



FOSTERING A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Safe, Supportive and Inclusive Practices in Schools for All Students

All students—including students from historically marginalized populations—have the right to a quality, equitable education in a safe, supportive and inclusive school. We know that every student, regardless of their race, religion, ability or socioeconomic status—can reach their full potential when the school environment is one in which they feel truly valued. PTA advocates for policies and legislation that ensure equity for every student, are grounded in social justice and support the whole child and family.

THE DATA

Every year in the United States, up to **20%** of children and youth experience a mental, emotional or behavioral disorder. ⁱ

Positive school climate has been linked to several important outcomes including increased student self-esteem and self-concept, decreased absenteeism, enhanced risk prevention, **reduced** behavioral problems and disciplinary actions (in-school detention and out-of-school suspension), and **increased** school completion. ⁱⁱ

The better-developed student social and emotional competencies are, the better students do in school and life. This holds for students from different economic backgrounds, races/ethnicities and genders. ⁱⁱⁱ

71% of principals report that they have partly or systematically implemented social-emotional learning programs. ⁱⁱⁱ

WE ADVOCATE TO



Provide and connect students with necessary behavioral and mental health resources at school and in their community.



Improve access to and funding for qualified school-based health and wellness practitioners, such as school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists and school social workers.



Encourage schools to use positive school discipline policies and behavioral interventions and supports that are effective, fair and consistently implemented.



Promote social-emotional learning, including resources for families to support this critical practice at home.

VOICE FROM THE FIELD

Schools are places where much more than academic skills are acquired. Delaware PTA began advocating for elementary school wellness centers when their former Attorney General Matt Denn proposed a set of initiatives and funding to help students in high-poverty elementary schools. Elementary school-based wellness centers provide not only wellness services but immunizations, dental exams, eye exams and sick visits. They also provide critical wrap around services, along with mental health counseling and trauma-informed healthcare. To promote the creation and funding of these centers in high-poverty elementary schools, Delaware PTA mobilized its membership statewide to contact legislators and testify at Legislative Hall in their state capitol. Delaware PTA engaged in coalition building with the Colonial School District, and two legislative champions emerged: Rep. Kim Williams and Rep. Val Longhurst. Legislation passed the Delaware House and Senate and was signed by the Governor, eventually funding two elementary school wellness centers for one year. There are now seven wellness centers in elementary school settings that are state recognized school-based health service provider sites. Delaware PTA remains vigilant in its advocacy as funding for these wellness centers continues to be of concern and the benefits of these centers are worth fighting for.



Sarah Bucic
Delaware PTA



ⁱ <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Mental-Health-Needs-Assessment-Brief-September-2017.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Cohen, J., McCabe, E., Michelli, N., & Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research, policy, practice and teacher education. *Teachers College Record*, 111, 180-213.
ⁱⁱⁱ Conley, D. T. (2010). *College and career ready: Helping all students succeed beyond high school*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

^{iv} https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/AWG-State-of-the-Field-Report_2019_DIGITAL_Final.pdf