

Five Focus Areas of Mental Health Task Force

One of the Superintendent and School Board's goals this year was to analyze the mental health of our student body at each of the four comprehensive high schools through the inception of the Mental Health Task Force. Members of the Task Force included the coordinators from each of the four comprehensive high schools (Jenny Bratton, Woodside; Shelley Bustamante, Carlmont; Miki Cristerna, Menlo-Atherton; Judy Romero, Sequoia), Board members Allen Weiner and Carrie Dubois, Wellness Coordinator Dr. Karen Li, and Superintendent Dr. Jim Lianides.

Through its work, the Mental Health Task force has identified the five following focus areas:

1. Student Data & Outreach

The Task Force spent a lot of time and energy collecting student data. We were most interested to see what the most pressing mental health issues were in our student population. Each of the four mental health coordinators at each school site gathered data on students who had accessed their services in the 2014-15 school year. Not surprisingly, we found some patterns and trends: Top issues consistently include Family & Home, Peer Relations, Self-image, and Stress/Academics. Not surprisingly, Stress/Academics jumped to one of the top two issues senior year. Rounding out the issues were stress, trauma, academics, and to a lesser degree, loss/separation, grief and substance abuse.

2. Site Resources

Each of our school sites has programs that are 'home-grown'— meaning they all developed organically to best serve their clientele. This sometimes makes direct comparisons difficult; however, it was useful in looking at the wide array of resources available to students at each site. All of our schools also have student support services such as mentoring programs, conflict mediation, and youth development programs, in addition. Our Task Force recognizes that each school site can do more student outreach, as student surveys have indicated that there remain students who are unaware of the mental health services being offered.

3. Parent Outreach and Education

The Task Force proposes that we extend parent education to all of our schools and coordinate district initiatives with the parent education piece. We also discussed how we can better serve the Spanish-speaking population and would like to see more psychoeducation that is multicultural to honor and reflect the diversity of our community. That being said, we have a very robust parent education program that has been well attended in the past. However, we recognize the need to reach more parents. To this end, we have discussed videotaping our parent speakers in order to make the workshops available for parents who cannot attend.

4. Professional Development

The Task Force recognizes that District staff should undergo training on how to recognize the signs of a student who may need socio-emotional support in addition to academic support. The District is looking at two layers of training—one that will take place at a district-wide Professional Development (PD) training and another at the individual school site to train staff most likely to be the first responders to a student in crisis.

5. Green Folder Initiative

The District is pleased to announce its rollout of the Green Folder Initiative for the next school year. Becky Beacom, WAC Executive member and PAMF health educator, first proposed this idea and our Task Force went into action, utilizing the collective knowledge of our site-based mental health coordinators and the design talents of WHS teacher Jenny Bratton. The Green Folder Initiative takes inspiration from the UC's Red Folder Initiative, which started in 2012. Under the Initiative, each UC campus published a "Red Folder" which serves as a quick reference guide to mental health resources for faculty/staff who may interact with distressed students. Since its inception, CSU's and other colleges have adopted their own versions of the Red Folder Initiative. We decided that this would be useful, both as a training tool and as a reference tool. We believe that we will be one of the first districts in the state to pilot the Initiative at the high school level.

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"Working on the WAC this year has been a truly inspiring, enriching, and productive experience. It has been incredible to see how much is being done for the students of the Sequoia Union High School District and how many passionate individuals there are dedicated to supporting the wellness of our students."

— Cailan Cumming, Carlmont High School Senior

Wellness Advisory Council Update

Karen Li, MD, District Wellness Coordinator, and Dana Schuster, MS, WAC Community Member

During our January, February, and April WAC meetings, we divided into sub-groups to discuss four health and wellness areas identified as high priorities for our District:

- Student Stress
- Mental Health Trainings/Resources
- Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Education
- Food Services/Nutrition

Each group was assigned the goal of devising action plans for (1) Short-term activities that could hopefully be accomplished this spring semester, and (2) Longer term activities that could be initiated for the 2016-17 school year.

A summary of the identified activities can be found on page 3.

benefits@seq

With Sonia Ramirez de Figueroa, Human Resources/Benefits

Q: What is Flexible Spending? How is it beneficial to employees?

A: Section 125 Plans, often known as Flexible Spending Plans, allow employees to set aside a monthly amount from their paycheck to use to pay for medical expenses such as prescriptions, over-the-counter items if prescribed by a physician (allergy meds, diabetes supplies, etc.), and/or co-pays. This is a PRE TAX amount, which can be a significant advantage. American Fidelity (AF) runs the program for SUHSD.

Q: Is there a limit to how much an individual/family can put into this type of plan?

A: Yes, there is a maximum. An individual can set aside up to \$2550 per year towards medical costs, and \$2500 per year for dependent day care costs (for dependent children or adults).

Q: Can this type of plan be set up anytime, and is it available to all employees?

A: No - the sign-up for a 125 Plan needs to be done during the open enrollment period OR during the first 30-60 days of employment for a new hire. This option is available to permanent employees, not temporary or Charter School employees. **It is important to remember that you must re-enroll in this plan each year.** However, if a person's medical needs change mid-plan, adjustments in the amount set aside each month may be made by calling American Fidelity.

Q: How does one access this plan to pay for expenses? Must all purchase receipts be kept and submitted to AF?

A: This was the first year that SUHSD employees were provided with a 'credit card' linked directly to their flexible spending account, which simplified payment and record keeping. Just use the card to pay for eligible medical expenses and keep your receipts in case any questions arise. You do not have to automatically send receipts in, as AF will request them if needed. If your employment ends with SUHSD and there are still funds in your flexible spending account, you will have until the end of the enrolled calendar year, plus 90 days grace period, to access them.

Q: Sounds great - who do I contact to sign up?

A: Contact American Fidelity at 800-365-8306 to discuss your options. They will likely ask to set up an appointment with you to determine the appropriate monthly amount to set aside, and any other enrollment details.

REMEMBER: If you are thinking of changing coverage for next year (effective date Jan1. 2017), summer is a great time to do your research at CalPERS and/or by visiting seq.org for a summary of available benefits. Open enrollment generally runs from September through mid-October so will be here before you know it!

CPR Training Saves Lives

A Woodside student saved the life of his classmate last fall. Teacher Rich Motylewski had just taught CPR, AED use, and the Heimlich maneuver to his PE class. That same day at lunchtime, Freshman Humberto Villalobos started choking, and his classmate Uriel Oropeza Herrera quickly dislodged the food from Humberto's throat by using his newfound knowledge of the Heimlich maneuver. Uriel is a true hero!

April 26th of this year marked the culmination of four years of CPR training in the SUHSD. Over 8,000 students have now been trained, which is nearly every student in the SUHSD. Back in the fall of 2012, Dr. Karen Li, Wellness Coordinator for the SUHSD, and Mr. Glenn Nielsen, Director of the Sequoia Healthcare District's Heart Safe program, were inspired by teacher Laura Perdikomatis's Woodside High program that teaches CPR to freshmen during their PE classes.

They invited local firefighters to assist in teaching the American Heart Association "Hands Only/AED" curriculum to ALL district freshmen. In addition to our firefighters, volunteers from the community and staff from organizations such as Dignity Health Sequoia Hospital and the Via Heart Project offer to assist in these trainings, which take place annually throughout the school year. This has been an extremely rewarding project and our CPR team is looking forward to training future incoming freshmen.

Just over a year ago, California Assembly Bill 1719 was introduced which, if passed, will require CPR training prior to high school graduation. Becoming a first-responder is an important life skill to learn, and the passage of this bill will result in the training of millions of young people in California!

For questions or comments, please contact Dr. Li at: kli@seq.org

Parent Education Mini-Series on "At-Risk Teens"

By Charlene Margot, M.A., Director, The Parent Education Series

In response to a district-wide focus on mental health, The Parent Education Series presents a Mini-Series on "At-Risk Teens." In a three-part program hosted at the District Office, the Mini-Series features presentations on drug addiction ("Saving Jake: When Addiction Hits Home" with award-winning author D'Anne Burwell), suicide prevention (QPR Training with Dr. Alejandro Martinez), and parent-teen communication ("Mastering Difficult Conversations with Your Teen" with Dr. Eran Magen).

Parent Education Series events are free and open to parents, faculty/staff, mental health professionals, and community members. The Parent Education Mini-Series is sponsored by the Sequoia Healthcare District and the Sequoia Union High School District. For more information, contact Charlene Margot, M.A., Director, The Parent Education Series, cmargot@csmconsulting.net or 650-868-0590.

Stretch Into Yoga

Two of our district schools, Sequoia and Woodside, now offer yoga for faculty, staff, and students. These classes are offered for everyone in the district.

Sequoia

Yoga classes at Sequoia are supported through the Sequoia SAFE program. Students and teachers participate equally. The class takes place every Thursday from 4:00 pm until 5:00 pm in the dance studio. The instructor, a teacher at Sequoia high school, is certified in Ashtanga Yoga, but uses Vinyasa moves as well. The class focuses on both mind and body, emphasizing flexibility and stability around the spine. The class is free for everybody to attend.

For more information, contact ckispersky@seq.org.

Woodside

Woodside High School teachers David Edel, Sarah Lefort, and Darcy O'Brien-Holt were recently awarded a mini-grant to fund their Wildcat Yoga program through the Sequoia Healthcare District's Healthy Schools Initiative. The \$1500 award supports on-site, after-school yoga classes on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from March until June for both staff and students. Participation is free for students, and teachers pay a nominal fee of \$30 for 8 classes or \$50 for all 16 classes in the hope of building up reserves to continue the program next year.

For those who don't have yoga supplies, the WHS P.E. Department is graciously lending yoga mats, leaving enough room in the grant budget to purchase blocks and straps. Local yoga instructors Lorraine Desser Schulze and Pam Lozoff teach the classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays respectively. Any district employees interested in joining Wildcat Yoga can try out a complimentary class from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. in the D-wing's staff lounge (adjacent to the M.U.R. building), which is accessible off of the Alameda de las Pulgas parking lot.

