

Mental Health Initiative Update



Metuchen School District

April 9, 2024

Presented by:

Dr. Tania Herzog, Assistant Superintendent



Mental Health by the Numbers in Youth & Young Adults

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among people ages 10-34

50% of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14

75% of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 25

1 in 6 children (ages 2-8) have a diagnosed mental, behavioral or developmental disorder

1 in 10 Young Adults (ages 18-25) experienced a serious mental illness

1 in 6 youth (ages 6-17) experience a mental health disorder each year

3 million adolescents (ages 12-17) had serious thoughts of suicide

1 in 3 Young Adults (ages 18-25) experienced a mental illness

1 in 6 adolescents (ages 12-17) experienced a major depressive disorder

The overall suicide rate increased by 35% since 1999

31% increase in mental health related emergency department visits

<https://nami.org/mhstats>
<https://www.samhsa.gov/>
<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/data.html>

Impact of the Pandemic on Youth and Adolescent Mental Health

1 in 5

Young people report that the pandemic had a significant negative impact on their mental health.

1 in 10

People under the age of 18 experienced a mental health condition following a COVID-19 diagnosis

15%

Of adolescents increased use of alcohol amongst those who drink

15%

Of adolescents increased use of drugs amongst those who use

50%

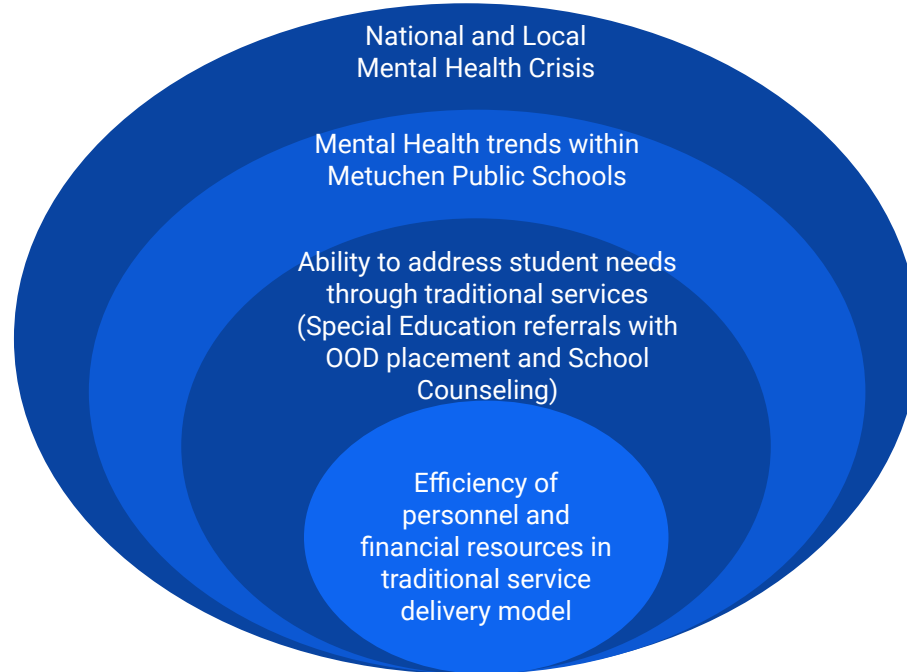
Of young people with mental health concerns report a significant negative impact of the pandemic

"Youth and young adults experienced a unique set of challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic- isolation from peers, adapting to virtual learning, and changes to sleep habits and other routines.

We must recognize the significant impact of these experiences on young people's mental health- and the importance of providing the education, care and support they need " -NAMI

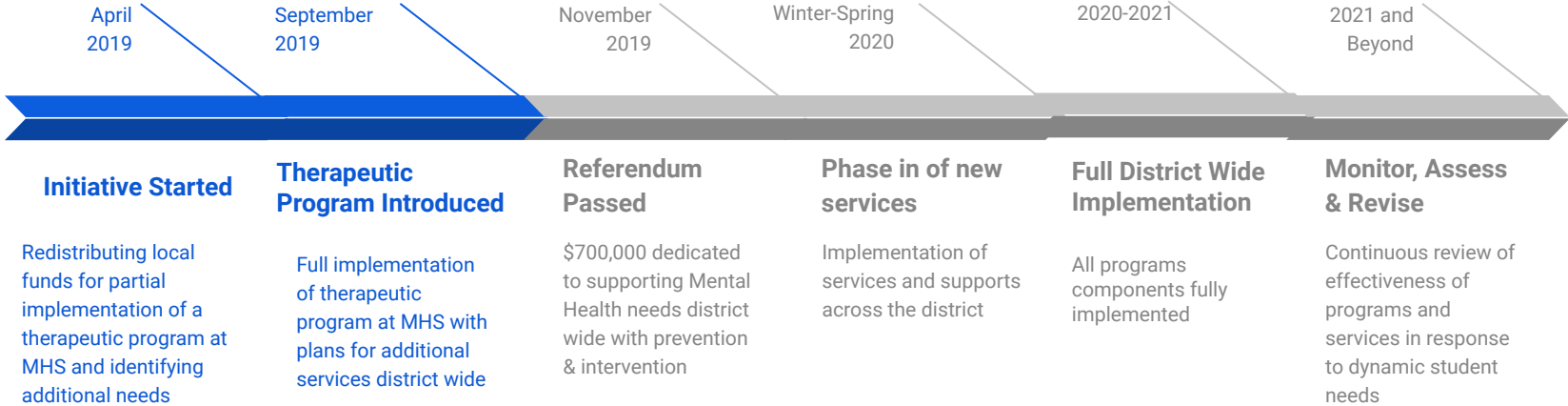
https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/NAMI_2020MH_ByTheNumbers_Youth-r.pdf

Identified Needs



Support staff advocated for the need for increased mental health services and a more targeted service delivery model to meet the needs of all students

Action Steps



Initiative Goals

Emotional Wellness → Academic Success

Prevention

- ❖ Identify and intervene early
- ❖ Assist parents and school personnel in developing and implementing comprehensive strategies for wellness
- ❖ Implement best practices across settings
- ❖ Foster resiliency, problem solving and coping skills

Education

- ❖ Develop awareness
- ❖ Promote acceptance
- ❖ Reduce mental health stigma
- ❖ Provide community resources
- ❖ Professional development
- ❖ Parent education
- ❖ Student education
- ❖ Building capacity of staff, students and parents
- ❖ Student skill development

