

# **Monrovia Wellness Centers: Collaboration in Action**

**Aligning Resources for an  
Increased Impact on Student, Family & Community Success**

Wellness Centers: A Community  
Schools Project

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Programs

# Community Schools Defined

## School Community Partnerships

### Center for Mental Health in Schools, UCLA

“School-Community linkages and partnerships have been identified as *essential* to improving schools, strengthening neighborhoods, and leading to a marked reduction in young people’s problems.”

“Community schools, with their emphasis on intentional partnerships, represent the most effective approach to addressing both the in-school and non-school factors that influence student achievement.”

Institute for Educational Leadership – Coalition for Community Schools  
[www.communityschools.org/scalingup](http://www.communityschools.org/scalingup)

# Why pursue a Community Schools model?

Monrovia Unified School District (MUSD) and the City of Monrovia are award winning entities well-known for working together for the common good through a collaborative web of partnerships. The majority of our California School Board Association (CSBA) Golden Bell Award winning model programs demonstrate this concept. *So if we already have this strong web of support, why pursue the Community Schools model?*

Although the idea of a “web” sounds good on the surface, when closely examined it contains many holes, through which too many of our families and students may still fall. In other words, our school and community-based services are many, but without a central location and organizing force they may be widespread, disjointed, and even redundant.

The challenge to unify our resources and efforts was answered with the opening of our inaugural program at Monrovia High School, known simply as the MHS Wellness Center, during the 2016-17 school year. Since then the program has won high accolades for success both within the community and statewide. It is currently being duplicated at varying stages of development throughout the district.

# Wellness Centers: An Infrastructure for Balanced Engagement

To be truly successful, well-balanced students and adults need to not only master academic knowledge but also master the social and emotional skills they will need to navigate a challenging and unpredictable world stage.

## MISSION

To provide a comprehensive variety of support services and programs to our students, their families and our staff members that ensures deep, meaningful and sustainable forward movement and success for all.

## VISION

The MUSD Wellness Centers shall provide a centralized, trauma-focused, brain-compatible school campus location where on-site services, provided by both district staff and a variety of therapeutic, community-based and other related service agencies join forces and work together for optimum results.

# Mental Wellness: Smashing Stigma, Breaking Myths

## NEED FOR AWARENESS

According to a Winter 2017 National Education Association report, though we may make assumptions about what populations might access such services, “the numbers are stark: One in four (1/4) U.S. students will witness or experience a traumatic event before the age of 4, and more than 2/3 by age 16. These statistics cross all socio-economic, cultural and ethnic lines, often breaking long-held assumptions.” The increases in the number of children and teens going to the emergency room for suicidal thoughts or attempts has doubled in the past decade to 1.12 million (2015) with nearly half of the visits coming from children between the ages of 5 and 11 according to a recent CNN report.

# The Flagship Program: MHS Wellness Center

## Pursuing the Balanced Approach

### **Social-Emotional/Mental Wellness**

- MUSD has district-wide school-based contracts with D'Veal Family & Youth Services, Foothill Family Service and Pacific Clinics, plus interactive relationships with other local therapeutic counseling agencies providing full time therapists, therapy supervisors and behavior specialists, as needed and appropriate. In addition, beyond assessment, our school psychologist provides designated services for special education students and consultation service for general education/Section 504 students, in addition to serving on our site Critical Response Team. Further, a team of school counselors, partner agency therapists and district administrators are certified to provide **Mental Health First Aide** training, statewide.

### **Academic Support & Tutoring**

- One full time adult Instructional Assistant is assigned to the both specific classrooms and the Wellness Center to support students who may be struggling academically. In addition, students from local colleges and universities provide tutoring services through Work-Study contracts as well as MHS AP student volunteers, all coordinated by the MUSD Pro-Active Tutoring Service (MUSD Golden Bell recipient). The IA also works with the AVID tutors and coordinates an After School Homework & Tutoring program everyday until 4:30 PM.

