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# Board Report

## School-Wide

## Board Report - March 2021

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### From the Senior School Director's Desk

Dr. E. Ward-Jackson

Today's Board report will focus on holistic support by taking a close look at the intentional work of our *Center for Holistic Support Services*. This year, especially, our core value of **Resilience** resonates deeply as we persist in the face of a global health crisis, civil unrest and injustices, along with operating school remotely. We are, indeed, in unprecedented times and the stressors are many. Still, nothing can compare to the fortitude of a Wave-Maker. It is not because Wave-Makers are super-human, nor is because they are predisposed to indefinite success, it is instead because they are met with an acknowledgement of their innate brilliance, high expectations are set for them, and intentional and informed resources and talent are in place, with an aim to position them toward their highest potential and dreams.

Making Waves Academy (MWA) is a school that was born from a community-based program that prioritized the **whole-child**, and for the past 14 years has prided itself on the work our Deans, external Clinicians, and Social Workers do that are significant differentiators in the success of our school's approach. Committed to further investing in proven strategies, this year MWA launched the *Center for Holistic Support Services*.

About **schools that "thrive"**, Kaiser Permanente shares that *"Schools are an ideal setting to support the social and emotional well-being of students and offer resources and opportunities to build resilience. When Schools support social and emotional well-being, students typically have fewer disciplinary issues, can focus more on school work, and can develop skills to communicate better. This can translate to improved academic outcomes and better health later in life."* This is our goal. We want healthy Wave-Makers who are equipped to thrive in life. I also want to lead a school that is trauma-informed, mindful, inclusive, dynamic, and puts into practice the audacious and rigorous plans that we set forth in order to achieve our school's mission. I am most proud of the strides that our *Center for Holistic Support Services* has made in this inaugural year, and I am expectant of how it will continue to refine and develop over the years to come.

As schools begin to reopen, there are pockets of high **anxiety amongst all of our stakeholder groups**. There are more questions and wonderings than there are answers. One of the most common concerns that comes up, across stakeholder groups, is regarding teacher preparedness to meet the emotional needs of their students. How will students respond to the transition back to on-site learning after over a year of isolation, distance, and extreme change? I cannot answer that question currently. That being said, I am confident that the investment our school has made in the *Center for Holistic Support Services* - from the hiring of highly qualified licensed personnel, to partnering with essential programs and engaging relevant training - will make a significant difference. What we have optimized for has not changed, **safety, rigorous instruction, and social-emotional well-being**. Our Wave-Makers and teachers will be met by a wellness program that is both ready to serve and ready to actively engage continuous improvement as we continue to learn and persevere through the unknown territory and nuances of pandemic and soon post-pandemic schooling.

Miguel Cardona, the new U.S. Secretary of Education shares, *"If I've learned anything in my career as an educator, it's this: **With the right support, students are remarkably resilient**. America's students have risen to this unprecedented occasion and adapted in ways that inspire me as an educator and a father. For all of the hardship and heartache this year, I firmly believe that we — and most of all, this rising generation — can emerge from this challenge stronger. We can do the most American thing imaginable: Forge opportunity out of crisis, draw on our resolve, our ingenuity, and our tireless optimism to create something better than we've ever had before. America's students deserve nothing less."*

As we **enter into the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of the school year**, we are simultaneously deep into preparation for the 2021-22 school year, the hiring season, the FY 22' budget, summative benchmarks, state tests, and final formative teacher evaluations. Additionally, we are working on programmatic compliance such as WASC, the SPSA, and the LCAP. Our teams are working hard, smart and innovating as needed. There is an ocean between compliance and excellence, and we continue to *make waves* in the right direction. In this report you will learn more about the transformative work of our Center for Holistic Support Services from two of its leaders, the Director and Senior Dean of Students.

