NAVIGATING SUCCESS THROUGH WELLNESS

An Innovative School Based Wellness Program that Fuses the Connection Between Success and Mental and Physical Wellness

The Bergen County Technical High Schools

In conjunction with

Bergen County Therapy

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Your Wellness Team

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MSW Interns on each of the four campuses
What trends are occurring in middle and high schools regarding the mental health of children and adolescents?

Marked increase in anxiety and depression

Increase in Section 504 Plans, IEPs and counseling and supports due to psychological and emotional struggles

Increased school refusal and school anxiety

Increase in emotional, behavioral and social circumstances that negatively impact children’s ability to learn

Increase in psychiatric emergencies and referrals in schools including acts or threats of self-injury and suicide

Increase in substance abuse and addiction in children and teens
What trends are occurring in the profession of mental health regarding children and adolescents?

- Younger age of on-set of psychological symptoms and conditions
- More severe psychological, social, emotional, behavioral and addiction behaviors in children
- Higher incidence of co-existing disorders
- Families struggling with multiple challenges
- More children requiring more intensive and aggressive intervention including medication
- More frequent psychiatric hospitalizations
- More anxiety, depression and suicidal behavior than ever before
- More children with Post-traumatic Stress Disorder than ever before
Why?

- Shrinking childhood / loss of innocence / precocious development
- Lack of safety / trauma / hyper-vigilance
- Over exposure and over saturation with social media
- Social, behavioral, neurological effects of technology
- Sexual “overload” not conducive to natural development
- Over scheduling and poor self-care: sleep, nutrition, exercise
- Increase in family stressors: financial, mental health, etc.
- Unrealistic life expectations
- Deficient problem solving skills
- Increased pressures regarding success
What is the overall impact?

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IMPACT A CHILD’S CAPACITY TO LEARN, PERFORM AND DEVELOP

21% of all children between 9 and 17 in the US have a diagnosable mental health disorder

1/2 of all mental health disorders begin by the age of 14

20% of children between 13 - 17 years of age in the US suffer from a diagnosable anxiety disorder

1 in 11 children under 14, and 1 in 8 adolescents from 14-21 years of age suffer from a diagnosable depressive or mood disorder

(NIMH, 2016)
The Most Alarming Statistics

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death in the US for children ages 10-24 (CDC, 2016; WHO, 2015)

Suicide rates among teens in the US have doubled in the past decade (CDC, 2018)

More teens die each year from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, birth defects, AIDS, stroke, influenza and lung disease... COMBINED! (CDC, 2018)

Suicide is the leading cause of death among LGBTQ* youth between 13-21 years of age in the US. (CDC, 2018)

In NJ: suicide rates of older youth (18-24) are declining while suicide rates for younger youth (12-18) are increasing (NJDFCS/NJ.GOV)
Concerns for the future

The mental health crisis and college students

AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 22 IN THE US:

Moderate to severe depression
2013 = 23.2%  2018 = 41.1%

Moderate to severe anxiety
2013 = 17.9%  2018 = 34.4%

Anxiety is #1 reason college students seek counseling on campus in 2018

Suicide attempt
2013 = 0.7%  2018= 1.8%

Journal of Adolescent Health July 3, 2019
BCTHS: Addressing the multi-dimensional wellness needs of our students

Navigating Success Through Wellness is the district’s attempt to fuse the gap in education between achievement and academic success and wellness and mental health.

Joint initiative between administration, teachers, students and parents

Evidence based: draws on connection between self-care, stress management, overall wellness, psychological theory… and performance and mental health

Varied student body with multi-faceted needs: unified initiative and approach across district while tailored to specific needs of each unique population
Navigating Success Through Wellness

The NSTW initiative is being implemented in all four schools. Each campus has unique needs for its unique student body.

NSTW is not a mental health program per se but is rather a wellness initiative that has far-reaching mental health benefits. Each campus has a point of contact person for students and parents: Student Assistance Counselor.
The NSTW Initiative

- Yoga
- Meditation and mindfulness
- Stress management, emotional wellness and self-care
- Nutrition and dietary counseling
- Sleep coaching
- Group support and counseling
- Character development, problem solving, decision making
- Cognitive and behavioral education and training
- Classroom support
- Parent support and education
- Follow up with high risk students
- Cultural and environmental initiatives
- Time management, organizational skills, study skills support
NSTW in action

Yoga in the lunchroom
Meditation in classes before tests
Morning meditations over loud speakers
“Wellness Wednesdays” “Mindful Mondays” “Fun Fridays”
Group counseling on body image and food relationship
Monthly parent meetings
Wellness Day (in early March)
Project Wednesday
“I Am More Than…..” Initiative
Culture of Kindness
What can parents do?

Become informed about the risks of mental health issues for our children

Participate in BCTHS’s Navigating Success for Wellness program by attending monthly parent meetings on critical topics related to your student

Encourage your children to participate in their school’s Navigating Success Through Wellness services and events

Talk to your children about wellness and mental health topics like anxiety and depression; ask them if they feel stress or anxiety from the demands of high school and take their experiences seriously

Reach out to your child’s school counselor if you have any concerns; work collaboratively with your school staff

Be a great role model! Participate and practice a healthy, well balanced and mindful lifestyle at home
Remember...

Your school is truly invested in your high school student as a “whole person.” Navigating Success Through Wellness is here for you and your child! No other school district has taken a bold measure such as this one to address the health and wellness needs of their students. Encourage your child to learn about and participate in this program.

We are all in this together! Let’s work together for the success and well being of all of our children.
The Bergen County Technical School district sincerely believes that achievement at the cost of our children’s well-being or mental health is NOT success. We look forwarding to partnering with you this year for the benefit of our students!

THANK YOU!!!