
Student Advisory Group

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Mental Health Education Proposal

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PROPOSAL

Student Advisory Group recommends that the Douglas County School District Board of Education requires elementary schools to adopt effective mental health curriculum spanning all grades served beginning in kindergarten.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this proposal is to educate elementary students on techniques to manage stress, maintain their mental health, provide them with ways to identify healthy and unhealthy mindsets, and implement methods of mental illness treatment and recognition. Implementation of these curriculum courses throughout elementary school will provide students an understanding of mental health norms throughout the district. Students will be able to practice these norms when they are in secondary education. This proposal will request that the Board of Education and DCSD will mandate the adoption of researched based mental health curriculum through health classes, related courses, or the day to day learning environment, where appropriate.

POLICY OUTLINE

I. Background

- A. Schools are facing a mental health crisis throughout the country, and Student Advisory Group wants Douglas County School District's Board of Education to consider implementing guidelines that will aid our students in dealing with these issues responsibly when they reach secondary education.

II. Policy Statement

- A. Student Advisory Group recommends the Board of Education direct the Superintendent to provide financial support, mental health curriculum materials, subject matter experts and other supports necessary to effectively implement mental health curriculum in elementary schools.

III. Financial Resources

A. DCSD Mental Health Department

1. Douglas County School District's Mental Health Department has access to a limited amount of operational funds to allocate towards new curriculum.
2. Douglas County School District's Mental Health and Prevention team collaborate with one another. They receive a budget and can seek out grant resources to assist in funding materials.
3. Medicaid funds are also allocated towards funding mental health in the District.

B. Other Sources of Funding

1. Pre-existing grants Douglas County School District has can be utilized towards implementing new curriculum.
2. Principals also receive their own budget and can choose whether they want their funds to go towards implementing new mental health curriculum.

IV. Guidelines for Curriculum Implementation

A. Evaluation

1. Students shall be critiqued on their ability to understand mental health to ensure the curriculum is in the classroom environment.
 - a) Standards of evaluation shall be created during the implementation process of this policy starting the 2019-2020 school year.
 - (1) Standards Include:
 - (a) Demonstrates basic understanding of mental health
 - (b) Verbal analysis between students
 - (c) Documentation in student's ability to problem solve in mental health scenarios

B. Feedback From Teachers

1. Teachers should be able to provide input to school principal in order to gauge what type of curriculum shall be deemed appropriate for age groups and their maturity levels. This also includes that teachers communicate with parents in regarding these options.
 - a) Principals must meet with each of their teaching staff to recognize what type of curriculum would be best to adopt in a particular age group. Must adopt a minimum curriculum that covers all age groups. For example, Second Step Elementary School covers K-5 while Second Step Middle School covers 6-8. The school would need to adopt one or more curriculum that effectively meets the mental health needs of all students in the elementary school.

C. Effective Curriculum

1. Douglas County School District must direct Mental Health staff to determine which cost effective mental health curriculum would best meet the needs of the elementary student population
 - a) Standards shall be created in determining what "effective" mental health curriculum is identified as.

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- (1) Use of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration researched Mental Health curriculum registry is recommended but not limited to in order to determine effectiveness of Mental Health curriculum.

