

District's Kognito Training Receives Kudos from Staff

Over the past several years, our district has focused on efforts to support our students' social-emotional and mental health needs. The work of our Mental Health Task Force has brought increased attention to this important area, and we are continuing to work diligently towards achieving the defined goals.

The semester started with a District Mental Health Intensive PD on January 10th, which included a morning presentation by Jenee Littrell from the SMCOE about the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) model and an afternoon presentation by UCSF's Dr. Tauheed Zaman, which focused on "Updates on Cannabis and the Adolescent Brain." This was followed by a Kognito online training—a nationally recognized interactive training simulation that includes role-play with virtual students—for all District staff.

We launched two Kognito modules: "At Risk for High School Educators" and "Step In, Speak Up!" (an LGBTQ module). Both modules are listed in the SPRC/AFSP Best Practices Registry for Suicide Prevention Programs (Suicide Prevention Resource). "At-Risk for High School Educators" is also included in SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (SAMHSA).

The program includes built-in surveys at the start of the training, immediately afterwards, and three months after completion to analyze course effectiveness. The initial results are back: the program was received with a 98-99% satisfaction rating (good, very good, excellent) for both the

At-Risk module and the Step In, Speak Up! LGBTQ module.

Below are some representative responses to the question, "What did you like best about the course?":

- Interactive features
- Ease of use, very clear, great information
- Realistic scenarios and dialogue
- Having the option to choose different responses
- Getting immediate feedback and being able to "undo" actions
- Not feeling "under the spotlight" as with most role playing
- Authentic student voices
- Practical and relevant advice
- An excellent course that every teacher across the country should be required to take

The next steps established from staff feedback were:

- Continue interdistrict school-based mental health collaboration meetings
- Debrief Kognito with site staff, and encourage Kognito for all staff (administrative assistants, transportation, coaches, athletic directors and trainers, etc.)
- Pilot Kognito Friend2Friend module—we received funding from the Sequoia Healthcare District to pilot with 230 students this spring (See page 3 for the update on this project!)

The Kognito training, along with the District's Green Folder Initiative, provides staff with tools to use with students. It is the District's goal to provide students (through the Kognito Friend2Friend Module) and parents (with a parent version of the Green Folder) these tools as well in the near future.

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Acknowledgment

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

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Q & A with Jacqueline McEvoy, Ed.D, Assistant Superintendent Human Resources and Student Services (Part 2)

Q: What HR services seem to change often and/or lead to confusion?

A: It is not uncommon for laws to change, particularly in regards to "leave" policies. For example, the definition of who qualifies as a "family member" is frequently reviewed and needs clarification. Not long ago questions arose as to whether or not "immediate family" included one's siblings and we found that we had not yet included this, so it has now been added. "Living in home" may well extend to other relatives beyond spouses and children, depending on one's situation.

The HR department is continually re-evaluating these types of questions and working to balance what is "reasonable" with the costs of coverage. I should also mention that a staff member may be able to convert "sick leave" to "personal necessity leave" which can be an asset, as the latter can be taken with you at retirement or if you transfer to another district. Having this "in the bank" can be very helpful. I am the final arbitrator on these types of issues, so please consider discussing your situation with me.

Q: What are your primary goals for HR in our district?

A: In the short term, to take care of what is *happening that day* in an efficient and caring manner. For the long term, I want to work to continue to maintain a healthy environment for employees and their families, so they can provide safe and productive instruction to students.

Q: How do you hope the WAC can support you and HR?

A: This is the first district I've been in where there is a Wellness Coordinator and a very active Wellness Advisory Council (WAC), and I find wellness efforts here to be more comprehensive in scope. WAC's work on things like concussion awareness, CPR, and the importance of mental health helps keep these things on the forefront. Getting information out to the school staff and community is also key - the WAC Newsletter is a great resource in this regard. It would also be great if we could have a monthly FAQ on the district website on health concerns for staff, students, and parents, that is also accessible via a mobile App for those who don't have computer access. A Kognito-like model with a "what should I do if..." format might be a helpful outreach option for WAC to consider providing.

Q: Any last comments/reminders to share?

A: I just want to remind our staff that I answer my own phone, and if I'm out and you leave a message, you don't have to give specifics. Simply telling me you have a "confidential issue you'd like to talk about" will work!



The Parent Education Mini-Series — "Safe and Healthy Teens"

By Charlene Margot, M.A.

Founder and Director, The Parent Education Series

This spring the Parent Education Mini-Series offers a four-part series on "Safe and Healthy Teens." This program is designed to educate parents, faculty/staff, and community members about critical health-related topics impacting today's teens. The Mini-Series has attracted the attention of administrators, counselors, and mental health professionals throughout the greater Bay Area.

