

2022 State Student Advisory Council on Education

Research Findings and Recommendations



Improving Mental Health in Schools

After Covid-19

By: Araya Miller, Sydney Hart, Michael Perry, and Daniel
Maroun



Importance of Mental Health

- Affects thought processing, emotions, and actions
- Determines how we handle stress, interact with others, and make decisions
- Impacts physical health
- Correlation between poor mental health and lower GPAs

Prior to Covid- 19 Pandemic

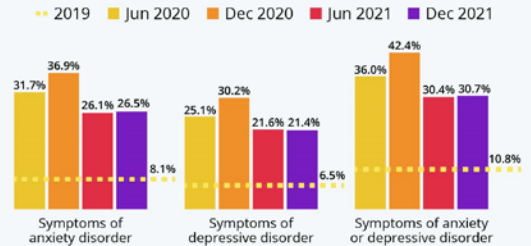
- Mental health issues were increasing over the years prior to Covid- 19
- More than **1 in 3** high school students had experienced **persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness** in 2019
 - 40% increase since 2009
- U.S. children from 3- 17 years (2016- 19) had:
 - **ADHD** 9.8% (6.0 million)
 - **Anxiety** 9.4% (5.8 million)
 - **Behavior problems** 8.9% (5.5 million)
 - (CDC)

After Covid- 19 Pandemic

- Emergency department visits for suspected **suicide attempts** among adolescents **jumped 31%** in 2020 (CDC)
- **81%** of **Gen Z** teens have experienced more **intense stress** during the pandemic (APA)
 - Causes: homework (13.2%), social isolation or lack of social interaction (8.5), **lack of support for mental well-being** (12.3%)
- Global prevalence of anxiety and depression increase by 25% (WHO)

Pandemic Causes Spike in Anxiety & Depression

% of U.S. adults showing symptoms of anxiety and/or depressive disorder*



* Based on self-reported frequency of anxiety and depression symptoms. Derived from responses to Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-2) and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-2) scale.

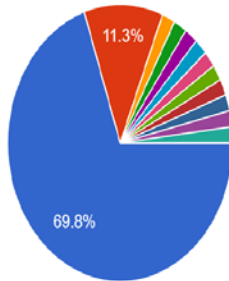
Sources: CDC, NCHS, U.S. Census Bureau

Survey: Assessing Support for Mental Health Improvement

73 participants: 39.7% teachers and 60.3% administrators

Do you think it is worthwhile to take time out of the school day to focus on mental health/social emotional learning?

53 responses

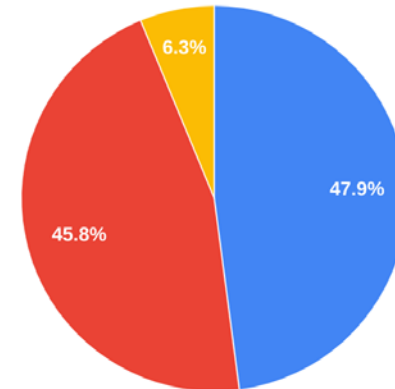


- Yes
- No
- It depends on the how the time is use...
- Should be embedded
- Not just worthwhile... Essential.
- I do not think this is successful for all s...
- Not all students need this specific instr...
- These lessons should be embedded

▲ 1/2 ▼

If so, how frequently?

61 Responses



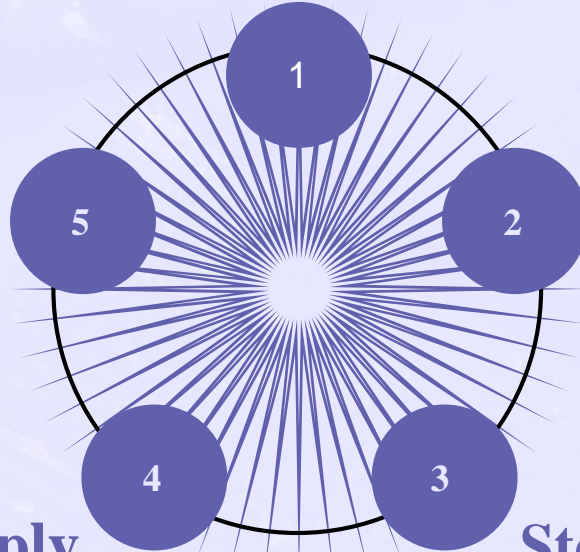
- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly

I.D.E.A.A.

The 5-Step Process to Improve Mental Health in Schools

Step One - Identify

Step Five - Assess



Step Two - Determine

Step Four - Apply

Step Three - Establish

Predicted Challenges and Obstacles

- ❑ Resources
- ❑ Attitude of Participants
- ❑ Ideas
- ❑ Logistics



Suggestions

- **Student- faculty discussion groups**
 - Enhance student- staff bonds
 - Open discussion about mental health
- **Social Emotional Days**
 - Have day of relaxation to reset
 - Dr. Annabel Diaz- Santiago, principal of E.C. Goodwin High School
- **Mental Health Breaks**
 - 10 min per day to decompress so students can focus later
 - Speak with teacher, listen to music, play a game, etc.
- **Add mental health professionals (therapists & psychologists)**
 - Experts on mental health (releases unrealistic expectations of teachers)
 - Alternative to lengthy initiatives
 - Give students support they do not receive at home or cannot afford from a health professional outside of school
 - Assess origin of behavioral/ academic issues





Improving Student and Staff Interactions

By Billy Barry, Boen Beavers, Ali Kyle, and
Young In Kim



Our Task

Given COVID, how should education be changed to improve students' lives?

