

ADDENDUM 1: SCHOOL DISTRICT PROFILES

CONTENTS

1. Aleutian Region School District
2. Anchorage School District
3. Annette Island School District
4. Bristol Bay Borough School District
5. Chatham School District
6. Chugach School District
7. Craig City School District
8. Denali Borough School District
9. Dillingham City School District
10. Fairbanks North Star Borough School District
11. Galena City School District
12. Haines Borough School District
13. Hoonah City School District
14. Iditarod Area School District
15. Juneau Borough School District
16. Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
17. Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District
18. Kodiak Island Borough School District
19. Kuspuk School District
20. Lower Kuskokwim School District
21. Lower Yukon School District
22. Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District
23. Mount Edgecumbe High School
24. Nenana City School District
25. Nome Public Schools
26. Petersburg City School District
27. Sitka School District
28. Tanana City School District
29. Unalaska City School District
30. Yukon-Koyukuk School District
31. Yup'it School District

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

ALEUTIAN REGION SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Aleutian Region School District (ARSD) serves the Western Aleutian Island communities of Atka and Adak. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's two schools serve approximately 30 students.

ARSD's small size and relationships with local communities contribute to the staff's ability to proactively identify student needs and knowledge of who to reach out to if student needs exceed the services and supports available through the district.

Highlights of ARSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Formation of district benchmarks and standards for social emotional learning and wellbeing
- » Early identification of needs and individualized outreach from teachers to connect students with appropriate level of supports and services
- » Intentional integration between school and community
- » Partnerships with local health clinics and tribal organizations to provide more intensive Tier 3 services and supports
- » Collaboration with itinerant therapists to provide classroom lessons on topics like coping strategies

COVID-19 IMPACTS

Although ARSD was in person, COVID-19 created feelings of isolation for staff and students given the limited ability to leave and travel between the islands. Similarly, travel restrictions significantly reduced access to mental health providers and community health services. With the lifting of travel bans, the district anticipates seeing continued efforts to meet the pandemic-related concerns of families and students, such as stress.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

With less than 20 students at each school site, ARSD takes an organic approach to universal and targeted Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports and services. Community, itinerant, and telehealth providers are integral for delivery of intensive Tier 3 supports and services.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organic approaches Classroom lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organic approaches
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher, itinerant therapist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher, special education director, itinerant therapist
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher, community partner student screenings
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General and Title funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General and Title funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eastern Aleutian Tribes offered through itinerants and telehealth Aleutian Pribilof Island Association
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District foundation and special education funds

BARRIERS

ARSD schools are in remote, isolated communities and staff numbers are small. The district does not have a school counselor on staff and relies on partnerships with community health clinics and itinerant and telehealth providers for more intensive Tier 3 supports and services. Turnover is common among these providers. Teaching staff often fill many roles within their schools, making it challenging to add new mental health programs to their existing priorities. The physical distance between the two island school sites also creates challenges for bringing staff together in one location and building comradery and collegiality.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

ARSD discussed the potential for continuing the mental health telehealth supports introduced during the pandemic into the 2021-2022 school year. Additionally, ARSD would like to continue offering opportunities focused on staff social emotional health. The district would also like to consider providing training for student identification in the context of the school communities' histories.

Ideally, ARSD would like to see a social worker at each school site to help connect families to resources, services, and supports.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Anchorage School District (ASD) is located in Southcentral Alaska. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's 96 schools serve approximately 41,900 students

ASD has focused on building shared language and consistency around mental health and social emotional learning for many years. More recently, the school board added language specific to these efforts into their goals and guardrails.

Highlights of ASD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Establishing common staff language and foundational trainings around the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and broad approaches to social emotional learning that are encompassing of related supports (i.e., trauma-informed)
- » Introduction of an equity-informed social emotional learning charter to serve as a streamlined guide for evaluating curriculum and programs
- » Ability to provide social emotional programs and supports through use of grant funds
- » Access to professionally trained staff with a commitment to community and the flexibility to reimagine and revise programs and services based on student needs
- » Strong partnerships with community-based organizations, with shared goals tied to their work in schools and collaborative efforts to deliver onsite services such as ASD's school-based health centers

COVID-19 IMPACTS

With virtual delivery, identification of intensive Tier 3 student needs was difficult, and some students and families had yet to be reconnected with ASD after losing contact. Most community partners provided telehealth delivery and continued to maintain the service as sites reopened. There were also positive impacts. ASD high schools partnered with community providers to raise awareness of the lingering mental health impacts of COVID-19 and the availability of local support options. The increased use of online systems and asynchronous training for professional development allowed the district to reach more staff and may potentially continue into next school year.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

ASD has strategies and supports at all three levels of the MTTS. Approaches and processes vary from school-to-school. Intensive Tier 3 supports incorporate a combination of ASD personnel, resources available through the district’s school-based health centers, and community partners.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Step • Connected and Respected • Safe & Civil Schools • CHAMPS • Capturing Kids’ Hearts • Lions Quest • American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher-led interventions • Progress monitoring of individual student need
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, support teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, student support team
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, student support team
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General, Title, and grant funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General, Title, and grant funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Mental Health First Aid • Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) suicide prevention • You’re Not Alone • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-based health centers • School psychologist, coordinator, and behavior strategist • Volunteers of America (VOA) • Providence • Southcentral Foundation • North Star Behavioral Health • Cook Inlet Tribal Council
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student support team, assessments, staff recommendations
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General and grant funds

BARRIERS

While ASD is a large district with many community partners, the district still faces access barriers for early intervention and intensive Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports. Funding is one piece of extending access. However, funding is limited by the availability of trained personnel and community-based services in the state. Additionally, demands on time make it difficult for mental health personnel to come together to network and align on practices.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

ASD is looking at alignment opportunities between social emotional learning and employment skills as an option for high school universal instruction. Additionally, the district set a goal to expand school-based health centers through existing community partnerships with Volunteers of America (VOA) and Providence. The new Equity Department is developing a data dashboard focusing on equity issues that will likely encompass aspects of social emotional learning and mental health supports.

Ideally, ASD would like to connect existing statewide funding with the needs of communities, as well as investing in adding a mental health specialist at every school or investing in current counseling staff. The idea of adding networking time with other districts to share and combine efforts, potentially by expanding Echo Trainings, was also discussed.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

ANNETTE ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Annette Island School District (AISD) is located in Southeast Alaska and based in Metlakatla on the west coast of Annette Island, 15 airmiles south of Ketchikan. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's three schools serve approximately 315 students.

AISD's use of a Response to Intervention (RTI) approach is reinforced through ongoing efforts to engage and build trust among families and students and through regular collaboration with mental health community partners.

Examples of AISD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Introduction of a family engagement specialist role to provide behavioral health and limited social worker supports and to build relationships with students and families
- » Collaboration between AISD and community partners on student mental health services, supported by a weekly partner meeting between school counselors and community providers
- » Progression toward closing trust gaps with families and expanding overall engagement, including a new partnership with Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) on the FIRE Grant, a family engagement grant
- » Culturally-responsive programming through annual student workshop opportunities, Zaretta Hammond in-service book series, and integration of cultural groups at student assemblies

COVID-19 IMPACTS

Early during COVID-19, counselor staffing gaps and condensed schedules made it difficult to reach students for universal and targeted Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports and services. A new "COVID assist" position was added to help fill these gaps using pandemic funds. More intensive Tier 3 services from outside contracts transitioned to online delivery due to travel restrictions. The district also partnered with their local tribal organization to fund internet for all families, which helped allow for some continuation of Tier 3 services while students were online.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

AISD uses RTI as the primary approach for mental health services and supports at all three tiers of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Local and regional community partners and contracted itinerant providers are involved in targeted and intensive Tier 2 and 3 supports and services.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response to Intervention • Student portfolios • Seminars for major grade transitions (i.e., 6th and 9th) • TEEN TRUTH • Second Step 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response to Intervention • Individual counseling • Parent meetings • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff, counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor, family engagement specialist, special education teacher, nurse • Annette Island Service Unit • Children’s Mental Health
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response to Intervention process
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID and general budget funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID and general budget funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counseling • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Itinerant and telehealth contracted outside providers • Children’s Mental Health • Annette Island Service Unit • Community Connections • Raven’s Way • iGrad
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response to Intervention process
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special education and general funds

BARRIERS

While AISD has access to Ketchikan as a regional hub, the district is in a rural community. Access to qualified providers is limited, and teacher retention can be a challenge. High turnover and lack of longevity of community partners can impact the consistency of services and supports. Additionally, it can hinder relationship building and lessen trust among families, particularly those who may have had negative experiences in school environments. Overall availability of time and the many roles held by staff is an additional challenge faced by AISD.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

AISD would like to formalize their mental health services and supports and select a districtwide tool that can be used consistently. Counselors and administrators are also considering options for social emotional learning curriculum that may potentially replace Second Step. Continuing to offer telehealth may be a way to maintain services like a school psychologist at a lower cost than hiring for a full-time role. The district will also continue their work with the AASB through the family engagement FIRE Grant and also plan on introducing trauma-engaged resources as part of contract work with The Sustainable Learning Projects' Dr. Trevor Sponis.

Ideally, AISD would like to see temporary community student housing and additional access to regional mental health resources for staff.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

BRISTOL BAY BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Bristol Bay Borough School District (BBBSD) is based in Naknek, which is located on the northeastern end of Bristol Bay, 297 airmiles southwest of Anchorage. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development \(DEED\) Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's two schools serve approximately 100 students, in addition to 20 students enrolled in the Bristol Bay Correspondence program.

By utilizing local and state partnerships, BBBSD is able to access the knowledge and expertise of trained personnel to provide student services and supports.

Highlights of BBBSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Leveraging community services through Camai Community Health Center to provide a social emotional learning coach that oversees universal and early intervention supports at Tier 1 and Tier 2, as well as contributing to staff trainings
- » Participating in a new mental health partnership with DEED's mental health education specialist to provide staff training on mental health and social emotional learning
- » Initial introduction of trauma-informed approaches through staff trainings

COVID-19 IMPACTS

With COVID-19 school closures, students who relied on the school environment as a safe space were heavily impacted and the lack of in-person contact made it difficult to identify student need. Overall stress among staff was intensified by the political climate around the pandemic, paired with isolation from their peers and family outside of Alaska. With increased reliance on alternate communication methods during COVID-19, BBBSD staff gained greater insights into their students' home lives and established more frequent outreach to families.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

The BBBSD social emotional learning coach has developed the approaches for the district’s universal and early intervention Tier 1 and 2 services and supports. Community partnerships are integral for more intensive services and supports offered in Tier 3.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District-designed supports Second Step 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual and group social emotional learning instruction Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher, social emotional learning coach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher, social emotional learning coach
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student data review meetings
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partner funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partner funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Camai Community Health Center Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher observation, family
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partner funds

BARRIERS

BBBSD could benefit from establishing a long-term approach that builds on their current supports. Lack of consistent funding for clinically trained roles and staff turnover are currently barriers to establishing that broader approach, as well as tools to formalize data collection and reporting. Stigma has also hindered acknowledgement of social emotional needs and topics within the broader school community. Historical trauma associated with western education systems may also continue to be a barrier for some stakeholders.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

BBBSD is positioned to continue growing existing partnerships. The district plans to offer more intensive Tier 3 supports next year through DEED's mental health education specialist and to expand the staff and student mental health knowledge base with their community-funded social emotional learning coach.

