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## **Cultivating Healthy Relationships Between Parents and Students**

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Title: Cultivating Healthy Relationships Between Parents and Students; Supporting Everett

Alvarez High School Students and Parents

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### **Abstract**

Everett Alvarez High School Wellness Center, known as the NEST, provides social/behavioral support to students in Salinas, Ca. During the transition into virtual learning, it became difficult to support the social/behavioral needs of students. As we have worked to adjust to virtual learning and students have had to adjust being home, it became challenging for parents to support their child's mental health. Based on data collected from the beginning of the academic year of virtual learning through February 2021, the NEST's requests received nearly doubled. To combat this, we created a virtual presentation showcasing information from research supporting parents in learning techniques to assist their student's mental health. The goal was to aid parents in understanding how to meet their students' social/behavioral/mental health needs, which was accomplished. Based on data, the continuation of educational presentations provided to the parents by the agency would be beneficial for the community.

### **Agency & Communities Served**

Everett Alvarez High School (EAHS) Wellness Centers, also known as the NEST to students works to provide social and behavioral support to students with the ultimate goal of having students succeed academically. The NEST at EAHS is a part of a greater entity as they are overseen under the Salinas High School Union District (SHSUD), more specifically, the Positive Behavioral Interventions Support (PBIS) portion of the district. Financially, SHSUD is funded under the school district meaning our organization is a local government agency.

The mission of the NEST at Everett Alvarez High School works to “Provide social, emotional, behavioral and academic support to all students so they can develop into resilient, compassionate, and well-rounded adults. Afford all students the opportunity to reflect, learn, and grow while providing individualized support as needed. Promote equality and inclusivity for students of *all* cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds; sexual orientations; gender identities; and those with specialized needs.” (The Nest Wellness Center, 2020). To achieve this, recurring one on one check-ins are provided to all of the students who we serve and seek support, whether they self refer or are referred to the NEST. When in- person instruction is occurring, there are a number of services that are provided to students and the community. The NEST provides programs such as Joven Nobles and Xinchtli, groups directed to serve Latinx students to break generational trauma through healing, our Grief/Loss group, Academic Seminar, and Mending Matters to name a few. Currently, as virtual instruction is occurring, Mending Matters and one on one check-ins are the two services being offered.

To add on, there are various collaborative partners that work within the NEST to provide such services and support for students and parents sometimes. Our team at the NEST consists of the

following; one District PBIS Coordinator, one Intervention Specialist, one School Social Worker, and one Substance Abuse Counselor. Through virtual learning, there have not been community partners providing services through the NEST as logistically, it is not feasible to do so. Nonetheless, the efforts to support the students at Everett Alvarez High School have gone above and beyond as now more than ever many students are in need of support in order to bridge this new nap.

### **Community Demographic**

One of the most fruitful portions about the location of EAHS is present is the access to the diverse community they serve. As mentioned, the NEST is placed in Salinas, CA. which is a very populated and diverse community. In 2019, it was reported that the population of this community is 155,465 according to the US Census. As the number insinuates, this community is very populated which gives access to various different experiences. In Salinas, 81% of the population reported as Hispanic, 11% as White, 6% as Asian, 1% as Black, and 1% identified as both according to data from 2019 from Census Reporter. As we can see, the ethnicities within Salinas are diverse, with a huge emphasis on the Hispanic population. One of the reasons for this is because Salinas is a huge agriculture town and throughout the year, many migrant families come and go into this city as they are often following the work that is available.

The huge population also calls for a huge ability to have poverty present as not all folks living in this community are supported and have the ability to be financially stable. In Salinas, 17% of the population is under the poverty line, according to the 2019 Census Reporter as well, which brings many different disparities these communities often face. The median household income in this city is about \$60,965 and about 38% of the population's income is under \$50,000 dollars according to the same source ("Census profile: Salinas, CA", 2020). When we compare the

median income and what a big majority of the population makes in a year, we can see the possibility to begin to struggle financially. When looking at the area where the agency provides services in, the median household income is between \$50,000 - \$100,000 a year which allows many of the students we work with to be above the poverty line. Within the zip code of where the site is located, about 12.7% of the population is under the poverty line in comparison to the 17% population within Salinas when comparing data from the Census Reporter as well.

