



PennState
PRO Wellness



FALL/WINTER 2021 EDITION



SUCCESS STORY

Engaging School Communities to Improve Mental Health

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STUDY OVERVIEW AND RESULTS



Deepa L. Sekhar, MD
Principal Investigator
Executive Director,
Penn State PRO Wellness

"Hi! I'm Deepa Sekhar, the lead investigator for the SHIELD Study. We are thrilled to share the results of the SHIELD (Screening in High Schools to Identify, Evaluate, and Lower Depression) study in this final edition of our newsletter!"

The bottom line: Students who completed a depression screening were six times as likely to be identified with symptoms and twice as likely to start treatment compared to peers who were not offered the screen. The full study results are published in JAMA Open (<https://bit.ly/3wqchCP>). The research brief (<https://bit.ly/shieldbrief>) provides a quick summary of the results along with clarification on some commonly used research terms.

We welcome your feedback and thoughts as always, but especially your reactions to these findings. Feel free to discuss with co-workers, friends and family, and you are welcome to contact us with your impressions [dsekhar@pennstatehealth.psu.edu] as well.

In this final year, the SHIELD team focused on preparing results for publication, gathering perspectives on the experiences of school staff, parents, and students throughout the screening process, and providing technical assistance to schools to formulate plans to engage their school communities in activities to improve the mental health of students and staff. This final edition contains updates on the school communities' plans as well as resources that will benefit readers moving forward, as the SHIELD study comes to an end. Please share this newsletter with friends and colleagues who might have an interest in these stories or benefit from these resources!



EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Learn About SMART Goals

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CURRENT MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH FINDINGS

Choosing personal exercise goals, then tackling them immediately is key to sustaining change

University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine | September 1, 2021

Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania recently completed a study with 500 low-income patients, mainly from West Philadelphia. The researchers incorporated the concept of gamification, which encourages behavioral change by turning the activity into a game. Participants were given a wearable step tracker to record their daily step count and then randomly assigned to groups; either a gaming group with goals or the control group, which did not have step goals or games. Those in the gaming group had two additional levels of randomization. First, they were further randomized into groups that set their own goals versus being assigned a goal. Second, groups were assigned to start immediately on their goals versus a slow ramp-up.

"Participants who developed their goals and began promptly achieved significantly more activity than those who had goals assigned or delayed intervention." Mitesh Patel, MD, MBA, who oversaw the study, summarized that new habits can best be formed when gamification is combined with the freedom to develop personal goals.



LINK TO FULL STORY:
<https://bit.ly/2ZtTdhK>



SUCCESS STORY

SHIELD Schools: Engaging School Communities to Improve Mental Health

Like most, schools who participated in the SHIELD project experienced an unexpected and challenging year and a half. However, they still found success in developing community engagement strategies around the topic of mental health and wellness. Read on for examples of how our partnering SHIELD schools plan to support their students and communities this school year and beyond!

positive vibes

Sending Positive Vibes through the Postcard Program

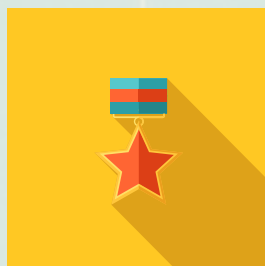
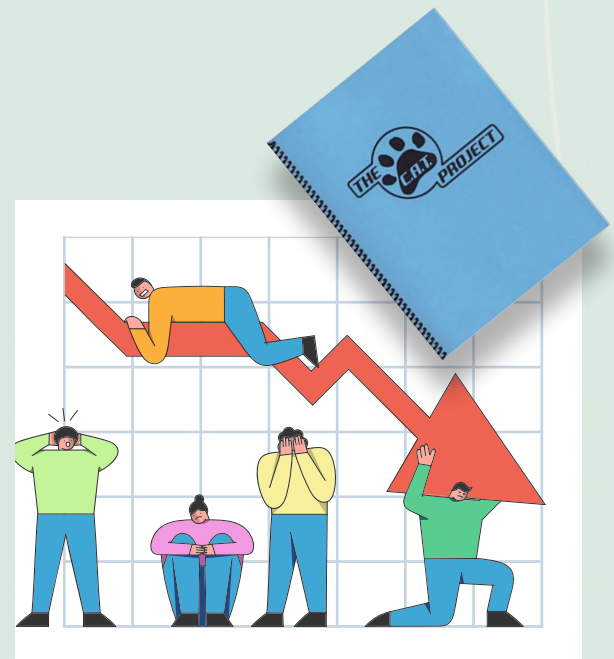
In an effort to create a positive atmosphere in one partner school, two counselors devised the “Postcard Program”! Each quarter, students who exhibit positive behaviors have the chance to earn a postcard from their teacher. Postcards are mailed home to parents/guardians, but first, they are used to enter into a drawing for the chance to win school spirit wear!

