

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

July 18, 2018

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Update on Development of a Mental Health Day (06-12-18-03)

Question

Mrs. Smondrowski requested an update regarding the development of a mental health day for the 2018–2019 school year.

Response

Staff members in the Office of Student and Family Support and Engagement (OSFSE) are dedicated to ensuring that all students attend schools equipped with physical, social, and psychological programs and activities that support their availability and preparation for learning so that they may graduate from high school college, career, and community ready. OSFSE staff members' work to expand opportunities for and access to programming in schools began during the 2017–2018 school year with a survey to document current physical, social, and psychological activities and programs in schools. Additionally, the Board proclaimed May 2018 as Mental Health Month, in accordance with Mental Health America and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and encouraged schools to engage in activities to raise awareness of and promote mental health and well-being.

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and OSFSE are designating October 2018 as MCPS Mental Health and Wellness Month as part of OSFSE's ongoing work in promoting and supporting physical, social, and psychological health and wellbeing. OSFSE staff members will be directed to work with their schools and administration to plan schoolwide mental health and wellness activities during the month of October 2018 (Attachment).

October 16, 2018, has been designated as MCPS Mental Health Day. Additional information on the location, time, and kick-off activities will be distributed to schools in early August. OSFSE staff members will be asked to promote the MCPS Mental Health and Wellness Month kick-off activities in their schools in the days leading up to MCPS Mental Health Day.

A resource fair for schools will be scheduled in the latter part of October. Community organizations and programs that support student and family mental health and wellness will be invited to attend and share resources on their work and services available to support mental health and wellness in Montgomery County.

Finally, we anticipate that the Board will recognize May 2019 as Mental Health Month through a resolution as was done in May 2018.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Jonathan T. Brice, associate superintendent for student and family support and engagement, Office of the Chief Academic Officer, at 240-453-2426.

JRS:MVN:JTB:ear

Attachment

Copy to:

Executive Staff

Mr. Ikheloa

Suggested Mental Health and Wellness Activities

The following are possible mental health and wellness activities in which students and schools could participate. This is not an exhaustive list and schools are encouraged to develop activities or events that may be better suited to their school community and its strengths and needs:

Elementary School

- Create a Mental Health Tip-a-Day (e.g., one week or one month of morning announcements with tips to promote mental health and wellness).
- Organize poster or art contests.
- Create and display health and wellness bulletin boards, including student-created bulletin boards.
- Provide families, and staff members with information on mental health and wellbeing.
- Teach coping strategies, stress management, and healthy habits.
- Infuse mental health and wellness throughout the school day and curriculum (e.g., sing songs in Music that emphasize coping skills; create a performance related to mental health and wellness; read books related to mental health and wellness with the media specialist; incorporate mindfulness to warm-up or cool-down in Physical Education).
- Recognize MCPS Mental Health and Wellness Month and providing information on the school website, newsletter, and principal's letter.
- Schedule a week of health and wellness activities (e.g., Mindful Monday, Try-it Tuesday [to expand one's diet], Walk-n-Roll Wednesday, Taste Test Thursday [students can try different foods, such as zucchini or grape tomatoes], and Fit Friday) to recognize the importance of physical and nutritional health in promoting mental health.
- Challenge grade levels to engage in mental health and wellness activities.
- Start a local school wellness committee.

Secondary Schools

- Create a Mental Health Tip-a-Day (e.g., one week or one month of morning announcements with tips to promote mental health and wellness).
- Create and display health and wellness bulletin boards, including student-created bulletin boards, with information and tips to promote mental health and wellness.
- Organize poster or art contests.
- Arrange poetry or rap slams.
- Provide students, families, and staff members with information on mental health and wellbeing.
- Teach coping strategies, stress management, and healthy habits.
- Infuse mental health and wellness throughout the school day and curriculum (e.g., promote books related to mental health and wellness in the Media Center; incorporate mindfulness to warm-up or cool-down in Physical Education).
- Recognize MCPS Mental Health and Wellness Month and provide information on the school website, newsletter, and principal's letter.
- Collaborate with the Parent, Teacher, Student Association to host a mental health forum for the community.

Secondary Schools (continued)

- Schedule a week of health and wellness activities (e.g., Mindful Monday, Try-it Tuesday [to expand one's diet], Walk-n-Roll Wednesday, Taste Test Thursday (students can try different foods, such as zucchini or grape tomatoes), and Fit Friday) to recognize the importance of physical and nutritional health in promoting mental health.
- Challenge grade levels to engage in mental health and wellness activities.
- Affix affirming messages and tips to bathroom stall doors.
- Read about mental health and wellness or famous individuals who have talked about and addressed their mental health challenges.
- Hold assemblies.
- Schedule speakers. The following are possible speakers who have presented to MCPS schools and offices in the past.

Behavioral Health and Wellness

- Ms. Rachel Larkin, director, Crisis Prevention and Intervention, EveryMind
- Ms. Regina Morales, manager, Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Services
Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

Substance Use

- Ms. Sara Rose, supervisory therapist, Screening and Adolescent Services for Children and Adolescents, DHHS

Internet Safety

- Mr. Vincent DeVivo, community outreach specialist, the United States Attorney's Office, District of Maryland
- Start a local school wellness committee.