

Wellness

We believe that students learn, teachers teach, and parents parent better when their physical, social, and emotional needs are met. We believe our schools are stewards of wellness throughout our community; as such, we intend to actively engage students, staff, parents, and the community in coordinated and aligned efforts that result in health enhancing behaviors for all. We believe that the evaluation of practices and policies promoted by MPCSD should measure the degree to which they promote and enhance wellness for all involved.

Strategic Directions 2016-2022

In the domain of *Wellness*, the Menlo Park City School District will use its time, energy, and resources to...

1. Continue and expand parent education opportunities and resources.
2. Develop strategic outreach and support of our traditionally underrepresented students--low SES, ELL, first generation college students, and ethnic minorities--with special emphasis on outreach to families participating in the Tinsley Program.
3. Create an environment that values and promotes physical well-being and fosters innovation in physical education, ensuring greater student choice and engagement.
4. Ensure safe and supportive school environments through policies and practices that reinforce the values of acceptance, tolerance, peaceful conflict resolution, and restorative discipline.
5. Acknowledge and address the impacts that stress and anxiety can have on our students through purposeful and effective programming, support, and outreach for stress management and cognitive behavioral therapeutic¹ practices, while also providing stress-reduction resources for staff and parents.
6. Raise awareness among all staff of timely and relevant neuroscience research that informs our understanding about learning and development and allow the research to influence more student-centered practices and policies.
7. Increase awareness and implementation of regular mindfulness² activities and practices in all schools throughout the district.
8. Provide robust and accessible Mental Health services for all children including partnership with outside organizations who share a common purpose and can provide additional resources for students, families, and staff.
9. Ensure vertically-aligned Social-Emotional Learning³, character education, and bully response/prevention curriculum and resources district-wide.

¹ Cognitive Behavior Therapy is a type of structured mental health therapy found to be very successful for school aged students and one in which many MPCSD staff have and will be trained.

² Mindfulness is the act of maintaining an awareness of one's thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment. When facilitated in a school setting, it has been found to relieve student stress, increase focus and attention, and decrease behavior issues.

³ Social Emotional Learning, also referred to as "SEL," is the process by which "children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning).

10. Expand the understanding and use of restorative practices⁴ started throughout the district ensuring effective and vertically-aligned policies and practices that hold students to a high standard while using mistakes as a teaching tool and learning opportunity.
11. Seek and organize wellness resources for teachers and staff that acknowledge the very real demands that being an educator presents while also communicating our appreciation of their dedication, professionalism, and talent.
12. Maintain high quality, nutritious food options for students, through policies and the integration of health and nutrition education where possible.
13. Advocate on behalf of safe routes to school including education, training, and accountability for safe driving, walking, and biking to and from our district's schools encouraging parents and students to walk and bike as often as possible.
14. Partner with like-minded community organizations who have a common goal to meet the social, emotional, and physical well being of MPCSD's students, staff, and parents.
15. Implement meaningful and valid measures to evaluate the impact of wellness programs as well as the ongoing social, emotional, and physical well being of our students, staff, and parents.

⁴ Restorative Practices refers to a relatively new field of study which evolved from restorative justice. The field integrates developments from a variety of disciplines including education, psychology, social work, criminology, sociology, organizational development and learnership. The field exists to build healthy communities, increase social capital, decrease crime and antisocial behavior, repair harm and restore relationships (Wikipedia and International Institute for Restorative Practices).