

Results of Survey of Successful School Districts in Montana

59 responses were received. Note, a district may have submitted one response for both a successful Elementary and High School SSD selected.

Background

What is the name of your district?

District Name	
Amsterdam School District 75	Plevna Public School
Anderson School District	Rapelje School District #32
Arlee High School	Reed Point Elementary School
Auchard Creek School	Richey Schools
Bear Paw Elementary School	Savage Public School 7,7j&2
Belt Public School District	Scobey Schools
BOZEMAN ELEM	Shepherd School District
BOZEMAN HS	Shields Valley Public Schools
Cardwell School	Sidney Public Schools Districts 1 & 5
Cleveland Elementary School	Springhill School K-8
Cohagen	SY School District
Cooke City School District 9	Townsend Schools #1
Custer Public School	Turner School District #43
Davey Elementary, #12	Twin Bridges School District #7
District 24: Jackson Elementary School	Valier School District
Florence-Carlton School District	Valley View Elementary School District 35
Fort Benton Public Schools	Vida Elementary
Froid School District	White Sulphur Springs
Golden Ridge School District	Whitehall Elementary
Greenfield School District #75	Wibaux Public Schools
Hawks Home Elementary	Willow Creek High School
Hinsdale	Winifred School District #115
Joliet Public Schools	Wisdom School District 16
LaMotte School District #43	
Manhattan School District #3	
Missoula County Public Schools	
Monforton School District	
Mountain View Elementary School District 64	
North Star School District	
Noxon Public Schools	
Olney-Bissell School #58	
Opheim Public Schools	
Ovando Elementary School District #11	
Pass Creek School	
Pine Creek	

What is your district's current enrollment?

Current Enrollment	
Average	354
Range	3-4,668

How many schools are in your district?

Number of Schools	
Average	1.8
Range	1-10

What is your role?

Role	% of Responses	Number of Responses
Superintendent	74%	42
Business Manager	3%	2
Principal	22%	13
Other	14%	8

Note, respondents could have indicated more than one role so total will be greater than 100%. For example, superintendent and principal.

Overall***Which are the top three factors you believe have contributed most to your district's success with student outcomes?***

Response	% of Responses	Number of responses
High-quality professional learning	9%	5
Student mental health and social-emotional supports	9%	5
Other (please specify below)	14%	8
Strategic staffing decisions	21%	12
Effective use of data to inform instruction	22%	13
Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)	24%	14
District/school leadership and coherence	29%	17
Targeted academic interventions	31%	18
Family and community partnerships	36%	21
Ability to recruit and retain high quality staff	48%	28
Strong core instruction	53%	31



Other factors specified included small class sizes and individualized learning.

Which of the following education opportunities does your district provide to expand student access and success?

Elementary Grades	% of responses
Early Childhood Education (ECE)	50%
Full-day kindergarten	100%
Gifted education programming	33%

High School Grades	% of Responses
Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways/programs	100%
Work-based learning (internships, apprenticeships, industry partnerships)	84%
Concurrent enrollment / dual credit	100%
Advanced coursework (AP/IB/honors)	68%
Online/blended learning options	60%

Are there particular instructional models, curriculums, or resources that you believe have been effective in improving student outcomes in your district?

Key themes from responses emerged:

- MTSS / Intervention Systems
 - Many districts cited MTSS, braided MTSS/PLC systems, and early interventions.
- Teacher expertise, quality, and stability
 - Repeated emphasis that teacher skill, creativity, and relationships drive student success.
 - Long-tenured staff and individualized knowledge of students were often cited as advantages, especially in smaller districts.

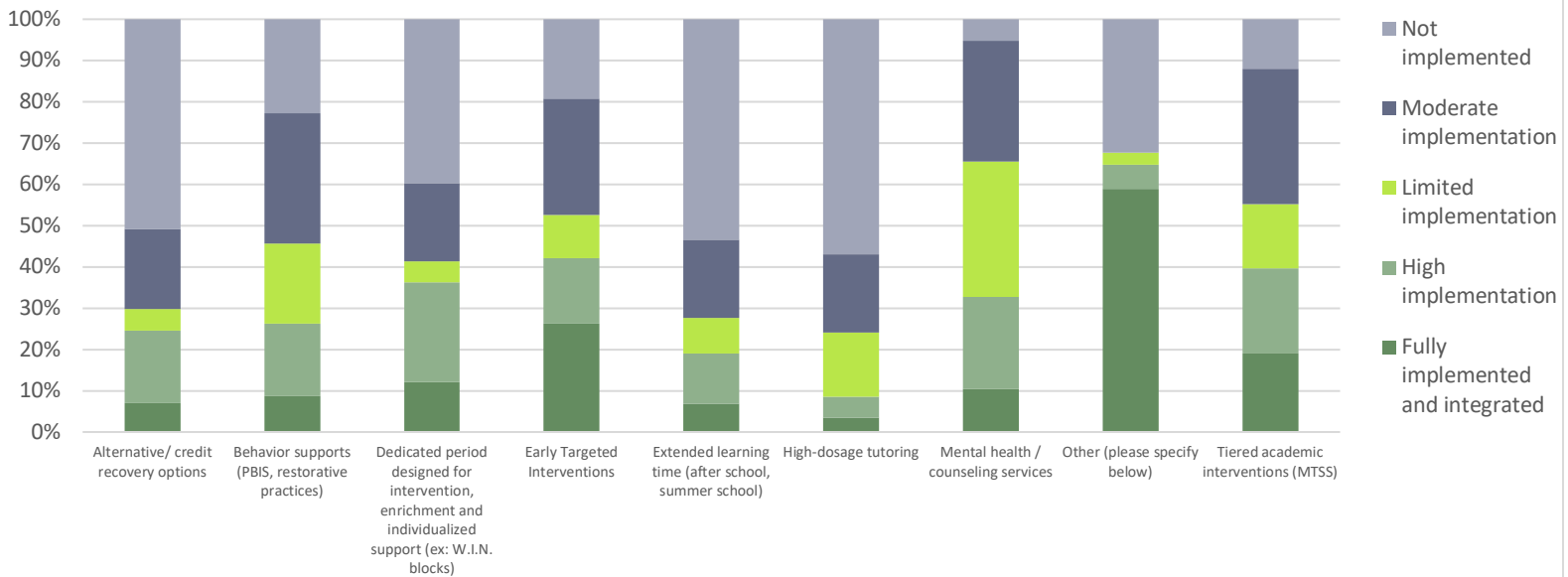
- Several responses described staff as the district's strongest resource.
- High-quality instructional materials / core curriculum
 - Frequent mentions of structured, high-quality curricula. Examples mentioned include Into Reading, Reveal Math, Bridges, CKLA, Eureka Math, Wit & Wisdom, Amplify, Wonders, Superkids, Heggerty, UFLI, ARC, Math Expressions, Great Minds.
- Small class sizes
 - Small class sizes and school environments were described as reducing the likelihood of students "falling through the cracks."
 - These settings also allow for individualized instruction.
- Professional development and coaching
 - Ongoing PD and coaching was cited frequently, with an emphasis that regular PD builds teacher capacity rather than one-off trainings.

