

STUDENT/STAFF SAFETY SUMMIT 2021

How Adults Make School Welcoming– Ron Lee, Annabelle, Isaac, Meron and Tess

1. How do school staff positively engage with students?
 - a. Learning students names
 - b. Talking to students one-on-one
 - c. Going to extra-curricular activities to support students
 - d. Staff participating in community events where students might be as well, so that spontaneous conversations can occur.
 - e. In one school, there is “seminar.” You are in the group throughout high school so everyone gets to know one another, like a family. Seminar meets every other day. Sometimes they have a communal breakfast together and other opportunities to connect.
2. Beside how counselors engage, what do other teachers do to connect?
 - a. Teachers need to do much the same thing that counselors do. Teachers need to reach out to students and initiate the relationships.
 - b. Greeting students at the door by name when students come to class.
 - c. Even if they cannot come to extra-curricular activities, they need to show their personalities to students i.e. telling jokes, appropriate stories about family, other tidbits of information attached to the subject matter, asking about how break was and what you did on break – showing interest in you.
 - d. Those from smaller districts think it might be easier to develop these relationships since there are fewer students. One teacher walks the halls, says, “Hello,” to students, and if they seem down, asks how they are doing. Since they know students, they are able to do this.
3. How are school staff connecting with families and helping them feel welcome at the school?
 - a. Inviting families to assist with extra-curricular activities i.e. homecoming and prom
 - b. With COVID, one school held their usual annual conference outside and included a barbeque before the concert.
 - c. Just inviting families to any possible events at school including those extra-curricular activities as well as having teachers meeting the students’ parents.
4. How to engage groups that might feel disenfranchised?
 - a. Having groups/clubs that invite anyone to join.
 - b. School scheduling mental health days – divide the students into new groups where you meet other students you do not usually talk with and you engage in enjoyable activities to build new relationships. Including a puppy room!
5. What are some of the barriers/challenges to school engagement?
 - a. Students do go to their counselor but many times lately, the counselors are so overwhelmed with tasks such as scheduling instead of having the opportunity to connect with students. It may have been an outgrowth of COVID but students think it was even happening before the pandemic.
 - b. One school had a student die by suicide over fall break, and students felt the counselors did not have enough time to support them.

- c. One of the rural schools does not even have a mental health provider in their district. They are trying to hire someone, but they do not have anyone now.
 - d. One question was if your counselor is busy, whom else could you go to in your building? Schools could make a list of others in the building to whom students could go.
- 6. Whose job is it to promote student engagement?
 - a. Students feel it's everyone's role.
 - b. It was pointed out that sometimes adults do not know how to reach out. Some suggestions were:
 - i. At the start of the semester, have an icebreaker day so everyone starts to get to know each other.
 - ii. Asking students how they are doing on a one-on-one level.
- 7. Are their events at the beginning of the year that address school engagement and look at things like homophobic language?
 - a. Sources of Strength addresses some of these issues in some schools.
 - b. Students need stress reduction skills especially in light of exams coming soon.
 - c. Other schools that have Sources does not necessarily focus on specific topics.
- 8. Other ideas:
 - a. Try to create safe spaces
 - b. Make community events cool – a bonfire with food trucks was a lot of fun
- 9. Can larger schools break things up into small groups so that students can be connected?
 - a. The difficulty may be that they all share teachers so the teachers are not connected to one small group. Therefore, that might be hard.
 - b. Perhaps everyone could go at the same time to assemblies with separate teachers.
- 10. Some of the students felt that others do not care about the community as evidenced by trashing the parking lot.
- 11. Would more buy-in about building community shift things? Students said they need examples of a great community so others would want to emulate it.
- 12. Was there more community in elementary or middle school?
 - a. Someone remembered a carnival in elementary school where even many high school students and parents participated.
- 13. It was noted that community participation has not necessarily come back to pre-pandemic levels.
- 14. What about the TikTok challenges this year?
 - a. These are still big issues at some of the schools.
 - i. No girls' restrooms were open last week due to vandalism.
 - ii. Kids are skipping class.
- Having fun with the other people