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Emotional Resilience for Educators

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Abstract

This part will be drafted during Milestone #3 and finalized for Milestone #4.

Keywords: burn out, emotional resilience, support

The purpose of this project is to implement a program that will provide emotional resilience support for educators in the Salinas Union High School District. This is a voluntary program designed to support staff through the work of Elena Aguilar. The purpose of this capstone project is for school staff to have that extra support and resources. The problem is classroom teachers do not have the necessary training to deal with students' problems. One contributing factor that relates to the problem is about students experiencing trauma and ACE (adverse childhood experiences) in their lives/community. As a result, they carry more stress and end up leaving the district. Students are then left with substitute teachers or educators who do not have the proper education or experience to provide high-quality teaching. Through Wellness Wednesday emails participants will be provided with learning opportunities to create a healthier lifestyle.

Agency & Communities Served

The Salinas Union High District Wellness Centers is an agency that is dedicated to supporting in creating and sustaining healthy, caring, and learning environments for students' grade levels 7th-12th grade. Students in the Salinas Union High School District (SUHSD) are facing mental health barriers. There are nine schools, including high schools' and middle schools' who have a wellness center. Wellness centers are designed to help students by providing increased access to mental health and academic support. Blanca Baltzar, who is a school board member, thought of the idea of creating wellness centers for all the SUHSD students. Now that some wellness centers are active and going, the Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) serves the wellness centers as a resource for them.

The Mission of the Salinas Union High School District Wellness Centers is to address the need for increased mental health, awareness, education, and support. Every wellness center serves different services to the students. Every school in the SUHSD has a unique problem they are facing. Although they offer various services, they all serve the same purpose. Students needs mental health services; the district is working to provide services to help them while in school. For example, at Harden Middle School in Salinas, the school social worker runs support groups and alternatives to suspension programs based on the needs of the students.

The wellness centers are for all students at the schools. Professionals such as the intervention specialist, PBIS Clerk, MSW students, and interns are some of the professionals that help run the services depending on the site. Salinas Union High School District serves a diverse community. In the year 2019, the enrollment rate was 15,818 students around the district (2019). Hispanics students count as the highest percentage of students in the district of a total of

88%, meaning 14,027 students (2019). The district demographics consist of a total of 12,135 socioeconomically disadvantaged students. While 3,404 students are English Learners, and 1,588 are considered students with disabilities.

Problem Description

The district's main problem is school staff are experiencing secondary trauma and compassion fatigue while working with our students and will lead to burn out and lower teacher

retention rates. As a result, school staff are not receiving the support they need to cope with the student population they are serving.

Contributing Factors

One contributing factor that relates to the problem is about students experiencing trauma and ACE (adverse childhood experiences) in their lives/community. Wellness centers face barriers when providing services to the student population. Anxiety, depression, and stress are amongst some obstacles these students face. The community has had an influence on why young teenagers are facing problems that in result have intervened in school and personal life.

According to a survey data in the year(s) 2015-2017, 5.3% of male seventh graders consider themselves gang members. While 6.7% of male 11th graders also considered themselves gang members. It is a hot topic to talk about why students are experiencing trauma (Austin, 2015-2017). Salinas is a city where gangs and drugs are seen and talked about. Gangs are an example of trauma to students because this has placed them to figure out what the community can do to help them with their mental health problems.

A second contributed factor is students have a lack of mental health support and knowledge of coping skills to promote healing. Students often do not receive services at home to cope with issues they are facing. It may be possible to consider that parents may not know their child is going through something. The project of creating wellness centers started from the idea of parents. Surveys are distributed at the end of every academic year for parents and community members to fill out. The purpose of the surveys is for people to vote where money should go. In this case, parents were requesting money for students' to receive mental health services. Parents

felt their students needed mental health services and suggested they should be incorporating services in school settings.

One last contributing factor is school staff is not prepared or trained to provide social emotional support to students who have trauma. School staff such as classroom teachers often do not receive the training to report or manage with students' mental health problems. According to the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards, "Many teachers and educational staff find themselves in this exact situation where they may not know the best way to deal with emotional and mental situations that arise with their students" (Are Teachers Ready for The Mental Health Crisis in Schools, 2019). Trainings often does not help school staff to successfully do their job. Responsibility for the mental health of students should never be solely placed on teachers (Are Teachers Ready for The Mental Health Crisis in Schools, 2019). In some cases, schools do not have school social workers or other professionals to help with the mental health problems being faced. School staff are the ones who have to deal with students' issues.