Supports and Interventions

To what degree are the following types of supports/interventions are currently implemented across your district?

	Fully implemented and integrated	High implementation	Limited implementation	Moderate implementation	Not implemented
Alternative/ credit recovery options	4	10	3	11	29
Behavior supports (PBIS, restorative practices)	5	10	11	18	13
Dedicated period designed for intervention, enrichment and individualized support (ex: W.I.N. blocks)	7	14	3	11	23
Early Targeted Interventions	15	9	6	16	11
Extended learning time (after school, summer school)	4	7	5	11	31
High-dosage tutoring	2	3	9	11	33
Mental health / counseling services	6	13	19	17	3
Other (please specify below)	20	2	1	0	11
Tiered academic interventions (MTSS)	11	12	9	19	7

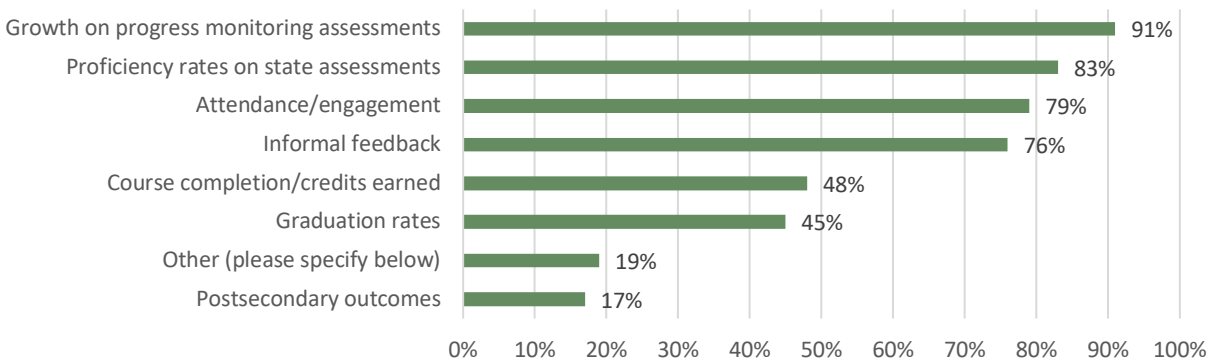
To what degree are the following types of supports/interventions currently implemented across your district?



How does your district measure the effectiveness of supports?

	Count	% of Responses
Growth on progress monitoring assessments	53	91%
Proficiency rates on state assessments	48	83%
Course completion/credits earned	28	48%
Attendance/engagement	46	79%
Graduation rates	26	45%
Postsecondary outcomes	10	17%
Informal feedback	44	76%
Other (please specify below)	11	19%

How does your district measure the effectiveness of supports?



Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

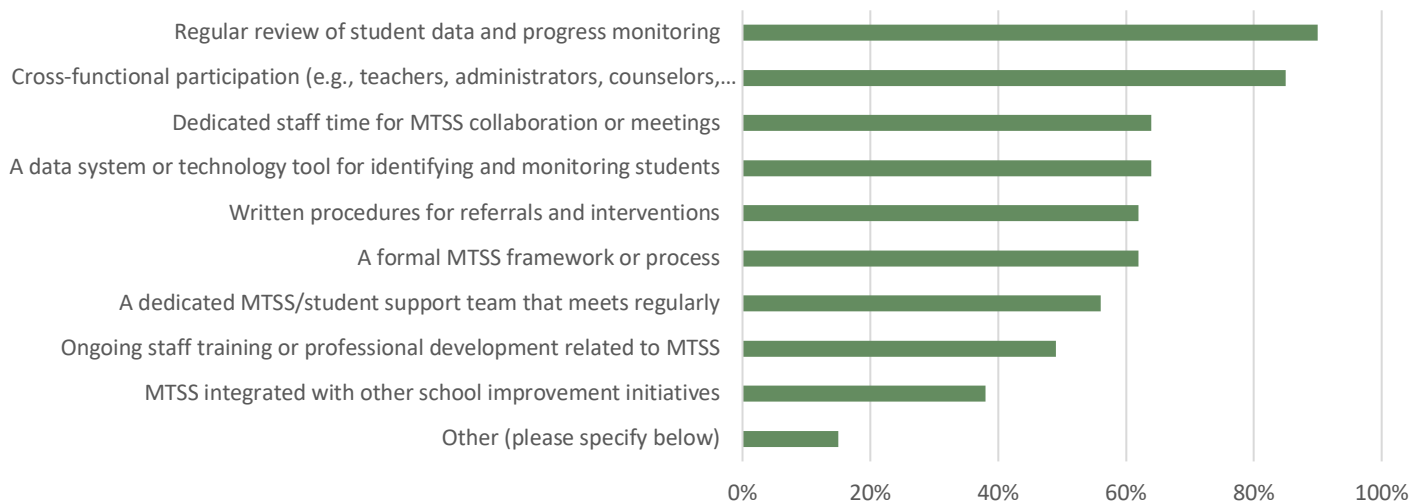
Does your district implement a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)?

	Count	% of Responses
Yes, in all schools (including if only one school in district)	31	53%
Yes, in some schools	8	14%
No	19	33%

Which of the following components are currently part of your district's MTSS approach?

	Count	% of Responses
A formal MTSS framework or process	24	62%
A dedicated MTSS/student support team that meets regularly	22	56%
Cross-functional participation (e.g., teachers, administrators, counselors, special education staff)	33	85%
A data system or technology tool for identifying and monitoring students	25	64%
Regular review of student data and progress monitoring	35	90%
Written procedures for referrals and interventions	24	62%
Ongoing staff training or professional development related to MTSS	19	49%
Dedicated staff time for MTSS collaboration or meetings	25	64%
MTSS integrated with other school improvement initiatives	15	38%
Other (please specify below)	6	15%

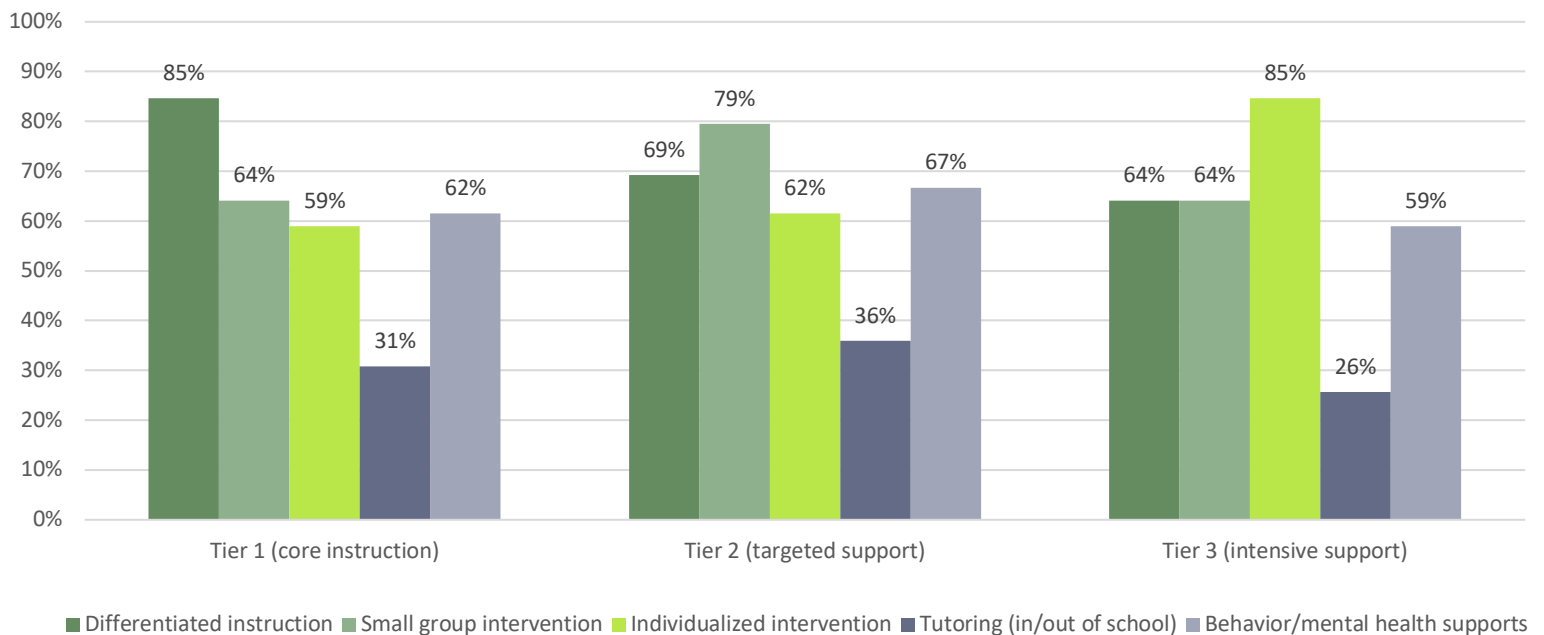
Which of the following components are currently part of your district's MTSS approach?



For each MTSS tier, what supports are typically provided in your district?

	Tier 1 (core instruction)		Tier 2 (targeted support)		Tier 3 (intensive support)	
	Count	% of Responses	Count	% of Responses	Count	% of Responses
Differentiated instruction	33	85%	27	69%	25	64%
Small group intervention	25	64%	31	79%	25	64%
Individualized intervention	23	59%	24	62%	33	85%
Tutoring (in/out of school)	12	31%	14	36%	10	26%
Behavior/mental health supports	24	62%	26	67%	23	59%

For each MTSS tier, what supports are typically provided in your district?



