Wisconsin Public Psychiatry Network Teleconference (WPPNT)

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WPPNT Reminders

How to join the Zoom webinar

• Online: https://dhswi.zoomgov.com/j/1606358142

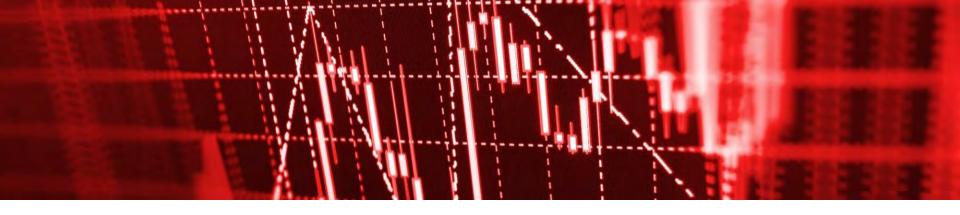
• **Phone:** 669-254-5252

• Enter the Webinar ID: 160 635 8142#.

- Press # again to join. (There is no participant ID)

Reminders for participants

- Join online or by phone by 11 a.m. Central and wait for the host to start the webinar. Your camera and audio/microphone are disabled.
- <u>Download or view the presentation materials</u>. The evaluation survey opens at 11:59 a.m. the day of the presentation.
- Ask questions to the presenter(s) in the Zoom Q&A window. Each presenter will decide when to address questions. People who join by phone cannot ask questions.
- Use Zoom chat messages to communicate with the WPPNT coordinator or to share information related to the presentation.
- Participate live or view the recording to earn continuing education hours (CEHs). Complete the evaluation survey within two weeks of the live presentation and confirmation of your CEH will be returned by email.
- A link to the video recording of the presentation is posted within four business days of the presentation.
- Presentation materials, evaluations, and video recordings are on the WPPNT webpage: https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wppnt/2021.htm.



THE VOICES OF WISCONSIN STUDENTS:

LEARNING, COPING, AND BUILDING RESILIENCE

DURING COVID-19



Sharon E. Belton, Ph.D. WIPPS Research Partners

December 2, 2021





Project Funding and Partners

- Supported by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Overdose Data To Action Grant
- Developed with input from many partners















Students Want Their Voices to Be Heard

The people in power should respond more to the students and ask them how they're feeling in different ways to improve...

...We've got to communicate back and forth.

Another thing would be if the school took more consideration of the students and their situation, because sometimes it feels like the school doesn't listen to our opinions or things that make us feel distressed.



Focus Group Approach and Methods

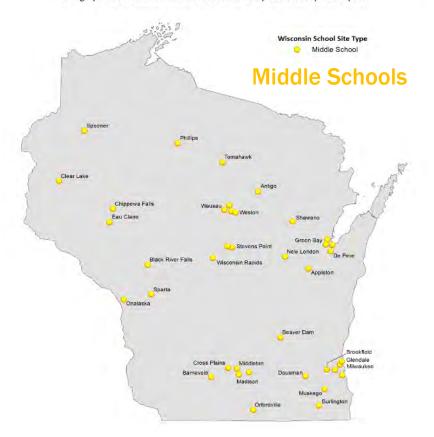
- Focus groups are helpful for understanding experiences
- 160 students in grades 6 to 12 from diverse backgrounds
- Medical College of WI IRB approval
- Broad, statewide recruitment strategy
- 23 two-hour Zoom discussions
 - January and February 2021



Broad Geographic Scope of Student Voices: Diversity of Views and Experiences

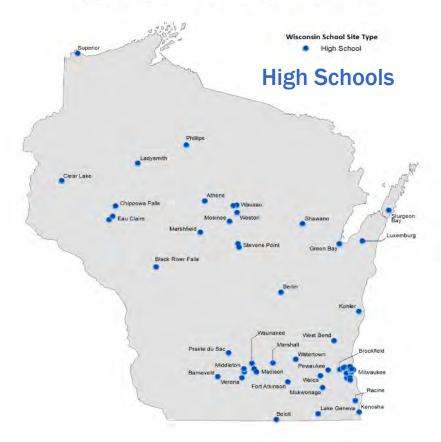
Voices of Wisconsin Students: Learning, Coping, and Building Resilience During COVID-19

