



Report to the Board of Education Counselor & Social Worker Feedback Student Mental & Physical Well-Being March 2021

Overview:

The purpose of this report is to provide information to Board Members pertaining to the observations made from school counselors and social workers on student mental health and physical well-being. The information will be of use to inform school district leaders on areas of observation from the schools to provide a clearer picture of the effects of the pandemic as well as provide some clarity to the roles of support provided from counselors and social workers.

As the pandemic started and its impact was felt at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, counselors and social workers were required to adapt numerous times in the methods and focus of their work. During the re-opening process in the fall their work within the buildings, with parents, and students shifted to social and emotional health as it related to seven broad categories of focus: families basic needs; mental health needs; supporting teachers and staff; supporting family stability; student engagement; grief, loss, and trauma informed care; and address inequities.

Process:

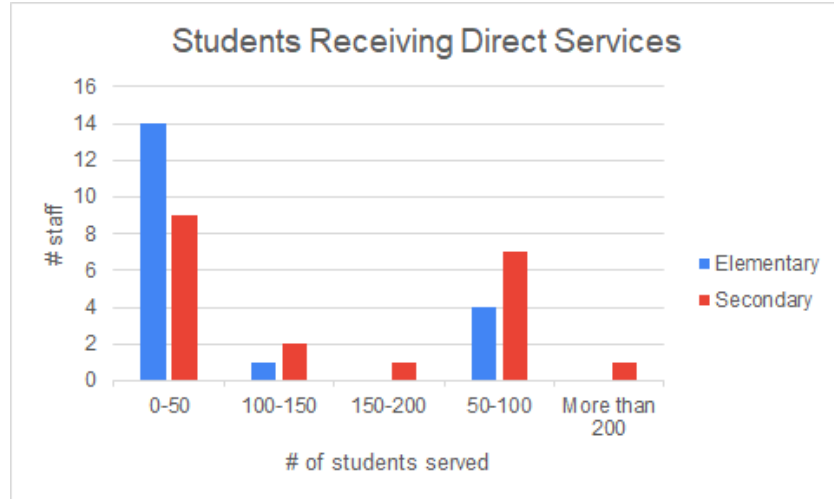
The district does not have a comprehensive case management tool for the twenty-four counselors and fifteen social workers to utilize for recording, tracking, and monitoring their work with students, parents, and collaborations with community resources. To gather the data shown, a short Google form was created in order to focus on the approximate number of direct student contacts, ranking of environmental and personal stressors on students, as well as, the percentage of typical responses to students in crisis.

Survey questions were:

- How many students have you provided direct services to as a result of their inability to cope mentally or physically due to the impact of virtual learning?
- In considering the factor impacting your students' mental and physical well-being, please rank these (environmental/student-centered) from the most prevalent to least prevalent.
- Are there any other factors which you feel were not listed in the prior questions which had a direct detrimental impact on your students' mental and physical well being?
- Please estimate the percentage of times each intervention was utilized in your direct work with students.
- Each was asked to provide an example of a success story
- Each was asked to provide any additional challenges to serving students

Data:

Question 1:



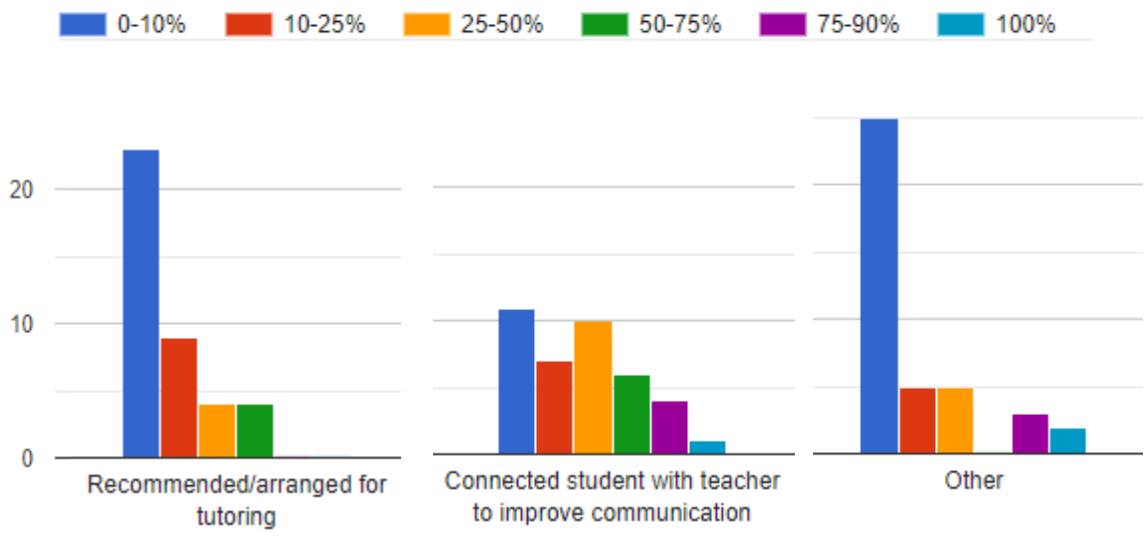
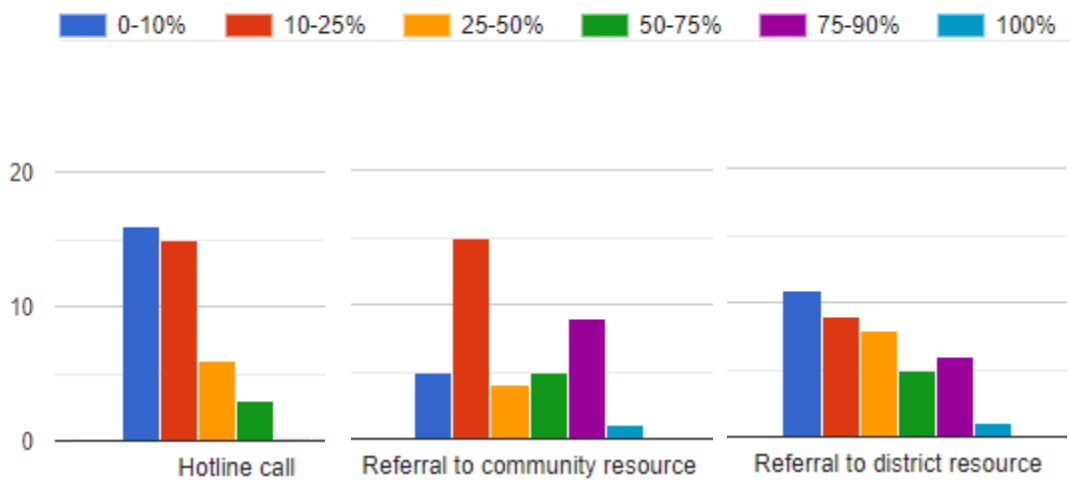
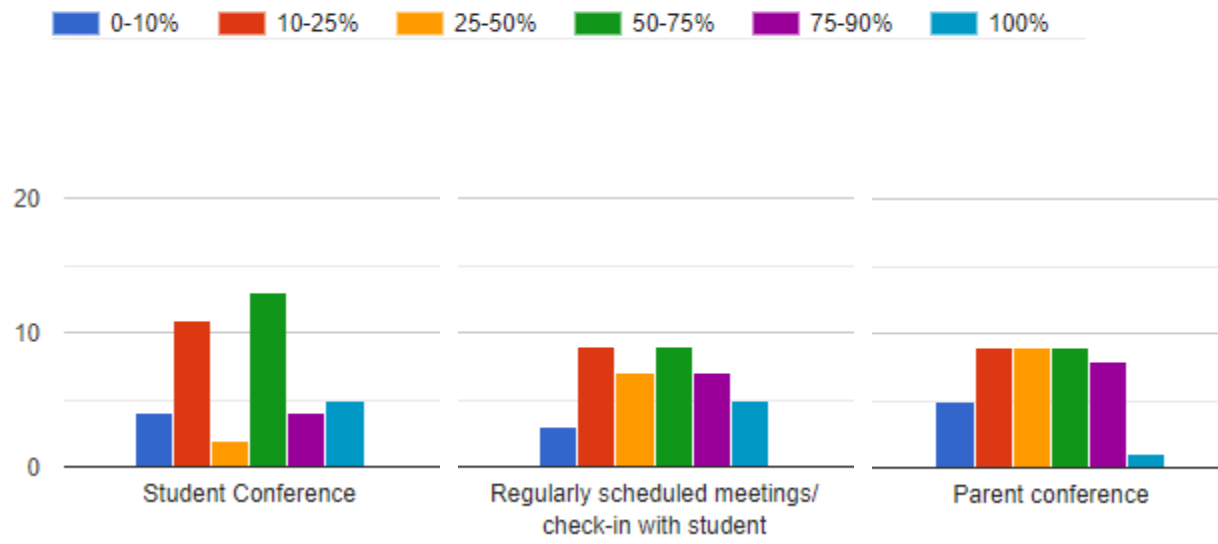
Question 2: Ranking the prevalence of factors (environmental):

Rank	Stressors	Percentage
1	Loss of employment/financial hardship	76.9%
2	Food Insecurity	71.8%
3	Family displaced from home	59.0%
4	COVID- 19 (FAMILY)	43.6%
5	Loss of Family Member	41.0%
6	COVID- 19 (SELF)	35.9%

Question 3: Ranking the prevalence of factors (student-centered):

Rank	Stressors	Percentage
1	Virtual learning disconnect	82.1%
2	Separation from peers	66.7%
3	Caring for younger siblings	53.8%
4	Drop in grades	51.3%
5	Conflict between working and school	30.8%
6	Overall safety at home	30.8%
7	Student displaced/separated from home/family	28.2%

Question 4: Percentage of time interventions were used



Anecdotal Data:

Respondents were asked, "Are there any other factors which you feel were not listed in the prior questions which had a direct detrimental impact on your students' mental and physical well being?"

The staff responses were categorized into various themes surrounding relationships, diagnosed and undiagnosed mental health issues, parents' needs superseding student needs, motivation, and overall safety and well-being. Staff shared concerns with students' lack of motivation, often due to the lack of peer interaction, daily contact with teachers with whom they had developed relationships, and lack of transportation to be engaged at the school building. They cited numerous times the stress and responsibilities being placed on older students to care, manage, and support younger siblings due to parents needing to work and be away from home. Many times, staff were trying to support students from a distance who had disclosed family conflict, abuse, neglect, or parents suffering from mental health unable to maintain stability within the home.

Respondents were asked, "Please share any other challenges you feel have impacted the work you do in supporting the mental and physical well being of your students and if there are additional resources you feel are needed."

The most noted concern of the high school staff was the very large caseload of 500 students to 1 counselor, along with the numerous changes to learning structures. These changes created duplicate work in regard to schedule changes, and the opportunity for changes were not limited for parents, thus creating an on-going process which directly impacted their time for student response for mental health, relationship concerns, and progress toward graduation and higher learning. Remaining virtual and not having opportunities for in-person contact with students created a barrier to developing partnerships for change, strategies for success, and regular lines of communication. They spoke to the challenge of trying to support students with a history of struggling in school further distancing themselves from the learning process without the daily accountability to engage virtually. The lack of accountability stemmed from parents who were overwhelmed with their own concerns such as housing stability, employment struggles, and mental health issues. Students also were expressing more social anxiety, isolation, depression and other mental health factors, often not formally diagnosed, being the reason they couldn't 'do school'.

Success Stories:

Staff reported some amazing stories of the challenges and perseverance of student success. To maintain student privacy, the story is in general terms.

High school:

During the fall semester, a senior student was on track to graduation. The family fell into financial crises as both parents lost their jobs. The family moved due to lack of stable housing, food instability and overall struggling. For a time, the student did not attend school. Later the family returned to RQS and the student returned to school. The student was drastically behind in the course work. The staff, through a great relationship, worked with the student to create a plan for graduation. It took a lot of time, continuous effort for follow-up, continual motivation, praise, positive interactions from the staff person. Over time the student is now on track for graduation. This is the case of many high school students and

their families facing many challenges known and unknown. The student graduating was thanks to the huge investment of time and positive relationship to the student that led to success. Time, commitment and dedication by the staff will leave a lifelong positive impact to this student.

Middle School:

A teacher referred a student for suicidal thoughts. The dad was called and was at first dismissive of the concern. The two parents were not parenting together and the family had many challenges. The middle school staff person continually checked in with both parents. Over time, the dad reached out to the school for outside counseling and therapy. The dad recognized the urgency from the staff person on the need for mental health support. The dad arranged for breakfast with the mom and son at which they had a family meeting to discuss their son's needs. The need brought the parents back together as they worked together to make their son's mental health a priority. As a family they all started therapy counseling together. The parents followed up with the school staff person to share that counseling was going well, the parents were working together and in the zoom meeting, they all shared tears of joy and happiness for how the family was reunited and had overcome their challenges.

Elementary Level:

A staff person made a hotline on a family for concerns at the home. This hotline made the parent very upset at the school and staff person. The parent elected to keep the children on virtual learning to avoid contact with any school staff. The staff maintained communication with the parent, albeit one way most of the time. The school made copies of assignments to be of help to the parent for at home learning, calls of support, and visits of support to the house. The parent continued to ignore the school. One day, the parent called the school for assistance when the parent needed guidance on how to obtain mental health support for one of the children. The staff person spent a lot of time, energy and support to assist the parent. The parent would have never previously accepted help but trusted the staff person due to her continual efforts to help the family. The family is now doing great and the parent works with school staff to partner and work together. This success story began with a hotline call, maintained by the ongoing efforts of communication of the staff, and resulted in a long-lasting positive effect on the students.