

Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health: An Upstream Approach to Mental Health and Suicide Prevention for Elementary Youth

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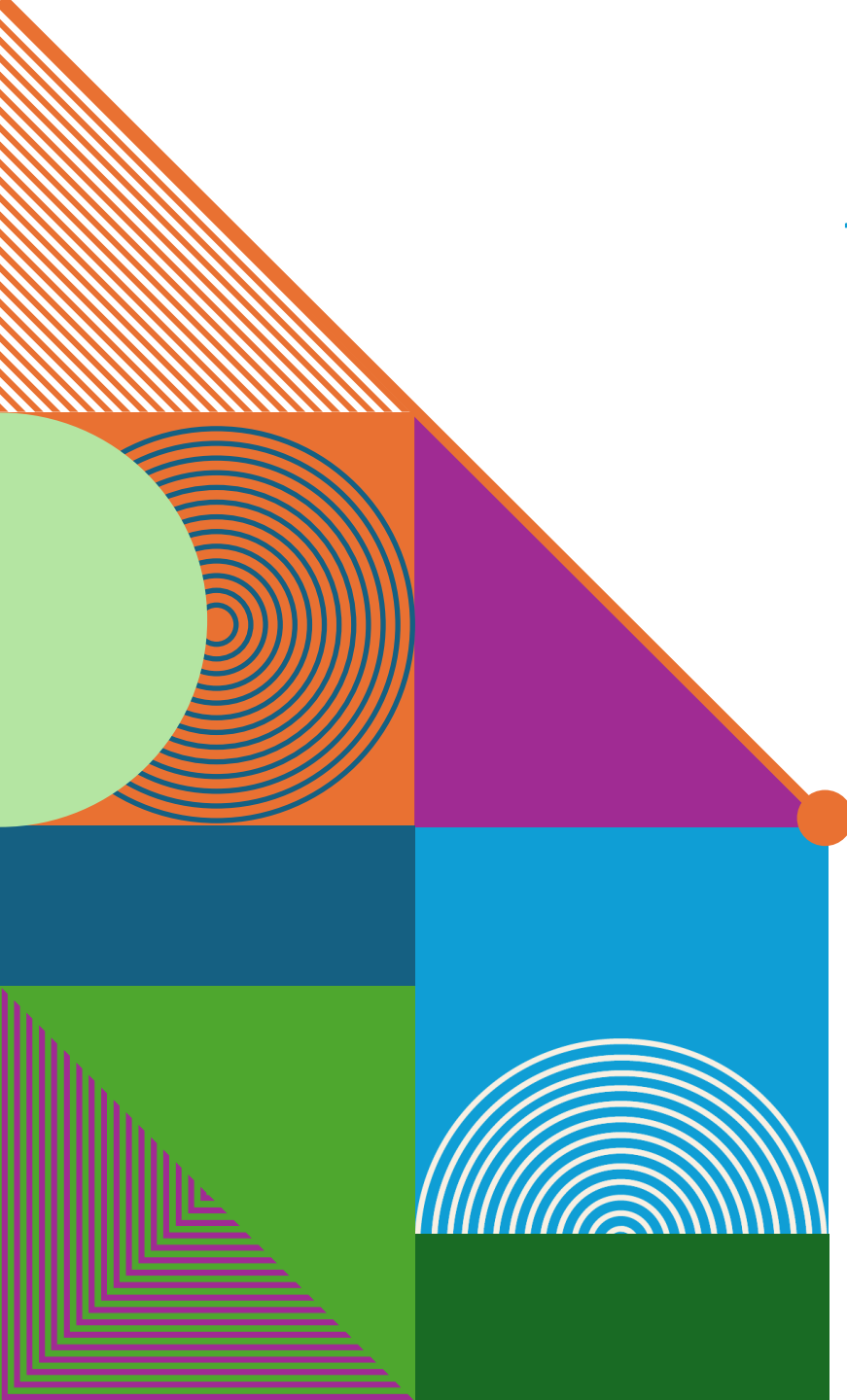
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Youth Suicide Prevention
Initiative*

**Partnerships for Hope &
Healing (PH2)
2023-2028**

**SAMSHA GLS Grantee Meeting
Bethesda, MD
August 7, 2026**



Acknowledgement

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and Mental Health Services Administration's
Cooperative Agreements for the Garrett Lee Smith
State/Tribal Youth Suicide Prevention and Early
Intervention Program

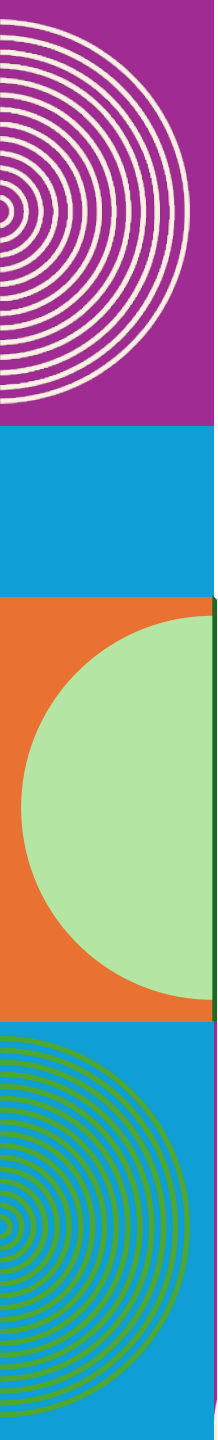
(Short Title: GLS State/Tribal Youth Suicide)

Award #: 1H79SM086113



Advisory & Project Team

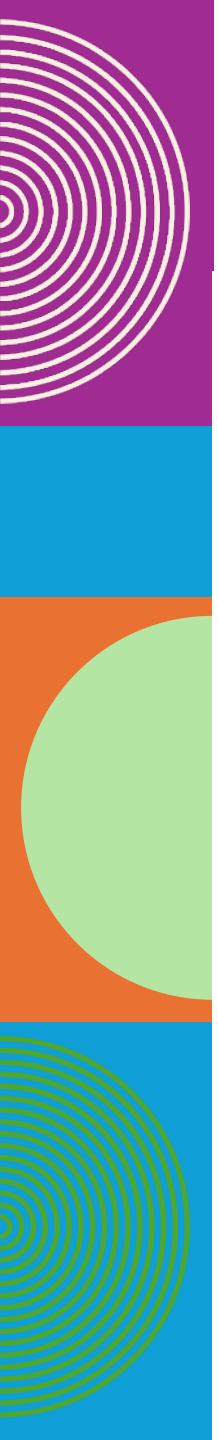
- CT Suicide Advisory Board
- Andrea Duarte, DMHAS, Prevention & Health Promotion, Project Director
- Stephanie Bozak, DCF, Behavioral Health Community Services, Co-Project Director
- Susan Logan, DPH, Injury & Violence Prevention, Co-Project Director
- Alyeska Tilly, United Way of CT/211, Program Manager
- Sara Wakai, UCONN Health, Center for Population Health, Evaluator
- Laurel Buchanan, UCONN Health, Center for Population Health, Evaluator



CT PARTNERSHIPS FOR HOPE & HEALING (PH2) 2023-2028

Partners:

- The EDC (Education Development Center)
- The Center for Population Health and The Center for Prevention Evaluation and Statistics at UCONN Health
- The five Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations: The Hub, Alliance for Prevention and Wellness, SERAC, Amplify and Western CT Coalition
- Four school systems Darien, Wallingford, Thompson, and Vernon and six communities: Darien, New Milford, Ridgefield, Thompson, Vernon, Wallingford



CT PARTNERSHIPS FOR HOPE & HEALING (PH2) 2023-2028

Local-level Objectives:

- Develop and implement intensive school-community-based efforts in five priority communities, one in each suicide prevention service region to build the capacity to prevent suicide as measured by the evaluation
- Each school-community partnership will perform suicide prevention, intervention and response strategic planning and implementation that will:
 - Use multiple best practice frameworks, strategies and curricula to *increase mental health promotion and suicide prevention* for all populations (Institute of Medicine-Universal, Selective, Indicated; Tiers 1-3)
 - Ensure *at-risk youth are identified and served* using best practice strategies to make connections to care and treatment, engage family/caregivers, provide lethal means counseling and safety planning, and receive timely follow-up services and supports
 - *Provide workforce development* appropriate for their profession to ensure those working with and supporting youth are educated about warning signs and risk factors, screening, treatment, and policies, procedures and protocols.
 - Enhance *policies, protocols and procedures* to align with best practice guidance
 - *Promote the 988* Suicide and Crisis Lifeline with the state's suicide prevention campaign and educate on its use

PH2: School-based Strategies and Curricula

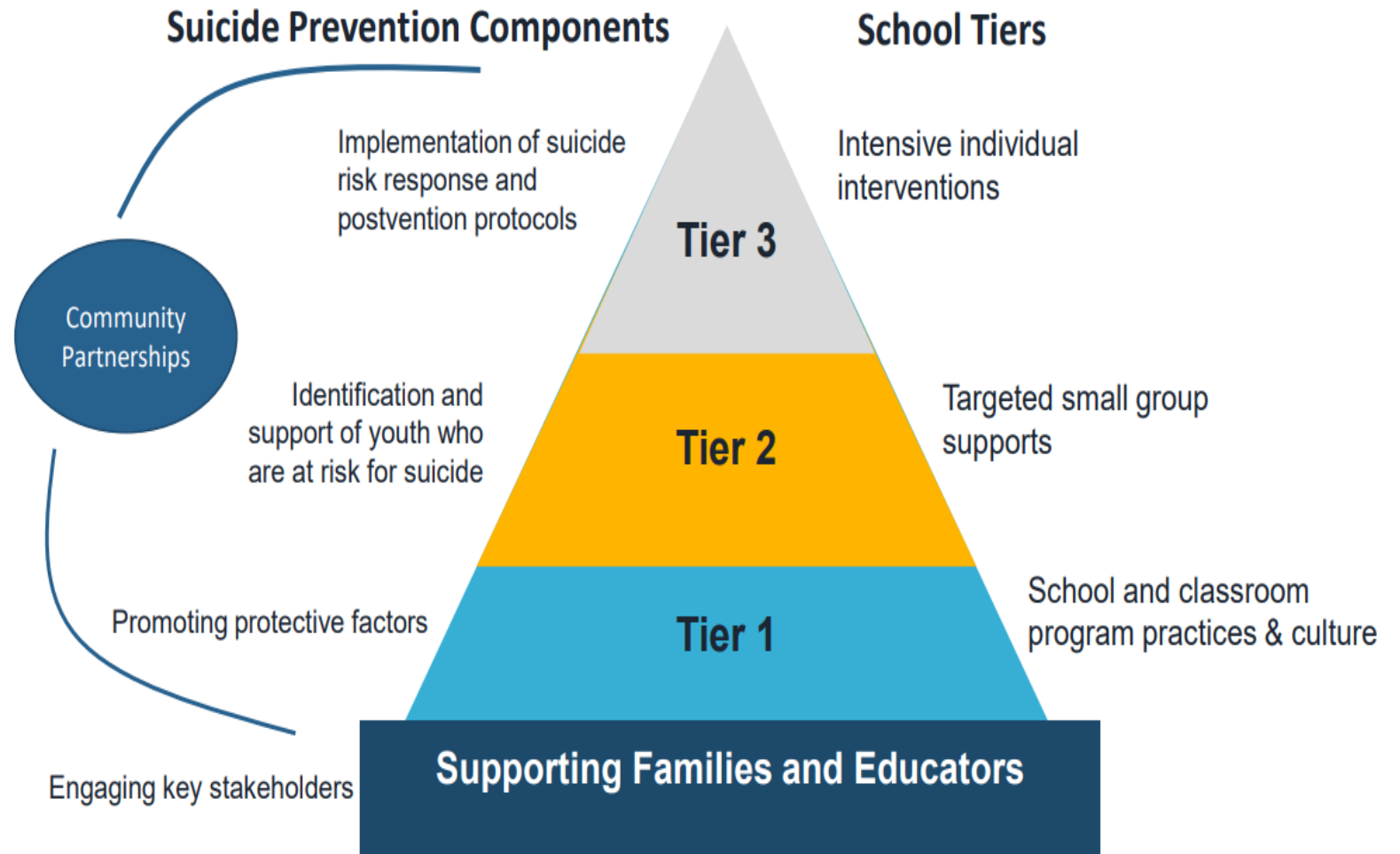
❖ System-wide:

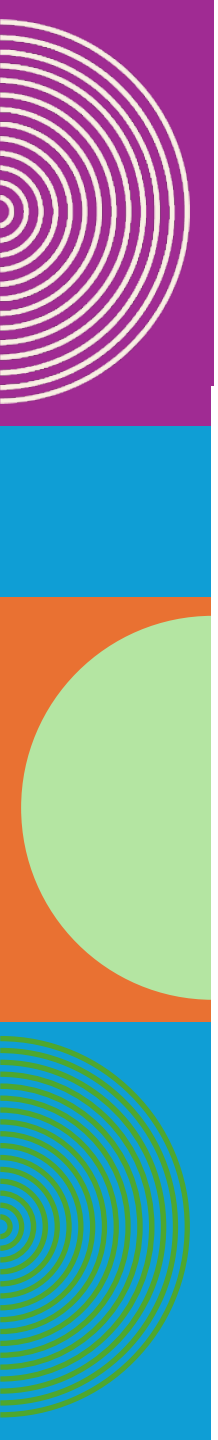
- Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention for Schools (MTSP)
- QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) Training for faculty, staff and high school students
- Early identification, referral to mental health services and follow-up to support connections to care and family
- Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) screener and assessment
- Safety Planning with Counseling Access to Lethal Means (CALM)

- **Elementary:** *Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health* © Elementary Curriculum (3rd grade, enhanced evaluation)
- **Middle School:** Signs of Suicide (SOS) Middle School Curricula
- **High School:** Signs of Suicide (SOS) High School Curricula

PH2: Multi-tiered Suicide Prevention for Schools

EDC's Multi-Tiered Approach to Suicide Prevention





Upstream Focus: “When” Matters

Youth Development

- Data indicates that in order to prevent these conditions and circumstances, we adults need to focus on developing life skills among elementary children. They need to:
 - 1) be old enough to have some sense of self
 - 2) have a desire for independence
 - 3) have the capacity to perform self-care (e.g. healthy habits), and
 - 4) still have a strong desire to carefully follow and trust adult guidance.
- According to Erik Erikson’s Social-Emotional Developmental Stages, this is the Industry vs. Inferiority stage. Youth age 6-11 (grades 1-5) begin to form a strong self-concept during this stage, and want to be “good and competent.”



www.gizmo4mentalhealth.org

Guide Development

- Upstream approach to support the mental health and wellness of youth.
- Data-driven and evidence-informed.
- Introduces mental health and wellness, mental health self-care, encourages self-identification of warning signs and when to apply the use of internal and external healthy coping strategies to help reduce risk.
- Introduces the characteristics of trusted adults, who may be one, how to practice talking with a trusted adult, and promotes proactive communication, social emotional learning, self advocacy, and community connectedness.
- Youth create a personal mental health plan (of action) that can be used daily, and in a time of need that can help them avert crisis. Can be shared with others.
- Resource section for trusted adults.



