

Improving Student Wellbeing: Implementing On-Campus Interventions in PAUSD Schools

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Methodology

1

Databases such as SARC and Google Scholar were used to collect data on PAUSD, as well as studies containing meaningful data pertaining to successful in-school interventions to promote student well-being.

2

A literature survey was conducted regarding the importance and roles of school psychologists and counselors in the promotion of student well-being throughout K-12 education, as well as the federally recommended ratio of students to school counselors and psychologists.

3

Quantitative data was collected from the 2020-2021 SARC records regarding student enrollment across PAUSD schools, as well as the total FTE(full-time equivalent) hours for school psychologists and counselors that year, in order to determine whether or not PAUSD is meeting the federally recommended ratio of students to school counselors and psychologists.

CORRELATIONAL AND EVALUATION RESEARCH

DATABASES AND MEASUREMENTS

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND SUMMARIZING

Conclusions

Insufficient psychologists and counselors for Palo Alto's student population.

Data supports PAUSD meeting federal recommendations for student-to-counselor/psychologist ratio.

Counselors and psychologists are trained to support students in meeting educational goals.

PAUSD's investment in the staffing of elementary school psychologists meeting federal guidelines is wise for optimal early intervention/support.

The gap in middle and high school staffing of psychologists and counselors should be addressed with priority.

Introduction

- Rates of mental illness among youth have been increasing over time and the pandemic only exacerbated the issue
- Mental illness and low levels of well-being can have lasting impacts on students' current and future success academically and throughout their lives
- While support services are in place, students claim PAUSD has failed to proactively address student mental health needs despite their proclaimed interest in student wellbeing, and more support is needed.
- In-school support services to support student well-being have been proven to positively impact student wellbeing.

Data & Findings

- Practitioners note that early intervention and prevention efforts are important, especially in elementary and middle school years.
- Only about 1/2 of students with mental health challenges are recognized and treated by educators, psychologists, clinicians, or pediatricians.
- School psychologists specialize in factors that influence SBMH programs and services; “developmental risk factors, the impact of behavior and mental health on learning and life skill development, instructional design, organization and operation of schools, and evidence-based strategies for promoting mental health and wellness”.
- School counselors serve students and parents by evaluating student abilities, addressing learning challenges, and assisting in personal and career development.
- Many school districts do not meet recommended staffing levels for counselors and psychologists.

Implications & Next Steps

- Despite stated and budgeted investment in student wellbeing, PAUSD lacks sufficient staffing to support student needs.
- Filling the staffing gap in PAUSD would benefit students within the district. Literature supports better academic and life performance with improved mental and emotional well-being through in-school mental health interventions; counselors and psychologists.
- PAUSD claims to prioritize students' well-being, but literature suggests suicide remains prevalent and students need more support. Insufficient staffing shown in SARC data indicates more work is needed to back up progress claims.
- Quantitative staffing data is strong, but privacy concerns prevented access to survey data on student satisfaction with the current level of support granted, mental health faculty data, and data on interventions implemented previously. Filling these gaps would provide better support for critical PAUSD decisions regarding mental health goals.

Figure 1: Percentage PAUSD School Psychologist Full Time Equivalent Hours per 500 Students by School Type

