



PROJECT EVERS

Ending Violence and its Effects in Rural Schools

EVERS Newsletter Winter 2020 ❄️ Volume 1, Issue 4

❄️ **Holidaze 2020**

2020 has been quite a year! For most of us 2020 has been a challenge, and many of us have experienced more moments than ever of anxiety, stress, fear, and uncertainty. But we hope you also have found warm, wonderful time with your family, time to enjoy the great outdoors, and a chance to prioritize yourself and do some things that you have always wanted to do.



Happy Holidays



We wish the same for you over the upcoming holidays. There is always a sense of heightened busyness during the holidays and this year may be the same, but some of the underlying reasons may be different. Nonetheless, make sure to take care of yourself and all of those closest to you. Set a very deliberate tone for dealing with the accompanying stress and anxiety that often comes during this time of year.

We all have patterns of dealing with anxiety, often established in our first families, because anxiety and stress are contagious emotions. Without realizing it, we can pass

our own emotions on to those who are closest to us. That is not necessarily a negative because calm, peaceful, and fun interactions are contagious too. Understanding all that we feel, and therefore may project onto others, can set the tone for a year that undoubtedly will be different for most of us.

Make this the year that you truly celebrate the meaning of the season. Make this the year that you pay attention to those you love most, listening to them and showering them with small, but genuine, gestures of care and connection. You may be able to establish some new special, unique traditions. And let's be sure to usher in 2021 with the utmost of care. It is a perfect time to reflect and reset.

Here's wishing each of you Happy Holidays from the EVERS Family!



2021 Loading...

With a brand-new year almost upon us, perhaps there is a resolution in your near future. Project EVERS would suggest you think about something related to communication. The pandemic has pushed all of us more into the realm of technology as we experience more solo time than ever. Whether the technology is used for homework, work meetings via Zoom, or a little fun on your favorite gaming platform, it surely seems that electronic communication is replacing good, old-fashioned one-on-one interaction. By necessity most of us are not seeing friends or socializing as we used to do, and that will hopefully change in 2021, but why wait?

As human beings we are built for human relationships. There is no technology that offers the equivalent of feeling heard, seen, understood, or cared for by another person, our friends, our family, and colleagues. Indeed, it is relationships that often drive us, create wonderful collaborations, and make us feel safe and secure. It is relationships that make us want to interact, express ourselves, learn together, and expand our thinking. Relationships create opportunities to get to know others as real people... and let them know you as well. Now, more than ever, everyone seems to be craving genuine human connection.



Strong relationships, and the underlying communication that ensues, help you understand who another person really is and lets them know who you are—your likes, dislikes, values, fears, strengths, hopes, and dreams. Valuing another person's perspective is key, even when it differs from your own. Never underestimate your power to make a difference in someone else's life. Now, perhaps more than ever before, all of us need genuine human connection. As Maya Angelou said, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

2021 is a great year to focus on creating deep, lasting connections. Happy New Year!

* Make A Memory Jar!

Here is a New Year's Eve activity that could become your new family tradition. This year on December 31st, decorate a "Memory Jar" to keep over the next twelve months. It can be a mason jar, a treasure box, or any sort of container. The important part is how you fill it.

Every time something incredible happens during 2021, write about it on a piece of paper and put it in the jar. Be sure to include mementos like pictures, names of books or movies that you enjoyed, cards, report cards, a bit of nature from that outing you enjoyed, etc.



On December 31, 2021, open the jar and take a walk down memory lane. Get ready for your memory jar's items and descriptions of events to make you smile again, cry again, and remind you of the specialness of each moment of the coming year.

Happy New Year!



Active assailants, fires, tornadoes, earthquakes, and, oh yeah, Covid. Just a few things that our Kansas educators worry about and deal with every single day. Two years ago, the Safe and Secure Schools Unit was formed at the Kansas State Department of Education. The unit is currently composed of Jim Green and John Calvert. Every day, our unit collaborates with superintendents, administrators, teachers, students, community members, and members from nine supporting state agencies to help keep our Kansas schools safe.

Jim Green is currently the School Safety Specialist for the Kansas State Department of Education. He served as the Emergency Management Coordinator for the city of Topeka for 13 years and still maintains a state certification as an emergency manager. He is also with the Kansas Incident Management Team (IMT) certified as a logistic section chief, and as an operations section chief. Jim has completed instructor level courses at the Center of Domestic Preparedness (CDP) FEMA in Anniston, Alabama, and instructs Incident Command System (ICS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS) classes and courses throughout the state of Kansas.

