

Honeywell Update- October 13, 2016

The mental health and personal well-being of our children needs to be a front and center issue. Good evening Highland Park, this is Dr. Taylor with a message about a disturbing national and local trend that we cannot avoid talking about.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services concludes that approximately one out of five adolescents has a diagnosable mental health disorder, and nearly one third show symptoms of depression. Unfortunately, as the director of school psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital and assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School Dr. Jeff Bostic points out, "School is... a very complicated place now. Kids are being told they're not going to have a good quality of life if they don't do every little thing exactly right. They're scared to death, and therefore rates of depression and anxiety are up."

Your schools' support staff, teachers, and leaders have committed to turning this trend around in Highland Park. Our community aims to deliver a world class instructional program, but we must do so without sacrificing our kids' personal well-being. The over 23 students, parents, educators, and town residents who came together on June 28 and June 29 agreed that our strategic plan should emphasize the social and emotional health of our children.

I echoed the plan's action step to look closely at homework's effects on academic achievement versus the negative impact it may have on kids' personal growth in my last Honeywell message. Tonight I want to take a step back and look broadly at Goal G1.1 of the strategic plan that reads, "The district will ensure that curriculum and instruction supports the 'whole' child." These words mean that our learning community will be taking stock of everything from the amount and kind of homework we assign students to the practices we implement in our classrooms and schools that foster mental health and well-being such as morning meetings, restorative practice disciplinary measures, student support group meetings, and building schedules.

My next Honeywell message will dive in to the nuts and bolts of Strategic Plan Goal 1.1. In the meantime, I strongly recommend you visit the plan's site by going to <http://www.pathway.hpschools.net>.

Have a good night.

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