

# SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SPOTLIGHT

## COVID-19 Response for Student Well-being



## Wisconsin Rapids Area Middle School

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Wisconsin Rapids Area Middle School serves grades 6-8 and is located in central Wisconsin. Our middle school has an average enrollment of approximately 1,000 students, with approximately 43% of those being economically disadvantaged.

*We are excited to highlight some of the tremendous work that our middle school pupil services team did to support students during the unprecedented times starting with the March 2020 school closures and through the 2020-21 school year.*



### **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORT**

As the year has progressed, numerous activities have occurred to ensure student social and emotional well-being. This included running groups for students with anxiety and those in need of coping skills—open to both in-person and virtual students. The pupil services team also worked to identify students who were either at risk of failing or currently failing and invited them to an academic support group. Students continue to meet with these groups now. The pupil services team also created "SEL Wednesdays" with video messages to students to highlight various aspects of emotional regulation. Throughout the year, students have also had access to our virtual calming site and an in-person calming room.



### **GOING THE EXTRA MILE**

We would also like to highlight the outreach efforts by our pupil services on our non-student contact day. The team often spent the day driving to students' homes to deliver/pick up work, materials, and/or Chromebooks. They would also deliver Kajeets (internet hotspots) to help ensure families had access to the internet and backpacks of nutritious meals to families facing hunger via our Rapids Family Backpack Program. In addition to delivering needed supplies to families, the pupil services team would also pick up students and bring them to the middle school so that they could receive additional in-person tutoring. Our pupil services team has been amazing in supporting the academic, social, and emotional health and well-being during this unprecedented year.

### **FOSTERING WELLNESS**

Our pupil services team conducted virtual grade level meetings weekly for six weeks when schools closed in spring of 2020. These meetings were open to all students, grades 6-8. Topics included understanding COVID-19 and the pandemic, handling stress, healthy relationships, and how to transition back to school in the fall. The pandemic also forced us to rethink our transition efforts to help acclimate our incoming 5th graders to the middle school. Since we could not bring the 5th graders physically to our building for a tour, the pupil services team worked with administration to create a virtual 360-degree tour.

Once school resumed in the fall, outreach efforts did not slow down. Our pupil services team hosted a virtual parent night for parents. From this meeting, two priorities were identified, the first of which being that parents stated their children were feeling disconnected from one another in the virtual setting. This resulted in our pupil services team creating a Connections Group in which virtual students could come together (virtually) to engage in social activities such as playing trivia, bingo, and exchanging memes (a favorite activity of the students). A second priority identified as a result of the parent night included a lack of one central location for parents/students to go to see assignments due for the week. As a result, the pupil services team created an assignment log for each grade as a one-stop-shop for parents to go to see all assignments.

### **KEY CONTRIBUTORS**

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### **SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH SPOTLIGHTS**

*a partnership of the Coalition for Expanding  
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