How consistent is implementation of these supports across schools?

	Count	% of Responses
Very inconsistent	1	5%
Somewhat inconsistent	4	19%
Moderately consistent	3	14%
Mostly consistent	11	52%
Highly consistent	2	10%

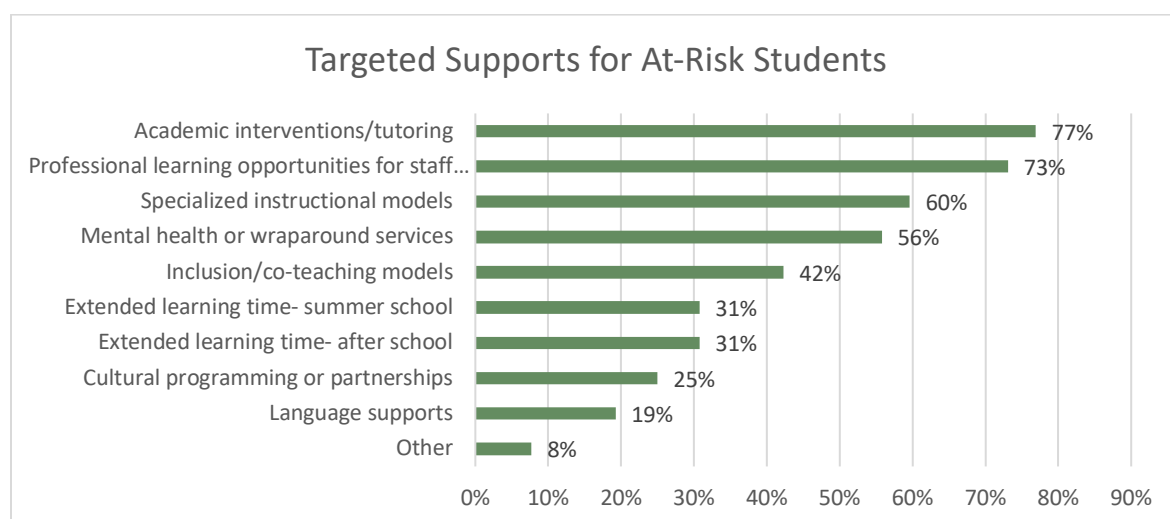
To what extent has the implementation of MTSS improved student outcomes in your district?

	Count	% of Responses
Minor improvement	2	5%
Moderate improvement	12	31%
Substantial improvement	19	49%
Transformative improvement	6	15%

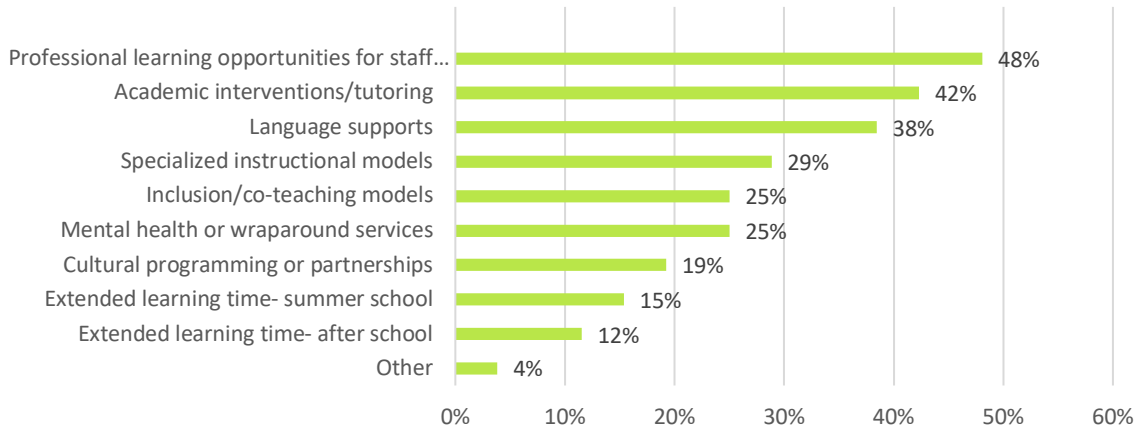
Targeted Supports by Student Group

Are additional, targeted supports provided specifically to students in the following student groups?

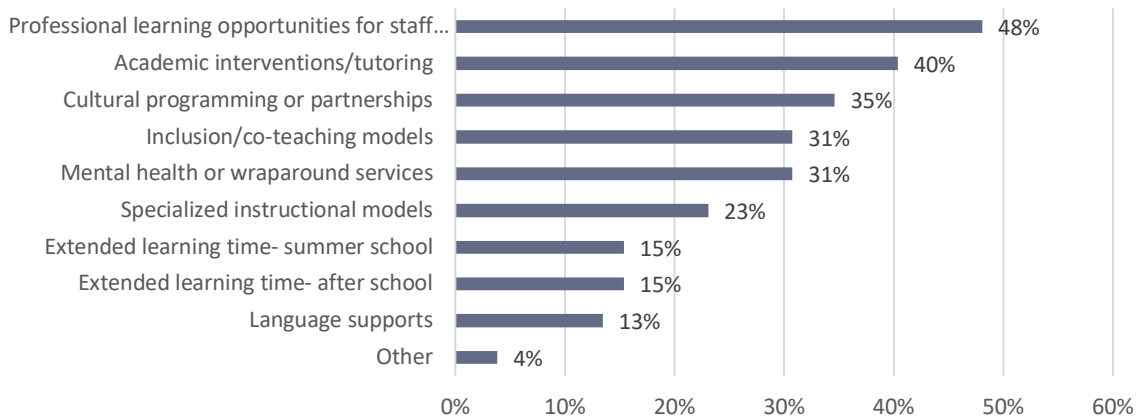
	At-Risk		English Learners		American Indian		Students with disabilities	
	Count	% of Responses	Count	% of Responses	Count	% of Responses	Count	% of Responses
Academic interventions/tutoring	40	77%	22	42%	21	40%	37	71%
Extended learning time- after school	16	31%	6	12%	8	15%	13	25%
Extended learning time- summer school	16	31%	8	15%	8	15%	20	38%
Mental health or wraparound services	29	56%	13	25%	16	31%	24	46%
Specialized instructional models	31	60%	15	29%	12	23%	33	63%
Language supports	10	19%	20	38%	7	13%	17	33%
Inclusion/co-teaching models	22	42%	13	25%	16	31%	28	54%
Cultural programming or partnerships	13	25%	10	19%	18	35%	12	23%
Professional learning opportunities for staff specifically on how to support	38	73%	25	48%	25	48%	38	73%



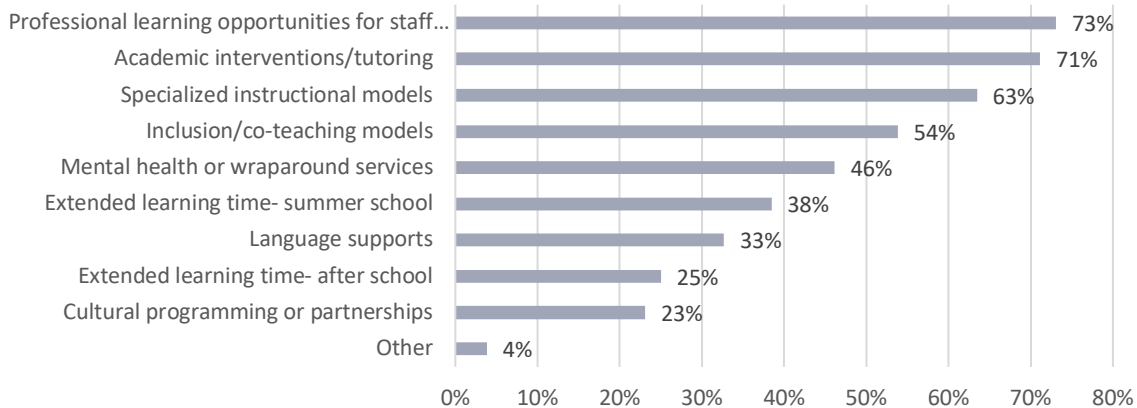
Targeted Supports for English Learners



Targeted Supports for American Indian Students



Targeted Supports for Students with Disabilities



Which of the supports above have contributed most to improved student outcomes in your district for each group?

	At-Risk		English Learners		American Indian		Students with disabilities	
	Count	% of Responses	Count	% of Responses	Count	% of Responses	Count	% of Responses
Academic interventions/tutoring	23	55%	12	46%	14	56%	22	56%
Extended learning time- after school	2	5%	2	8%	2	8%	3	8%
Extended learning time- summer school	2	5%	2	8%	2	8%	3	8%
Mental health or wraparound services	7	17%	2	8%	2	8%	3	8%
Specialized instructional models	10	24%	6	23%	7	28%	10	26%
Language supports	0	0%	4	15%	0	0%	0	0%
Inclusion/co-teaching models	2	5%	1	4%	1	4%	4	10%
Cultural programming or partnerships	0	0%	1	4%	3	12%	0	0%
Professional learning opportunities for staff specifically on how to support	5	12%	4	15%	4	16%	9	23%

Student Mental Health

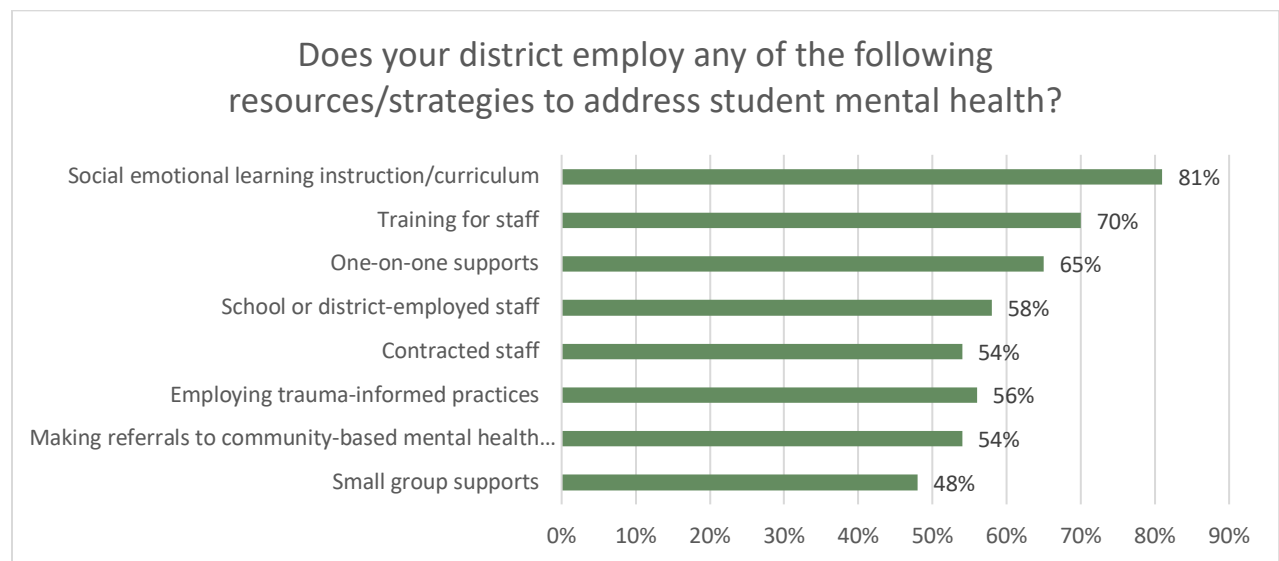
Please describe how your district supports student mental health:

Districts described a variety of ways they support student mental health, including:

- Contracted counseling and therapy support through local agencies and cooperatives as well as virtual providers
- In-school support from guidance counselors and therapists, working with individual students as well as working with small groups and coordinating lessons for the school
- Teacher training and professional development, especially for districts without in-school counseling support; this included in-service trainings for school staff, additional education/certifications for individual staff members, and teachers attending the MSSA counselor training annually
- Use of surveys, screeners, and behavior risk assessments
- Implementation of MTSS, with regular team meetings and discussion about how to best meet students' mental health needs
- Fostering a positive culture throughout the school community through various programs (character, social emotional learning, etc.) within the school and by engaging families to create meaningful relationships

Does your district employ any of the following resources/strategies to address student mental health?

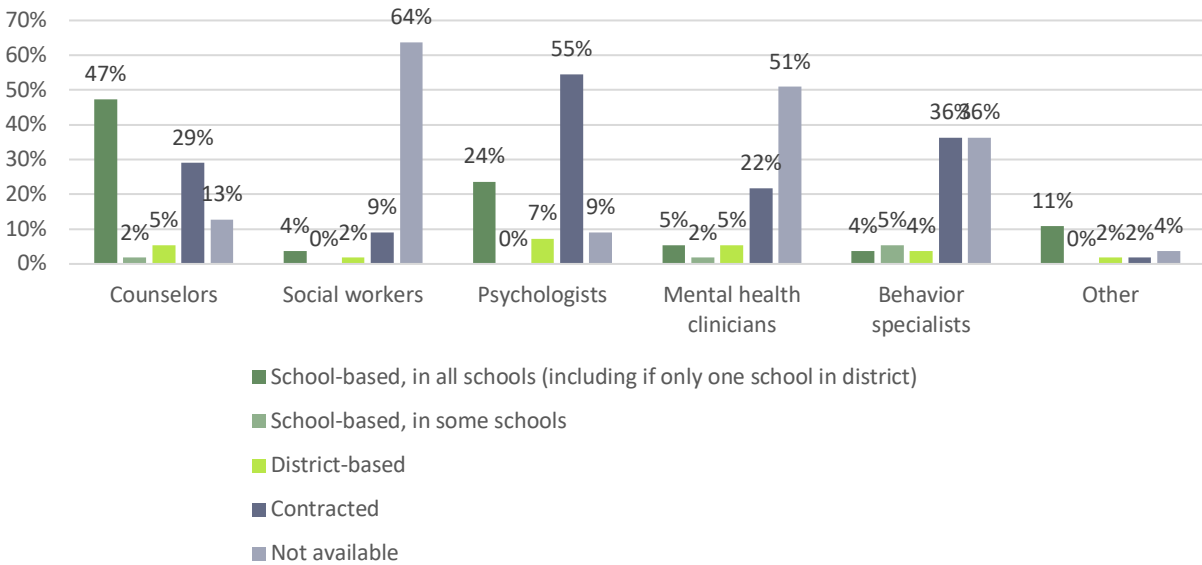
Does your district employ any of the following resources/strategies to address student mental health?	% of Responses	Count
Small group supports	48%	26
Making referrals to community-based mental health services	54%	29
Employing trauma-informed practices	56%	30
Contracted staff	54%	27
School or district-employed staff	58%	29
One-on-one supports	65%	35
Training for staff	70%	38
Social emotional learning instruction/curriculum	81%	44



Are the following staff available in your district to support student mental health?

	School-based, in all schools (including if only one school in district)		School-based, in some schools		District-based		Contracted		Not available	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Counselors	26	47%	1	2%	3	5%	16	29%	7	13%
Social workers	2	4%	0	0%	1	2%	5	9%	35	64%
Psychologists	13	24%	0	0%	4	7%	30	55%	5	9%
Mental health clinicians	3	5%	1	2%	3	5%	12	22%	28	51%
Behavior specialists	2	4%	3	5%	2	4%	20	36%	20	36%

Are the following staff available in your district to support student mental health?

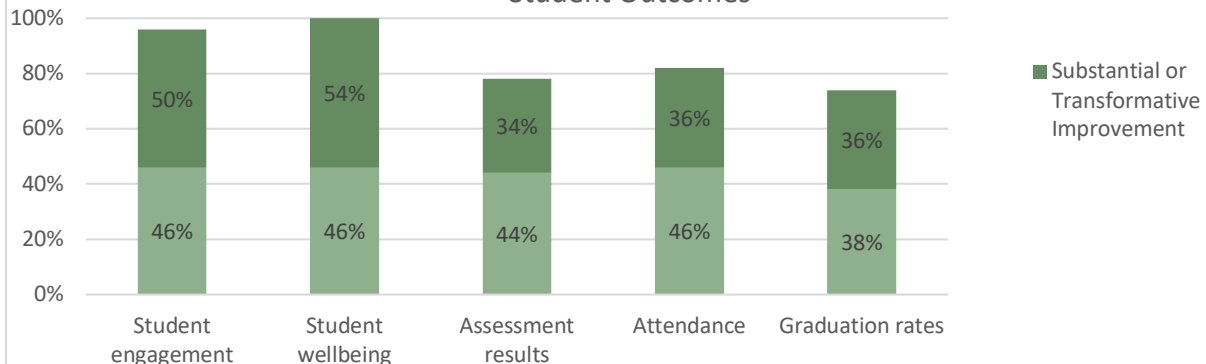


How do you think your district's efforts to support student mental health have impacted student outcomes?

How do you think your district's efforts to support student mental health have impacted student outcomes?

	No noticeable improvement	Minor improvement	Moderate improvement	Substantial improvement	Transformative improvement
Student wellbeing	2%	8%	43%	36%	11%
Student engagement	2%	6%	43%	41%	9%
Attendance	9%	17%	42%	25%	8%
Assessment results	11%	13%	43%	26%	7%
Graduation rates	18%	15%	35%	25%	7%

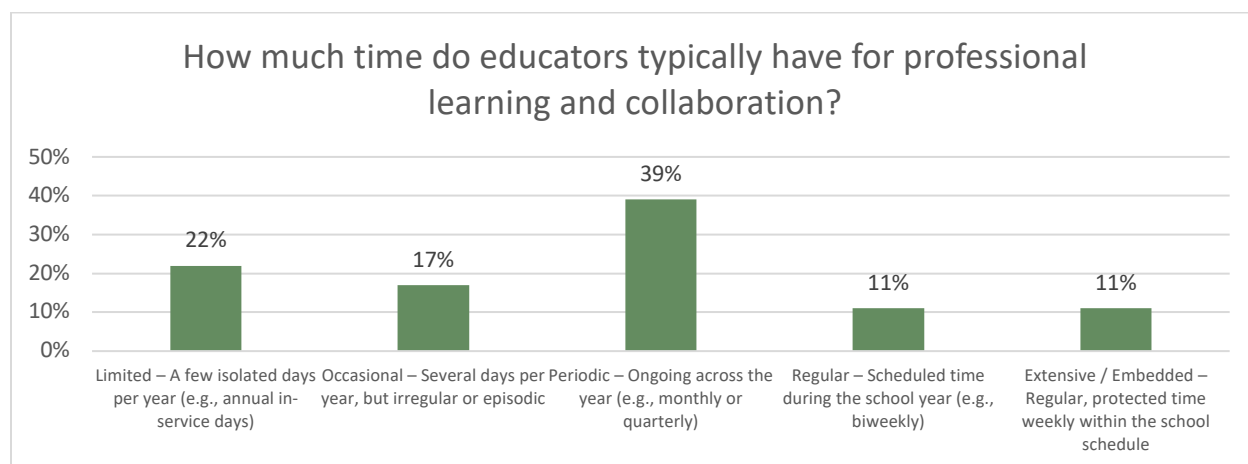
Areas with Moderate and Substantial or Transformative Improvement on Student Outcomes



Staff Professional Development

How much time do educators typically have for professional learning and collaboration?

How much time do educators typically have for professional learning and collaboration?	Count	Percent
Limited – A few isolated days per year (e.g., annual in-service days)	12	22%
Occasional – Several days per year, but irregular or episodic	9	17%
Periodic – Ongoing across the year (e.g., monthly or quarterly)	21	39%
Regular – Scheduled time during the school year (e.g., biweekly)	6	11%
Extensive / Embedded – Regular, protected time weekly within the school schedule	6	11%



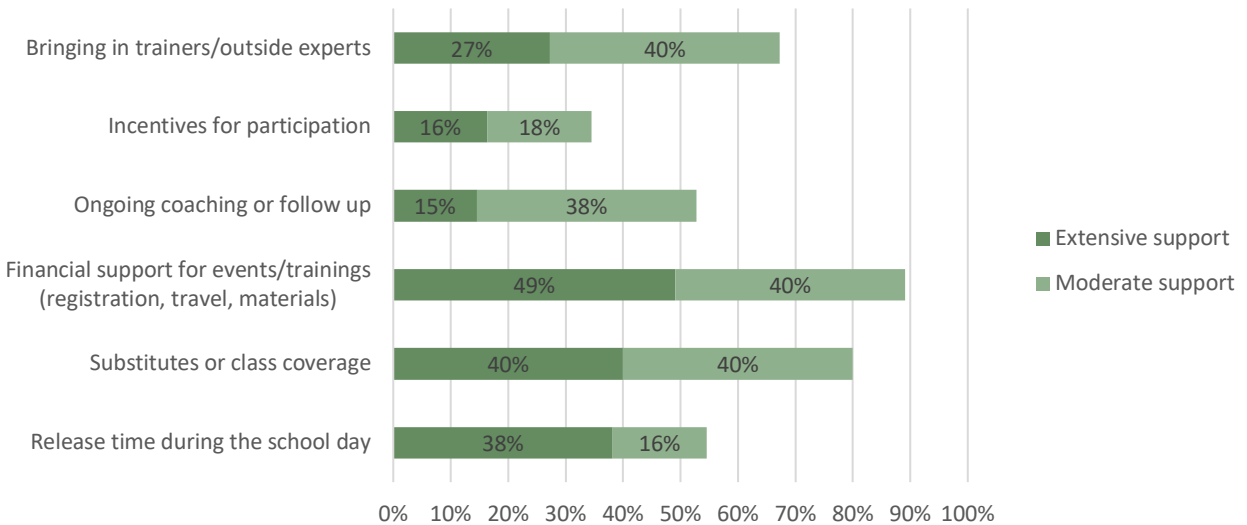
Who identifies and provides professional opportunities in your district?

	All PD	Most PD	Some PD	Few PD	No PD	N/A
School district	27%	38%	27%	5%	0%	0%
Individual schools	11%	20%	22%	11%	0%	27%
Grade-level or department teams	11%	11%	24%	9%	5%	29%
Individual educators	20%	16%	33%	16%	0%	11%

How does your district support educators to participate in professional development opportunities?

	Extensive support	Moderate support	Limited support	No support	Not applicable
Release time during the school day	21	9	15	1	6
Substitutes or class coverage	22	22	7	0	3
Financial support for events/trainings (registration, travel, materials)	27	22	4	0	2
Ongoing coaching or follow up	8	21	16	2	6
Incentives for participation	9	10	11	8	16
Bringing in trainers/outside experts	15	22	13	0	4
Other (please specify below)	4	2	0	0	1

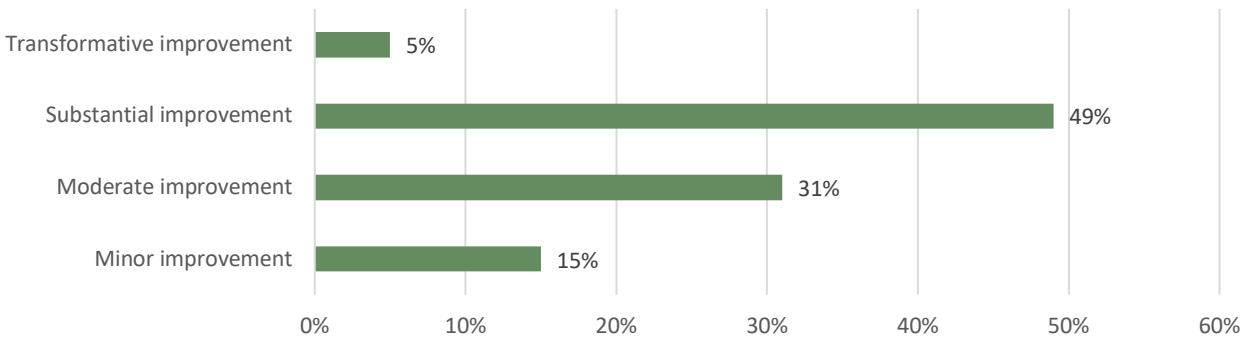
How does your district support educators to participate in professional development opportunities?



To what extent has professional development improved instructional practice in your district?

To what extent has professional development improved instructional practice in your district?	Percent	Count
Minor improvement	15%	8
Moderate improvement	31%	17
Substantial improvement	49%	27
Transformative improvement	5%	3

To what extent has professional development improved instructional practice in your district?



What have been the most effective professional learning strategies for improving teacher practice in your district?

Districts identified what they consider the most effective professional learning strategies for improving teacher practice, including:

- **Tailored Professional Learning Opportunities**
 - Tailored to individual teacher's specific needs
 - Aligned with curriculum used in the districts, provided by the curriculum company
 - Targeted to specific content areas or approaches such as proficiency-based learning
 - In-person guest presenters and trainers, allowing for greater personal connections and learning
- **Collaborative in Nature**
 - Regular opportunities for educators to learn together through professional learning communities
 - In small schools, opportunities to collaborate with teachers from other small schools in the state
 - Integrating instructional coaching to provide immediate feedback and strategies for teachers during the school day
- **Data-Driven**
 - Engaging staff members in school and student data to drive decision making
 - MTSS process guides the identification of professional development needs
 - Engaging external consultants and partnerships to provide support and training

Closing

In what ways, if any, did your district's finances (funding level and/or spending approach) enable your student outcome successes?

Respondents said the following:

- Strategic use of limited resources
- Grants and supplemental funding are critical
- Investing in teachers and staff matters most
- Linked financial decisions to the ability to maintain small class sizes, provide individualized instruction, and offer targeted interventions
- Community support strengthens financial stability
- Current funding is often not enough – districts hit a ceiling of student success from limited funding.

Anything else the Commission should know about your district's financial circumstances relative to other districts?

Respondents shared:

- **Funding Gaps & Inequity**
 - Many districts describe funding as bare bones or insufficient
 - Small/rural districts face structural disadvantages
 - Reliance on levies and local tax base drives inequity
 - Many want a more stable, equitable funding formula
- **Staffing & Cost Pressures**
 - Salaries and benefits dominate budgets

- Teacher recruitment/retention is strained by housing and wage pressures
- Rising operating costs leave less for programs and supports
- **Instability & Limited Flexibility**
 - Enrollment swings and failed levies create volatility
 - Districts report little room for innovation or extras
 - Many are operating lean, with staff covering multiple roles
- **Strong Outcomes Despite Constraints**
 - Districts emphasize efficiency, staff dedication, and community support
 - Many believe additional investment would significantly expand impact

Are there any other factor(s) that contribute to your district's success that this survey has not yet captured?

Respondents highlighted:

- Small size that enables personalization
- Dedicated, high-quality staff
- Staff retention and stability
- Strong community support
- Positive school culture and relationships
- Targeted systems and instructional supports
- Well-rounded and engaging learning experiences
- Student-centered mission