John Calvert spent 12 years in law enforcement including being the School Resource Officer for Holton, Jackson Heights, and Royal Valley School Districts for six years. John accepted a position with the Kansas State Department of Education in 2018, and he is now the Director of the Safe and Secure Schools Unit. John has written for *Safe and Civil Schools*, has presented at various locations throughout the state of Kansas about a variety of school safety issues, and has been both a keynote speaker and a presenter at national conferences across the United States.

Our unit focuses on assisting school districts with being “all-hazards” prepared. Jim and John can travel the state (including Northwest Kansas) and give presentations on a variety of school safety issues to any number of audiences. Some of our more popular presentations include active assailant training for staff, teaching adults the dangers of kids and social media including some of the more popular apps, empowering our youth to be the change they want to see, leading tabletop exercises for staff, FEMA courses, and explaining what “All-Hazard” preparation is. All of our trainings are designed to be empowering and trauma-informed in our approach.

Jim and John can train in person or virtually. They are also available for more than just training! Each love to talk to schools or parents to answer questions or walk through situations together. If there is anything we can do to help, do NOT hesitate to contact us. We look forward to meeting you virtually or after the 8-hour car ride to Northwest Kansas!

Jim Green
JGreen@ksde.org
(785) 296-4946

John Calvert
JCalvert@ksde.org
(785) 296-7056

* Professional Development Opportunity



Professional Development Opportunity - Mental Health First Aid for Youth (Virtual Training)

Identify. Understand. Respond.

Mental Health First Aid is a skills-based training course that teaches participants about mental health and substance-use challenges that are common among youth ages 12-25. The *Mental Health First Aid for Youth* program is specifically designed for adults who regularly interact with adolescents and young people; it is ideal for teachers and district administrators.

Led by: High Plains Mental Health Center Staff

When: Thursday, January 14, 2021 9:00am – 1:30pm

OR

Monday, January 18, 2021 9:00am – 1:30pm

Note: Approximately 2.5 hours of an advance assignment must be completed one week prior to the on-line course, so sign up now to ensure you have time to complete the coursework!

Professional Development Certification Points: 8 points

A \$100 stipend will be offered to eligible District Teachers / Administrators / Staff within the Project EVERS area.

Register Here: [Registration-Virtual Mental Health First Aid Training \(rs6.net\)](#)



* Children in Foster Care: Educating Our Most Vulnerable Youth

Youth involved in the child welfare system face unique challenges. One of the less frequently considered traumas experienced by foster children, along with their move from one home to another, is the frequent disruption to their schooling. According to some estimates, children may lose four (4) to six (6) months of academic progress per move. Unplanned changes in school, delays in enrollment, and the transfer of records create further difficulties. Per a national factsheet on educational outcomes for children in foster care, published in April 2018, over a third of 17- and 18-year-olds in foster care have experienced five or more school changes. Understandably, these youth make less academic progress in school as they fall further behind with each move. Nationally, 65% of youth in foster care complete high school by age 21, compared with 86% of all youth.

Measures to address this deficit include the 2013 Uninterrupted Scholars Act, which allows child welfare professionals the right to access general educational records for children in foster care without a court order or parental consent. Kansas foster youth advocated for fewer required elective courses, resulting in Kansas Senate Bill 23 (commonly referred to as the “21 credit rule”). In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act included provisions addressing school stability for children in foster care and ensured that students in foster care have the right to remain in their school of origin (most recent school attending) unless a determination is made that it is not in their best interest. As exciting as this news is, child welfare and school officials at the local level still have a lot of work ahead of them to develop plans to provide transportation to keep children in their school or arrange a rapid, smooth transition to a new school.

In the spirit of that cooperation, and thanks to the advocacy work of the Project EVERS staff, I wanted to encourage all school staff to use me as a liaison point in working with foster care agencies. I am one of four Education Coordinators with Saint Francis Ministries and am assigned to children originating from the western half of Kansas. I know child welfare can be a confusing and complicated world, and school staff can have many questions on parental rights, who to contact at the agency level, and what information can be shared. Please feel free to get in touch with any questions you might have.

Stephanie Pfannenstiel
Education Coordinator
Office 620.793.7454 x4421 | Cell 620.278.6604
1508 Main Street | Great Bend, KS 67530
stephanie.pfannenstiel@st-francis.org



Providing healing and hope to children and families

References:

National Working Group on Foster Care and Education. (2014.) Fostering success in education: National factsheet on the educational outcomes of children in foster care. Retrieved from: <http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/OurWork/NationalWorkingGroup.aspx>