

Governor's Weekly Message: Supporting Students' Emotional and Academic Growth

Wilmington – As a guest host for the Governor's [weekly message](#), [Delaware Children's Department](#) Secretary Jennifer Ranji discusses a statewide effort to place licensed mental health professionals into middle schools.

"We know the middle school years can be especially challenging for our youth as they face new academic and social pressures when they enter adolescence," said Governor Markell. "By giving our students the support they need to overcome their challenges, we'll help them thrive in school and achieve a bright future, and that will keep Delaware moving forward."

Every week, the Governor's office releases a new Weekly Message in video, audio, and transcript form. The message is available on:

YouTube: http://youtu.be/W4_h2GWzTLs

Delaware.Gov:

http://governor.delaware.gov/podcast_video.shtml

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FULL TEXT OF MESSAGE

We know the middle school years can be especially challenging for our youth as they face new academic and social pressures when they enter adolescence. Until last year, Delaware's elementary and high school students had someone at school to talk to if they felt overwhelmed, but middle school students

did not. That's why Governor Markell proposed and the General Assembly approved \$3.3 Million to place licensed mental health professionals into middle schools throughout the state.

We have implemented the program in 30 middle schools this year, providing screening, counseling, referral services, and much more for our students. The need for these Behavioral Health Consultants is clear. Last spring they completed over 2000 consultations, based on referrals from school personnel, parents, and even student themselves. Students are actively engaged in group therapy and hands on activities with professionals like Lisa Groak at Springer Middle who facilitates group sessions about the anxiety of transitioning to middle school. Students at Chipman, Postlethwait and Laurel Middle have taken nature walks to conduct team building and trust exercises and to show how outdoor activities and exercise can help with stress relief.

Importantly, our Behavioral Health Consultants also communicate with families, even making home visits to ensure parents are engaged. We're pleased that these professionals have been met with support and positive feedback from school administration and staff, as well as from students and parents.

By giving our students the support they need to overcome their challenges, we'll help them thrive in school and achieve a bright future. And that will keep Delaware moving forward.