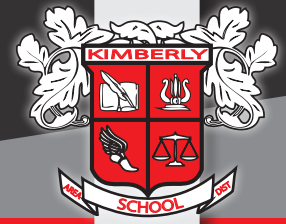


School Matters



Special Insert
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School News for Residents of the Kimberly Area School District



Robert S. Mayfield, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Welcome to this Special Insert section to our School Matters newsletter. We want our students to be prepared for the next step in their lives, such as college and careers, by providing them with opportunities to reach their potential.

To be prepared for life, students need to be supported in their mental, physical and social health. I am proud to be part of a community that offers comprehensive programming around alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) for youth. When the District began to see an increase around these issues 15 years ago, the proactive programming we put into place makes us a leader among other public school districts facing similar challenges.

-- **Bob Mayfield**

Supporting Students Through AODA Programming

Fifteen years ago, the Kimberly Area School District's community started to have serious conversations about the increasing concerns of students abusing alcohol and drugs. There was a rise in drug-related expulsions at Kimberly High School (KHS). The community knew it needed to act. Together, the community and KASD developed a comprehensive approach to tackle alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) issues. Our long history of proactive AODA programming makes KASD a leader among area schools.

During the early 2000s, parents and the District organized meetings to discuss the increase of AODA issues and to develop solutions to help students. From these meetings came three comprehensive recommendations that were put into practice for the proactive education and support of students:

1. Develop a required health class that focused on current and relevant topics at the sophomore level
2. Create an organization to support students to make healthy choices around drugs and alcohol
3. Random drug testing of certain groups of students (such as co-curricular participants and those registered for parking permits)

Health Class

During the meetings 15 years ago, parents recommended a graduation requirement of a health class at the sophomore level. Prior to this recommendation, taking a health course in high school was an elective if the student had already taken a health class in 8th grade. Parents felt that the growing independence of high school aged students warranted the need for more health education in order to better prepare them for making decisions for situations they would be faced with.

Life-Force

The Life-Force student organization, previously called Promise Makers, was formed to support students in making healthy choices. Members sign a promise that they will not use drugs or alcohol. The group's purpose is to educate students on the dangers of destructive behaviors and to encourage positive lifelong health and wellness. The group seeks to inspire students to identify their natural passions, also called their Life-Force. Throughout the school year, members participate in a variety of activities to enjoy high school while making positive choices.

The group hosts a large Health Fair for JRG Middle School (JRG)



Life-Force members explaining the dangers of tobacco to JRG students during their Health Fair.

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students. Life-Force members speak to the younger students about the benefits of pursuing positive things in life and the dangers of drugs, tobacco and alcohol. This student organization has a positive influence on the school culture at both JRG and KHS.

Random Drug Testing

Much has appeared in local media regarding random drug testing of students and this is an opportunity to revisit how this came to be at Kimberly High School. During the meetings 15 years ago, parents wanted to see random drug testing at the high school in order to deter students from using illegal drugs and to identify those who may be using illegal drugs in order to provide an opportunity for intervention and treatment.

Students who belong to certain groups are eligible for random drug testing. These groups are: students participating in co-curricular activities, the Life-Force student group and those who register to park a motor vehicle in school lots.

Kimberly High School is often cited in media articles about random drug testing of students in Wisconsin because of the school's long history with it, making KHS a leader on the topic. However, there have been some media perspectives that have criticized the practice. Our local community is supportive of random drug testing because they remember the path our community was heading down 15 years ago. Community members know how much effort went into changing the school and community culture to support local youth in choosing healthy paths for their future.

ROCKS at JRG Middle School

The student group ROCKS (Recognizing Our Committed Kids) at JRG Middle School has a similar philosophy to the Life-Force group at the high school in that they actively help students make healthy choices and provide opportunities for socializing in fun settings free from alcohol, tobacco and drugs. ROCKS members pledge to be alcohol and drug-free, and ROCKS activities are designed to show students that they can live exciting, fulfilling and rewarding lives without substance abuse. Middle school is a critical time for students as they develop healthy habits for the rest of their lives.



JRG students participating in the Run for ROCKS race.

Students Request More Support

In 2010, students in the Leadership Class at KHS presented a proposal to the Board of Education requesting to expand the groups of KHS students randomly drug tested to include those participating in summer co-curriculars/electives. These students felt that the positive influence of random drug testing should be expanded to the summer. The Board agreed with their proposal and updated KASD's policy. Also in response to concerns expressed by students, a group made up of parents, staff, students and community organizations worked together to actively engage with the "Parents Who Host, Lose the Most" program. This program raises awareness about the negative effects of hosting underage drinking parties. The campaign was tremendously successful in raising awareness about the detrimental impact these situations were having on local youth.

Post Prom and Graduation Celebration

High school is a time filled with life milestones – including prom and graduation. Parents and students were concerned about the use of alcohol and drugs at parties after these milestone events. Through the formation of Post Prom and the Graduation Celebration, both of which are organized and run by parent volunteers and staff, students have a safe place to celebrate these life milestones. Local organizations also donate tremendous resources to support these events.

All of the initiatives, policies and practices in KASD that comprehensively support students' mental, physical and social well-being are meant to help students while they are in school and prepare them for life after they graduate. With a proactive approach and increased awareness about decision making, students will be better prepared to be problem-solvers when faced with choices that can help or hinder their life goals. If they are prepared to make better choices, then they are better prepared for their future.