Curriculum Lessons

Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health © has five primary lessons:

- **LESSON 1** (Segment 1) - Introduction to mental health and self-care
- **LESSON 2** (Segment 2) - Signs of when mental health needs attention and healthy coping activities
- **LESSON 3** (Segment 3) - Identifying and connecting to Trusted Adults
- **LESSON 4** (Segment 4) - Completing “My Mental Health Plan”
- **LESSON 5** (Segment 5) - Activities to reinforce the lessons in the guide



Lesson 1: Introduction to mental health and self-care

This is called
mental health.

Mental health
is your

**FEELINGS,
THOUGHTS,
AND ACTIONS...**



Here are
some things
you can do
every day to
take care of
your mental
health —

**YOUR
FEELINGS,
THOUGHTS,
AND
ACTIONS.**



Lesson 2: Self-identification of warning signs and use of healthy coping strategies.

We all feel

SAD, MAD, OR WORRIED

sometimes, but how do we know when we are feeling this way?

I can tell you. You may see changes in how you usually

FEEL, THINK, OR ACT:

- Eat less or more
- Hard to get to sleep or stay asleep
- Argue more
- Cry easily
- Feel bored with things I like
- Want to be alone a lot
- Act before thinking
- Have less energy
- Feel very nervous/stressed



WHEN YOU FEEL **SAD, MAD, OR WORRIED**
sometimes you can do things on your own to take your
mind off of these feelings.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOU CAN DO
TO KEEP YOUR FEELINGS, THOUGHTS,
and ACTIONS healthy? ? ? ? ?

Turn back to pages 6 through 9 and

READ THE LISTS AGAIN.



...if you try these things on your own and they do not seem to help, try doing them with other people.

People I can Do Things With

- ✿ Parents
- ✿ Grandparents
- ✿ Aunt or Uncle
- ✿ Brother, Sister, Cousin
- ✿ Friends

ANY OTHERS?



PLACES WE CAN GO TOGETHER

THINGS TO DO WITH OTHERS
TO HELP YOU FEEL BETTER



- 🐾 Play a game
- 🐾 Tell jokes
- 🐾 Go for a bike ride
- 🐾 Go for a hike
- 🐾 Go to the store
- 🐾 Go to the library
- 🐾 Watch a movie
- 🐾 Play a sport
- 🐾 Go to lunch
- 🐾 Give and get hugs
- 🐾 Dance and sing

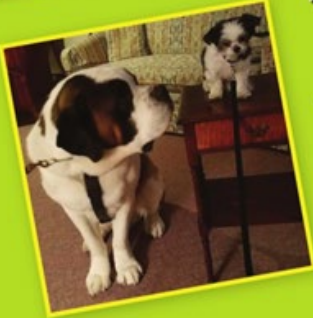


Lesson 3: Identification of and connecting to Trusted Adults



Talking about your mental health
— **FEELINGS, THOUGHTS, AND ACTIONS** —
with a trusted adult as soon as possible
is your next step.

You might be wondering,
"What is a trusted adult, anyway?"
Turn the page and find out.



A Trusted Adult is someone Who

- Helps YOU
- Makes YOU feel safe
- Is patient with YOU
- Listens to YOU
- Cares about YOU
- Spends time with YOU



Lesson 3: Indicated Trusted Adult at School Slide

OUR Trusted Adults:

Name:

Photo

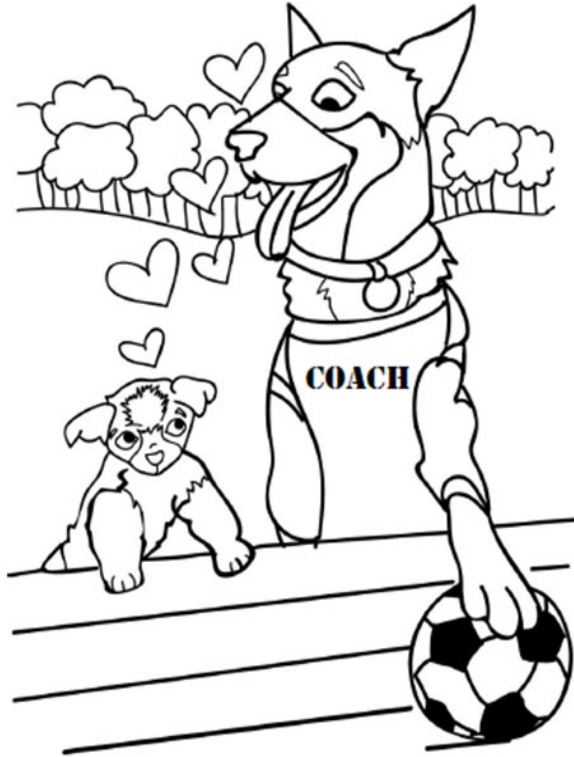
Room Number/Office:

Name:

Photo

Room Number/Office:

Lesson 3: Required Activity #1 - Trusted Adult Valentine



Dear _____

I am giving you this valentine
because you are my trusted
adult. This means that I will
come to you when I need
to talk about my feelings,
thoughts and actions.

A Trusted Adult is someone Who

- Helps YOU
- Makes YOU feel safe
- Is patient with YOU
- Listens to YOU
- Cares about YOU
- Spends time with YOU

RESOURCES FOR TRUSTED ADULTS

If you have been identified as a trusted adult and would like more information...

- www.preventsuicidect.org
- www.211ct.org
- www.mobilecrisisempsc.org
- www.gizmo4mentalhealth.org
- www.988lifeline.org
- If you are interested in learning more about how you can help children contact:

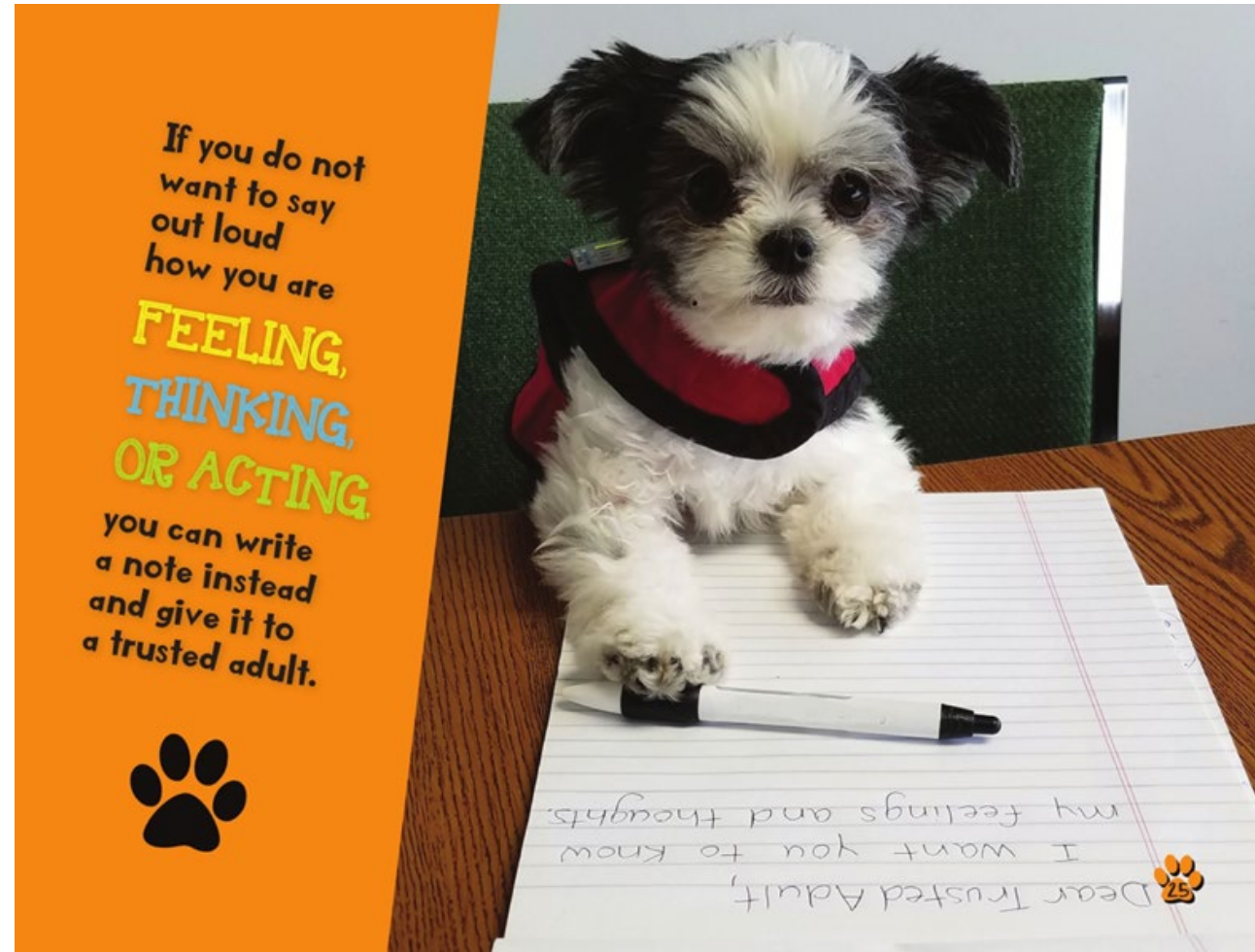
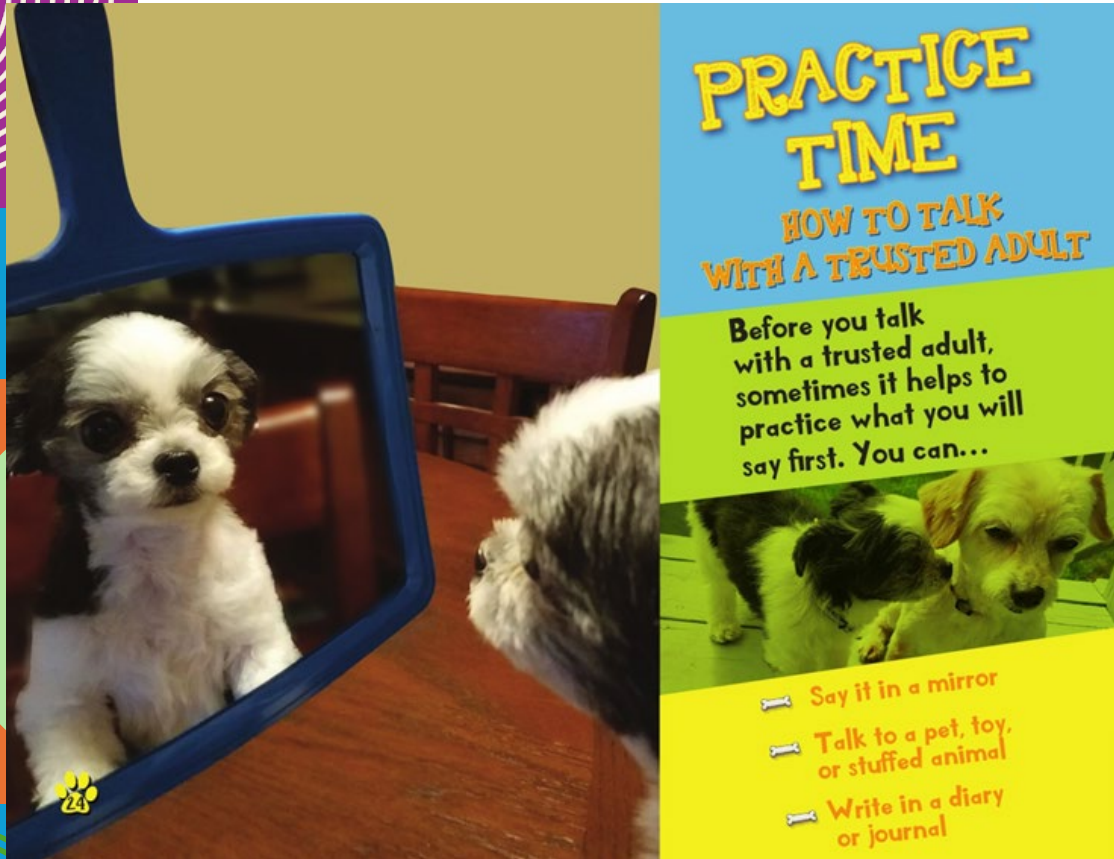
In a crisis contact:

- CT Mobile Crisis Intervention Services for Youth: Call 211
- 988 Lifeline: Call or text 988 or chat at www.988lifeline.org

In an emergency call or text 911

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Lesson 3: Continued



Lesson 4: Completion of Mental Health Plan



Lesson 4: Required Activity #2 - Check-In Slip



Name: _____

To practice talking to a trusted adult about my feelings and thoughts I would:



☐ Say it in a mirror

☐ Talk to a pet, toy or stuffed animal

☐ Write in a diary or journal



☐ I need to talk to the school/agency trusted adult about my feelings and thoughts soon.

☐ I do not need to talk to the school/agency trusted adult about my feelings and thoughts soon.

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**Implementation of Lesson 4 cannot precede a weekend or a break.*

Lesson 4: Required Activity #3 - Completion of Mental Health Plan

MY MENTAL HEALTH PLAN

Name: _____

1. Things I can do to take care of my mental health: feelings, thoughts, and actions

☐ Breathe slowly	☐ Ride a bike
☐ Listen to music	☐ Play outside
☐ Play an instrument	☐ Read
☐ Draw or paint	☐ Play with toys
☐ Take a nap	☐ Do a puzzle
☐ Blow bubbles	☐ Sew or knit
☐ Play with a pinwheel	☐ Smile or laugh
☐ Play dress-up	☐ Take a walk
☐ Write a story	☐ _____
☐ Play with pets	☐ _____

2. How to know if I feel mad, sad, or worried

☐ Eat less or more	☐ Want to be alone a lot
☐ Hard to get to sleep or stay asleep	☐ Act before thinking
☐ Argue more	☐ Have less energy
☐ Cry easily	☐ Feeling very nervous/stressed
☐ Feel bored with things you like	☐ _____
	☐ _____

3. People and places that can help me think of other things

☐ Parents	☐ Friends house
☐ Grandparents	☐ Family member's house
☐ Aunt or Uncle	☐ Faith Community
☐ Brother, Sister, Cousin	☐ Community center or youth center
☐ My friends	☐ Park
☐ _____	☐ Library
☐ _____	☐ _____

4. Things I can do with Others to Help Me Feel Better

☐ Play a game	☐ Go to lunch
☐ Tell jokes	☐ Play outside
☐ Go for a bike ride	☐ Give and get hugs
☐ Go for a hike	☐ Dance and sing
☐ Go to the store	☐ _____
☐ Go to the library	☐ _____
☐ Watch a movie	☐ _____
☐ Play a sport	☐ _____

5. My trusted adults

☐ Parents
☐ Grandparents
☐ Uncles/Aunts
☐ Older Brothers/Sisters
☐ Teachers
☐ Coaches
☐ Religious Leaders
☐ Scout Leaders
☐ School Counselors
☐ School Social Workers
☐ School Nurses
☐ Doctors
☐ Camp Counselors
☐ Any Others?
☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____

PAWS UP for mental health



29

Lesson 5: Optional Activities - Use of mindfulness exercise and other activities

GIZMO CAN HELP YOU with Mindfulness Exercises too!

Meditation is doing nothing **AND** listening to your own thoughts at the same time. It can help you with your feelings, thoughts and actions. Sometimes, meditation is hard at first, but once you get the hang of it, you will **LOVE** it!

HERE'S HOW YOU DO IT



1. Sit comfortably in a chair or cross-legged on the floor. Keep your back straight, and let your shoulders relax. Take a deep breath, and close your eyes, if you want.