Ideally, the district would like to have access to a child psychologist and additional mental health professionals focused on early education.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

CHATHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Chatham School District (CSD) is located in Southeast Alaska with schools in Angoon, Gustavus, and Haines. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's three schools serve approximately 140 students.

CSD's emphasis on culturally-appropriate approaches has created opportunities to engage Elders and local communities in CSD's mental health and social emotional learning services and supports for students.

Highlights of CSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Investing significant time in creating culturally-appropriate programs, supports, and services, including partnering with Elders on activities such as district planning, student identification, and spiritually-based grief student support groups
- » Development of a community-created universal Tier 1 social emotional learning curriculum with supporting staff training, as outlined in CSD's strategic plan
- » Offering trauma-engaged trainings for staff, as well as training opportunities with SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC)
- » Establishing annual in-service time focused on goal setting and planning that addresses trauma, with quarterly progress check-ins

COVID-19 IMPACTS

Existing trauma within CSD schools was exacerbated during the pandemic. COVID-19 created a significant increase in the number of students in need of support during the 2020-2021 school year. Student mental health concerns, such as depression, appeared early in the fall of this school year, as opposed to typical school years, when more issues might manifest during the winter months. Travel in and out of the district was also limited, restricting access to supports and services via hubs in Juneau or Seattle.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

CSD has some strategies and supports at Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Administrators provide targeted student interventions for Tier 2, but options become more limited at this level and are unavailable for more intensive Tier 3 service and supports.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-developed curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual meetings
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrators
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School staff, parent
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outside of reports to the Office of Children’s Services (OCS), Tier 3 supports are not available

BARRIERS

Addressing trauma is a significant focus of CSD. The district’s staff sizes are small, making it challenging to meet the level of need. Beyond existing efforts, CSD does not have funding or personnel to provide additional targeted Tier 2 interventions, such as counseling. More intensive Tier 3 services and supports are currently nonexistent.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

Year two of the district's community-developed curriculum was found to be more effective than the first year, including increased identification of students.

Ideally, CSD would like to build a community-based team to support all levels of the MTSS. This team could help work with staff on universal and targeted Tier 1 and Tier 2 and provide local intensive Tier 3 that allow students to receive services and supports in their community. The idea of ongoing trauma training and an introduction to more intensive Tier 3 services and supports for staff was also discussed, as well as implementing virtual services for Tier 3 delivery.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

CHUGACH SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Chugach School District (CSD) has three schools across Prince William Sound in Chenega, Tatitlek, and Whittier. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development \(DEED\) Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's three schools serve approximately 90 students, with an additional 600 students enrolled in the FOCUS Statewide Homeschool program.

CSD's small school sizes and multiple sites across a large geography creates a unique situation for the structure and delivery of their mental health supports. Low-turnover and tenure among staff has allowed for organic integration and engagement with their local school communities.

Highlights of CSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Guiding commitments to whole child, social and emotional health, and social services that are built into the district's vision statement, goals, and planning process
- » Formation of a solid foundation for community engagement approaches established through a previous multi-year healthy pathways grant that helped shape goals and strategic plan elements
- » Support for direct service and professional development from DEED's Mental Health Education Specialist through participation in the Mental Health Support Grant
- » Integration of trauma-engaged approaches at CSD's Voyage School, a variable-term statewide residential school, with a focus on bringing student resiliency into all processes and procedures
- » Expanded access to intensive Tier 3 supports through a community partnership with Chugachmiut, an Alaska Native agency serving the seven Native tribes in the Chugach Region

COVID-19 IMPACTS

Delivery of mental health supports were disrupted by reduced travel and school closures caused by COVID-19. Counseling sessions were able to move to virtual delivery, but with limited student participation and likely less effectiveness than in person supports. Isolation has negatively impacted both the physical and social interactions among staff, with an opportunity to mitigate the impacts by resuming wellness programming and outreach. While

in person supports will continue to be the preference, CSD found some benefits for virtual models, particularly for establishing new ways to connect with their homeschool students.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

CSD schools have some variation in universal and targeted Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports and services. Any supports beyond teacher-led delivery are dependent on the availability of the itinerant school counselor. Similarly, intensive Tier 3 supports are dependent on community providers and telehealth.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habits of Mind • MindUP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small groups • Cognitive behavioral therapy • Choice theory
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, parent
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District foundation and Title funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District foundation and Title funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services and supports through outside providers • Telehealth through Chugachmiut community health centers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local behavioral health aides • Itinerant school psychologist • Llargarwik Recovery Camp
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, counselor
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community funded

BARRIERS

CSD schools are part of small communities that are geographically isolated from each other. Limited local services and the unpredictable nature of travel during winter months for itinerant providers can be a stressor for families as they try to access care. Some of the communities have limited housing, making it difficult to house itinerant providers during local site visits. Student clinical needs are likely not being met and existing universal and targeted Tier 1 and 2 need additional intensive Tier 3 reinforcement from professionals outside of the district. The stigma of accessing mental health supports and the potential to receive supports

from someone who is a family member can also be a barrier in the small villages and communities in the district.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

CSD is in the planning stages of incorporating Mental Health First Aid for the district. Ideally, CSD would like to increase resources and access by adding a full-time itinerant mental health counselor and reinforcing supports available at each school site with additional staff and teacher professional development.

Ideally, the district's one school counselor, who is primarily based at the residential school, would have additional personnel to provide more regular support at the other school sites. The idea of addressing student and community needs collectively through systems that incorporate family needs was also discussed. This system could potentially be supported by roles like full-time community social workers.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

CRAIG CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Craig City School District (CCSD) is located on Prince of Wales Island, 56 airmiles northwest of Ketchikan. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, enrollment in the district's three schools is approximately 215 students, with an additional 660 students in the PACE Homeschool program.

CCSD's small class sizes and strong relationships between staff and students create a close-knit school community that allows for early intervention. Local knowledge and connections among the counseling staff helps bring an awareness of student needs into the district's approaches.

Highlights of CCSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Updates to school board policies and the strategic plan focused on building skills and knowledge of trauma-informed practices
- » Offering professional development focused on building staff knowledge of trauma-engaged approaches
- » Student and staff exposure to mental health content through school counselor presentations on topics such as suicide prevention and awareness and anxiety
- » Distribution of an annual needs survey for middle and high school students to identify relevant prevention programming topics for the school year

COVID-19 IMPACTS

Return to in-person during the 2020-2021 school year helped restore some of the service gaps created during the prior school year's virtual learning, with the added option of using virtual services emerging as an ongoing benefit. COVID-19 restrictions on in person activities and family involvement within the school building impacted school climate and culture both for families and students. Travel restrictions also added to stress and anxiety among staff. CCSD saw an increase in student and family needs for intensive Tier 3 supports that led to a strain on availability of outside resources. COVID-19 has also prompted CCSD to examine the existing supports and consider ways to take a more systemic approach.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

CCSD has curriculum and counseling services in place to support universal Tier 1 services and supports, with opportunities to grow their targeted Tier 2 services and supports. Delivery of intensive Tier 3 services and supports are highly reliant on the availability of outside providers.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fourth R • The Great Body Shop • Second Step 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention programming • Individual counseling • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor • Community Connections
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General and Title funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General and Title funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counseling • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School psychologist (itinerant) • Community Connections
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor, parent, teacher
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant funds

BARRIERS

CCSD is a small community with existing local partnerships, but limited resources and trained personnel can create challenges for accessibility of supports. Delivery of intensive Tier 3 supports have been inconsistent, primarily due to turnover and increased student needs during COVID-19. The stigma of accessing mental health supports can also be a barrier in a small town, both from a privacy perspective as well as through negative feedback about local supports being shared via word-of-mouth and preventing others from seeking supports. Lack of access to indigenous and Alaska Native providers is also a barrier that can limit the availability of culturally-relevant supports.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

CCSD would like to continue partnering with local tribal associations and community providers to share information with teachers, parents, and students on the mental health and social emotional learning supports available in their community. Counselors would like to reinforce this outreach through in-service presentations with staff. CCSD currently has two school counselors.

Ideally, the district would like to add a full-time mental health clinician that could be available onsite daily to bridge the gap from school counseling to ongoing therapeutic interventions, as well as consistent funding for mental health supports.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

DENALI BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Denali Borough School District (DBSD) is located along the Parks Highway with schools in Anderson, Cantwell, and Healy. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's three schools serve approximately 175 students, in addition to 1,040 students enrolled in the Denali PEAK homeschool program.

DBSD's small size allows for students to build staff relationships. This relationship building is reinforced through the DBSD's use of an EL Education Crew structure that pairs groups of high school students with a teacher over multiple years.

Highlights of DBSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Establishing a school culture of connectedness and safety in risk taking through the EL Education Crew structure
- » Commitment to flexibility and sensitivity from staff in supporting students
- » Offering professional development opportunities focused on trauma-engaged principles and restorative justice practices
- » Providing a level of flexibility for the services and supports offered

COVID-19 IMPACTS

The COVID-19 cohort format and student schedules made it difficult to consistently connect with students and staff. Some students also likely dropped counseling services during the pandemic. Communication with the community counselor has also been difficult due to pandemic social distancing restrictions. There were also positive impacts. Prior to COVID-19, the district started using an EL Education Crew structure, which potentially helped maintain strong attendance during remote learning through the model's small group format. Reliance on alternate communication channels, including phone calls to student homes, helped increase connections with families.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

DBSD has some strategies and supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Community partnerships are integral for the more targeted and intensive supports offered in Tier 2 and Tier 3.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EL Education Crew structure Zones of Regulation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual counseling Restorative justice Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher, counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher, counselor, student assistance team Itinerant school psychologist Railbelt Mental Health itinerant providers
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School psychologist, anecdotal and behavior data
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title funds (potentially others) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title funds (potentially others)

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services and supports through outside providers Student and family check-ins Houselessness resources
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student assistance team Itinerant school psychologist Railbelt Mental Health itinerant providers
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counselor, school psychologist
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncertain

BARRIERS

DBSD is in a rural area. Local resources are limited. Currently, there are some approaches in place to provide universal Tier 1 supports, but DBSD lacks a specific districtwide social emotional learning program. Pressures on staff time can also make it difficult to provide mental health supports in the time available. Community partners are a significant benefit, but personnel is limited. When connections to community providers are made, students may need to go on wait lists prior to receiving services. The stigma of accessing counseling also prevents some students from using community resources.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

DBSD is reviewing options for a peer-modeling suicide prevention program, such as Sources of Strength. With the success for the EL Education Crew structure, the district is looking to implement a supporting social emotional curriculum.

