

USE OF A SIMULATION TO REDUCE STIGMA AND INCREASE HELP-SEEKING IN TEENS



PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- Summary of the district and pre-existing school programs to enhance mental health
- Review of systemic approach to engaging students in suicide prevention and early intervention
- Use of simulation tool in student health lessons
- Effectiveness data

FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- . 10th largest school division in the country
- . Primarily suburban, 407 square miles
- . Diverse student population
 - . 188,000 students, 196 schools
 - . 10% Black, 25% Hispanic
 - . 20% Asian, 40% White
 - . 5% multiracial
 - . 48% speak a language other than English in the home



WHAT OUR YOUTH SURVEY DATA TELLS US

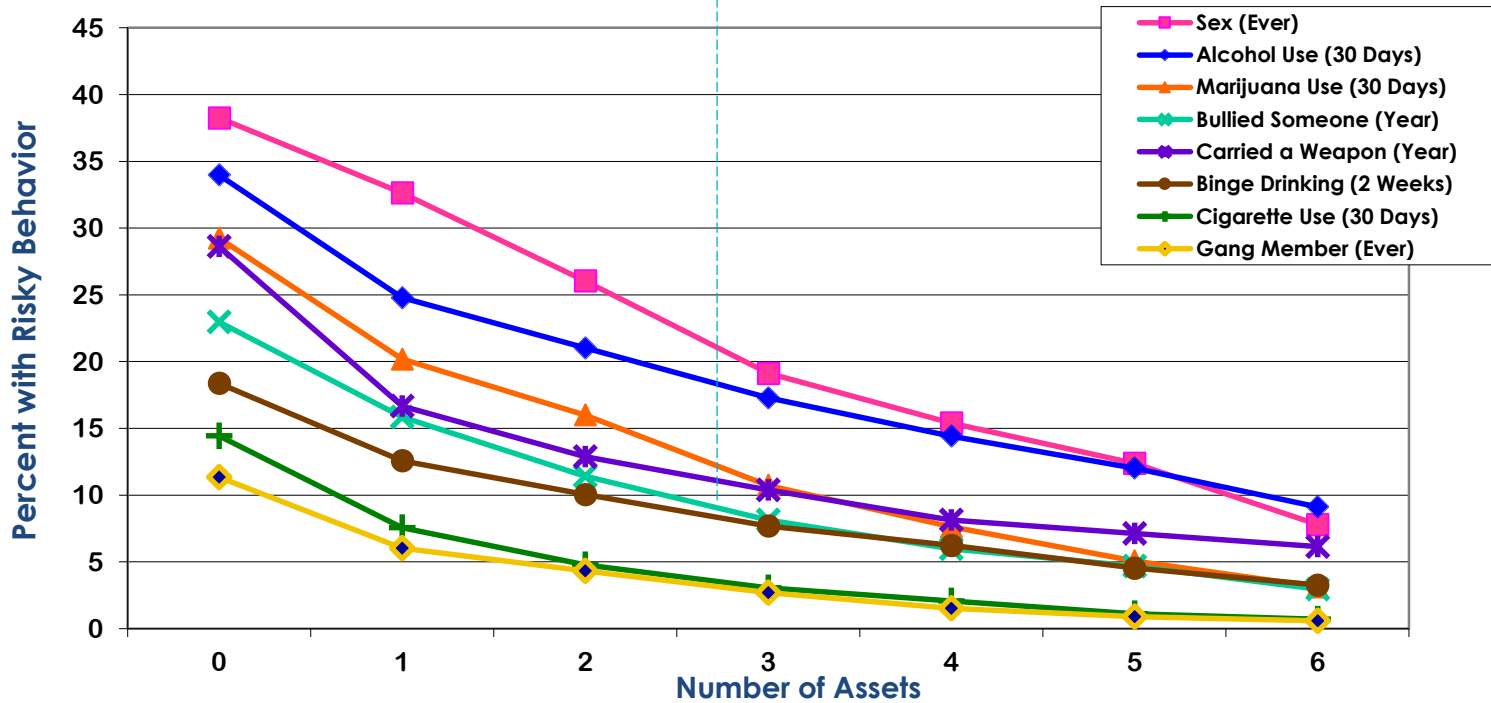
- 31% (2012) to 26% (2016) reported feeling so sad and hopeless that they stopped engaging in normal activities
- 17% (2013) to 14% (2016) of youth surveyed reported they had considered suicide
- 36% of youth reported high level of stress
- 16% (2013) to 13% (2016) for being sexually harassed in past year; high correlation with feeling sad and hopeless

