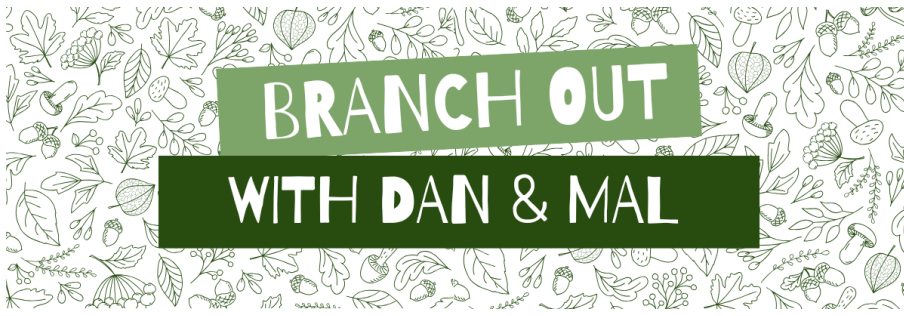




Welcome to Branch Out with Dan & Mal, a weekly newsletter on all things health, wellbeing, and wellness at Midland!

OAKay, Let's Talk...

Mallory's Report:

I asked whether naps made students feel better or worse on the Health Office whiteboard last week and was somewhat shocked when an overwhelming majority selected "better" (with a few adding a column for "hungry," which is relatable). I was curious what the research actually says about napping, and came away with a few major takeaways. Students, when you come to my office and say "Can I be excused from class because I need to nap?" here are some things to consider:

Mal's Quick Guide for Napping Smart

- Between early school start times, homework, and everything else, you're probably exhausted, and a good nap can actually help. The key is keeping it short: **15-30 minutes max, ideally between 1-4 PM**. Any longer and you'll wake up groggy and mess up your ability to sleep at night.
- Think of naps as a quick recharge, not a replacement for real sleep—you still need 8-10 hours at night for your brain to actually function and retain what you're learning. If you're constantly relying on naps just to get through the day, that's a sign you need to prioritize getting more sleep at night instead of just band-aiding the problem.
- In the spirit of formulating questions and conducting research (6c) and using evidence to craft arguments (6d), here are some additional resources and references (PubMed, Medical Journal on Sleep, and Journal of Sleep Medicine) I used to evaluate my research question about napping!

Dan's Report:

This week and last have been action-packed and different! They've been different from the more "typical" weeks we had grown accustomed to navigating from the end of October through Thanksgiving/family weekend. Now, here we are anticipating one last week before break that is also shifted around to fit in important holiday events, preparing campus for a clean and welcoming return, and fitting class days into a different sequence to complete the semester.

Adaptability is the theme I'm thinking about this week, and our students and faculty are exhibiting mastery of it with impressive tenacity and energy. Even when we experience moments of challenge, we continue to work together to get back up and power forward. THAT is what gives me confidence in these students. They aren't just preparing for life after high school—they are living it and facing it successfully right now!

In a Nutshell -- Deep Dive of the Week

Midlanders! As we find ourselves right in the middle of the holiday season with variations of different schedules and vacations, our focus has shifted to transitions and the challenges they can present. Whether we like transitions or not, they often create potentially disorienting challenges that require adjustment and, in some cases, intentional effort to work through—especially vacations that are longer than one week!

In order to minimize some of the challenging effects of bigger transitions, the following tips may prove effective, especially upon returning to school:

- **Create a visual schedule or calendar:** This can reduce boredom or wasting precious vacation time by planning a variety of activities that you usually never have time to do (personal reading, museums, coffee shops, live music, seeing family, movies, etc.).
- **Plan intentional downtime:** It can be very restorative to plan quiet times on your own to recover and recharge. Being able to hear your own thoughts can help you process change and regulate emotionally.
- **Maintain "some" structure:** Flexibility is very important, but so is predictability! At the least, try to maintain routine times for meals and sleep. This will certainly help when it comes time to readjust to school.
- **Movement time:** Plan outdoor playtime to manage stress and provide an outlet for any pent-up energy or restlessness. Movement can also act as a very effective mood stabilizer.
- **Routine adjustment:** Adjust your bedtime and wake-up time by 10-15 minutes per day over the final few days of break. This allows your body to adjust back to the school routine, making the return a bit less shocking.

We hope you'll consider any of these tips, even if it's just over the last few days of vacation. We've already tried them and found them to really help! The key here is to take action in steering your eventual outcomes. You may just find out that you have more control than you think!

Acorny Ending

Eight days left until break, but you'll always be in our hearts. Is that (a)corny enough for you?

We're on your team—and we're rooting for you.



Mallory McPherson-Wehan
Health Director



Dan Petrocelli
School Counselor

© Midland School | Los Olivos, California