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**TO:** Superintendent Gina Butters, Board President Jon Ritchie, WSD Board Members

**FROM:** Sheri Heiter

**DATE:** October 24, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Mental Health Specialists - Board Presentation

Good mental health is a key component to a child's success in both school and life. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, one in five students will experience a mental health event at some time during their educational experience. These events can include overall stress, anxiety, family situations, depression, substance abuse and self harm. Nearly two thirds of students who receive treatment do so only in the school environment.

In 2019, Weber School District was able to hire a group of mental health professionals to offer increased levels of service to our students. Partial funding was made possible through *House Bill 373*, which provided millions of dollars in mental health support to Utah districts. Additional funds were derived from state grants and other related revenue streams.

Since 2019, the program has grown from 5 mental health therapists to 21. They serve students with a range of mental health issues, from anxiety and depression to suicidal ideations. The program was first only available in the secondary schools, but it has now expanded to serve students at all grade levels in each school. Additionally, these therapists offer support for our teachers. In any given year, over 1,000 students are served. In the last three years, the team has become increasingly aware of the unique needs of our students and are better equipped to offer appropriate support.

Zach Leifson facilitates the group of Weber School District mental health specialists and provides ongoing professional learning, coordinates appropriate supports and ensures continuity of services. These specialists are well trained in supporting the emotional health of our students, in promoting mental wellness, in building resilience and in helping to foster a healthy school culture in which students feel safe and valued. Zach and some of the mental health specialists will share updates with the Board, will offer success stories from Weber School District and will outline their future goals to provide these important services to our students.