

Indiana Public School Districts’ Student Wellness Practices and Supports: A Summary Report on Survey Outcomes June 2020

Overview and Purpose

As part of the Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education) grant initiative, Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) collaborated with Indiana University School of Social work (IUSSW) to identify the range of practices, programs, and implementation strategies each Indiana public school district employs to promote student wellness.

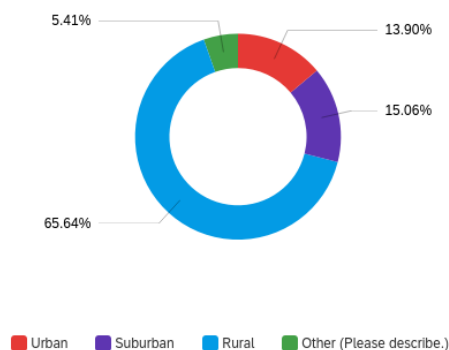
Student wellness is the term used to represent social, emotional, and behavioral wellness. This summary provides an outline of the study’s findings and analyses. The full report also offers an emerging snapshot of Indiana public school districts’ approaches to supporting student wellness.

Data Collection and Methods

Using an online survey, researchers collected and analyzed descriptive data from public school representatives across the State of Indiana. The guiding research question was **“How do public schools address student wellness within their district settings?”** Data collection occurred in August 2019 and May/June 2020. The study used a mixed methods research design, with an analysis approach that included descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies) for numeric data and thematic analysis for qualitative data.

Survey Participants

School district leaders (N=401) were invited by email from IDOE to take part in the online survey. Out of the 401 possible respondents, 254 respondents participated in the study. The table below provides the percentages of the sample by type of school district: urban, suburban, rural, or other type.



The percentages of urban (13.9%) and suburban (15.1%) districts were similar and accounted for over a fourth of the sample. The largest type of school district represented in the sample was rural (65.6%).

Key Themes and Findings

The survey findings produced a statewide composite of the practices, programs, and implementation strategies that Indiana public school districts use to address student wellness. A notable theme was the gap between the reported high levels of administrator and educator commitment to support student wellness and the shared vision and capacity needed to adequately address student wellness needs in their respective districts. The data analysis produced four key findings that align with this core theme.

<p>Finding 1: Variability of Schools' Interpretation of Student Wellness and Implementation Approaches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools' approaches to addressing student wellness widely varied. Responses indicated some schools had integrative multi-tiered systems to promote student wellness. While other schools relied on roles and functions of specific student services personnel or restricted student wellness to health and physical education classes. Close to 40% of schools had no standardized wellness curriculum in their district; although, 92.3% of respondents stated they intentionally provided some level of wellness practices and supports for students.
<p>Finding 2: The Need for a Shared Roadmap for Integration and Evaluation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 50% of respondents indicated that student wellness was not included, or they were unsure if it was included, in their district improvement plans. More than 50% of respondents reported their district did not have, or they were unsure if their district had, a formal implementation strategy to promote student wellness. Over 44% of respondents indicated there was no plan, or they were unsure of a plan, in place to evaluate the effectiveness of approaches used to address student wellness. Few schools had any formal, standardized assessment and evaluation system established to monitor progress and evaluate outcomes of student wellness.
<p>Finding 3: Gaps in Multi-Systemic Capacity (Family, Organizational, Community, State, and Federal)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respondents indicated that a lack of sustainable funding and competing demands were the greatest barriers to addressing student wellness needs. Other capacity needs most frequently identified included the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Workload capacity to systematically plan, implement, and evaluate support strategies Strategic leadership and vision for an integrative approach Family engagement An accessible, qualified mental health workforce Evidence-informed, affordable, and accessible professional development opportunities Over 40% of respondents reported there was no plan, or they were unaware of an intentional district-level plan, to support school employee wellness
<p>Finding 4: The Central Role of Community Partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 86% of respondents reported a strong collaboration with community resources to assist with delivering student wellness supports in their respective school settings. Most schools reported a mixture of community resources in their school settings, and more than one in four respondents indicated that their district relied on community mental health centers as a primary source of support Overall, school districts depended on a cross-systems framework to address student wellness supports.

IDOE's Social, Emotional, Behavioral Wellness Team Next Steps

- Continue providing statewide professional development on social, emotional, behavioral wellness (SEL 101, 201 for teachers and administrators, chronic absenteeism, suicide prevention, etc.)
- Funding and technical assistance call for proposals to be released in May 2020 for Cohort 2 for Project AWARE
- Continue partnership with Indiana University to follow-up with non- and low-responders to build upon initial report and data repository of student wellness practices and supports
- Create additional resources and supports based on [IDOE's Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Pilot District Program](#)

For more information, please visit www.doe.in.gov/sebw.