YOUTH SURVEY ASSETS

- Direct relationship between youth who report that they have three or more assets and engagement in risk behaviors
 - Involved in community service
 - Involved in extracurricular activities
 - High personal integrity
 - Parent available to help when needed
 - Adult in community available to help
 - Teachers know me and notice when I do good work



THREE TO SUCCEED ASSET GRAPH (GRADES 8, 10, 12)

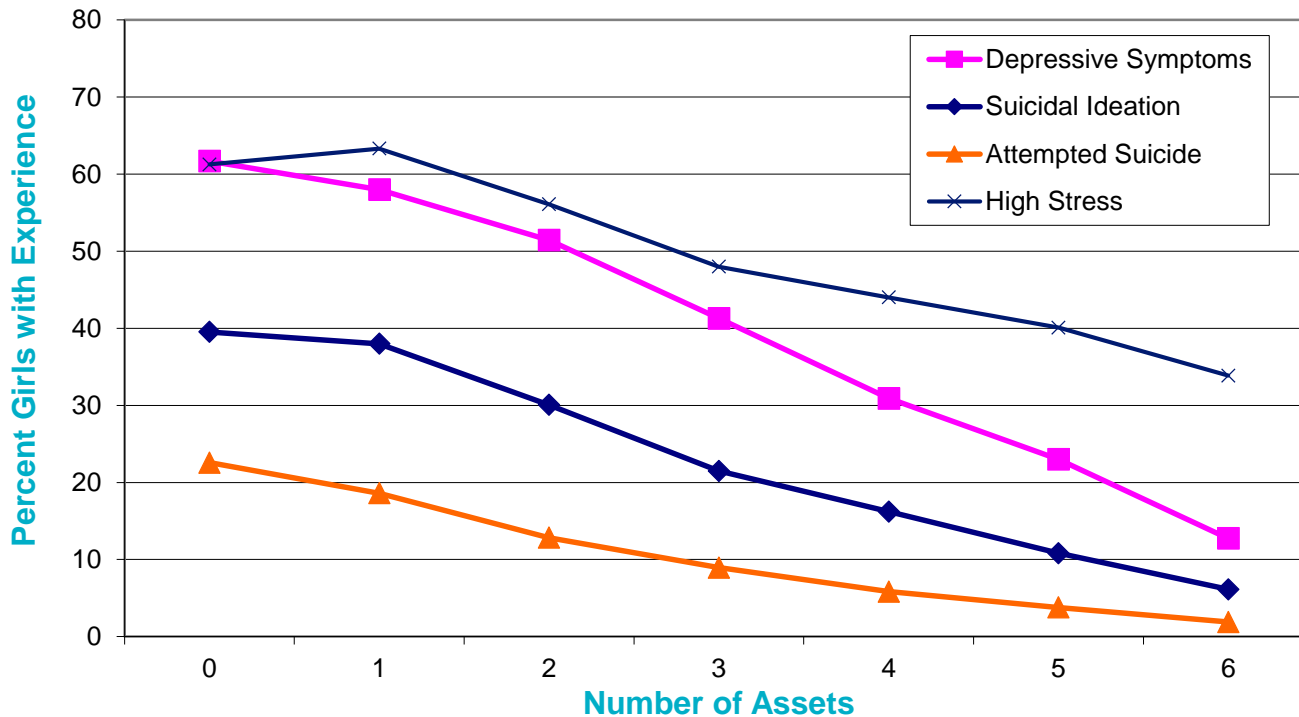


Having High Personal Integrity
Performing Community Service
Having Teachers Recognize Good Work

Having Community Adults to Talk to
Participating in Extracurricular Activities
Having Parents Available for Help

Three to Succeed: Youth who have three assets are less likely to engage in risky behavior than youth who have none.

