Mental Health in Middle Schools
The Team

Erin Beasley

Jackie English

Claire Girardeau

Kameron Haake

Charlotte Moxley
The expectation is not only that students will be supported by their teachers but by their entire school system, and this essential need is not being met.
Research & Data
**Why It Matters**

There is a huge unmet need regarding mental health, especially in middle schools.

- **49.5%** of adolescents met criteria for mental health disorders.
- **21%** of low-income children and youth ages 6 to 17 have mental health disorders.
- **59%** of Colorado educators and school mental health professionals said they needed assistance with students' mental health needs.
The Project is in the Process
Project Timeline

September

- Formed Group
- Decided to focus on Mental Health in Middle Schools

December

- Solidified Relationship with Morey Middle School
January

- Collected data about teacher needs through pre-presentation survey

February

- Met continuously with social worker at Morey
- Continued to solidify project
March

- Finalized project
- Worked with professionals to develop resources

April

- Presented to Morey teachers
- Collected post-presentation data
Help Morey teachers support mental health of students:

Understanding
Strategies
Resources
Stakeholders
Power and Attitude Grid

Positive attitude with much power

Negative attitude with much power

Positive attitude with little power

Negative attitude with little power
Morey Middle School
What We Found

Initial Survey of Morey Middle School Teachers

What issues are Most Difficult to Deal With?

- Anxiety: 7%
- Aggression: 16%
- Defiance: 47%
- Lack of Interest: 12%
- Peer Conflict: 12%
- Sleep Related: 2%
- Outside Issues: 5%

How Comfortable are you Dealing with Mental Health?

![Bar Chart showing comfort levels and number of responses.](image-url)
The Project
Presentation at Morey

Audience
- Morey Middle School Faculty and Staff

Materials Distributed
- Behavioral Intervention Suggestion Cards

Content of Presentation
- Previous survey data from teachers
- Adolescent brain development and function
- Mental disorders commonly seen among Morey students
- Content and application of the cards
Behavior Sheet

- Examples of externalizing and internalizing behaviors
- Sentence starters for addressing behaviors
- Additional advice gathered from research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internalizing Behaviors</th>
<th>Externalizing Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What you’ll see:</td>
<td>What you’ll see:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Shutting down</td>
<td>● Acting out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Refusing to participate</td>
<td>● Refusal to sit still and focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Nervous habits</td>
<td>● Seeking peer attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Not taking direction/re-direction</td>
<td>● Enters into a power struggle with the teacher</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What to say:
- Do you need to take a break?
- I’ve noticed your physical cues (foot tapping, increasingly messy handwriting, looking around, etc.). Are you feeling stressed or overwhelmed right now?
- I noticed you seem sad/upset/worried today, is there anything I can do to help?
- I noticed that you had some trouble with the work today (or insert appropriate phrase). Is something else bothering you?
- I noticed you not engaging the material today, is that because it’s too easy or difficult for you?
- Thank you for participating today. Good job!

Things to keep in mind:
- It makes a big difference when students feel like they are cared for
- One on one conversation with the student.
- Minimize the spectacle.
- Encourage students to notice their own physical cues.
- Many external parts of life (student having to take care of other siblings; not getting enough sleep; outside home trauma) are coming into the classroom.
- The student’s actions are not a personal attack.
Post-Presentation Survey

How Comfortable Are You Identifying and Addressing Mental Health?

Number of responses

Comfort level

[Bar chart showing the distribution of responses for comfort level]
Post-Presentation Survey

How helpful was the information presented?

Number of responses

Overall helpfulness

[Bar chart showing the distribution of responses]
How helpful was the behavioral intervention suggestion sheet?

![Bar chart showing overall helpfulness ratings.](chart.png)
“The sheet that provided talking/conversation points on how to deal with difficult situations”

“Slowing down and asking the right questions”

“Having the information in an organized easy-to-use place”

“The information about what is happening in the teenage brain”
Take-Aways
Thanks!

Any questions?

Erin Beasley: erin.beasley@du.edu
Jackie English: jacquelyn.english@du.edu
Claire Girardeau: cgirardeau@comcast.net
Kameron Haake: kameron.haake@yahoo.com
Charlotte Moxley: charlottemoxley30@gmail.com