Consequences

One consequence that has created an impact on the students and school staff is that there is not enough emotional support for educators. School staff have a challenging job in the workforce. School staff juggles standards, the social and emotional needs of students, behavior, and often trauma. Still, they are also the professionals that are sometimes at the front of the line facing students' health problems (Boyce, 2019). A 2017 survey found that California teachers are

generally satisfied with their jobs overall. However, those who teach in more challenging contexts are somewhat less satisfied (Darling-Hammond, Sutchter, & Carver-Thomas, 2019).

Educators are burnt out and overwhelmed. This consequence is also a result of teachers not receiving the support they need. Schools are close to first-line detection to mental health issues. Those who are dealing with mental health issues are carrying them every day to school. Classroom teachers are often the ones that are dealing with students and their problems. Teachers are often overwhelmed because they often feel that the work they do is “always” or “often” stressful (Cox, Solomon, Parris, 2018). When they are feeling burnout, they often leave the position and work at another district. Failing to address the needs and supports of teachers often coming from the student’s stress and trauma may affect their ability to do their work. Educators are not only educating the children; they are also dealing with challenging behavior and complex parent and family needs. Educators are often not trained to work with these types of student populations or have the support they need to help them out. The wellness centers support school staff to support them and not make them feel they have all the responsibility to work with challenging students.

Another result of a consequence is that when teachers leave for another job position, the students are left with a professional who does not have the proper education or experience to provide high-quality teaching. This consequence relates to the teacher shortage the Salinas Union High School is experiencing. Since the demand for recruiting new teachers is high, there are also spots to fill in as soon as possible. In this particular district, since the demand is high, they recruit classroom teachers ignoring the proper education that is needed or the experience they may have.

For the academic school year of 2018-19, in the district, there were a total of 124 new classroom teachers hired (Rothenbaum, 2019). Also, during the same academic school year of 2018-19, the staff education report informed us about the highest individual group that has a higher number in education is a Master's degree resulting in 348 teachers. While 209 teachers only have a bachelor's degree without any further preparation or experience for this field. When districts cannot fill a position with a qualified teacher, they have few good options. California districts have hired long-term substitutes or teachers with substandard credentials, left positions vacant, increased class sizes, or canceled courses—all of which can undermine instructional quality and student achievement (Rothenbaum, 2019).

Problem Model

Contributing Factors	Problem	Consequences
<p>Factor 1</p> <p>Students are experiencing trauma and ACE (adverse childhood experiences) in their lives/community</p>	<p>School staff is experiencing secondary trauma and compassion fatigue while working with our students, and will lead to burn out and lower retention rates.</p>	<p>Consequence 1</p> <p>Not enough emotional support for educators.</p>
<p>Factor 2</p> <p>Students have a lack of mental health support and knowledge of coping skills to promote healing.</p>		<p>Consequence 2</p> <p>Educators are burnt out and overwhelmed.</p>

<p>Factor 3 School staff is not prepared or trained to provide social emotional support to students who have trauma.</p>		<p>Consequence 3 When teachers leave for another job position, the students are left with a professional who does not have the proper education or experience to provide high-quality teaching.</p>
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Capstone Project Description and Justification

Capstone Project

The name of this capstone project is Emotional Resilience for Educators. The purpose of this project is to implement a voluntary program that will provide emotional resilience support for educators in the Salinas Union High School District. This program will provide Wellness Wednesday emails that will include work of Elena Aguilar to remind themselves about the importance of emotional resilience. School staff is not receiving the support they need to take care of themselves while dealing with challenging students. They need the support and resources to avoid unnecessary stress and burnout.

Project Purpose

The need is high for support for school staff. The burn out rate is high, and teachers are leaving the district. Students' issues are conflicting with the work school staff do. The goal is to motivate educators to take care of their mental being while having a job that can be a full load to handle. As a result, as mentioned above, when teachers leave for another job position, the students are left with a professional who does not have the proper education or experience to

provide high-quality teaching. It is a cycle that continues to repeat itself all over again. There has not been necessary intervention or support to help the school staff. Both the student's and the professionals lack what they should be doing or learning. This is supposed to be a win-win situation when being in a learning environment but when the school staff is not receiving the support students and staff are being affected. Wellness Wednesdays emails will be sent out to those that signed up for this program. The email will include weekly activities participants.