Geographic Locations of the Schools Attended by Focus Group Participnts



Voices of Wisconsin Students: Learning, Coping, and Building Resilience During COVID-19

Geographic Locations of the Schools Attended by Focus Group Participnts





Summary of Key Themes from High School Student Focus Groups

- High (and increasing) stress, anxiety, and depression
- Significant challenges with virtual learning environments
- Lack of connectedness to school, teachers, and friends
- Students have heightened expectations of their teachers
- Limited awareness of mental health resources
- Stigma, skepticism, and confidentiality are barriers to help
- Perceived increases in substance use among peers
- Despite challenges, students have developed new coping skills and ways to be resilient





Student Voices: High (and Increasing) Stress, Anxiety, and Depression

Lots of kids are pushing themselves, are not sleeping well, and are anxious about their schoolwork.

I have struggled with anxiety and depression. Being online increased it to a whole other level.

The schoolwork can really cause your mental health to go downhill because you're worried about it. A lot of people, like me, take school very seriously and I like to be proud of my grades. People are having a tough time.



Additional Nuances Related to Students' Levels of Stress, Anxiety, and Depression

- Family approaches may create social pressures
- Some anxiety about returning in-person
 - Want reassurance about safety protocols
 - Loss of "people skills" and "study skills"
 - Hard for students who need to stay virtual



- Some reported less stress and anxiety due to more sleep, less social pressure, and more down time
- Lack of stress may also reflect apathy ("numbness")
 - Consistent with decreases in motivation towards school



Student Voices: Connectedness and Belonging

The sense of community and connection to both my peers and my teachers is lost.

My teachers do have a connection with the in-person students, but [they] don't really pay attention to the virtual student.

Three of my teachers really make us feel like we belong.

One teacher does a mental health check every day.

Another teacher, I go in, I listen, I leave. I log in. I log out.

It's fine, but there is no sense of belonging.



Students Generally Reported Diminished Connectedness and Belonging

- Lack of connectedness to school, teachers, and friends was more pronounced for virtual learners
- Students deeply miss opportunities to socialize
- Freshmen feel especially disconnected
- Sports, clubs, and extracurriculars
 - Help students feel more connected
- Common experience of pandemic
 - Helps some students feel less alone



Student Voices: Sources of Mental Health Support

I could trust the counselors, but I would go to friends and family first.

I can't think of any resources that I would use specifically besides just going, talking with one of my teachers personally. I can't think of something that the school itself has advertised in a way to help students.

We have a guidance counselor at our school, and she has a lot of great resources. However, she's very busy, so it's difficult. She's not always available.



Friends are Primary Source of Support; Students Had Limited Awareness of Resources

- Friends are primary source of support, then parents
 - Unclear whether peers and parents are equipped to help
 - Less access to friends during COVID-19
- Limited awareness of school-based resources of mental health and wellness support
- Students referenced school counselors, but many noted they are often busy
- Need for more resources at school
- Many deal with feelings on their own



Student Voices: Barriers to Accessing Support

There's still this huge stigma around depression and anxiety.

I feel embarrassed when I go to someone. I feel like I should be able to handle it on my own.

Students and staff are judgy. Our guidance counselor and principal say no one will know, but it ends up that they tell your parents or another teacher.



Key Barriers Include Stigma, Skepticism, and Lack of Trust

- Stigma was main reason students do not seek help
 - Fear, embarrassment, and shame
- Skepticism about whether getting help will work or how to talk about what they are feeling
- Breaches of trust
 - Concerns about of confidentiality
- School counselors are "too busy"





Student Voices: Drug and Alcohol Use

With this pandemic, a lot of people who weren't using drugs started to use drugs just because of the stress, and they have nothing else to help them cope with what's going on.

There is a little less partying, just because a lot of people's parents have closer eyes on them, I guess, the pandemic and stuff. So, there's a little less kind of going out and doing illegal drugs and alcohol.



Many Perceived Increases in Use of Drugs, Alcohol, and Vaping Products to Cope

- Students perceived increases in use of drugs (marijuana), alcohol, and vaping products
 - Lack of other healthy coping mechanisms
 - Boredom, more free time, lack of supervision
 - Alleviates feelings of fear and isolation
- Some felt pandemic may decrease substance use due to less access





Student Voices: Findings Reasons to Be Positive and Developing New Coping Skills

You kind of appreciate things more, because, for me, I've been quarantined so many times, that by the time I get back to school, I appreciate going and being in person.

