



Franklin Public Schools

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Superintendent's Report to School Committee April 12, 2022

Tiered Focus Monitoring Review

A big congratulations and kudos goes to Ms. Paula Marano, Director of Student Services, and Assistant Directors Ellen White and Jennifer Graveline for their contributions to the Tiered Focus Monitoring Review in the area of Special Education that was completed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education during the week of March 28.

I also wish to extend a big congratulations and kudos to Ms. Michele Kingsland-Smith and the English as a Second Language Department for their efforts in the review process of the ESL programming in the District.

The Office of Public School Monitoring visits each district and charter school every three years to monitor compliance with federal and state special education and civil rights regulations. DESE also visits to monitor compliance with ESL regulations.

When the special education review team departs, they sit with the Central Office leadership for a debrief. They commended the District in numerous areas.

Again, thank you to Paula, Ellen, and Jennifer for your attention. We anticipate a final report in about 60 days.

COVID-Testing Program through DESE

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) are extending the statewide testing options currently available to districts and schools past April 22, 2022. DESE and EOHHS will continue to monitor factors related to COVID-19 and may make further adjustments to the statewide K-12 COVID testing options this school year. We anticipate following up later this spring with more information, including next steps for the summer and fall.

OpenSciEd Grant Awarded

Thank you to Dr. Tina Rogers. Through her leadership, the District received three grants from Boston College through funding from the One8 Foundation totaling \$122,800. This grant will support all three middle schools as they implement a high-quality, research-based middle school science curriculum, OpenSciEd. This funding will also provide teachers with professional learning over the next three years.

OpenSciEd uses a storyline approach, a logical sequence of lessons, that are driven by the questions students ask as they interact and investigate a phenomena. Phenomena are observable events that occur in the universe that we can use our science knowledge to explain or predict. Anchoring learning in explaining phenomena shifts the focus from *learning about* a topic to *figuring out* why or how something happens. Throughout a unit in OpenSciEd students build general science ideas in the context of their application to understanding phenomena in the real world, leading to deeper, more transferable knowledge.

We are thrilled to be one of the communities to receive this grant, but it should be noted we are moving forward with OpenSciEd simply because we received a grant. A committee with 13 members including classroom educators, special educators, and administrators have been working through a process since January. Throughout this time, the committee used current research, guidance from DESE, and Franklin's Portrait of a Graduate to write a middle school science instructional vision statement. This vision statement was used to guide the committee as they reviewed, piloted, and evaluated two high-quality science curriculum resources. On April 5, the committee came to consensus and decided to recommend to the Superintendent that we move forward with OpenSciEd as our primary middle school science curriculum resource. The committee will continue to meet through June after which some members will continue to work through the summer to ensure students and teachers are supported as they begin the next school year. We will also host a webinar prior to the end of the school year to share information about OpenSciEd with the community and to gather feedback on the vision statement.

Mood Check: Franklin

We are pleased to announce the first year of ***Mood Check: Franklin***, a depression prevention initiative supported by the Franklin Public Schools and directed by Dr. Tracy Gladstone, a licensed clinical psychologist from the Wellesley Centers for Women at Wellesley College. This is a comprehensive depression screening program that serves Franklin students in grades 8 and 10 and their families by: (1) providing education about the problem of youth depression; (2) identifying and referring adolescents in need of mental health services; and (3) providing follow-up with students' parents/guardians.

Dr. Gladstone presented to faculty/staff last Wednesday and screening began at Horace Mann Middle School yesterday.

This initiative is so important because depression is a significant concern among adolescents. Approximately one in every four to five children suffers from a mental health disorder that will result in severe impairment, and about 10.8% of adolescents experience significant depressive symptoms at any given time.

This initiative consists of two components: first, we will be delivering the Signs of Suicide (SOS) educational curriculum to students during a class period. Second, we will be screening all 8th

and 10th grade students for symptoms of both depression and anxiety using Qualtrics, a HIPAA-compliant web-based survey tool, on students' Chromebooks.

During the school day, Dr. Gladstone or a trained member of her team reaches out to students who score above a designated threshold on either screening measure, indicate safety concerns, report past depression, or indicate they wish to talk. During individual conversations with these students, a clinician will further screen teens for current or past depression and/or anxiety, after discussing confidentiality. Parents and guardians will be contacted following these individual meetings. The outcomes of the screening will NOT be shared with any school personnel unless the parent/guardian wishes, unless immediate safety concerns are revealed.

Screening is optional. Parents/guardians can opt their child out and students have the opportunity to opt out of screening at the time it is delivered.

Information about youth depression and anxiety in general:

Depression is a significant concern among adolescents. Approximately one in every four to five children suffers from a mental health disorder that will result in severe impairment, and about 10.8% of adolescents experience significant depressive symptoms at any given time. The National Institute of Mental Health defines depression as a common but serious mood disorder that influences the way a person feels, thinks, and handles daily activities. Some of the symptoms of depression include persistent sadness or irritability, loss of interest in activities, fatigue/low energy, changes in appetite/sleep, difficulty concentrating, and thoughts of death or suicide. While all of us sometimes experience these and other depressive symptoms, we worry when several symptoms occur at the same time and persist over a period of at least two weeks.

Anxiety is also a significant concern among adolescents. Anxiety is one of the most common psychological disorders in youth, affecting 25.1% of teens between 13 and 18 years old. Some of the symptoms of anxiety include excessive worry about everyday things, trouble controlling worry, nervousness, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, sleep problems, unexplained aches/pains, irritability or feeling 'on edge', difficulty swallowing, and feeling light headed. While all of us sometimes experience these and other anxiety symptoms, we are concerned when several symptoms occur at the same time and persist over a period of several weeks or months.

Because youth depression and anxiety are so common, we want to share some contact information with you, so that you can refer to it in the future should you have any concerns. If there is ever a need, you may be able to find support for your child at SAFE Coalition (508-488-8105). Or, you can connect with mental health supports for your child by contacting the Interface Referral Network [888-244-6843](tel:888-244-6843), Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm). Also, if you ever have immediate concerns about your child's health and/or safety, please contact the Advocates Emergency Service crisis line [800-640-5432](tel:800-640-5432), which is available 24 hours a day.

For additional information about these mental health concerns, please see the links below:

Depression

- [National Institute of Mental Health](#)
- [American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry](#)
- [Families for Depression Awareness](#)

Anxiety

- [National Institute of Mental Health](#)
 - [American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry](#)
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Music Accolades

We'd like to congratulate the students and teachers of the FHS Performing Arts department after a full and exciting weekend over April 2-3.

All FHS Performing Arts students performed, competed, and were evaluated through the MICCA and METG Festivals. Several awards and accolades were received. Congratulations!

MICCA

FHS Concert Band (Leighanne Rudsit) - Silver Medal
FHS Symphony Orchestra (Diane Plouffe) - Silver Medal
FHS Choir (Stephanie Beatrice) - Silver Medal
FHS Wind Ensemble (Leighanne Rudsit) - Gold Medal
FHS Repertory Orchestra (Diane Plouffe) - Gold Medal

METG

FHSTheatre Company (Skylar Grossman) - 2nd Place (Silver) with many student awards

The two ensembles who received Gold Medals have been placed in a lottery to perform at Mechanics Hall in Worcester on Sunday, April 10th. The performance schedule should be released shortly.