



# Mental Health and Wellness in Palo Alto Schools: An Analysis of Students' Opinions on Various Programs in Palo Alto High School

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## INTRODUCTION

Ask anyone in Silicon Valley what the biggest problem at Palo Alto High School is, and their mind will immediately jump to suicide. Suicide and mental health are extremely prevalent issues in Palo Alto, with the teen suicide rate four times higher than the national average (Goyal, 2008). So what, then, is the root problem? The school has responded with a number of programs to improve mental health and wellness in this community. These programs are being put into place to help, but how effective are they, and what do students think of them? This is what I will be researching in my capstone project.

## DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION

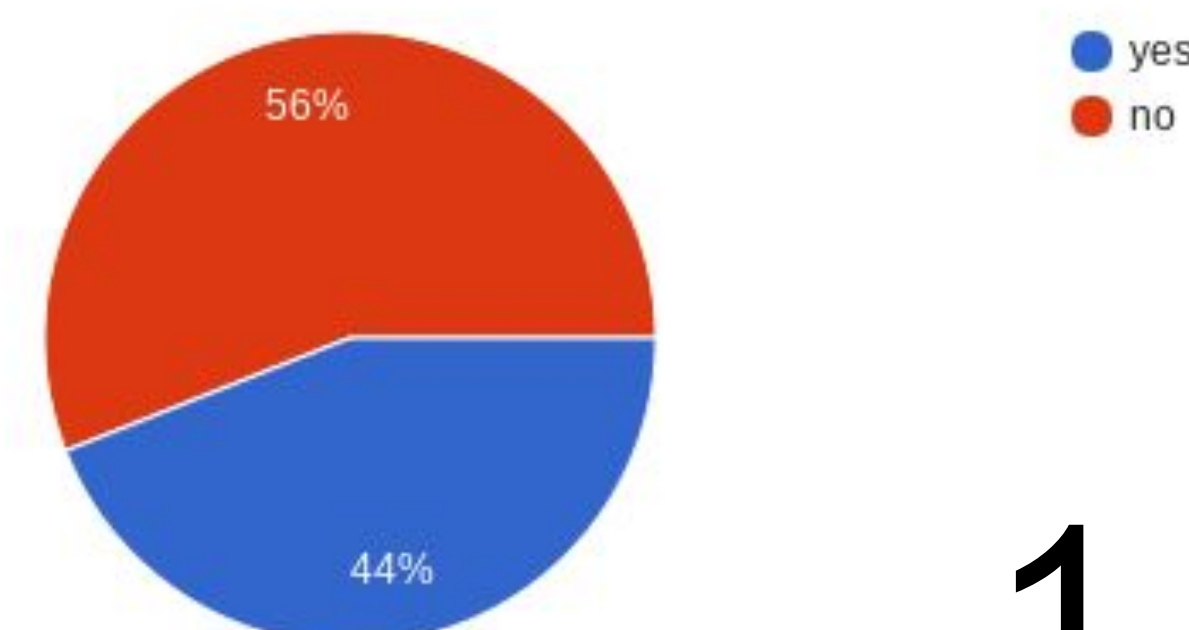
What I see as a trend in these results is the number of students asking for more awareness about Sources of Strength schoolwide. I am pleasantly surprised at how thoughtful the responses are; it looks like most people actually put effort into their words. The next step is to contact Sources of Strength and work with them to implement these ideas. Students seem more satisfied with the wellness center, so I think it will be easier to contact and work with them. From Figures 3 and 4, I can see that students are more satisfied with the wellness center than Sources of Strength. I hope to work more with SOS than the wellness center because of this. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, students seem split 50/50 on how they feel about the wellness center.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

I used action research, which solves a problem by making change. I also used evaluation research, an evaluation of a subject (programs at Paly) to decide the subject's merit, worth, and significance, to determine the effectiveness of different programs at school that are supposed to improve mental health. I used descriptive and inferential statistics, and I used an online survey to question the students. Lastly, I used coding to identify common themes in students' answers. I did not need any tools, except computers. I collected both quantitative and qualitative data.

