

Healthy Schools



Connecting education, health, & community

Annual Report | 2023-2024



"I think [Healthy Schools] has brought a lot of help improving relationships between staff and with students, and helped with information about community resources as well as building relationships with students and helping organize events for family engagement.

-High School Staff

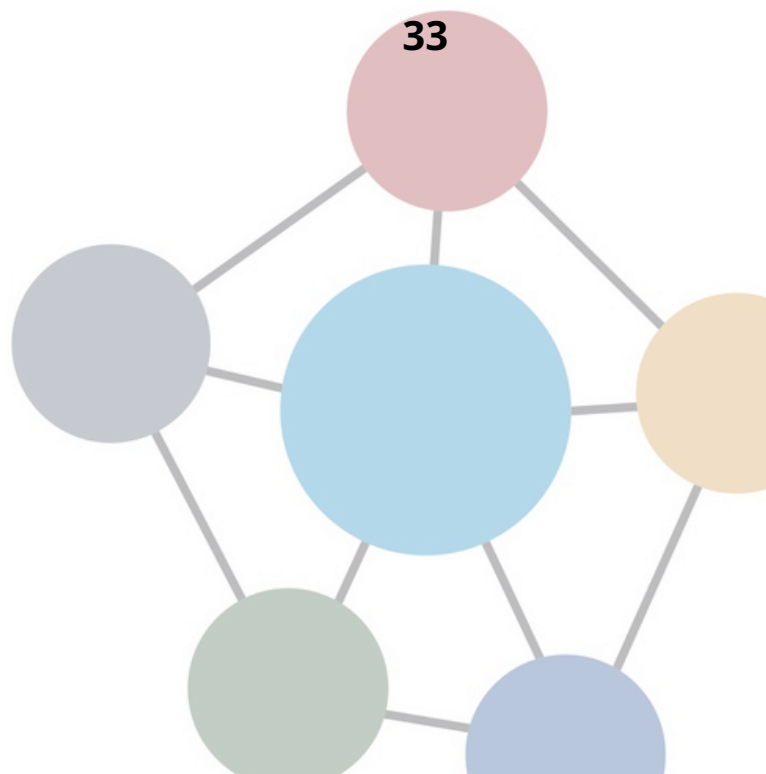
Our Genders and Sexualities Alliance club [co-advised by Healthy Schools staff] has reached students who I think would struggle without some support. We had two students who graduated that I really do not think would have graduated at all if it was not for this club.

-High School Teacher



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2023-2024 school year was *Healthy Schools*' third year of operation. The program launched in the 2021-2022 school year at the district office and in two high schools in Bend-La Pine Schools (BLS). We expanded to reach 10 BLS secondary (middle and high) schools in 2022-2023, and then expanded to reach all 14 secondary schools in the district this school year (2023-2024). This report includes program outcomes to this point from our three years of developing and delivering our program.

Decrease in Emergency Department and Stabilization Center visits

Over the 3 school years since *Healthy Schools* began, there has been a significant decrease in behavioral health Emergency Department and Stabilization Center visits for ages 11-17 living in zip codes with *Healthy Schools*, and not in zip codes without.

Healthy Schools has five program areas: 1) Links to Care, 2) Positive, Inclusive School Climate, 3) Health Education, 4) Family Engagement, and 5) SHIP Engagement. Some key results from these program areas include:

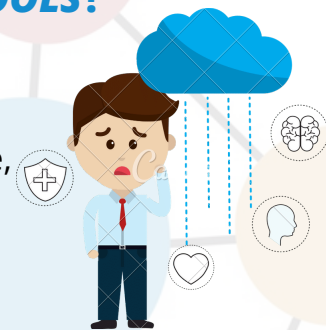
- All 14 BLS middle and high schools now have an on-site *Healthy Schools* Public Health Specialist serving as their School Health Coordinator.
- Most (12 of 14) BLS schools now have a *Sources of Strength* Peer Leader program, with 304 students (4%) trained as "Connectors to Help" and "Agents of Change."
- 100% of middle and high school Health teachers are using at least 2 effective, skills-based prevention education programs, and 100% are covering important prevention topics, including suicide and child sexual abuse prevention.
- *Care Solace* referrals resulting in behavioral health care appointments increased by 8% points so that now 60% of referrals now result in appointments and less than 1/3 of referrals remain unanswered.
- Every BLS middle school offered an internet safety workshop for parents of students in grades 4-10, which increased knowledge/skills and intention to use internet safety practices with their student at home.
- The amount of family newsletters with prevention and health promotion messaging doubled in both district and school newsletters.