Project Justification

The importance of self care is important for both students and educators. Educators and other staff members need to take care of themselves before they can take care of their students. There can be challenges why educators are not taking care of themselves. A study by the advocacy group, Alliance for Excellence Education, reports that 40-50% of new teachers leave within their first five years on the job (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2019). Schools are stressful places. Toxic stress can escalate to more serious symptoms such as anxiety, dissociation, frustration and burnout. Lack of Resilience, therefore, has a financial cost and contributes to instability, which in turn negatively impacts student learning and experience. In order to retain such people, school leaders need to provide teachers with resources to meet the challenges they'll encounter in their work so that they can learn from those challenges, surmount them, and fulfill their purpose (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2019).

Project Implementation

The goal for this project is to design a program that will benefit the emotional resilience of all educators. In order to initiate this project a sequence of planning needs to take place. Due

to COVID-19, the initial goal of the program was to implement workshops for all staff at one school. After School workshop sessions were going to take place for those staff members that would want to participate. Modifications to the project were needed to make this project run due to COVID-19.

The new changes were modified by district leaders that included Hayley Newman, the district PBIS Coordinator. Wellness Wednesday's emails were the new change that was brought to the program. Wellness Wednesday consists of learning opportunities such as tips on how to self care. The participants have options to watch, read and listen to better assist their preference. Since this is a voluntary program, participants can view the email when they can. Every week for the remainder of the academic year they will receive an email.

The resources that were needed to complete the Wellness Wednesday Emails was to organize ahead of time. Time what spent on what useful videos were most interesting from Elena Aguilar's work. Also, to look for readings and listening videos from Elena Aguilar's work. Hayley is in charge of the introductory video of every week that is attached to the email. Along with that she is the one that sends out the Wellness Wednesday email.

Assessment Plan

To measure the effectiveness of this project there will be a distributing of pre and post surveys. The purpose of the use of the pre and post surveys is to help collect data. The data collected will assure how school staff is feeling. Questions will be on the survey participants to answer about themselves using a scale 1-10. After the workshops are done, we will provide the same survey to help us analyze if our project influenced their emotional resilience and health

being. We will also be able to analyze if our project was successful or not. The post surveys will help us gather the change for future workshops if needed. After each workshop participants will fill-out the workshop evaluation. The workshop evaluations will provide us feedback on the effectiveness of the workshops.

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes for this capstone project are for all school staff to have resources when they are dealing with students problems. The burn out rate is high in the SUHSD and school staff are not receiving the support they need. The goal is to have at least 5 participants register for the Wellness Wednesday emails. School staff are busy professionals and having at least 5 people participate means a great contribution to themselves and change in the school environment. School staff are busy professionals and it can be difficult for them to register through another virtual program. The goal is to have participants learn more about creating a healthier lifestyle.

Overall, the goal is to implement a program that school staff could later present themselves. The program will have everything set up such as materials and lesson plans. This project will continue staff through our program and potentially contribute positively to the high burnout rate.

Project Results

The project results were based on the Pre-PROQOL survey that was given to all staff members in the SUHSD. Along with the registration questions, attached was the confidential Pre-PROQOL (Professional Quality of Life Survey) of 30 questions. The survey was used as the main quantitative data component to gauge the effectiveness of the program for this year. After the registration deadline there were 57 participants who wanted to be part of the program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were not high expectations of a big number of participants. This program has never been implemented before and for 57 participants to join is a great start.

There will be pre and post surveys to determine the effectiveness of the program. During the month of December there will be a December check in to better understand where the participants are. The December check will help gather more data on who will like to continue on for the Spring 2020 semester. This will also give the opportunity to provide feedback from the program. It is early to determine if the program achieved the expected outcome. By the post survey more data will be available to conclude how the first year went.