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## Center for Holistic Support Services

Brandon Greene (Director of Holistic Support Services) and Eric Mingo (Senior Dean of Students)

### Opening

The 2020-21 school year has brought with it many 'firsts.' This is the first time in the history of MWA that our middle and upper grades have begun formal and intentional alignment across our collective practices and protocols. This is the first time in a generation that we have experienced a global pandemic, in which our professional and personal lives have been greatly impacted. Although political turmoil and dissent is not new, the scope of polarizing politics and injustices experienced in the 2020-21 school year have further compounded an already painful and traumatic year for many of our students and families. In response to the extraordinary strains and challenges being experienced at the local and national levels, this is also the first year that the MWA has set a school-wide goal to *optimize for the social-emotional well-being of all stakeholders*. Spearheading MWA's efforts on this front is the Center for Holistic Support Services, comprised of:

- Director of Holistic Support Services
- Senior Dean of Students
- Deans of Students (3) for grades 5-6, 7-9 & 10-12
- Social Workers (2)
- Clinical psychological service providers (clinicians)

This team is also referred to as the "Holistic Support Services Team" (HSST). The HSST has collaborated to address and facilitate meeting the support needs of our faculty, student, and parent communities during this unprecedented season.

These needs have largely centered around:

- processing the impact of Covid-19
- building a school community characterized by strong connections and relationships
- developing healthy coping mechanisms
- managing personal, academic, and professional lives during a time of perpetual crises and existential threats

These needs range across the areas of: 1) mental health support, 2) student safety, 3) student skill development (academic, social-emotional and career), 4) family support and development, and 5) intensive faculty professional development. These areas of focus and shifts in our approach to community support were in response to a tectonic shift in how human beings fundamentally engage one another as a result of the pandemic. When we think about innovation, innovation isn't solely defined by our programmatic structure, but innovation is also understood from the perspective of shaping and aligning behaviors that:

- 1) Allow students to make choices that are in alignment with their life dreams
- 2) Center teachers' relationship building and engagement practices on the development of emotional intelligence and behaviors that are aligned with MWA's Mission
- 3) Support our parental community in aligning home behaviors and practices with MWA's Mission

These impact areas not only reflect the centrality and efficacy of our work, but are aligned with our cultural practices of effective teaming, collaboration, and relationship management. We are a department that is process and results-oriented, but not at the expense of relationship development and management.

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## What?

In summer 2020, our Team conducted a comprehensive school-wide needs assessment examining our strengths, areas for growth, concerns to address, practices to continue, practices to initiate, and new innovations to consider across seven key areas of holistic engagement. Those areas are:

- 1) school culture and climate
- 2) attendance
- 3) counseling/Social Worker referral trends
- 4) behavior management/suspensions
- 5) social-emotional learning and well-being
- 6) parent/guardian support needs
- 7) faculty support needs

From our school-wide needs assessment, the HSST prioritized development, innovation, and support for stakeholders in the following three buckets for the 2020-21 school year:

### 1) **Professional Development and Trainings:**

- Develop the social-emotional skills and competencies of our teachers via a series of high impact Professional Development (PD) experiences
- Develop parent/guardian knowledge and skill-sets on how to support the academic, social emotional, and college and career needs of their children within the home via robust Parent Academy offerings

### 2) **Community Partnerships:**

- Establish strategic partnerships with local organizations to promote the social-emotional well-being of all stakeholders

### 3) **Direct Student Services:**

- Deliver daily universal Community Building/Advisory offerings to meet the holistic needs of all students focusing on the topics of:
  - Processing the Impact of Covid 19 & Systemic Racial Injustice
  - Community & Relationship Building
  - Study Skills
  - Coping Mechanisms
  - College & Career Development
- Integrate Community Building/Advisory themes into Tier 1 lesson plans across content areas
- Targeted group counseling & mentorship
  - Small group counseling/mentoring services, expanded orientation modules, and reintegration to campus efforts for our most vulnerable students (chronically absent, multiple suspensions, cumulative GPAs below 2.0, students with intensive clinical needs, students noting high levels of general anxiety in culture and climate surveys, and low distance learning attendance/participation)
- Intensive Individualized Psychological Supports
  - Clinical counseling and Social Worker services for students with the most acute needs