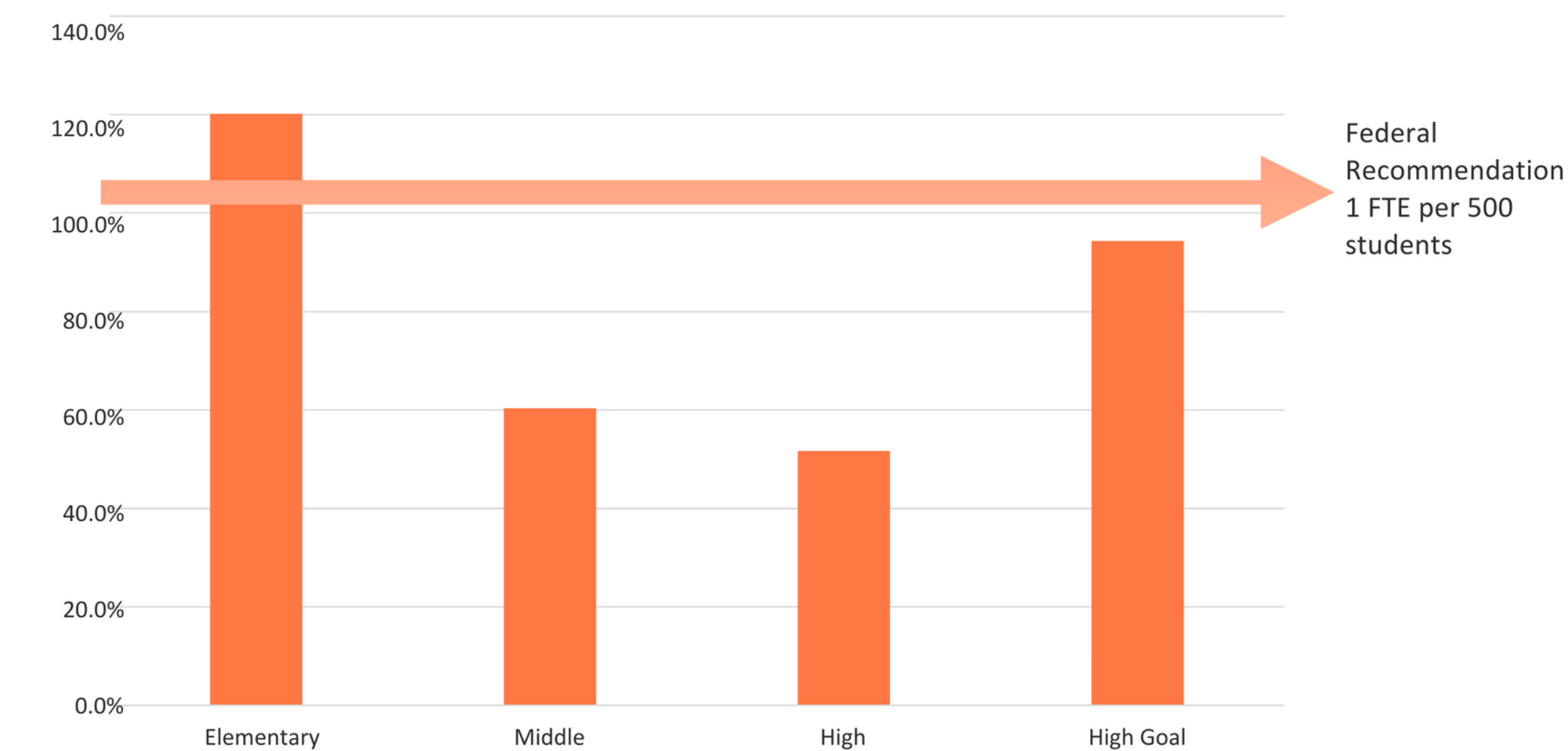


Figure 1 shows how many Full-Time-Equivalent(FTE) hours for school psychologists per every 500 students currently staffed at each school level. In addition, it shows that 1 Full-Time-Equivalent per 500 students (100%) is recommended by Federal guidelines. It can be concluded that PAUSD Elementary School's staffing of psychologists is above adequate for the Federal goal of having a minimum of 1 full-time-equivalent psychologist per every 500 students. However, staffing of psychologists at the Middle and High schools is well below Federal recommendations and the goal of the High schools is to meet that requirement.