2. Focus on how the air feels as it moves in and out of your nose.



3. Sometimes thoughts will come into your mind and distract you from paying attention to your breathing. That's ok - just refocus on how the air feels as it moves in and out of your nose, and how it fills your chest and then leaves with every breath.



4. Try to meditate for 5 to 10 minutes every day, just like brushing your teeth. If you meditate every day you will find it easier and easier to do and it will help your feelings, thoughts and actions.



COLOR GIZMO



PH2 Gizmo Evaluation

GLS Grantee Meeting
Bethesda, Maryland
August 7, 2026



Gizmo Evaluation

❖ Purpose

- Reporting to PH2 leadership & federal funders
- Fidelity monitoring
- Effectiveness evaluation for Gizmo's application to the Suicide Prevention Resource Center's (SPRC) Best Practices Registry (BPR)

❖ Data sources

- Gizmo Curriculum Report
- Gizmo Effectiveness Teacher Surveys (Pre & Post)
- Gizmo Effectiveness Student Survey
 - Planned for spring 2027

OVERVIEW

REPORT

- ❖ Completed by Gizmo implementor(s)
- ❖ Classroom level reporting on details of the delivery of the Gizmo curriculum
- ❖ Aggregate only, no details on individual students
- ❖ Required each year that Gizmo is delivered
- ❖ Used in Federal reporting and reporting to PH2 leadership

SURVEYS

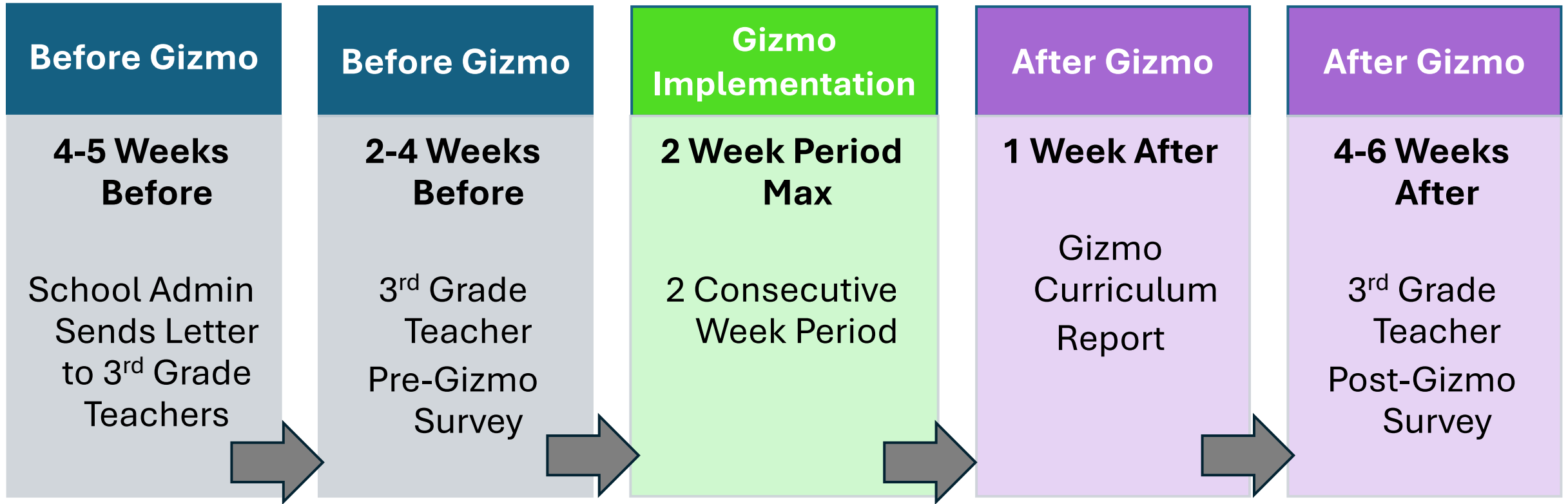
- ❖ Completed by third grade teachers the first year that their classroom receives Gizmo
- ❖ Optional online surveys done pre and post Gizmo curriculum delivery
- ❖ Used for:
 - Reporting to PH2 leadership
 - Effectiveness evaluation for Gizmo's application to the Suicide Prevention Resource Center's Best Practices Registry

Gizmo Evaluation Preparation Activities

❖ Fall 2025

- Obtained school contacts for curriculum report and teacher survey
- Held webinars for school administrators and implementors
- PH2 program staff provided QPR Training (Gizmo requirement)

GIZMO EVALUATION: 14-Week Timeline



**This 2 consecutive week period for Gizmo implementation determines when Week 1 starts. Implementation of Lesson 4 cannot precede a weekend or a break.*

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Gizmo Curriculum Report

Gizmo Administration

- School Participation

- School Districts: 4
- Schools: 8
- Classrooms: 30
- Teachers: 30
- Students: 575 (approximately)

- Role of Implementor

- Behavioral Health: 18
- Teacher: 18
- Principal: 4

Fidelity Monitoring

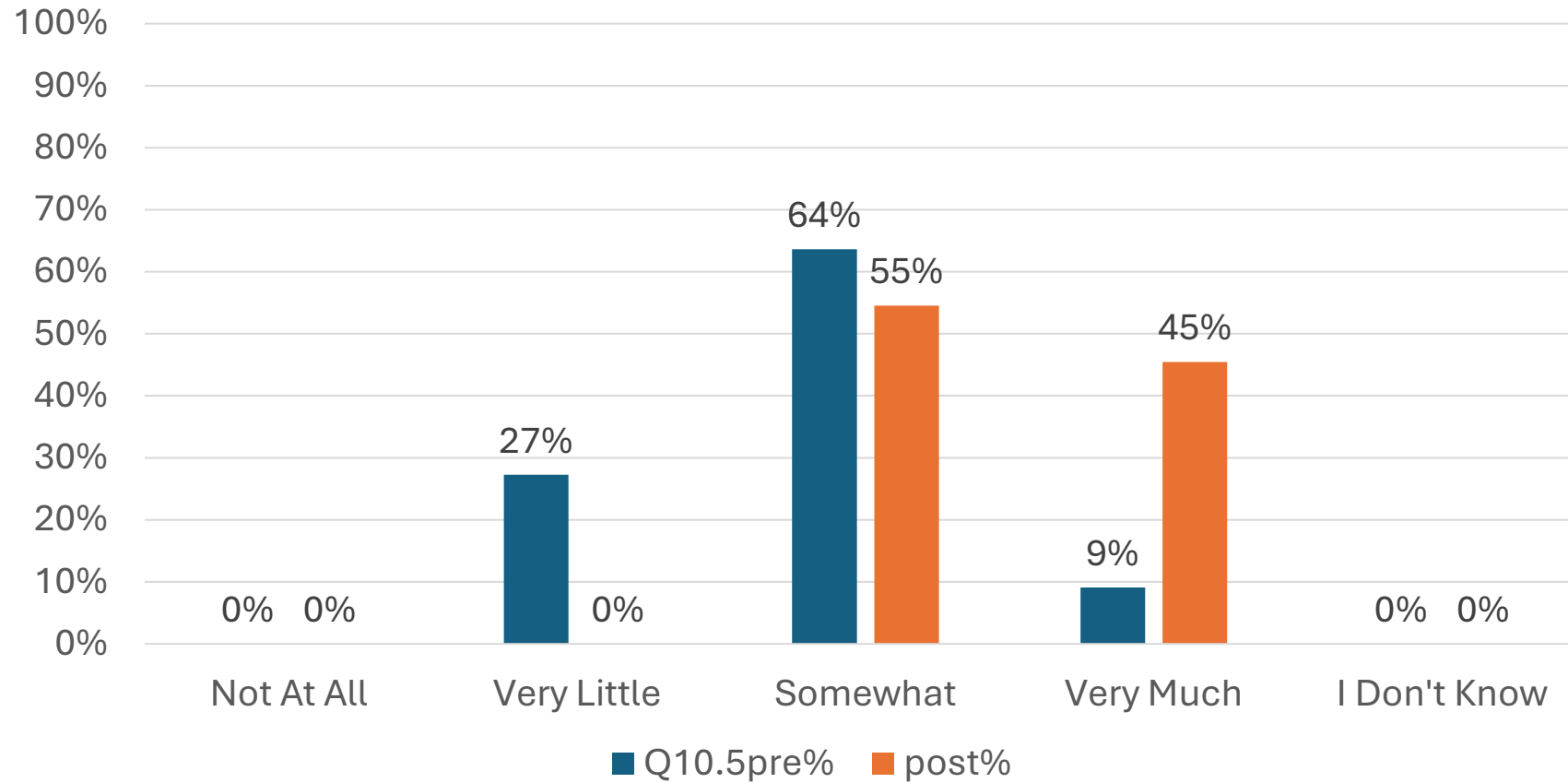
Gizmo Required Activity	Percent
Trusted Adult Introduced	97% of classrooms
Completed Valentine	99% of students
Completed Mental Health Plan	97% of students
Completed Check in Slip	76% of students
Connected with adult within 24 hours	57% (n=59 students)
Connected with adult but longer than 24 hours	44% (n=45 students)

