



Student artwork from Allison M.'s East Palo Alto Charter School classroom.



Among signs of spring, April is also National Stress Awareness Month. The American Psychological Association reports that **“by nearly every metric, student mental health is worsening...even before the pandemic, schools were facing a surge in demand for care that outpaced capacity.”** ([APA.org/monitor](https://www.apa.org/monitor), 10/12/22)

EPAK teachers are doing something about this need. Several EPAK teacher grant applications request support for efforts to improve students' mental health. East Palo Alto Academy teacher Allison M. writes,

*Teaching is so hard when so many students come in with a "I don't want to be here" mood. So how can we make school into a more joyous space? **We***

**started to do Mental Health Fridays. One student said, "Miss, you really don't know how much I needed this."** This gave me the idea of asking all my classes...what would you like Mental Health Fridays to be? Some shared: walks to the park, acrylic paints, karaoke, and an art gallery where we get to see each others' work.

*This EPAK grant is dedicated to all the students who show up persistently to school, even though it seems like we are all struggling one way or the other.*

**With this EPAK grant, we hope to find some of that pre-existing magic in the classroom through art. School doesn't have to be a place where kids dread coming, but hopefully it can still be a place...of hope.** Thank you so much EPAK for your care and generosity. There aren't enough thank-you's in the world!

EPAK grants also support professionals in a variety of school roles dedicated to improving students' mental health and well-being. EPAK has sponsored "cozy corners" in classrooms that feature bean bag chairs, quiet spaces, fidgets and art projects.

Thank you to our supporters for making these initiatives possible!

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East Palo Alto Kids Foundation (EPAK) believes that all students deserve an inspiring, engaging, and tailored classroom experience. For 30 years, we have provided grants to teachers to enhance educational opportunities for students in the Ravenswood City School District (RCSD) and public charter schools in East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park.

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**East Palo Alto Kids Foundation**  
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