

# ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT

# 6 ANNUAL SMWC STUDENT MENTAL WELLNESS CONFERENCE

SEPT. 14 - 15, 2022

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION CENTER  
111 W Harbor Dr. SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA



WellnessTogether.org  
School Mental Health



California Department of  
EDUCATION



# STUDENT MENTAL WELLNESS CONFERENCE

## SEPT. 14 - 15, 2022

### ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

Wellness Together School Mental Health, in partnership with the California Department of Education, welcomes you to the 6th Annual Student Mental Wellness Conference (SMWC) as we work together to advocate for the mental wellness of students, families, and school staff. Join over 1,400 educators, school administrators, policy-makers, and school mental health professionals for two days of networking with colleagues, gaining knowledge of evidence-based interventions, and celebrating common goals.

### ABOUT WELLNESS TOGETHER

Wellness Together, Inc., is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation launched in 2016 to deliver mental health services for students, families, and educators on campus and online, regardless of Medicaid or insurance requirements. Culturally responsive Mental Health Specialists take a collaborative approach with existing school staff to provide evidence-based interventions within each school's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Wellness Together offers individual counseling, group counseling, crisis intervention, family engagement, and social-emotional learning.

### WELLNESS TOGETHER AND THE BLUESKY INITIATIVE

Wellness Together School Mental Health is proud to be announced as the lead partner in the multi-year BlueSky Initiative beginning in 2019. Blue Shield of California's BlueSky Initiative increases awareness, advocacy, and access to mental health services for middle and high school students by providing additional mental health clinicians on school campuses, increasing access to mental health services for thousands of students and their families. Blue Shield of California has joined Wellness Together School Mental Health and the California Department of Education as a Platinum Sponsor for the 2022 Student Mental Wellness Conference.

### CONFERENCE DETAILS

**DATE:** Wednesday, September 14, 2022 - Thursday, September 15, 2022

**LOCATION:** San Diego Convention Center - 111 W Harbor Dr. San Diego, CA 92101

### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



#### JOHANN HARI

NEW YORK TIMES BEST SELLING AUTHOR

Johann Hari is the author of three New York Times best-selling books, including *Stolen Focus* - a deep dive into what we can do to recover our minds. The Washington Post calls Johann's work a "call to arms" to all of us who are worried about what will happen if we spend all of our time on our phones and stop being able to connect to the real world around us.

Johann's TED talks have been viewed 80 million times and he has been named twice 'National Newspaper Journalist of the Year' by Amnesty International.



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## TONY THURMOND STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Tony Thurmond was sworn in as the 28th California State Superintendent of Public Instruction on January 7, 2019. Superintendent Thurmond is an educator, social worker, and public school parent, who has served the people of California for more than ten years in elected office. Previously, he served on the Richmond City Council, West Contra Costa Unified School Board, and in the California State Assembly representing District 15.

Much of Superintendent Thurmond's social service work has focused on improving the services provided to foster youth and directing programs that provide job training to at-risk youth. He also led programs to provide help for individuals with developmental disabilities. He has 12 years of direct experience in education, teaching life skills classes, after school programs, and career training.



## KATHERINE NEAS DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES (OSERS), U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Katherine Neas is delegated the authority to perform the functions and duties of the Assistant Secretary, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, at the U.S. Department of Education. In this capacity, she serves as advisor to the U.S. secretary of education on matters related to the education of children and youth with disabilities, as well as employment and community living for youth and adults with disabilities. The mission of her office is to improve early childhood, educational, and employment outcomes, and to raise expectations for all people with disabilities, their families, their communities, and the nation. Deputy Assistant Secretary Neas will deliver a live and interactive video keynote presentation on September 14th.



## DR. ATUL NAKHASI, MD, MPP SENIOR ADVISOR FOR THE OFFICE OF THE U.S. SURGEON GENERAL

Dr. Atul Nakhasi, MD, MPP, serves as Senior Advisor for the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General. The Office's core priorities are centered on addressing the youth mental health crisis and combating the nation's epidemic of loneliness and social isolation. Dr. Nakhasi also serves as a primary care physician for the underserved communities of Watts/Compton at a government-run public clinic in South Los Angeles.

During the initial stages of the pandemic, he also served as a frontline physician in the LA COVID Surge Hospital resurrected by the Governor. Dr. Nakhasi attended Johns Hopkins School of Medicine for his medical degree and Harvard Kennedy School of Government for his public policy degree, where he was named a Fellow at the Harvard Center for Public Leadership. He has been featured in the Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, ABC World News, Good Morning America, MSNBC, and CNN. He originally hails from Iowa, born and raised amongst cows and cornfields in the Midwest.



