



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

RESOURCE

Mental Health Literacy Advocacy: Create an Elevator Pitch

What is an Elevator Pitch?

An elevator pitch is a short, compelling introduction to a person, their work, and why it matters. An effective elevator pitch is **brief, clear, and memorable**. (Harvard 2025) When opportunities arise to advocate for mental health literacy, an elevator pitch is a tool that can help advocates confidently and effectively engage with decision makers and potential champions.

Any member of the school-community can advocate for mental health literacy; a person does not need to be a health or mental health professional to talk confidently and accurately about the importance of mental health literacy to individuals, their loved ones, and their community.

How to Write an Elevator Pitch



1

Introduce Yourself

Start with a friendly greeting and introduce yourself to your audience. Be sure to mention what connects you to this school community and preview your purpose.

E.g., Good afternoon members of XXX, my name is XXX and I am parent of two students at XXX elementary. I'm here today to express my support for strategies that increase the health, well-being, and future prosperity of our community.

2

Introduce the Topic

Start by introducing mental health literacy. Most people will not have in-depth knowledge of mental health literacy, so it's important to provide background information to help them understand your pitch.

Your introduction to the topic should:

- connect health and mental health literacy,
- clearly define mental health literacy, and
- provide an explanation of the components of mental health literacy.

E.g., One such strategy is mental health literacy. Mental health literacy is a set of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that help our students live healthy lives, succeed in the classroom, and contribute positively to our community. You've probably heard about other types of literacy, like financial or media literacy. What all the types of literacy have in common is that they all involve taking in new information and then using it in a variety of contexts to achieve goals, develop knowledge and potential, and participate fully in the community. Health literacy, is how well a person can find and use information to promote the health of themselves and others. Mental health literacy is one aspect of health literacy that focuses specifically on how well we use information and resources to build and maintain positive mental health, recognize when we are struggling with our mental health, ask for help, and support others when they are struggling.

3

Explain Why it Matters

Provide some compelling information to the audience about why they should care about this topic right now.

The explanation should answer the following questions:

- Why is mental health literacy important in general and for your school community specifically?
- What problem does mental health literacy solve?
- How does mental health literacy move your community towards its shared goals?

E.g., We know that right now, many of our students and families are struggling with their mental health. In fact, the most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data show that XXX. Our treatment and crisis resources are understaffed and overloaded. Mental health literacy can help our community to reverse these trends. Mental health literacy is an “upstream approach” to supporting student, staff, and community mental health and reducing health disparities. It empowers us all to take better care of ourselves and our neighbors. Since everyone has mental health, everyone needs mental health literacy. In fact, the World Health Organization has noted that “health literacy is a stronger predictor of an individual’s health status than income, employment status, education and racial or ethnic group”. Our vision for students in this school district is for them to XXXX, and mental health literacy helps us move towards that vision by XXX.

4

Offer Next Steps

As you are wrapping up your elevator speech, provide an invitation for questions, further communication, and next steps to continue the conversation.

E.g., Communities across Wisconsin are already using a variety of strategies to increase their mental health literacy. I'd be happy to set up a time to talk more about the potential to bring these opportunities to our schools. I believe that when we invest in improving mental health literacy, we invest in the success of our students and the health, well-being, and future prosperity of our community.

Tips for Delivering an Effective Elevator Pitch ✓

Keep it short: Your elevator pitch should only be up to 60 seconds or less.

Avoid jargon: Use language that is clear and simple. Avoid terms that people who are not familiar with the subject would not be familiar with.

Be aware of tone and body language: Use a voice that is clear, audible, and that conveys energy and passion for the subject. Use body language that is calm and confident.

Adapt to your audience: Consider your audience, their values, and what might be compelling to them. Start with simple, clear explanations and add more detail and depth as you receive feedback from the audience that they are tracking the conversation.

Make it personal: Illustrate important points using short stories or anecdotes to engage the audience and help them feel connected to you and your cause.

References

Harvard University. 2025. "Elevator Pitches." Writing and Communication Center.
<https://writingcenter.catalyst.harvard.edu/elevator-pitches>.



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