

news galleryweek

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CHOICES introduces new social-emotional education program in 29 schools

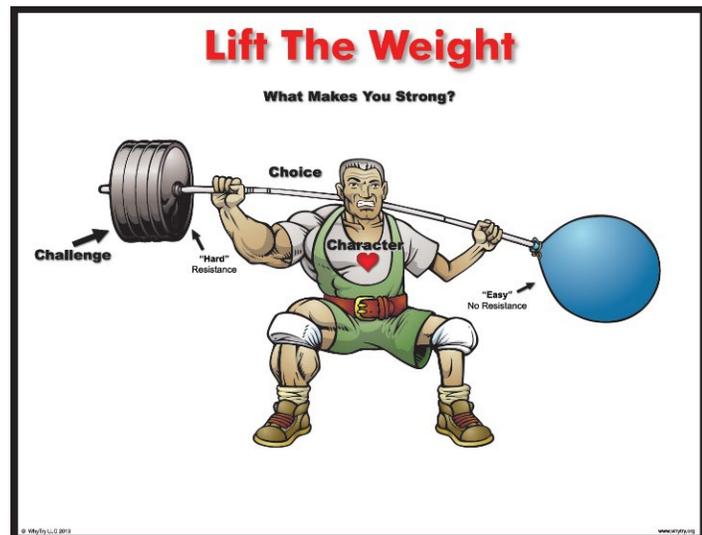


One day each week, freshmen at Mt. Whitney High School in Visalia use their physical education period to attend a new class focused on other elements of their wellbeing. Instead of building muscles and cardiovascular health, the class is designed to build resiliency and social-emotional wellbeing.

This fall, members of the CHOICES Prevention/Intervention Education team are leading classes around the county utilizing a new social-emotional development curriculum called WhyTry. The curriculum is being taught to middle and high school students in 29 schools throughout the county.

The WhyTry program is designed to teach social-emotional education to youth in a way they can understand and remember. Through the use of visual analogies or metaphors, the program teaches improved decision-making, dealing with peer pressure, impulse control, valuing hard work, having a future vision, and more.

At Mt. Whitney last week, the focus of the WhyTry lesson was on laws and rules. Isaac Miranda, a CHOICES Prevention/Intervention Education specialist, introduces the lesson with an illustration of a weightlifter. The lifter has a barbell resting on his shoulders. On one end of the barbell are four heavy plates. On the other is a balloon. Miranda points out the difference in the weightlifter's body. On his right side, the lifter has significant muscle development; on his left side, his body is thin and underdeveloped.



The illustration is used to spark a conversation about the importance of laws and rules. Miranda uses himself as an example. Throughout middle and high school, he tells students that he was engaged at school and did well on tests, but wasn't doing his homework. Year after year, counselors warned him about the danger of failing due to his poor homework grades.

Miranda asks the students to consider the weightlifter. "When I ignored the rules about homework, do you think I was doing the hard work or the easy?" Several students in class replied, "The easy."

"The balloon represents the easy choice," Miranda said. "It may be fun at first, but it doesn't give us any real benefit. The weights represent the hard work. They may not be easy, but in the long run, they give us lasting benefits."

Attitudes and actions of students in the 29 schools receiving the WhyTry curriculum will be measured by comparing results from surveys administered prior to and following the seven-week course. K.C. Pearce, CHOICES Prevention/Intervention Education manager, reports that the WhyTry curriculum is well-received by students. "Students are enjoying it because it's fun, simple, and engaging," Pearce said. "It reaches all students, including those who may have experienced trauma."

At each presentation, the CHOICES team infuses the WhyTry lessons with curriculum from the Tobacco Prevention Toolkit, created by Stanford Medicine, as a tool to prevent middle and high school students from using tobacco and nicotine.

For more information about WhyTry or tobacco use prevention education, contact K.C. Pearce at k.c.pearce@tcoe.org.

Photos above:

~ Isaac Miranda, a CHOICES Prevention/Intervention Education specialist, presents the new WhyTry social-emotional education curriculum to freshmen at Mt. Whitney High School.

~ The WhyTry curriculum utilizes a series of visual analogies to help students improve their abilities to make decisions, deal with peer pressure, control their impulses, value hard work, follow rules, have a future vision, and more.

Behavioral Health Services provides resources, trainings during Suicide Prevention Awareness Month



During the month of September, TCOE's Behavioral Health Services (BHS) provided training and outreach on school campuses in recognition of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. BHS also promotes mental wellness through outreach events throughout the school year.

In September, BHS was able to reach a total of 2,839 students, school staff, and parents at 25 Tulare County schools. Numerous presentations were held. Resources on mental wellness, self-care, and mindfulness, as well as activity sheets, positive affirmation wristbands, and stickers were distributed.

The takeaway messages from September's events were, "Mental wellness is important, take care of it. You are valuable. You can do hard things. Caring adults are here to help."

To schedule a presentation on mental wellness at your school or in your community, contact Anna Isais at BHS.Training@tcoe.org."

Photo above:

~ During September, Behavioral Health Services spent time at 25 schools promoting mental wellness through training and outreach. September is recognized as Suicide Prevention Awareness Month.

La Sierra Military Academy cross country competes at Golden West Invite



This fall, La Sierra Military Academy (LSMA) is competing for the first time in the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) as an associate member school. As an associate member, the La Sierra Screaming Eagles can compete against CIF member schools but are not eligible for league or postseason competition.

La Sierra's first CIF sport is cross country. La Sierra has already competed in two invitational meets with the last one – the Golden West Invite – happening last Friday at

Cutler Park in Visalia. In the boys varsity open 5,000-meter race, sophomore Isaac Hernandez placed 10th with a time of 21 minutes, 22.10 seconds while senior Izaak Sandoval was 13th with a time of 22:19.10.

In the team's first race – the Hanford Invitational – Hernandez (13:43.8) placed 17th in the 2-mile, 10th grade boys race. Competing in the 3-mile, 11th grade boys race, Christopher Lira (19:08) placed eighth and Sandoval (20:17.6) was 14th.

La Sierra is scheduled to compete in four more races this year, all on different courses. LSMA head coach Tyler Baxley said he wants to provide La Sierra runners with exposure to different courses and running experiences.

“My goal for them is to use running as a means for them to explore new territory within, and beyond (the area), along with using this sport as a way to encourage physical activity as a lifelong pursuit well beyond high school,” Baxley said.

Along with cross country, the school also plans to compete in basketball and track this school year.

La Sierra Charter School was established in 2000 and is approved by WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges), providing a tuition-free public education, and governed by the Tulare County Office of Education.

Photo above:

~ La Sierra Military Academy's Isaac Hernandez, left, and Izaak Sandoval, right, run in the Golden West Invite, Friday, September 30 at Cutler Park in Visalia.

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