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### Bucket #1: Professional Development and Trainings:

Thus far in the school year the Holistic Support Services Team has led professional development offerings on the following topics:

- Holistic Support Services Introduction & Processing the Impact of COVID-19
- Restorative Practices & Behavior Management Systems
- Establishing Routines, Expectations & Procedures (REPs)
- *Notice. Talk. Act.* Referrals (Social Worker/Clinicians)
- Developing a Professional Culture of Trust
- Supporting the Holistic Needs of All Students Through Community Building & Advisory
- Tier 2 Group Mentorship
- Open Forum to Discuss and Process the Impact of Extended Isolation
- Inner Resilience and Resourcing: Understanding Your Stress Response Cycle and Engaging Practices to Find Your Window of Tolerance
- Wellness & Thriving Through Mindfulness
- PMSC Overview, Vision and Goals

The team has also led Parent Academy offerings on the following topics:

- Open Forum to Discuss and Process the Impact of Election Season, COVID-19 and Extended Isolation
- Inner Resilience and Resourcing: Understanding Your Stress Response Cycle and Engaging Practices to Find Your Window of Tolerance
- Wellness & Thriving Through Mindfulness
- Mindful Parenting & Connecting

Concepts from the Preparing the Mind for Success and Competition (PMSC) Institute continue to support our approach to PD and trainings. Our Director of Holistic Support Services and Senior Dean of Students are integral members of our PMSC Implementation Team, collectively tasked with developing the capacity of our professional community with respect to their emotional intelligence, social-emotional competencies, and with regards to developing their abilities to approach professional obstacles and challenges through a solutions-oriented outlook that prioritizes productive interpersonal engagement practices.

Our vision for PMSC at the Academy is that MWA will be a school community where all teachers and leaders are equipped with the social-emotional competencies to ***teach and model*** for our students how to meet the demands of rigorous college environments, excel in competitive work industries, and take full advantage of educational opportunities and resources, while maintaining social-emotional well-being.

As MWA Leaders and PMSC training participants, it is our aim to seamlessly integrate PMSC principles into our respective management roles, programmatic offerings & relationship-centered approach to community building and engagement. Ultimately, PMSC will be integrated into Tier 1 lessons and programming across all levels of leadership and content. Our goals for PMSC are as follows:

- Ensure that all leaders understand what PMSC is and how it connects to our daily work
- Integrate PMSC into what we are already doing
  - Explain student behaviors (e.g. motivation, opposition, resistance, conflict, etc.) based on PMSC domains
- Use tools to engage students and adapt to challenges and obstacles
  - Understand challenges & obstacles through the PMSC model
  - Utilize PMSC Pathways to assess, coach, & problem-solve around obstacles to student success and well-being

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### **Bucket #2: Community Partnerships**

To optimize for the social-emotional well-being of all stakeholders in a year of extraordinary challenges, the Holistic Support Service Team's proposal for the procurement of a wellness partnership with *Seeds of Awareness* was approved by our Board of Directors in December of 2020. *Seeds of Awareness* is a Bay-Area nonprofit organization that serves K-12 schools providing comprehensive social-emotional and mindfulness education to teachers, students and parents. Our wellness partnership provides professional development/in-service training to support all faculty and staff with building their inner capacity and resourcing to navigate stressors, conflict, and intensity for themselves, and to model and share these practices and resources with their students and peers. This includes monthly workshops themed in response to identified needs of our educators and school system, including but not limited to the topics of:

- Inner Resilience & Resourcing for Educators
- Trauma-Informed Classrooms, Vicarious Trauma, & Burnout
- SEL Skill-building and Experiential Practice
- Mindful & Restorative Relationship Building

In addition to providing proactive support to all faculty and staff in these areas, more intensive differentiated supports are being provided to small groups of teachers via Mindful Educator Group Coaching Sessions. These coaching sessions are offered as opt-in intensive supports for a limited number of teachers who desire further growth, reinforcement and deeper learning on the monthly PD themes provided to our entire faculty and staff through our wellness partnership. This support offering was publicized to all instructors, and we are excited that every MWA instructor who expressed interest in this opportunity was assigned to a Mindful Educator group for ongoing support and development.

