

Can you recommend a counselor for my high school child who struggles with being motivated to do school work?

Answer: Each high school student has a school counselor assigned to them based on the first letter of their last name. If your child does not know who their school counselor is, each building's webpage contains a list of school counselors and their alphabetic assignment. If you are in search of a counselor outside of the school for support, a list of potential community-based counseling services can be found at: <https://www.dasd.org/Page/6055>

What is the benefit of the Keystones? If I do not believe this is in best interest of my child's mental health, can we opt out? He will take plenty of tests in Algebra, Biology, and Literature. He will take the SAT, ACT, and all the tests, midterms, final exams for all his courses in high school.

Answer: Beginning in 2012-2013, the administration of the subject-specific Keystone exams were required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to replace the PSSA exams at the high school level and to establish proficient performance on the Keystones as a graduation requirement for students. Subsequent legislation has postponed the graduation requirement for students on multiple occasions (currently proficiency will be required for students in order to graduate beginning with the class of 2022), but it remains a requirement that every student take the exams. Chapter 4 of Title 22 of the Pa. Code (22 Pa. code 4.4) does allow for parents/guardians to excuse his/her child from the state assessment, but only if, upon inspection of the testing materials, he/she finds the assessment to be in conflict with his/her religious beliefs. More information about the Keystone exams can be found here: <https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/Pages/Keystone-Exams.aspx>

Do you have an idea of the number of students that may be experiencing thoughts of suicide, or have tried in the past? Have you surveyed students levels regarding emotional/mental health issues to help DASD better develop priority? If this has been done already, can you share the statistics?

Answer: Every two years, students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 at participating schools in Pennsylvania participate in the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS). Downingtown Area School District is a participating District and has been for many years. The survey is anonymous, voluntary and confidential. Youth are never required to complete the survey, and their identity

is not connected to their answers. The questions asked in the survey cover many types of attitudes, knowledge, behaviors, and experiences related to topics such as the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD), violence, bullying, and mental health and wellness. For Downingtown's most recent data (the survey was last taken in Downingtown in 2017), visit the District's webpage at <https://www.dasd.org/Page/6612>. To access data for Chester or other PA counties, visit [https://www.pccd.pa.gov/Juvenile-Justice/pages/pennsylvania-youth-survey-\(pays\).aspx](https://www.pccd.pa.gov/Juvenile-Justice/pages/pennsylvania-youth-survey-(pays).aspx).

Do you think it would be beneficial for mental health specialists and psychiatrists to come to the school every marking Period to check in on students?

Answer: Given their nature, psychiatric services are likely best accessed by students outside of the educational setting. However, we encourage students to speak with school-based counseling staff or Prevention Specialists for emotional reasons that may be present or interfere with learning. Additionally, students can be seen in school by Mental Health Professionals but only if those services have been initiated through Community Based Mental Health: ie. wraparound providers, family based teams, case management.

Does the school district have a comprehensive policy and administrative guidelines to respond to a student in crisis? Is the staff in-serviced in the guidelines and their responsibilities?

Answer: Yes. School board policy 819 and its associated guidelines, adopted following the passage of Act 71 in 2014, outline the steps for responding to students in crisis. The policy requires that staff are provided 4 hours of in-service every five years and DASD has already met this requirement. Additional in-service has also been provided to to specific buildings and staff such as counselors and Student Assistance Program (SAP) teams.

Is there a central referral list for community resources and providers in the area that we can access on the school website or that teachers/staff have to give families that could use them?

Answer: Yes. The District's webpage contains a list of community-based resources and providers to support a variety of student and family needs. These links can be found at <https://www.dasd.org/Page/2587>.

Is the district planning to train all counselors, teachers, coaches, leaders, in mental health first aid and QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer)?

Answer: The District to date has trained all professional staff in grades 7-12 in QPR as well as all current 9th grade students. We do have plans to train additional students in QPR and are investigating additional training opportunities for staff, with mental health first aide being one potential option.

The January 17th Mental Health Panel Discussion discussed student access to cellphones. Is there a difference between students accessing cell phones and watching TV, particularly during meal times?

Answer: As discussed by the panel, boundaries should be discussed and determined on an individual basis by parents through discussion with their children. The important thing is to keep lines of communication open.

Many school and job applications ask applicants if they have sought out professional mental help. Would seeking professional help limit future opportunities?

Answer: Seeking or asking for professional mental health assistance will not negatively impact future goals with respect to college or career. Depending upon the extent of professional assistance required or any diagnosis that be provided by a qualified professional, some career goals such as the Military may be effected. Such outcomes should not negate an individual asking for help.

What evidence based practices do you recommend?

Answer: Best practice would suggest that if you are concerned for a child and their safety, you notify either local Law Enforcement, Crisis Intervention or a trusted adult who can assist them with getting help. Beyond that there are some therapeutic interventions that are evidence – based including such modalities as Cognitive – Behavioral Therapy or CBT.

What are the impacts you expect for kids who have seen things such as a “Good Bye” video on social media after the loss of a peer?

Answer: A student who has viewed a “Good bye” video on social media may be either directly or indirectly impacted by the viewing. Depending upon their proximity with the peer, this image may result in a variety of emotions from guilt to sadness to anger. The timing of this emotional impact may also be unpredictable and may be instant or delayed. Conversation and

discussion with a trusted adult may be helpful. If you are concerned about something your child has viewed on social media, there may be value in reaching out to either their School Counselor or Administrator in addition to talking directly with them.