Events include: discussion of the opioid epidemic ("Prescription Pain Killers: What's at Stake?"); an interactive workshop on parent-teen communication ("Managing Emotionally-Intense Conversations with Your Teen"); a lively workshop on adolescent sexuality ("Get Connected! Talking to your Teen about Sexual Health"); and a program from award-winning nonprofit Crisis Text Line ("Help is a Text Away: How Crisis Text Line Saves Lives").

The Parent Education Series is sponsored by the Sequoia Healthcare District and the Sequoia Union High School District, with special funding for the Parent Education Mini-Series from Palo Alto Medical Foundation (PAMF). For more information, go to The Parent Education Series Facebook page or SUHSD website (seq.org).

Kognito Friend2Friend — Students Learn To Help Peers

By Dana Schuster, MS, Student Voice F2F Project Coordinator

I was surprised—
this was an educational tool that was
actually educational!

Thanks to funding from the Sequoia Healthcare District, WAC recently conducted a field test of the Kognito Friend2Friend online mental health training, with 239 students participating from six of the district's campuses. The 25-minute module gives students hands-on practice interacting with virtual teens Michael and Ana on issues of psychological distress. The avatars discuss emotional health and wellness, address several misconceptions teens may have about mental health, and teach both effective and ineffective tactics for supporting friends. Forty-eight of the trained students then participated in one of six follow-up focus groups.

Student feedback was very positive and insightful in regards to both the training experience and content learning, as noted in this statement from a Sequoia High School student, which was echoed by others:

"My experience taking the Friend2Friend training was that it was very relatable and had realistic scenarios. I felt comfortable taking this because it emulated a conversation I would have with my friends. One thing I learned is that there is no reason to not ask someone if they are contemplating suicide, for it does not evoke feelings of wanting to do so. I think this would be a good training for all students because it teaches and clarifies how to approach people and direct them to help."

Additional Comments from Student Participants:

This training makes it more
likely that you can help
someone —
it is a skill you can take with
you.

I thought it was
going to be BORING but
when I got into it I found it
was really interesting..

I learned to not talk about **My-SELF**, but to listen and ask
open-ended questions.

We are deeply indebted to all of the students who participated, and to staff who helped with coordination, administration of the training, and/or facilitation of a focus group:

Misla Barco
Jenny Bratton
Shelley Bustamante
Rachel Bycer
Miki Cristerna
Eric Ettlin
Whitney Fitzgerald
MJ Flockhart
Ashley (William) Gray
Laurie Karzen

Gigi Kruse-Silva
Addison Lewellen
Matthew Miskelly
Andrew Ramroth
Judy Romero
Chris Rubin
Greg Schmid
Nancy Staves
Sara Grace Vann

WAC Executive Committee Members

Becky Beacom, PAMF, Health Education Manager
Jenny Bratton, WHS Teacher
Tiffany Burkle, CTE Resource Teacher
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, Director, The Parent Education Series
Maureen Rafferty, RN, District Nurse
Dana Schuster, MS, Health and Fitness Instructor
Jo-Ann Byrne Sockolov, Founder, Transform Collaborative LLC
Marie Violet, Director, Sequoia Hospital Health & Wellness Center

Avocado Tartare (recipe courtesy of Food & Wine magazine)

- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 2 Tablespoons minced red onion
- 1 Tablespoon Dijon mustard, plus more for garnish (optional)
- 1 Tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tablespoon drained capers
- 1 Tablespoon chopped parsley
- 1/2 small minced jalapeno
- 2 drops Worcestershire sauce
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground pepper
- 2 medium Hass avocados, peeled and finely diced
- Toasted baguette slices for serving



In a medium bowl, stir the olive oil with the onion, mustard, lemon juice, capers, and parsley. Stir in the jalapeno and Worcestershire sauce and season with salt and pepper. Gently fold in the avocados. Plate and serve with toasted baguettes.

Avocados have abundant nutrients, fiber, potassium, monounsaturated fats, and anti-oxidants. Not only are avocados healthy, they are also easy to prepare to accompany a variety of foods. Here are three recipes to try if you are looking to expand beyond the standard guacamole recipe. Each of the recipes yields 4 servings.

Avocado Radish Salad (adapted from the Food Network Chicken Tacos with Avocado Salad recipe)

- 3 cups thin sliced Romaine lettuce
- 1 diced avocado
- 6 thinly sliced radishes
- Juice of one lime
- 3 Tablespoons chopped cilantro leaves
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- Kosher Salt
- Freshly ground pepper

Gently toss the first six ingredients in a bowl; season with salt and pepper to taste.

Avocado Pesto (recipe by Georgianna Kruse Silva)

- 2 ripe avocados (Fuertes variety recommended)
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves
- 1/4 cup fresh curly parsley (for an earthy taste)
- 2 Tablespoons lemon juice
- 1-2 garlic gloves
- Salt to taste
- 1-2 Tablespoons olive oil (optional)

Put all ingredients in a bowl (if using a hand blender) or a blender and pulse until smooth. Use on pastas, breads, bruschetta, etc.

