

Intro/Vision

Our students need us to prioritize their mental wellness like never before. In the past few years we have seen declining mental health in children and teens, experienced the stress of a global pandemic, and embraced the racial reckoning that is occurring in our country. These events have caused individual, familial, community, racial, societal, and collective trauma. This has led to emotional upheaval and life-altering circumstances for many of our students and families. We recognize that systemic racism and white culture ideals are embedded in our education system. It is incumbent upon us as educators to be responsive to students, create supportive environments, teach skills and strategies, and provide resources to better support healing and wellness.

Behavioral Health and Wellness activities aim to reduce barriers to learning and increase opportunities for student engagement. By focusing on building strong and healthy communities and promoting the wellbeing of every learner, we believe students will thrive in the classroom and as they move beyond the K-12 system. Cultivating learning spaces that are celebratory, joyful, and nurturing allows our students to become their best selves. Our plan provides measurable goals and concrete action steps so we can assess and align our human and financial resources to best serve our students. Focusing on student, staff, and organizational wellness will help move us forward in evolving our education system as a whole.

Equity and Trauma Informed Care

We prioritize human beings, individual's cultures, and we dismantle racist systems in order to allow our staff, students, and community to heal and grow together. We use our talents and passion to create a loving community that can knit itself together even when we are in a structure that mirrors racism. Knowing that our white supremacy culture harms people of color, we examine and restructure our systems and practices so that our students feel valued in order to remove barriers that are preventing students from feeling valued. As educators, we challenge our own biases and beliefs and reflect on our own pedagogy and tools with an anti-bias/anti racist focus.

Racism is trauma so to be anti-racist we must also be trauma-informed. This effort requires a solid grounding in the science of trauma. which includes the impact of trauma on our brains and bodies, historical/generational trauma, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and the science of resilience. As a system, the district realizes the widespread impact of trauma, understands potential paths for recovery, and recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in students, families, staff, and others involved with the system. By fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices we seek to actively resist re-traumatization and respond in a way that best meets the needs of our students. We are committed to incorporating the six principles

of trauma-informed care as we develop a more anti-racist trauma-informed behavioral health and wellness system. These principles include: safety, trustworthiness and transparency, peer support, collaboration and mutuality, empowerment, voice and choice, and cultural, historical, and gender issues. (SAMHSA, 2014)

What do we want our students to learn or have?

Behavioral Health and Wellness strives to support every student in acquiring and applying the knowledge, skills and attitude to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2021). Students' behavioral health and wellness is supported by teaching students the tools necessary to develop the social, emotional, and academic skills necessary to facilitate student voice, agency, and engagement as they prepare for their future.

As a center for academic learning, we believe students needs skills to:

- Understand and recognize their emotions.
- Possess social awareness.
- Communicate and advocate for their physical and emotional well-being.
- Develop and maintain healthy relationships with self and others.
- Cultivate responsible decision making skills (ability to make constructive choices in social interactions).

Organization and Staff

We recognize that our current systems do not effectively support all students and strive to disrupt the correlation between demographic profile and belonging and achievement in school, economic opportunity, and health. As staff and organization, we:

- Recognize the harm perpetuated against our Black, Indigenous, People of Color and strive to create restorative school communities.
- Center joy by cultivating learning spaces that are celebratory and judgement free.
- Reduce stigma around student behaviors through reflection and self awareness.
- Recognize the emotional, mental, and physical health of community members' as a key component to organizational health.
- Value each member of the learning community and organization as a contributing member. They are invested, they take ownership, and they are able to learn from one another; continuing to build on divergent thinking. Everyone is valued for what they bring.
- Foster perseverance, cultivate self-regulation capability, and advance problem solving dexterity.

- Demonstrate our commitment to equity by implementing inclusive practices.
- Support and teach emotional awareness and communication skills that allow students to identify the needs of themselves or others, advocate for the needs of themselves or others, and respect that people have different needs. A part of this process requires accountability backed by mindful reinforcement to those who teach these skills so as to promote growth, limit trauma and respect the individual.

How do we do this?

Evidence based practices for Behavioral Health and Wellness will be adopted and implemented throughout all our schools, PreK-21. A focus on behavioral health and wellness will allow our students to thrive with the support of the district's multi-tiered systemic approach. The first must be a shift to an *emotions matter mindset*. Emotions drive learning, decision-making, creativity, relationships, and health. This will foster a cultural mindset shift where mental health and anti-biased/anti-racist practices are at the forefront of our curriculum. Behavioral Health and Wellness focuses on positive mental health, not just the absence of mental health concerns. By teaching the necessary skills and strategies to build trust and relational safety, we create the conditions for students and teachers to do their best work. Data driven decisions, a focus on continuous improvement, and utilizing our Anti-Racist and Trauma Informed lens will impact and evolve our foundational, prevention and intervention programs and strategies.

Emotional regulation is also critical for staff members and we must provide them with opportunities and tools for self care. The district will provide resources to help schools support teachers and staff in this endeavor with sustainable and meaningful professional development, coaching and on-going support.

Who are the stakeholders?

Behavioral Health and Wellness refers to the social, emotional, and behavioral welfare of all. Ultimately, BH&W is achieved in a partnership between our students, families, schools, and greater community. It is through this collaboration that a strong foundation of support is created to allow students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.