



# Culture COUNTS

## Circling Up with Content at OCM BOCES

By Randi Downs

By now, most of us know that sitting and talking while in the shape of a circle sets the stage for powerful community building. Imagine, a classroom where we can all see each other and honor each voice! So what happens when we take the magic of that community circle into our daily lesson?

Here's a challenge: Teach a lesson using the circle! Author Kay Pranis explains how teachers can use circles to deepen content learning:

- Unpack a video or movie while in a circle as an alternative to filling out a worksheet.
- Strengthen existing curricula around social skills by having students try new strategies and coping skills while in the circle.
- Use the circle as a place where students can learn from each other's challenges and successes.

Here are some other ways we can use circles for content:

- Teach vocabulary: Have students write their best guess for new vocabulary and share around the circle.
- Use a circle discussion to push through writer's block.
- Go over the steps to solving problems in math or science.
- Have students add on facts to tell a story in a foreign language.
- Share writing in the circle.
- Reflect, reflect, reflect!

Try it, and next time you are sitting in a circle at your next faculty meeting, share your challenges! Celebrate your successes!

Pranis, Kay. *The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking*. Good Books, 2005.

*"Sometimes, it only takes a single teacher to turn a child's life around. Some children will come to school today because of that teacher. Be that teacher, every day."*

— Author Unknown

Wellness inside and outside the classroom



Turn to the next page for a photo journal of Opening Day 2019.

## Kicking Off the School Year

Guest speaker James Butler kicked off the first week of school for about 550 OCM BOCES educators from the Student Services division, with a session about mindfulness. Butler's presentation focused on mindfulness practices to use inside and outside the classroom, tips for regaining your focus, and more. Turn to the next page for our Opening Day 2019 photo journal.

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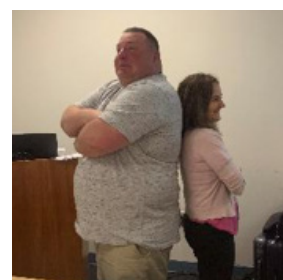
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# Caring School Community and School Connect SEL Programs

By Heather Vitale

OCM BOCES programs in Special Education and Innovative Education are making excellent progress with our roll out of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) this year! All staff have been trained in our curricula, Caring School Community and School Connect. Our staff has put in tremendous amounts of preparation and work to modify lessons to adhere to the needs of our students.

Classrooms have been participating in morning and afternoon circles, as well as integrating the lessons into their daily schedule. Our first leadership meetings will begin in the early weeks of October. At these meetings, we will be able to truly identify what strategies are working and how we can continue to use a multi-tiered system of approaches to include Restorative Circles and Rachel's Challenge techniques. We are very excited to continue our SEL in our classrooms!



## A New Beginning! Student Services Opening Day 2019





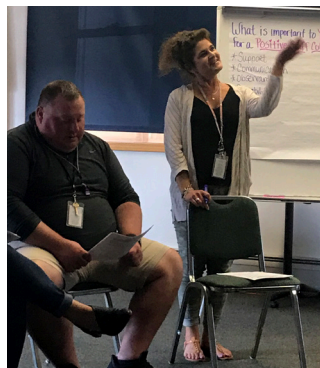
# Wellness Counts

## We Asked and You Answered - Wellness Activities During the School Year

By Rosanna Grund

Survey results are in, and an overwhelming majority of staff would like to participate in wellness activities this school year. Building-level wellness committees are in the process of being formed; please see your building administrator if you would like to join a wellness committee in your building.

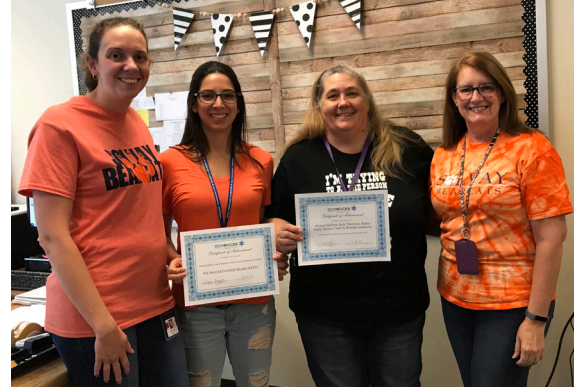
Many sites have already started to promote wellness activities. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing program and Solvay Middle



School TEAM program have teamed up to count steps. The four teams are

working in accumulating steps over the next eight weeks. The winning team will receive a basket of healthy food. Congratulations to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing program at Solvay High School for walking over 300,000 steps in two weeks!

This month, the focus for staff compassion and resiliency training has been on building community and staff culture. The McEvoy high school special education staff had their first training in late September. Thanks to all the staff who participated!



## Employee Wellness Room Opens at Cortlandville Campus

The Cortlandville Campus hosted a Staff Lounge Grand Opening to highlight recent renovations and promote wellness. Renovations to the lounge include updated flooring and furniture, which created a peaceful and comfortable space for staff to take a break and engage in mindful self-care.

At the grand opening, staff members enjoyed a healthy start to the day with yogurt parfaits and entered a raffle to win a self-care themed basket. Congratulations to our raffle winner, Cortlandville Campus Social Worker Jenn Kilpatrick!

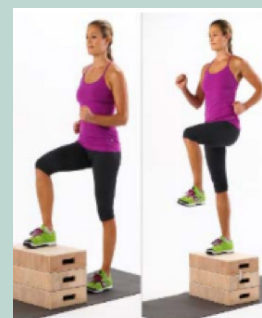
Thank you to Catie Reeve for this submission!



# Wellness Counts

## Physical Activity Tips for October

Looking for a challenging, yet simple way to exercise? Try step aerobics for a heart-pumping workout at home or work. All you need is a staircase or sturdy platform that is one foot off of the ground, and you are ready to burn about 10 calories a minute! Here's how you do it: Step onto the platform with your left foot. Bring your right foot up to a 90-degree angle. Lower the left foot to the ground. This is one repetition. Do 20 repetitions on each leg. For a greater challenge, hold a pair of dumbbells.



### No-Bake Macaroni and Cheese

Courtesy of EatingWell

#### Ingredients:

8 ounces (2 cups) whole-wheat elbow Noodles  
1 package (10 ounces) frozen chopped Broccoli  
1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups low-fat Milk, divided  
3 tablespoons Flour  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon Garlic powder  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon Salt  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon ground white Pepper  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup shredded extra-sharp Cheddar cheese  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup shredded Parmesan cheese  
1 teaspoon Dijon Mustard



#### Preparation:

Cook pasta four minutes in a large pot of boiling water. Add frozen broccoli and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until pasta and broccoli are just tender, four to five minutes more.

Meanwhile, heat 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups milk in another large pot over medium-high heat until just simmering. Whisk the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup milk, flour, garlic powder, salt and pepper in a small bowl until combined. Add flour mixture to simmering milk. Return to a simmer and whisk constantly until thickened, two to three minutes. Remove from heat and whisk in cheddar, Parmesan and mustard until cheese is melted.

Drain pasta and broccoli and add to cheese sauce. Return to medium-low heat and stir until heated through, about one minute.

## Self Care Mindfulness for October

During opening day this year, the Student Services team had the opportunity to participate in mindfulness activities with James Butler, the Social, Emotional Learning Mindfulness Specialist for the Austin Independent School District.

Throughout his presentation, Butler provided a variety of tips and tricks to help us practice mindfulness within our classrooms throughout the year. View the resources he provided at the training here: <https://www.smores.com/g9ywe>.

The resources also provide several short mindfulness videos led by Butler. Pick your favorite and incorporate mindfulness in your day.