Figure 2: Percentage PAUSD School Counselor FTEs per 250 students by School Type

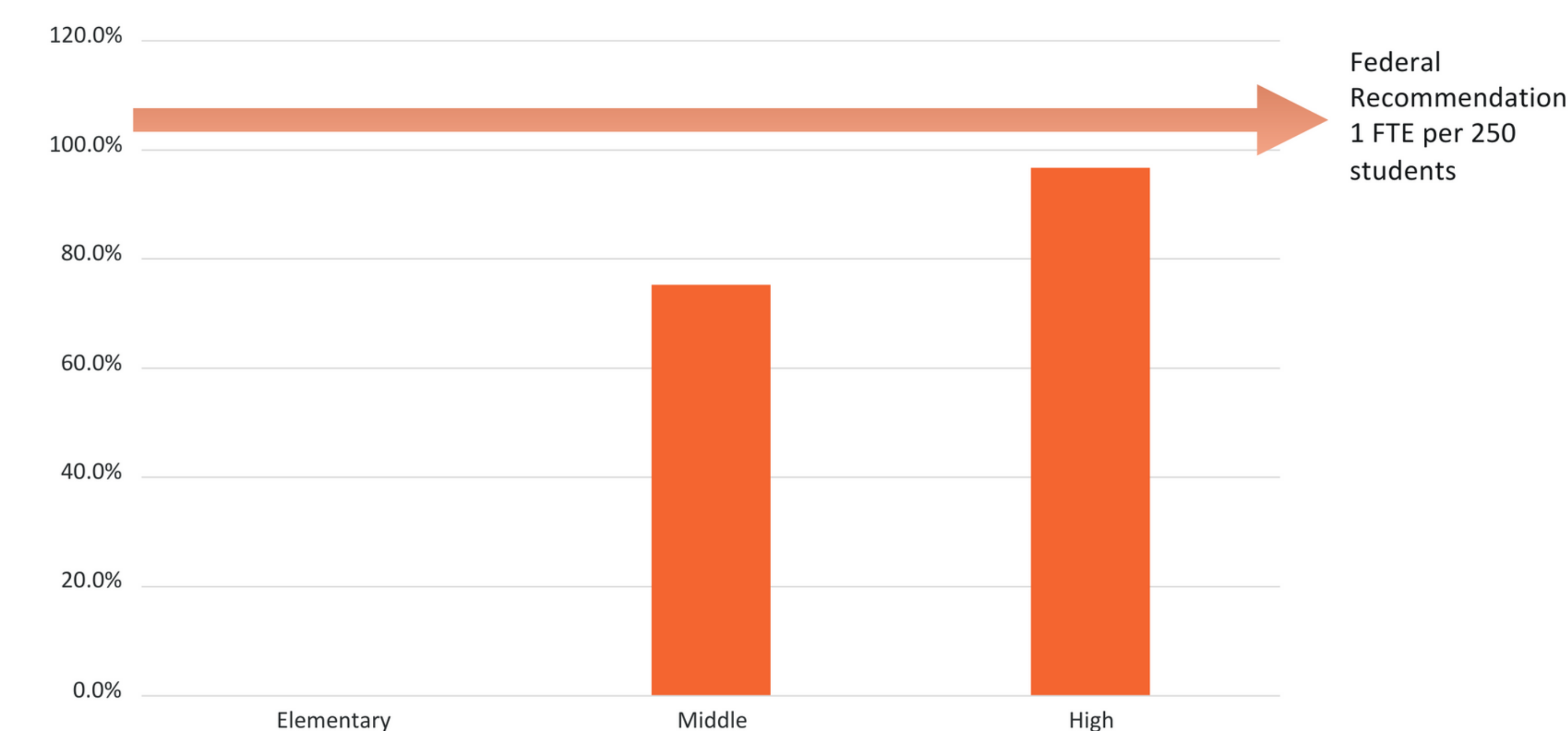


Figure 2 shows how many Full-Time-Equivalent(FTE) hours for school counselors per every 250 students currently staffed at each PAUSD school level. In addition, it shows that 1 Full-Time-Equivalent per 250 students (100%) is recommended by Federal guidelines. This graph shows that PAUSD Elementary school and Middle School staffing of counselors is below the federal goal of having a minimum of 1 counselor per every 250 students. However, the staffing of counselors at the High school level is meeting Federal Recommendations.

Citations



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