Lights On, Peoria grant

Peoria Public Schools was awarded the $3.4 million Climate Transformation grant in October, which will be implemented in our three high schools: Manual, Peoria High and Richwoods. The program, entitled "Lights On, Peoria," will allow Peoria Public Schools to fill in gaps of support for high school students residing in the city's Opportunity Zones, equipping schools to better help under-served students.

The purpose of the grant is to ensure a safe and supportive school climate, which plays a critical role in the success of a student. Services will include academic tutoring for acceleration and intervention, social emotional counseling, career coach mentoring, competency-based learning expansion, connections for students to community services and agencies, justice advocates and professional learning for teachers. The grant also provides funding for positive learning experiences, food, games and activities at schools on Friday and Saturday nights, which will begin in January 2020.

Full Service Community Schools grant

In September, Peoria Public Schools was awarded a $2.5 million federal grant for two schools: Harrison Community Learning Center and Roosevelt Magnet School. The Full Service Community Schools grant provides support for students during the school day and valuable activities after the school day ends.

Harrison and Roosevelt will receive additional academic tutoring money, support to provide advanced academic courses, social-emotional counseling, physical fitness and wellness activities, and mentoring for students. Financial literacy classes will be provided to both students and parents as well as opportunities to explore Peoria, including its businesses, landmarks and resources. Adult Literacy and Early Childhood classes will also be offered to adults. Additionally, each school will have access to a liaison to help families get to services at the Wraparound Center or other agencies.

Panorama SEL screening underway, Data allows educators to pinpoint strengths and challenges

As part of its strong emphasis on social emotional learning (SEL) Peoria Public Schools requires all education stakeholders to play a role in creating a safe, equitable and engaging school climate, so each student acquires the knowledge, skills and dispositions they need for interpersonal and life success.

The Panorama Social-Emotional Learning Screener helps teachers and administrators measure and improve social-emotional learning skills and competencies for their students. Panorama’s SEL measures have been used with more than 600,000 students in the U.S., with strong findings of validity and reliability. The screener measures four competencies for students 2nd grade through high school: self-management, growth mindset, self-awareness and teacher/student relationships.

Measures used by Panorama were developed with support from research partners at the University of California Santa Barbara, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Transforming Education and CORE districts. Each measure consists of several questions or prompts for students or teachers. The tests can be administered in English and Spanish.

Data from the screener provides a high-level picture of SEL at each school, including strengths and opportunities for growth. Teachers and principals can use Panorama’s reporting and analytics to understand how their students and schools are doing. Educators can use this data to strengthen students’ individual SEL skills by focusing on social-emotional outcomes using Panorama’s Playbook platform and resources.

Students took the first screening in October. Student and school data can be used to make informed decisions on students’ strengths and areas of need.

Nearly 300 PPS teachers attend Lions Quest training

In August, 237 PPS teachers from Glen Oak Community Learning Center, Harrison Community Learning Center, Sterling Middle School, Maude Sanders Primary School, Lincoln K-8 and Von Steuben Middle School attended Lions Quest a training workshop. An additional 60 Roosevelt Magnet School attended the training in October. Teachers' evaluations of the workshop were overwhelmingly positive, with 93 percent rating the workshop as either effective or very effective.

To refer a student or a family for services at Wraparound Center and find more information on SEL resources go to: https://www.peoriapublicschools.org/wraparound

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Wraparound Center and SEL resources for PPS staff

News about Social Emotional Learning from Peoria Public Schools January 2020
Anonymous donor brightens holiday for Wraparound OSF Strive client

Linda Williams lost her son, John Bell III, in April 2017, an innocent victim of random gun violence. Williams is raising four of her eight grandchildren, Peoria Public School students ranging in age from nine to four. Battling stress and severe depression over the loss of her son, Williams reached out to the Wraparound Center for help in October 2018 shortly after they opened its doors.

Contacting OSF Strive was a good first step for Williams. However, it was the assertive outreach of psychotherapist Janie Exner, and case manager Barbara Hedrick over the next three months that encouraged her to stick with the supports. Exner and Hedrick kept calling and checking in with Williams, urging her to come back to the OSF Strive program.

Williams had made such tremendous progress since reaching out to OSF Strive and the Wraparound Center that just before Christmas an anonymous donor, inspired by Williams’ story and the steady effort she has made to help herself and her grandchildren, surprised her with a gift of $500 cash – a perfect gift for a grandmother of eight.

OSF Strive is a trauma recovery program offered through OSF St. Francis Medical Center and one of ten Wraparound Center partners. The program offers counseling and other services to guide victims of violence through the healing process. OSF Strive counselors and case managers are specially trained to help victims of traumatic and violent events. OSF Strive also serves victims of violence from an office located at Manual Academy.

“My son was an innocent victim of violent crime. OSF Strive and the Wraparound Center helped me get through, that is a miracle. I want to live my life again,” said Williams after receiving the gift. “I couldn’t have made it without you,” she told Exner and Hedrick. “You kept me coming back. You taught me how to walk it out and breathe it out. I hope others who have experienced violence will think they can get help too.”

Wraparound Center helps family cope with trauma of violence

In November, Tina Rucker of Peoria spoke addressed the PPS school board regarding her experiences with the Wraparound Center. Following is a summary of her remarks.

“My name is Tina Rucker. My family and I have been victims of a violent crime. I’ve never been the victim of violent crime before. It’s very frustrating and painful.

“On August 6, 2019, my nephew, Marshawn Tolliver, was shot five times in front of me. It was like the end of the world to me.

“I heard about the Wraparound Center. My mama used to say, ‘A closed mouth don’t get fed.’ I went to the Wraparound Center and I talked. I spoke and they listened, and they helped me. Everyone there took me in – Katie, Barbara Hedrick and Derrick Booth – they all wrapped their arms around me. I’m going to grow through the Wraparound Center. I’m going to carry my nephew’s legacy forward. My husband and I are raising his son. He’s 16 and goes to Manual and he’s a good kid.

“I want everyone to know how the Wraparound Center has helped me survive. They helped me and they helped my family.”

Wraparound Center to host Financial Opportunity Center

Beginning this month, the Wraparound Center will host a Financial Opportunity Center (FOC), a career and financial coaching service center to help low- to moderate-income people build smart money habits and focus on the financial bottom line. The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), in partnership with the Jobs Partnership – Peoria, will provide FOC services to individuals and families throughout Peoria.

FOCs provide employment and career counseling, one-on-one financial coaching and education, and low-cost financial products that help build credit, savings and assets. They also connect clients with income supports such as food stamps, utilities assistance and affordable health insurance. The cornerstone of the FOC model is providing these services in an integrated way—rather than as stand-alone services—and with a long-term commitment to helping clients reach their goals. Individuals are welcome to visit or contact the Wraparound Center to connect to these financial opportunity services.

Pamela Wiley wins CI Hero

WMBD 31 news named Pamela Wiley its Central Illinois Hero of the Week in October.

Wiley operates the Hand Up Peoria food pantry at the Wraparound Center. The pantry serves up to 150 people per week in need of food, toiletries, diapers and other household items, representing a significant part of the services the Wraparound Center provides to the community. Wiley was also recognized with the Remarkable Spirit award at the November board of education meeting.

A huge thank you to Wraparound!

Two days ago a family new to Peoria came to register. They have many challenges, and Whittier referred them to Wraparound. They had intake yesterday, and it is amazing to hear the services that this family received. Thank you to everyone! This family was truly wrapped in support and lifted to a better position.

Julie Deighton, Principal, Whittier Primary School, August 2019