Support

- ❖ Students, families and staff
- ❖ Mental health services to students who wouldn't otherwise have access
- ❖ Counseling and behavioral services in an accessible, authentic setting
- ❖ Academic Interventions
- ❖ Facilitating transitions across settings and between service providers
- ❖ Addressing targeted student needs

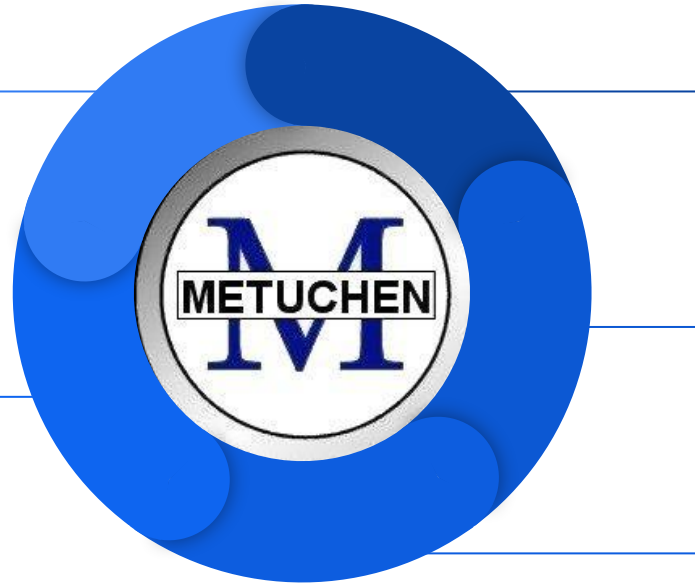
Mental Health Referendum Components

School Psychologists

Services expanded at all schools with two additional positions

Behavioral Support

Increased support from Board Certified Behavior Analysts district wide



Therapeutic Programs

Clinicians added at Campbell & Edgar and continued at MHS

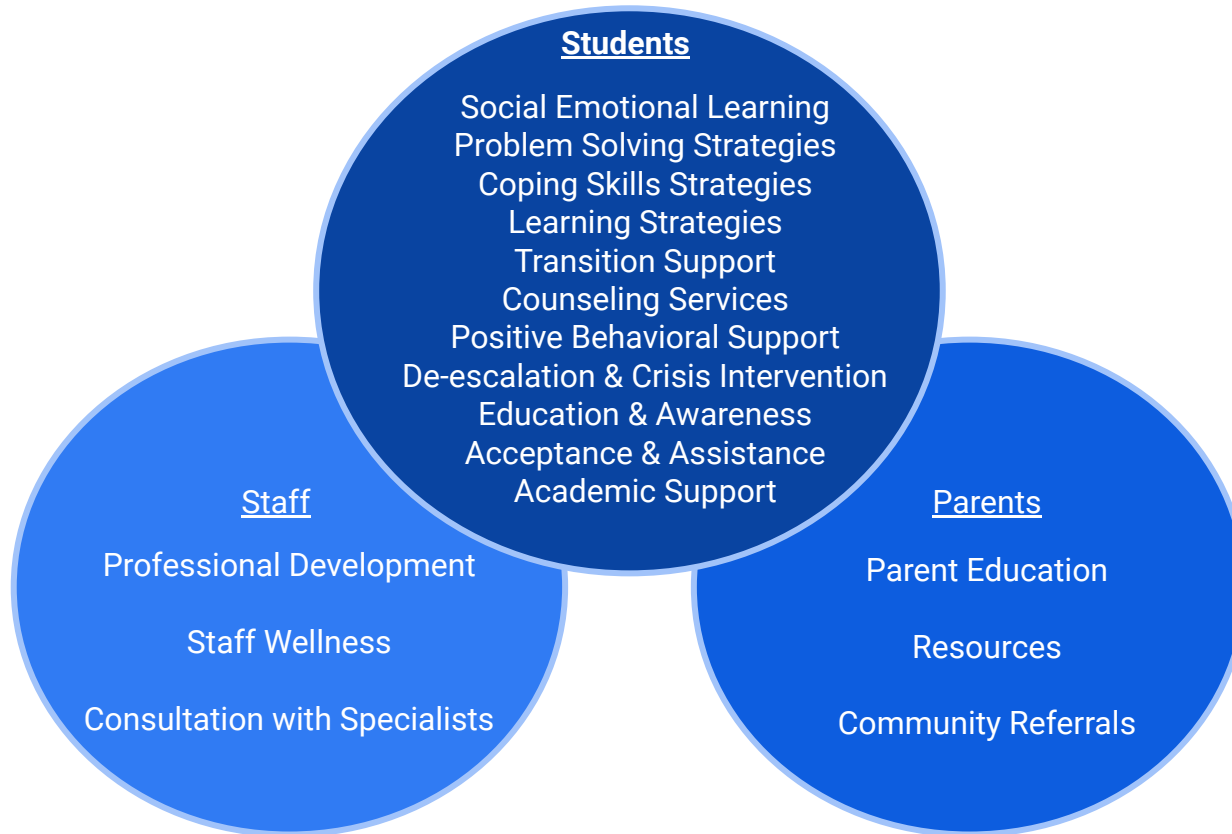
Academic Interventions

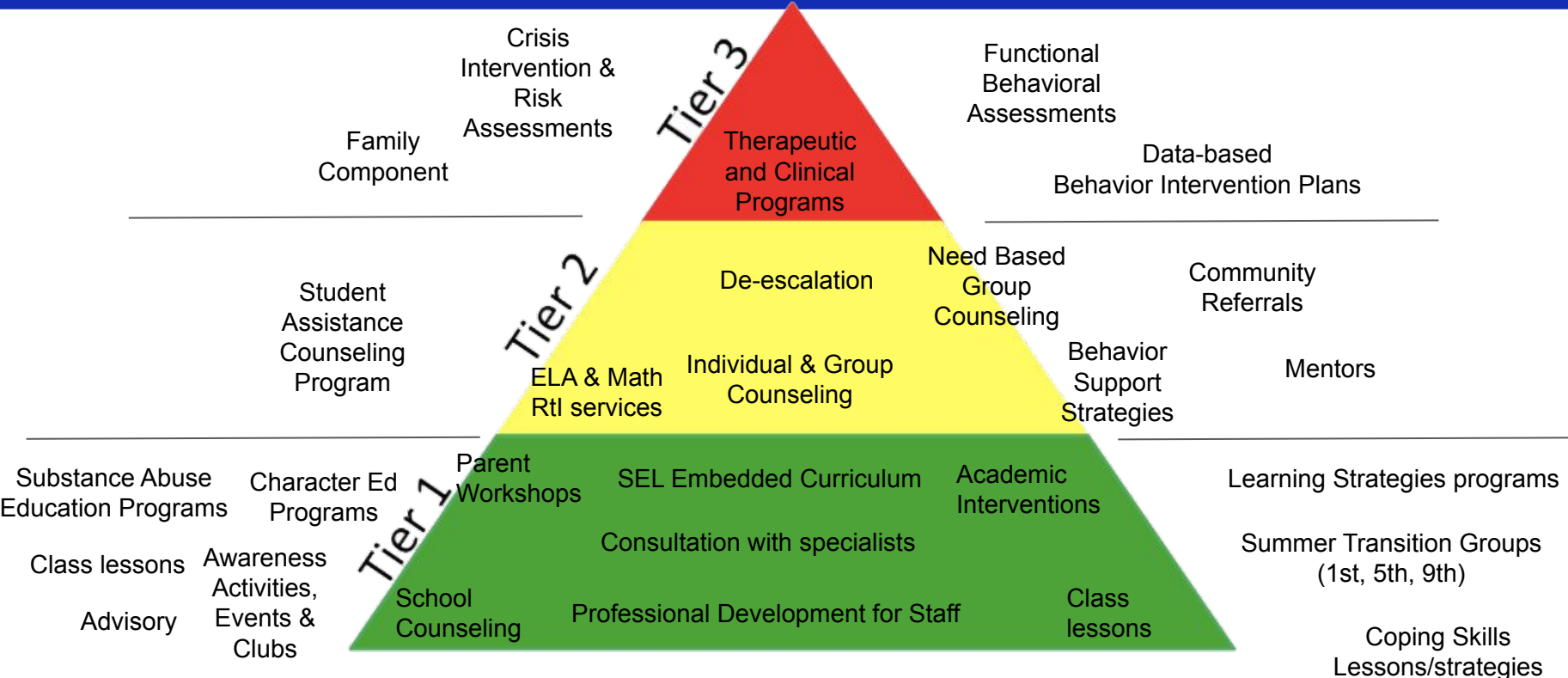
Reading Specialist
Math Intervention services
Increased Response to Intervention services
Individualized intervention plans
Learning Strategies programs

Clerical Support

Part time secretary to increase efficiency and availability of support staff for direct services

