



Thank you for learning more about our Wellness Rooms

Dear Parents,

Something new in many of our schools this year with our district wide focus on prevention and Social Emotional Learning is our Wellness Rooms. You may have questions about why we have a Wellness room and how it helps. First, a Wellness Room is not just a room in a school. It is the culmination of a mindset and cultural shift toward trauma informed care and educating the whole child. The Wellness Room is an integral part of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) designed to meet the social emotional needs of every student.

The purpose of the Wellness Room is based on physiology and brain science (neuroscience). We are teaching students two main concepts: 1) to recognize how their stress response system works and 2) what coping skills they can use to self-regulate (self-regulate means to manage our emotions and behavior). We are all doing the work of self-regulation every day.

1. Stress Response System: Our brains are wired for survival so when we perceive any kind of threat to our safety our nervous system activates our stress response (aka fight or flight response) to keep us safe. This is helpful and adaptive when there is an immediate threat to our physical safety such as crossing the street and a car is coming, or getting away from an animal or person that could hurt us. However, there are times at school when our brain detects a threat such as when we make a mistake, when we don't finish an assignment, when someone teases us, or when we get called on to answer a question we don't know the answer to... This is a perceived lack of safety to our self concept and the threat is related to our feeling of acceptance and belonging. There are many other ways we can feel unsafe. The more we know about what situations make us feel unsafe, the more we are empowered to handle them and cope in healthy ways. Research has proven that our brains can't learn when we don't feel safe. To enable students to be ready to learn, we need to make sure they feel safe.

2. Skills to Self-regulate: All humans have to learn how to self-regulate (regulate emotions) or calm their nervous system, to make good choices about how they act. When students feel the activation of their nervous system through the fight or flight response, they can choose to take a break to the Wellness Room where they can engage in calming sensory activities. The activities in the Wellness Room have been specifically chosen because they stimulate at least one of the 5 senses and will calm the nervous system effectively. Students have at least 10 minutes to engage in an activity and this teaches them healthy ways to calm their nervous system and self-regulate by engaging in healthy coping skills. If a student is still not regulated after 10 minutes, they may request to stay a little bit longer. It is important they feel regulated and ready to learn when they leave.

It is important for students to know we all get stressed, frustrated, sad and angry sometimes. We are human beings and to be effective in our relationships and endeavors we need the skills to self-regulate. We also know that knowing is not doing. Rather than tell kids how to self-regulate, we now allow kids to practice the skill in the moment, throughout the day whenever they need it. We feel safe when the people around us are self-regulated. When we feel safe we learn and we begin to trust. Trust is the foundation for healthy relationships. Recently, a 6th grade student was interviewed for an education news story. The question was, "What message does the Wellness Room at your school send to students?" She replied, "I think it sends the message that you care about our well-being."

We hope our students feel safe and ready to learn each day, because when they come to school they know we care about them.

Please reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

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