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### JANE ELLIOT

#### AMERICAN DIVERSITY EDUCATOR

Jane Elliott, internationally known teacher, lecturer, diversity trainer, is a recipient of the National Mental Health Association Award for Excellence in Education.

In response to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, Jane Elliott devised the controversial and startling, “Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes Exercise.” This, now famous, exercise labels participants as inferior or superior based solely upon the color of their eyes and exposes them to the experience of being a minority. Everyone who is exposed to Jane Elliott’s work, be it through a lecture, workshop, or video, is dramatically affected by it.



### MARLON MORGAN

#### CEO & FOUNDER OF WELLNESS TOGETHER

Marlon Morgan is the Founder & CEO of the California-based national nonprofit organization, Wellness Together School Mental Health. He works with school districts, universities, state offices of education, and the U.S. Department of Education to increase awareness, advocacy, and access to mental health interventions for students, families, and school staff. Marlon is a curriculum consultant for Harvard Medical School and works with leading corporations including Amazon.com to support employee mental well-being. He has received special recognition from the U.S. Congress, California State Senate, and the California State Assembly for his innovative work promoting mental health and wellness in education. Marlon is also an honorary faculty member at the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work.

Marlon began his career as a school counselor and a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, creating student support programs for underserved students in an effort to close the achievement gap. He was appointed by the California State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI) in 2016 to develop policy recommendations for the SSPI and the California State Legislature.



### DR. JASON HEUSTIS

#### SCIENTIST, EDUCATOR, AND HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATOR

Dr. Jason Heustis serves as the Director of Student Development and Training Evaluation for Graduate Education at Harvard Medical School, where he is also Lecturer in the Department of Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology.

Dr. Heustis teaches graduate students, develops skills-building curriculum, deploys career preparation programming, connects students to resources for their personal well-being and professional success, and assesses graduate student learning and development. He has worked extensively on outreach and recruitment efforts focused on undergraduate students and also taught at the undergraduate level.





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**CHRIS GETHARD**  
COMEDIAN, ACTOR, AND AUTHOR

Chris Gethard is a comedian, actor, and author. He's the host of the Beautiful/Anonymous podcast, the former host of The Chris Gethard Show, and wrote and starred in the HBO special Career Suicide. He also hosts the podcast New Jersey Is The World, a celebration of his home state.

Chris has been seen on television shows such as Space Force, The Office, Broad City, Parks and Recreation, and Inside Amy Schumer. He's also been seen in films such as The Other Guys, The Heat, Ghostbusters, Anchorman 2, and was one of the stars of Mike Birbiglia's Don't Think Twice. Chris can most recently be seen in the HBO Max documentary Class Action Park.



**DR. PAUL GOTHOLD**  
SAN DIEGO COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dr. Paul Gothold has more than 27 years in K-12 education, with a focus on building school systems with equity at the core. He has a proven track record of supporting quality professional learning for teachers, backing innovative ideas, and putting students first. Since being named San Diego County Superintendent of Schools in 2017, Gothold and the SDCOE team have worked to find alternatives to detention initiatives, and, through partnership with the district attorney's office, juvenile courts, and probation, the county has reduced the criminalization of youth from over 600 students incarcerated to less than 100 in three and a half years. Gothold has experience as a teacher of adjudicated youth and an adjunct professor, and serves as a mentor and advisor for sitting and aspiring superintendents throughout the state.



**DR. LAMONT JACKSON**  
SUPERINTENDENT, SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dr. Lamont A. Jackson is the Superintendent of the San Diego Unified School District. Dr. Jackson is a San Diego native who not only graduated from the San Diego Unified School District but has been an employee with SDUSD for over 30 years.

Dr. Jackson has maintained an unwavering focus on students' well-being and achievement, while also operating with the understanding of nurturing all learners in an organization to develop their leadership. His favorite part of his continual service to the San Diego Unified School District is working with principals, teachers, staff, and students to improve outcomes for our learners.



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## NICOLE DEWITT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF LEADERSHIP & LEARNING  
SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Nicole DeWitt has been in education since 2002 and served as a classroom teacher, AVID instructor, English Learner Coordinator, and intervention developer prior to becoming an administrator. Currently, she serves as the Executive Director of Leadership & Learning for the San Diego Unified School District, primarily overseeing areas that support student services such as counseling and guidance, mental health services, restorative justice practices, and community schools. Ensuring students achieve their academic goals while addressing their social-emotional and mental health needs has always been her number priority and she truly enjoys developing systems of support to uphold equity and access for all students.

