



Kenilworth Public Schools
Office of Student Personnel Services

December 16, 2020

Dear School Community,

When schools closed last March, we immediately recognized that the disruption to students would have emotional impacts. We worked quickly to address students' needs and, months later, continue to provide support based on rapidly evolving situations.

We hope you find these resources helpful. Above all, we want you to know that you're never alone in these difficult times; you are part of a school community that cares.

Be well,

Dawn Cuccolo

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Director of Student Personnel Services

District SEL this year

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) was a main component of the district's recovery and restart planning from July through September:

- Approximately 20 staff members were trained in Psychological First Aid in August. The early intervention method aims to keep children feeling safe and calm during a crisis.
- All instructional and support staff members received training in Trauma Informed and Resilient Classrooms.
- The district contracted with CarePlus to provide a therapist at each building to work with staff, students and families as needed.



More for students & staff

Staff members will continue training on intervention initiatives, and students have a new forum to support their well-being:

- The peer advisors at Brearley High School and their teachers have launched BrearleyWellness.com, a virtual wellness space to help middle and high school students decompress with meditation and yoga exercises, plus inspiration for hobbies and creative activities.
- Early next year, members of the school-based crisis teams will be trained in the [Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale](#). The scale “supports suicide risk assessment through a series of simple, plain-language questions that anyone can ask,” according to Columbia’s website.

Brearley Middle-High School SEL Update:

- Brearley staff received training in Executive Function supports in November. Executive Function refers to cognitive skills that include emotional control, and planning and carrying out tasks.
- Parents can soon learn more about how to support their children’s emotional health. SEL training sessions for middle and high school parents are set to begin in January, and will continue throughout the school year.
- Students have the opportunity to participate in virtual groups that can help them connect with one another away from school. The online forums include a 7th grade girls group, an 8th grade girls group, and a welcome committee. Sign up through [the general group interest form](#) or [the welcome committee interest form](#). (These links are open to students through their school Google accounts.)

Feel-good fun

Supporting students’ emotional well-being also means providing outlets for socializing and fun. Here’s what we have planned:

- Harding and Brearley Middle School have a Virtual Game Series for grades 6 through 8. The virtual events will include introductory videos hosted by Brearley High School peer advisors. The series will feature:
 - Virtual Wellness Space Scavenger Hunt
 - Family Bingo Night (Hosted by **Ms. Meg Harrison**)
 - Family Escape Room Night (Hosted by **Ms. Meg Harrison and Ms. Jamie Rifkowitz**)
- Students can send e-cards to their classmates and teachers through a project organized by Middle School Guidance in partnership with Student Leadership and Bears that Care. The e-cards, with Bear graphics made by **Mr. Jacob Ulasevich** and the Bears that Care, will offer a choice of pre-written messages.



Harding SEL Update

- SEL training for Harding parents launched this month and will continue throughout the school year.
- The Harding Hangout is a Google Classroom where students in grades 4 through 6 can find fun activities, along with check-in questions and links to read-alouds.
- More resources can be found at the [Harding SEL website](#) and this link for [behavior support and strategies for parents and guardians](#).
- Counselors are visiting classrooms, both in-person and virtually, to offer SEL and mindfulness activities, and also are offering individual counseling as needed.

New year, new programs

- Students in grades 4 through 6 will have the chance to join virtual game groups the week of Jan. 4:
 - Game show groups: Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune
 - Board games: Bingo, Charades, Pictionary, Scattergories
 - Scavenger Hunt and Heads Up!
- To continue Kenilworth's focus on kindness and anti-bullying efforts, schools will observe No Name Calling Week in January.
- Virtual assemblies will be held, giving students a sense of cohesiveness.
- Needs-based group counseling will be offered.

Additional resources

- [Extensive hotline list](#) from the New Jersey Division of Family Services
- Free virtual [support group for pandemic parenting](#)
- Coping in hard times: Fact sheet for [high school and college students](#)
- Coping in hard times: Fact sheet [for parents](#)
- COMIC: [A Kids' Guide To Coping With The Pandemic from NPR](#)