Mental Health Initiative Focus Areas





District Wide Tiered Mental Health Supports



Role of Therapeutic Programs

Students

- ❖ Counseling Services (individual and group)
- ❖ Class lessons on Coping skills and wellness
- ❖ Coping skills, Emotional Wellness and Executive functioning tips
- ❖ Academic support
- ❖ Learning Strategies and Executive Functioning support
- ❖ Summer therapeutic support and transition groups
- ❖ Transition support
- ❖ On-site risk assessments by licensed mental health professionals
- ❖ Fostering awareness and acceptance
- ❖ Psycho-educational lessons

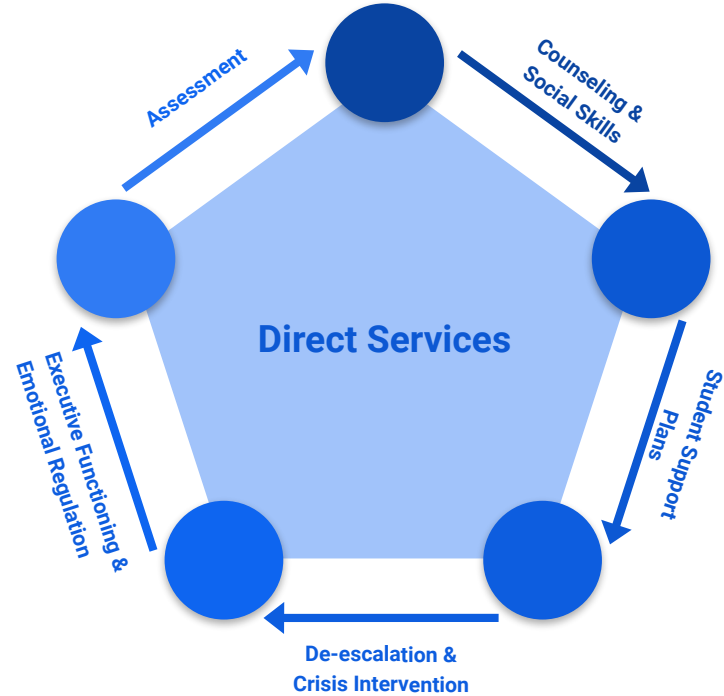
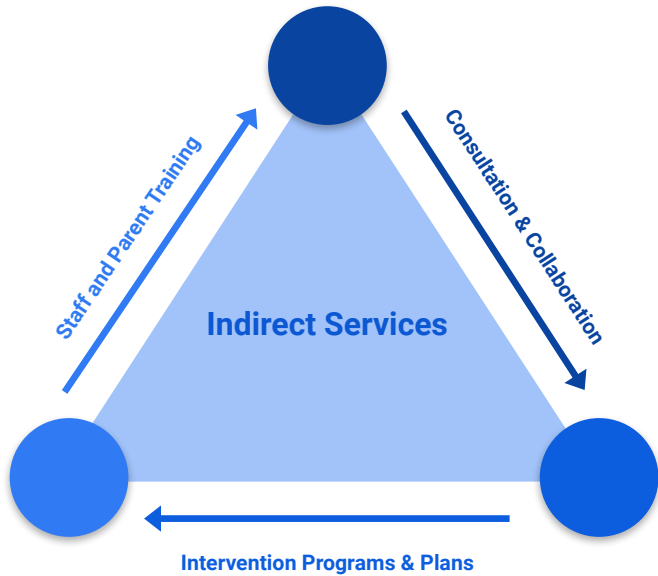
Staff

- ❖ Structured collaboration with School Counselors, CST and Administrators
- ❖ Professional development on a variety of topics
- ❖ Teacher consultation
- ❖ Collaboration to transition students across schools and settings
- ❖ Articulations across providers and buildings to support student transitions
- ❖ Staff wellness support and referrals
- ❖ Capacity building

