

Dolores Secondary School

———— PARENT MONDAY MEMO--MARCH 4, 2019 ————

HAPPY MARCH, EVERYONE!

This month is definitely coming in like a lion, with more much needed and appreciated moisture for us! I love the month of March...it always feels, to me, like a month full of hope.

CELEBRATIONS

We have some pretty big celebrations in the secondary school this month (and holding over from last month)

1. Our knowledge bowl team has earned a spot in the state tournament, which will be held over spring break
2. Our boys and girls basketball teams both made the regional bracket.
3. Bryan Escarcega represented us at the State Wrestling Tournament
4. Ben Schafer placed 3rd at SkillsUSA Districts in Durango
5. Nineteen Dolores students will participate in the state National History Day in May

MINDSET OF THE MONTH--ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE



Parent-Newsletter-Attitude-of-Gratitude.pdf

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180.2 KB

STUDENT SUICIDE RISK--WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?

Many of you probably know that Suicide is the leading cause of death among people ages 15-24 in the United States, and the third leading cause of death among 10-19 year olds globally.

You may also know that Southwest Colorado has one of the highest rates of suicide in the country.

So the question is, what are our schools doing about it? And what can parents do about it?

- Research indicates that Life Skills that emphasize Resilience and Stress Management are a leading protective factor against suicide. Another protective factor is a strong relationship with a trusted adult.
- Our focus on the 7 Mindsets, and our implementation of a multi-year with one advisor system in secondary, are designed to create a setting for these two protective factors. All students at Dolores get instruction in the 7 Mindsets and have either a home room or advisory teacher who sees them every day. The focus of this system is NOT on Suicide or an emphasis on unhealthy student behaviors. Rather, it is a focus on strategies to create your own life, in a healthy way, and what to do when things happen that make life difficult.
- We have a full-time student counselor, who provides social-emotional supports for students in need. This counselor, Elisa Olson, sponsors our Friends of Rachel Club, which has a mission to create a culture of positivity and kindness in our school. The Friends of Rachel choose one "kindness campaign" every few weeks to implement throughout the school. So far, they have completed "Random Notes of Kindness" and "Chews Kindness" (positive uplifting notes attached to chewing gum). They are currently working on a third campaign, "Kindness Confetti."
- This counselor also attended a sponsor's training for Sources of Strength, an evidence-based suicide prevention program, and will be working with the Pinon Project to bring this training to a group of students who will become "peer mentors" to implement the different campaigns supported by Sources of Strength: Get the Word Out, I am Stronger, Trusted Adults, Thankfulness Challenges, What Helps Me, Sources of Strength Week, We Belong, Strengths, and Connect. These themes echo the same themes from the 7 Mindsets and the FOR Club. The training for students is tentatively scheduled for the week after Spring Break.
- We have a full-time school social worker, Peggy Pine, who serves as a community resources liaison for our families. Families can self-refer for support, or may be referred by a student, a staff member, or another parent. The social worker provides information about community services and supports for families who may need that.
- Peggy has also worked with Community Partners to form the group, HOPE Montezuma. HOPE Montezuma has worked together, along with donors, to bring a series of films on important topics to the Montezuma County Community. So far, the group has screened Rachel's Challenge and Screenagers. Rachel's Challenge addresses the topics of Kindness and Community, while Screenagers explores the impact of readily-available technology on our relationships. The third film in the series, Angst, addresses the topic of social anxiety and stress management. It is showing Friday, March 8, at the Dolores Community Center at 6:30 p.m. All of these film screenings seek to involve families in important conversations about topic impacting our relationships and our community.

- Peggy also writes and delivers informative lessons on behavioral health topics such as substance abuse, in an age-appropriate format.
- Our elementary school counselor, Leigh Dickinson, and BOCES School Social Worker, Diane Dettloff, are both trainers for Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR), another evidence-based suicide prevention program. QPR seeks to train non-counselors to recognize the signs of suicide and self harm in others, and convince them to seek help. The training takes only 1 1/2 hours, and is being offered to all staff on March 15. A community training will be available in April. Staff are required to attend one of the trainings.
- In August, all staff will be trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid, a comprehensive programming that culminates in certification. This is an 8-hour program, and much like physical first aid, seeks to train first responders in critical care for youth in crisis.
- Counseling staff work closely with the behavioral health specialist from the 4 Corners Youth Clinic, and provide referrals to the clinic, Axis Mental Health, or other behavioral health providers when students have needs beyond the scope of school counseling.
- Currently, the counseling team is developing protocols for Suicide and Self-Harm response, along with post-vention both for the victim and the victim's friends, with guidance from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Guide for Schools.
- The San Juan BOCES has secured funding for some pilot schools to implement a "Signs of Suicide" Screening tool, and a possibility of implementing Suicide Prevention Lessons. We meet with the BOCES representatives to discuss this programming on Monday, March 11.

Knowing the facts about suicide, and the risk and protective factors, is the best way for parents to intervene on behalf of their children. There is no evidence that talking to children about suicide puts them at increased risk for suicide. In fact, many experts believe that removing the stigma around mental health is the best way to get young people to ask for help. The resources below are a starting place for parents to have these critical conversations:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psychoanalysis-unplugged/201807/speaking-your-teen-about-suicide>

<https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/teens-suicide-prevention>

<http://www.sptsusa.org/parents/talking-to-your-kid-about-suicide/>

SPRING TESTING CYLES

After Spring Break, we will be entering our Spring testing windows for the State-Required testing. The required state assessments are as follows:

- 7-8 Math and English/Language Arts
- 7 Social Studies
- 8 Science
- 9 PSAT 8/9
- 10 PSAT 10
- 11 SAT
- 11 Science (and possibly Social Studies)

The tentative assessment schedule will be available within the next few weeks. Please reiterate to your students that these tests DO matter in our planing for instruction and intervention classes, and in our school's accountability picture for meeting the state standards. The PSAT 8/9 and the PSAT 10 are indicative of student future performance on the SAT.

ADVISORY THIS WEEK

All grade levels will be working on College and Career Explorations, Academic Time for Study, and the Mindset of Gratitude.