Ideally, the pipeline of mental health personnel could be built by increasing interest among local community members and youth. If there were a possibility to increase personnel, DBSD would like to add a community mental health counselor and potentially consider ways of creating a school-based clinic that is structured to serve a district of their size.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

DILLINGHAM CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Dillingham City School District (DCSD) is located on the north end of Nushagak Bay in Southwestern Alaska. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's two school sites serve approximately 410 students.

DCSD recognizes the value of addressing behavioral and mental health as well as providing onsite student supports and services. The district is actively expanding existing supports to provide more options for students.

Highlights of DCSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Introduction of new mental health roles through CARES funding, including two directors of school climate and culture and a behavioral and mental health counselor
- » Effective approaches to personalized student interventions through intensive Tier 3 services and supports
- » Awareness among district stakeholders of available student services and supports, as well as staff autonomy to utilize their expertise in a collaborative way
- » Staffing for various roles and approaches focused on community engagement, such as work led by the district migrant coordinator and ongoing collaboration with the local tribal council and regional healthcare providers

COVID-19 IMPACTS

Early in the pandemic, DCSD set the expectation to continue providing student services and supports, which was reinforced through existing behavioral and mental health personnel in place. Shortened school days limited access to students for mental health programs and supports. The time constraints also made it challenging to balance academic instructional time with mental health and wellness. DCSD also had to delay the rollout of universal Tier 1 services and supports as risk levels changed. Anxiety and uncertainty of the future is likely a lingering impact of COVID-19 that will need to be addressed in students and staff.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

DCSD has strategies and supports at Tier 1 and Tier 3 of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Tier 3 is provided through a combination of district, local, and regional services and supports.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of social emotional learning approaches offered between sites • Annual mental health resource fair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students currently move from Tier 1 to Tier 3
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff 	
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID and Title funds 	

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behavioral and mental health counselor, migrant coordinator • Raven’s Way • Office of Children's Services (OCS) • Tribal Council • Itinerant special education service agency provider
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partner, family, teacher, district staff, self-identification
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title funds

BARRIERS

The level of need among students and staff in DCSD exceeds the existing personnel resources. District turnover has created frequent transitions between mental health approaches and limited the sustainability of programs. The lack of consistency contributed to a gap between universal Tier 1 and more intensive Tier 3 services and supports that DCSD is actively working to address. Part of this gap is tied to a lack of policies and procedures for identifying, assessing, and evaluating needs as students transition between levels of supports and services.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

DCSD is reviewing comprehensive curriculum options, with plans to select one that can inform planning, policies, and regulations for all tiers. The behavioral and mental health team is working to put a comprehensive counseling plan in place with student services and interventions at every level, delivered in part through a mobile gaming app that will allow improved data tracking of student needs. DCSD also has plans to offer their first annual Mental Health Awareness Month activities through a virtual resource fair, with student screening and an opportunity to introduce families to the district's mental health resources.

Ideally, the district would like to offer asynchronous and synchronous professional development resources on the mental health continuum, as well as trainings for families to help extend the impact of services and supports in the community.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD) is located in Interior Alaska. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's 35 schools serve approximately 10,430 students, in addition to 970 students enrolled in the Fairbanks BEST Homeschool program.

FNSBSD has committed the last several years to putting a strong social emotional framework in place and is now in the early stages of implementing and driving impacts. This work is strengthened by access to local partnerships and community resources.

Highlights of FNSBSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Access to supports through a dedicated student support services team staffed by roles such as counselors, social service managers, prevention intervention specialists, and behavior aids, among others
- » Offering an annual in-service day focused on culturally-relevant education, as well as significant tribal and community consultation in the district planning processes
- » Completing an annual contracted audit focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion
- » Sharing of resources and offering of additional student services and supports through community partnerships
- » Availability of transparent school climate data through the FNSBSD data dashboard

COVID-19 IMPACTS

FNSBSD pivoted during COVID-19 to provide professional development focused on a variety of social and emotional learning topics, including self-care. These efforts also included providing support to deliver social emotional learning, while focusing in on core academic concepts and skills. For example, FNSBSD provided frameworks for reducing curriculum and suggestions for how to incorporate more wellness checks, connection, and engagement with students. COVID-19 also created rollout delays of new social emotional learning tools and of application of updated trauma-informed discipline policies.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

FNSBSD has strategies and supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports that are aligned through Collaborative Academic Social Emotional Learning (CASEL). Community partnerships are integrated throughout all tiers.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Step • Sources of Strength • CHAMPS • Kagan strategies • Zones of Regulation • Character Strong • SMART kids • Fourth R • Safe Dates • PREPaRE crisis response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check & Connect • Second Step • Individual counseling • Small groups
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student support services team • Project AWARE social service managers • Community volunteers • Fairbanks Native Association
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student support services team
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General, grant, Title, and CARES funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counseling • De-escalation spaces • Contracted services through residential treatment program
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School psychologists • AK RISES mental health clinicians • Project AWARE social service managers • Alaska Behavioral Health • Family Centered Services of Alaska
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTSS process
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General, grants, and CARES funds

BARRIERS

In the FNSBSD region, local resources have limited clinically trained personnel. Time between student identification and delivery of supports can be extended, with limited

options for specialized providers that can offer intensive Tier 3 services. Filling the personnel gap with local community members can be challenging given the limited options for Alaska-based mental health training programs. Inconsistencies between FNSBSD funding resources can create challenges to budgeting for behavioral health supports and mental health professionals. Staff are becoming versed in FNSBSD’s social emotional learning and mental health supports, but limited training time and inconsistencies in program adoption can impact delivery.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

In building toward a comprehensive approach, the Mental Health Technology Transfer Center “National School Mental Health Best Practices: Implementation Guidance Modules for States, Districts, and Schools” provides a comprehensive model FNSBSD would like to emulate. Additionally, FNSBSD would like to strengthen data collection and evaluation of tiered interventions to help determine program effectiveness, starting with data from Project AWARE, AK RISES, and National Outcome Measures. An increased focus on social emotional learning alongside academic priorities will likely continue into next school year, a shift initially prompted by the pandemic. This will also be paired with a transition to apply a culturally-responsive lens to the social emotional learning framework that is inclusive of FNSBSD’s tribal and community stakeholders.

Ideally, the district would like to see funding that allows for additional community therapeutic resources, adoption of state and district social emotional learning standards, and ongoing training utilizing new virtual delivery models.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

GALENA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Galena City School District (GCSD) is located on the Yukon River, 270 airmiles west of Fairbanks in Interior Alaska. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's three schools serve approximately 150 students, with an additional 9,250 enrolled in the Interior Distance Education of Alaska program.

In addition to existing counseling goals and plans related to school mental health, GCSD has started early conversations on how the district's mental health and social emotional learning efforts could continue to progress.

Highlights of GCSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Access to school counselors, as well as community-based supports and services through a local psychologist and two behavioral health aides
- » Availability of telehealth therapy sessions offered onsite at schools and at local community clinics
- » Providing classroom lessons and small group work based on the Alaska School Counselor Association (AKSCA) and national models
- » Efforts underway to bring more trauma-engaged principles into the district

COVID-19 IMPACTS

Time constraints made it challenging to learn new online systems and adapt services for the COVID-19 virtual format. Lockdown and quarantining restrictions also reduced access to school counselors and community providers. The focus on academic needs also limited the delivery of social emotional services and supports.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

GCSD has strategies and supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Community partnerships are integral for the more targeted and intensive supports offered in Tier 3.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Step • The Fourth R • Relationship building skills • Small groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counseling • Small groups
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor, specialist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertain

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor • Tanana Chiefs Conference offered locally and through telehealth • Edgar Nollner Health Center offered locally and through telehealth
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff, counselor
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partner funds

BARRIERS

GCSD's broader school community has limited access to trained mental health professionals, creating barriers to meeting the level of student and staff needs. Balancing the delivery of mental health services and supports with academic priorities can also be a challenge. The stigma of accessing mental health professionals can also prevent some students from connecting with community-based providers.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

Additional staffing for the 2021-2022 school year will potentially help increase the universal delivery of social emotional learning curriculum.

Ideally, GCSD would like to create a comprehensive school counseling plan that aligns with American School Counselor Association Recognized ASCA Model Program and Alaska School Counselor Association. The idea of partnering with teachers to develop cross-curriculum social emotional learning content and proactively working with students in classrooms to meet social emotional needs and develop skills was also discussed. There is also interest in adding Kelso's Choice to GCSD's curriculum options.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

HAINES BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

The Haines Borough School District (HBSD) is located on Lynn Canal, 80 airmiles northwest of Juneau. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's two schools serve approximately 210 students, in addition to 70 students enrolled in the Haines Homeschool program.

HBSD's small size and relationships with families and community providers allow for a more custom approach to the district's mental health and social emotional learning services and supports.

Highlights of HBSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Awareness among students about the role of the school counselor as a consistent support option through regular interactions with the counseling staff member
- » Collaboration between HBSD and local mental health providers to support students and families with available resources
- » Hosting inter-agency meetings between local police, SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) Lynn Canal Counseling, and school staff
- » Support for staff mental health and wellness through the Sunshine Committee, a group that plans challenges and activities for overall morale and to encourage physical movement

COVID-19 IMPACTS

HBSD was in person for the 2020-2021 school year, which led to benefits for students and staff, including the ability to rely on in-person meetings and interactions to identify and serve students in need of supports. School leadership recognized the increased student need during COVID-19 and helped the district's counselor make time for more individual and classroom supports. With the community's December landside tragedy and ongoing impacts of COVID-19, HBSD anticipates an ongoing increased need for counseling and mental health supports. Prior to COVID-19, SEARHC providers were able to meet with students before or after school, an important support program for the district that allowed students to receive services without requiring transportation. The district will reintroduce onsite SEARHC services once it's safe to do so.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

HBSD has strategies and supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. The district tries to collaborate with community partners as often as possible at all tiers, with a specific focus on the delivery of more intensive Tier 3 supports.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Step • Kelso’s Choice • Counselor classroom instruction • Annual healthy choices event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-In/Check-Out • Individual counseling
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, counselor • Community organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, counselor
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, family, staff meetings
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertain (potentially grant and general funds) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertain (potentially grant and general funds)

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counseling • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School counselor, special education, teacher • SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) offered locally and through telehealth • Bartlett Regional Hospital telehealth counselors • Telehealth psychiatrist or psychologist
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff meetings, family
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertain (potentially grant and general funds)

BARRIERS

HBSD is in an isolated community. Regional barriers in Southeast Alaska make it difficult to access more intensive Tier 3 services supports, specifically for securing spaces in facilities for students experiencing suicidal ideation or actions. Locally, there are a limited number of counselors to meet community and student needs. Within the school, constraints on time can make it difficult to focus on mental health and wellness. In-service time is limited, and the structure of the school day can make it challenging for teachers to address self-care.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

HBSD has access to Coping Cat for more intensive Tier 3 support and hopes to eventually implement it with students.