ASSETS AND EXPERIENCES RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH: **GIRLS (DISTRICT LEVEL)**



Having High Personal Integrity
Performing Community Service
Having Teachers Recognize Good Work

Having Community Adults to Talk to
Participating in Extracurricular Activities
Having Parents Available for Help

RESILIENCY PROJECT

Coordinated resiliency-focused approach by school counselors, psychologists, social workers to build coping skills, increase problem solving skills, increase capacity to recover from adverse life experiences

- Bullying prevention and intervention
- Depression awareness and suicide prevention
- Systematic evaluation and response to threats
- Crisis response following death of student, teacher or administrator, including postvention following suicide

Visit the website at:

<http://www.fcps.edu/dss/ips/resiliency/rb.shtml>

SYSTEM-WIDE EFFORTS

- Universal lessons in counseling (elementary) and health (middle and high)
- Use of Signs of Suicide (SOS) program and screener
- Partnerships established with county youth serving agencies and non-profit groups
- Parent Clinic and Student Clinic-summer offerings to parent and students to make an appointment to consult privately with a school psychologist or social worker for an hour

COLLABORATIVE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY EFFORTS

- Annual Mental Health and Wellness Conference
- Children's Behavioral Health Collaborative (schools, county, community)
- Training consortium with FCPS, Fairfax County Government, George Mason University, and other private and public partners

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

- Superintendent's Student Advisory Council
 - Fairfax County Youth Survey
 - Core understanding of various mental health conditions and how to help a friend get help
 - Communication plan for social media
 - Outgoing tweets and messages
 - #mental wellness to send questions
 - Review of wellness policy and ideas about how sleep, physical activity, etc. have relationship to mental wellness

■ Student wellness page with Tips & Strategies

<https://www.fcps.edu/student-wellness-tips>

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- Wellness weeks
- *ourmindsmatter* club
- Creating library of wellness activities and events from schools to share and use across other schools
- Presentations by staff on specific mental health conditions and how to seek help
- Student Ambassador Club and how to start your own
- Peer counseling initiatives
- Presentation to School Board



MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH INSTRUCTION

- Virginia Standards of Learning for Health Education include mental & emotional health at elementary, middle, and high school levels
- Instruction is scaffolded and appropriate for student age
- Lessons begin in primary grades with introduction of emotions, how emotions are expressed, what a person can do to feel happy
- Upper elementary lessons include avoidance of self-harming behaviors, positive self-image, respect for self

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH INSTRUCTION

- Middle school students investigate mental health resources available at school and in the community
- Depression awareness and suicide prevention are introduced in grade 8 and included in grades 9 and 10
- Focus on destigmatizing mental health issues, signs and symptoms of depression, warning signs of suicide, getting help for self or friend/family member.
- The primary message is that it is important to talk to somebody. It doesn't matter who. Psychologists/psychiatrists are not there to judge, they are there to help.

USE OF A SIMULATION: *Friend2Friend*

- FCPS student leaders were involved with reviewing and providing feedback during the development of *Friend2Friend*
- Incorporated into grade 10 health lesson on awareness and prevention of self-harm and suicide
- Provided time in class to complete, may be finished at home

Friend2Friend <http://bit.ly/2gp7tYy>



IMPLEMENTATION OF A SIMULATION

The average class is 40 students

- Beginning of 2016-2017 the simulation was completed in the library
- By end of 2016-2017 every student had a laptop allowing students to remain in the classroom during the simulation
- Most students complete the lesson within 30 minutes and then we have a class discussion.

STORIES FROM THE CLASSROOM

- Several students were impacted emotionally by the content of the lesson
 - students were brought personally to the school psychologist to discuss the reason for their emotional distress.
- The school psychologist identified some students who would have a negative reaction to the simulation and suggested that students be sent to her office during that time
- As a result of the simulation, students who were suppressing emotions related to depression and/or suicide were given an opportunity to get help.