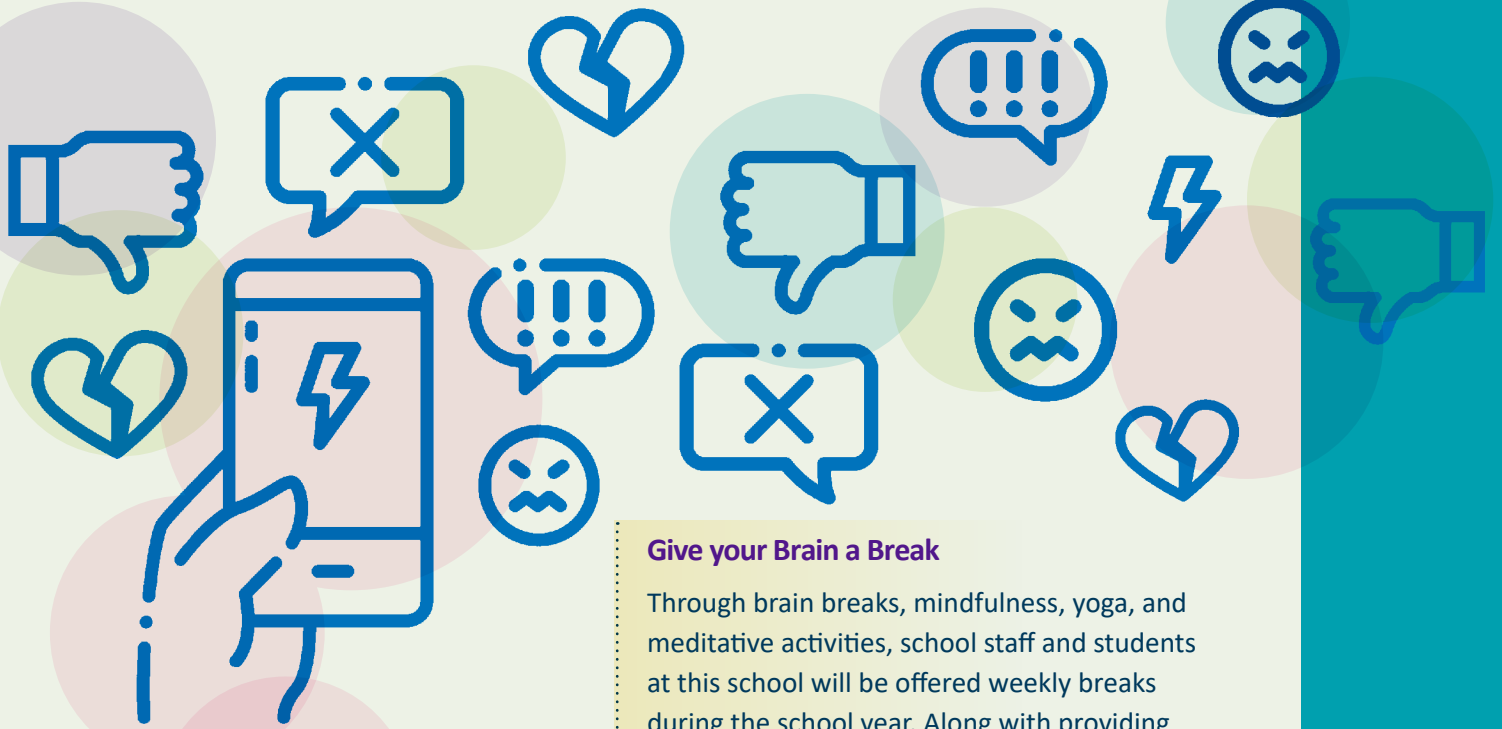
The C.A.T. Project

The high school counselors and school psychologist at this SHIELD school ordered C.A.T. project booklets for students. The C.A.T. project is a workbook of cognitive behavioral strategies to help anxious adolescents. The goal is decreasing stress levels as in-person instruction resumes this year.

Support for Staff and Students, Tools for Teachers

To determine how to best support staff and students, one school conducted a brief survey of mental health and wellness needs at the start of the academic year. The school learning community that returned the most surveys won a prize! Results informed the selection of tools for teachers, and needed mental health and wellness supports for students.





Help Me Help You, the Mentorship Program

Inspired by a commitment to address both bullying and cyber bullying concerns, this SHIELD school started a Peer Helper Program. A group of diverse students serve as “leaders” to take an active role in building an accepting, open school culture.

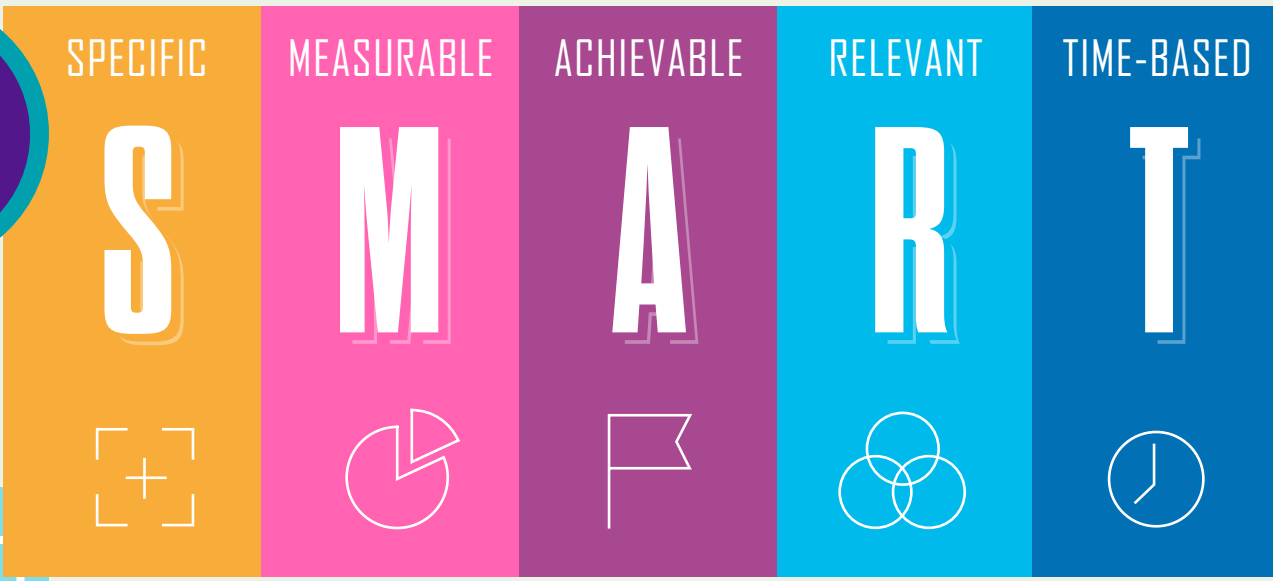
Give your Brain a Break

Through brain breaks, mindfulness, yoga, and meditative activities, school staff and students at this school will be offered weekly breaks during the school year. Along with providing resources, the wellness team at this SHIELD school aims to see an increase in self-reported health and wellness over the next two years.

Whats Next?

Some of our SHIELD schools are still in the midst of action planning and will go on to incorporate ideas such as introducing Aavidum (<http://aavidum.com>) programming and starting positive behavior support programs. The SHIELD Study Team wishes the best of luck to participating schools as they engage their school communities this year!





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In the wonderful world of technology, our cell phones serve so many purposes.
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Is your Goal SMART?

Over the past two years, this newsletter has provided examples of tools and success stories with the goal of inspiring readers to make positive change in their own school, work, and play environments.

As you continue to work towards your future endeavors, make sure you are setting goals that are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based) to increase your success of meeting, or even exceeding your target. Follow the link below for in-depth directions and a free template.

➔ <https://bit.ly/3nIDRaa>

Tools to achieve your SMART Goal

In the wonderful world of technology, our cell phones serve so many purposes. With millions of apps to choose from, nearly any task can be accomplished. Follow the link to checkout available apps that will help to keep you on track to achieve your future goals.

➔ <https://bit.ly/3EtBY8k>

The SHIELD Challenge

Moving forward, the SHIELD Team challenges readers to recognize negative thoughts and reframe them to be more positive. We challenge readers to consider 5 happy thoughts per day. Positive thoughts are necessary for a happy and successful mind. Follow the link below to learn how to reframe your brain.

➔ <https://bit.ly/30dnbzR>