### **Bucket #3: Direct Student Services**

**Our team is proud of the intensive work being done to create and implement daily, synchronous social-emotional learning (SEL) and holistic development offerings for all Wave-Makers via the Advisory period.** We strive to create a predictable daily routine and ritual for students where relationship building and forming social connections with peers and teachers is the focus. We prioritize creating fun, experiential, inquiry and reflection-based interactive sessions intended to alleviate our community's sense of social isolation during this COVID-19, systemic racial injustice, and crisis impacted season. Core elements of each daily Advisory period offering include the following:

- **Opening activity** to transition students mindfully into the period (e.g. highlight a motivational quote or practice a mindful minute)
- **Review of Advisory Norms** provides space to reiterate expectations that help students be their best selves in Advisory
- **Daily check-in** to elevate all student voices (e.g. emotional "weather report", reflection on accomplishments or goals for the week, discuss what you are looking forward to or are most excited about for the day, etc.)
- **Content or lesson for the day** to teach, model and reinforce skills and competencies for student holistic development (e.g. practicing coping strategies, identifying school-based social support networks, digital citizenship, practicing outreach for support, developing organization and time management skills, etc.)
- **Brief community building activity** (e.g. "minute-to-win it", guess the celebrity baby picture, announcements and shout-outs, etc.)
- **Closing** to help transition students from Advisory back to their core classes. (e.g. "mindful minute", breathing exercise, or thoughtful transition to the next period)

*Semester One Weekly Attendance Advisory Rate:*

**86%** of middle school students attended Academy-wide SEL Advisory period  
**85.5%** of upper school students attended Academy-wide SEL Advisory period

Given the nature of the 2020-21 school year, a key focus area of Advisory has been on helping students take care of

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themselves, increasing awareness of their mental/psychological/physical needs, and promoting healthy ways for students to meet their needs. This is evident in our offerings on Self-Care Strategies, Self-Care Plans, and Self-Care Vision Boards. Another key focus of Advisory has been on how students can take care of others, as highlighted in Kindness Week, and *Notice. Talk. Act.* activities and lessons.

Another indispensable HSST offering at the Academy is our professional school-based counseling and therapeutic services. Our MWA Social Workers and clinicians, also referred to as our “Clinical Care Team,” provide intensive individualized and small group therapeutic/counseling services. These services make-up our Tier 3 differentiated supports for students with the most acute psychological and social-emotional support needs. This Clinical Care Team meets on a weekly basis to discuss emerging psychosocial support referrals and to triage community needs to ensure that our students with the most significant needs are provided with the highest quality of professional counseling and support services in a timely manner.

### For Quarter 1 of the 2020-21 School Year:

Number of students **receiving** individual counseling/psychological services:

- a. Clinicians:
  - Middle School: 56
  - Upper School: 35
- b. Social Workers (students receiving ongoing counseling services/support):
  - Middle School: 15
  - Upper School: 12

Total # of students **referred** for psychological supports/services via Social Worker Office:

- Middle School: 44
- Upper School: 48

### For Quarter 2 of the 2020-21 School Year:

Number of students **receiving** individual psychological services:

- a. Clinicians:
  - Middle School: 55
  - Upper School: 39
- b. Social Workers:
  - Middle School: 29
  - Upper School: 22

Total # of students **referred** for psychological supports/services via Social Worker Office:

- Middle School: 32
- Upper School: 22

Beyond providing direct psychological services for students via counseling services, MWA Social Workers also conduct Safety/Risk Assessments for students at risk of harming themselves or others, provide crisis intervention, case management, direct support to staff, parent/guardian consultation and coaching, and provide referrals to community resources for families in need.

### **So What?**

Since the inception of the 2020-21 school year, facing an unprecedented host of known and anticipated challenges, our Holistic Support Service Team has taken initiative to enact every available proactive and responsive measure to support all stakeholders in their respective roles. MWA’s HSST has served as the tip of the spear and the leading force behind our school-wide goal to *optimize for the social-emotional well-being of all stakeholders*. Through innovation, development, and strong implementation in the areas of Professional Development and Training, Community Partnerships and Direct Student Services, MWA’s HSST is providing exemplar differentiated support.

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In the first year of our reorganization and in the inaugural year of our Center for Holistic Support we will achieve implementation of a complete, three-tiered, differentiated, wrap-around holistic support program for our Wave-Makers. Our HSST is providing the highest quality of universal, targeted and individualized support for our Wave-Makers in the areas of academic, social-emotional and career development. In order to achieve our Mission, each of our students will require a complete holistic support infrastructure that includes their parent/guardians and each of their instructors and school leaders working in tandem to develop and model the skills they will need for success. We know that teachers and parents are the prevailing forces that drive the social-emotional learning (SEL) and well-being of our youth. The social-emotional competence and well-being of teachers and parents strongly influence that of their children. Homes and classrooms with warm adult-child relationships support deep learning and positive social-emotional development. Conversely, when teachers or parents struggle to manage the social-emotional demands of teaching or parenting, students' academic achievement and well-being both suffer (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). For these reasons, we have established a Cycle of Community-wide Holistic Education to lay the foundation for each student's SEL development and well-being, ultimately completing each student's holistic support infrastructure, and enhancing the continuity of positive experiences for students between home and school.

Our HSST's efforts to optimize for the social-emotional well-being of all stakeholders are responsive to clearly identified support needs, and our community's response has been overwhelmingly positive. With our faculty reporting that their average baseline level of stress in the school year is 7 out of 10 in intensity, and with 100% of survey respondents expressing interest in further Professional Development and training in the areas of vicarious trauma, trauma-informed practices, social-emotional skill-building, building restorative relationships & classroom community, and/or developing coping mechanisms, our HSST is meeting the most pressing support needs of our faculty. Furthermore, our faculty rate the relevancy of our HSST PD and training themes to their efficacy as educators at over 3.6 out of 4.

Culture and climate survey results indicate that more than 60% of Wave-Makers feel that MWA facilitates an environment where they feel safe, can be themselves, feel celebrated/praised, feel valued/important and feel supported to address and resolve harm. As another indicator of success, over 82% of Wave-Makers Academy-wide agree or strongly agree that Advisory has been helpful during distance learning.

Feedback from our parent/guardian community has also been overwhelmingly positive. Our HSST has experienced an outpouring of appreciation from our parent/guardians after each Parent Meeting offering and at the conclusion of the vast majority of direct outreach engagement efforts made by our Team that reflects MWA's prioritization of supporting the social-emotional well-being of MWA parents during these challenging times. During these support sessions and points-of-contact, our parent/guardians have shared stories of tremendous loss, hardship, and anguish. Yet, in classic Wave-Maker spirit, our parent community focuses on sharing attitudes of incredible resilience, deep commitment to MWA's Mission and Core Values, and an uplifting spirit of hopefulness for the future and trust in one another for the fulfillment of our community's fundamental needs.

### **Now What?**

Our HSST now looks to build and scaffold in further tiered supports, with the ultimate goal of providing universal proactive and preventative supports, targeted small group development, and intensive individualized supports for students, faculty and our parent/guardian community respectively. To that end, we now turn to advancing targeted small group development offerings for our student and parent/guardian communities and to further build out our community partnerships to address the extensive anticipated support needs of our school community in the year ahead.

In the month of March, we plan to launch our Group Mentorship offerings for students with 1.0 GPAs or below and chronically absent students to help identified Wave-Makers build social-emotional skills and give them the extra boost they may need to achieve wellness and academic success. Our HSST has developed corresponding training modules, including a Group Mentorship scope and sequence and related engagement materials. Please see an overview of weekly themes, derived from the PMSC Institute, for our Group Mentoring scope and sequence below:



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- **Week 1: Getting to Know You**
  - Groups meet to introduce themselves to one another and their Group Mentor/leader. This will be an introduction session on what to expect in the upcoming Group Mentoring sessions.
- **Week 2: What is your Life Dream?**
  - Groups meet to discuss their Life Dreams, or aspirations for the future. Students will also explore their strengths and interests. Students will connect with peers who may have similar interests, and continue to learn about each other. Students will note specific goals for the Group Mentoring term that may help get them closer to achieving their dreams.
- **Week 3: Tackling Challenges**
  - Groups meet to discuss what challenges they are experiencing right now. Challenges can be academic or personal. Students will practice naming emotions, and making informed, thoughtful decisions. This is a way to gather a list of common challenges among the group, and to begin thinking about what specific needs are underneath these challenges.
- **Week 4: Tools for Academic Success**
  - Groups meet to brainstorm and share strategies that are helping students succeed academically. Group Mentors will review standard tips of staying organized and creating a schedule/routine, while gathering specific strategies from students in the group.
- **Week 5: Tools for Social-Emotional Well-being, Relationships**
  - Groups meet to brainstorm and share strategies that are helping students feel “well”. Group Mentors will review standard tips for finding calm when activated, communicating needs, and will gather specific strategies from students in the group.
- **Week 6: Celebration, Accessing Supports**
  - Groups meet to celebrate their progress and their time together in the last Group Mentoring sessions. Group Mentors will review avenues for students to access further support.

For quality control and to foster the positive experience of students participating in Group Mentoring, strong expectations, trainings, and support will be outlined and provided to our Group Mentors as highlighted below:

- **Expectations**
  - Hold meeting sessions at agreed upon day/time consistently for students
  - Communicate with students to remind them of meeting day/time
  - Complete meeting session notes to document progress, needs
  - Connect any students who are needing support to resources as needed
  - Uphold NTA procedures as needed
  - For sessions:
    - Time: 45 minutes - 1 hour
    - Frequency: Every week or every other
- **Training**
  - Comprehensive Mentor Orientation and Training sessions will be conducted
  - Ongoing drop-in/check-ins will be available with Ms. Pilloton

In alignment with our Cycle of Community-wide Holistic Education, further targeted small group development offerings for our parent/guardian community are being proposed through the budget planning process. Our Director of Holistic Support Services has engaged in collaborations with MWA’s CEO and long-standing partner to the MWA community, Dr. Koke Saavedra, to propose a Parent Development Series in order to provide tiered differentiated support for our parent community that is necessary for our most vulnerable students to overcome adversity and to achieve. The HSST has identified approximately 40 MWA families where the primary obstacles to student academic progress and social-emotional well-being derive from counter-productive parenting strategies being utilized in the home environment. These offerings will

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provide both an intensive small group parent development series, as well as regularly occurring drop-in support sessions with our community partner.

In regards to next steps for supporting the differentiated support needs of our faculty and staff, we will continue focusing on the roll-out of our community partnership with Seeds of Awareness through monthly universal PD for all faculty and staff, as well as with the completion of regularly occurring Mindful Educator Group Coaching sessions. Looking ahead to our spring and summer planning, we anticipate further developing our partnership with Seeds of Awareness to include a continuum of these services in the 2021-22 school year. Ideally, a future proposal will include a three year train-the-trainer model partnership where MWA instructors and leaders will have the opportunity to elect to receive individual mentorship from the Seeds of Awareness team to become certified as Mindful Educators and qualified to train and mentor their colleagues in mindful education.

The Holistic Support Service Team is incredibly grateful for the tremendous support, investment, encouragement and connection to the work of our Department that we have received from our Senior School Director, our CEO and from MWA's Board of Directors. As we move to the next phase of development, innovation and implementation as a HSST in order to provide robust proactive, preventative and responsive measures that address the holistic support needs of all stakeholders in this era of extraordinary challenges, we look forward to deepening these connections. In doing so, we also look forward to providing a continual pulse on the health and social-emotional well-being of our community, and to perpetually seeking and creating new avenues of support and development that promote a thriving and Mission-aligned school culture and community.