

# FOURTEEN

BridgeUp at Menninger  
**A FIVE-YEAR IMPACT REPORT**



Menninger®

Dear Friends,

More than half of all mental disorders are diagnosed by age 14, making it a pivotal time in adolescent development.

As part of The Menninger Clinic’s commitment to improving the emotional and mental well-being of this population, we formed BridgeUp. Since 2015, our 33 school-community partnerships have served more than 25,000 vulnerable adolescents.

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**At Menninger,  
we’re committed to  
improving mental  
health in the Houston  
area, particularly  
in underserved  
communities.**

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BridgeUp at Menninger builds partnerships with Houston-area schools and community-based organizations by providing *Magic Grants* funding. We augment that funding with guidance for social and emotional learning, behavioral health support and collective impact – all integral to the BridgeUp at Menninger Model. Our results reflect gains in students’ social and emotional skills, improved mental health, fewer disciplinary referrals and stronger academic performance.

In a climate of the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, racial injustice and political divisiveness, we know that adolescents are experiencing even greater stress and anxiety. So, our support for them is more essential than ever.

This report celebrates the first five years of BridgeUp at Menninger. We are grateful to the David and Helen Gurley Brown Trust for the generous gift that made our success possible. We invite you to explore our stories of how BridgeUp at Menninger is making a difference.


In Partnership,



**Armando E. Colombo**  
President & CEO  
The Menninger Clinic



**Patricia Gail Bray, PhD**  
Founding Director  
BridgeUp at Menninger



**Linda Civallero, MPH**  
Associate Director  
BridgeUp at Menninger

Half of mental illnesses  
begin by age **14.**

**Fourteen** should be the age when  
you dream about the bright future  
ahead of you. The age of video games  
and Instagram. Pizza with friends  
and inside jokes.

*Instead, you're confused, angry and  
sad. Scared of what's happening  
and afraid to ask for help. You're  
worried everyone will judge you.  
A little voice nags inside you, saying  
that you're too sad, too different  
or simply not good enough.*

One in every four to five youth meet the  
criteria for a mental disorder. Mental  
disorders are serious changes in the way  
youth typically learn, behave or handle  
their emotions, causing distress and  
problems getting through the day.

Depression, anxiety, mood and  
substance use disorders significantly  
affect a student's behavior and  
performance in school. While the  
national high school graduation rate  
is 85%, only 67% of students with  
emotional, behavioral and mental  
health disorders graduate.

Many students try to manage their  
mental health needs on their own,  
often with devastating effects. For  
adolescents and young adults, suicide  
is the second leading cause of death,  
and the rate increased nearly 60%  
from 2007 to 2018.

We know vulnerable youth from  
low-income and culturally diverse  
communities face the most challenging  
barriers to care, such as cost, limited or  
no insurance and lack of awareness of  
services. In Texas alone, 67% of teens  
who experienced a major depressive  
episode had an unmet need for care.

There is hope. Prevention and early  
intervention of mental and behavioral  
disorders – the focus of BridgeUp at  
Menninger – can improve the well-  
being of adolescents and even save  
their lives.

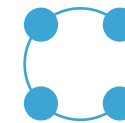
## BridgeUp at Menninger by the Numbers



BridgeUp awarded  
**33 Magic Grants.**



**25,134 students** gained  
essential social and  
emotional skills.



**160 community  
organizations and schools**  
collaborated to improve the  
mental health of youth.



**83% of BridgeUp students**  
were economically  
disadvantaged.



Local schools and  
nonprofits were awarded  
**\$4 million** in *Magic Grants*.



**3,776 adolescents**  
engaged in individual or  
group therapy.



Grant partners leveraged  
BridgeUp funding to garner  
an additional **\$9.1 million.**



**Educators at 77 schools**  
trained in social and  
emotional learning.



BridgeUp youth received  
**\$500,000 in sponsored care**  
at The Menninger Clinic.



**5 young adults**  
apprenticed as  
Brown Fellows.

# The BridgeUp Model

The mission of BridgeUp at Menninger is to integrate social and emotional learning (SEL) and behavioral health in schools to enhance the well-being of vulnerable adolescents. Our work focuses on prevention and early intervention of behavioral and mental health disorders through the BridgeUp Model of (1) schoolwide SEL programs, (2) behavioral health supports and (3) collaboration.

Through a competitive process, *Magic Grants* are awarded to school and community partnerships to implement the BridgeUp Model. School leaders work side-by-side with the nonprofit programs and behavioral health providers that deliver services in their schools. Our vision is that families, schools and communities work together to nurture the whole child.

The BridgeUp program is tailored at each school and district. The primary components include a campus SEL committee, SEL training for teachers and administrators, classroom SEL instruction for students and

complementary SEL activities such as messaging in morning announcements, mindfulness and restorative practices.