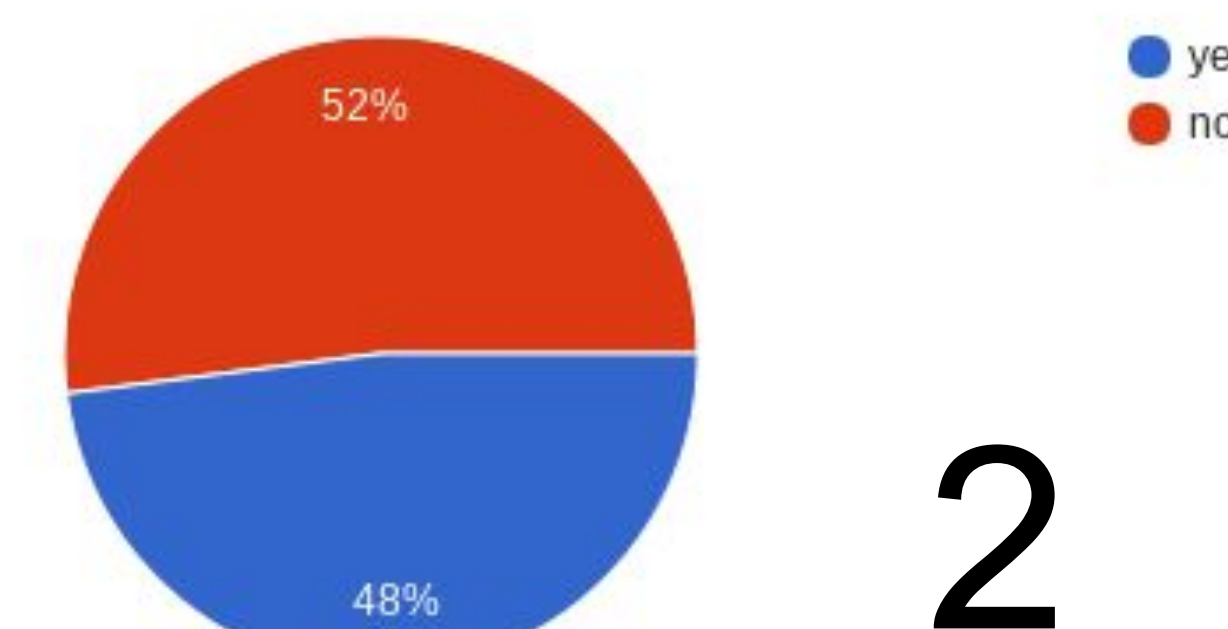
## DATA AND FINDINGS

Do you feel that the wellness center is helpful to you in terms of mental health?  
25 responses



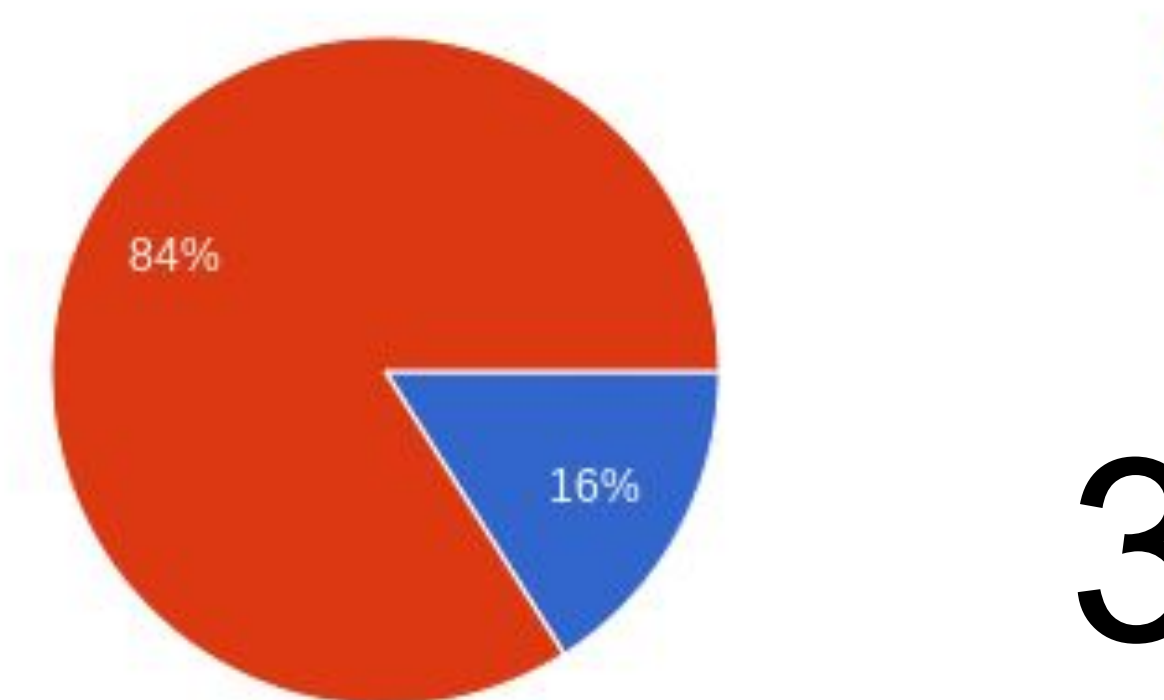
1

Do you feel that the wellness center has positively impacted your school-related stress?  
25 responses



