

Let the action commence -- at our March meeting, the Panel was unanimously in agreement that we focus on social/emotional learning!

**See the bottom of the email for action YOU can take now to support the social and emotional well-being of our students.**

Our March meeting dovetailed nicely with what we heard in February from CPS elementary teacher Amanda Hendricks about the huge social and emotional challenges confronting elementary students, as this past Monday we heard from Dr. Caitlyn Powell, Chair, Psychology Dept. and Director of the 1<sup>st</sup>-year experience at Thomas More University. Dr. Powell discussed the challenges being experienced by 1<sup>st</sup>-year students at Thomas More after 2 years of Covid and the dramatic effect it is having on their learning and socialization. She outlined several consequences and ways to deal with these issues (copies of overheads to follow).

The panel then questioned her and discussed possible ways Cincinnatus could be helpful in discussing these issues. Following are some of the thoughts that came from the discussion:

1. The critical value of emphasizing the importance of addressing social/emotional learning must be more broadly broadcast and emphasized. There still is not a broad understanding of how critical addressing these issues are.
2. John Young suggested that Cincinnatus should try to identify the “gaps” in how these issues are being addressed. When they can be identified we can then determine where our best efforts can go. He indicated those efforts should be in-concert with Cincinnatus’ “Cincinnati Dream” focus.
3. Al Beauchamp indicated not all “social/emotional” issues are related to mental health. He outlined the critical need for children to have experiences to interact more with their peers. He particularly noted the lack of after school activities for elementary students such as athletics, arts, etc. Funding from the federal/state/& local systems is not there. There is a lack of coaches & others to direct these activities.
4. John Young suggested we use our leader to leader principals to help identify the needs in the social/emotional area. He suggests a qualitative approach where they could simply give us their written replies to some questions.
5. Elliot Grossman suggested that whatever we select we should make it a project with measurable goals.
6. Kim Haverkos noted that unlike k-12 schools where principals & teachers have some training about using social/emotional understanding in teaching; college instructors are just completely academic content-oriented.

**Next Meeting**

Our next step is to identify how the Panel can make a difference. Dr. Carrie Bunger, who is in charge of social/emotional learning at CPS, will speak to us on Monday, April 18<sup>th</sup> at 4:30. We will learn what CPS is doing systematically to support student mental health, and we will ask how we can address the barriers to their programs'

effectiveness. At some point, we might convene central office reps like Carrie with some principals and teachers in a conversation to illuminate the gaps in their experience -- which alone could be very powerful.

### **Action Request**

Hamilton County commissioners are currently debating the level of funding for the mental health levy renewal coming up in November. Please call or email them (contact info below). You might use the following language as inspiration for what you might say...

Dear Commissioner

Local and national studies show that student mental health and social well being has been steadily declining for years, and the pandemic has pushed this issue to a state of crisis. Consequently, after hearing from several experts in the field, the Cincinnati Education Panel has chosen to focus on student mental health and social well being as the focus of our work going forward.

Despite valiant efforts, school systems cannot possibly offer all the support our students need, and parents also need more support than ever to care for their challenged children. Moreover, teachers are burned out and having severe mental health crises of their own, according to a recent Ohio Department of Education report.

This is why I'm writing to encourage you to INCREASE funding for the upcoming Hamilton County mental health levy. If we don't act boldly to support the mental health of our families during a time of unprecedented challenges, a generation of students will have their potential forever diminished.

Here are the phone #'s and email addresses of the Hamilton County Commissioners:

Stephanie Dumas  
President of the Board  
513-946-4410  
[Stephanie.SummerowDumas@hamilton-co.org](mailto:Stephanie.SummerowDumas@hamilton-co.org)

Alicia Reese  
Vice President of the Board  
513-946-4401  
[Alicia.Reece@hamilton-co.org](mailto:Alicia.Reece@hamilton-co.org)

Denise Driehaus  
Commissioner0  
513-946-4406  
[Denise.Driehaus@hamilton-co.org](mailto:Denise.Driehaus@hamilton-co.org)

**Proposed action**

I have a deep connection with Miami University's Center for School-Based Mental Health, which has always wanted to get Cincy Magazine to update its methodology for ranking school districts with a mental health category of services. My wife Lydia now happens to be an associate publisher for Cincy Magazine, and they are very interested in meeting with Miami reps, and reps from Cincinnati Ed Panel, to convince them why this is a good idea. Miami has the data and evaluation metrics the magazine could use, we have the strength of volunteer advocacy to prove this really does matter to community leaders.

Of course, this is just the start -- we really need to find our action niche overall, but between our levy advocacy and Cincy magazine, we've already got some tangible action on the table.

### **Great student mental health program**

Below is a link to a great student mental health program used by Lighthouse in training for all their teachers.

<https://livesinthebalance.org/our-solution/>

Jeffrey L. Stec, J.D.

[513-235-3068](tel:513-235-3068)

[jeffreystec@gmail.com](mailto:jeffreystec@gmail.com)

[www.jeffreystec.com](http://www.jeffreystec.com)

Executive Director

[www.CitizensForCivicRenewal.org](http://www.CitizensForCivicRenewal.org)