Conclusion & Recommendations

This is the first time in the district a program to support staff is implemented. This year will be a year of analyzing data and to continue to grow as a program. It is early to conclude whether the program is working or not. Hayley Newman has received feedback from participants. Based on some feedback she has seen participants are enjoying the Wellness Wednesday emails. They have enjoyed the tips to create a healthier lifestyle. My conclusion based on some of the results that are seen is that the program is working. It is probably not working for all 57 participants but I have a feeling that some participants are learning from the program.

My recommendation for the program is to continue to value participants' input. The Winter check-in will help gather more information to help manage the program for the remainder of Spring semester. The post-survey will help determine how successful the program was. That is why it is important to value the input through the Winter check-in and post-survey. Something that could have been done differently to improve the program is to announce or advertise the program ahead of time. During that announcement they could also have had the option if the program would interest them or not. If the program interests them, they would then receive a follow up email along with a registration link. This approach would also be helpful to recruit more participants.

Personal Reflection

This capstone project offered me learning opportunities through the Salinas Union High School District (SUHSD). Every task given was meaningful to me because I gained more knowledge of what is seen in my community. As mentioned above, the problem being addressed is that school staff is not receiving the support they need to handle stressful situations or social emotional issues. I used to believe students always came first in the education system. It never crossed my mind how school staff had such an impact on the success of the education system. My takeaway from this project is that there needs to be more support needed to continue on for those that are at risk for burn-out.

The planning and implementation was a step to step process. Every step of planning needed to be verified, receive back and forth feedback from other professionals, or second

opinions. Through the planning and implementation my understanding of decision making or what it takes to implement a project became more clear. Revisions after revisions have made the project run smoothly. During my in person internship, I was able to observe the intervention specialist and school counselors to experience the common problems students are bringing to classrooms. Classroom teachers do not have the support or resources to help the students.

The contributions are to create learning opportunities for those staff members that signed up for the program. All 57 participants are being offered helpful tips by learning new ways to implement healthier habits to prevent stress or burnout. The greatest challenge experienced was to rapidly change due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It took time to plan and implement the program, but it had to continue due to the pandemic.

This project is identified as a social issue. This is an ongoing issue in the district level. As the pandemic continues to spread classroom teachers and other staff members are experiencing challenges due to adjusting from working or teaching from home. Before the pandemic, school staff members were not receiving sufficient resources to cope with the trauma experience from students or stress. They need the support or resources to avoid a burnout. As this project continues to develop, something that could have been done is sending out a survey to announce the program and what they would expect from the program. Sending out a survey asking about what they would like to receive more support or resources on. This would have been helpful to gather more participants and meet what they request.

For the future capstone students, that will continue to work on Emotional Resilience for all Staff Educators in the SUHSD they should continue to value the input of the participants through the surveys. The voice of every participant is heard through the three surveys that are

distributed in the academic year. Capstone students can also do more research on what similar programs are doing virtually to offer staff the support they need.

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Appendix A

Scope of Work

This should be drafted for Milestone #1, completed for Milestone #2 & updated for Milestones #3 & #4. Below is a sample format.

Activities	Deliverables	Timeline/Deadlines	Supporting Staff
Creation of Pre and Post Surveys	Pre and Post surveys will help collect data.	Fall-Spring 2020	Hayley Newman

Creation of Emails	Emotional Resilience emails will be to remind school educators about their mental wellbeing	Fall 2019	Hayley Newman
Collect Pre-Surveys	The surveys will help gather information on what school we are going to pilot the program.	March or April 2020	Hayley Newman

Administer Post-Surveys	Post surveys will help gather information and know what can be done to make changes and be more effective.	Fall 2020	Hayley Newman

COMPASSION RESILIENCE FOR EDUCATORS



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Being an educator and staff member is not always easy; it takes dedication and hard work to successfully meet our students' needs.

Compassion Resilience for Educators is a voluntary program that will support you in your goals to maintain your mental, physical, and emotional well-being while serving our students.

Through the work of Elena Aguilar and her books, **Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators** and the accompanying workbook, we will go on this journey together towards building the resilience we strive for.



WE WILL THRIVE BY:

- Reflecting on Each Monthly Theme
- Receiving Weekly Compassion Resilience Emails with Activities
- Gaining Additional Resources and Tips
- Building Community

LET'S GET STARTED!

Join today by emailing Hayley Newman at hayley.newman@salinasuhd.org

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Hayley Newman.