Narrowing down on the population we will specifically be serving, according to the School Accountability Report Card for 2018-2019, the school demographic consists of 90.2% Hispanic or Latino, 5.3% White, 2.6% Filipino, 0.7% Asian, and 0.6% African American, which are among the greater percentages of demographics we support. This data is accounting for 2,664 students that were enrolled at Everett Alvarez High School (Redondo, 2019).

### **Analysis of Community Needs and Assets**

As mentioned prior, the NEST works to emphasize the importance of mental wellness within the high school students that we serve. Statistically 66.9% of the population in the area served are able to be high school graduates or higher according to the Census Reporter. Although the students who are worked with belong to this demographic and are able to achieve a high school diploma, the need for mental wellness is extremely important as social and behavioral support has not always been emphasized. Schools partaking in a PBIS framework use the 3 tier model as a way to align academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs of support to improve education for all students. Tier 1 is “universal prevention”, Tier 2 is considered “target population” as this tier is focused for students in need of specific necessities, and Tier 3 is considered “Intensive, Individualized Prevention” intended for students in need of intensive support (Center on PBIS | Tiered Framework, 2021). Based on the agency's outreach, many

students who are served are at the NEST considered Tier 1 and Tier 2 students within PBIS meaning positive behavioral support is emphasized greatly without much intervention.

As an organization, many of the current needs and assets have completely shifted as the agency is in a virtual environment and needs are very different now. When in a traditional environment, behavioral support and mental wellness needs are greatly emphasized and worked towards as different groups have been created which serve as assets within the school and community.

Working with outside organizations and providing resources to the population served is a huge asset this site has. Community wise, the students the agency works with are always willing to be open to different services that are provided and different resources being allocated to them such as our growing LGBTQIA+ student population which also receive support from The Epicenter, an organization that supports and advocates for youth who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community (Epicenter, 2021).

Currently the biggest needs that are being seen within the organization are needs for academic and mental support and different tools that will support students who are living in difficult home situations. As an agency, the work has shifted their work to become more persistent as that is the only way my site has been able to see any sort of impact. When looking at the data through the agency, outreach is one of the greatest assets this site has to offer as they are constantly working towards communicating with clients, but also parents about how to better serve them. Overall, the different factors that this population faces all become intertwined within the need for mental health support which the agency strives to provide support in.

**Project Title:** Cultivating Healthy Relationships Between Parents and Students

**Project Intervention/ Strategy:** This project was achieved by creating a PowerPoint presentation on different concepts and resources that best served parents in supporting their



students. To achieve this, I was directed to gather academic resources to include in the presentation that would assist parents in meeting their child's mental health needs. I was also responsible for finding community resources within Salinas, CA that could be accessed by our families in Salinas. These resources were based on basic needs, behavioral support, and information to support parents in supporting their students that were found through research. I then summarized all information found to share with the community. The presentations were given, completed, and edited by myself.

**Justification:** The project being completed was implemented because there is a lack of exposure to resources that support our parents in understanding social and behavioral needs that their students have. Providing this community with education and support to assist their children, whether in virtual learning or in person, will assist for better awareness of mental needs our students may have. More specifically, the population being served is vasesly Latinx, a group often needing special emphasis, but treated as other groups which can dismiss their needs and struggles (Wang, Barlis, Do, Chen & Alami, 2019). The long term hope for this project was that it would be able to be used as a resource, and primarily, exposure to our spanish speaking homes as that is a huge population that Everett Alvarez serves, yet, many parents have minimal education or knowledge on the social, behavioral, and emotional needs their children face and how they can be supported in a healthy way. Implementing this project would ultimately allow the EAHS NEST to be creative in finding ways to better support the community being served such as this project. Although there was limited data to prove this as it was to be completed in May, the referrals from teachers and parents have allowed us to see the significance of the problem in need.

