



Spencer-Van Etten Central School District

MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE | FEBRUARY

Due to recent tragedies within our community, S-VE schools has created an initiative to address mental health. S-VE is committed to investing and supporting social emotional wellbeing, academic growth, and community through meaningful connections. There are four pillars under mental health, specifically, Selfcare, Professional Development, the Mental Health Task Force and Mental Health Mondays.

Mental Health Task Force

Community Involvement

Addiction Group

Goal: Develop a “local” support group for addiction. Determine if it should be peer or counselor led. Determine if focus should be substance addiction or non-substance addiction.

Focus area: Address lack of access to addiction support groups within a close proximity.

Mental Health Stigma Group

Goal: Update community directory with available resources. Provide facts and crisis contact information on local television channel. Provide flyers, books and other resources at local events and establishments.

Focus area: Create awareness.

Suicide Prevention Group

Goal: Provide outreach events and other community-based initiatives. Reach all demographics. Make resources more accessible to all. Involve the community in all development stages.

Focus area: Create awareness that talking about these initiatives does not encourage people to complete suicide. Address “not in my community” mentality.

Trauma Group

Goal: Partner with agencies for resources. Provide community awareness of trauma.

Focus area: Provide education and infuse hope. Resiliency is the antidote.

Mental Health Task Force Upcoming Dates:

March 9th @ 6pm in the Middle School Library

April 27th @ 6pm in the Middle School Library

Anyone is welcome to attend!

Selfcare

Mental health affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices which is why encompassing all aspects of health will increase your overall mental health. Thinking, mood, and behavior are affected by mental health but making healthy choices in other aspects of health can balance you.

The Wellness Committee has developed a Winter Wellness BINGO Challenge for staff, encompassing all aspects of health. In February, a monthly Wellness Challenge will begin where staff teams will compete against each other, allowing opportunities to support each other with motivation and accountability.

Ways to maintain positive mental health include: connecting with others, staying positive, getting physically active, helping others, and getting enough sleep. All of these are parts of the BINGO challenge among many others which in total will help overall mental health.

Mental Health Mondays

The Counselors have created a plan to distribute weekly reminders, ideas, and strategies to promote positive mental health practices to be utilized both personally and professionally. Feedback related to topics of interest was gathered. Principals are also reserving time during faculty meetings for the sharing of strategies. The first part of the year focused on taking care of ourselves, with the second half of the school year providing practices which can be incorporated into aspects of the school setting.

Topics shared include: healthy habits, the power of gratitude, self-advocacy, and self-assessment. Together we have learned how to use breathing techniques, guided imagery and the use of games to become more open about communicating our emotions.

Professional Development For District Staff

January Conference Day hosted several opportunities for staff to participate in a variety of mental health focused workshops. All district employees attended a Mental Health and Wellness 101 training provided by the School Mental Health Resource and Training Center. Participants entered discussions to reframe the negative connotations around mental health. The presentation also included information regarding the prevalence, signs and symptoms, risk and protective factors, coping strategies, helpseeking and recovery related to mental health issues. In addition, throughout the day, staff were offered the following workshops:

- ❖ Cultivating Educator Resiliency: Exploring self-care and wellness from a strengths-based perspective.
- ❖ Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR): Recognizing the warning signs of a suicide crisis and what you can do to support.
- ❖ SafeTALK – Suicide Alertness for Everyone: Understanding the steps to provide support to those who have thoughts of suicide using the acronym TALK (*Tell, Ask, Listen and Keep safe*).
- ❖ Mindfulness and Meditation: Practicing strategies which can be incorporated into the classroom/school setting.

In addition, we plan to provide professional development to explore the Social Emotional Learning standards which are building blocks for addressing mental health per NYSED in the future.

For Students

Most recently, our High School Student Council is working on setting up a training with the Tioga County Mental Hygiene Suicide Prevention Coalition. Small group discussions/trainings for our student body, organized by the NYS Suicide Prevention Community and Coalition Initiative Director, would assist in the effort for contributing to the goal of educating the community on awareness and resources regarding suicide prevention.