



**February 2019**

### **Understanding and Supporting Your Child's Stress and Anxiety**

Last week, District 118 partnered with Palos Behavioral Health Professionals and Clinical Psychologist Dr. Christopher Higgins to offer parents an opportunity to better understand and support their child's stress and anxiety. This presentation included information on how parents can help their children navigate through their elementary and middle school years as they encounter the stress and anxiety that comes with being a student.

Dr. Higgins provided the audience of approximately 70 parents with information on the how the adolescent brain develops, the difference between worry and anxiety, and how parents can support their children with the challenges they face at school and in society. Included below are some key takeaways and suggestions for parents to ponder:

- Tolerate the uncomfortable state - "NOT SPARE THE ROD"
- If the challenge is not beyond their current capacity, it's not a challenge.
- The human brain and society are built to handle trauma, loss, death, failure and stress.
- You can't handle a challenge by running away with it.
- You have to push the brain to develop it.
- Define who owns the problem: the parent or child?
- Let children deal with their own stuff.
- Divorce, addictions, hardship, and unavailability all have consequences on the child. HOWEVER, it's how situations are handled that impacts the child more than the event itself.
- Never start by saying "no." Start with "how" and promote choice.
- Boundaries are essential.
- Focus on solutions, not punishment.
- Sports and music are great for kids so they can learn failure.

If you would like more information, a video will soon be available on our district website.

### **The Illinois Assessment of Readiness**

This spring, all students in grades 3-8 will be taking the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) in reading and math. This assessment replaces the former PARCC test, and I am pleased to announce that this year's assessment is streamlined to 5 total test sessions per grade level. Each grade level has 3 math sessions and 2 in English Language Arts. This is approximately a 40% reduction in total time spent on state assessments as compared to 2015 when elementary students were given a total of 8 tests, and middle school students completed 9.

From the time PARCC was first administered in the 2014-2015 school year, many parents raised concerns regarding the amount of time students would be spending on state assessments, contributing to a negative testing culture specifically around PARCC. As a result, our participation rate has decreased on this mandatory assessment each year which now reflects a negative impact on our schools. Under the new ESSA School Accountability System, our schools were penalized this

year for having less than 95% of our students taking the tests. In the spring of 2018, District 118 reported that 86% of our students participated in PARCC testing. If this trend continues, the Illinois State Board of Education will eventually label each of our schools as “Consistently Underperforming.” These labels will be reported to the public annually.

It is also important to understand that state assessment results are a valuable tool in determining whether our curriculum is meeting the needs of our students. School districts need a balanced assessment system, which includes classroom assessments, local diagnostic assessments, and state assessments, to ensure alignment to the Illinois learning standards and the level of rigor necessary for college and career readiness. As we move forward with the Illinois Assessment of Readiness, it is essential that we have valid data to inform decisions on curriculum and instruction.

This is why the school board, administration, and teachers have joined together to partner with parents to make sure your children are participating on state assessments. We want school ratings that accurately reflect the quality of our schools. It is imperative that we work together as a learning community to establish a positive assessment culture so the students of District 118 can be recognized for their hard work and talents. Now let’s join together to encourage students to do their best and celebrate their success.

School teams are currently developing ideas to reach the goal of at least 95% participation. IAR testing will take place in April. Look for more information from your buildings in the next few weeks. If you would like to learn more on this topic, please refer the audio PowerPoint from the [January 23rd Parent Information Meeting on State Assessments](#).