

This is regarding the training that would include suicide prevention into the middle and high school curriculum. There are a couple issues that will bring life to what it 's like for the teachers, students and administration.

1. As teachers, we are asked to do so many things in addition to our jobs (almost weekly surveys and presentations that are "required," follow-up with students/parents with immense documentation from the teachers (regarding missing class, assignments overdue or not done, mental health issues, bullying, etc.), and additional trainings that we are required to do and not in our contracts. Consequently, we as teachers are asked to do so much more than the general public ever knows and are expected to do this during our school hours which forces us to work many more hours. I would average 60 hours per week.
2. We are required as teachers to take suicide prevention training every year. We do. This training gives us the background to look for flags and tells us who to refer them to.
3. The behavior specialists have been good and we refer students to counselors (or they request it) all the time. But, they can't do it all.
4. Many times parents don't want to talk about "mental health" issues. So, for teachers, counselors, and administrators to incorporate this training may fall on dead ears (of the parents).
5. Finally many behavior issues go hand-in-hand with potential mental health issues. However, let me give you an example of what I have direct experience: Last year, my team and I had a student who kept running away from home. He would lie to his mom and say he was in school when he wasn't. His mom didn't want to give us a lot of support. He did nothing during the year and was truant. But, of course, he was sent to 8th grade! Sadly, we couldn't get him the services needed to help him enough because he was not in the "system" (judicial) that would allow him to get the mental health and familial support (forced support) because we were short of judges to fill the backlog of cases. He is still "around" but achieving the same results as last year.

A couple actions to consider:

1. We are required to take concussion training as a parent who has a child in sports. This is simply either in-person or an on-line presentation.
2. It goes without saying that each school district needs to communicate with parents and work with them too. **Teachers are just one part of their lives. What about a training or even just an information brochure that is included in the "back to school" packet. Also, an online (video on demand) could be developed by the state and given to each school for their website.** (I did a similar thing when I was on the Governor's Task Force for Wellness and Health in Arizona)
3. Teachers can only do so much. I have developed so many extra presentations for others to use about different topics that we are "required" to teach. However, most teachers would not do that on their own. Considering that, **maybe we can continue the "mental health" training with students that we are required to do because of the pandemic. However, this needs to be created for the teachers because others are the experts. We are observers.**
4. Fund more counselors/social workers to help in the school.

Finally, it's funny to tell you about comments that came from my students last year. About six young middle-school girls were talking about their "therapists" and spoke opening about going to therapy! I've heard that several times!