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

- Availability of technology for all students
- Limited opportunities to train teachers
- Pop-up blockers had to be disabled in order for students to access the simulation
- The process slows down when an entire class is logging in to the simulation
- Our high school has a large ESOL population

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM

- Sample of 539 student surveys
- Demographically similar to general population
- 44% White, 19% Hispanic, 20% Asian, 8% Black, 9% Other
- 88% 10th graders
- 61% athletes

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

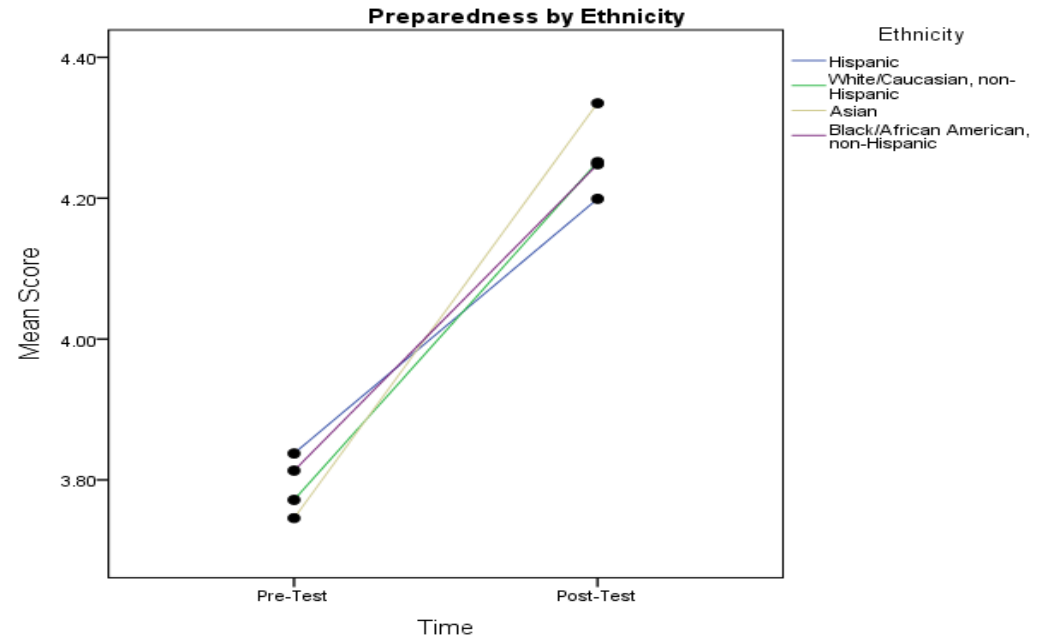
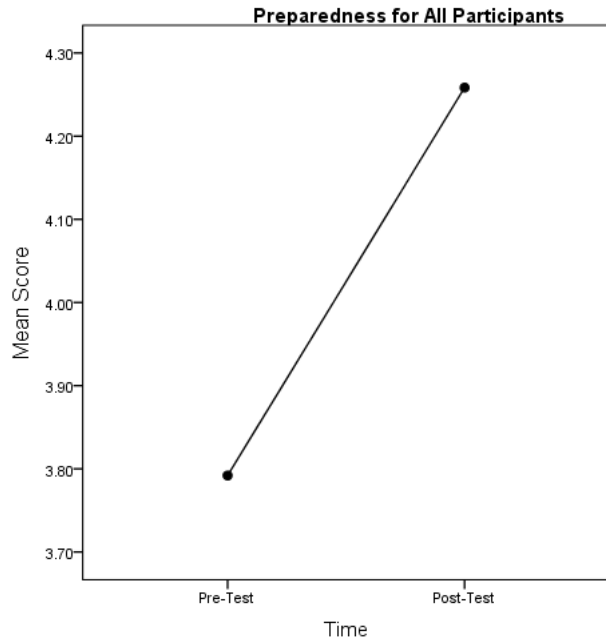
- 94% rated good, very good, excellent
- 90% believe all students should take the course
- 79% would recommend the course to a friend



