

North Penn Special EDition



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Director's Corner

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that up to 20% of children experience a mental, emotional or behavioral disorder. Of those children, 50% have not received treatment (Simon et al., 2015). It should come as no surprise then that some of these concerns are spilling over into school. Unfortunately, an increasing number of our North Penn students are undergoing mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, and behavioral health concerns.

To address the concerns around mental health for both general education and special education students, a "Mental Health Think Tank" was convened in late April. The team was comprised of over fifty staff members representing multiple disciplines in each of North Penn's eighteen school buildings. Guided by five teacher leaders, the groups were charged with identifying current problems, hypothesizing root causes to the issues, and making actionable recommendations. A number of suggestions from the group have already been implemented, or are currently in progress.

This installment of the Special EDition focuses on the incredible work completed by members of the Mental Health Think Tank. Read on to learn how members of the North Penn community are working together to provide an educational experience that focuses not only on academics, but social and emotional development as well, to address this epidemic.

Jenna Mancini Rufo, Ed.D.
Director of Special Education and Student Services

Creating Stronger Transitions

Trish Pike, School Counselor, NPHS

Members of the Mental Health Think Tank transition team discussed the need to build stronger relationships between treatment centers and school personnel to help children succeed academically and emotionally, as well as the possibility of developing an in-district step-down program.

[Read on...](#)



Students at North Penn High School took a pledge of health and hope in honor of Mental Health Awareness Day.



Pre-schoolers from the Oak Park "Dream Growers" program visit Kindergarten to ask questions about what next year will bring!

Early Learning Behavioral and Mental Health Challenges

Kate Small, Inclusion Facilitator, Oak Park

The early learning sub-group of the Mental Health Think Tank addressed the concern that students in kindergarten and first grade are coming to school with significant behavioral and/or social-emotional deficits, causing challenges during the transition period through the first few months of school. [Click here to learn about a summer program and outreach efforts that will occur to support this need.](#)

Streamlining Counseling Supports

Jenna Rufo, Director of Special Education and Student Services

The "Streamlining Counseling Supports" subgroup of the Mental Health Think Tank discussed how to better coordinate services among counselors, psychologists, Student Assistance Program providers, and Lakeside counselors through tiered interventions. [Continue reading to learn about the plan...](#)



Mental Health Screening

Naomi Morissette, School Psychologist, Oak Park

At the Mental Health Think Tank held in late April 2018, a team met to discuss developing a systematic way of identifying students in need of mental health supports. [Click here to review the recommendations of the team.](#)

Social-Emotional Learning

Tori Rubbo, School Counselor, Knapp Elementary

The Social-Emotional Learning team of the Mental Health Think Tank discussed the need for tier one interventions in social-emotional learning at the elementary level. While school counselors deliver lessons, the team felt that something was needed on a more consistent basis. Progress has already been made in this regard. [Learn more by clicking here.](#)

Lakeside Counseling: What Is It?

Rebecca Schmidt, Lakeside In-School Counselor

Student Assistance Program: What Is It?

Karen Cantor, SAP Counselor, NPHS

Ever wanted to learn more about these programs? Click the links above to find out!

Fall Newsletter Quiz Winner - Kass Pfender, York Avenue!

Congratulations to the winner of the fall Special EDition Accommodations and Modifications Quiz, Kass Pfender. Kass was one of 53 individuals who responded correctly to the quiz and was chosen at random. Kass' grand prize includes a non-alcoholic beverage of her choosing hand-delivered by the Director of Special Education! [Click here for answers to the quiz!](#)