

Wallingford Swarthmore Behavioral Health in Schools

WSSD Behavioral Health in Schools

NEWSLETTER

Volume 1

Welcome back WSSD to the 2020-21 school year. We are so pleased to introduce everyone to a new quarterly WSSD Behavioral Health in Schools Newsletter. Each newsletter will highlight key behavior initiatives happening in our schools as well as helpful information to use at home.

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Student & Staff Wellness Committee

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This committee worked over the summer to develop supports for staff and students as they return to school for the 2020-2021 school year.

Suicide Prevention Month

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September is National Suicide Prevention Month with September 10th identified as World Suicide Prevention Day

TRUAMA-INVESTED PRACTICES

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The provision of a culture of safety and caring where all can thrive is the true goal of a trauma-invested school.



Welcome Back!

Wallingford-Swarthmore School District welcomed students back to school in an all virtual model on August 31, 2020.



Focus on Wellness for Everyone

Since school doors were last open in mid-March of the previous school year, our students and staff have experienced many challenges with long-term consequences. As a district, we recognize the importance of being proactive in helping students and staff re-acclimate to school in the many forms it will take over this year. We cannot underestimate the emotional impact of the current health, economic and social crises our country is experiencing.

The Student and Staff Wellness Committee was composed of teachers, WSSD school counselors, WSSD behavioral health counselors, administration, board members, parents and community-based counselors. The committee worked to prepare school teams to address a wide range of behavioral health needs of children and staff when schools reopen.

As a result of the committee's work short term initiatives were put in place as well as long-term plans to implement supports for staff and students throughout the school year.

Some of the highlights of the committee work include; providing universal student check-in surveys, embedding social and emotional learning (SEL) into morning meetings and seminars, offering Wednesday Wellness drop-in sessions for staff and a Check-n-Connect program that gives a structure for staff to support one another. Students Services owes a debt of gratitude to those who joined the committee and helped spread the message that mental health and wellness are innately connected to students' success in the classroom.





National Suicide Awareness Month

Every year, school mental health organizations and individuals across the U.S. and around the world raise awareness of suicide prevention during September, National Suicide Prevention Month.

This year, the Behavioral Health Counselor at the high school provided key resources to students and families and a drop-in informational session was held via Zoom.

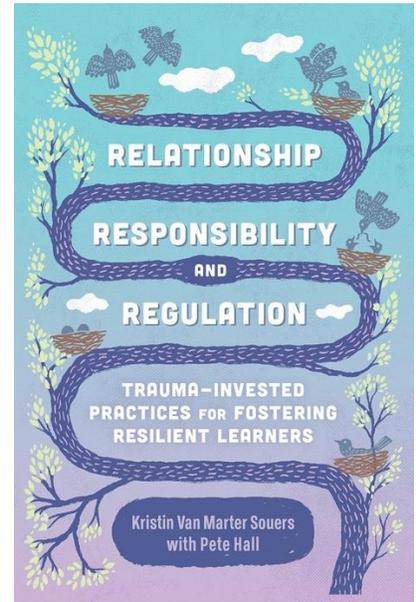
The work done during September lays the groundwork for embedding Question Persuade and Refer (QPR) coursework into the 10th grade health curriculum. The QPR mission is to reduce suicidal behaviors and save lives by providing innovative, practical and proven suicide prevention training. Similar to CPR, QPR is an emergency response to someone in crisis and can save lives. QPR is the most widely taught Gatekeeper training in the world and offers simple steps that anyone can learn to help prevent suicide.

Empathy has no script. There is no right way or wrong way to do it. It's simply listening, holding space, withholding judgement, emotionally connecting, and communicating that incredibly healing message of 'You're not alone'.

-Brené Brown

3R's

Trauma- Invested Practices



Meeting all Students' Needs

In trauma-invested environments, school staff actively work to meet their students' needs and help them become ready to learn. This means there must be a basic understanding of trauma and the impact it can have on child development and an agreement to common definitions and speaking the same language and viewing every situation through a need's orientation.

The primary mission of schools is to support students in educational achievement. To reach this goal, children must feel safe, supported, and ready to learn. Children exposed to violence and trauma may not feel safe or ready to learn.

In February, 2020 Wallingford-Swarthmore School District received a Pennsylvania School Safety and Security grant in order to help schools implement trauma-invested practices so that all of our students can feel safe a ready to learn.

As part of the grant, Elementary and Secondary schools will have access to two trauma coaches. These trauma coaches will not only provide professional development, but participate in many of the already

established systems within our schools. Trauma coaches will be part of the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) teams and our Student Assistance Programs (SAP) to guide school teams in using a trauma-invested lens. They will observe school culture and give recommendations for enhancing practices that support the whole student.

Prior to students returning to school, all WSSD staff received a Trauma-Invested Practices Quick Guide and participated in a professional development session with one of the Trauma Coaches. The focus on this training was on establishing a culture of safety where all students can thrive. Staff learned about the three Rs of prevention and intervention: relationship, responsibility and regulation. This professional development was well-received with staff actively participating through the chat feature on Zoom and requesting additional resources and information.