

School Matters



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



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Superintendent

Last month, we shared information about how in the early 2000's, the community had increasing concerns about students abusing alcohol and drugs. As parents and the District worked together to increase student programming around AODA issues, we found that some students were abusing substances as a way to cope with mental health issues. Please read more about how we comprehensively support students mental well-being and how we are continuously improving our mental health programming for all students.

-- **Bob Mayfield**

Supporting Students' Mental Well-Being

We work to actively support the physical, emotional and mental health of our students. A student's well-being is critical to their academic success and future accomplishments. Ongoing and focused K-12 initiatives that promote healthy choices, reduce risk-taking behaviors, educate about topics that impact mental health and provide extra support to students who need it are developed and implemented with collaboration and support from students, teachers, parents and our community.

High School Supports

Students at Kimberly High School (KHS) have access to comprehensive mental health supports. Incoming freshmen receive support as they transition from 8th grade to KHS. All freshmen also meet with a school counselor to prepare for their future. At this meeting, the school counselor asks questions related to mental well-being to check-in and see if there might be a need for additional help. "There have always been mental health issues for our students and families," said Tracie Halfmann, school counselor at KHS. "As counselors, we have seen an increase in the number of students who struggle to cope with the stressors that come along with growing up."

Since the 2007-08 school year, Kimberly High School has been working with a community-based provider, Family Services of Northeast Wisconsin, to offer additional mental health resources. "The stressors our students experience come from a variety of factors, such as family dynamics, pressures to succeed, peer conflicts, or AODA issues," added Halfmann. When a student needs mental health support beyond what a school counselor can provide, Family Services is able to provide on-site sessions with a licensed therapist and ultimately refer them to community-based providers.

United Way's PATH for Students

The Kimberly Area School District has partnered with United Way's PATH (Providing Access to Healing) for Students to provide access to additional resources and counselors since the 2011-12 school year. Through KASD's lengthy relationship with PATH and Family Services, students at Kimberly High School and JRG Middle School have access to licensed therapists in their schools.



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On-site access to mental health services reduces barriers to receiving care, such as lack of reliable transportation or parent work schedules.

Triumph Program

The Kimberly Area School District partnered with the Kaukauna and Little Chute school districts to develop the innovative Triumph Program. The goal of the Triumph Program is to help students in grades 9-12 have academic success by providing educational services integrated with on-site mental health services. The program is intended for students experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties. “As educators, we are aware that mental health issues affect all areas of our students’ lives,” said Chris Biolo, school counselor at Kimberly High School. “The Triumph Program can provide students and families with the mental health care so often needed, along with the school and academic support required to make positive changes in their lives.” The program began accepting students in January 2017.

Resources at JRG Middle School

“I’ve been doing this for a long time and I think mental health and specifically how students feel about themselves and their future, is one of the top concerns,” said Tim Handrich, school counselor at JRG. In addition to PATH, students at JRG Middle School have access to a variety of mental health supports, from education on specific topics to small groups with a school counselor. “Over the last few years, we’ve been using more data to guide what specific interventions we do to meet students’ needs,” said Handrich. “We do several student surveys and those help us identify specific interventions for the concerns that students are experiencing. We want to help students be ready to learn and ready for life.”

One group intervention is called “Living with Hope.” In this group students can talk and learn about ways to cope with stress and the challenges they are facing. Health classes at both JRG and KHS cover topics related to mental well-being. During JRG’s TLC (homeroom), students learn about a variety of topics such as mistreatment, bullying and identifying a trusted adult they can talk to. Each school year, about 75 JRG students are selected as Safe School Ambassadors (SSA). These students receive a two-day training to teach them skills to intervene and assist their peers.

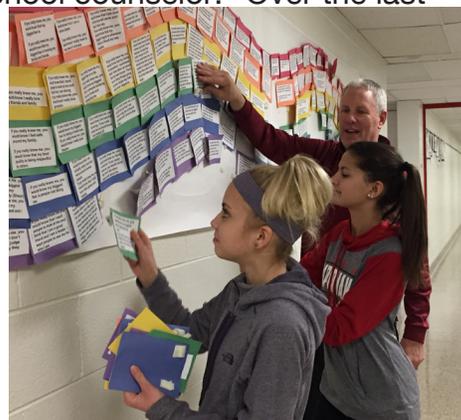
Helping Intermediate Students

Mental health supports at the intermediate level are based on building skills and knowledge around mental well-being. Just like the older students, these students can meet one-on-one with a school counselor or in small groups for guidance on topics like self-awareness, stress management and understanding peer pressure.

There are classroom counseling lessons on mental health awareness such as understanding someone else’s perspective, conflict management and goal setting. Students are also taught about the negative effects of drugs and alcohol, and participate in Red Ribbon Awareness Week (drug and alcohol awareness). A school climate survey is conducted to identify social and emotional needs and trends in the school so staff can better help students around issues they are dealing with at the time.

Mental Health Supports at the Elementary Level

Even the youngest students need mental health support because well-being is a lifelong pursuit. Students in 5K-4 learn a variety of life skills in their classrooms, from social skills to dealing with challenges. They also have access to meet individually or in small groups with school counselors. The well-being of each student is critical to their academic success and future accomplishments. In order to help each student reach their potential, we work to assess and develop our school-based mental health supports. Through comprehensive K-12 initiatives, we strive to educate and support mental health in our schools to better prepare students for their future.



Mr. Handrich working with Laken Reschke and Sophie Heinan on the SSA’s “If You Really Knew Me” project. JRG students can anonymously share something about themselves such as a goal or concern.