# MHS Wellness Center

## continued

### **Parent Education & Family Support**

- D'Veal Family & Youth Services also provides an evidence-based, court-approved (open to all) program: Educate, Equip & Support (EES) in English and Spanish. Beyond the 12 week certificate curriculum, families find a welcoming support group where challenges are explored with a solutions-based approach.

### **Attendance**

- Attendance is monitored school-wide with chronic absenteeism and/or tardies addressed directly by the target student's counselor and assistant principal through the School Attendance Review Team (SART – school-based contract) process and when necessary, the School Attendance Review Board (SARB – district level). To “make-up” lost classroom time/instruction, students are invited to come to the Wellness Center and register for our Saturday School program, a non-punitive offering that provides both study/school work time and academic enrichment activities.

### **BARR = Building Assets, Reducing Risks**

- This nationally acclaimed Scale-Up Grant focuses on the tough 9<sup>th</sup> Grade transition year with cohort teams of teachers focusing on both supporting students with whatever interventions or “kudos” are needed for continuous improvement through a systematic structure and providing specific evidence-based life-skill lessons. We have aligned the BARR system with our SST process to ensure sustainability of practices.

# MHS Wellness Center

## continued

### **Accommodations Support**

- Students with specific accommodation plans, both through an IEP or a Section 504 Plan, are provided the support they may need outside of the classroom in the Wellness Center. Whether it is academic tutoring, an alternative distraction-free testing environment, or specific social-emotional requirements, students are consistently able to achieve at their level of potential through the varied opportunities provided.

### **Job Skills & Employment**

- The Workability/TPP Counselor assists designated students whose academic needs are supported through an IEP or a Section 504 Accommodation Plan in the exploration of possible career interests, providing both job skill training and employment. The counselor works directly with local businesses to establish work locations and monitors student challenges and successes.

### **Probation & Prevention Mentoring**

- A Los Angeles County Probation Deputy is assigned to MHS, providing support to students both on formal probation and those who may be at-risk of entering the court system through a voluntary mentoring program. The deputy monitors attendance, grades and behavior, often rewarding voluntary mentees by connecting them to jobs when goals are met. This has resulted in some tremendous “turnaround” cases.

# MHS Mental Wellness Club

## Bring Change 2 Mind/Healing Connections

### Healing Connections Community Coalition: Founded through Tragedy

- Several years ago Monrovia, like many school districts/communities, experienced a series of teen suicides. Our former city mayor and school superintendent pledged to stop the trend by forming a diverse taskforce to address the issue. The core group formed what became another MUSD CSBA Golden Bell Award winning model program.
- **Good News:** No additional completed suicides in our community since formation!  
**HOWEVER:** This does not take into account the number of students who continue to struggle with *extreme social-emotional issues and life challenges*, and stand on the edge ready to leap.
- **Student Club: *Healing Connections for All Seasons*** formed during the first year of the MHS Wellness Center, working hard to provide suicide prevention information on campus. The club affiliated with the national organization ***U Bring Change 2 Mind*** during the 2018-19 school year. This group, started by the actress Glenn Close when her sister was diagnosed with a severe mental illness, works to dispel the myths surrounding mental health and break associated stigmas. The campus club held several events during the school year and helped coordinate Mental Health Awareness Month in May, 2019, including the screening event of our award-winning ***Directing Change*** PSAs.

