



PRESS RELEASE

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Grant Award Supports Gloucester Students' Wellness During COVID-19

Gloucester High School receives grant to partner with Project Adventure for expanded mental health and social-emotional supports

GLOUCESTER, MA, September 14, 2020 – Gloucester High School is the recipient of a \$84,000 grant from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to increase support for their students' mental health and wellness this year.

The DESE grant program, *Supporting Students' Behavioral and Mental Health and Wellness*, funds a partnership between Gloucester High School and Project Adventure, a nonprofit in Beverly that provides social-emotional learning, community-building, and teacher training.

The project comes at a time when schools around the country are struggling to meet the mental health needs of their students. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the need for support even more critical.

"In this effort we are focusing on the 9th grade transition and some of our higher needs populations, which for this year is critical as we face increased challenges due to the pandemic," says Amy Kamm, Gloucester High's Adjustment Counselor.

The grant funds a combination of professional development for teachers, social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum, an afterschool Adventure Leadership Program, and training for the school counseling staff in experiential group therapy approaches.

Project Adventure has been a partner of north shore schools since 1971, when it was founded in Hamilton-Wenham High School with the goal of making outdoor education and teambuilding accessible to all students.

Although Project Adventure's work is no longer focused solely on the outdoors, they still partner with schools to enhance their programs for students and teachers.

"Our goal is to support emotional wellness and healthy communities," says Caitlin McCormick Small, PA's Executive Director. "We partner with schools all around the country. We use group games and play, teambuilding initiatives, and deep reflection to help students and teachers build new social skills and emotional resilience."

This grant revives a collaboration that is decades old: Gloucester Public Schools and Project Adventure also partnered in the 1970's and 1980's.

"We are excited to be able to add supports for our students this year," says Kamm. "The pandemic has increased isolation and anxiety among young people. We're glad to invest extra energy in their wellness."