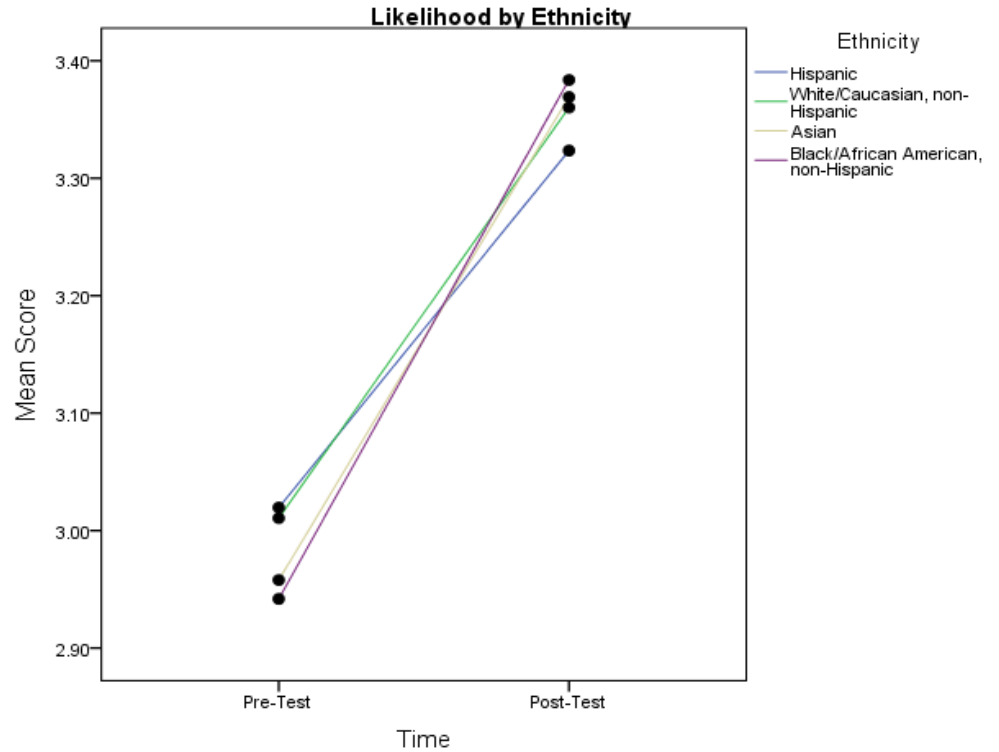
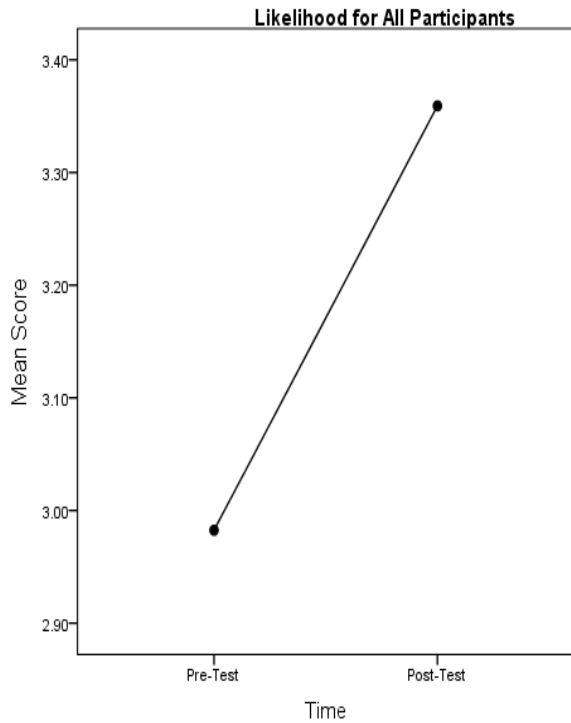
PRE-POST COMPARISONS

- How prepared were participants to recognize signs of emotional distress, start a conversation, and motivate a friend to get help?
- How likely were participants to speak to a friend who needed help, speak to an adult about a friend who is stressed out, seek help for self when stressed out?
- How confident were participants in their ability to recognize need for assistance, talk to a friend, motivate to go to an adult, talk to an adult themselves?
- *Note:* For charts that follow all paired-sample t -tests were significant at $p < .001$ for total change. Differences between ethnicities were not significant.

