



October, 2019

Those who have a strong sense of love and belonging have the courage to be imperfect."

-Brené Brown.

# St. Catherine's Counseling

## Letter to families

New year, new counseling!

Welcome to the counseling newsletter! As a way of increasing communication between school and home, I will be writing each month about the interventions and activities that are taking place with the counseling program at St. Catherine's. I have already had the opportunity to meet many families and students within this first month and am looking forward to getting to know this community better as the year progresses.

As a benefit of being here full time, I have the opportunity to meet with students in a multitude of ways and create a counseling program that fits the needs of the students. Throughout the year, I will be implementing small groups, teaching classroom lessons, and meeting with students individually either by referral from a teacher or guardian, or if the students advocates for themselves by coming to the counseling office. As the year progresses, please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.

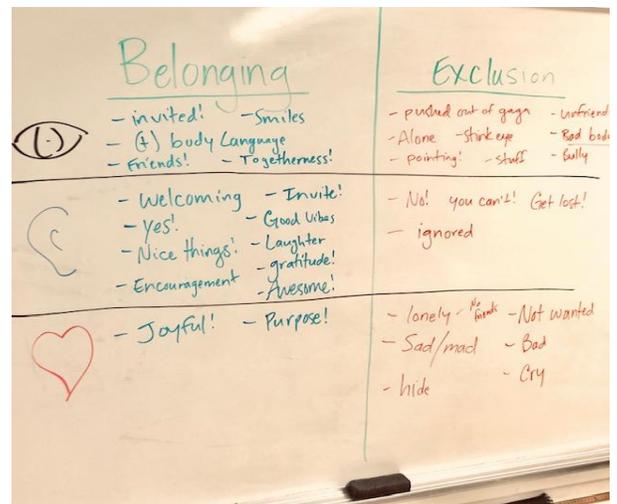
Kevin Ward, School Counselor. · kward@stcatherineschool.net

## What has the school counselor been up to?

### Classroom Lessons

Visiting each classroom has been a blast so far. Within the first two weeks of school, each class received a lesson on the role of the school counselor, introducing them to the services I provide and how to find me throughout the day if they need help.

The beginning of the year also provides a great opportunity to discuss with students



the value and responsibility of belonging to a community. So for the past couple of weeks we have been discussing how to be a healthy advocate for yourself and for others. We have also been focusing on the idea of belonging, which is an idea I hope to loop into each lesson I teach throughout the year. We began by talking about what it

looks like, sounds like, and feels like to be excluded, and then we did the same for what it looks, sounds, and feels like to be included and to truly belong to a community. The idea is that students begin to know that they are where they are meant to be, fulfilling their purpose, with people who support them for who they are.

## Small Groups

Within the next few weeks, I plan on beginning counseling groups. Topics depend entirely on the needs of students and can fluctuate throughout the year. In

the past, I have lead all sorts of groups including: character growth for young boys, study skills, peer mentorship, peer mediation, leadership development, trauma, and sportsmanship. I have many ideas for this year's small groups and will be working with the teachers to develop ones that are appropriate for our student body.

*Have an idea for a small group you think your child could benefit from? Let me know about it!*



## Getting to Know the Counseling Office

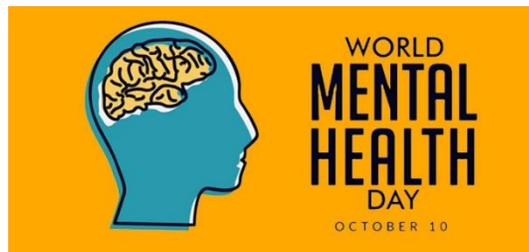
At the core of developing a school-wide counseling program is the development of trust with the student body, and to make sure each student knows that the counseling office is a safe space for them to use for

decompression, reflection, conflict resolution, or to simply take some time off from their busy lives. Remind your student that the counseling office is for their use, and as long as I am in there, they can come in and chat. Even if I am not available at the moment, I have left notes outside my office for students to leave for me so that I know to find them when I become available



## What's new and upcoming?

October 10<sup>th</sup> is world mental health day!



Here are some ways you can observe it:

- ✚ Learn new ways to nurture your child's mental health:
  - Actively listen to your child without offering a solution – empathy builds connection!
  - Model forgiveness – allow your child to know it is ok for them to mess up
  - Be present and consistent with your time and energy
  - Proactively plan time to relax together as a family, away from screens!
  - Respond calmly when their emotions are heightened... (deep breaths!)
- ✚ Look for signs of mental health:

Mental health conditions can begin to develop in young children. Because they're still learning how to identify and talk about thoughts and emotions, their most obvious symptoms are behavioral. Symptoms in children may include the following:

- Changes in school performance
- Excessive worry or anxiety, for instance fighting to avoid bed or school
- Hyperactive behavior
- Frequent nightmares
- Frequent disobedience or aggression

- Frequent temper tantrums

## Looking for outside counseling for your child?

Outside counseling is not just for children who exhibit overt behavior difficulties, worries, or fears.

Caring for a child's mental health can and should be more like brushing teeth. Unfortunately, mental fitness is not talked about and cared for as much in our society. Unfortunately, when children need outside counseling, families often realize that finding a counselor with an opening and who connect with their child can be hard, if not impossible, to find.

Luckily, UW can help with that this year! See the ads below from their college of education to see how you could get your child involved in free psychological testing and/or counseling!



### FREE TESTING for SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

The University of Washington's College of Education invites you and your child to participate in the School Psychology graduate's assessment testing course. Children in Grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> will participate in testing in the Winter Quarter, January-March. The tests administered by graduate students (under the supervision of licensed psychologist/faculty), are designed to identify strengths, weaknesses, and learning disabilities that may be influencing the child's academic performance.

We are located on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the **College of Education** (Miller Hall), and provide testing services from mid-January through March.

For more information or to apply for participation, please call the School Psychology Clinic at (206) 543-4970.

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## FREE COUNSELING for CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS

The University of Washington's College of Education is offering free weekly therapy sessions for Children and Adolescents between the ages of 6-18. Those experiencing mental health issues (e.g. anxiety, depression, attention-deficit), social skills difficulties, behavior problems, and/or adjustment to life stressors (e.g. parental divorce, death in the family, etc.) are examples of appropriate referrals, although we will assess for your individual needs. All free sessions are provided by School Psychology Trainees, and are supervised by a licensed psychologist/faculty member. Parental commitment is essential in order to receive services.

We are located on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the College of Education (Miller Hall).

Services begin in January and continue into June. Each counseling session is 50 minutes long, starting at 4:30pm every Monday or Wednesday.

For more information, please call the School Psychology Clinic at (206) 543-4970.

Confidentiality is strictly enforced for all family and student information.

Use of Evidence-Based Practices is emphasized (i.e. Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Behavior Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy).