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You Matter: Finding School Based Support For Children Dealing with Mental Health Challenges

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Challenges

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Abstract

This study sheds light on the importance of providing easily accessible mental health support to all students. Advocating for mental health is important as the number of students who are suffering from mental health challenges increases. It is argued that many students are currently suffering from depression and anxiety and unfortunately schools are not doing a satisfactory job of providing support.After conducting research through the use of a survey and interviewing a school psychologist three different action options were thoroughly discussed to find school based support for children dealing with mental health challenges. Providing a permanent specialist and implementing a wellness center within the school, it is argued to be the most effective way to achieve the goals of providing school support for children who are dealing with mental health issues.

Setting the Stage

Imagine waking up one day and feeling flustered because you do not quite understand your feelings or what exactly is going on with your feelings at the age of 12. I felt that. I remember waking up one day and constantly questioning myself on what was going on because of the confusion that lay within my head. There were days where I would wake up and feel flustered because I was just confused on what I was feeling. I never reached out to anyone because I assumed that what I was feeling was just something that I was going through because it was a rollercoaster of emotions that I have never felt before. There were consistent days that threw me off because I would go throughout the day and have some breakdown episode because I was sad. I remember thinking to myself that there was no way that this could be anxiety or even could be some type of mental health source because it was just something I felt but never pursued the curious thought of what exactly was going on. I finally woke up one day and did my research because my feelings and thoughts never went away. I logged onto the computer one day at school and did my research. After about an hour of googling the symptoms I had and the thoughts I had, it was confirmed that I had anxiety and was severely depressed. I was baffled because I never knew this was something that could happen to me because I was always under the impression that anxiety and depression only happened to veterans because I was 12 and did not understand any better. I constantly wondered how this formed, but then I realized that it formed because of the type of insecurity that I had always gone through. I would constantly tell myself that I was not good enough nor was I ever going to be good enough, it baffled me because I was 12 and this age is usually the prime time age where children build the foundation of their life. I finally decided that I did not want to live a life where I was consistently sad or upset, so I

finally reached out to my school to ask about the resources that were available for students who

face mental health issues. I was told that there were no resources because "no student ever goes

through mental health issues." Hearing that broke me. It broke me because it honestly felt like

my feelings were invalidated. I felt like I had no one to talk to because my friends never spoke

up about mental health issues, so I assumed they never knew what that meant because we were

all 12. No 12 year old should ever experience mental health issues at such a young age, but

society has developed so much over time that the idea of a 12 year old facing mental health

issues is considered the norm. After thinking about this and questioning myself, I finally spoke

up to my friends because they were the only people I felt safe speaking to about this. I was

wrong, I was told why I did not speak to the counselor and why did I not reach out to someone

sooner. My feelings were invalidated, just as I feared for them to once again. I told myself that I

would never allow for someone to feel invalidated the way that I did because I personally felt

some type of embarrassment. I felt embarrassed in a sense that it felt like everyone assumed that

I was making this stuff up in my head when I was not. This is my influence to change things.

After experiencing and acknowledging that I personally go through mental health issues, I made

it clear to myself that I never want anyone to feel invalidated the way that I did nor do I want

them to be afraid to speak up. Ultimately, I am choosing to move forward by looking into the

types of resources that are available to middle school students when it comes to mental health

issues since it is looked at as a norm in today's society.

Literature Synthesis & Integration

Oftentimes people do not come to terms with their mental health until after school because they contain this thought that they feel invalidated because at such a young age, we are taught that we do not understand the idea of what mental health and it's struggles mean even though most times mental health is commonly found to start within the age groups of 12-14. Children may be afraid to speak up about having mental health struggles because of the stigma that having some type of mental health is seen as needing assistance. Ultimately, there may be many questions about what schools are doing to support their students.

What is the Problem?

The most common problem in today's age is that most children understand the concept of what mental health is, but unfortunately the way that schools and society portray this idea comes off as offensive. It is also not uncommon nowadays for this next generation of children to be familiar with both perspectives of mental health because of how often and how much they praise the idea of being familiar with their mental health. It is said that by having children educated about their mental health before conceptualizing fully formed mental health problems, the possibility of preventing the formation of negative attitudes to assist the idea of accurate understanding of psychiatric disorders (Wahl, O. F., Susin, J., Kaplan, L., Lax, A., & Zatina, D. 2011). By doing this, it allows for children to recognize and familiarize themselves with the possibility of gaining more knowledge before attempting the idea of trying to self diagnose which could potentially be more beneficial to those who are not comfortable with the idea of reaching out to a professional.

Oftentimes, most parents are unaware of the fact that their children are facing the struggles of mental health challenges. Although this may be the case, most parental figures are now trying to be involved with their children's well being and whether or not they need professional help. One curriculum that has helped children get educated on this topic is Breaking the Silence: Teaching the Next Generation About Mental Illnesses. This program was formed in efforts to help veteran teachers who also play the role of parents who have children with mental illnesses (Wahl, O. F., Susin, J., Kaplan, L., Lax, A., & Zatina, D. 2011). Ultimately, by providing this type of program to students, they are capable of offering the type of assistance that most students may need due to the lack of assistance that they may feel.

Why is it an Issue?

Due to the fact that many students face mental illnesses, it is a crucial factor that students receive the help that they may be seeking because without it students are facing crises that affect them negatively especially when it comes to school. It has been acknowledged that there have been many argued observations towards the topic of mental health resources being implemented in school systems (Slade, E. 2003). Though this may be the case, there are many factorable arguments on why schools are slacking on providing these types of resources to their children. The first factorable argument that takes place is how schools are defining their mental health services as a broad topic that potentially reflects diverse needs of students in different types of learning needs (Franklin, C. G., Kim, J. S., Ryan, T. N., Kelly, M. S., & Montgomery, K. L. 2012). Not only is this seen as some type of ignorance, but it is also portrayed as slacking behavior. This could potentially be seen as slacking due to the type of restriction that the school is leaving up because mental health is seen as a vague topic that many adults are afraid to speak up about. It is also concerning that many teachers are pretty unaware of the idea of mental health with their middle school students as well because it comes off that teachers themselves do not quite understand nor do they contain the knowledge of what mental health even is. It is said that the type of programs provided focus solely on the idea of trying to resolve psychological problems (Franklin, C. G., Kim, J. S., Ryan, T. N., Kelly, M. S., & Montgomery, K. L. 2012). The problem with this being the case is that not all students suffer with just psychological problems, but rather the term "mental illness" is such an umbrella term that there are much more factors when it comes to mental illness that are often blocked off or not given enough recognition because of the fact that not many children are diagnosed with this type of illness or that the

children are incapable of knowing what it is because it could potentially be a form of mental illness that society is not used to highlighting. Another arguably debate that could cause tension between everyone is that those who are not mentally ill are considered to be tenuously mentally healthy (Keyes, C. L. 2006).

There are also many different factors that allow for students to be considered as mentally healthy. Thus being that they are labeled this way so that way there is a positive outlook on mental challenge issues rather than looking at it in a negative type of connotation. The importance of providing assistance to those students and encouraging them to learn more about the concept of mental challenges allow for children to implicate the idea of the positive end of the mental health spectrum along with positive mental health development rather than focusing solely on the negative form of development that takes place (Keyes, C. L. 2006). The type of positive reinforcement that could potentially help students in the future is by allowing them access to the understanding of what mental health is and by allowing for them to provide insight on what they know because by doing this, it later allows them to realize what they know and what other knowledge they can gain when it comes to this topic of focus. The most familiar way that schools are implementing this idea is through a test called the Knowledge Test. By completing this test, students are capable of responding to scenarios that show how much they understand the idea of what mental health is. Teachers often meet curriculum by doing this when they can provide results to the school about the type of knowledge that the students contain because their results are later used on to assist the school on how they can help provide better assistance to those in need (Watson, A. C., Otey, E., Westbrook, A. L., Gardner, A. L., Lamb, T. A., Corrigan, P. W., & Fenton, W. S. 2004).

Lastly, it is also unrecognized that the idea of mental illness causes a negative impact on how children may end up presenting themselves to those around them. The stigma that affects this overall is the fact that children may fear the stigma that there is some type of influence on their social demeanor because they may contain some sort of mental illness (Henderson, P. 1993). The types of outcomes as well as the type of knowledge that can be gained is what allows for researchers to pursue interest in this topic as mental illness is a bigger issue in this generation because of how many children and adolescents face this issue.

What Should be Done?

Over time as this issue has grown, researchers have believed that students are in need of this conversation and education because of the rates of child loss due to mental challenges. One core factor that assists this to be a successful core curriculum is by providing the schools with the right resources and right people who are certified in this field of study. It has become more apparent in some schools that it is recognized that school itself is potentially the reason as to why students are taking tolls on their mental health. By understanding this, researchers have made it a point in trying to help better understand and guide their students to helping better understand the struggles they are facing when it comes to this issue (Slade, E. 2003). By doing this research, teachers and staff have been able to recognize the types of tolls that are being presented upon students which allows for them to realize the type of assistance that they are seeking. The schools in today's society are choosing to do this by reaching out to professionals, as well as state issues to help schools fund for mental illness resources for students such as trying to receive reimbursements when they are funding specifically for student health (Slade, E. 2003). Lastly, it is also known and recognized that schools are trying to help assist students because they realize

that they are trying to find more evaluations on how they could successfully and effectively use

their funds towards this important issue (Slade, E. 2003).

Conclusion

The idea of opening up the learning portal of mental illness to students at young ages, even as young as adolescence, could potentially provide more insight as well as positive outcomes for students in a sense that mental illness could be looked at in a positive light rather than something negative because of the numerous amounts of research being done to help students rather than being ignored. It is quite unfortunate that not all schools are providing the right amount of insight for their students because they turn a blind eye to this topic. Schools that have been successful with this topic often implement the idea of mental illness within their curriculum which also assists them in providing correct and accurate insight as to how students could potentially reach out for help when it does come to this topic.

Methods

For this Capstone Project, researchers investigated how mental health challenges in youth have risen at an alarming rate and what to do about this trend. Based on an analysis of data and literature reviews, the researchers used their knowledge to prepare an action plan to inform parents, students, community partners, and staff about the types of resources, if any, that are being provided for their students. Ultimately, this is important because mental health plays a more significant role in today's society, and it is often a struggle for most students to seek support.

Context

The Monterey Peninsula Unified School District is located on the Central Coast of California in Monterey. The district was established in 1961 in Monterey Bay. This district stretches along many cities that lie within Monterey county such as Marina, Del Rey Oaks, Monterey, Sand City, and even Seaside. This district consists of many schools that lie within these cities along with implementing the teaching method of being a Traditional School which also means this is why they are considered as Public Schools. This district is considered community-oriented because of how well known this district is. The district's ultimate vision is to "envision a school system that serves all students well, and engages each student in deep learning that prepares them to solve the challenges of the 21st century."

Participants and Participant Selection

Based on our research, we chose this district due to the location and ability of communication. This seemed most convenient to us because of the fact that this district was easily accessible to us as well as being easily reachable. Unfortunately, we reached a time in our project where the interview process had gone wrong so we took matters into our own hands and still strived to hear the many voices that we were eager to hear from. This stemmed from attending a meeting that taught us more about AIMS as well as going through the length of speaking to a school social worker. After conducting those steps of research, we then sent out a survey to 18 students which then was completed over zoom. After conducting the interview process, we then gathered all the data and concluded our research.

Researcher

This topic is meaningful to us because we know from personal experience how difficult it is to deal with mental health problems and not have a safe place to share your discomforts. We know all the hardships that come along with mental health challenges and how it may be hard to go through the day when a voice whispers in your ear that you are not good enough. We believe that we are qualified to carry out this project because we know what is to come when there is no support. Therefore, finding school-based support for children dealing with mental health challenges is vital for students to thrive in school. We remembered to stay mindful of what we were asking to not accidentally trigger the interviewee. We also made sure to be conscious of any biases.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

1. What is your gender identity?

2. What racial/ethnic group do you belong to?

3. From a scale from one to five how would you rate your awareness of mental health? One being not aware and five being aware.

4. What does mental health mean to you?

5. Is there an increased need for mental health services within the youth community?

6. Do you think you are being supported by your school when it comes to mental health?

7. How comfortable are you with having conversations about mental health?

8. If you were going through a challenging time, where would you go for support?

9. Do you think your school would benefit from an on campus wellness center (that supports mental health, education/career and offers family support services)?

10. If a wellness center is implemented, how likely are youth to utilize the space and services?

11. What benefits come from wellness centers ?

12. Since opening your doors in 2019 has there been an increase in students coming forth who need support?

13. What services are offered at the wellness center?

Procedure

Participants were given a survey that consisted of 9 questions regarding mental health. The surveys were sent out April 27, 2022 and were taken by 18 students. Participants were also interviewed. All interviews were done individually. When it was not possible to interview the two participants in person, they were invited to complete a zoom interview. A semi- structured interview was used for the zoom interviews, to allow for follow-up questions to unclear, interesting or unexpected responses. All interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee and took approximately 15 minutes to complete. The survey was closed May 1st, 2022 and the data was gathered.

Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews were coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

Results

For this Capstone Project, middle school students were given a survey to see what they think could be done to improve the resources that are provided to them regarding their mental health.We also interviewed a school Social worker, Intervention Specialist, and a counselor to gather more data on the effectiveness of wellness centers. This is important because several students are faced with mental health challenges and are not supported by their schools. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature three themes emerged (see Table 1). Evidence-based decision making required evaluating each potential Action Option by the following criteria: Effectiveness; Accessibility; and Cost. By implementing all three evaluation items, schools would get a better understanding of what types of resources they could potentially offer to their students based on their mental health needs. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option an action will be recommended and justified.

Table 1

Evaluation of Action Options

	Effectiveness	Accessibility	Cost
Wellness center	High	High	High
Train staff members	Moderate	High	Low
Hire a mental health professional	High	Moderate	High

Wellness Center/Action Option 1

The Salinas unified school district will be the pioneers of implementing Wellness Centers within the school setting in the Monterey peninsula school district. Wellness centers are fairly new and Harden middle school is in its third year. The Harden middle school has a wellness team that consists of thirteen professionals, including two community health and human services interns, four counselors, a intervention specialist, one social worker, a school psychologist, a behavioral health therapist, and other working members to help support students from various issues that may be harming their mental health.

Schools in Sacramento county and Fresno county have implemented school based wellness centers and now the Fresno county's Office of Education has clinicians in 107 schools and eventually plan to have clinicians in all 300 of their schools (Jones). San Francisco Unified is another district that has opened wellness centers and currently operates at 19 different schools helping over 16,000 students (sf wellness). According to the San Francisco wellness center the center's goal is to "assist with connecting with all students, with focus on the most vulnerable students and families to assess basic needs," as well as " connecting with existing Wellness clients, especially students who were in crisis to help them manage their stress, depression, family, chronic health issues, etc." The wellness centers are there to increase the overall wellbeing of their students.

Another school that is doing an effective job of supporting their students is a high school in Palo Alto, California. In 2016 the wellness center located at the Palo Alto school had been

visited about 2,500 times less than three months into the school year (Kadvany). Wellness

centers were curated to meet the needs of the students and are meant to be a safe space for all

students to come to whenever they need help. Ranging from a variety of things such as taking a

break, needing guidance or simply to eat a snack. According to Kadvany 29% of students came

in for social or emotional issues regarding home and social life and 62% of students sought help

due to mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and other disorders causing a strain on their

mental well being. The wellness center located at Harden middle school in Salinas, California

also shares its successes. As it is improving the attendance rate and behavioral issues. The

Wellness center not only is accessible to students in person but can also be accessed through

virtual means of communication. Virtual calming rooms are offered and students have access to

twelve different rooms that they can access at any time (HMS). Wellness centers are a perfect

way for students to reach out and connect with specialists who are focused on giving school

based support.

This action option is highly effective, as it will allow students to go to a space that fully

supports their needs and mental well being. The accessibility will also be high since the wellness

center will be on-site and students would be able to easily walk over. School districts would hire

more counselors, social workers, and psychologists to support their student needs but cost can be

of concern because of funding. However the cost would be low as nonprofits and other agencies

would pay for a majority of the services. A con of this action option is that parents would be

against their students going to get help due to the stigma that surrounds mental health.

Trained Staff Members /Action Option 2

Oftentimes it is commonly questioned on why students do not speak up about their mental health or why they seem to shut it down when the topic itself is brought up. After thorough thought and research, a new action option had become present. This action option being that staff members gain experience with Mental Health Awareness training. They can often gain the experience by attending workshops hosted by the school district that teaches staff the basic understanding of what mental health challenges are, how to understand the signs, and how to help resolve or attempt to resolve the signs. They could potentially host this training weeks prior from when school starts so that way they are capable of refreshing their understanding or even getting started with completing their required training. By having staff members train in this specific field, it could cause great assistance to students who are constantly looking out for help but are afraid of reaching out because they fear that they have no reliable resource in tact. When reflecting off of the type of effectiveness this action option holds, it looks quite moderate to me because of the fact that even though students do find comfort in speaking to some teachers, there may be a possibility that even though the comfort is there the student still may not even speak up about what they are possibly going through.

Accessibility on the other hand would have no problem at all and would be considered as highly accessible since the resources that the students would be needing are staff members. After thoroughly reflecting back on the given surveys, it has been brought to my attention that it is most common for students to find comfort most in reaching out to their teachers for these specific types of conversation. I do find that being there as some type of guidance is what most teachers sign up for because students oftentimes look up to their teachers most. By thinking about the pros and cons of this option, there may be trouble in a sense that the staff member

either may not be capable of helping the student who reached out or the possibility of obtaining confidentiality may not be present based on the level of severity.

Assigning Mental Health Professionals /Action Option 3

On- site mental health professionals are essential to creating and sustaining safe spaces for students. They are educated and trained to provide adequate resources and help students dealing with mental health challenges. Having a school based mental health professional who specializes in mental health can help destigmatize the topic and make it safer for students to reach out. Moreover, it is effective in having a professional at school as it will be easily accessible for students who do not have the resources outside of school to speak to someone. Although there are already school counselors working in schools, hiring a therapist or a psychologist would benefit the students as well as easing up on the caseloads that each counselor has.

This action is highly effective, as on-site mental health professionals are specifically tasked with helping students with mental health challenges and disorders. With the implementation of specialized mental health workers, students will benefit greatly. The accessibility may be moderate because it may not be easy to have a mental health professional at every school in the Monterey Peninsula due to the cost being high.

Recommendation

After thorough thought between all three options, we recommend that schools implement wellness centers on campus as well as hiring mental health professionals to help better assist their students' needs. Based on the results and data that we have gathered, there is confidence that

these are the best solutions to help students better understand and cope with their mental health challenges. Ultimately, these next couple of sections will discuss my concessions, limitations, and even potential negative outcomes that my project may entail.

Concessions

Though the two options of implementing a wellness center as well as hiring mental health professionals are what we had leaned towards, the other option of training staff members would still be considerable as it does itself have its own potential strengths if the idea is implemented. For example, this action option allows for more awareness to take place as well as the school community representing that they care about their students because this option allows for staff members to understand the idea of mental health challenges as well as being capable of pointing out the symptoms and knowing exactly how to help/provide guidance for their students. The main point literature wise when having teachers train in this situation is that the classroom environment would change in a positive way rather than negatively (For Educators). By bringing more awareness as well as involving staff members more when it comes to this topic allows for more students to feel as if a safe space for them is implemented daily. It is quite unfortunate but if there is no significant change that takes place, this problem of mental health challenges within the youth would still be present and still be considered as a problem in today's society. Unlike the other two action options, the cost of this action option would be considered to be the cheapest option since it would only require the staff members to gain training from a certified individual who best represents this case on campus and can do so by teaching and providing the correct training that staff members need. Ultimately, it does not go unnoticed that though this is

something we would not recommend first this is still something that we believe contains its own strengths to even be possible in being considered.

Limitations

Although we had chosen the action options of implementing a wellness center and hiring a mental health professional, there are still limitations that arise in these action options. For example, the focus of these action options are so that students have reliable and easily accessible resources to better help them understand and speak about the challenges that they are facing. It is quite unfortunate but we are not guaranteeing that every student will be using the wellness center or even attempting to reach out to the mental health professionals. This ultimately means that even though the resources are there and they are professionally reliable, it does not mean that every student will consider using the resources that are being provided for them.

Potential negative outcomes

After thinking about both action options, there may be potential negative outcomes that should be considered. For instance, by hiring a professional mental health doctor, the students may feel pressured or even intimidated because of the title that this person obtains. Along with that, by implementing a wellness center, students may feel discouraged or even embarrassed at even showing face in this center because they may contain the fear of potentially seeing their friends there without planning it. The reality of these ideas are that the feeling of fear and intimidation are what would possibly lie most within these students. Ultimately, there may be a possibility that the wellness center and mental health professional be let go due to the lack of students who are using their resources.

Conclusion

Despite all of the limitations and potential negative outcomes, we still recommend and still lean towards the idea of implementing a wellness center as well as hiring a mental health professional to help better support the needs of their students. These two action options contain the strongest reach of all three options due to the credibility of these resources being provided as well as how reliable these resources would be considered. Once students are comfortable with speaking up about their mental health as well as using these resources, it would be better in a sense that they would be capable of referring these resources to their friends along with those who are considered to be younger than them. By reaching out to the students who face mental health challenges, this should be the main priority of what resources students may need implemented for them. Adding on to this I do believe that if we as a society want to deteriorate the statistics of mental health challenges within the youth, then we need to start providing better resources along with listening to our students when needed. It is apparent that these two action options are superior and listed as top two because these would be the best solutions moving forward.

Action Documentation

Mental health is a major topic of concern in the youth community. Middle school students are at high risk of developing mental health challenges. Often they do not get the support that they need because there are no resources that are accessible to them. Low self esteem, feelings of worthlessness, a loss of passion, and no motivation can lead to a more severe problem if they are continuously ignored. Therefore,finding school based support is essential in helping students get the proper support they need while dealing with mental health challenges.Three action option plans emerged after conducting research on the relevant literature and collecting data from surveys and interviews. The survey results as well as the two interviews with the stakeholders helped us identify our action options. The first option is to implement wellness centers in the schools located in the Monterey Peninsula school district. The second option is to get better training for teachers to better equip them when dealing with students who may be dealing with mental health challenges. The third and final option is to hire a mental health professional that are   on-site for the students as a way to better assist the students' needs. The recommended action option is a combination of implementing wellness centers on campus as well as hiring mental health professionals to help better assist their students' needs. This action option was chosen based on the data collected from a survey, an interview with a school social worker, and scholarly studies on mental health.

The recommended actions were suggested through emails that were written and addressed to the superintendent and assistant superintendent of a California school district. The emails explained that after intensive research, analysis of literature and the data collected from the survey and interviews, two action options emerged that state that schools should begin implementing

wellness centers and hiring mental health professionals and having them on-site for more

accessible support. Additionally the email explained what the issue was, the action options, and

explained the importance of the action option.

Lastly, the emails thoroughly explained our Capstone Project and the formulated actions to address

the issue at hand. It was explained that our action is only a suggestion and should be shared to

others in hope of spreading awareness on mental health challenges in the youth and finding

school based support. We did receive a response from the assistant superintendent and he

directed us to someone who he believes can help with our action plans. Unfortunately, for the

superintendent we have not received a reply regarding our email and recommended action plan.
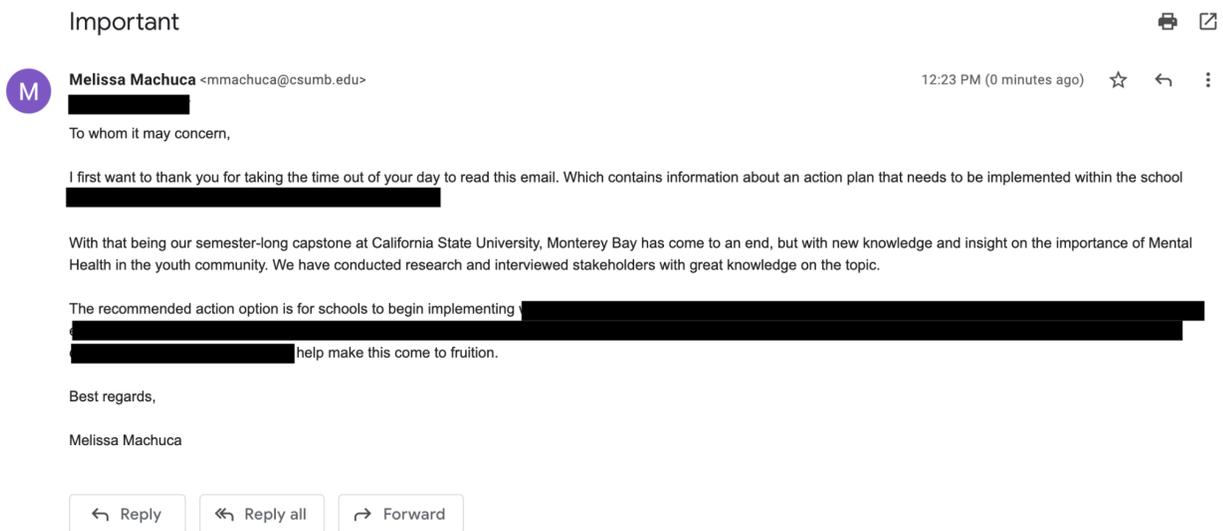

Image 1. A screenshot of an email sent to the assistant superintendent of a California unified school
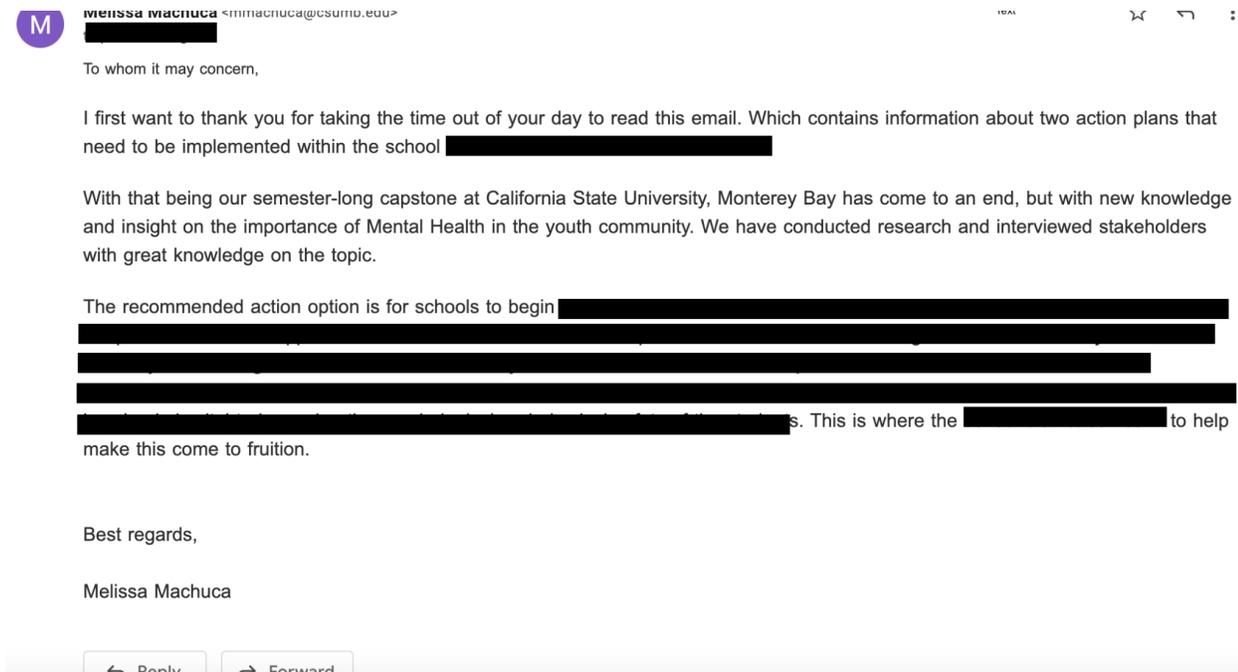
district.