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Gizmo Effectiveness Teacher Surveys

Gizmo Teacher Survey Pre & Post

3rd grade students in my classroom . . .
Use strategies when they are sad, mad or worried

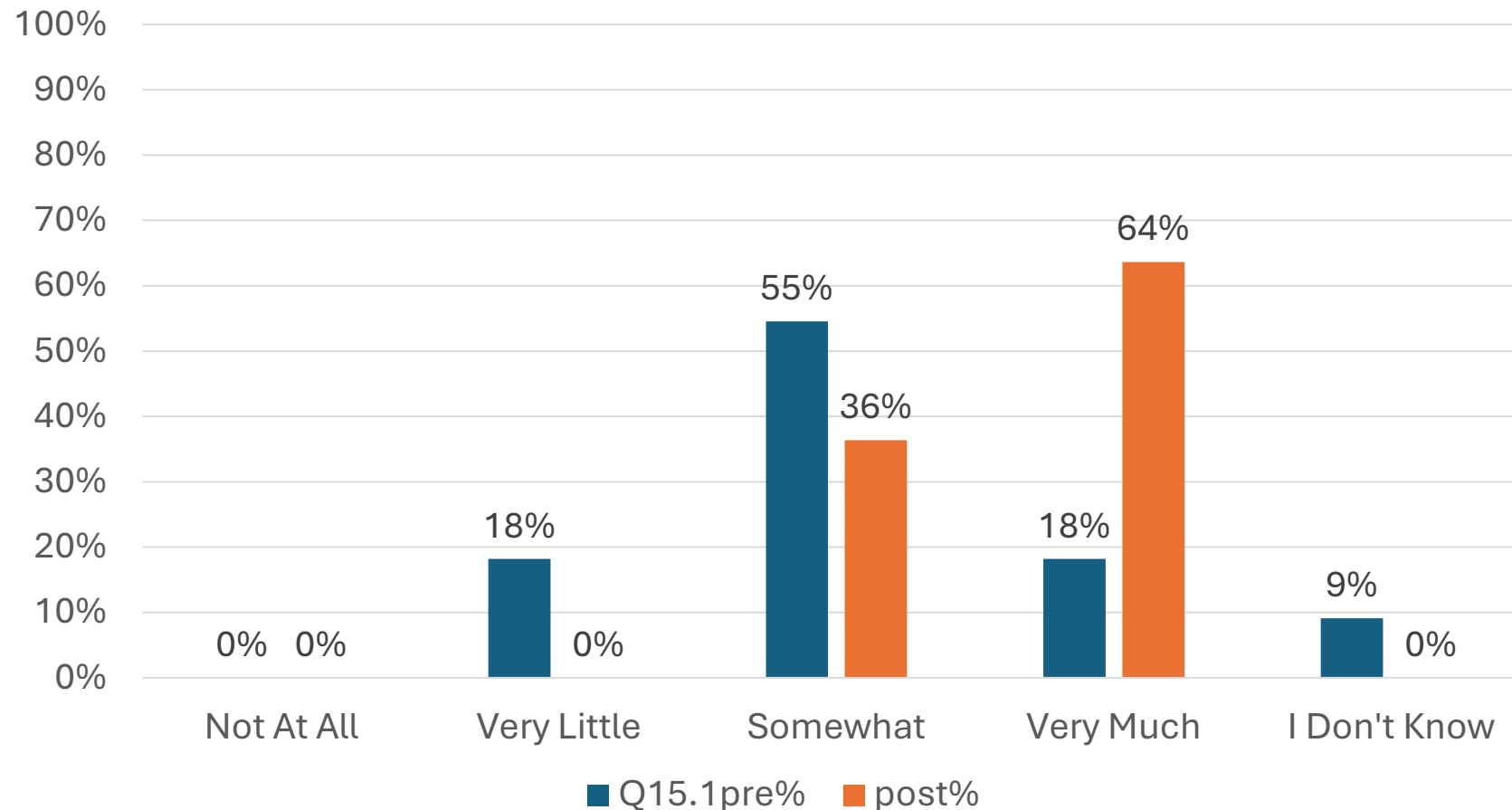


(n=11)
Spring 2026

Gizmo Teacher Survey Pre & Post

3rd grade students in my classroom . . .