A formal evaluation of the impact of Healthy Schools will be published in Fall 2025. A quasi-experimental design (interrupted time series analysis) will be used to test whether there has been a statistically significant decrease in the indicators of targeted student health outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

WHY DO WE NEED DESCHUTES COUNTY *HEALTHY SCHOOLS*?

Several national leaders in child and adolescent health have declared a **national youth mental health crisis**.¹ Factors contributing to this crisis include: media usage, academic pressure, access to mental health care, alcohol and drug use, witnessing violence or injustices, and feelings of an unstable future due to COVID-19, extreme weather events, and economic changes.²



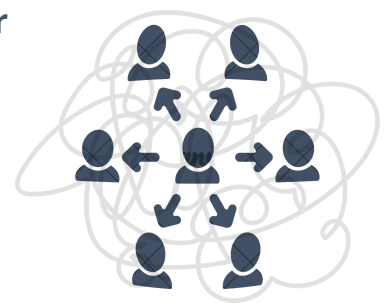
In Bend-La Pine Schools, 50% of middle and high school students reported feeling stressed, anxious, or depressed as a barrier to learning.³ Additionally, about a quarter reported their health or family's health (28%) and their personal relationships (23%) as a barrier to learning.³

This high rate of youth mental health issues exceeds the capacity of treatment providers alone and requires partnerships between public health, schools, youth and family, health care, and other organizations to address the root causes and link those in need to services.²



Schools are logical and efficient locations for public health interventions for youth. They are settings where learning is expected and new behaviors are learned and practiced daily. Children and adolescents spend nearly half of their waking hours at school for 13 years of their critical developmental years. More than 95% of youth ages 5-17 can be reached through schools.⁴

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other national leaders **recommend having a designated coordinator in schools** to improve school health practices, across the whole school and with community partners and resources, to address the health and development needs of every child.⁵⁻⁷ A coordinator is needed to work across roles, teams, and organizations to turn sectorized chaos into a coordinated system of supports.⁵⁻⁷ This, often called **coordinated school health**, is public health work in a public health setting.



In Oregon, the coordinated school health approach is also associated with schools having more effective prevention practices; healthier, competent, and confident students; higher grades; and fewer attendance and disciplinary violations.⁸ Further, this approach also leverages use of external resources within or through schools, reduces duplication and gaps in services, and improves awareness, support, and efficiency of school health services.⁶

WHAT IS DESCHUTES COUNTY HEALTHY SCHOOLS?

Healthy Schools embeds Deschutes County Public Health Specialists (PHSs) into the school system to provide schools with essential public health services. These services include assessing population health needs, facilitating collaborative planning, and coordinating projects to improve the health of the whole student population.⁹

Our PHSs serve as a coordinator to ensure that schools promote health and prevent student health issues from ever starting or worsening. PHSs do not take over the roles of school staff, but guide staff to use more effective practices.

The PHS enables their schools to reach Oregon's core capacity for a health-promoting school,⁸ which requires four elements:

1. Having a designated school health coordinator
2. Assembling a school health team
3. Assessing school health needs using an evidence-based assessment
4. Creating a school improvement plan

School-based prevention programs are effective at promoting positive youth development and decreasing substance use, mental health problems, and aggressive or disruptive behavior.¹⁰ Yet, effective prevention programs often fail when they are no longer guided into schools by prevention specialists. Educators and other school staff are not trained in how to adapt prevention programs to fit school needs without losing what makes the program work.¹¹⁻¹²

Our PHSs are in schools as an extension of Deschutes County Prevention and Health Promotion. They are a linkage between county prevention specialists and schools to assure prevention programs and practices are implemented in ways that remain effective in the school setting. PHSs "connect the dots" between schools, health, and community.

