

## Social Emotional Learning is Key to Student Success

Meeting students' social emotional needs has been a long-standing priority for Dover Schools. With Ohio's passage of K-12 Social Emotional Learning State Learning Standards in October 2019, districts have a new tool to evaluate the student services and programs in a district against these state guidelines.

Dover Schools currently employs two school psychologists; a student advocate; three full-time and one part-time school counselors; and two nurses to serve students. In addition to this staff, we partner with Community Mental Healthcare to provide access to mental health counselors for our students within the school day.

Staff across the district are invested in incorporating positive behavior strategies in their buildings. Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports (PBIS) is a statewide K-12 initiative to provide consistent, research-based strategies for all students. School teams are working to set parameters for student behavior and support students in following classroom, building, and district expectations.

A district-wide book study has also encouraged dialogue around mental health. The book "What Made Maddy Run" by Kate Fagan was purchased for all staff members with grant funds. Led by the Tuscarawas County Association of School Counselors, and through a collaborative effort with other schools and local agencies, Kate Fagan recently presented to staff, parents, and community members and shared insight into the mindset of this high-performing student who took her own life.

This year a team of administrators will attend the "Stop School Violence Threat Assessment Training" provided by the "Sandy Hook Promise" organization. Providing a safe learning environment and having best practice protocols in place in the event of an emergency will always be a priority.

In addition to these supports, school staff members provide prevention programs and activities in all grades. Our high school Interact Club, Teen Leadership Corps, and Youth-to-Youth Club inspire our teens to not only learn about healthy behaviors, but to encourage other students to pursue a healthy lifestyle, too. In January, the Dover Avenue staff provided a "Social-Emotional Learning" Parent Night for our 4th and 5th grade families. Staff, students, parents, and community members learned how to meet the needs of our fourth and fifth graders now and support them as they transition to middle school.

Meeting the needs of every student is a challenge that we embrace and work to improve each day. Through staff and community collaboration, we can best care for our children and continuously guide them to becoming emotionally healthy adults.