Through a multi-tiered system of supports, students struggling with attendance, academic or behavioral issues are identified early and receive needed care, including individual or group counseling. Students considered to be high-risk are referred to The Menninger Clinic or a local mental health provider.

*SEL is the process through which young people develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish relationships and make responsible decisions.*

BridgeUp has transformed classrooms and schools into supportive communities where young people can be confident, compassionate and empowered to succeed in school and life.

# SEL Program Outcomes

Decades of research demonstrate the benefits of social and emotional learning, including: improvement in students’ social and emotional skills, attitudes, relationships and academic performance – and declines in students’ anxiety, behavior problems and substance use (CASEL.org). Our BridgeUp partners report program outcomes that support the case for SEL and the BridgeUp Model.

91%

of De Zavala Middle School students **feel there is at least one person on campus who cares about them**, up from 85% at the beginning of the year.

92%

of KIPP Connect students **passed the Algebra 1 state exam**, compared to 83% in the previous year. Teacher testimonials name SEL as instrumental in academic achievement.

14%

**decrease in disciplinary referrals** over three years, due to improved student behavior and discipline policy changes at De Zavala Middle School.

80%

**decrease in student suicide risk** compared to the previous year at Infinity Early College High School, attributed to additional behavioral health services.

As we reflect on the first five years of BridgeUp at Menninger, we’re asking you to think back to when you were **fourteen**. What was it like?





"BridgeUp is a team of people that come together and collaborate to do what's right for kids, by their hearts and minds, not just academics."

Cherie' Spencer, *SEL Coordinator, Causeway Galveston*

## Amplifying Collaboration

**The Causeway Galveston collaborative works to transform the lives of students on their island.**

When Cherie' Spencer was a principal, she did everything she could to help struggling students with individualized education plans that supported mental health needs, but something wasn't working. Even with on-site programs and therapists, students and parents weren't seeking care. Then Cherie' joined Causeway Galveston, Galveston Independent School District's SEL initiative and discovered an effective way to impact the lives of her students.

Through Causeway Galveston, Cherie' and her coalition partners at Teen Health Center, Family Services Center and The Center for Violence Prevention at The University of Texas Medical Branch have combined forces to make joint decisions, share best practices and multiply their impact. Together, they've developed a

prevention and early intervention program focused on healthy relationships, mental health and well-being and academic success for all students.

As the district's SEL Coordinator, Cherie' oversees SEL instruction for students and training for teachers and coordinates on-site individual and group therapy with Teen Health Center and Family Services Center. She works alongside her Causeway Galveston partners to break down school and nonprofit silos, while changing the community-wide conversation around emotional health.

Before BridgeUp, only a fourth of the student population sought behavioral health support on campuses now served by the program. Today, three-fourths of students are well-versed in SEL and mental health. Galveston ISD serves over 7,000 students who face high rates of poverty and school transfer, resulting in inequitable care. Cherie' and her Causeway Galveston partners are working to expand the BridgeUp model to every school and child on the island, leading the way to a brighter future.

**Causeway Galveston leveraged BridgeUp funding to receive an additional \$8.3 million.**



# Connecting Students and Teachers

Through social and emotional learning, a principal changes the culture of an entire school.

Early in Melissa Garza's career as an administrator at De Zavala Middle School, a student survey revealed that most students didn't feel that there was an adult on campus they could turn to for help. She knew the student-teacher relationship was a key to academic success but needed access to the tools and knowledge that would help her cultivate a sense of strong community and emotional support at her school. When De Zavala became a BridgeUp school, its doors opened to a proven SEL model and deep peer network that allowed Melissa and her team to change an entire school culture.

SEL lessons started as thirty-minute activities during Wellness Wednesdays, but, as time passed, teachers began integrating SEL into their classroom curriculum throughout the week. By addressing their own social and emotional learning and developing related skills, teachers gained insights into how students learn, think and feel, and their approach to building relationships with students became stronger.

As teachers modeled techniques and cultivated relationships, their students embraced SEL, learning how to manage the big emotions and dramatic changes that come with adolescence. In contrast to the survey responses when Melissa began at De Zavala Middle School, 91% of students now say that they have at least one person on campus they can turn to for help.

**"BridgeUp makes your campus so much more positive, and SEL reaches every student."**

Because of BridgeUp, Melissa has developed a strong and welcoming community for her students and teachers. Academics and attendance have improved every year since implementing the program. Parents are no longer transferring out of De Zavala Middle School; rather, they are choosing to stay where students have champions in Melissa and her team.



Who could you turn to at fourteen?



**"It's important to focus on mental health in middle school because, for students to learn, they need to feel safe. They have to feel valued, and they need to know you genuinely care about their whole being."**

**Melissa Garza, Principal, De Zavala Middle School, Pasadena ISD**





**"Incredible. Respectful. First-class. Kind. Andrés received the best care possible, and I'm grateful to Menninger and BridgeUp for helping us when we didn't have anywhere else to go."**

*Gisela Treviño, Parent of Menninger Patient*

# Accessing Quality Care

**A mother fights for her son to receive mental health care and finds it through BridgeUp at Menninger.**

Gisela Treviño noticed changes in Andrés' personality when he was a fourth-grader. Her youngest child transformed from a happy and smiling boy to a reserved and withdrawn teenager. By middle school, Andrés grew his hair long enough to hide his face and wore hoodies to cover his eyes. He'd complain of stomach pains, so he didn't have to go to school. And when he did go, he'd get in trouble for disrespecting teachers or starting fights.

**Over two years, 42 adolescents received intensive treatment through The Menninger Clinic.**

In March 2018, Gisela received a call from Andrés' counselor urging her and her husband to come to campus. The counselor explained that Andrés was contemplating suicide. Gisela was stunned. She knew Andrés had academic problems, but she wasn't aware of his mental health issues. Gisela and her

husband quickly engaged with the district's mobile crisis team, only to find out that their income was too high to qualify for assistance, and their insurance didn't cover the appropriate care. Andrés' mental well-being – and indeed his life – hung in the balance.

Andrés was in 8th grade when his school's SEL specialist called Gisela to tell her about a unique opportunity: a two-week inpatient stay at The Menninger Clinic's Adolescent Treatment Program, paid for in-full by BridgeUp at Menninger. Andrés was enrolled the following month, at age 14.

At Menninger, Gisela saw how the doctors and staff treated her son with respect and kindness. Andrés realized there were other teenagers with similar issues, and he felt "normal" for the first time. By the end of his stay, Andrés had a diagnosis and a treatment plan that included ongoing outpatient care.

Since Andrés' first visit to Menninger, Gisela has seen a huge transformation in her son – he's cut his hair, changed his style of clothing and now makes eye contact with others. He's smiling. Radiant. Happy.



# Empowering Students

A student leader emerges in Galveston, embracing a world of openness and connection.

Surrounded by thirty students from high schools across his district, Keylen Evans sat through much of his three-day “SELfie Student” retreat questioning why he was chosen to attend. But his puzzlement cleared when something clicked, and social and emotional learning began to make sense. A new awareness of himself and his community emerged.

The SELfie program and SEL classroom lessons have taught Keylen to manage his anger – like calming down by counting to ten – and he is empowered to share this knowledge with his high school friends. In a group project called Leaders of Galveston (LOG), Keylen and other SELfie students sent out positive messaging and mental health resources to their peers via the Remind app. To this day, an inspirational quotation shared on the app reminds him never to give up: “It doesn’t matter how you start. It only matters how you finish.”

SEL has also taught Keylen to think more about others. One day at lunch, he noticed a girl sitting by herself, staring

down at her meal. He was moved to join her and encouraged her to sign up for LOG. She began eating with Keylen and his friends, and, as though a switch had been flipped, the connections sparked a new light in her.

“Before, when I got angry, I used to just burst out. But after learning about self-awareness, I know how to calm down.”

Before experiencing SEL and his district’s SELfie program, Keylen felt stuck – struggling with teachers and schoolwork, unable to talk about the problems he was going through and exploding whenever he got angry. Now he’s confident in his ability to manage his emotions, and he’s excited about helping others do the same. As Keylen starts his senior year, he believes that SEL has given him lifelong skills that will serve him well on his path to becoming an aeronautical engineer.



“From one to ten, being a SELfie student has changed me by twelve, like on a whole different level. I started to really care about everyone else, because everybody has something good within them that can be brought out into the world.”

Keylen Evans, Senior, Ball High School, Galveston ISD

Who did you dream of becoming at fourteen?



# Our Collective Impact

## One mission. 160 Impact Network partners — and growing.

BridgeUp at Menninger awarded four rounds of *Magic Grants* from 2016 to 2020. This work to build nurturing connections and emotional resilience for youth would not be possible without the commitment and collaborative approach of the lead grant agencies and their nonprofit and behavioral health partners.

### Magic Grants Recipients

**Alley Theatre**

Blackshear Elementary, Rucker Elementary, Stevenson Middle School, Houston Ballet, Houston Galveston Institute, Houston Symphony, University of Houston

**Baylor Teen Health Clinics**

Wisdom High School, Baylor College of Medicine Department of Psychiatry

**Boys & Girls Clubs**

Spring Branch ISD Schools, YES Prep Southside, Legacy Community Health, Spring Branch Community Development Center

**Breakthrough Houston**

Houston ISD Schools, University of Houston ADAPT

**CHAT**

Las Americas Newcomer School, Houston Center for Photography, UTHealth School of Public Health

**Communities In Schools**

Houston ISD Schools

**Connect Community**

KIPP Connect Middle School and High School, All Kids Alliance, FuelEd, Legacy Community Health, St. Luke’s United Methodist Church - Gethsemane, YMCA

**Council on Recovery**

Sam Houston Math, Science and Technology Center High School, The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD

**Galveston ISD**

AIM College and Career Preparatory, Ball High School, Collegiate Academy, Galveston Academy, Family Services Center, FuelEd, Teen Health Center, The Center for Violence Prevention at the University of Texas Medical Branch

### Magic Grants Recipients Continued

**New Caney ISD**

Infinity Early College High School, Keefer Crossing Middle School, New Caney Middle School, New Caney High School, Porter High School, White Oak Middle School, Woodridge Forest Middle School, 7 Mindsets, Tri-County Behavioral Health, Yes to Youth

**Pasadena ISD**

De Zavala Middle School, Miller Intermediate, Shaw Middle School, Clear Hope Counseling, Coronado Counseling, Memorial Hermann School-Based Health Centers

**Project GRAD**

Houston ISD Schools, Alley Theatre

**ProUnitas**

Key Middle School, Kashmere High School, ChildBuilders, re:MIND, FuelEd, Houston ISD, Mental Health America

**Spring Branch ISD**

Spring Woods Middle School, Communities In Schools, Harris County Community Youth Services, Spring Branch Community Health Center

**Texan French Alliance for the Arts**

Las Americas Newcomer School, Center for Healing Arts & Sciences, Houston Galveston Institute

**University of Houston, Psychological Health and Learning Sciences**

Cullen Middle School, Psych on Site, University of Houston ADAPT

**Workshop Houston**

Houston ISD Schools, Yellowstone Academy, Houston Community College, LEAD Houston

### Consultants

**All Kids Alliance, University of Houston**

**Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute**

**Rice Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership**

**WestEd**



# Building a Bridge to the Future Together

There are more than 20 million youth between the ages of ten and fourteen in the U.S. right now.

Adolescence is an important period for brain growth and development. It is also the time when physical, mental, emotional and social changes can lead to mental health challenges for many teens. Since half of mental illnesses develop before age 14, it is imperative that we create ways to identify the warning signs sooner rather than later. Providing early care for adolescents reduces the severity of mental illness, recovery time and educational disruption.

Listening to Cherie', Melissa, Gisela and Keylen, we know the tremendous impact that BridgeUp at Menninger has had on adolescent mental health across Greater Houston throughout our first five years. Now, we are dreaming big and working to scale and share our work across the region, state and the nation to meet the mental health needs of our young people. We know **fourteen** does not have to be an age of crisis when it can be an age of connection.

**David and Helen Gurley Brown understood the power of community.**

BridgeUp at Menninger is inspired and funded by a generous gift from the David and Helen Gurley Brown Trust/Helen Gurley Brown Foundation. Helen believed that education could build the bridge to a more fulfilling life. The legendary editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine and her late husband – the acclaimed movie producer and executive David Brown – were committed to supporting education. The funding made possible by the Brown Trust is distributed through *Magic Grants*.

# About The Menninger Clinic

The Menninger Clinic has 95 years of experience diagnosing and treating people with mental illness. Highly trained teams of mental health experts provide a supportive, healing environment coupled with evidence-based treatments for adolescents, young adults and adults. Gold standard measures of improvement in patients' symptoms and well-being demonstrate the effectiveness of Menninger's programs up to a year after discharge.

A wide range of services are available to individuals and their families from Houston, Texas, across the country and elsewhere.

Our researchers participate in various studies, including understanding

biological mechanisms of mental illness, advancing the efficacy of treatment and development of novel treatments and technologies for improving patient care.

Menninger is among Baylor College of Medicine's teaching hospitals for psychiatrists, psychologists and other specialists. As a nonprofit, charitable organization, Menninger is a member institution of the Texas Medical Center.

Menninger, bringing healing to mind.

To discover all of Menninger's programs and services, visit [MenningerClinic.org](http://MenningerClinic.org).

**Credits**

**Menninger Team:** Patricia Gail Bray, Linda Civallero, Stephanie Cunningham, Anne Lupton, Jennifer O'Bryant, Nancy Trowbridge

**Consultant:** Bob Wimpelberg, UH All Kids Alliance

**Design:** The Black Sheep Agency

**Photography:** BWash Media



As an adult remembering what it was like to be **fourteen**, what would you want to tell the young people in your life now?





12301 Main Street | Houston, TX 77035  
713.275.5400

**[MenningerClinic.org/BridgeUp](https://MenningerClinic.org/BridgeUp)**