



PEARL RIVER SCHOOL DISTRICT CLINICIANS

FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER

Welcome Back! We wanted to take the time to introduce the district's clinicians and inform parents of the important Social Emotional Concepts that will be presented to students this fall. In addition, September is Suicide Prevention Month. We hope you find the information and resources helpful.

School Psychologists

Miguel Arias (Pearl River Middle School)
ariasm@pearlriver.org

James Calisi (Pearl River Middle School)
calisij@pearlriver.org

Krystina Kane (Evans Park)
kanek@pearlriver.org

Dr. Rebecca Massa (Lincoln Avenue/District Office)
massar@pearlriver.org

Jamie Martens (Pearl River High School)
martensj@pearlriver.org

Ellen McCabe (Franklin Avenue/District Office)
mccabee@pearlriver.org

Matthew Schultz (Pearl River High School)
schultzm@pearlriver.org

Dr. Samantha Turco (Pearl River High School)
turcos@pearlriver.org

Social Workers

Eric Borcharding (Lincoln Ave./Evans Park)
borcherdinge@pearlriver.org

Jessica Bersani (Pearl River Middle School)
Bersanij@pearlriver.org

Natalie Cervantes-Libassi (Franklin Avenue)
cervantes-libassin@pearlriver.org

Norma Canals (Pearl River High School)
Canalsn@pearlriver.org

What is Social Emotional Learning?

“Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

- SEL aims to integrate social and empathy awareness with academic development.
- In each school, Social Emotional Learning concepts are presented to students.
- The goal is to help them regulate their emotions and communicate effectively.



Research shows students who receive social-emotional interventions early and throughout their learning careers demonstrate impressive and measurable benefits later on in life. They learn to manage their emotions, cope with stress, and set positive goals. *CaseI.org*

September's SEL construct is: Self-Awareness

Students are working to become more self-aware by:

1. Identifying their emotions including examples of when they felt that way.
2. Identifying how their thoughts and feelings are related to each other.
3. Identifying body cues and how they relate to feelings.
4. Labeling their own strengths and weaknesses.
5. Participating in activities to increase self-confidence.



Activities students can do at home to promote self-awareness:

1. Write an acrostic poem with their strengths, such as:

Empathetic
Motivated
Mindful
Adventurous

Resilient
Unique
Smart
Supportive

2. Play feelings charades. Provide your child with feelings words and have them act out the feelings for you to guess.
3. Ask these questions when reading with your child:
 - a. How does the character feel?
 - b. What event or events led them to feel this way?
 - c. How does the character express this emotion?
 - d. How would you feel if you were in the situation?
 - e. How did the characters emotions change?
4. Encourage children/young adults to keep an emotions journal where they can explore their emotions.
5. Make a collage using magazine clippings or clip art/google slides with images or words that identify strengths and personality traits.
6. Do a quick feelings check in, such as, "What made you feel proud today? Or "What made you feel excited today?"



September is Suicide Awareness Month

The National Association of School Psychologist (NASP) offers the following advice for anyone who has concerns about a child or young adult:

- Remain calm and nonjudgmental; listen.
- Ask directly about suicide (e.g., “Are you thinking about suicide?”).
- Avoid being accusatory (e.g., don’t say, “You aren’t going to do anything stupid are you?”).
- Reassure them that there is help; they will not feel like this forever.
- Provide constant supervision. Do not leave the youth alone.
- Remove means for self-harm, especially firearms.
- Get help. Never agree to keep suicidal thoughts a secret.
- Tell an appropriate caregiving adult.
- School staff should take the student to a school-employed mental health professional.
- Continue to take threats seriously.
 - Follow-through is important even after the child calms down or informs the parent they "didn't mean it".
- Access school support.
 - Parents can give the school clinician permission to contact the referral agency, provide referral information, and follow up on the visit.
- Maintain communication with school. After an intervention, the school will also provide follow-up support.
 - Your communication will be crucial to ensuring that the school is the safest, most comfortable place possible for your child.

More information about suicide from the National Association of School Psychologists can be found at the National Association for School Psychologist website (NASP.org)

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988

Or visit

www.988lifeline.org

Tips for a Successful School Year!

Returning to school can be a time when children experience uncomfortable feelings related to separation anxiety, academic expectations, and peer relationships. Below is helpful information and a breathing strategy that may be helpful if your child should experience anxiety related to school.

Anxiety in Children and Adolescents

- Anxiety is one of the most common experiences of children and adults. It is a normal, adaptive reaction. Typically, anxiety presents itself as worry.
- Anxious children are much more likely to see minor things as potentially threatening.
- Anxious children are likely to engage in a variety of avoidance behaviors to reduce exposure to threat. In the classroom, they may appear quiet, pick easy tasks over difficult ones, and avoid situations in which they envision failure.
- This may impact their interactions with friends and may avoid new social situations and group interactions.
- Although there may be some basis for worry, it is usually out of proportion to the situation and is unrealistic.

Strategy to use When Feeling Anxious

Focused Breathing: Focused Breathing is a powerful tool to effectively regulate our emotions. Try out this script with your child when they are feeling strong emotions:

- Please sit comfortably with a tall, straight back.
- Close your eyes or let your gaze float downward.
- When I begin counting, inhale deeply until I reach the number five.
- Then, hold your breath as I hold mine for three seconds.
- When I begin counting backward from 5, slowly exhale until I reach 0 again