Some of the positives for me are new hobbies. And being more independent, especially during this time, it gives you more time to focus on your homework or understand things better.



Students Developed New Coping Skills and Ways to Feel More Resilient

- Connecting with friends and others
- Spending time with family
- Engaging in self-reflection
- Writing and journaling
- Development of new hobbies
- Staying organized
- Listening to music
- Exercising; spending time outdoors
- Taking a drive
- Using technology





Intrinsic Value of Student Focus Groups

- 97% had a somewhat or very positive experience
- 93% reported a somewhat or very positive impact on their mental wellness
- 63% changed their perspective on mental wellness
- 96% felt their voice was heard
- Value in exchange of ideas with peers



Student Voices: Finding Value in Focus Groups

I really liked hearing other people's perspective on things. It was very eye opening.

It was definitely beneficial to my mental health. I would want to do this again. It helped me express myself and made me feel happier.

I am really glad that I was a part of the group and people got to hear my voice.

I really felt that my voice was heard!



Some Differences for Middle School Students

- Feelings of stress and anxiety were somewhat less pervasive compared to high school students
- Parents (mom) are the front-line source of support
- Fear is a key barrier to middle school students accessing help when they need it
- Many referenced increases in vaping
- Many had pets in Zoom meetings



See www.wipps.org/voices

Middle School

The Voices of Wisconsin Students: Learning, Coping, and Building Resilience During COVID-19

MIDDLE SCHOOL REPORT

Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy April Bleske-Rechek, Ph.D. Sharon Belton, Ph.D. Eric Giordano, Ph.D.

Julie Bunczak Olivia Rasmussen

Medical College of Wisconsin – Centra

Corina Norrbom, M.D. Amy Prunuske, Ph.D. Sofie Kjellesvig

April 19, 2021





The Voices of Wisconsin Students Project: Learning, Coping, And Building Resilience During COVID-19

> IN THEIR OWN WORDS: School Students' Coping Strategies

Middle School Students' Coping Strategies, Examples of Resilience, and What They Need to Succeed

> Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service Sharon Belton, Ph.D. April Bleske-Rechek, Ph.D. Eric Giordano, Ph.D. Julie Bunczak Olivia Rasmussen

Medical College of Wisconsin – Central Wisconsin Corina Norrbom, M.D. Amy Prunuske, Ph.D. Sofie Kjellesvig

April 19, 2021







High School

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HIGH SCHOOL REPORT

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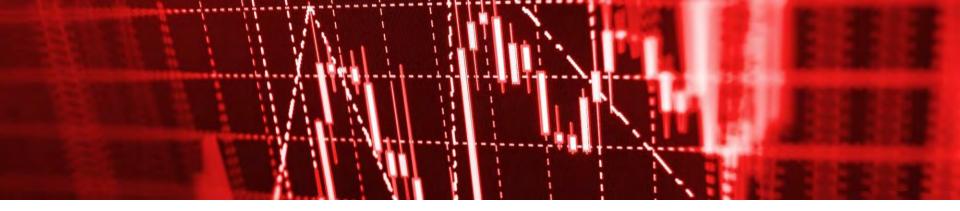


Let's Talk!



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Supplemental Demographic Slides



Student Focus Group Participants: Geographic, Community, and School Diversity

160 Total Students From Across Wisconsin



	Middle School	High School
Focus Groups (#)	10	13
Students (#)	64	96
Counties of Residence (#)	24	29
Communities of Residence (#)	38	46
Schools (#)	40	56



About 75% of the Students Were In a Virtual or Hybrid Learning Environment

160 Total Students From Across Wisconsin



	Middle School	High School
Students (#)	64	96
Schools	40	56
Learning Environments (%)		
Virtual	36%	52%
Blended/Hybrid	39%	21%
In-Person	25%	27%



Demographic Characteristics of Focus Group Participants

	Middle School	High School
Male	45%	20%
Female	52%	77%
Non-binary or self-describe	4%	3%
Free or Reduced Lunch	23%	39%
African descent (Black)	2%	10%
American Indian/Alaskan	3%	4%
Asian descent	3%	17%
European descent (White)	81%	58%
Hispanic/Latino descent	3%	4%
Other or prefer not to say	8%	6%