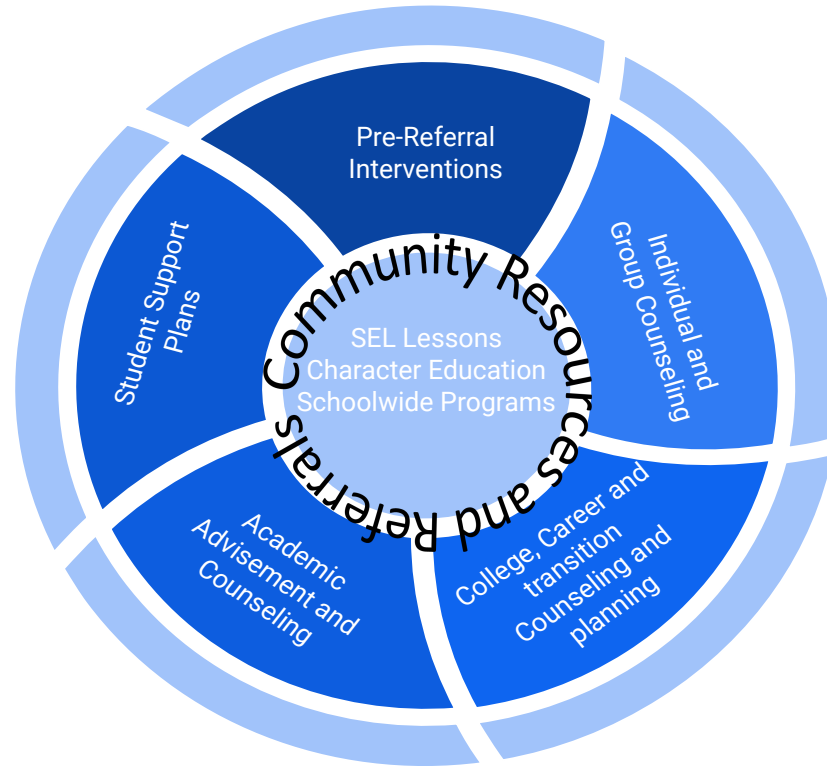
Parents

- ❖ Presentations
- ❖ Psycho-educational materials
- ❖ Family Counseling
- ❖ Support Groups
- ❖ Referrals & Resources

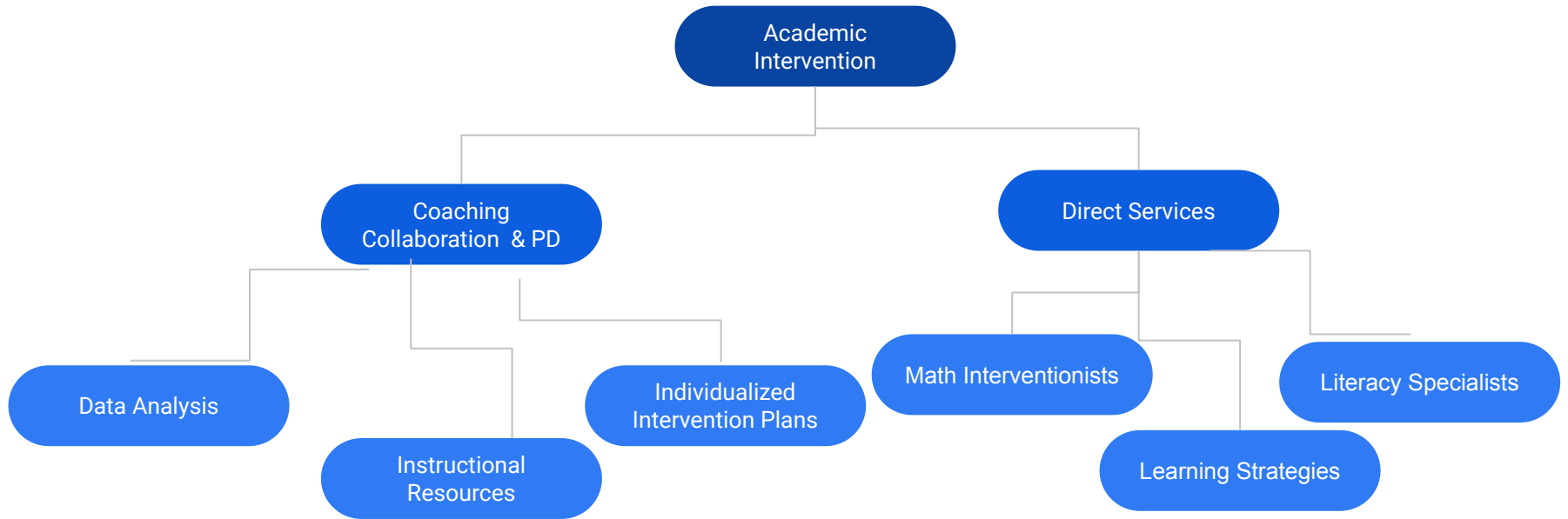
School Psychologists and Behavior Analysts Supporting Mental Health, Wellness and Positive Behavior



