



PRESS RELEASE

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Bellevue Schools Foundation | May 1, 2024 | Media Contact: Michael C. Smith, info@bsfdn.org

Dean Witter Foundation Invests \$30,000 in Bellevue Schools Foundation's Mental Health Initiative

BELLEVUE, Wash. – The [Bellevue Schools Foundation](https://www.bsfdn.org) received a \$30,000 donation from the Dean Witter Foundation to support mental health and suicide prevention in the Bellevue School District. This gift is offered as a competitive match to encourage another \$30,000 in donations to the program during May's Mental Health Month. The funds will support the continued training of counselors and assessments of student mental health.

According to the CDC, more than 4 in 10 (42%) students felt persistently sad or hopeless, nearly one-third (29%) experienced poor mental health, more than 1 in 5 (22%) students seriously considered attempting suicide and 1 in 10 (10%) attempted suicide.

Bellevue School District's Department of Counseling has been proactive in their response to this trend through their development of, the Mental Health Assistance Team (MHAT)—a model in effective mental health support for school districts nationwide.

According to Dr. Jared Taylor, who designed and oversees the program, "The mission of the Mental Health Services Team (MHAT) is to identify students with mental health needs and to provide greater access to a full spectrum of evidence-based mental health services delivered by highly trained and skilled staff in order to enrich student well-being." As a result of this program, mental health assessments reached over 7,200 middle and high school students last year. Those in immediate crisis are referred to emergency care. Approximately 650 students received therapy from district staff and 95% reported better coping skills.

A student who received counseling via the program said, "Not only have you helped me improve my mental health and performance in classes, you have bettered me as a person and really opened my eyes to being true to myself. You inspire me so much and have had such a big impact on my life in the best way possible".

Allison Frey, President of the Dean Witter Foundation, states, "I advocate strongly for comprehensive mental health support for young people. It is essential to establish sustainable and ongoing resources that can truly make a difference, not only during crises but as a continuous effort. The Bellevue Schools Foundation and Bellevue School District's proactive commitment to this endeavor is commendable, as it's crucial in nurturing environments conducive to learning. We at the Dean Witter Foundation are eager to lend our support to the BSF and MHAT initiatives, recognizing their pivotal role in safeguarding the mental well-being of our youth both now and in the future"

Foundation Executive Director, Juliet Buder said, "Bellevue Schools Foundation is honored to have the continued investment of the Dean Witter Foundation as we offer Bellevue students transformational mental health tools. Their commitment to innovative K-12 public education initiatives will be amplified through its funding partnership with BSF to the benefit of students in critical need of mental health support."

ABOUT THE BELLEVUE SCHOOLS FOUNDATION: Established in 1979, Bellevue Schools Foundation (BSF) is the 1st foundation dedicated to supporting public K-12 initiatives in Washington State. Its mission is to promote and fund the best possible learning opportunities for all students in Bellevue's public schools. Since its inception, the Foundation has raised \$37 Million in funding to support programming in the Bellevue School District. To learn more about and to donate to the Bellevue Schools Foundation, visit www.bsfdn.org.

ABOUT THE DEAN WITTER FOUNDATION: The mission of The Dean Witter Foundation K-12 education grant-making program is to help all students develop their full potential and to invest in innovative initiatives to enhance and improve student learning.