Our objective was to observe the ways students currently interact with staff members at their school, specifically with **school counselors**. We then came up with ideas for how to improve these student-counselor relations in order to create a more beneficial connection.

School counselors are often hard to reach for many students, and are sometimes considered “exclusive”. Many of our peers at our schools do not know their counselors well, and some were not even sure who their counselors *were*.

Potential Solutions: Proactive Counselors

- Counselor training to be more proactive among the students.
 - Most students are not likely to seek out their counselors. Therefore, counselors must make the connection with the student first.
 - This can be done through mandatory meetings with the counselor, at least once per semester/term.

“My efforts in communicating by email, by phone call, through an assembly, through a class visit, has helped students get to know who I am (as a school counselor).”

- Mia Breuler, school counselor at Wilbur Cross High School

Effective Ratio

Reduce the student-to-counselor ratio.

- Right now, the nationally *recommended* student-to-counselor ratio is 250:1.
- Ms. Catucci believes that a ratio of 200:1 can reduce the amount of stress on the counselors, and allow counselors to give more attention to each individual student.
- Urban school districts are particularly affected by the issue of overwhelming counselors with a large student population.
- Hiring the correct number of counselors and support staff, or only assigning a counselor to the appropriate number of students, are all viable solutions

“The national recommended ratio is 250:1...but it still feels very high... I worry more for urban school districts with less counselors and more students. Having 200 (students per counselor) could be even better.”

- Michelle Catucci, President of the Connecticut School Counselors Association,
Counselor at Cheshire High School

Time Management



- Reduce the in-school responsibilities of counselors.
 - Oftentimes, counselors are asked to take on lunch duty or act as a substitute teacher. When this happens, the counselors are no longer accessible to students in their office, and can be detrimental to any students who need help.
- Why this is important
 - Keeping our counselors focused on the students has to be the number one priority. By keeping a clear line of communication with the student body while establishing sound office hours enables the most effective method of ensuring a stable relationship between counselors and students.

“Having more support staff in schools could be helpful. School counselors would do the counseling aspects, but then school psychologists and social workers would do the social-emotional things that school counselors sometimes get pulled out to do.”

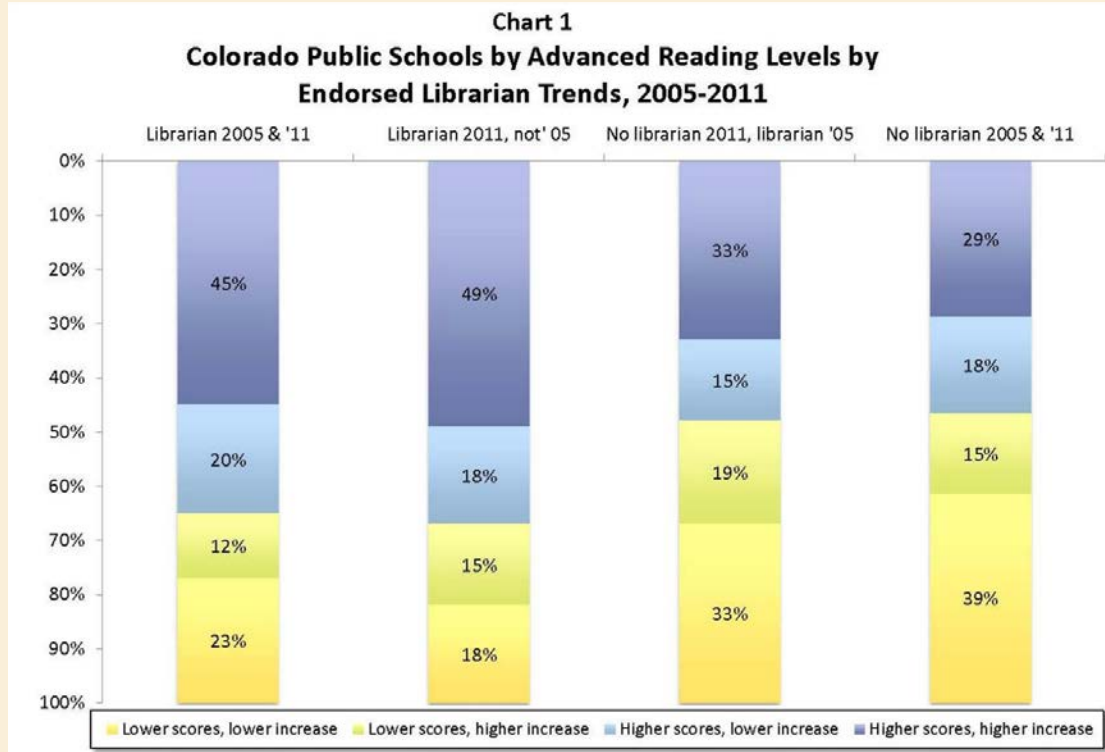
- Michelle Catucci, President of the Connecticut School Counselors Association, Counselor at Cheshire High School



