



## **SAMPLE LETTER FOR PARENTS**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I want to inform you that next week our class will be spending time learning about the important topic of mental health, the harmful effects of stigma, and how students can be supportive of others who may experience a mental health challenge. Our curriculum includes a video adaptation of the Walk In Our Shoes musical play developed for 9 to 13 year olds as part of the California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) statewide campaign to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with mental health challenges. Initially, the play was implemented as a live production in a limited number of schools in California. Because of the interest and positive reviews by school personnel and students, a video-taped production was created for classroom use.

The video follows the lives of four high school students and their experiences with mental health challenges and the negative effects of stigma. Students will become familiar with four mental health challenges: Bipolar disorder, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity disorder, Anorexia Nervosa, and Post Traumatic disorder. Although students will learn information about these mental health challenges, the more important lessons are learning that mental health challenges are common and something anyone can experience, that name calling and bullying because of differences can be hurtful, and that by seeking help a person can recover and feel better.

I invite your participation in these lessons by following up at home with your child. Consider asking your child next week how he/she liked the video and what he/she might have learned. This is an excellent opportunity to open the door to conversation about bullying and teasing and how you feel about such behavior. You might want to ask your child to relay the experiences of the story characters and then ask how this fits or does not fit with their own life experience and that of their friends.

You can also help by reinforcing the key messages of the video and campaign - that mental health challenges are common, that people can recover and lead normal lives. That the vast majority of people with mental health challenges are as predictable and nonviolent as anyone else, and that talking about mental health challenges is not something to fear.

If you would like more information about what your child will be learning, please feel free to contact me. Also please visit the campaign website [www.WalkInOurShoes.org](http://www.WalkInOurShoes.org) (or [www.PonteEnMisZapatos.org](http://www.PonteEnMisZapatos.org) for Spanish) where you can find more information about mental health and how to speak with your child.

Sincerely,

Classroom Teacher