Know when they need to reach out to an adult for help with their mental health

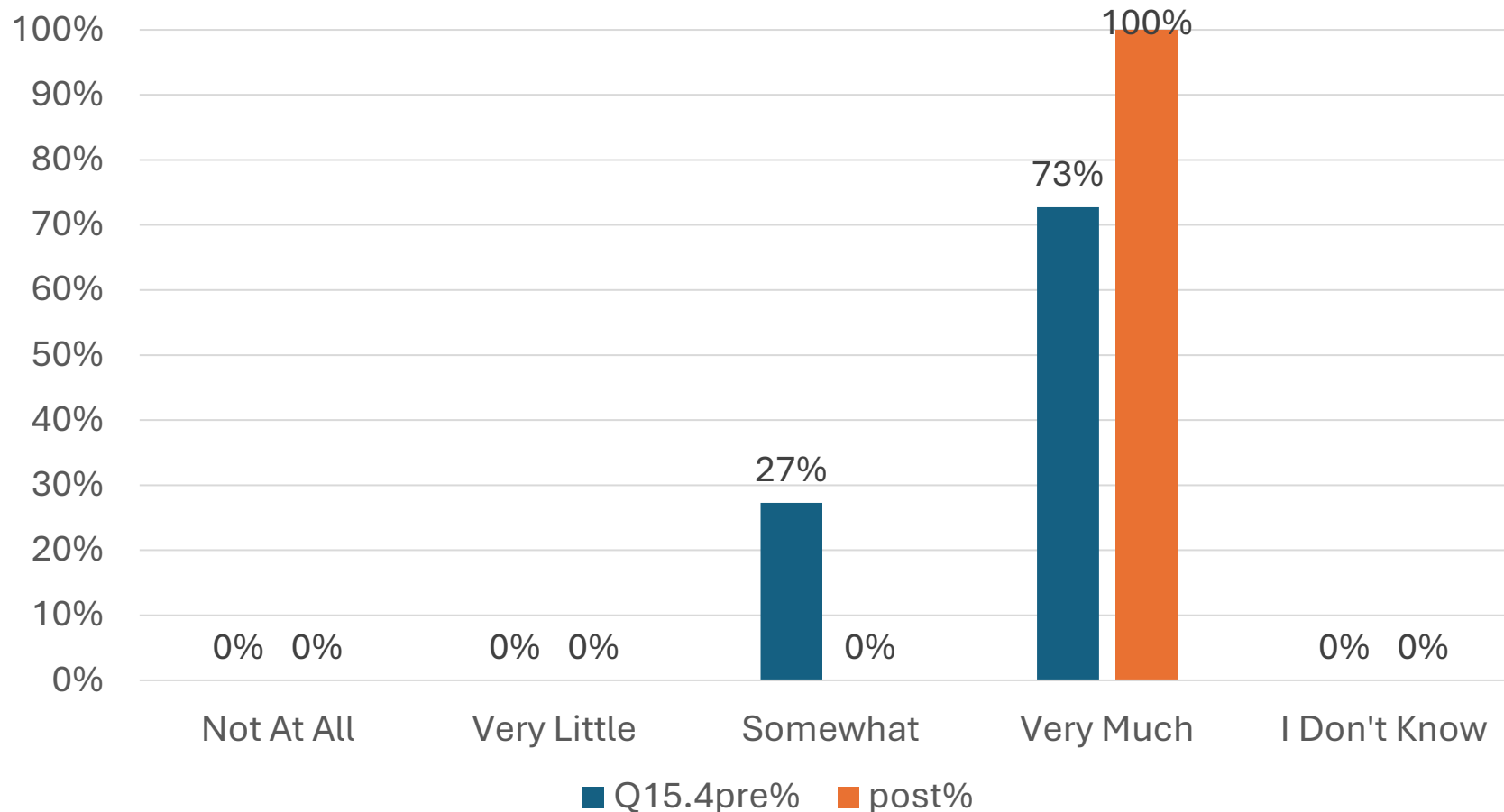


(n=11)
Spring 2026

Gizmo Teacher Survey Pre & Post

3rd grade students in my classroom . . .

Have an adult in the school who they can talk to when they feel sad, mad or worried.

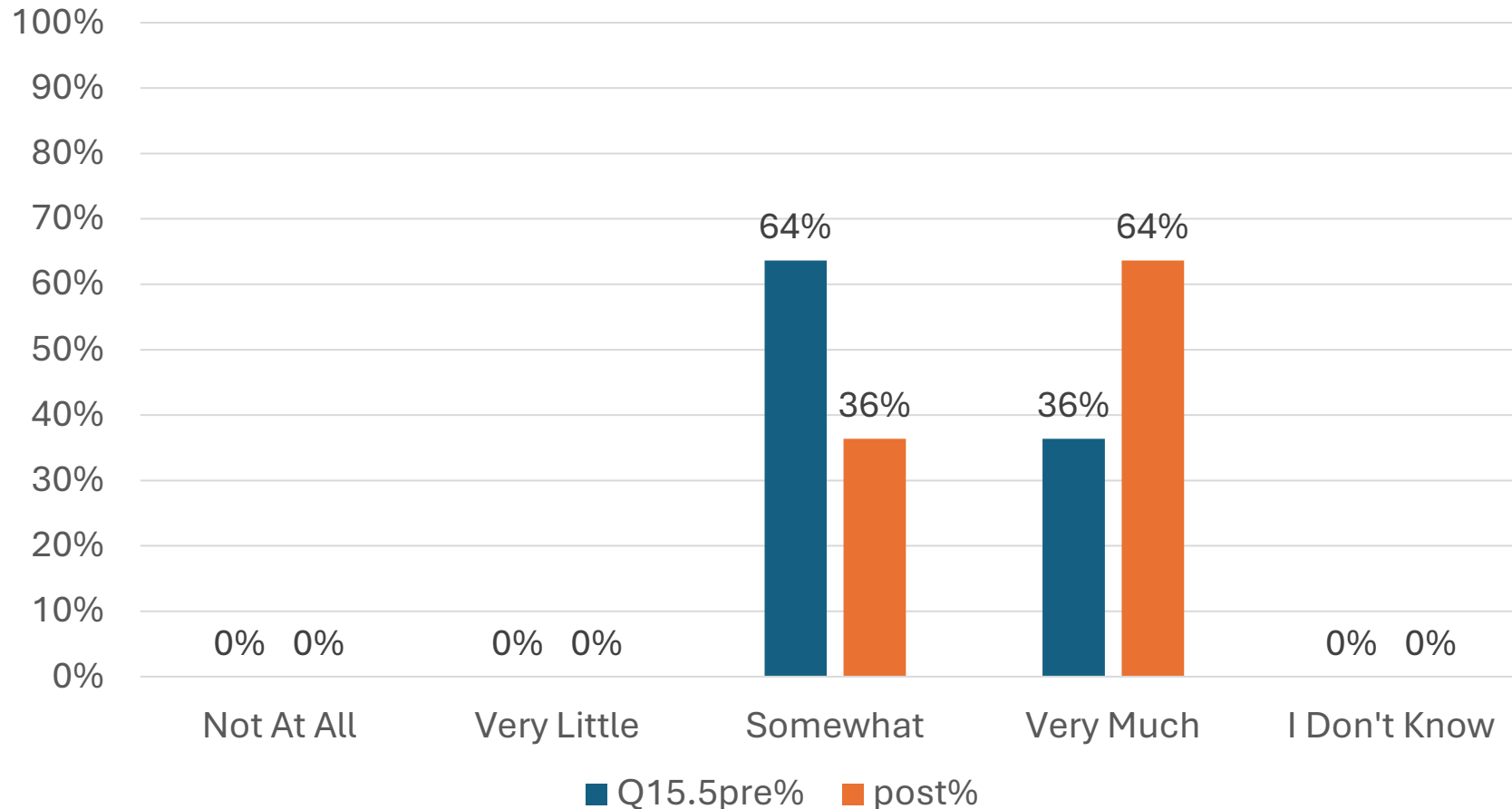


(n=11)
Spring 2026

Gizmo Teacher Survey Pre & Post

3rd grade students in my classroom . . .

Are comfortable talking to an adult at school about their feelings, thoughts and actions.



(n=11)
Spring 2026

PH2 Gizmo Teacher Post Survey

How much do you agree . . .

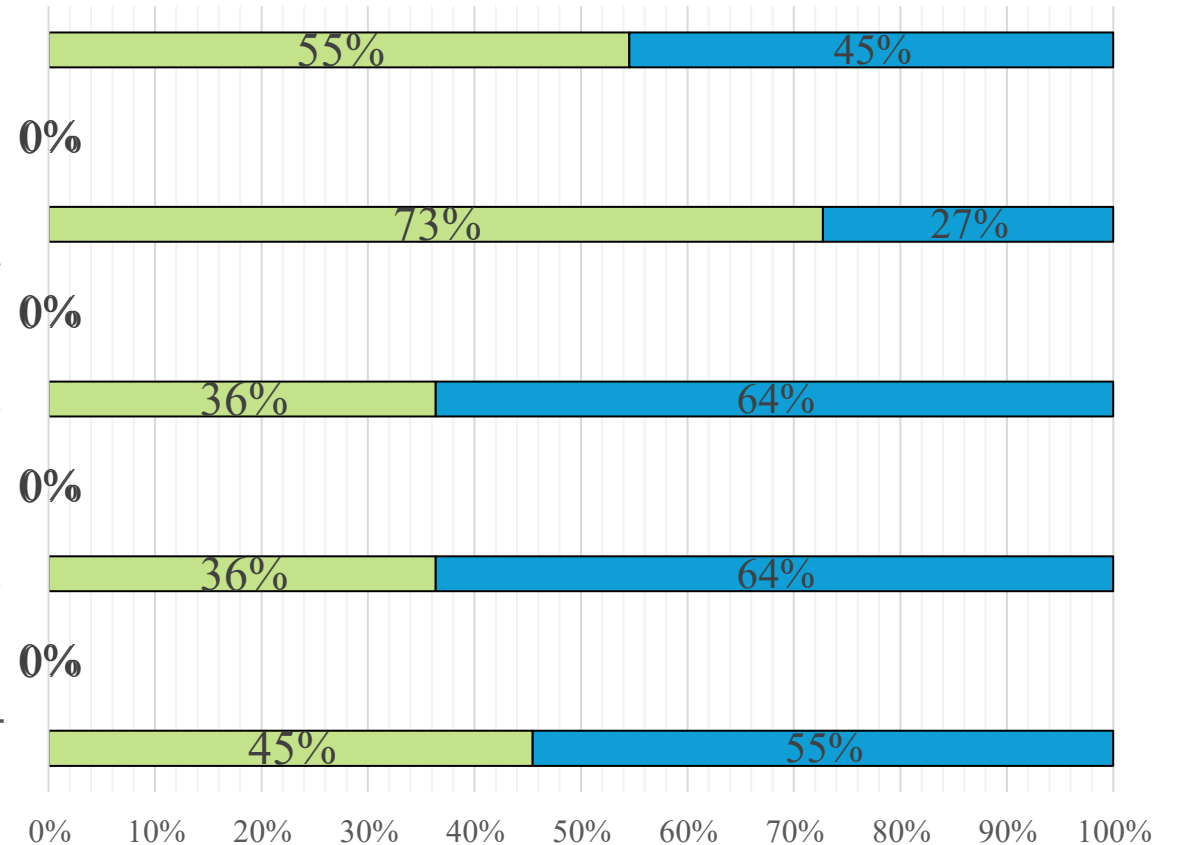
Gizmo improved the climate related to mental health in my classroom.

QPR Gatekeeper Training or other community helper training was helpful to me as a prerequisite to Gizmo.

I would recommend the Gizmo to other schools.

Students enjoyed the Gizmo curriculum.

Gizmo is effective in improving students' social-emotional well-being.



(n=11)

Spring 2026

■ Not At All ■ Very Little ■ Somewhat ■ Very Much ■ I Don't Know

NEXT STEPS

- Gizmo Student Survey
 - ❖ Drafted the survey
 - ❖ Pilot test survey (fall 2026)
 - ❖ Modify as needed
 - ❖ Administer to 3rd grade students (spring 2027)

LESSONS LEARNED



Fidelity Monitoring



Engagement



QPR Training

Questions?



PH2 Contact Information

PH2 Staff	Grant Role	Email
Andrea Duarte, DMHAS	Project Director	Andrea.Duarte@ct.gov
Alyeska Tilly, United Way of CT/211	Program Manager	Alyeska.Tilly@ctunitedway.org
Sara Wakai, UCONN Health	Evaluator	SWakai@uchc.edu
Laurel Buchanan, UCONN Health	Evaluator	Lbuchanan@uchc.edu

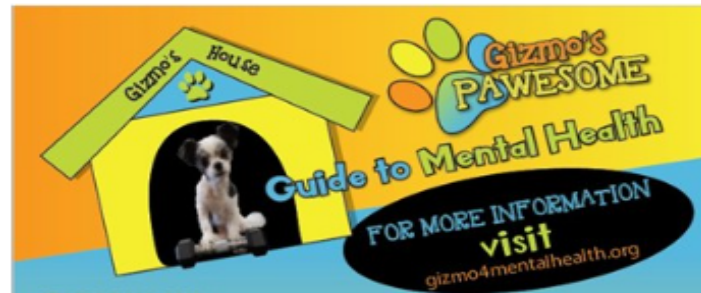
Thank you

About the Curriculum

[Home](#) / [About the Curriculum](#)

All about Gizmos Pawesome Guide to Mental Health © Elementary School Curriculum!

This is a fun, flexible, turn-key curriculum for elementary youth in 3rd and 4th grade that introduces the lessons in Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health using an animated Power Point and interactive activities for youth. The curriculum strives to help youth, their trusted adults, and the settings in which they live support their mental health and social emotional learning. The program creates a greater sense of individual and community connectedness thereby strengthening children's mental wellness and reducing their risk of many negative health outcomes, but most importantly poor mental health and suicide.



[Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health Info Card](#)

-  [What is the curriculum's purpose? ⓘ](#)
-  [What's included in the curriculum? ⓘ](#)
-  [What does the time commitment and implementation look like? ⓘ](#)
-  [What's the cost and how do I order? ⓘ](#)
-  [Curriculum development, evidence base, and awards ⓘ](#)

To connect with a Gizmo Specialist (email, text, virtual call) to answer any questions or walk through the curriculum please do not hesitate to Contact Us at: <https://www.gizmo4mentalhealth.org/contact/>

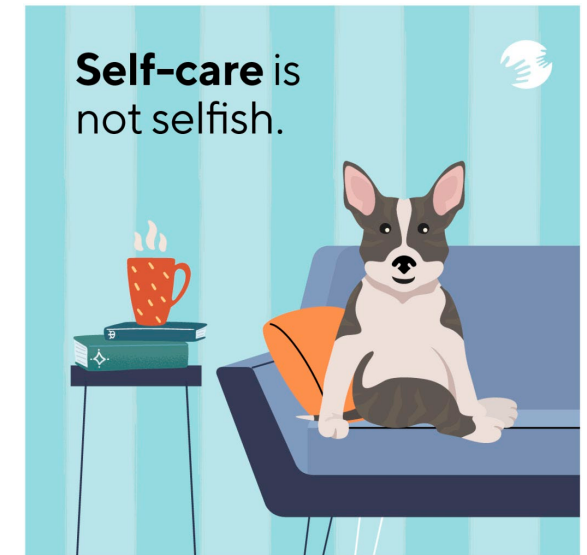
<https://www.gizmo4mentalhealth.org/curriculum-preview/>

Additional Gizmo Resources

www.Gizmo4MentalHealth.org



- Books (free in CT)
- Elementary Curriculum
- Read-Along Guidance
- Activities
- Youth and Trusted Adult Pledges with *free gifts*
- Social Media for youth and trusted adults
- Print Materials (book marks, info cards)
- Trusted Adult Resources
- Gizmo's Guide to 988 with stickers



GIZMO 988 MATERIALS



Brochure

Check out Gizmos' Pawesome Guide to 988, a [new 988 brochure](https://www.gizmo4mentalhealth.org/gizmo988/) that takes a friendly approach to teaching children about mental health, trusted adults, and 988. Download the PDF or [order a physical copy](https://www.gizmo4mentalhealth.org/gizmo988/) and check out Gizmo's new 988 page: <https://www.gizmo4mentalhealth.org/gizmo988/> [#Gizmo4MentalHealth](#) [#Gizmo988](#)



Sticker

Check out Gizmos' Pawesome Guide to 988 materials that take a friendly approach to teach children about reaching a Trusted Adult through 988; including an animated video, social media posts, and an orderable brochure and sticker. <https://www.gizmo4mentalhealth.org/gizmo988/> [#Gizmo4MentalHealth](#) [#Gizmo988](#)



Video

Check out Gizmos' Pawesome Guide to 988, a [new video](https://www.gizmo4mentalhealth.org/gizmo988/) designed to teach youth about 988. This video can be used by educators, parents, caretakers, youth serving organizations, and more! Visit the Gizmo website to access more Gizmo materials <https://www.gizmo4mentalhealth.org/gizmo988/> [#Gizmo4MentalHealth](#) [#Gizmo988](#)



Check out the new 988 page on the [#Gizmo4MentalHealth](https://www.gizmo4mentalhealth.org/gizmo988/) website to access these new resources and additional free materials:

<https://www.gizmo4mentalhealth.org/gizmo988/>

CONTACTS

PH2 Staff	Grant Role	Email
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THANK YOU!

Questions?