

## Youth Perspectives on:

# Student Wellbeing & Support Services



## Overview

This subtheme, emerging over 300 times during 94 listening sessions, explores how Alexandria's schools support students' mental health, emotional wellbeing, and ability to manage academic stress. Students shared insights about their experiences with counselors and mental health services, the structure and pace of the school day, and the availability of adults who care about them beyond academics. Their ideal vision centers on schools that promote holistic wellness where young people feel emotionally supported, mentally prepared, and personally valued.

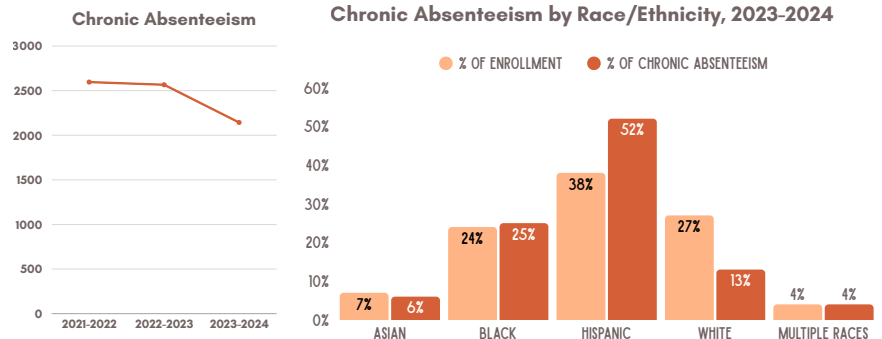
80%

of youth surveyed (n=1,125) rated this issue as somewhat or extremely important

## WHY IT MATTERS

Mental and emotional health are closely tied to students' ability to learn, engage, and thrive in school. Supportive school environments that include trusted adults, accessible services, and time for rest and recovery can reduce stress, prevent burnout, and help students develop lifelong coping skills. When these supports are missing or hard to access, students may feel isolated, overwhelmed, or unsupported.

## WHAT THE DATA SAY



\*Source: Virginia Department of Education, Alexandria City Public Schools Quality Profile

## WHAT YOUTH WANT

### 30+ mentions

"More mental health support for students."

"More encouragement from counselors, teachers, and staff – some make students feel like failures."

"I would want the classrooms to be more decorated so it looks more welcoming."

### 160+ mentions

"A nap class."

"Lighter workloads."

"I think they should bring recess back as it was a time for us to take a chill pill from the rest of the day, and it was a nice mental break."

### Mental Health and Emotional Support

- Easy access to confidential, culturally responsive mental health care
- A school culture that normalizes mental health support
- Strong, trusting relationships with school counselors, social workers, and supportive adults

### Workload Balance & Restorative School Schedules

- School schedules that allow for meaningful breaks, time outdoors, and physical activity
- Balanced workloads and academic expectations that support both learning and wellbeing

## WHAT YOUTH EXPERIENCE

### 25+ mentions

"Lack of connection between students and counselors."

"School doesn't know how to help students who are in crisis."

"Counselors are hard to meet with."

"Counselor making it seem like we are stupid."

### Mental Health and Emotional Support

Some students shared positive experiences with counselors or therapists. However, others reported difficulty making appointments, concerns about privacy, and a lack of consistent relationships with school-based mental health staff.

### 80+ mentions

"Not enough breaks in school."

"A lot of time sitting in class instead of going outside."

"There is too much pressure and expectation on students."

### Workload Balance & School Schedules

Feeling chronically overwhelmed, stressed, and fatigued by long school days, short passing periods, early start times, high expectations, and heavy homework loads.