



Oak Park Elementary School District 97

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Date: April 30, 2019

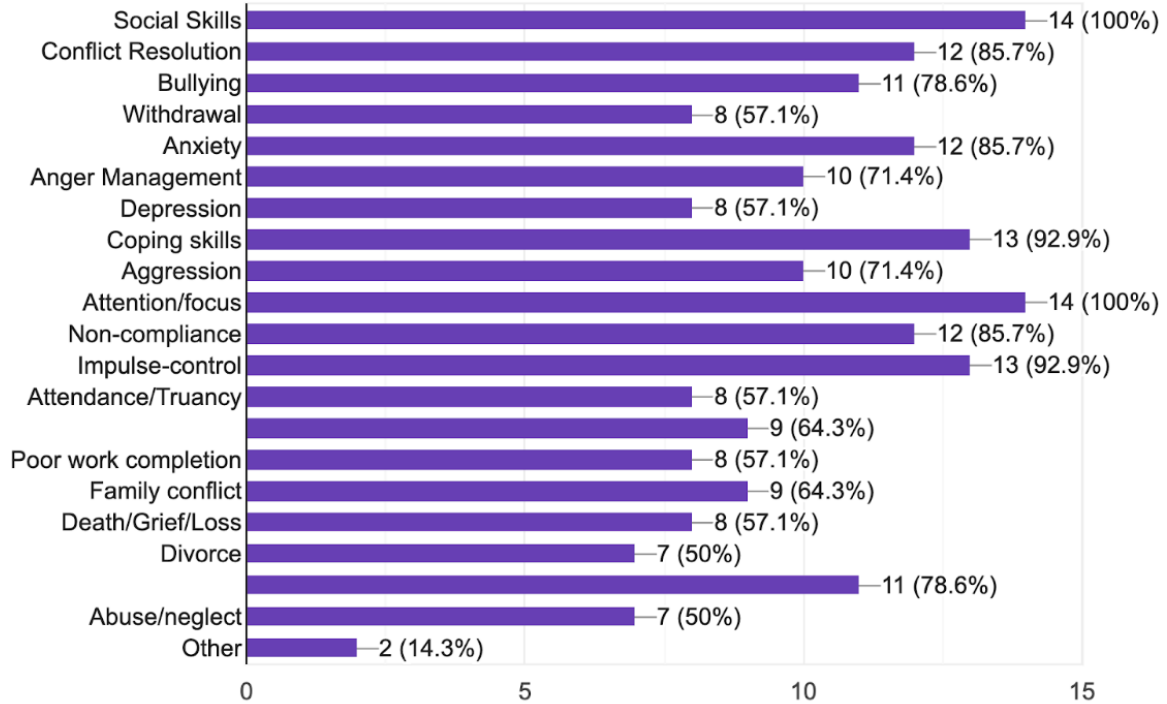
To: Board of Education
Dr. Carol Kelley, Superintendent

From: Ebony Lofton
Senior Director of Special Education

Re: Social Emotional Supports Update

Students in District 97 present with varying levels of strengths, talents and needs related to social emotional skill development. Data indicates that student need ranges anywhere from the development and reinforcement of prosocial skills to short-term cognitive behavioral intervention relative to trauma. In order to address said need, the board of education approved the addition of four social workers and one school psychologist for the 2019-19 school year. The additional staff members allowed for the provision of one social worker per grade level at Brooks and Julian Middle Schools and for one school psychologist per middle school. The remaining social workers were assigned to the elementary schools on the basis of the existence of highly specialized programming and/or the size of the student body. To that end, four elementary schools received an additional half-time social worker – Longfellow, Lincoln, Holmes and Irving Elementary Schools.

The school social workers have been charged with monthly data collection to inform how services are being accessed by students and the resources that are required to ensure every student who needs or requires social-emotional support has an avenue to access it. The chart below outlines the topics or skills that the school social workers have addressed at their respective buildings. Each social worker indicates if the topic is addressed during each month. As an example, social skills were addressed by 100% of the social workers during the month outlined below. The data provided is based on the latest data collection period, March 2019:



Based on student data and the feedback from school teams, the district has sought to meet the needs of students in a number of different ways. A few of the district initiatives are highlighted below:

The Launch of support4U at Brooks and Julian Middle Schools

Oak Park Elementary School District 97, River Forest District 90 and Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200 introduced a new mental health resource for middle and high school students called "support4U," on May 1, 2018 with full implementation during the 2018-19 school year. Support4U is a mental health-related prevention and support resource for students, by which they can text licensed mental health clinicians any time of the day for assistance or guidance. While students can initiate a text conversation on any issue, some of the matters that students wish to address could include anxiety, depression, substance use, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, bullying, abuse, or any other mental health-related topic. The resource is anonymous, so that student concerns about their identity are not a barrier to reaching out for help. The clinician's goal during the text conversation is to steer the student to available resources in the school and community. In cases with an identified extreme threat of danger, clinicians have the ability to alert local authorities. However, the vast majority of interactions

result in the student garnering immediate support from the clinician and being informed about local individuals (frequently school-based) who can assist them with their concern.

The resource was established by LEAD, a not-for-profit agency in Lake County, and is referred to as "Text-A-Tip" in other communities. The resource is present throughout northern Illinois and in several other states and is highly regarded in these communities as a valuable mental health asset for young people. District 97, District 90, and District 200 administrators and social workers were trained on the workings of the system, and are identified as key contacts in case of emergency. Similarly, the Oak Park and River Forest Police Departments are aware of the resource's capabilities and are continuing their long history as strong supporters of mental health resources for community youth.

Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) Implementation

Two social workers at each of the middle schools received training in CBITS. CBITS is a school based group and individual intervention that is designed to reduce symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and behavioral problems. It also serves to improve functioning, grades and attendance, peer and parent support and coping skills. It consists of ten group meetings where students learn coping skills to help them both feel and function better after stressful events. Students also participate in 1-3 private sessions with a group leader to talk about their stressful event. In addition, parent attendance is encouraged at 2 psychoeducational sessions. With parent consent, students are screened to determine if the intervention would be supportive of their needs. Julian Middle School is currently piloting CBITS groups with a wider rollout to Brooks Middle School for SY20.

Bounce Back Implementation

Each elementary school social worker and school psychologist has received training in Bounce Back. Bounce Back is also a school based group intervention for elementary school students who may have been exposed to a stressful event. It also consists of ten group meetings where children learn coping skills to help them feel better and function better after stressful events. In addition, students participate in three private sessions with a group leader to talk about their stressful event. Parent attendance is required at one of those meetings. With parent consent, students are screened to determine if the intervention would be supportive of their needs. A number of elementary schools are currently implementing Bounce Back groups with full implementation to occur in SY20.

Community Partnerships

The district continues to maintain and foster ties to community resources. School social workers are well versed in the resources available to families and students beyond the school walls and regularly connect families with our community partners. A key highlight of our partnership this year is the Community Mental Health Board (CMHB)'s allocation of funding for a special Request for Proposals (RFP) in order to provide services in the community directed towards addressing the mental health needs of middle school students and families in the district. The CMHB's goal was "to meet the needs of 6th - 8th grade students who have complex behavioral health and social needs, in particular, those youth and families that have had difficulties in finding or linking to needed services and supports regarding their mental health or addiction needs." The content of the RFP was informed by the district's middle school social workers and based upon district data. District representatives and the CMHB reviewed the proposals and worked collaboratively to select the finalist. The district looks forward to continuing to support this initiative and all of the critical community partnerships in the future.