

Community Conversation notes  
General Public – Kids' Anxieties and Stresses  
October 25, 2017

*Why are you here tonight?*

I hear so many parallels with my own situation (as a school administrator). You want to fix it for your child, and you can't fix it.

We feel our children's pain times ten. More than they feel it.

I'm a school employee and I couldn't help my own kid.

You have to keep working with the system, and it does get better.

The change won't happen overnight.

I remember the helpless hopelessness you feel when your child starts going through the anxiety process.

It's important not to lose hope.

It helps at this meeting to hear the school board members talk about their own families and disclose their own vulnerabilities.

Parents want to fix and solve everything for their children, and remove their pain. But that pain allows them to grow. You have to be comfortable sitting in that space of pain.

If you take away that pain, they don't learn to cope.

As a dad I let my mind go to the worst-case scenario. But doing that gets in the way of the natural processes of hurting and healing.

The opening question (Why are you here?) was really good. It opened us up. I could feel the caring and support for one another.

That's how I felt too. I started to wonder, "Where are the tissues?" I felt the vulnerability in this room.

At the core of what we all really want is for our kids to be happy and healthy.

*What are the symptoms and causes of students' anxieties and stresses?*

Social media.

Perfectionism...it's just how some of them are wired.

Fear of failure. Expectations. It gets worse every year.

Living in the shadow of older, high-achieving siblings.

Competition. They all know each other's class ranks.

Social media and expectations lead to a distorted reality.

Differences in economic classes and social classes.

No time to rest and play.

Over-the-top expectations.

Club sports. Taking kids 8 and 9 years old to out of town games.

Telling them early on that grades define them, and then raising the bar every year.

Piaget's theories. Ego-centrism of four- to seven-year-olds shows up again in adolescence and adulthood. Focusing on the end results and not the process.

Learning has changed. We have different tools now.

*What more can the schools do to help?*

Mindfulness, yoga.

Service opportunities.

Showing gratitude.

Thankfulness.

Kids need to learn, move, even in high school.

Self-awareness of how you learn. The freedom to implement that learning about you.

I'd love to see self-awareness in the curriculum.

In the real world, they're not in desks in rows.

Kids need to know it's ok to fail, and learn from it. Need to celebrate kids who takes chances...write them up in the school newspaper...tell about what they tried to do.

AP class methods to be worked in throughout the curriculum.

Your contribution matters just as much as those from a kid who's better in that class or subject.

I'm not sure we want to encourage failure. It's not rewarded in the professional world. Some failures get measured and have impact.

It has to be the right kind of failure.

Some kids would do better in smaller schools.

How do you define success?

AP tests are coming and the message from the community is you better gets 4's and 5's.

AP scores are now on the state report card. If the community wants to step back and have more well-rounded kids, they have to be ok with lower scores.

The health curriculum – kids take it early just to get it out of the way. We could emphasize the content in it more at higher grades.

My daughter says the weekly support group of friends she goes to is really helpful.

*One word to describe your feeling about tonight:*

Tsunami

Awareness

Not alone

Togetherness

Sharing

Hopeful

Overwhelming

Acceptance

Validated

Committed

A village

Optimistic

Openness

Complex – in a positive way

Powerful

Proud

Everyone different, in a unique way

Reality

Inspired

Supported

Enlightened

Student: Students are on their own journeys. They can't become a different person. Support who they are.