



# Amador County Public Schools

December 2020

The purpose of this message is to provide an update on the mental health and social emotional wellness efforts and strategies in place for our students, staff, and families.

- We used CARES Act money was used to hire 2 additional TK-8 school counselors in addition to the 5 we already have. We also have 5 high school guidance counselors who spend a great deal of their time doing social-emotional counseling. Our current counseling FTE is 12, for a ratio of students to counselor at 328:1. In California, the ratio of students to counselors is 622:1.
- Many counselors hold a "Counselor's Hour" for students to talk about anything they may be concerned about (i.e., how they may be feeling about the recent shift back to distance learning).
- Counselors have created their own Google Classrooms where students can access resources and communicate with the counselor.
- Some counselors have created their own websites with resources and opportunities to chat. Here's an example: <https://sites.google.com/acusd.org/msvalle/announcements>
- Social-emotional learning curriculum is in use at all schools, including Second Step, Sanford Harmony, Project Success, and Botvin Lifeskills. Counselors and teachers provide classroom presentations and lessons using the social-emotional curriculum.
- All counselors were asked to provide me with a summary of how they are supporting students, and this response is a good summary of all of them: "My focus is reaching and communicating with students and their families. My goal was to keep my program as close as I had it when we were in person full-time. I am seeing kids through video format. If they do not have access to the internet, I am calling them. I am communicating with the families by phone, text, or email. We still do mindfulness, breathing, or stretches to begin and check-in on our feelings then do our lessons. I have two Google Classrooms for each site and post things there and their meetings. I also created my own Website that has videos, resources for families, and coping skills. I am collaborating with the caseworkers for kids with IEP's and posting materials in their Google Classroom and joining their weekly video check-in when I can. I also participate in the Social Skills class as a co-teacher at the Jr High. I also have open office hours for each school so students can just drop in and see their friends or check-in with me without an appointment."
- [Nexus Youth and Family Services](#) provides support in a variety of ways including seeing students in groups, seeing students one on one, and presenting lessons in classrooms.
- All employees have access to free counseling and mental health support through our [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#). Frequent reminders have been sent about this in recent months.



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- ASPIRE Referral process for students whose needs are beyond the scope of what our school counselors can provide. This links them to mental health therapists in our community.
- A list of resources in Amador County was sent to all counselors, psychologists, Principals and VPs. These lists are attached on our webpage for your convenience.
- Multiple professional development opportunities have been offered, including:
  - Suicide Prevention 101 for Parents: Recognizing Signs and What to Do (This was very timely after Julia's comments Wednesday evening.)
  - *LivingWorks Start* Suicide Prevention training sponsored by CDE for all staff and students in grades 7-12
  - Suicide prevention module in the mandatory training all employees are required to complete at the beginning of each school year
  - CDE's Social Emotional Learning for School Well-Being Webinar
  - Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) training during many of our schools' staff meetings
  - Posttraumatic Growth: How to manage the human experience through COVID-19
  - Mental Strategies for Managing Your Overactive Mind: Useful Techniques for Surviving the Pandemic
  - Crisis & Youth: Self Harm and Suicidal Ideation
  - Helping Teens with their Screens
  - The Role of Sleep in the Prevention of Mental Health Disorders
  - Maintaining Hope in a Time of Profound Grief and Loss