

November 24, 2020

Hello Washington Cougars! I hope this message finds you well on a Tuesday. We just finished a faculty meeting where we discussed a few important topics together, one of which included a debrief on the Needs Assessment we recently asked your children to complete. I thought you may want to hear some of the highlights.



First, we are very pleased to report our kids seem to be doing alright in Covid times. From a physiological standpoint, Washington Elementary students are getting enough rest, food, water and warmth. Their sense of personal safety is also clear. They feel secure and protected. We also learned they feel a sense of belonging, even though their friends feel a little far away right now. Feeling loved by their “no matter what people” was also crystal clear. 😊

Now, please pat yourself on the back or give yourself a big hug. You are colossally responsible for your kids being alright. It is easy for parents to doubt themselves at times, especially while living smack dab in the middle of a pandemic, but the multitude of ways you are addressing your child’s social and emotional well-being is working. And sure, some of our students did respond to the survey in ways that let us know they could use a little extra support. Their voices have been heard and we will work in partnership with their family to ensure they get what they need.

Periodic worries and mood related struggles make sense in a pandemic, but feelings come and go. They are not forever, and children need to know this is true. All feelings are okay, and it matters how we manage them. As adults, it is our job to closely monitor children’s social and emotional well-being. If their sadness or nervousness reaches a point where a life function becomes maladaptive, we need to reach out for help. Deepening supports to get kids back on track is a privilege and we can help, if you sense your child has needs this way.

Again, most of our students are showing clear signs of resilience though. This is largely because of the protective factors your family and school community have in place for them. Protective factors are conditions or attributes that help people deal more effectively with stressful events. They also mitigate or eliminate risk in family and community life. For more information about how you can grow your child’s resiliency in the world, feel free to Google, The Center for Family Strengthening. You won’t be sorry to invest a little time studying their research.

Beyond all the good news, we did notice one trend in our kids that seems like common sense and it is worth mentioning. Our kids are reporting a sense of boredom and loneliness at times. Perceived idle time and feelings of isolation can lead to depression and anxiety. Activities are important. The more varied and interactive, the better. Get outside too. Fill that brain with more oxygen. Connecting with extended family and friends is essential too, even if not in person. Try and laugh as much as you can. Sometimes, I need a quick laugh in the middle of the day. I follow two dogs in Maine. Their names are Stella and Mabel.....and they love to run full speed into a mountain of leaves. I’m not sure why, but I can’t stop laughing when I watch them. Hey, whatever floats our boats and fills our buckets, right?

Last, I want to wish everybody a very Happy Thanksgiving. It is always meaningful when we can gather with our loved ones and celebrate all the things we are most grateful for in life. Perhaps, you will agree with me that it is important to also acknowledge the complexity of this holiday for some too.



“Thanksgiving Day is a national holiday in the United States and Canada, which focuses on acknowledging the harvest and other blessings of the past year. Americans generally believe that their Thanksgiving is modeled on a 1621 Harvest Feast shared by the English Colonists (Pilgrims) of Plymouth and the Wampanoag Nation (Indigenous people). Many Native Americans do not celebrate the arrival of the Pilgrims and other European settlers. To them, Thanksgiving Day is a reminder of the genocide of millions of their people, the theft of their lands and the relentless attempts to erase their culture.”

Reading this gives me pause and of course, I feel a heavy sensation in my chest. Regardless of my sadness and discomfort, the fact remains true. I also think it is an important discussion for your family to have, especially during this time of great divisiveness in our country. Acknowledging dark truths about our country’s history in developmentally appropriate ways with our children is healthy. Perpetuating false narratives about the European colonization is not, as it diminishes the experiences of the oppressed and continues to empower those who seek to mistreat.

Recently, I was at a meeting and the guest speaker was a member of the Puyallup Tribe. She opened our gathering with a land acknowledgement, which is a formal statement that recognizes, and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of our land. “Acknowledgements also speak to the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their territories.” Hers was an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those who came before her, whose territory we reside on now. The elder delivered her message with warmth and openness. She also spoke to the value of honoring the Indigenous Peoples who have been working on the land since the beginning of time.

She finished saying, “We are all guests on this land, nobody owns her.”



Trust me when I say, there were a lot of descendants from the European continent in the room that afternoon, and I could have heard a pin drop when the elder finished her message. She was a beautiful person and it is because of her that I am more aware of the importance of recognizing ALL the unique people and stories that

came before me today. Our kids need to have open hearts and minds for all the exceptional people and stories out there too, especially those that may be very different from their own.

As always, thank you for your consideration of my thoughts and I welcome your feedback. Enjoy some peace and rest in the week to come.

Kindest regards,

Missy

[mporter@tacoma.k12.wa.us](mailto:mporter@tacoma.k12.wa.us)

253-571-5739