Ideally, HBSD would like to add an itinerant social worker liaison or social service provider, a clinician trained in child psychology, and play therapy approaches.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

HOONAH CITY SCHOOLS

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Hoonah City Schools (HCS) is located on Chichagof Island, 40 airmiles west of Juneau. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's one school site serves approximately 130 students.

With specific staff committed to mental health, use of the Positive Behavioral Interventions Supports (PBIS) framework, and ongoing staff trainings, the district has worked to establish consistency and expectations for schoolwide supports and services.

Highlights of **HCS's approach to providing mental health supports** include:

- » Building consistency and awareness of districtwide universal Tier 1 programming among staff
- » Collaboration between the school social worker and counselor to deliver student services and supports, as well as staff trainings on trauma-informed practices, self-care tips, and mental health awareness exercises
- » Partnering with a family engagement committee that meets monthly and includes representation from school staff, Hoonah Indian Association (HIA), and the forest service, among others
- » Participating in professional learning communities (PLCs) run with the Association of Alaska School Boards

COVID-19 IMPACTS

The virtual COVID-19 format made it difficult to build a connection and therapeutic relationships with students in a crisis. Delivery of targeted Tier 2 services and supports were negatively impacted, particularly for small group sessions. Observations of stress, uncertainty, and loss were more present during the 2020-2021 school year. However, HCS observed a new appreciation among students for being in school and connecting with peers.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

HCS uses the PBIS framework. Through the PBIS framework, the district is offering strategies and supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. A combination of district resources and community partnerships are used for more intensive services and supports in Tier 3.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Step • Social emotional learning tie in for career and college prep 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-In/Check-Out • Second Step for small groups
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor, social worker
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, parent, or self-identification
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertain outside of grant funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertain outside of grant funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counseling • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor, social worker • Itinerant school psychologist • Juneau-based services offered regionally and through telehealth
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-identification, counselor, principle, teacher
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertain outside of grant funds

BARRIERS

HCS is in an island community. Locally, access to a professional counselor is inconsistent. Access to supports and services off the island require time and coordination with multiple agencies, as well as logistic considerations like transportation. Family acknowledgment of a student’s needs and stigmas tied to mental illness can also serve as barriers to accessing services and supports. Availability of staff time and competing priorities can also be a challenge.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

HCS is reviewing options for universal screeners. The PBIS team is also working on defining decision rules for identifying students. COVID-19 impacts to targeted Tier 2 student groups prompted the district to investigate a virtual social emotional learning platform, BASE Education, for online support options.

Ideally, HCS is interested in finding a more updated culturally-responsive Tier 2 intervention to replace Second Step. Ideas such as increasing community collaboration and infrastructure, establishing steady district personnel funding, and continuing staff mental health and wellness activities were also discussed.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

IDITAROD AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Iditarod Area School District (IASD) is located in Central Alaska with school sites in Anvik, Grayling, Eagle River, Shageluk, Holy Cross, McGrath, Takotna, and Nikolai. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development \(DEED\) Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district serves approximately 175 students across seven schools, in addition to 150 students enrolled in the Distance Learning Center.

As a geographically dispersed district with small schools, IASD staff work actively to bring awareness to available mental health resources and to tap into supports available through the state and regional resources.

Highlights of IASD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Staff commitment to putting kids first and providing as much support as possible within their roles
- » Proactive outreach to bring in new services and continue partnerships with regional providers, including support from DEED's Mental Health Education Specialist and collaboration with Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC)
- » Attention to cultural relevance through collaboration with the school sites and villages to develop a local plan in partnership with IASD, as well as cultural training for teachers
- » Providing channels for students to pursue their cultural identity and practices with supporting policies for awarding high school credit for culturally responsive activities

COVID-19 IMPACTS

IASD distributed surveys, made calls, and held Zoom talking circles to identify how to support families during COVID-19. Air service was suspended for six months during the 2020-2021 school year, limiting the ability to access health services. Quarantine periods created isolation and left community members at home and without support. Students and families were not able to gather, celebrate, and grieve. As villages and schools started to open, staff described a hesitancy among families to return to school due to fear of the pandemic.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

IASD has limited strategies and supports at each of the three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Where options are available for early intervention and intensive Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports, local village clinics and regional supports are integral to delivery.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AASB Social Emotional Learning curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local health clinics
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special education staff
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special education staff University of Alaska Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium Local Tribes Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) State troopers and juvenile courts Alaska Regional Health Center
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partner funds

BARRIERS

IASD schools are in small, isolated communities spread out across a large geography. Local resources for students and families are limited. The stigma of counseling and mental health needs paired with lack of trust between community members and outside providers can be made more challenging by provider turnover. Personnel is limited, including a lack of a school counselor or nurse and staffing gaps in community and village clinics. Interventions to address trauma, substance use, and safety issues are lacking. Allocating funding to mental health efforts can be made more challenging due to declining enrollment and subsequent teacher reductions.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

IASD plans to continue work with DEED’s Mental Health Education Specialist into next school year. Phlight Club was previously offered through a grant that has ended; it was a beneficial social emotional learning program for the district and work is underway to apply for a new grant to reinstate the program.

Ideally, the district would like to see consistently staffed roles such as an itinerant school counselor, nurse, and post-secondary career advisor. In lieu of local supports, improved internet and available devices would help with accessibility of telehealth and virtual resources.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

JUNEAU SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Juneau School District (JSD) is on the mainland in Southeast Alaska. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development \(DEED\) Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's 14 schools serve approximately 3,760 students, in addition to 390 students enrolled in the HomeBRIDGE program.

JSD's staff training opportunities, grant-funded roles, and community partnerships come together to provide a range of student services and supports.

Highlights of JSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Creating opportunities for regular exposure to counselors at every school through weekly lessons at the elementary and ongoing contact at the middle and high school level
- » Staffing from grant-funded mental health clinicians and behavioral health specialists who partner with school counselors for delivery of district-based services and supports
- » Holding effective professional development sessions, such as Collaborative Learning for Educational Achievement and Resilience, Youth Mental Health First Aid, restorative practice training, and culturally-responsive program training through community partners Sealaska Heritage Institute and Association of Alaska School Boards
- » Integrating racial equity and culturally-responsive learning into the district's strategic plan, with efforts such as implicit bias training and Tlingit language learning opportunities

COVID-19 IMPACTS

The COVID-19 virtual learning environment made it difficult for counselors to deliver content and to connect with students, particularly at the elementary level. Plans to roll out resources around topics like trauma-engaged principles were put on hold to refocus on virtual learning needs brought on by COVID-19. JSD also anticipates increased student mental health needs during the 2021-2022 school year as a result of the pandemic. There were positive impacts as well, including increased engagement with special education and pre-Kindergarten families. In some instances, remote learning environments also provided benefits for some students with social anxiety or who are easily overstimulated.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

JSD has strategies and supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. The district provides some intensive Tier 3 services and supports that are supplemented with community partnerships for long-term intensive needs.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Step • Zones of Regulation • Responsive Classroom • Restorative practices • Kelso’s Choice • #WinAtSocial • Healthy Life Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-In/Check-Out • Small groups • Individual counseling
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff, counselors, advisory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health clinicians • Behavioral health specialists
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, family
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant and general funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant and general funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual interventions and counseling • Family services and therapy sessions • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor • Mental health clinician • Behavioral health specialist • Contracted high school teen health center • Juneau Youth Services • Juneau Alliance for Mental Health, Inc. (JAMHI)
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family • Student of concern team process through school staff • Referral from outside agency
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General and grant funds

BARRIERS

The overall shortage of mental health professionals across the country and in Alaska impacts JSD's ability to meet student need. Sustainable funding, recruitment, and turnover all contribute to personnel barriers. This shortage can create capacity issues for delivering services and supports beyond the universal Tier 1 level, with a specific gap identified for more intensive Tier 3 services and supports. Time constraints can also make it challenging to establish consistent mental health professional development opportunities without further stretching staff capacity.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

Two additional mental health clinicians will start in the fall of the 2021-2022 school year as part of the DEED Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) grant. JSD will also expand use of the #WinAtSocial digital social emotional learning and social media curriculum to all secondary students after initial positive reception to a spring 2021 pilot. JSD will also provide all certified staff with an all day training on social emotional learning, trauma-engaged, and equity prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year, followed by support sessions and related social emotional learning/restorative practices training through the remainder of the year.

Ideally, the district would like to create a cohesive mental health plan, offer additional professional development time, and support social emotional competency development among staff and students.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD) encompasses a region of 25,600 square miles. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, KPBSD serves approximately 6,300 students across 41 schools, in addition to 1,780 students enrolled in the Connections homeschool program

KPBSD has integrated numerous evidence-based social emotional efforts. Currently, the district is moving toward explicit expectations for social emotional learning as a priority, prompted in many ways by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Highlights of KPBSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Offering a range of content and formats for social emotional staff professional development, including trauma-informed training for all school staff, Youth Mental Health First Aid training, sessions with Homer-based Dr. Linda Chamberlain, and staff mental health and wellness workshops hosted by school psychologists and counselors
- » Support for student outreach and relationship building through flexibility and eagerness among staff, as well as a level of teacher choice to select their specific classroom approaches
- » Establishing staff roles for providing targeted Tier 3 wraparound supports and services typically focused on student needs around trauma, including a homeless liaison, student success liaison, and recidivism specialist
- » Observed benefits of Sources of Strength program when implemented consistently
- » Expansion of district connections with outside community organizations to focus on upstream prevention

COVID-19 IMPACTS

While COVID-19 virtual delivery created an engagement barrier for students without internet or consistent phone access, family and student outreach became more flexible by using online meeting spaces and tools. Many of KPBSD's existing programs provided support for virtual implementation formats. KPBSD also put funding toward reaching families in new ways, such as public service announcements and online engagement activities. Pandemic impacts for staff prompted KPBSD to support teachers in prioritizing self-care through professional development opportunities focused on managing personal wellbeing. Looking

to the 2021-2022 school year, lasting pandemic impacts will create more focus on universal Tier 1 social emotional learning for all students and will likely lead to an increase in early intervention Tier 2 needs.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

KPBSD has services and supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Specialized district positions to support high-risk populations and community partnerships are integral for the more targeted and intensive supports offered in Tier 2 and Tier 3.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Great Body Shop MindUP Sources of Strength Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Schools Youth Mental Health First Aid Fourth R 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check-In/Check-Out Social skills groups Individual counseling Modified Alternative to Out of School Suspension (ATOSS) program Restorative practices
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Homer Recreation Room LeeShore Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School staff LeeShore Center Kenaitze Tribe
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher, intervention team
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General, Title, and grant funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General, Title, and grant funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services and supports through outside providers Substance use support Summer support Student shadows
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School staff and liaisons Kenaitze Tribe Peninsula Community Health Services of Alaska (PCHS) SeaView Community Services
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PowerSchool, intervention team, Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title, grant, and community partner funds

BARRIERS

KPBSD is part of a large community. While their size and location allow for local resource options, district and community supports are not always immediately accessible due to capacity and expertise barriers like provider wait lists and high student-to-counselor ratios. Addressing the availability of district supports can be challenging due to budgetary constraints for balancing the cost of mental health personnel with academic needs. Staff training on trauma-informed approaches is helping to address some of the day-to-day needs, but work is still underway to establish more alignment between systems and policies that support classroom instruction.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

Starting during the 2020-2021 school year, goals for social emotional wellness will likely be integrated into updates to the district's strategic plan. Explicit recognition of social emotional learning and its importance to successful student learning will start to be visible in curriculum documents and lesson plans. KPBSD is also working on numerous competitive grants to support work around suicide prevention and Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning competencies, as well as reviewing ways to incorporate social emotional competencies in content curriculum. The district has also hired six elementary counselors for the 2021-2022 school year.

Ideally, KPBSD would like to see sustainable funding sources for social emotional programs that allow the district to develop internal trainers who can train other staff.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District (KGBSD) is located in the southern region of Alaska. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development \(DEED\) Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's nine schools serve approximately 2,160 students.

KGBSD and community partners actively collaborate to address student needs, in addition to work within the district to provide ongoing staff trainings on mental health services and supports.

Highlights of KGBSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Offering ongoing trauma-engaged professional development, including a fall conference and weekly sessions reviewing the "Transforming Schools: A Framework for Trauma Engaged Practice in Alaska" from DEED and the Association of Alaska School Boards
- » Reinforcing trauma-engaged practices with updates to the district's discipline, bullying, and harassment policies
- » Providing training districtwide on Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) for social emotional learning focused on how to create and embed consistent expectations
- » Collaboration between school nurses, health aides, counselors, psychologists, and community partners to identify and address mental health needs
- » Creation of a cultural coordinator role to connect with staff on developing culturally-relevant school environments, as well as recognizing and celebrating local cultures

COVID-19 IMPACTS

KGBSD schools were primarily in person full time for the 2020-2021 school year, limiting disruption of supports. Some students stopped accessing services when outside agencies switched from in-person to telehealth. Accounting for the impacts of COVID-19 through student screenings was also a challenge. KGBSD used CARES Act funding to hire additional paraprofessionals to staff student cohorts and to provide support for group interventions, which led to a reduction in behavior issues for elementary students.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

KGBSD is in the process of updating the district’s interventions and approaches under the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and currently have existing supports in place at each of the MTSS Tiers. Community partnerships are integral for the more intensive supports offered in Tier 3.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too Good for Drugs • Second Step • Kelso’s Choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counseling • Small groups
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor, paraprofessional
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student attendance, grade, and behavior data
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General and Title funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General and Title funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counseling • Behavioral intervention plan • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Itinerant and full time school psychologists • Mental health counselor • Community Connections • Ketchikan Wellness Coalition (KWC) • PeaceHealth • Tribal Councils • Women in Safe Homes (WISH)
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTSS or PBIS team
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General and special education funds

BARRIERS

KGBSD is an island district with less local amenities than a larger city. Hiring and long-term retention of specialized mental health roles is a challenge, with recent turnover in some of the district’s student support positions. Approaches for supports could benefit from districtwide alignment, consistent training, and delivery. Existing data sources tend to rely on academic and discipline indicators and could expand to include information on student behavior and social emotional learning.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

Currently, KGBSD is pursuing best practices to bring their academic and social emotional learning approaches together under the MTSS by supporting MTSS-certified teachers, data systems, and funding. After seeing improvements in student behavior under the COVID-19 cohort model, KGBSD has proposed hiring four new elementary teachers to maintain low class sizes.

Ideally, an additional mental health clinician or social worker would help reduce the high student-to-counselor ratio.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

KODIAK ISLAND BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Kodiak Island Borough School District (KIBSD) is located on the northwest tip of Kodiak Island in the Gulf of Alaska. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's 11 schools serve approximately 2,070 students, in addition to 230 students enrolled in the AKTEACH homeschool program.

Over the last several years, KIBSD has grown their mental health team significantly to try to meet rapid increase in student needs. This period of team growth, followed by observations of the inequities exposed during COVID-19, is prompting a period of positive transitions as the district begins to align and organize district and community-based supports.

Highlights of KIBSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Access to a coordinated team of district counselors and contracted mental health clinicians to provide mental health supports to all school sites, primarily focused on universal and early intervention Tier 1 and 2 supports and services
- » Offering contracted services through Providence to provide more intensive Tier 3 mental health supports through a school-based clinic with two full-time clinicians
- » Recent efforts to engage a cross-functional group of community mental health providers to review school community needs and to begin to identify a path forward
- » Addressing staff wellness and mental health through programs and benefits such as counseling, a confidential help line, and self-care activities

COVID-19 IMPACTS

Trauma was prevalent in KIBSD prior to COVID-19 and trauma exposure likely increased overall as a result of the pandemic. The pandemic restrictions prompted increased access to services and supports through telehealth, but other variables such as bandwidth and family comfort with operating the virtual platforms created additional barriers to receiving the virtual supports. Many students did not show up for their appointments. KIBSD wanted to maintain supports over the summer and is using CARES Act funding to offer mental health counseling during the break before the 2021-2022 school year. KIBSD is also working to identify and address the gaps that COVID-19 highlighted around mental health and inequities.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

KIBSD has implemented supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Contracted school-based providers are in place for intensive Tier 3 services.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conscious Discipline Second Step Safe & Civil Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check-In/Check-Out Zones of Regulation Incredible Flexible You Skillstreaming Rethink Social skills groups
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School staff, counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher, school staff, counselor
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher, family
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General and Title funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General and Title funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports through school-based clinic Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contracted Providence school-based clinic Outside providers (as needed)
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family, teacher, counselor
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General and special education funds

BARRIERS

KIBSD is in a rural community. Availability of local services is limited. Even with recent team growth, ratios of students to mental health staff make it challenging to fulfill all levels of need especially with recent increases in students experiencing suicidal ideation and accessing more intensive supports. Local resources and the number of clinically trained personnel are outpaced by the level of need, particularly for family resources. Recruitment and retention for trained personnel has severely limited availability of local family resources. The local Office of Children’s Services office has been without consistent case management for several years.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

KIBSD has set goals to establish mental health processes, expertise, and alignment within their mental health team and the broader staff, including professional development around suicide response interventions, health and mental health curriculum alignment, team protocols, and additional family supports. The district is also adding a social worker position to their 2021-2022 budget and are developing partnerships with the local native corporation to continue expanding community-based supports.

Ideally, these efforts would support funding for a variety of needs including a universal data collection and reporting system tied to counseling and mental health; social emotional learning curriculum onsite at each school; and community substance abuse treatment.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

KUSPUK SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Located in Western Alaska, the KuspuK School District (KSD) encompasses 12,000 square miles with schools in Aniak, Chuathbaluk, Kalskag, Stony River, Sleetmute, Cooked Creek, and Lower Kalskag. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's nine schools serve approximately 390 students.

KSD is leveraging virtual providers and staff professional development to bring mental health services and supports to students, with work underway to continue expanding the current student health intervention program.

Highlights of **KSD's approach to providing mental health supports** include:

- » Facilitating consistent direct instruction for social emotional learning through a virtual school social worker and supported by a districtwide program, shared vocabulary, and persistent messages
- » Developing profiles that incorporate both academic and social emotional data for each student
- » Engaging communities through efforts spanning from planning to implementation, including ongoing district and school site communications with the six Tribes in the region
- » Offering extensive professional development in-service opportunities, including a student and staff wellbeing series and monthly trainings with the school social worker or school psychologist focused on mental health topics

COVID-19 IMPACTS

Remote and distanced delivery during COVID-19 limited student experiences due to lack of internet and, in some instances, phone service in students' homes, as well as loss of physical connectivity during village closures. Hiring and retention has been challenging, particularly during the pandemic, given the district's remote location and number of employees who come from other areas. Commercial flight service stopped, greatly increasing the cost of travel. There were also positive impacts, including increased access to telehealth services for students and staff. With schools reopening, representatives are hopeful to continue increasing student services and implementing pre-COVID-19 plans and goals.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

KSD has strategies and supports at Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Providing more wraparound, intensive Tier 3 services and supports to fill the current gap at this level is a key focus of the district.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Step • Social emotional lessons • District-created curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small groups • Individual counseling • Check In/Check Out
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher • DotCom Therapy telehealth • Virtual social worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual social worker
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, administrator, family
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant and Title funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant and Title funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tier 3 services and supports are not currently available

BARRIERS

KSD schools are in remote communities. Mental health services and supports across the district and region are inconsistent and funding is insufficient to meet the current level of student need, particularly for issues like suicide and depression. The physical distance between school sites and limited internet and phone service outside of the school buildings is also a challenge. Beyond services and supports through the itinerant behavior and mental health specialist at the sub-regional clinic, accessing the closest providers often requires a flight to Bethel or Anchorage. When providers can be onsite, response time is sometimes slowed due to travel issues. Additionally, awareness of mental health issues is increasing in the KSD region, but some stigma still exists around recognizing and addressing needs.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

KSD is focused on creating a new approach to mental health services and is eager to address the district's existing needs through outside support and partnerships. The district is in the process of writing a grant for new, complete wraparound cradle to career services focused on providing more comprehensive supports for all students. The program concepts include a restorative education center and alternate education pathway, student success coaches at every school, community partnerships, and data-based referrals and monitoring for student transitions between the MTSS Tiers, among other programs and services.

Ideally, KSD would like to see investment in internet infrastructure for each of the villages in the region.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

LOWER KUSKOKWIM SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD) covers approximately 22,000 square miles on the lower part of the Kuskokwim River Delta, located 400 airmiles west of Anchorage. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's 29 schools serve approximately 4,090 students.

LKSD has a long-standing commitment to providing student supports and access to services. The school social worker department follows a long-standing board directive to provide suicide prevention and intervention training for staff and students, which was later expanded to include specific mental health and suicide interventions.

Highlights of LKSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Staffing for multiple roles focused specifically on mental health services and supports with an emphasis on community relationship building and culturally-relevant services, including positions such as itinerant school counselors and social workers and local community advocates
- » Engaging with the school community through a Central Native Education Parent Advisory Committee with representatives from all the Tribes within the district, as well as Advisory School Boards (ASBs) at each school site
- » Ongoing outreach to staff through the district's employee assistance program (EAP) provider to build awareness of the program's availability and supports

COVID-19 IMPACTS

COVID-19 travel restrictions greatly impacted itinerant visits from counselors and social workers to school sites. Intensive Tier 3 services were most impacted; telehealth services through village health clinics stopped and lack of in-home internet created a reliance on phone-based services. To address these challenges, LKSD rolled out an intranet program with hardware installed in students' homes that will continue to be available. School social workers also found creative ways to administer universal Tier 1 strategies, including use of Keynote virtual social emotional learning lessons and book readings through Zoom. These approaches helped reach more students and are opening new options to supplement onsite support with virtual interactions to help with intense travel schedules and burnout among itinerant staff. Social workers are also administering a parent survey about mental health

needs for students, a result of the increased conversations happening during COVID-19 about supporting mental health.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

LKSD has strategies and supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Community partnerships play an active role for the more intensive supports offered in Tier 3.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Step • Prentice Hall Health • Teen Health • Personal life skills class • Social worker presentations • Signs of Suicide • More Than Sad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check & Connect • Sources of Strength • Individual counseling • Social skills groups
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, counselor, social worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor, social worker, community advocate
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff, parent, self-identification, site administrator
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District and school site funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School improvement and Indian Education funds

INDICATED SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counseling • Case management • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Itinerant school social worker and school community advocate • Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation Behavioral Health offered through telehealth • Bethel Family Clinic • Village Behavioral Health Aides • Elders
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social worker
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District and community partner funds

BARRIERS

LKSD sites are geographically dispersed. The ability to physically access sites can be a challenge due to weather, or more recently, COVID-19. Staff turnover and the subsequent need to rebuild connection and relationships with families and students is also a challenge. From a regional perspective, LKSD identified a lack of culturally-relevant intensive treatment facilities close to students' homes for issues like adolescent substance abuse.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

For the 2021-2022 school year, LKSD plans to continue roll outs that were stopped or slowed by COVID-19, including introducing Sources of Strength and consultant-led work around restorative practices. LKSD is also continuing to build community partnerships, specifically through encouraging the district's Advisory School Boards (ASBs) to develop their own crisis response plans with key community resources.

Ideally, LKSD would like to lower turnover by investing in existing staff resources like the EAP and adding more local, trained professionals through promotion of social work and counseling student career trackers and training options like UAF's Rural Human Services (RHS) program. Additionally, ideas such as hiring a full-time social worker and counselor at each school site, as well as building partnerships with local providers, were also discussed.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

LOWER YUKON SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

The Lower Yukon School District (LYSD) is located on the lower portion of the Yukon River and encompasses 22,000 square miles. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's 11 schools serve approximately 2,100 students.

LYSD's schools are centrally located in rural Alaska Villages and the district aims to regularly engage their local communities on school planning and efforts. The district's goals and plans related to mental health resources are supported by grant partnerships with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and the Association of Alaska School Boards.

Highlights of LYSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Focusing on building community supported, culturally appropriate programs through activities such as tribal leader participation in district strategic planning and work with the district's Yup'ik Language and Culture Committee
- » Creating a range of new mental health services and approaches through three key grants that are building out community-based mental health systems, violence prevention through school climate building, and peer support training for suicide prevention and mental health supports, among others
- » Connecting students to targeted Tier 2 supports through regional and statewide programs
- » Leveraging the expertise of Community Human Service Providers trained through the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Rural Human Service (RHS) program to serve as liaisons between communities and schools

COVID-19 IMPACTS

During the pandemic, it was difficult to reach students at home and identify needs with the lack of face-to-face interactions. While delivery of LYSD's universal tier 1 curriculum was disrupted, students were able to continue peer support from home through the Natural Helpers program. For the 2021-2022 school year, social emotional learning and mental health supports and services will likely be more active as a result of the pandemic. These activities will likely include identifying and connecting students with services and supports for Tier 3 needs, and staff professional development and in-service.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

LYSD has strategies and supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Community and regional partnerships are integral for the more targeted and intensive supports offered in Tier 2 and Tier 3.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connected and Respected • Activators • Integration of local cultural teachings and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suicide Alertness for Everyone (safeTALK) • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RHS-certified community human service providers • Counselor • Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC) • Alaska Crossings
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff, special education screening
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services and supports through outside providers • UAF Suicide Prevention Program • Safety and youth services trainings • Mental health training with Elders
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RHS-certified community human service providers • Elders • Special-education itinerants • Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC) offered locally and through telehealth • Alaska State Troopers • Office of Children’s Services (OCS) • Indian Child Welfare Association (ICWA)
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special education, YKHC screenings
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partner funds

BARRIERS

LYSD schools are in isolated, remote areas that come with delivery constraints given the unpredictable nature of weather. While community partnerships are integral to LYSD's approach, the availability of local supports are limited. School staff fill many roles for their students to make up for the gap in local supports and sometimes their self-care suffers as a byproduct.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

LYSD is completing a set of district Yup'ik Social Emotional Learning (SEL) standards, a culturally-relevant document created by Yup'ik mentors and teachers.

Ideally, LYSD would like to establish a clear referral process and staffing for behavioral and mental health counselors at each school would be beneficial, as well as adding a school-based Elders program and after-school mental health activities for students and families. The idea of increasing the number of personnel and interventions coming from local community members and organizations was also discussed.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (MSBSD) covers approximately 25,000 square miles in the area 35 miles north of Anchorage often referred to as the “Valley.” Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district’s 47 schools serve approximately 18,350 students.

As part of the district’s approach to mental health services and supports, MSBSD has set social emotional learning standards and objectives. These standards and objectives have been supported by mental health partnerships.

Highlights of MSBSD’s approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Providing well-established behavior support programs at each school and use of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)
- » Offering ongoing professional development opportunities on topics such as social emotional learning, trauma-informed schools, and Adverse Childhood Experiences training
- » Integrating choice and flexibility for staff on the social emotional learning program offered at each school site
- » Funding and personnel support from community agencies, such as trusted embedded clinicians through the Mat-Su Health Foundation initiative for behavioral health in schools and small group support on vaping provided by American Lung Association

COVID-19 IMPACTS

During COVID-19, changing schedules and social distancing impacted some program delivery (i.e. Check-In/Check-Out), as well as virtual counseling services for students who may not have a quiet space at home. However, the ability to reach students and families via online platforms, as opposed to phone or email, was a benefit. Online student access was supported by community partner MTA, which helped students connect to internet access and online learning.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

MSBSD has strategies and supports at all three levels of the MTSS. Community partnerships are integrated throughout all tiers.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Action • Second Step • Lions Quest pilot • Social Express pilot • Ripple Effects pilot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-In/Check-Out • Self-monitoring • Home notes • Behavior contracting • Hot passes • Small groups
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency clinicians, counselors, school psychologists
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervention team
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District, school site, and grant funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District, school site, and grant funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent involvement • Functional behavioral assessments • Behavior plans • 504 accommodation plans • Referral to special education • Individual and small group support • Supports from outside agencies
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff and agency support as determined by the 504 Team and Individualized Educational Plan. • School nurse, psychologist, applied behavior analyst coordinator, roving behavioral technicians • Behavioral health associates or counselors from outside agencies
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervention team, parent, staff
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District and school funds

BARRIERS

MSBSD has established choice and flexibility within the district's MTSS approach, which can serve as both a strength and a challenge given the potential for complexity of choice between multiple curriculums and programs. Availability of professional development time outside of mandatory trainings, in addition to overall demands on staff, can also be a challenge. Time constraints and competing priorities can also impact the availability of secondary counselors, and counselor roles are currently limited at the elementary level.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

MSBSD is reviewing options for online social emotional programs, including the district's current Ripple Effect pilot, to continue reaching students remotely at home. Creation of new secondary credit is underway for the Credit, Community, Career, and College Readiness course (The 4C's). The 4C's will incorporate evidence-based methods to support students to get back on track, while also fostering trusting relationships and providing an opportunity for a well-rounded education. For fiscal year 2022, three districtwide mental and behavioral health coordinators were hired to support students and staff.

Ideally, MSBSD would like to simplify universal Tier 1 curriculum and program recommendations with realistic time expectations for classroom implementation. Additional time towards professional development, specifically focused on social emotional learning and connection building with community agencies could also be a benefit. Elementary school counselors, onsite community agency counseling support, and additional time for secondary counselor classroom support were discussed as personnel concepts for building an ideal system, as well as smaller class sizes and larger classrooms to allow for increased connection and space for student breaks and creativity.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

MT. EDGECUMBE HIGH SCHOOL

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS) is a public boarding school in Sitka operated by the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the school serves approximately 375 students.

MEHS's residential setting and access to community supports in Sitka allows for consistent access to coordinated, centrally located supports that create a natural wraparound model for students. Clinical staff are critical in facilitating delivery of school-based supports, as well as coordinating outside referrals.

Highlights of MEHS's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Screenings for mental health, suicide, and substance use that allow for early identification of student need and follow up to connect students to supports and prevention efforts
- » Delivery of coordinated student supports through multiple roles focused on student mental health, including clinicians, wellness counselors, and a student support coordinator
- » Nearby access to mental health supports outside of the school day in the student's living environment
- » Offering trainings for addressing staff and student mental health, including annual training for teaching staff, Mental Health First Aid for dorm staff, and staff-led mindfulness trainings
- » Access to student supports during the summer through telehealth sessions delivered by the school clinician

COVID-19 IMPACTS

COVID-19 restricted MEHS's ability to implement prevention and school climate building efforts. The delivery of supports outside of MEHS experienced increased demand and transitioned to telehealth, making it difficult for the district to get students connected with regular clinical support. Campus activities were also reduced, which may be connected to an increase in marijuana use as students spent more time isolated in dorms and unable to participate in prevention programming.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

MEHS is unique in its approach to supports given the school’s residential setting, with a heavy focus on student screenings as a universal Tier 1 approach. School clinicians and wellness counselors oversee the majority of supports for Tier 1 and 2, while also coordinating Tier 3 connections to community providers.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe Dates (modified) • Fourth R • Health curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counseling • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness counselor, health teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinician • SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) offered locally
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screenings, staff and clinician meetings
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General, Title, and grant funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General, Title, and grant funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical mental health supports • Small groups • Crisis supports • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sitka Counseling offered locally • SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) offered locally • Youth Advocates of Sitka offered locally • Behavioral Residential Program offered locally • North Star Behavioral Health System offered in Anchorage
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinician, student support coordinator
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General, Title, and grant funds as well as Medicaid billing (done through community partners)

BARRIERS

Overall, the residential setting at MEHS allows for consistent access to supports. In instances where students need to leave school to receive supports during the day, it can be a struggle for them to miss out on academic class time. With the level of access, there are some instances where connections to outside early intervention Tier 2 supports could potentially come after additional classroom-based approaches are further utilized.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

MEHS is currently updating their substance use programming, with a focus on prevention and early intervention approaches. The school is also exploring culturally based prevention strategies and culture activities as protective factors.

Ideally, MEHS would like to enhance existing supports by adopting a culture of prevention and potentially hiring an additional clinician to provide more evening supports.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

NENANA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Nenana City School District (NCSD) is 55 miles southwest of Fairbanks on the Parks Highway. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's one school serves approximately 120 students, in addition to 1,720 students enrolled in the CyberLynx correspondence program.

Given the distance to Fairbanks, NCSD is eager to bring more local student supports into their community. The district reinforced this commitment by including social emotional efforts in their latest strategic plan and by leveraging high levels of staff engagement with social emotional approaches to proactively identify and connect students with services and supports.

Highlights of NCSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Leadership by the Response to Intervention (RTI) committee to determine how trauma-engaged principles and social emotional needs are impacting student academic outcomes
- » Offering professional development focused on social emotional topics and Professional Assault Crisis Training (Pro-ACT) de-escalation training
- » Providing targeted and intensive Tier 2 and Tier 3 services and supports through a partnership with Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC)
- » Consistent referral tracking to capture the number of students accessing outside services and supports and subsequent use of the data to inform planning efforts
- » Observed positive changes in behavioral instances through social emotional curriculum and family engagement, including Second Step and Phlight Camp

COVID-19 IMPACTS

The physical barriers introduced by COVID-19, such as limited facial reactions with masking and social distancing, made screening difficult. It was also challenging to determine if student needs were directly related to COVID-19 or tied to other underlying issues. NCSD had to pause use of Second Step during online learning, but the district anticipates reintroducing it for the 2021-2022 school year. COVID-19 did open up access for more targeted and intensive Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports through increased use of telehealth and online services.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

NCS D has curriculum in place for universal Tier 1 supports. Connecting students to TCC is critical for delivery of targeted and intensive Tier 2 and Tier 3 services and supports.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Step 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher • Tanana Chiefs Conference offered in Fairbanks
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General and community partner funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services and supports through outside providers • Connection back to family for residential students
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tanana Chiefs Conference offered in Fairbanks • North Star Behavioral Health
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partner funds

BARRIERS

NCS D is a rural district and local resources are limited. The travel required to access services in Fairbanks takes students away from time in class. Several years ago, NCS D was able to hire a counselor through grant funds, but the role was not refilled after funding ending. The limited regional and state intensive Tier 3 options is a significant challenge, particularly in instances where NCS D must connect a boarding school student back to families for safety issues. Connecting students to facilities like North Star Behavioral Health is dependent on parent approval and facility capacity, both of which can sometimes be limited.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

NCSD is researching contracted online mental health services through PresenceLearning, which could help overcome some of the funding barriers associated with hiring a full-time mental health staff member.

Ideally, NCSD would like to have funding to provide more student supports locally and reduce the need make connections to outside providers. The idea of dedicated social emotional funding for local crisis counseling through a new staff position or at the local clinic was also discussed. For the more intensive needs, NCSD would like to see more state services for youth.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

NOME PUBLIC SCHOOLS

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Nome Public Schools (NPS) is located in Northwest Alaska on the coast of the Bering Sea. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the districts three schools serve approximately 630 students, in addition to 60 students in the Extensions Correspondence Program.

The community connections and relationships built by NPS's school counselors have helped build continuity for the district's approaches to mental health and social emotional learning.

Highlights of NPS's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Access to experienced school counselors who provide students with a connection to a caring adult through services and supports such as small group and individual counseling
- » Recent adoption of districtwide social emotional learning standards
- » Promotion of staff mental health and wellness through a variety of activities and events offered during weekly early-release professional development days
- » Annual review of the School Climate and Connectedness survey data to set goals, with subsequent evaluations of progress

COVID-19 IMPACTS

NPS schools were open for most of the 2020-2021 school year, allowing the district to continue offering the majority of services. However, transitions to homeschooling and online learning disconnected some students from available services. When NPS schools did shut down for COVID-19, it was a challenge for staff to identify ways to reach students potentially experiencing trauma outside of the school environment. NPS also anticipates that the increased need for mental health supports that emerged during the 2020-2021 school year will continue into 2021-2022, particularly for students transitioning back to in-person school. There were also positive impacts, including the response from high school students to peer supports and an overall awareness of mental health needs within themselves and other students.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

NPS has strategies and supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Local behavioral health services are the primary option for more intensive Tier 3 supports.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Step • Connected and Respected • Mental Health First Aid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small groups • Individual counseling
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, parent, administrator
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General, Title, grant funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General, Title, grant funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norton Sound Health Corporation Behavioral Health Services offered locally and through itinerant staff
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, administrator, counselor, parent
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partner funds

BARRIERS

Local resources for NPS are limited. Funding and staffing for qualified mental and behavioral health personnel is a challenge. NPS has established services and supports for universal and targeted Tier 1 and Tier 2, but is primarily dependent on outside providers for more intensive Tier 3 needs. Connecting students to local behavioral health services has also been challenging, potentially due to clinic capacity issues. When students do access outside services, it can be difficult for families to transport students to local appointments. Regional services also require time away from the school community, which can impact student connections. For the services and supports offered through NPS, the overall availability of staff time to meet academic and social emotional learning priorities can also be a challenge.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

NPS has discussed creating a physical space within the school building to offer onsite services from Behavioral Health Services personnel. Prompted by COVID-19, the district may eventually explore online counseling services to help address provider shortages and access challenges.

Ideally, NPS would like to put sustainable funding toward hiring mental health personnel, such as social workers or a school psychologist, to provide services beyond itinerant special education support. The idea of a larger behavioral health program with added capacity for therapy, counseling, crisis support, and local inpatient services was also discussed.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

PETERSBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Petersburg School District (PSD) is located on Mitkof Island in Southeast Alaska. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's three schools serve approximately 430 students.

PSD's limited turnover, highly involved staff, and strong relationships with community agencies provide students with regular access to caring adults at school.

Highlights of PSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Planning among school counselors and administrators for annual mental health efforts, with use of Suicide Awareness, Prevention, and Postvention (SAPP) grant funds to support yearly goals
- » Providing effective social emotional learning curriculum, including observed impacts from Kelso's Choice and Zones of Regulation for elementary students and early identification of high school student needs through Signs of Suicide
- » Offering in-service sessions on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma through Ricky Robertson trainings and conferences
- » Leveraging strong relationships with community agencies and programs, including partnerships with Sealaska, Girls on the Run, Petersburg Mental Health (now Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium), and Working Against Violence for Everyone

COVID-19 IMPACTS

Virtual delivery during COVID-19 negatively impacted universal Tier 1 lessons and made it difficult to reach some students for intensive Tier 3 services and supports. Once students were onsite, limited physical space continued to impact Tier 3 delivery and pod structures made it difficult to deliver small group counseling services. Overall, COVID-19 added extra stress for staff with limited time for self-care as they worked to adjust to shifting protocols while maintaining a sense of normalcy for students. Positive outcomes also occurred, with reduced class sizes helping some students connect and build tighter bonds with their class and teacher.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

PSD has services and supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Community partnerships play an active role in the delivery of targeted and intensive supports offered in Tier 2 and Tier 3.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Step • Kelso’s Choice • Zones of Regulation • School Connect • Signs of Suicide • Sanford Harmony • Compassion Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-In/Check-Out • Small groups • Individual counseling • Structured study hall
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor, community volunteers • Petersburg Mental Health (now Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium) • Working Against Violence Everywhere
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff meetings, Mileposts, D and F list
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District and grant funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District and grant funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counseling • Parent meetings and support • Personalized Individual Learning Plan • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor, special education, principal, teacher, paraprofessional • Petersburg Mental Health (now Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium)
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff meetings, Mileposts, special education, teacher, D and F list, family
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertain outside of grant funds

BARRIERS

In recent years, PSD has experienced an increase in student needs, such as trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). PSD's local community has limited capacity to meet the level of family need, particularly for concerns related to substance use and recovery. Within the district, the overall availability of staff time and competing priorities can be a challenge.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

PSD is working on continued parent trainings for next school year, with hopes of increased participation through in-person opportunities. The high school is also introducing a new social emotional learning curriculum next year, School Connect.

Ideally, the district would like to see additional personnel and community resources, such as a part-time school nurse, programs director, local rehabilitation facility and addiction recovery support, and affordable childcare options. Additionally, ideas such as establishing additional staff time and training for social emotional learning and mental health supports and a schedule that allows for preventive social emotional learning were discussed.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

SITKA SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Sitka School District (SSD) is located on the western edge of Baranof Island, 95 airmiles southwest of Juneau. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's six schools serve approximately 1,180 students.

SSD's strategic plans over the years have included a mandate to provide a school counselor or social worker in every building. Since establishing this expectation, the district has worked to maintain the roles to the extent possible, with more recent efforts to promote and embed social emotional learning in all schools.

Highlights of SSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Integration of social emotional learning practices in classrooms, with support from the administrative team and school board
- » Leveraging the availability of local mental health personnel and services, including community and school-based supports
- » Offering routine professional development focused on topics such as trauma-informed practices, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and self-care
- » Delivering student programs that build mindfulness and coping skills for ACEs to help through developmental stages and resilience building

COVID-19 IMPACTS

The shortened school days and remote learning during COVID-19 limited students' access to mental health programs and supports. Additionally, SSD experienced a scarcity of mental health practitioners, further contributing to difficulty meeting student need. Uncertainty about the future is thought to have added to stress for staff. While the quality and quantity of mental health interventions were impacted, the district made adaptations. For example, school counselors and social workers were able to pivot Second Step programming to high-quality video lessons for students. The district also invested in technology devices for students, which supported consistent connectivity. Looking ahead, SSD would like to increase social emotional learning programs, particularly for the universal Tier 1 and early intervention Tier 2 programs to help catch students up on the experiences missed during COVID-19.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

SSD has strategies and supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework. Community partnerships are present in more intensive Tier 3 supports.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Step • Playworks • Kelso’s Choice • Conflict resolution program • Bear Paws Kindness Support • Incredible Flexible You 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-In/Check-Out • Social skills groups • Play therapy • MindUP • Superflex • Skillstreaming • Social Explorers • Promoting Executive Function in the Classroom • Mindful Kids
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, specialist, counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist, counselor, social worker, paraprofessional
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief Externalizing and Internalizing Screener for Youth
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, counselor, family • Uncertain

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group and individual counseling • Play therapy • Services and supports through outside providers (offered onsite and in community)
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor, social worker, administrator, special education teacher • SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium • Sitka Counseling
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening tools • Teacher, counselor, family
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertain

BARRIERS

While SSD is a well-resourced community, its rural location and limited client base for consistent funding of services are barriers to providing upper-level intensive Tier 3 supports. When funding is limited, the need to allocate budget for classroom teachers can impact funding for mental health services and supports. Allocating time for social emotional learning, particularly with the recent academic time lost to COVID-19, can also be a challenge.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

SSD has budgeted to fill a standing mental health vacancy at the alternative high school for the 2021-2022 school year, likely with a school social worker. The high school also plans to offer an early childhood class in partnership with Ventures, the after-school daycare program.

Ideally, SSD would like to see continued funding for mental health services and continued staff trainings on ACEs, trauma-informed practices, self-care, and integration of student mental health and academic needs. The idea of additional supports for families was also discussed.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

TANANA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Tanana City School District (TCSD) is located 130 airmiles west of Fairbanks in Interior Alaska. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early \(DEED\) Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's one school serves approximately 30 students.

TCSD's small size and location makes the district's partnerships with the Tanana Tribe and DEED integral pieces of the mental health supports available for students.

Highlights of TCSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Partnership with the Tanana Tribe to provide supports for students, including a mental health coordinator from the Tribe who is frequently in the school
- » Addition of new resources through work with DEED's Mental Health Education Specialist, including staff trainings and classroom and individual student supports
- » Staff education on trauma-engaged approaches and restorative practices through collaboration with DEED
- » Increased access to targeted and intensive Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports through new telehealth services available through the local clinic

COVID-19 IMPACTS

Lack of internet access in student homes was a significant barrier during COVID-19. For example, social emotional learning was less effective with limited opportunity for class discussions and direct student interactions. Internet access also impacted the ability to get targeted Tier 2 supports to students. There were also positive impacts, including increased access to telehealth at the local clinic, allowing more students to receive supports in the village, as opposed to traveling to Fairbanks.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

TCSD has limited services and supports at each of three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Services and supports through DEED and contracted with Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) through the Tanana Tribe are integral for the limited targeted and intensive supports currently offered in Tier 2 and Tier 3.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second Step 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual counseling
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DEED's Mental Health Education Specialist
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General and grant funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tanana Chiefs Conference (contracted through Tanana Tribe) offered locally and through telehealth
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher, family
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partner funds

BARRIERS

TCSD is in a small, remote community. Regional access to mental health supports requires air travel. The limited district and local clinic resources are extremely stretched to cover the level of need. Specifically, personnel gaps including a school counselor and staffing at the local mental health clinic limit access. School staff take on many roles within the school community to help bridge this gap, but challenges remain in trying to provide supports for student needs.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

TCSD plans to continue using in-service time for DEED-led mental health and wellness professional development and to continue their work with the mental health education specialist. If local access to telehealth remains beyond the pandemic, TCSD sees an opportunity to continue utilizing the services to provide more access for students.

Ideally, TCSD would like to hire a school counselor and secure funding to explore additional social emotional curriculum and approaches. Career and technical guidance from a counselor could help provide some future planning support to students to address underlying social emotional factors like anxiety and depression.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

UNALASKA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Unalaska City School District (UCSD) is located 800 airmiles southwest of Anchorage on the island of Unalaska in the Bering Sea. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's two schools serve approximately 390 students.

UCSD's small size, family-oriented cultures, and low teacher-to-student ratios create a close-knit school community and proactive identification of student needs. Students are supported by engagement opportunities in the broader school community, such as parks and recreation programming.

Highlights of UCSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Delivery of universal and targeted supports through a student assistance team made up of school staff, with as needed support from community providers
- » Providing increased capacity for mental and behavioral health supports through community partnerships and outside trained clinicians
- » Annual participation in the Association of Alaska School Boards School Climate and Connectedness Survey as basis for program planning
- » Integration of a behavioral or mental health component into fall in-service

COVID-19 IMPACTS

The delivery of social emotional learning and mental and behavioral health supports, such as counseling, was disrupted by the shifts to remote and hybrid learning. Students reported struggling with their mental health, particularly during remote learning. It's thought to be likely that the isolation of COVID-19 significantly increased anxiety and depression among students, as well as stress among staff. Quarantine requirements also made medical travel to Anchorage more challenging.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

UCSD has strategies and supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports. Community partnerships are integral for the more targeted and intensive supports offered in Tier 2 and Tier 3.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student assistance team • Kelso's Choice • District-designed supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student assistance team • Individual counseling • Community presenters • Services and supports through outside providers
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff, counselor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor • Iliuliuk Health Clinic • Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association Behavioral Health • Unalaskans Against Sexual Assault and Family Violence (USAFV)
Referral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School staff, parent, student assistance team
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual and family counseling • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iliuliuk Family & Health Services • Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association Behavioral Health • Anchorage-based providers
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor, school psychologist
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General funds

BARRIERS

UCSD is in a remote community. Local resources are limited. Air travel is expensive and has been unstable, which can impact those students who need more intensive supports not available in the community. The cost and time required for travel and the additional time required for community quarantine requirements have all been barriers. There is also limited internet for telehealth. The stigma of being seen accessing mental health supports can also be a barrier in a small town, where everyone knows everyone else. Several years ago, the state closed the local Office of Children’s Services branch, and a community social worker position that worked in the schools was not refilled.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

Ideally, UCSD would like to have funding for a dedicated counselor at each school site. Currently, UCSD can only support one counselor. More affordable and better broadband could also improve access to telehealth options for students and staff, but in person supports are still preferable.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

YUKON-KOYUKUK SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Yukon-Koyukuk School District (YKSD) encompasses about 65,000 square miles on the Yukon, Koyukuk, and Tanana River systems. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's nine schools serve approximately 300 students, in addition to 4,035 students enrolled in the Raven Homeschool program.

YKSD's relationships among staff and ability to leverage individual strengths, as well as the responsiveness of community partners, helps reinforce the district's existing services and supports.

Highlights of YKSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Engaging social emotional learning curriculum and positive response to adoption of the Department of Education & Early Development and Association of Alaska School Boards trauma-engaged framework
- » Creation of school-specific plans that capture mental health resources through Culturally Responsive Embedded Social and Emotional Learning (CRESEL) grant work
- » Offering mental health and wellness presentations during in-service, including speakers such as Nick Hanson, Ricky Robertson, and public health nurses, on topics like self-care
- » Establishing consistent relationships between staff and community partners that allow for quick connections to outside supports

COVID-19 IMPACTS

The inability to travel to school sites and the local variations in restrictions during COVID-19 had a significant impact on services for YKSD. Most family homes do not have internet access and bandwidth is limited, which made virtual counseling and video meetings challenging. Students had to rely on telephone communication. Isolation between school sites was felt more acutely by staff given the limited ability to gather in person. Despite the challenges, COVID-19 strengthened community and district relationships through increased telephone communication between counselors and families, a benefit that YKSD predicts will continue to improve in the 2021-2022 school year with the transition back to in-person interactions.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

YKSD has services and supports at all three levels of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports, with community partnerships providing a significant impact for the district. Tier 3 services largely consist of connections to outside services, most of which are virtual or require access to transportation.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fourth R • CHAMPS • Positive Healthy Choices • Safe Dates • Life Skills • Conscious Discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counseling • Social skills groups • Individual behavior support plans • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, counselor • Speakers and presenters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, counselor • Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC)
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universally offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff, parent
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant and general funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant, general, and community partner funds

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual counseling • Services and supports through outside providers
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselor • Boys and Girls Home of Alaska • Graf Rheeneerhaanjii Substance Abuse Center • Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) • Raven’s Way • Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API)
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher, parent, counselor
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants, general funds, partner-funded

BARRIERS

Geographically, YKSD encompasses an area larger than the state of Washington. Travel to most of the communities and villages is by small aircraft. Itinerant staff is highly dependent on the ability to travel in order to provide services, which was heavily disrupted during COVID-19. Limited internet availability in student homes also created access barriers tied to the pandemic.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

Ideally, YKSD would like to see continued improvements to internet bandwidth. The district would also like to add local mental health professionals, such as a counselor at each school site, a districtwide social worker, or a full-time nurse. YKSD also discussed the idea of implementing video-based self-care training and group counseling sessions for staff.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.

Mental Health in Schools Profile:

YUPIIT SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 2021

OVERVIEW

Yupiit School District (YSD) is located northeast of Bethel on the Kuskokwim River with school sites in Tuluksak, Akiachak, and Akiak. Based on pre-kindergarten through grade 12 district enrollment totals from the [Department of Education & Early Development Data Center](#) as of October 2020, the district's three schools serve approximately 510 students.

With YSD's rural school locations and limited local services, the district has focused on equipping staff with information on mental health issues and recognizing student needs. Change is slow, but steps are being taken to build awareness of social emotional learning and mental health supports.

Highlights of YSD's approach to providing mental health supports include:

- » Exposure districtwide to trauma-engaged practices through staff professional development, including a book study with state mentor Lisa Mead
- » Leveraging staff proximity of living and working within the school communities to approach family engagement and student needs in a cultural context, such as working with Elders in schools for student supports
- » Introduction of the Responsive Classroom approach and supporting social emotional learning at Akiachak School
- » Tapping into existing social emotional knowledge base to provide weekly staff-led professional development during COVID-19

COVID-19 IMPACTS

In January of 2021, Tuluksak's washateria and water plant building were destroyed in a fire, leaving school staff and community without running water or sewer. The fire created a lack of access to basic needs and further exacerbated COVID-19 challenges. Most homes do not have internet access, so hybrid and remote learning severely limited connections to students and created a heavy reliance on telephone communications for delivery of intensive Tier 3 supports. With return to in-person school, YSD is hopeful to re-start video-based telehealth services in lieu of the telephone outreach.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS

YSD does not currently have universal and targeted Tier 1 and 2 supports beyond case-by-case approaches in individual classrooms. Intensive Tier 3 supports are limited to student referrals to special education.

UNIVERSAL STRATEGIES & SELECTIVE SUPPORTS		
	Tier 1 Universally offered, schoolwide supports	Tier 2 Early intervention & targeted supports
Approaches, curriculums, models & programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not currently using universal supports outside of individual teacher-led approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not currently using Tier 2 supports

INTENSIVE SERVICES & SUPPORTS	
	Tier 3 More intensive supports
Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health counseling if included in Individualized Education Program (IEP)
Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PresenceLearning (telehealth)
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health provider, parent, teacher
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District foundation and special education funds

BARRIERS

YSD schools are in rural, remote villages. Limited local services and the unpredictable nature of travel creates challenges for offering student supports. For instance, YSD previously planned to engage their local health provider Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation after a crisis, but weather prevented their team from traveling to provide onsite support. Housing is limited and is typically prioritized for academic staff ahead of mental health staff.

WORKS IN PROGRESS, CONCEPTS, & IDEAL SYSTEMS

For the 2021-2022 school year, YSD will have a CTE teacher at two school sites and will continue to identify additional interactive learning opportunities for students. The district has also hired new staff members from the local community as interventionists who will provide students with the opportunity to receive individual support in a small group setting. YSD also hopes to further involve their community and Elders in general academic curriculum, as well as in teaching students to understand and learn about the Yup'ik language and local culture.

Ideally, YSD would like to see a dedicated mental health team at each school that focuses on screenings, outreach, ongoing trainings, and implementation of classroom strategies, as well as available housing for those staff members.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This information was collected through interviews with district staff as part of an environmental scan of the mental health policies, programs, and practices in school districts across Alaska. The project is funded by the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the research was conducted by the Stellar Group.