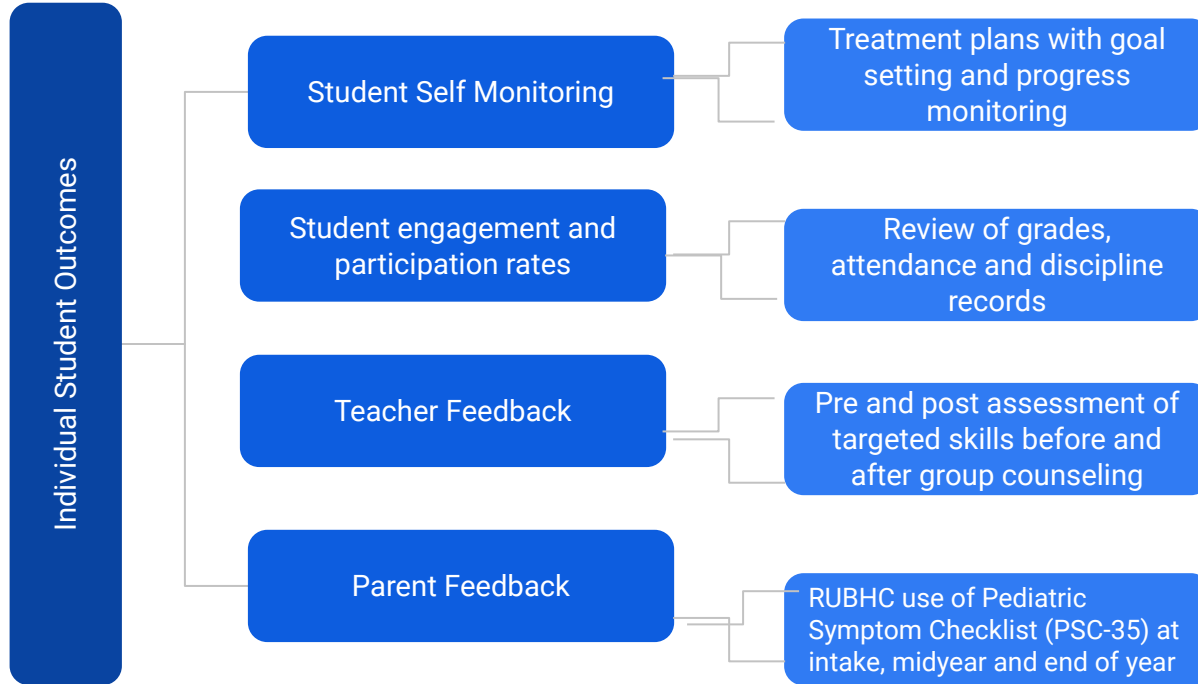
School Counseling Services



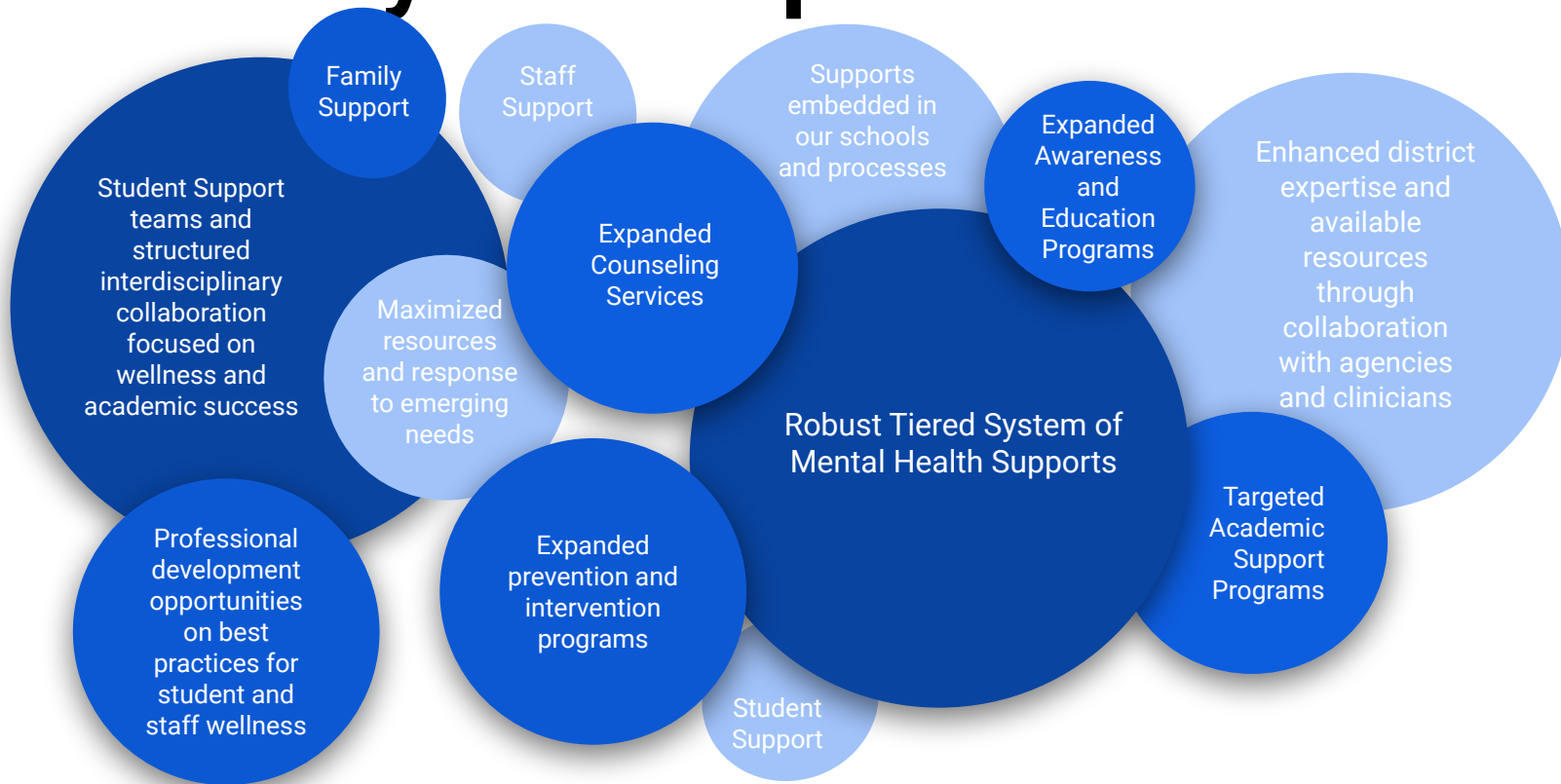
Academic Success \Rightarrow Emotional Wellness



Assessing Individual Student Outcomes



Key Accomplishments



Partnerships, Programs, & Engagement

Student Assistance Program in Partnership with Wellspring

Student Services

- Licensed Clinicians
- Check ins
- Classroom lessons
- Drop in counseling
- Short-term counseling
- Group counseling
- Crisis Intervention
- Referrals & Resources

Education & Prevention

Wellness & Coping

Awareness & Acceptance

Outreach

- Interactive bulletin boards
- Lunchtime engagement events
- Inspirational giveaways
- Announcements
- Social media presence
- Collaboration with student clubs
- Schoolwide events
- Staff presentations

Student Assistance Program in Partnership with Wellspring

Mental Health Topics



- Suicide Prevention
- Bullying Prevention
- Coping Skills and Mindfulness
- Gratitude, Kindness & Empathy
- Stress and Anxiety
- Mental Wellness
- Self Esteem
- Teen Dating
- Self Harm
- See Something Say Something
- LGBTQ+ Pride

Substance Abuse Topics



- Recovery
- Smoke out
- Impaired Driving
- Drug Facts
- Alcohol Awareness
- Pre-prom & Pre-graduation
- Substance Abuse

Topics are presented in a variety of ways throughout the year, including formal presentations, informational displays, lunch activities, and collaboration with student clubs.

Student Assistance Program in Partnership with Wellspring Engagement with Students and Staff

MHS Students

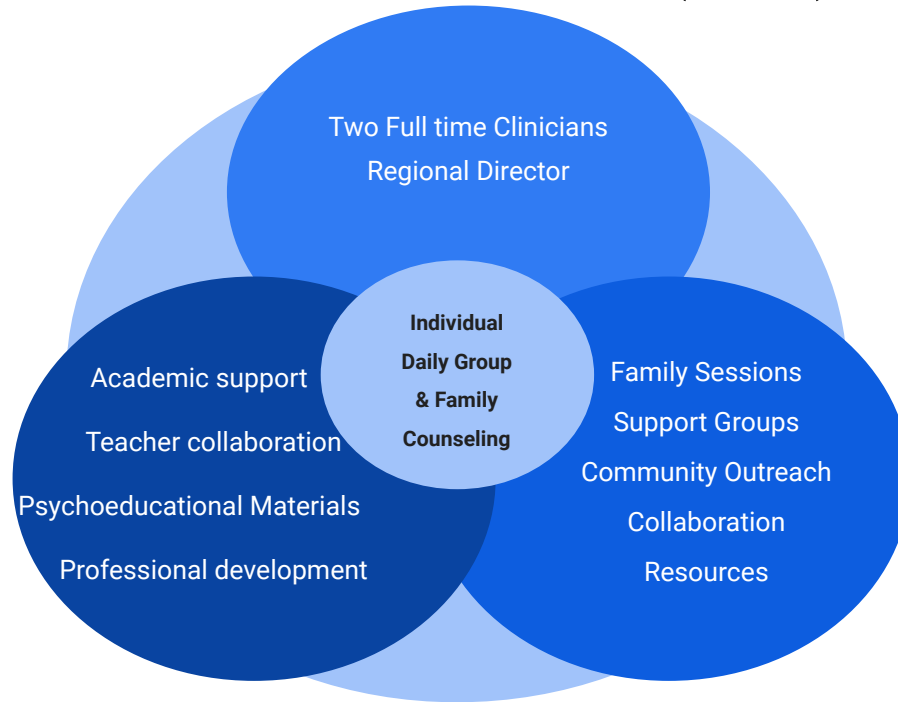
- ❖ Counseling Services for 47 students (approx 18 students seen per week)
- ❖ Student Outreach: monthly bulletin boards - Suicide Prevention, We Are One Metuchen (Bullying Prevention), 30 Days of Gratitude, How to Beat the Winter Blues (focus on stress and anxiety management), Fill Your Cup
- ❖ Stress Reductions kits
- ❖ Collaboration with Bring Change to Mind and GSA Student Organizations
- ❖ Push in lessons/activities with ESL class and Unified class
- ❖ Monthly Lunch Presentations: Bullying Prevention Month/Anti-Bullying Pledge, World Kindness Day, Winter Blues, Acknowledge-Care-Tell Campaign, etc.
- ❖ Anti bullying activities- World Kindness, Unity Day sidewalk chalk, posters to educate
- ❖ Resource folder in hallway
- ❖ Trauma counseling
- ❖ Crisis screening and re-entry planning
- ❖ 91% of measurable treatment objectives met

MHS Staff

- ❖ Workshop to district coaches and PE teachers on Athletes and Mental Health
- ❖ Self Love, Self Care event for staff
- ❖ Suicide prevention staff workshop
- ❖ Traumatic Event Response Team
- ❖ Participation in student support meetings and planning



Therapeutic Program in partnership with Effective School Solutions (ESS) at MHS



Services by referral only at MHS

Effective School Solutions

Engagement with Students, Staff, Parents and Families

Direct Services

- ❖ 16 students utilized ESS this year
- ❖ Intensive therapeutic program: daily counseling, family component, collaboration with outside providers
- ❖ Academic monitoring and support
- ❖ Alternative lunch program
- ❖ Support plans for chronically absent students
- ❖ Crisis intervention and assessment
- ❖ Safety plans
- ❖ Re-entry plans

Support

- ❖ Implementation of Life Skills course curriculum for credit towards graduation and independent study work plans
- ❖ Provide support to staff with individual student plans
- ❖ Parental reports noting improvement and a high level of satisfaction with services
- ❖ Referrals and resources

Training and Professional Development

Parent Workshops:

- ❖ Having Hope: Suicide Prevention for Parents and Caregivers

Staff Workshops:

- ❖ Trauma Attuned Models
- ❖ Language of Behaviors

Psycho-educational literature, recorded webinars for staff and parents

Therapeutic Program in partnership with Rutgers UBHC at Campbell and Edgar

Clinical Services:

- ★ Licensed Clinicians at Campbell & Edgar
- ★ Doctoral level Supervisor
- ★ Direct Services
- ★ Consultation
- ★ Parent Education
- ★ Professional Development for staff
- ★ Shared resources



Prevention:

- ★ Class lessons
- ★ Coping & calming strategies
- ★ Executive Functioning strategies
- ★ Summer transition programs
- ★ Collaboration/consultation
- ★ Staff wellness support

Workshops:

- ★ Suicide Prevention
- ★ Trauma Attuned Teaching in New Teacher Academy



Intervention:

- ★ Individual therapy
- ★ Psycho-education counseling groups
- ★ Community outreach, referrals & resources
- ★ Crisis intervention & assessment
- ★ Case Management & Referral Services
- ★ Treatment plans and support strategies
- ★ Targeted trainings on student support
- ★ District wide Traumatic Event Response Team supporting staff and students
- ★ Mean PSC-35 scores show a decrease of 1-2 points from beginning to midyear

Engagement Data for Rutgers UBHC

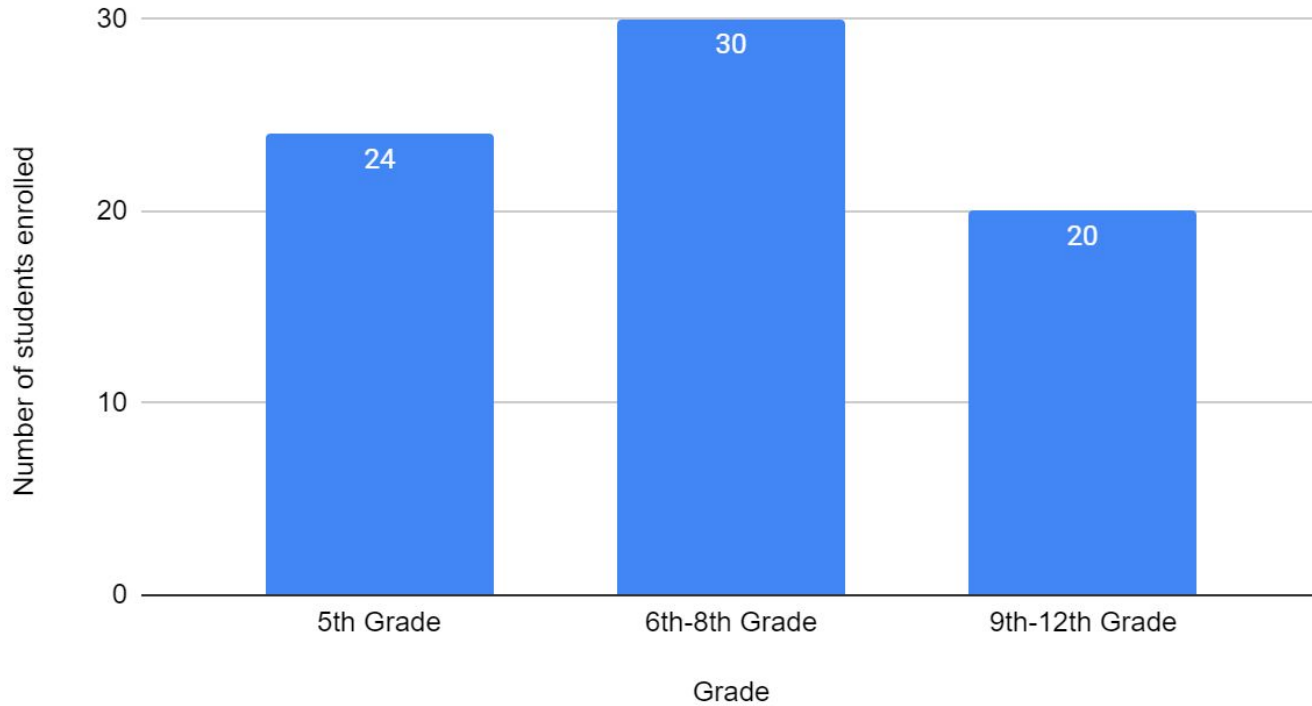
Campbell Elementary School

- ❖ 9 students enrolled in intensive therapeutic program
- ❖ 4 students received support services
- ❖ 5 students participating in counseling group on Emotional Regulation
- ❖ 40 students participated in the First Grade transition program
- ❖ 5 students received crisis response services

Edgar Middle School

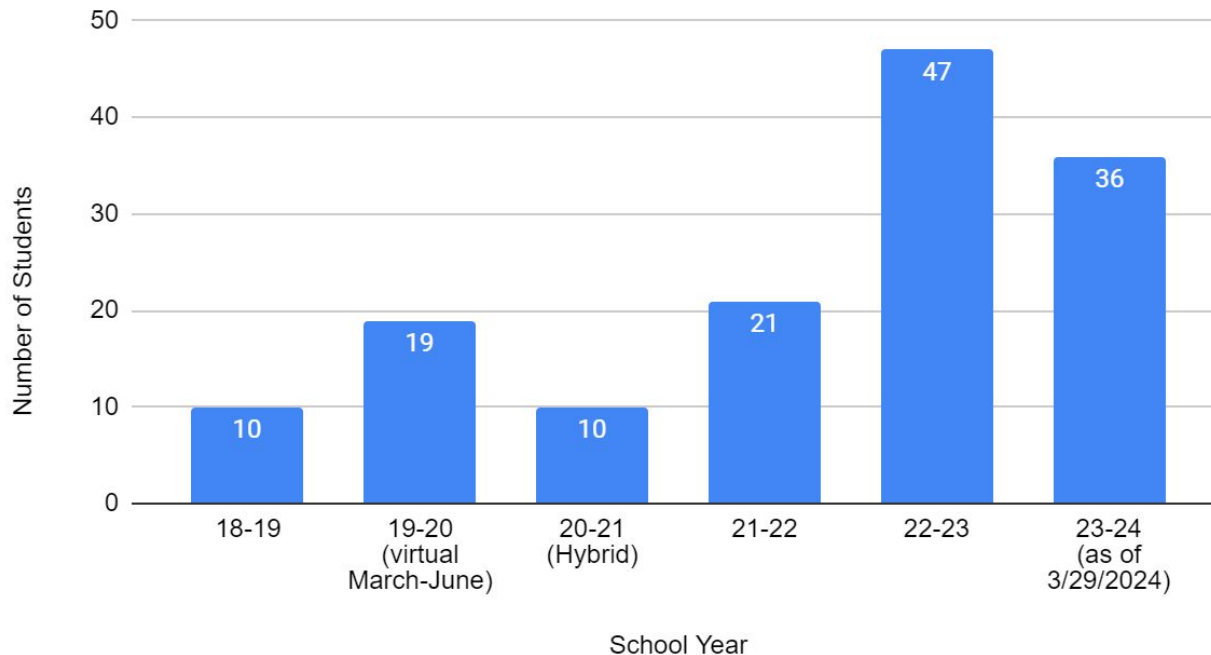
- ❖ 18 students enrolled in intensive therapeutic program
- ❖ 9 students received support services
- ❖ 6 students participated in counseling group- Find Your Focus
- ❖ 22 students participated in Fifth Grade Summer Transition program
- ❖ 14 Students participated in Freshman Summer Transition program
- ❖ 9 students received crisis response services

