



Message from the CEO

By Dr. Jared Scherz



The single most important universal goal for 2021 is our health. Both our psychological and physiological wellbeing drive our overall health, which can be broken down into behavioral health, wellness, stress, immunity and vitality. Out of all these components, it's our immunity we have the most control over, driven largely by our diet and lifestyle choices.

Social-emotional learning is seldom tied into nutrition, however there is an important link. The choices we make around self-care directly impact every aspect of our personhood and vice versa. Unhealthy eating and drinking habits adversely impact our thoughts and behavior. Unrestrained appetite and indulgence will cause poor reasoning, making it easier to give into pessimism as a prelude to unhappiness.

When the digestive organs are taxed, it weakens your mental capacities both through the production of neurotransmitters responsible for mood but also with focus, memory, processing speed and clarity. Practicing temperance in eating can also help you become more patient, deliberate and tolerant. Not only is this metabolic but exercising self-control helps reduce the instinct for instant gratification.

To manufacture critical life-blood, essential for all aspects of our immunity, we require nutrient dense food. Eating a balanced diet rich in fresh vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, and other organic matter helps with feelings of wellbeing. Next generation schools will recognize this important formula for both faculty and students, truly emulating a whole child / whole community approach to learning.

In addition to our individual choices, we also need to focus on the big picture. In 2021, schools will work to bring social justice issues to the forefront of education. The food industry and the environment may jointly be the most important of all health equity work, producing students who recognize the many threats to our existence. All students need to appreciate where their food originates and how our soil is at risk of complete annihilation. Without doing so, food deserts will become more than an inner city problem we cannot continue to ignore.

Mighty Mushrooms: Boost Immune Function and Brain Health and Guard Against Cancer

By Dr. Joel Fuhrman

Strengthen the Immune System



Mushroom's phytochemicals, such as beta-glucan, enhance the activity of several different types of immune cells including natural killer cells, which attack and destroy virus-infected and cancerous cells.

The immune-enhancing actions of mushrooms are thought to help the body to more effectively attack microbial invaders and developing tumors.¹⁻³ According to a study on healthy volunteers who ate white button mushrooms daily, mushrooms may also help to prevent infections by enhancing salivary immunoglobulin A production; immunoglobulins are antibodies secreted by mucosal surfaces (such as the digestive system and respiratory tract) to protect against infection.⁴ Similar results were found for shiitake mushrooms in healthy people: after 4 weeks of eating 5-10 g dried shiitake mushrooms daily, there was an increase in salivary immunoglobulin A.⁵ The immune system protects us against infection and also cancer. Many clinical trials have investigated concentrated mushroom polysaccharide extracts as an adjunct treatment for improving immune function in patients with cancer.⁶⁻⁹ [Read More.](#)

Star District



To say that the educational community is under an unprecedented amount of stress is an understatement. Amongst teachers', students' and parents' chief stress triggers are their health and the health of loved ones. The irony here is that increased levels of stress can negatively affect the immune system, making people more susceptible to Covid-19 as well as other illnesses. It is imperative that administrators take this seriously and into consideration when addressing the needs of their faculty and students.

Eastern Camden County Regional School District (ECCRSD) has taken this task on in some innovative ways. Dr. Kristin Borda, director of academic programs and student performance and Dr. Susan Roth, director of special services, Eastern Learning Academy and homeless liaison explain how their district is getting creative under difficult circumstances. "We have two athletic trainers who have taken it upon themselves to develop a faculty wellness program," says Borda. "They've created a list of wellness and self care goals like diet, exercise, reading, volunteering, etc., and have implemented a friendly competition amongst the staff to foster a sense of community and connection during a time when most of us cannot physically be together."

Roth adds, "We also addressed the added stress factors through curriculum by easing teachers' work load. We've eased up on lesson plan requirements so they have less documents to submit, taking some of the workload off of their very full plates."

"TeacherCoach has also provided mindfulness sessions called 'Let's Talk About It' which offers small group therapy," says Borda. "It's a great program and we are hoping more teachers feel comfortable enough to take advantage of it. We think that creating a safe environment where teachers can talk about their stresses with others and not feel like they are alone is important right now."

"It's so important that teachers can then incorporate the mindfulness they learn from TeacherCoach into the classroom with their students. This helps them create a warm, safe

environment in an otherwise unstable situation,” explains Roth. “We provide teachers the support they need and the teachers then pass that down to the students.”

Administrators are also taking the time to listen to their faculty on the front lines. They acknowledge that it would be impossible to fix every issue because there are aspects of this learning model that are just out of their hands. But listening and making sure people feel heard is very important to morale and managing stress levels. “We talk to our teachers through committees and listen to what they have to say. We’ve heard and responded to their concerns about PD requirements, trying to find a way to fulfill requirements in a more flexible way,” explains Roth. Borda adds, “Although PD is still an extra thing that teachers have to do, the SEL modules that TeacherCoach provides affords them some flexibility so that they can complete them at a time when it’s more convenient for them.”

Additionally, the two school nurses have played an invaluable role in providing support and information to the entire staff regarding this unprecedented health crisis. Knowing that there is professional medical support and advice available to answer questions about how to care for themselves, their children and other family members has been a key ingredient in easing the stress levels of the Eastern educational community. “The nurses are a more valuable resource than ever, and are now available to our faculty on weekends,” says Roth.

Finally, ECCRS D is offering precautionary sick days to staff so that if they are exposed to someone with Covid and are concerned about exposing others, they can take these precautionary sick days without jeopardizing their time off or their jobs. “We know that we can’t alleviate everyone’s stress all the time,” says Borda, “but we are doing what we can and taking a proactive role in helping our faculty. I think these precautionary sick days help reduce the stress levels somewhat when this virus affects someone in some way.”

Overall, what’s important is that districts like ECCRS D are taking steps and are aware that the stress levels in their community are at unprecedented levels. Hopefully, things will go back to some kind of normal, but in the meantime, working together, helping each other and maintaining a strong sense of community is essential to keeping stress levels from becoming dangerously high and directly affecting immune systems.

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