Incorporating the Roles of Families and Communities

Leah Darby, Mahina Massaidova, Nicholas Lolis, Yasmeen Galal

Effect of Librarians



Source: Library Research Service

Solutions



Volunteering



Collaboration

Benefits Observed from Later Start Times

- Increase in quality of student-family interaction
- Increased attendance rates
- Decrease in disciplinary action
- Decrease in student-involved car accidents
- Increase in student GPA
- Increase in state assessment scores
- Increase in college admissions test scores
- Increase in student attention
- Decrease in student sleeping during instruction

Source: American Psychology Association

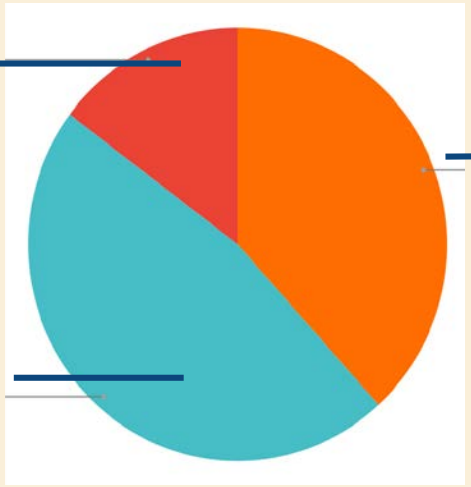


School Night Hours of Sleep by Age Group.
While 69% of kids age 6-11 get approximately enough sleep, just 1 in 10 15-17 year olds are.
Source: National Sleep Foundation

Time for Clubs

No Clubs 15%

This portion of students is not in any clubs. By getting more students involved in clubs, one gets more students involved in their community.



Have Time 38%

There are many students who say that they have plenty of time for clubs. This is, however, not the majority.

No Time 47%

A large amount of students expressed the need for more time for clubs and extracurricular activities.

Students cannot get to/from their clubs.

33% of students

CAN NOT ALWAYS GET A RIDE HOME.

43% of schools

SOMETIMES/NEVER PROVIDE AFTER-SCHOOL BUSESSES.

Student Creation / Perspectives

Want to Create: 111 students	Do not Want to Create: 475 students
---------------------------------	-------------------------------------

There are many students that want to make new clubs, but are unable to do so due to lack of funding, resources, or time.

“My two clubs meet on the same day, so I have to alternate between the two. There are also my academic responsibilities that I have to do so many times I go straight home to do assignments...I am too burnt out.”

“I want to join clubs, but I feel that it adds stress to homework or rides to get home.”

Building mentally stronger communities

Schools should make an ANONYMOUS survey of mental health status to gauge the needs of their school. Every school is different

Students know that they can reach out to their counselors if they need help, but counselors don't reach out to students to ask if they need help.

Health Checks

Counselor Check Ins




Health Days

Apps

Similar to many workplaces, permit students to have one or two mental health days throughout the year. This would be a harmless excused absence that could make a huge difference in someone's day.

Provide students with a professional resource book on where to start if they need help. I.e. a page dedicated to the steps to take if a student is struggling with anxiety.





SSACE 2022: Improving Technology in Schools

Anna Brasseaux, Hansuja Chaurasia, Luke Izzo, Alex Ramnarine, and Katherine Sanderson



After the COVID-19 pandemic, how should education be changed to improve students' lives?

1. Assess current state of technology access and familiarity
2. Identify the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on software use
 - a. Through an online questionnaire with over 100 responses
3. Create improvements for students, educators, and administrators



Analysis of Results

Students

- Devices ran decent: $\frac{3}{5}$
- Chromebooks
- Most used Google Meet followed by Zoom
- Quality of online classes varied drastically
- Used many Google software during online learning

Teachers

- Devices ran well: $\frac{4}{5}$
- HP Laptop, Chromebook, or Desktop computer
- During COVID, varied levels of comfort with technology
- Now, higher levels of comfort
- Not much training received: $\frac{2}{5}$

Administrators

- Most have IT
- Most satisfied with tech at school
- Training for Google-based softwares
- Recycling/trading of old technology
- Range of efficiency in mitigating tech issues



Recommendations

1. Add more technology training to teacher training.
2. Utilize student input in regards to technology.
 - a. Sending surveys to students...
 - i. How chromebooks are working at school, at home, etc.
 - ii. Questions related to school Wi-Fi speed.
3. Use lessons learned from the digital era of COVID-19 and incorporate them into classroom learning in the future.
 - a. Certain websites, apps, softwares, assignments, etc.

Questions?

Thank you.