2023 Summer Institute Learning Strategies: Participation



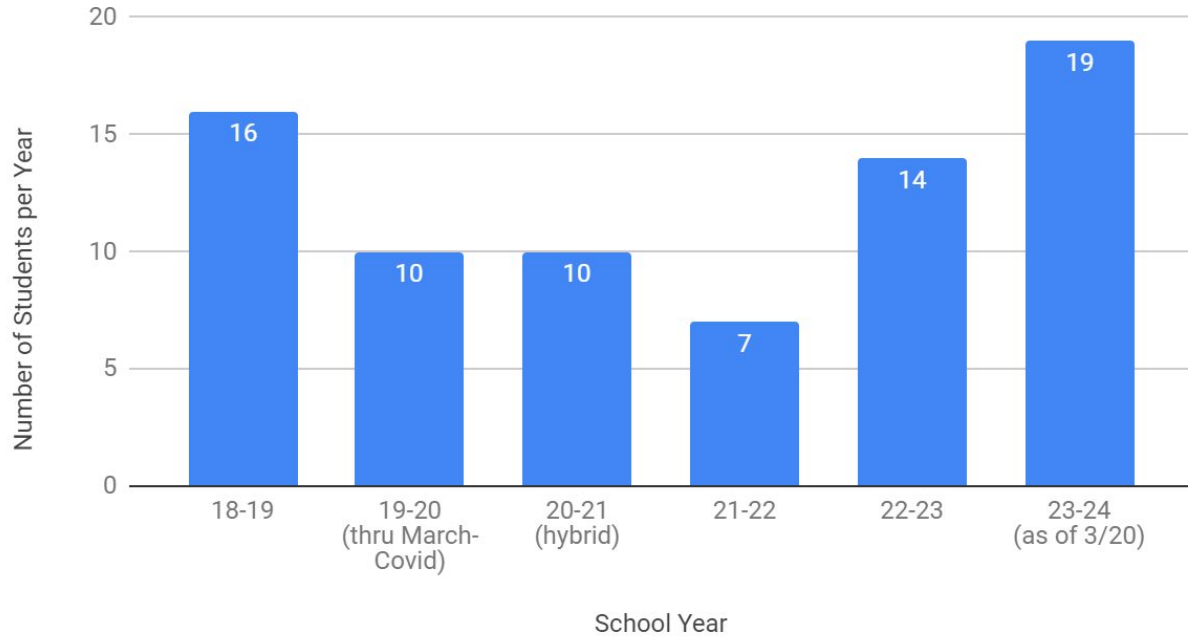
Summer Institute courses are offered at no cost for students in 5th-12th grade

Metuchen Students Referred for Risk Assessments



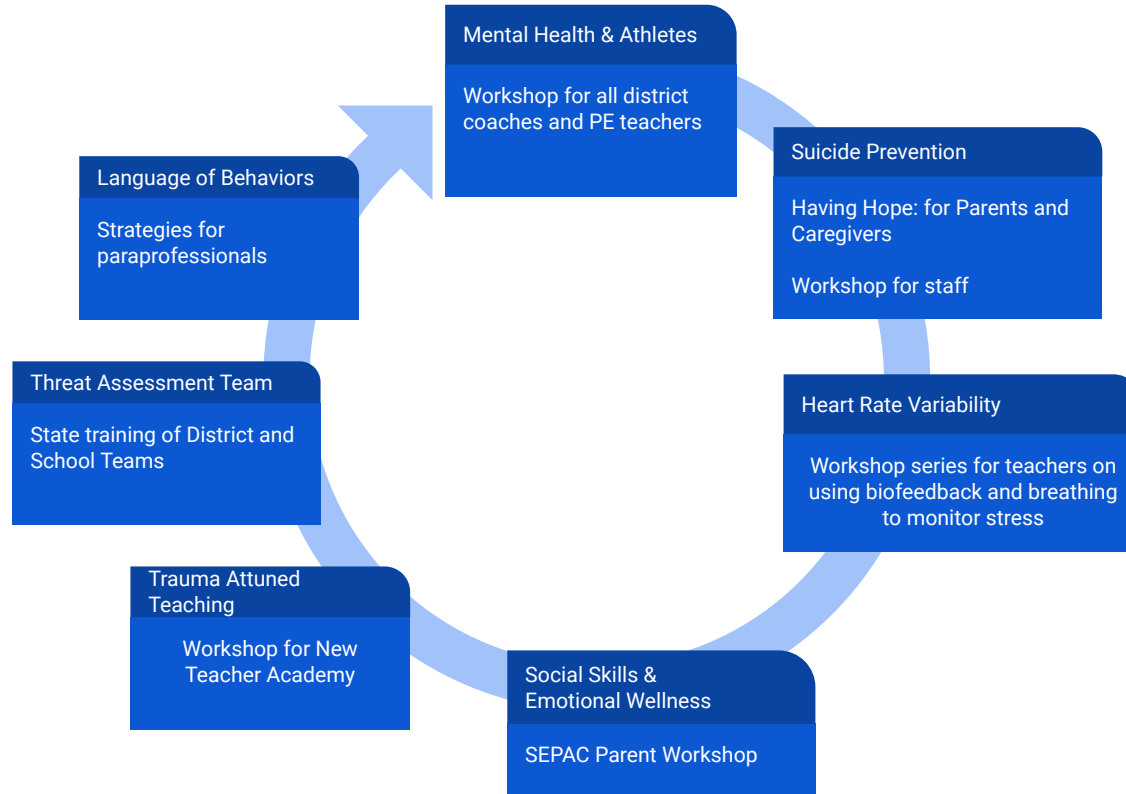
An increasing number of students indicate signs of crisis and an immediate need for intervention and support. Most students can now be screened by staff in the schools, rather than a hospital setting, and then referred to the appropriate services.

Home Instruction for Mental Health



Most students placed on Home Instruction due to mental health are either hospitalized or enrolled in a day program for intensive mental health services.

Professional Development & Workshops



Year in Review

- Formed a District leadership group with district administrators and Directors of our 3 partner agencies to review district data, trends, best practices, and advise on district programming
- Developed an annual training plan for staff and parents on recognizing signs of mental health concerns and suicide risk, as well as ways to access help and supportive strategies
- Implementation of District and School Based Threat Assessment Teams, providing staff training, screening steps and assessment procedures based on new state law
- Planning for implementation of the Acknowledge-Care-Tell (ACT) strategy to equip staff and some students with steps to offer support and seek assistance
- Inclusion of Mental Health and Trauma Attuned classroom practices in the New Teacher Academy series
- Workshops for all coaches, physical education teachers and counseling staff on Athletes and Mental Health
- Increased accessibility of counseling services to all MHS students by expanding the Student Assistance Program and creating a plan to transition from grant based services to a sustainable implementation
- Workshop series for staff on stress management using biofeedback: Heart Rate Variability and breathing exercises
- Superintendent led Forums with stakeholders on Hot Topics (Mental and Behavioral Health; Kindness to combat bullying) and Mental Health included in district goals, workshops, and action steps
- Coaches and Club Advisors district wide focusing on acts of kindness
- Preparedness and supportive response to district wide traumatic loss and crisis through Traumatic Event Team
- Leveraged partnerships with Traumatic Loss Coalition, Wellspring, ESS, and RU UBHC to support our district in time of need, including guidance and direct support for our counseling staff



Looking Ahead

- Continue implementation of comprehensive programming
- Enhance practices for identification of students in need of more support
- Enhance suicide prevention educational programming for students
- Build staff capacity in responding to behavioral health concerns for our younger students
- Continue to develop educational programs that foster kindness and empathy and develop coping and problem solving skills

A special thanks
to all of those involved in the daily implementation of this initiative.
It takes a Boro!