Image 2. A screenshot of an email sent to the superintendent of a California unified school district

After completing our research and collecting data, we were not surprised by how many middle school students felt unsupported by their school when it came to their mental well being. However, we did not expect to have 18 students take our survey; we thought we would only receive 3 to 5 back. So when we checked our data we were shocked by how many students took the time out of their day to take our survey to help us help them. Before we began our Capstone project, we wish we would have known how to manage our time more effectively to allow us to not feel so overwhelmed.

The critical next step after completing our Capstone project is to continue advocating for mental health in the youth and find them school-based support so they can finally begin their journey of healing. It is vital to remain informed about the severity of mental health and the harmful effects when they do not receive the help they need.

Critical Reflection

Reflecting back onto the first day when I walked into Professor Patty Whang's class, I had little

to no clue on what exactly would go down in this course because all I had known was I had to

create my senior project, also known as my capstone project. I was so excited and thrilled to hear

that I was capable of being creative with a project as I had the ability to choose exactly what I

wanted to do. I have always been passionate about the topic of mental health awareness as well

as bringing it to light whenever it came to the youth because of how often this issue is

overlooked. It saddened me most when reading the responses as to how children genuinely felt

like they were receiving little to no help when it came to their mental health. Through many trial

and errors of trying to complete the interview portion, my partner and I finally got what we

needed and that was a voice that was capable of answering our questions. I was quite frustrated

from a certain time due to the amount of times that my partner and I had gotten flaked on or even

given the benefit of the doubt after being confirmed that we were capable of setting up

interviews with the people that we needed to interview with. After speaking with my professor

along with continually working with my partner, I found that I was going to be okay and that we

would be capable of finishing this project because of the drive that both my partner and I had.

After going through the many challenges of this capstone project, I do feel that the process of

getting to the end is definitely worth all the stress and frustration that came along with it. As my

plan to be a future educator is still in thought, I am proud of the progress and process that I

experienced for my project as now I have the resources and thought process to attempt at

bettering our school system for young adolescents who need help with mental health. Ultimately

moving forward, I plan to voice my opinions to the schools as well as trying to get there to be

changed sooner rather than later.

Synthesis and Integration

My college experience here at Cal State Monterey Bay has definitely been a rollercoaster. I went from coming into this school being so confident in what I wanted to do to switching my major and even thinking about switching it again another time. After time and time, I finally settled on Liberal Studies. The coursework requirements, the Liberal Studies MLOs, along with the action research project has made an impact on my life as well as providing me with the proper knowledge and experience that I may require if I plan to pursue this issue. The two MLOs that I do feel stuck with me throughout this process have been MLO 1, Developing Educator, and MLO 5, Subject Matter Generalist. Based off of MLO 1, I am thankful for gaining the experience of hearing from professionals within this field as well as being capable of connecting with them because gaining all the knowledge I have. I can confidently say that I do not doubt my skills to think, write, and speak critically through the context of a California educator representing the main point of my project. Following along with that, I do feel my confidence with gaining knowledge from MLO 5 as I have recently completed my coherent in-depth that became successful within my action project. After thorough thought and research that was conducted, I do hope that I am capable of furthering my research as well as making a little difference sooner or later. As I continue to move forward with my professional career, I feel that I may need to continually familiarize myself with this topic as it is a serious matter, and if this is something that I am trying to make a change in I need the proper resources and assistance to do so. Ultimately, after completing this project I would like to say that my biggest takeaway from this is now that I contain the proper amount of knowledge, I do hope that I can somehow inspire, inform, and

educate those around me who share the same amount of concern when it comes to this topic of

choice.

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