**Stakeholders:** Stakeholders of this project would consist of the NEST faculty as they believe this would benefit in supporting the parents of the community we are serving. Other stakeholders included were the parents of the students referred to the NEST. Providing resources to these stakeholders allowed us to support them in self educating and exposure to healthy parenting techniques as many have not had the opportunity to learn these things.

**Benefits:** From an agency standpoint, our goal was that the resources being provided would assist our students in minor needs they were being referred to us for. The goal in this was to lessen the individual caseloads of agency staff which would allow more time to be allocated to students severely in need of our services. From a community member standpoint, the benefits of the research being shared with them would assist them in education and growth regarding mental health. Being able to better understand their child will ultimately lead to creating supporting mechanisms that are sustainable and healthy. By creating this foundation for parents and their children, we were also hoping they benefited in understanding how to create and cultivate healthy relationships.

### **Implementation**

The project carried out as we worked to ultimately provide resources to support the absence of knowledge as a way to have low income demographic communities meet the social and behavioral needs of their students, occurred by creating a list of resources and best practices which were shared with community members. Once all information and resources were collected they were shared via Zoom as a live presentation for parents. The demographic that Everett Alvarez High School's Wellness Centers work with are individuals who often are spanish speakers, did not have access to secondary schooling, or do not have the literacy skills to research out resources to best support their children. Through research, I was able to find

research that described best practices to reach low income families, primarily hispanic communities. Such research has shown that the best approach to access minority demographic communities is person to person contact, but as we are in the midst of a pandemic, we took safety precautions and worked to reach these communities vocally in a different way (Torres, Guerra, Caal & Li, 2020). In order to best meet their needs while working to meet that conversational effect, the creation of the presentation was produced as a possible way to mimic the conversation that could possibly occur if in person.

I conducted the research to allocate the resources we shared with the community by researching scholarly sources on the topic I covered in my project. After all the information that would be shared was chosen and finalized, I began the creation of the presentation of all information that was to be shared and which was given two sessions. This project became an idea for me as our agency had noticed many parents had been communicating their feeling of overwhelmedness due to the inability to meet the social, mental, or behavioral needs of their children. During virtual learning, we have had many parents share they are unaware of what's wrong with their kid and their feeling of inability to support them which is normal and common as many students have been able to hide these needs as they are often away in school. Providing health resources is always important as low income communities often lack the advocacy for resources needed in these communities, and providing additional resources about how they could support and meet their child's emotional and behavioral needs was essential as well. The only concern that has been worrisome through developing this idea has been the concern of being able to reach a greater audience, but we believed a sense of conversation would assist us in accessing the community more effectively.

The following *Scope of Work Timeline* (Table 1 in Appendix) gave a detailed timeline as to when specific research and items was completed in order to achieve the completion of this project.

Research on the community was also done to allocate specific resources we would be sharing with community members, following that we researched social and emotional support practices for high school students, specifically through virtual learning. After research was done, a rough draft of the presentation was created which was followed by making adjustments if needed and adding more resources as needed as well. Once editing was finalized, project participants were invited to attend the presentation which is where the project was assessed.

### **Problem Description**

As we have transitioned into virtual learning, it has become more difficult to support the social and behavioral needs of students within our high school campus. According to the NEST annual data collection, from the beginning of virtual learning to February of 2021, the NEST referrals nearly doubled (NEST Referrals, 2021). Due to their virtual learning and the enforcement of being home during their current learning, parents have struggled to meet such behavioral and social needs mentioned before. Dealing with stressors, anxieties, and acts of resistance has been confusing to parents to deal with as teachers, administrators, as staff at the NEST wellness center would often deal with these emotions when they were on campus. The causes of this frustration has led to an overwhelming need of support for our 9th through 12th grade students, but due to limited intervention specialists and counselors, it has become more difficult to check in and meet their needs. This is why providing different social and behavioral resources to parents to assist them in the support of their children was a beneficial idea to the community we serve.

Providing tips of healthy communication, grounding techniques which are different ways to ease mental health struggles (Therapist Aid, 2021). Being able to do this would allow an opportunity

for educational growth for parents and children as well as the opportunity to lessen the caseloads for NEST staff. The micro and macro level needs intertwine with one another as we are meeting the social and behavioral needs with supporting and educating parents who have not had much exposure to healthy mechanisms to use in supporting their children. Being able to provide this support will allow for parents and children to better deal with their emotional needs that society may flare up.

In the graphic below, you will see a breakdown of the different micro and macro level issues my project will work to address.

<b>Contributing Factors to Agency Problem</b>	<b>Agency Specific “Micro-level Problem Addressed By Project</b>	<b>Consequences to Agency</b>
Virtual learning	Lack of support for mental health needs of students  Increased parent calls	Increased caseload for NEST staff  High number of stress, anxiety, depression, etc referrals

More specifically, my project will work to meet the micro level problem as this immediately affects students currently as well as the agency. Due to virtual learning, this need is more immediate as it allows for students needs to be met now, rather than in the future.

We have seen students struggling within their academics due to their emotional and social needs not being met because of virtual learning. The NEST has also seen the need for academic support has increased which is why an “Academic Intervention” was created for students with three or more “F” grade letters, as well as a wellness check in. Providing resources for parents will allow

for the student's needs to potentially be met in their home which impacts the needs of services from the NEST as well. The students at EAHS are primarily "Hispanic or Latino" with 90.2% identifying as such and 74.4% being identified as "Socially disadvantaged" (Redondo, 2019). As mentioned before, these communities are very under served due to various barriers. Being able to work to meet their needs, as most are socially disadvantaged, allows our agency to close the gaps and support their parents in breaking the barriers that disadvantage our students.

### **Assessment Plan**

Through my capstone project, the expected outcome was to be able to provide parents with adequate resources to best be able to support their child's mental and behavioral needs. The sharing of resources was done by presenting them via powerpoint to share all information gathered. The way our outcome measures were assessed was through a post survey (See in Appendix) that participants took with questions pertaining to the presentation. Our expected outcome was for parents to gain knowledge on the resources that were shared to assist them in better supporting their children. To gain better clarity on the outcomes, we have pinpointed the short term, intermediate, and long term outcomes. Our short term outcome was to be able assist parents in having access to resources that can support parents in supporting their children to decrease NEST referrals for staff. The intermediate outcome for this project was to have parents support their children with the mental and behavioral needs they have. Lastly, the long term outcome/impact that is hoped for is to have parents and children learn to build healthy relationships.

### **Findings**

The presentation was given 3 times to different parents available to attend the presentation which in total we had 6 parents attend. Each parent was asked to identify something they were able to

learn if they learned something through the presentation. Through the survey given, all 6 participants identified they were able to gain knowledge on something via the presentation given. Some of the concepts specifically mentioned that was new information for them included topics such as effective healthy communication and grounding techniques for students dealing with anxiety or pain attacks. The project was successful in being able to share information and increase knowledge for project participants.

### **Assessment Results**

Once the implementation process took place and the presentation was assessed using the post test with our participants, the overall findings were that the presentation was effective. Through parent feedback via the post survey, the short term goal was achieved. Though some challenges interfered such as schedule changes and COVID19 stalling the timeline, the project was able to be assessed and attained the goal. One of the major challenges was being able to get parents to attend as our presentation was virtual so we accommodated and made the times of the presentations in the evening for parents to attend. Although there was not a high number in the audience, the outcome goal was achieved according to what participating parents shared.

### **Recommendations**

Overall, the goal of the project was achieved according to the data collected which is of importance to the agency as this similar route can be taken in the future. Through my experience with the implementation of this project, the importance of audience participation was not a priority as the primary goal was to be able to provide an accurate and effective presentation. Based on this experience, one recommendation I would make for the agency if a similar project like the one presented occurs in the future is to work on creating access to the community by interpersonal communication and relationship building. The assumption that being virtual played

a major role in the access to parents is very important to highlight as if this similar project would happen virtually again, I'd recommend taking a different approach in regards to the parent population one chooses to target. A recommendation to combat the limitations of access would be to expand one's targeted audience as that can affect the ability to gather data when assessing the project.

My final recommendation for the agency would be to work to highlight the importance of educational resources that can be shared to the community being served. Using the knowledge that professional staff have at the agency would be very beneficial to be used in future presentations and projects like this moving forward. I believe the access to community resources parents can be presented with may make a difference as they can use this information to not only educate themselves, but to create a better and more supportive environment for the students the agency is serving. If the agency uses this as a possible stepping stone to work to incorporate the community and parents more often, I believe that it can have a positive future effect for parents, students, and their households.

### **Conclusion & Personal Reflection**

Transitioning into my personal experience with the creation and implementation of this project, I can whole heartily share this was a huge learning experience. My experience with this capstone project was challenging, but surreal in seeing what I was able to accomplish. Through this experience, there were various personal challenges that arose for me, but through those challenges, I was able to really understand my resilience and ability to overcome obstacles. I believe that one of the biggest challenges while being one of the most beneficial aspects of this project is the constructive feedback given to us which I am walking away from this with a new appreciation for.



The opportunity to intern at the NEST for the last three semesters has been one of the most rewarding and growing experiences I have had and I truly couldn't be more grateful. My mentor trusted me and supported me every step of the way which gave me a sense of confidence I truly am so proud of. Having the opportunity to work with students and expand my knowledge and experience on how to support their mental health needs and challenges is one I will truly carry with me forever. To conclude, a pandemic was the last thing any of my colleagues and I expected in our last semesters of undergraduate, but there's always a lesson somewhere and through this we learn about ourselves, our capabilities, our strengths, and our ability to overcome obstacles no matter what. I am eternally grateful to the CHHS program for the endless encouragement, support, and guidance that they gave me throughout my time as a CSUMB student.

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**Appendix**

**Table 1**

<b>Table 1. Scope of Work</b>			
<b>Title: Cultivating Healthy Relationships Between Parents and Students</b>			
<b>Project description: This capstone idea came up as we have seen a need within parents on how they can effectively support their child through virtual learning. I hope to focus on providing resources to parents on how they can better support their child, not only educationally, but also through social, emotional, and behavioral attributes. A powerpoint will be created and presented to the parents of the students we work with at the EAHS Wellness Center.</b>			
<b>Goal: Have guardians better understand how to support and validate their child’s mental and behavioral needs.</b>			
<b>Primary objective of the project: Have our EAHS students be supported educationally, mentally, and behaviorally as our mission states we work towards.</b>			
<b>Phases</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Timeline/deadlines</b>
Plan Project	Begin research of resources	Final capstone project idea approved & draft of information to be shared in community created	December 3 - January 28

	Create outline of resources in community & research needed to meet agency needs		
Research	Research resource and analyze information to be included in presentation	Initial Draft Presentation	January 28 - March 10
Create & Complete Project	Create and complete presentation with resources Edit and finalize parent presentation	Final Parent Presentation	February 3 - April 1
Implement Project	Set time & date for project participants to attend Gather participants & Create assessment tool	Implementation Post Survey	April 10 - April 25
Present and Assess Project	Present resources to parents and assess via post test	Presentations Assessing Project	April 28
Report on Project Findings	Complete report requirements Capstone Festival Prep	Capstone Paper Capstone Festival Presentation	April 29 - May 7
Final Report	Final preparation for Capstone Festival	Final presentation at Capstone Festival!!	May 14

**Survey**

## Post Survey: Cultivating Healthy Relationships Presentation

Thank you so much for attending our presentation! Please fill out the following questions that will be used to assess how effective the presentation given was. If you have any questions while filling out the form, please don't hesitate to ask!

\* Required

Are you the parent or guardian of a High School student? \*

- Yes
- No
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Prior to this presentation, how knowledgeable were you in different techniques to ease one's mental health struggles? \*

- 1    2    3    4    5
- No knowledge at all                        Very knowledgeable

Prior to this presentation, did you have an understanding of how to identify anxiety or depression? \*

- 1    2    3    4    5
- No understanding of how to identify                        Could identify anxiety or depression

Through this presentation were you able to learn something new today? \*

- Yes
- No

Please identify what new information you learned today. \*

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_