



# Building Resilience in Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

## Introduction

Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCKPS) is a diverse district with over 21,000 students speaking 60 languages across 50 schools. To ensure the well-being and success of its students, the district employs dedicated social workers and counselors in each school. At the forefront of this initiative is Tracie Chauvin, the Director of Student Support, who leads a team of 16 staff members in implementing transformative programs.

## Background

Several years ago, Chauvin and the student support team embarked on a journey to cultivate a resilient school community. Recognizing the importance of evidence-based strategies, they developed a comprehensive framework centered on family engagement and relationship-building.

## Approach

At the heart of their approach lay a profound commitment to transitioning the district from punitive to restorative practices, and from reactionary to preventative practices. Understanding that punitive measures often exacerbate underlying issues and hinder long-term growth, KCKPS embraced restorative and preventative practices as cornerstones of their framework.

Through community-building activities, they sought to foster a culture of accountability, empathy, and healing. Moreover, the team recognized the imperative shift from reactive to preventative measures in addressing the multifaceted needs of students and families. By proactively identifying and addressing challenges before they escalate, they aimed to create a supportive and nurturing environment conducive to academic success

and personal development. This proactive stance involved extensive collaboration with stakeholders, including families, educators, and community partners, to implement targeted interventions and support systems tailored to the unique needs of each student.

Central to their strategy was a relentless focus on family engagement and relationship-building. Recognizing the profound influence of familial support on student outcomes, the student support team worked tirelessly to bridge the gap between home and school. Through workshops, family events, and personalized communication channels, they empowered families to become active participants in their children's education journey. By nurturing authentic, trusting relationships with families, they cultivated a sense of belonging and ownership within the school community, laying the foundation for sustained collaboration and mutual support.

In response to high suspension rates, KCKPS developed a [Student Code of Conduct](#) and a Rapid Response program. By involving families and addressing underlying issues, **suspensions were cut in half in 2023, and are expected to be halved again in 2024.**

## 02. Implementation

In 2023, as part of KCKPS's district-wide Building Resilience initiative, KCKPS implemented HELPme, a comprehensive safety and mental health wellness program, from STOPit Solutions. With this program, KCKPS wants to continue the shift from reactionary to preventative, build capacity, and normalize kids asking for help with privacy and dignity.

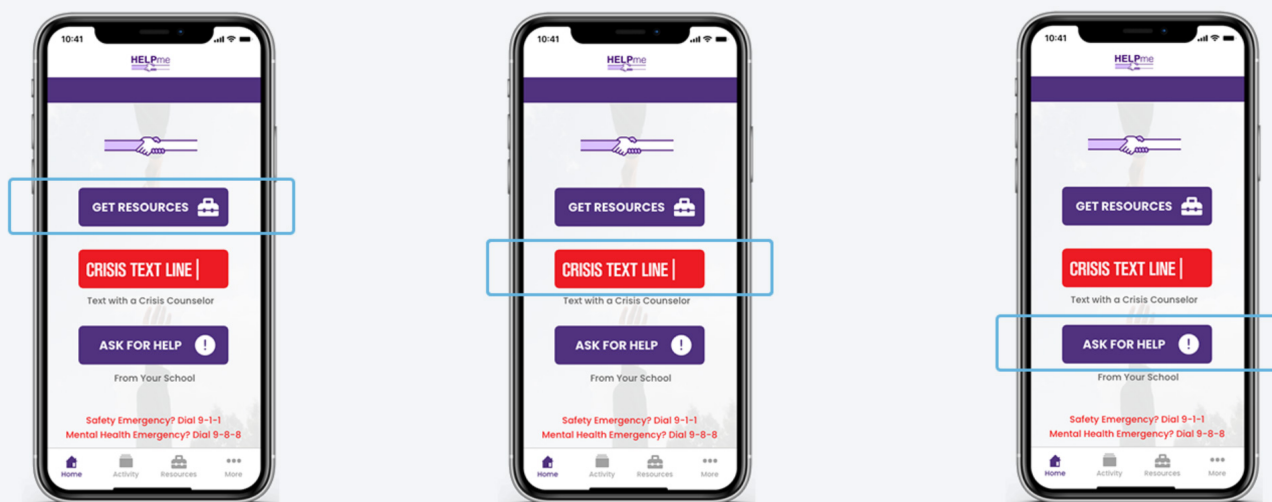
### Solution

HELPme offers support and resources through a healing-centered interface. It includes preloaded community resources, access to trained crisis counselors, and direct assistance from the school or community. The program normalizes asking for help and provides a safe way for students to seek support.

**KCKPS is transforming community support with HELPme! Explore how HELPme grants access to crucial community & mental health resources, facilitates anonymous incident reporting, and offers key insights into prevention.**

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### HELPme Provides 3 Ways to get HELP



#### ► Self-Help

These are preloaded community resources with links to crisis helplines and resources in one easy-to-access place.

#### ► Help from a Trained Crisis Counselor

Connect directly to trained crisis counselors at Crisis Text Line. It provides free, 24/7, high-quality anonymous text-based mental health support and crisis intervention volunteers to support people in their moments of need.

#### ► Help from your School or Community

This is where students can get direct help from their school. They can report bullying or an unsafe incident or just request help for everyday needs such as food, transportation, clothing, shelter, medical, or mental health needs such as bullying, anxiety, or domestic violence.

# 03.

## Impact

Although KCKPS is still rolling out the HELPme program to various groups within the district, HELPme has already united the community with the school district.

In the Fall 2023, a neighbor's vigilance changed the course of a potentially dangerous situation. Using HELPme, a local resident reported suspicious activity involving gang members

and a possible weapon at an upcoming school event. This seemingly small act triggered a chain reaction of responses that ultimately helped safeguard the event.

The school administration, upon receiving the report, did not hesitate. They immediately contacted the local police department, sharing the details received through the HELPme app. Recognizing the potential threat, the police department collaborated with the school to devise a comprehensive security plan. The plan included increased security measures at the event, with officers strategically positioned both inside and outside the venue. Additionally, security personnel were instructed to thoroughly screen all entrants, ensuring the safety of everyone attending.

This swift and collaborative response, prompted by a neighbor's alert using HELPme, proved invaluable. The increased security presence, coupled with heightened awareness, acted as a powerful deterrent. The event proceeded smoothly, with no incidents reported. The community, school, and police department united through a shared commitment to safety and successfully ensured a peaceful and enjoyable event for everyone involved.

## Conclusion

Under the leadership of Tracie Chauvin, the district has made significant strides in fostering a resilient school community. Through these initiatives, KCKPS is undergoing a profound transformation. By leveraging the network of support offered through HELPme, embracing restorative practices, adopting preventative measures, and prioritizing family and community engagement, the district is creating a more resilient, inclusive, and thriving school community where every student has the opportunity to flourish and succeed.



## GET IN TOUCH

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