



Maddy, 9, loves to perform and support her classmates (Courtesy Carey Forget).

WOONSOCKET, R.I. -- There isn't a microphone **Maddy Forget** doesn't like. A rising fourth grader at Bernon Heights Elementary School in Woonsocket, the nine-year-old has been performing since as long as she can remember.

"I like singing in front of the class. I write my own songs. I like to give presentations and speeches," Maddy said. **"I like doing things in the spotlight."**

While she enjoys taking center stage, Maddy is acutely aware of the importance of slowing down

and taking stock of her wellbeing. She always keeps two notebooks on her: one to take notes during class, and a second to **express herself** when she may feel overwhelmed, upset, or confused.

"I'm really emotional and usually I will talk to myself and try to calm myself down," Maddy shared. "If that doesn't work, **I'll talk to my teacher and I will go to the school counselor.**"

Maddy's confidence to share her emotions – and let it out – is a top priority of the Woonsocket Edu-



cation Department and the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). In 2022, Woonsocket High School became the first secondary school in Rhode Island to train dozens of students in Mental Health First Aid. The school district, which is in its fifth year of the mental health initiative Project AWARE, has been a leader in the development and promotion of the Let It Out mental health awareness campaign. Let It Out is a long-term program of classroom activities, ideas, and tools to help educators, school support staff, and families cope with the challenges our students face daily.

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Maddy Forget, 9

Maddy understands not every student may feel comfortable enough to express themselves like she does and tries to support them.

"I really like helping other kids," she noted. "I like having responsibilities."

As the spirited nine-year-old wraps up summer learning, Maddy is **growing more excited about meeting her new teachers**. Her mother, Carey, said open lines of communication have been vital in her children's academic journey.

"[Our kids] succeed when they feel that connection and that closeness with their teachers," she said. "They feel more comfortable, confident, and learn a lot better. The communication between students, parents, and teachers is huge."

Remember, **being present is essential for students to learn!**

*Woonsocket Public Schools students' first day is September 7. Wish students luck and join the conversation using **#Cool2BeinSchoolRI** and **#Back2SchoolRI**.*