Contact dobrieholt@seq.org or slefort@seq.org for more information.

WAC Executive Committee Members

Becky Beacom, *PAMF, Health Education Manager*

Tiffany Burkle, *SHS Teacher, Health Careers Academy*

Nora DeCaro, *Director of Food Services*

Gigi Kruse-Silva, *CHS teacher*

Karen Jackson, *MD, Palo Alto Medical Foundation*

Karen Li, *MD, District Wellness Coordinator*

Charlene Margot, *MA, Parent Education Series Director*

Maureen Rafferty, *RN, District Nurse*

Dana Schuster, *MS, Health and Fitness Instructor*

Marie Violet, *Director, Sequoia Hospital Health & Wellness Center*

WAC Update Continued (from page 1)

I. Student Stress

Short term:

1. Administer a student survey on sources of stress and how stress manifests for them (Based on the Sequoia HS YAB / John Gardner survey), and distribute the results to parents, students, teachers and staff.
2. Research how the Sequoia HS SAFE program works.
3. Students create MH educational video announcements.

Long term:

1. Develop a Homework Policy for consideration by Board of Trustees.
2. Restructure Life Skills to (a) Include more on mental health and stress (b) Add a semester/quarter in the Junior or Senior year and (c) Have it taught by a Health Teacher.
3. Offer after school mental health support and stress reduction classes at all campuses (based on SAFE model?)

II. Mental Health Trainings/Resources

Short term:

1. Update the list of mental health services offered at each school.
2. Develop a reference and training tool for staff, regarding mental health services in our district: The "Green Folder Initiative" (based on the UC/CSU "Red Folder Initiative") is in development and should be ready for distribution Fall 2016.

Long term:

1. Offer professional development mental health trainings for all staff, in addition to more intensive trainings for key staff with the highest level of student interaction.
2. Adapt the Green Folder Initiative for parent and student use-- possibly develop an app.

III. ATOD Education

Short term:

1. Include ATOD education in the Make Time For Fitness activities on May 19th, 2016, which our teens help lead for all Redwood City School District 4th graders.
2. Develop a five-day, 50 min/day, prevention curriculum which will be piloted with select Life Skills classes in the fall.

Long term:

1. Offer Peer-to-Peer trainings, with the goal of doing outreach to our school sites and our middle school feeder sites.
2. Students will develop video announcements, participate in health fair booths, and plan noon rallies.

IV. Food Services/Nutrition

Short term:

1. Work with Dairy Council to complete food services Scorecard to identify potential gaps and no cost improvements.
2. Identify strategies to educate students on healthy food choices (Cornell behavior economics).

Long term:

1. Implement "Smarter Lunchroom" program.
2. Ensure that nutritional information is available for all foods sold through Food Services.
3. Create opportunities for taste testing of new Food Service items.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This newsletter was printed by a generous gift from Dignity Health Sequoia Hospital.

Kale with Cannellini Beans

(recipe courtesy of Deborah Madison)



Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients:

- 1.5-2 lbs of kale or mixed greens, stems and ribs removed
- salt and pepper
- 1 small onion, finely diced
- 1 1/2 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- pinch of red pepper flakes
- 2 teaspoons chopped rosemary
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1 can of cannellini beans, rinsed well
- freshly grated parmesan

Directions:

- 1) Simmer the kale in salted water for 7-10 minutes.
- 2) Drain, reserving the cooking liquid, and chop leaves.
- 3) In a large skillet, sauté the onion in oil with garlic, red pepper flakes and rosemary for about 3 minutes.
- 4) Add the wine and cook until it is a syrupy sauce.
- 5) Add beans, kale and enough reserved liquid (a few tablespoons) to keep the mixture loose.
- 6) Heat through, then remove from heat and dust with parmesan.

Summer's Coming
Avocado, Mango and Black Bean Salad

(recipe courtesy of Whole Foods)



Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients:

- 2 ripe - still firm avocados - cubed
- 3 tablespoons lime juice, divided
- 2 ripe - still firm mangoes - cubed
- 1 jalapeño, stemmed, seeded & finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon grated lime zest
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro, plus more for garnish
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon sugar
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added black beans, rinsed and drained

Directions:

- 1) Gently toss avocado with 1 tablespoon of the lime juice in a medium bowl.
- 2) Add mango and jalapeño and gently toss to combine. Set aside.
- 3) Whisk together remaining 2 tablespoons lime juice, zest, cilantro, salt, pepper and sugar in a large bowl.
- 4) Whisk in oil until thoroughly combined to make a thick dressing. Add avocado mixture and black beans and toss gently.
- 5) Spoon salad onto plates, garnish with cilantro and serve immediately.

Sequitur District Newsletter

The District has a monthly parent newsletter that is distributed electronically to all parents. Even though the target audience is parents, faculty and staff will be sure to find items of interest to them as well. To read past issues of *Sequitur*, please visit the District home page at seq.org. There is a tab for the most recent edition and an archive of past editions. The direct link to that page is: <http://seq.org/?id=263>.