D. Time Requirement

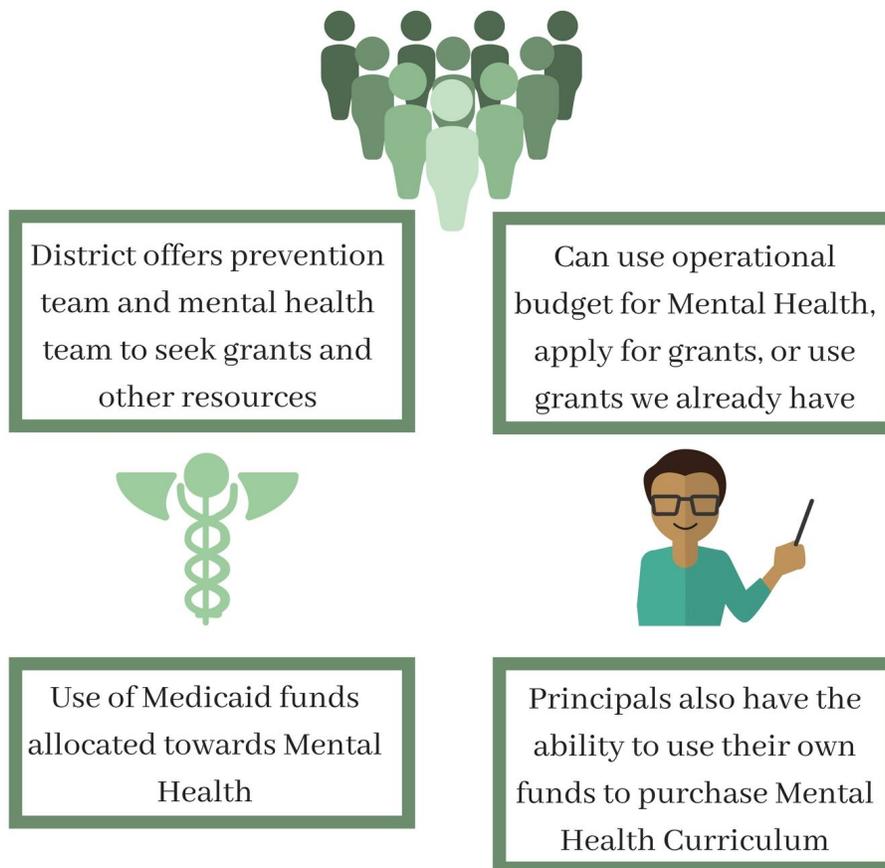
1. Teachers shall spend a specified amount of time on incorporating mental health curriculum throughout the school month per unit of time decided by a mental health professional in the District, as recommended by particular curriculum, or at the discretion of the Board of Education.
 - a) Standards shall be created to identify how much time should be spent per unit of time as a part of the student's education

GOALS

1. Educate students about how to confront mental health and offer solutions on how to deal with their experiences
2. Provide resources and support groups to students early on so it feels natural to express emotions
3. Provide students with coping mechanisms and eliminate negative stigma around mental health
4. Begin implementation by the 2019-2020 academic school year

BUDGET BREAKDOWN

(Information provided by Stephanie Crawford, Director of Personalized Learning in Mental Health)



STUDENT FEEDBACK

Concerns from the students	Resolutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The peak time for education about mental health starts at an elementary level. 	<p>Prioritize the implementation of mental health curriculum/awareness in elementary school so students feel more comfortable with the idea of supporting one another, empathizing, and getting the resources they need to maintain their mental health. This will help them transition into their adolescent years by being educated about their mental health.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What resources do we already have access to that we are not using? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Coping Cat ❖ Second Step Elementary ❖ Second Step Middle School ❖ Sources of Strength - ❖ Resilient Me - elementary program aligned with Sources of Strength ❖ Signs of Suicide -

Student Comments on Mental Health

(Sourced from Austin Mueller’s Mental Health Subcommittee Survey for Student Advisory Group)

- “I’d like to see the committee write a letter to the board of education to make sure they are aware of this reasonable concern and also meet with school officials to talk about implementing something to help students out more.”
- “I think it’s important to teach more about mental health in mandatory classes, just like how we PE/Health classes. It would at least make students aware that they are not alone.”
- “Brainstorm ideas to implement mental health assistance programs, and talk to school administration, counselors, and other mental health oriented faculty about implementing these procedures.”
- “We could try to get a class started, to teach about mental health and actually more than we do in a regular health class. It could be somewhere where people could better understand as well as better manage their own mental health.”

FUTURE CONSIDERATION

As mental health is becoming a growing concern, Student Advisory Group hopes that the Board of Education and DCSD take the extra step to implement ways for students to be educated on the culture they are growing up in. Educating students to navigate their struggles in school, work, and with friends and families at a younger age will allow them to become more resilient in their everyday lives. It is vital for this project to gain its roots from elementary in order for students to become acclimated to what mental health means and understand what resources are out there for students to use.