

December 22, 2018

Bend-La Pine Schools families,

As winter break approaches, many of us look forward to spending time with family and friends and sharing in the joys of the season. These changes in school and family routines and extra demands on time can also cause some stress, especially for children.

As a parent, it can be difficult at times to recognize the difference between typical problems teens have while growing up versus more serious issues. In recent days, some of these more serious issues have been presented to local community mental health practitioners, who are seeing an uptick in crisis services provided to both youth and adults here in Central Oregon.

Hearing this, and knowing that students are about to be away from one of their consistent social-emotional supports — their school community — compelled me to share a new tool that we have been working on with you before winter break.

This afternoon, we will push [First Step](#), a suite of Tip and Talk resources, out to all iPads issued to students in grades 6-12. For our elementary parents, please know that this resource can be accessed at www.firststeporegon.org on your mobile device or computer.

It is my hope that you will spend a few minutes familiarizing yourself with this new tool and talking to your children about it. Inside First Step you will find resources like, “3 Ways to Help a Friend,” “Getting Through Today,” contacts for free counseling and two featured resources: SafeOregon and YouthLine.

Free Counseling and Support Free counseling and support can be accessed by contacting our community partners at Deschutes County Behavioral Health, St. Charles Health System Behavioral Health, OSU Cascades Counseling Clinic, and Lutheran Community Services NW through [links](#) in First Step.

SafeOregon is a new way to report information 24-hours a day that involves students, the safety of their fellow students, or their school. With SafeOregon, students can report anything from vandalism to theft to cyberbullying [via text or phone, email, or online](#).

YouthLine is a free and confidential teen-to-teen help line. Students are encouraged to contact YouthLine [via phone, text, chat, and email](#) to talk about anything that may be bothering them. Teens are available to help daily from 4-10 p.m. Pacific Time (adults are available by phone at all other times).

First Step is made possible thanks to the Bend Police Department, Lines for Life, SafeOregon and many other incredible community partners. I am very grateful for their continued support of our shared commitment to the well-being of all of our students and staff.

I wish you all a happy, healthy winter break and wonderful start to 2018. I will see you all back in school on January 8, 2018.

Sincerely,

Shay Mikalson, Superintendent
Bend-La Pine Schools