6th Grade Student Led Anti-Bullying Workshops by Greg Butz

Last year was a heavy one for CCPS for a variety of reasons. Both RAPS and middle school teachers felt that something needed to help students be aware of the different support systems available to them.

It Began During a PD Meeting in Spring

During the Spring 2018 PD, RAPS (Risk Adjustment Processing System) presented information to CCPS Staff about their findings from the New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey (YRPP). This information prompted a vigorous discussion and what emerged was a basic understanding of the greatest issue.

Q: What is the Greatest Issue?
A: Students unaware of the various support systems.

Q: What could be Done to Address this?
A: No consensus was reached during the meeting.

“The Suggestion”

After the meeting, I approached Dr. Denise Giannopoulos seeking clarity upon the issues RAPS raised. The idea of student-lead anti-bullying workshops emerged from this conversation. Students would be the drivers of this process, and my advisory could be used for the trial run. If successful, we could think larger picture.

With only two months of planning left in the calendar before seniors began taking IB exams, the upperclassmen would have to act fast to get the trial run off the ground before the end of the year. (Continued on page 2)
Anti-Bullying Workshops (cont.)

In the days following, various juniors and seniors began excitedly introducing themselves in the hallway. Within a couple of weeks, the first joint-RAPS and sixth grade meeting was underway. I was impressed by their “all in” response.

Ms. Lisa Wallhagen accompanied students Karina Aguilar, Ellianna Nevitt, Nichole Greif, Giovanni Marti, Hala Reeder, and Angelique Roeloffs. In this brainstorming session, various proposals developed and an overall vision emerged.

Initial Stages & Trial Run

Due to the difficulty of different schedules, we were only able to meet during 7th period. While the 6th grade advisory was in the room, juniors and seniors met polling students, compiling data, and turning this information into actionable scenarios. I am grateful for Leah Plymire and Phoebe Saltzein for taking a handful of the students each day of the planning sessions (to lighten the load of supervising 6th grade students).

The trial run was happened in three 25 minute lunch-time advisory lessons (during PARCC testing). Students used Google PearDeck to lead interactive lessons, and then broke off into mini-socratic lessons. It was a smashing success! I am indebted to the amazing support of Cindy Chavez who is a tireless advocate for our students and an amazing encouragement to the RAPS team and to myself.

Debrief & Roll Out of 2018

In the week following the presentation, admin and counseling services were invited into a debrief session to discuss the successes and what to change for next year. Upon witnessing these workshops up-close, Principal Sam Obenshain declared, “we’ve got to scale out this for the middle school!”

Fast forward to August of 2018: With only minor snags, this year these workshops rolled out to all of the 6th grade, under the supervision of Keila Guiteriez and Cindy Chavez, and leader by student Elliana Nevitt. Well done to everyone!
Hello everyone! I am excited to be starting my third year here at Cottonwood with all of you. This will be my eleventh year as a school counselor and clinician working with adolescents, adults, couples and families. My passion is to help and support others on their journey. I love to build on student strengths in approaching any problem that might arise and also practice from a person-centered approach. I incorporate a variety of evidence based techniques and interventions in my work with students and families (including mindfulness and yoga!), depending on their needs at that time. So don’t be surprised to see students in downward facing dog or talking to an empty chair in my office :) I strive to create a welcome, non-judgmental and calming environment in my office for students and staff! I look forward to working and collaborating with all of you this year!

A Message from our Counselors!

“Greetings from the counseling department! Our focus this year is to provide a safe and caring environment for students and staff in order to promote mindfulness, community and well-being. This year we will continue to provide one-on-one counseling and interventions for students as well as student mediations, classroom/advisory presentations, collaboration with students, staff and the community as well as various counseling groups. We will continue to work with Natural Helpers and RAPS students to promote connection, safety and support here at Cottonwood. We are looking forward to a wonderful year!”

RAPS

Risk and Resiliency Assessment Project for Students, is a student-led, leadership group with the intention of making a difference at school. Every two years, the Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey collects data from students specific to CCPS. RAPS students, then analyze this data to determine information about the students at Cottonwood. They, then engage in advocacy on the behalf of their peers and community. The ultimate goal of RAPS is to instill positive change at CCPS and within the community.
I have had some previous experience in a leadership role before, coaching kids at gymnastics. Stepping into a position is something I actually enjoy. Getting put into a leadership position allows me to be able to have a little more control over what gets done and how it gets done. Previously participating as a member, there were some ideas and events that I would change to go more smoothly, and now that I am in this position I will be able to help make those changes and help lead other people to be more engaged into the community and help train people to take on this project once I leave.

This leadership role has helped me expand my skills in communicating with people younger than me. This opportunity has allowed me to learn how to talk and know more about what issues people are having. As I grow older I forget what it is like to be in the young teens, and being in RAPS has helped me gain a better understanding and multiple perspectives on situations that these kids are in.

Leading the 6th-grade presentations have honestly been such a fun project. These bullying awareness presentations have allowed sixth graders to be more informed about bullying and ways to stop it, prevent it, and notice when an act of bullying is occurring. Being involved in this has honestly taught me more about bullying because there have been some gray areas where I didn’t know if I was being bullied or if I was the bully. These presentations should be something that is done each year because it is beneficial to the school and ourselves. It benefits individuals, the ones giving the presentation and the ones learning, by making them more aware of bullying and can allow us to stand up for unjust acts we see. It can also benefit the school because it can make the school a safer learning environment and a much more healthy and happier atmosphere.

“Meet Ashley Cruz
Hello, my name is Ashley Cruz. I am a counseling intern at UNM. My goal is to become a high school counselor. I am currently gaining experience here at CCPS. I enjoy working with individuals and utilize a humanistic approach. Thank you for welcoming me. I'm really excited to be a part of the CCPS community.

Natural Helpers Mission Statement
“We the Natural Helpers of CCPS, strive to promote love and the wellbeing of our school community through the cultivation of our character as individuals, paired with our training in prevention of suicide, substance abuse, bullying, life and school stress, and any friend issues that arise. We aim to reach our community through various efforts including maintaining “The Den” which is a safe space for all Coyotes to go for confidential support and open communication. By dealing with our own struggles together we learn how to accept help which builds empathy as we help those who ask for help and opens the space for helping those who may not ask.”

Reminder, Breath and Meditation Group meets in room B-3 on Tuesdays 3:05-3:30.

A school in Portland, Oregon has been pilot- ing mindfulness in schools. Feel free to check out their research below!

https://www.peaceinschools.org/mindfulness-research/