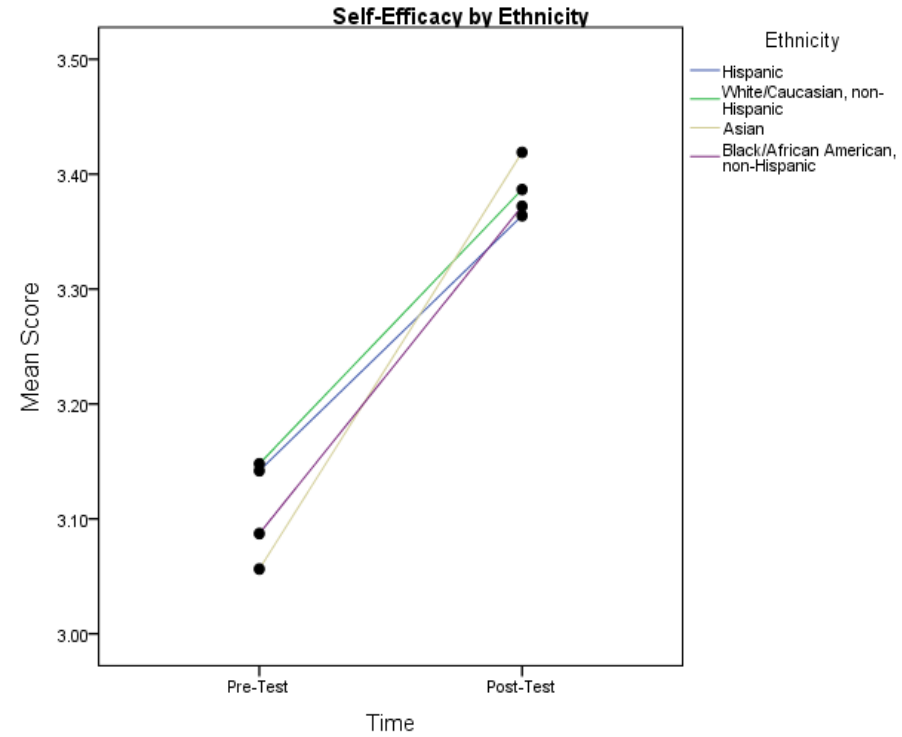
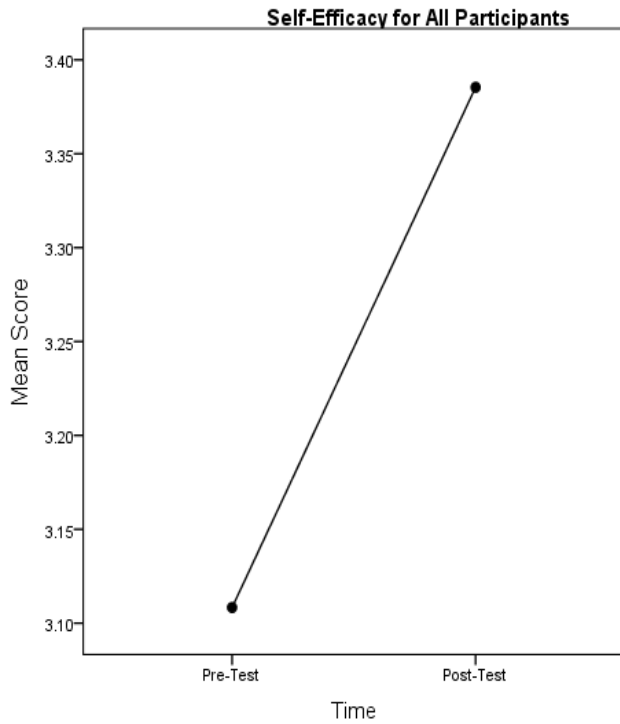
PREPAREDNESS



LIKELIHOOD



SELF-EFFICACY



STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Niharika Vattikonda, Student Representative to the School Board; Senior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology

Elise Wellbaum, Finding the Way Leader, Student Ambassador Program; Senior at Hayfield High School

CONTACT INFORMATION

Lisa Gonzalez, Health PE Teacher

Lisa.Gonzalez@fcps.edu

Carrie Reynolds, Educational Specialist Health and PE

Carrie.Reynolds@fcps.edu

Dede Bailer, Ph.D., Coordinator, School Psychology Services

drbailer@fcps.edu

Mary Ann Panarelli, Ed.D., Director, Intervention and Prevention Services

mmpanarelli@fcps.edu



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