Building a Positive Culture Around Mental Health

Kevin Kusy, LCPC, NCC, PEL-SC
Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy
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Who I Am

Kevin Kusy

- Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor
- School Counselor
- Doctoral Student
- Future Educator/Researcher
Questions and Topics to Cover

- What are the current mental health issues students face?
- How do we know what to do for our community?
- Exploration of options
- Developing programming and implementation
- Future considerations
Mental Health Stigma

Stigma is when someone views you in a negative way because you have a distinguishing characteristic or personal trait that's thought to be, or actually is, a disadvantage (a negative stereotype).

Some of the harmful effects of stigma can include:

- Reluctance to seek help or treatment
- Lack of understanding by family, friends, co-workers or others
- Bullying, physical violence, or harassment
- Health insurance that does not adequately cover mental illness treatment
- The belief that you will never succeed at certain challenges or that you cannot improve your situation
Signs to Look For

• Have lost interest in things that they used to enjoy
• Have low energy
• Sleep too much or too little, or seem sleepy throughout the day
• Are spending more and more time alone, and avoid social activities with friends or family
• Fear gaining weight, or diet or exercise excessively
• Engage in self-harm behaviors (e.g., cutting or burning their skin)
• Smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs
• Engage in risky or destructive behavior alone or with friends
• Have thoughts of suicide
• Have periods of highly elevated energy and activity, and require much less sleep than usual
• Say that they think someone is trying to control their mind or that they hear things that other people cannot hear.
Ways to Change School Environment

1. Build positive school climate
2. Incorporate social-emotional learning
3. Strategies that support motivation and self-directed learning
4. Create individual support for each student
Stay Focused on Purpose

• The main purpose of education is for students!

• Academic learning is only one part of a student

• Student learning and development areas to remember:
  • Cognitive
  • Social-emotional
  • Physical
  • Ethical
  • Well-being and safety
Tier 1
Universal
All students

Tier 2
Targeted
Students with some risk factors

Tier 3
Intensive
Students at high risk

Increasing intensity of intervention
Continuous parent communication
Collaborative problem solving
Decreasing number of students
Recommendations for Long-term Effectiveness

• Create a multidisciplinary team
  • Include various ideas and support
  • How will you secure buy-in for your intervention?

• Establish clear goals and purpose
  • What will this look like?
  • Why is this needed?

• Discuss logistics
  • What resources are needed?
  • Who or what will be targeted?
Tiered System Approach (MTSS)

• Discuss briefly with person next to you about some instant concerns that come to mind within your school

• Write down ideas as other person brainstorms
Needs in Our Community
Do we need to focus on:

• Promoting general knowledge around mental health?
• Changing teaching style to promote social emotional learning?
• Building more connectedness among community?
• Dealing with trauma?
• A specific issue (anxiety, depression, suicide, self-injury, eating disorder)?
• Resilience and grit?
Needs Assessment!

1. Identify Needs
2. Select Relevant, Evidence-Based Interventions
3. Plan for Implementation
4. Implement
5. Examine and Reflect

Tiered System Approach
• After determining the needs of your community, which interventions will work best?
  • Utilize a multi-tier system of supports (MTSS) to address the entire student
Ideas to Change Culture
Create decision-making processes that facilitate student, family and community engagement, academic achievement and staff empowerment.

Provide education and opportunities to enable families to be actively involved in their children’s academic and school life.

Provide students with the academic, emotional and social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school.
Ideas to Change Culture

Use effective classroom management and teaching methods to foster a positive learning environment.

Provide professional development and support for teachers and other school staff to enable them to meet the diverse cognitive, emotional and social needs of children and adolescents.

Create trusting and caring relationships that promote open communication among administrators, teachers, staff, students, families and communities.
Areas to Target
Whole School Interventions (Entire School)

- Push for friendly, respectful interactions. Be inclusive!
  - Staff to student, staff to staff, student to student
- Discuss policies that address wellbeing and use inclusive language
- Push for students to actively participate and become leaders
- Build partnerships between students, parents, staff, and community members
Areas to Target
Whole School Interventions (Classrooms)

- Discuss and incorporate social and emotional skills and topics in the curriculum
- Allow students to develop some of the class policies
- Use intentional methods to allow for personal and social interactions
- Promote wellbeing in the classroom
Areas to Target
Whole School Interventions (School Culture)

• Encourage students and staff to support each other
  • Promote interactions on campus that allow for growth and development
• Incorporate positive approaches around behaviors
  • Push for students to volunteer
  • Peer to peer programs run with staff involvement
• Address and intervene when there are issues around wellbeing
Contact Me

• If you would like a copy of the presentation, please send me your information via this Google Form:
  • https://forms.gle/W3mEsNrJ1Rv2jSbNA

• If you would like to email me:
  • kkusy@imsa.edu