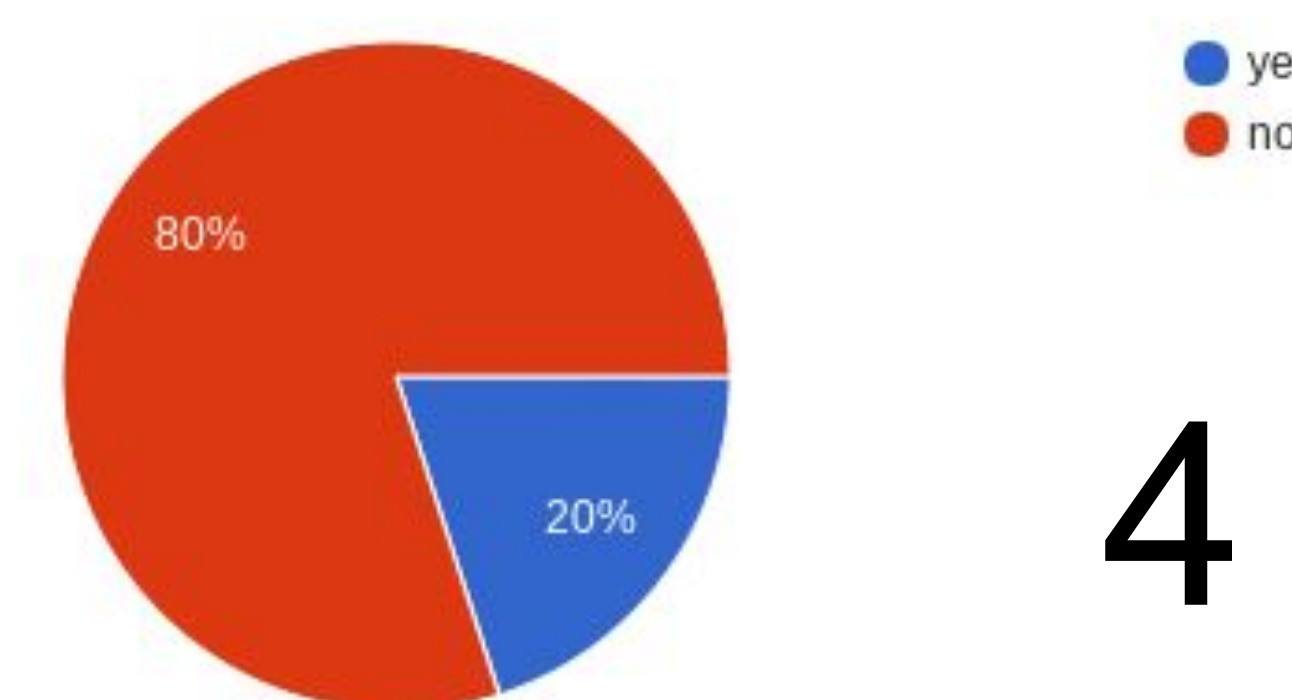
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Do you feel that Sources of Strength has positively impacted your school-related stress?  
25 responses



3

Do you feel that Sources of Strength has positively impacted your non-school-related stress?  
25 responses



4

Date	Task Details
Jan 8 - 14	Time & Location: Paly, during school hours and by myself after school People Involved: Julia Chang, Josh Bloom, Ms. Modaniel, my mentor Materials: Nothing What will be accomplished: Survey students and begin analyzing and reading through all data
Jan 15 - 21	Time & Location: Paly, during school hours and by myself after school People Involved: Julia Chang, Josh Bloom, Ms. Modaniel, my mentor Materials: Spreadsheet What will be accomplished: Finish coding and analysis, start writing plan
Jan 22 - 28	Time & Location: Paly, during school hours and by myself after school People Involved: Julia Chang, Josh Bloom, Ms. Modaniel, my mentor Materials: Spreadsheet What will be accomplished: Finish and present plan of action
Jan 29 - Feb 4	Time & Location: Paly, during school hours and by myself after school People Involved: Julia Chang, Josh Bloom, Ms. Modaniel, my mentor Materials: Don't know yet What will be accomplished: Implement changes in programs
Feb 5 - 11	Time & Location: Paly, during school hours and by myself after school People Involved: Julia Chang, Josh Bloom, Ms. Modaniel, my mentor Materials: Spreadsheet

## CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

What I've found is that students are, as I predicted, dissatisfied with Sources of Strength as a whole, and the wellness center to a lesser extent. I am going to bring these results to the leaders of Sources of Strength, and we will try to work to implement student suggestions and feedback to improve the program. After this, I will survey students again. There is less data about *what* to do, and more about what students think, so I will have to brainstorm solutions.



<https://www.facebook.com/sourcesofstrength/>

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