# City Partners

- **City of Monrovia Community Services Department:** Offers a wide variety of programs for our youth that promote leadership, civic pride and engagement, including the Youth Commission, Summer Leadership Academy, and YES Program (Youth Employment Service).
- **City of Monrovia Neighborhood Services Department: MAP** (Monrovia Area Partnership) is a nationally acclaimed, award-winning program that educates and unites citizens in caring for their neighborhoods through civic engagement. The department provides ongoing education through both adult and youth leadership academies.
- **Monrovia Police Department (MPD):** In full partnership with MUSD, one MPD officer is designated as the School Resource Officer (**SRO**). This officer supports all schools and sits on the district **SARB** panel, **CRT** (Critical Response Team), **MHIT** (Mental Health Intervention Team) in addition to leading the Police Explorers.
- **Monrovia Communication & Action Network (M-CAN):** This alliance between MPD and MUSD provides communication between entities regarding specific youth/families and/or activities in the community with the goal of prevention through collaborative services. In addition to specific officers, including the SRO, principals, assistant principals and school counselors, the group also includes police chaplains through the **CARY** (Chaplains for At-Risk Youth) program and other designated area service agencies. The group formally reorganized (2019-20) to meet current needs ((formerly MAGIC - Monrovia Anti-Gang Intervention Committee - winner of the James Q. Wilson Community Policing Award, 2012).
- **Monrovia Fire Department:** Provides **CERT** (Community Emergency Response Team) and **SERT** (School Emergency Response Team) training and coordination of services. In addition, both **MFD** and **LA County Fire Department** provide **Fire Explorer** programs to our youth.

# Community-Based Organizations Partners & Supporters

- **Boys & Girls Club of the Foothills:** Extended school day and holiday/summer care at Shamrock site (grades K-5), Wilcox Teen Center (grades 6-12) and Mayflower Elementary School. Full partner with MUSD Wellness Centers in **Project Mentor**, providing leadership activities and excursions.
- **Santa Anita YMCA:** Provides both the Youth in Government and Model United Nations programs for area students, and helps coordinate **YES** (Youth Employment Service) program with the City.
- **Monrovia Ministerial Association:** Participates in the “Adopt-a-School” program, Healing Connections, and B&GC Project Mentor.
- **Interfaith Council of Monrovia:** Focused on peace, unity and understanding among all groups, the ICM is open to and embraces all traditions. Members also participate in “Adopt-a-School” program, Healing Connections and tutoring/mentoring projects.
- **Healing Connections:** Community-based suicide prevention group providing education and resources for individuals and groups in need.
- **Foothill Unity Center:** The largest non-profit organization serving our area families with basic services and supports such as medical, including eye and dental care, groceries, job skill training and employment links for qualified applicants, in addition to homeless services and short-term emergency housing referrals. The organization provides a **Back to School** event in August, Thanksgiving meals and Christmas gifts for children/families in need plus opportunities to fulfill Community Service obligations through an extensive volunteer program.

# Other Partners & Resources

- **Each Mind Matters:** Group provides mental health resources and workshop support in addition to hosting the statewide student PSA film contest, *“Directing Change.”* **Monrovia High School 2018-19 Regional First Place and Honorable Mention Winners!**
- **Bring Change 2 Mind (BC2M):** Resources and support to remove the stigma with multiple resources and monetary support for student clubs on school campuses. MHS Healing Connections for All Seasons voted to affiliate with BC2M 2018-19.
- **Teenline:** Provides immediate peer response and support through the teen hotline, but also hosts both youth and adult workshops and presentations covering a variety of timely mental health issues.
- **Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Foundation:** Also provides a wide variety of programs and resources targeting suicide prevention.
- **ChapCare Health Clinic:** The Monrovia clinic offers sports physicals and other related services to our students and their families, and participates in all outreach opportunities.
- **League of Women Voters, Pasadena Branch:** The Education Division advocates for legislation to support our schools, encourages civic engagement through voter registration workshops and invites our youth to become active citizens.
- **Anti-Defamation League:** Provides worldview updates regarding human rights and locally invites teachers to an annual workshop series at the Museum of Tolerance.

# County, State & National Resources

- **Mental Health Coalition of San Gabriel Valley:** Led by Congresswoman Grace Napolitano, a strong proponent of early intervention and author of legislation regarding mental health services in the schools
- **National Suicide Prevention Network:** Recently gathered at the California Endowment Center to discuss the “Suicide Contagion” effect and the alarming increase of suicide attempts across the nation
- **National Center for Community Schools**
- **California School-Based Health Alliance**
- **UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools**
- **UCLA Mind Sight Institute**
- **California Conference for Equity & Justice**
- **BARR Scale-Up Grant: Building Assets, Reducing Risk**
- **Southern California Mediation Center**

# Closing Thoughts

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**“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”**

Helen Keller