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*Experience 60+ breakout sessions from the leading voices in student mental health, with presenters from across the globe helping educators and youth-serving professionals to promote student mental wellness and create a positive school climate.*

## BREAKOUT TOPICS WILL INCLUDE:

- Community Engagement
- Cultural-Responsiveness
- Educator & Staff Wellness
- School & District-Wide Initiatives
- Student Intervention Strategies
- Trauma-Informed Practices in Schools (TIPS)
- Supporting Trans & Nonbinary Students
- Suicide Intervention, Prevention, and Postvention
- School Based Mental Health: Using a Multi-Tiered System of Supports
- Cognitive-Behavior Therapy (CBT) with Children and Adolescents in School Settings
- Mindfulness in an Educational Setting

Tickets and sponsorship opportunities are available at

[WellnessTogether.org/Conference](https://WellnessTogether.org/Conference)



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## 5 FACTS ABOUT 2022 SMWC

- 1,400+ educators, school administrators, policy-makers, and school mental health professionals from around the world in attendance
- Largest student mental health conference in the world
- Co-sponsored by the California Department of Education
- Listed as one of the “Top 8 Mental Health Conferences Worldwide” (Healthline.com)
- Partnership with the US Department of Education, US Office of the Surgeon General, and the California Department of Education

## WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

“This is going to make an impact in the overall program to improve our school-based mental health, school climate, and attendance programs on campus.”

**Marcella Rodriguez M.S., PPSC**

Student Support Center Coordinator - Sacramento City Unified School District

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“This conference is about helping students and helping them live their best life. When they can do that, they can learn more and everyone wins.”

**Jean M. Twenge, Ph.D.**

Best-selling Author & Psychology Professor - San Diego State University

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“Thank you so much for an incredible conference. I gained a tremendous amount of information and inspiration from all the speakers and break-out session presenters. I’m grateful for the opportunity to attend...and look forward to putting some ideas into action!”

**Saori M. Choulos, MBA**

Director of Outreach and Business Engagement, Align Capital Region

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## LETTER FROM TONY THURMOND - STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION**

1430 N STREET, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5901 • 916-319-0800 • [WWW.CDE.CA.GOV](http://WWW.CDE.CA.GOV)

**TONY THURMOND**  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

July 20, 2022

Dear County and District Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, and High School Principals:

### **Student Mental Wellness Conference: Promoting Student and Staff Mental Wellness and Improving School Climate**

I am excited to invite you to the Sixth Annual Student Mental Wellness Conference: Promoting Student and Staff Mental Wellness and Improving School Climate, sponsored by Wellness Together School Mental Health and the California Department of Education (CDE). The conference will be held in person at the San Diego Convention Center on September 14–15, 2022, with an option for virtual attendance.

We know that many students, family members, and school staff were struggling with mental health issues well before the onset of the pandemic. Systemic inequities in our educational, health care, and economic systems had already caused major disparities in education and health outcomes for children of color and children living in conditions of poverty. The unimaginable impacts of the pandemic in vulnerable communities have left our schools facing an unprecedented wellness crisis. In addition, the consequences of social isolation and learning loss caused in part by prolonged school closures have led the U.S. Surgeon General to declare a mental health state of emergency for our nation's children.

There has never been a more important moment for us to come together to gather strength, share resources, and elevate the priority of student and staff mental health. I urge you to consider sending a team from your county, district, and/or school site to this important convening, which will focus on fostering healing and building the foundation of wellness for our school communities. The conference will include workshops, panels, and presentations from leading experts at the intersection of educational, familial, and communal mental health. Conference attendees will also have a chance to learn how to expand best practices, establish networks of support, and maximize community mental health resources in the school setting.

I am proud that the CDE is co-hosting this event with Wellness Together, and I encourage the participation of local educational agencies from across our state. For more information on the conference, please visit the Wellness Together Student Mental Wellness Conference web page at <https://www.wellnesstogether.org/conference>.

For questions, information, or guidance from our new Office of School-Based Health Programs or the Whole Child Division at the CDE, please contact Monica Nepomuceno, Education Administrator, Office of School-Based Health Programs, at [mnepomuceno@cde.ca.gov](mailto:mnepomuceno@cde.ca.gov), or Lisa Borrego, Division Director, Whole Child Division, at [LBorrego@cde.ca.gov](mailto:LBorrego@cde.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

Tony Thurmond  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction