

UPDATE - August 2024:

This letter is just a copy of our original letter with almost 300 signatures. If you would like to add your name to our BSD Valentines letter to show your support for these initiatives, please email us at yumeweallboise@gmail.com.

There are many positive things that have happened since this letter was submitted to the Boise School District last April 2024. The Boise School District has been very supportive and continues to meet and work with us on finding ways to better address these initiatives.

We formed a grassroots Boise parent/community organization with the goal of educating and making changes regarding these 4 initiatives in our schools, homes and community.

Our organization's name is **Youth Mental Wellness Alliance (You, Me, We, All)**. Our website is yumeweall.org. It is a place to find resources and action items we can all do as a community to address these initiatives.

Boise Public School Administrators and the Boise School Board
Boise School District
Attn: Superintendent Dennis and Trustee President Wagers
From: Parents of students in the Boise School District

April 8, 2024

Dear Superintendent Dennis, Boise School Board, Boise School District Principals, and Boise School District Board of Trustees,

We are writing to you as parents in the Boise School District; **we want to be part of the community solution to help meet the growing need for mental health support in our schools and communities.** We know there is no simple solution to [suicide prevention](#), and the terrible rise in teen suicides has no easy answer. Between 2007 and 2018, the [suicide rate among Americans ages 10 to 24 increased by nearly 60%](#); Idaho had the fifth highest suicide rate in the nation in 2020 according to the [CDC](#). We recognize the district and other organizations (e.g. Rotary Club) are actively engaged in seeking support and solutions. **But we need more.** Fortunately, place-based research has helped identify what Boise schools and communities can do to foster Upstream Prevention of suicide. The two main drivers of depression and suicidal ideation in Boise youth are **high levels of stress** and experiencing high levels of **social isolation** (<https://www.communitiesforyouth.org/boise>). A primary solution to stress and isolation is to **build authentic connections and communities.**

Parents have identified the four following action areas where **we can support our students and communities** (please see expanded information about these topics at the end of the letter). These are **not listed in order of priority**:

- 1) Appropriate Technology Use: Excessive use (and misuse) of personal smart devices (e.g., smart phones, smartwatches and earbuds) play a big role in declines in mental

health among all demographics. We seek development and implementation of appropriate use of technology in the school setting.

- 2) Peer-to-Peer support through the creation of Hope Squad Boise and/or more complete implementation of Sources of Strength: Hope Squad and Sources of Strength are both a peer-to-peer program that empowers students to perform acts of intentional outreach. We seek development and expansion of peer mentoring in Boise Schools.
- 3) Authentic Connections in the Outdoors: Outdoor spaces at school offer students key opportunities to learn, problem solve, and mentally refresh. Many of these opportunities were lost during COVID and have not come back. We seek reinstitution and expansion of outdoor opportunities for students.
- 4) **School Start times: There is broad support and abundant medical evidence that indicate that school start times are not aligned with age-appropriate sleep needs. We seek evaluation and alignment of school start times with sleep needs for students.

****(this issue came up from many parents reviewing the letter, and was added during the letter signing process).

We seek board, superintendent and district approval to form four committees to address the above initiatives at your next board meeting. We request committees be composed of representatives from parents and parent organizations, BSD leadership, students, teachers and staff. (note: the signatures below indicate support of the formation of these committees, not including the associated material in the appendices).

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

PLACE CONTACT INFO BELOW
(Name, Parents of & email ONLY needed)

**There is no longer a deadline to sign our letter. We would like to continue gathering parent signatures to create a community of parents, families and guardians who support these initiatives and want to increase connection opportunities with youth in our own families and community.*