



BY ALEXANDRIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL

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TOPIC

Student Mental health & Wellness

TOPIC DESCRIPTION

Mental health is a critical issue at Alexandria City High School, where students face intense academic pressure and social stress. This problem affects all students, but data shows female and LGBTQ+ youth are at a particularly high risk for persistent sadness. Untreated mental health issues lead to lower grades, higher absences, and long-term health problems. It matters at ACHS because a student cannot succeed in the classroom if they are struggling internally. By addressing this now, we can create a safer, more supportive environment for every Titan.

BASELINE DATA & GOAL

25% of Alexandria students in grades 8, 10, and 12 report persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness according to the 2024 youth survey.

My goal is for 100% of students surveyed at ACHS to be able to identify at least two school-based mental health resources, such as Hazel Health or the Teen Wellness Center.

CYCP GOAL & STRATEGIC AREA

My Goal is that all children, youth and families are physically safe and healthy. My issue fits here because mental health is a fundamental part of overall health. My project supports the CYCP strategy of "promoting wellness" by advocating for better access to clinical and school-based support services.

WHAT IS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW?

Graph 1: Student Awareness of Resources (Pie Chart)

- What does the data show? Only 8% of students feel the school provides enough resources, while a huge 56% say they aren't even sure what resources are available.
- Why does this matter? This is your "smoking gun." It proves that the problem isn't just a lack of resources, it's a lack of communication. Students can't use help they don't know exists.

Graph 2: Top Mental Health Stressors (Bar Graph)

- What does the data show? Social media/peer pressure (68%) is the #1 stressor for Titans, followed by academic pressure (48%) and family dynamics (40%).
- Why does this matter? This shows that to help students, the school needs to address more than just grades; they need to help students navigate their social lives and online worlds.

Graph 3: Student Stress Frequency

- What does the data show? 72% of students feel overwhelmed a few times a week.
- Why does this matter? It shows that stress is a constant part of the student experience at ACHS, not just something that happens during finals week.

WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN TRIED? Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) has partnered with Hazel Health to provide free virtual therapy for all students. Additionally, the city operates the Teen Wellness Center directly on the ACHS campus to provide confidential mental health screenings. The school also uses the RULER program to help students manage their emotions during the school day.	WHO CAN HELP? - Stakeholder 1: Alexandria Teen Wellness Center - How they help: They provide professional clinical care and can help my project by offering expert resources for students who need more than just peer support. - Stakeholder 2: ACPS School Board - How they help: They control the budget and school policies. They can help by officially approving more "mental health awareness" time during advisory periods. - Logos: Search Canva elements for a "Medical/Health Shield" logo for the Wellness Center and a "School/Book" icon for the School Board.
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WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR? - Quantity: ACPS provides Hazel Health access to 100% of students (over 16,000 students). The Teen Wellness Center provides hundreds of free appointments each year. - Quality: These are high-quality, professional services, but my survey data shows that 56% of students are unaware of them, which means the "quality" of the communication needs to improve.	IS IT ACTUALLY HELPING? While city-wide data shows that student sadness has dropped from 38% in 2021 to 25% today, it is not helping everyone yet. My survey shows that 72% of students still feel overwhelmed weekly. The resources exist, but there is a 'communication gap'—people are not better off if they don't know where to find the help that is already there.
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WHAT SHOULD CHANGE? (YOUR SOLUTION) My solution is to create a mandatory 'Mental Health Awareness Week' at ACHS during Titan Advisory periods. This week would focus on teaching students exactly how to access Hazel Health and the Teen Wellness Center through hands-on tutorials. My survey data supports this idea because 56% of students reported they weren't sure what resources exist. By dedicating school time to awareness, we can turn that confusion into confidence."

WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT? - What will improve? "Student awareness will increase, and the number of students using Hazel Health and the Wellness Center will rise. This will lead to a decrease in the 72% of students who currently report feeling overwhelmed weekly." Who will benefit and how? "All Titans will benefit, especially those who are currently struggling in silence.	CITATIONS - Alexandria City Public Schools. (2024). Student Wellness and Support Services (Policy JED). acps.k12.va.us - Alexandria Health Department. (2024). Alexandria Community-Wide Health Survey Results. alexandriava.gov - Fairfax County Government. (2024). 2023-2024 Youth Survey Results. fairfaxcounty.gov
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LEARN MORE - Hazel Health: Provides free, virtual mental health sessions that students can do from school or home with a professional therapist. - ACHS Teen Wellness Center: A confidential, school-based clinic that offers free mental health screenings and clinical support specifically for Alexandria teens.
