



BUENA PARK SCHOOL DISTRICT

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

May 22, 2020

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Buena Park School District Students Awarded for Mental Health Wellness Videos

BUENA PARK, CA – Two Buena Park School District student-made videos that encourage empathy and compassion toward people experiencing mental health issues received honorable mentions in the statewide Directing Change film contest. Winners were announced virtually in May.

Whitaker School and Buena Park Junior High received the honors from the film contest sponsored by nonprofit Directing Change, a leader in statewide efforts to prevent suicide and reduce the stigma related to mental health awareness.

“I am very proud of the way my students tackled these important topics with maturity and curiosity,” Buena Park Junior High program specialist Debbie Clark said. “They truly wanted to learn about mental wellness and were excited to share their new outlook with their peers.”

Buena Park Junior High School’s video, “[Mental Health Solutions](#),” featured students describing how they ease stress in their lives.

Whitaker’s entry, “[How to Help a Friend with Stress](#),” featured animated avatars discussing ways to recognize signs of stress and how to approach someone who might need help.

Whitaker sixth-grade students Erica A. and Dayana M. helped write the script for the video and lent their voices to the avatars. Using the theme “Be Well Whitaker,” Erica and Dayana drew upon knowledge learned in class as well as Whitaker’s Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program, to send a message that every person deserves to be heard.

“If you know someone who has stress, you should help them and not judge them, let them know it’s not their fault,” Erica A. said. “It’s good to have this knowledge so we can all know if we experience it, we’ll know what to do.”

Buena Park Junior High received a \$1,500 grant and Whitaker received a \$500 grant, both from Directing Change, to develop their videos.

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“This was a wonderful opportunity for us to begin the discussion of mental wellness with our community,” Whitaker Principal Mary Beckelheimer said. “Our students broke ground on these issues, which are often difficult for adults to discuss. We will continue to spread information throughout the Whitaker community.”

Both schools hosted their videos online to the community to celebrate May as Mental Health Awareness Month.

“I am very proud of our students and staff for rising to the challenge and making their voices heard in respect to mental health and wellness,” Superintendent Dr. Ramon Miramontes said. “Our mission is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for every student to learn, a goal that is strengthened exponentially when students are developing ways to help a classmate through a tough time.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

05222020_BPSD_DIRECTINGCHANGE: Buena Park School District’s Whitaker School animated video “How to Help a Friend with Stress” received an honorable mention in the statewide Directing Change film contest. Whitaker sixth-grade students wrote, animated, and added their voices to the film, which discusses ways to recognize signs of stress and how to approach someone who needs help.

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