Essential Public Health Services















- Assess and monitor population health
- Address population health issues at the root cause
- Communicate effectively to inform and educate
- Strengthen, support, and mobilize communities and partnerships
- Create, champion, and implement public health initiatives

Read more about the 10 Essential Public Health Services at [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/10essential).⁹



WHO WAS SERVED OVER THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR

Healthy Schools phased-in over three school years, starting in November 2021. As of the 2023-2024 school year, all 14 Bend-La Pine Schools secondary (middle and high) schools have started *Healthy Schools*. That means all secondary schools have a designated Deschutes County Public Health Specialist working as part of their leadership team to improve prevention and health promotion practices, particularly to prevent suicide, substance use, violence, unhealthy relationships, and risky sex.

	La Pine Cluster	Bend High Cluster	Mountain View Cluster	Summit Cluster	Caldera Cluster
Pilot Schools Started Fall 2021					
Started Fall 2022					
Started Spring 2023					
Started Fall 2023					
Started Fall 2023					
Starts Fall 2024*					

*One rural K-8 school will be added to the Caldera cluster during the 2024-2025 school year to provide additional support to South County.

IMPROVED STUDENT HEALTH OUTCOMES

Ultimately, everything we do is to improve behavioral health outcomes for the whole adolescent population.

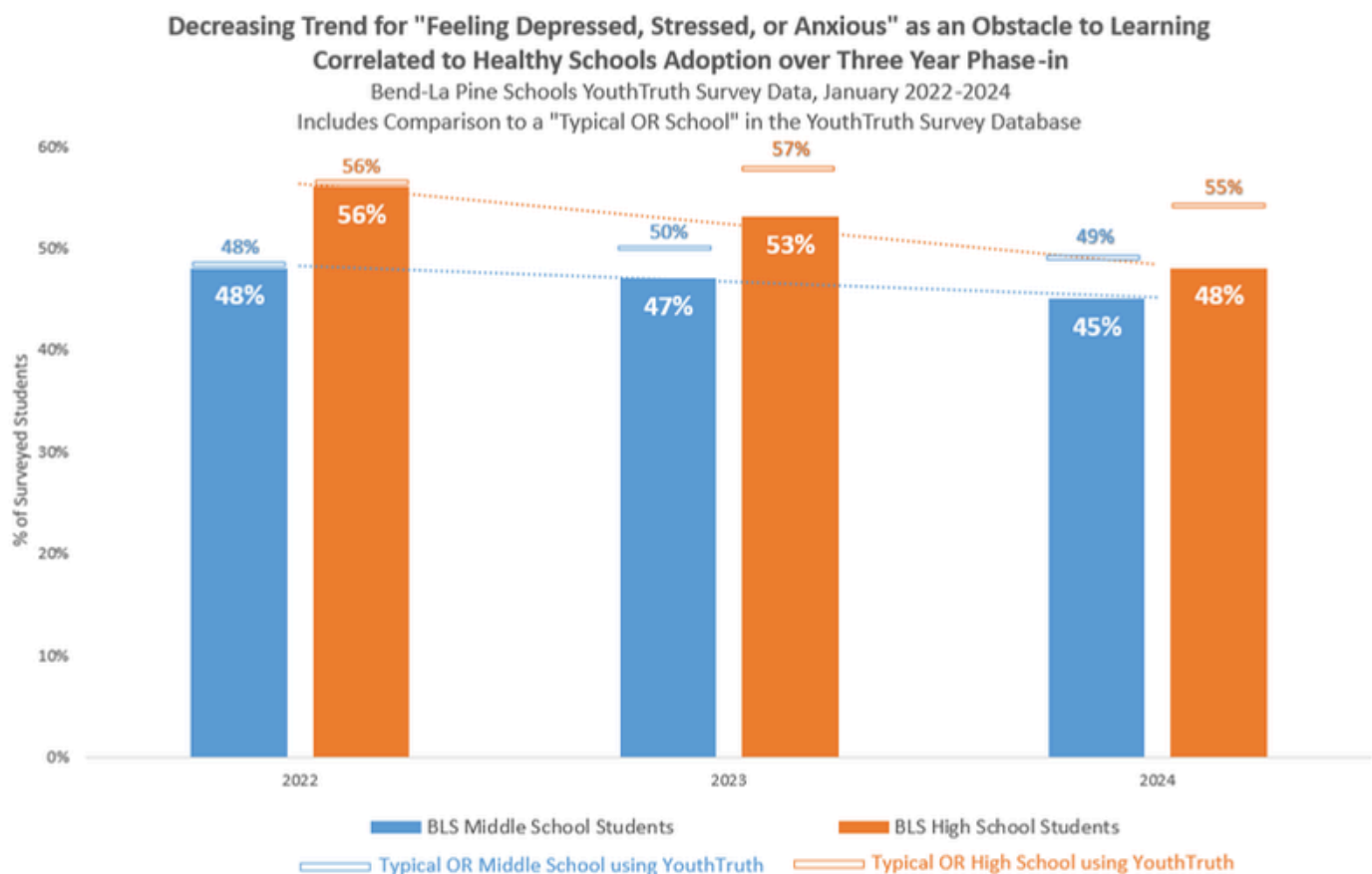
Our Targeted Health Outcomes

- ↓ Unmet Mental Health Care Needs
- ↓ Suicide
- ↓ Substance Use
- ↑ Positive Youth Development
- ↓ STIs and Teen Pregnancies
- ↓ Violence, Bullying, Bias
- ↓ Disparities

IMPROVED OUTCOMES CORRELATED TO HEALTHY SCHOOLS

We are beginning to see positive changes to student health indicators. These changes are correlated to our *Healthy Schools* expansion across the district's secondary (middle and high) schools over time. See page 7 for our phase-in timeline.

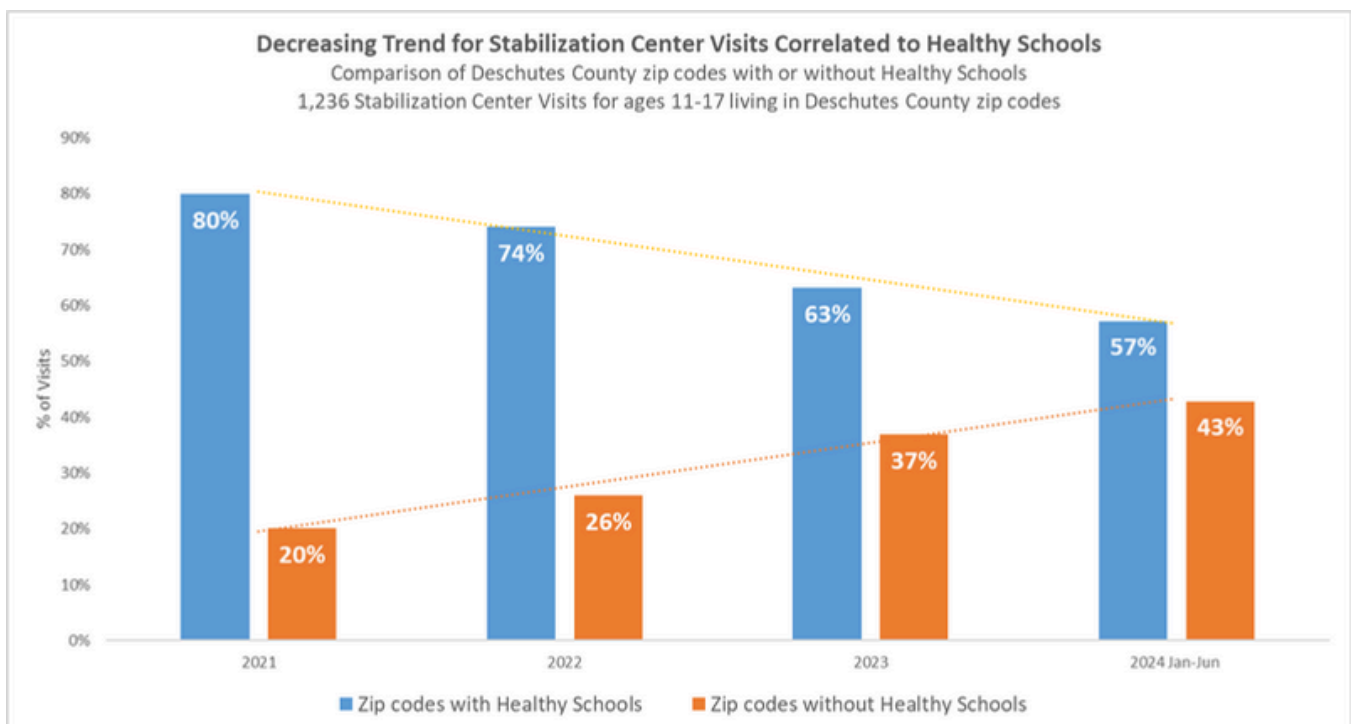
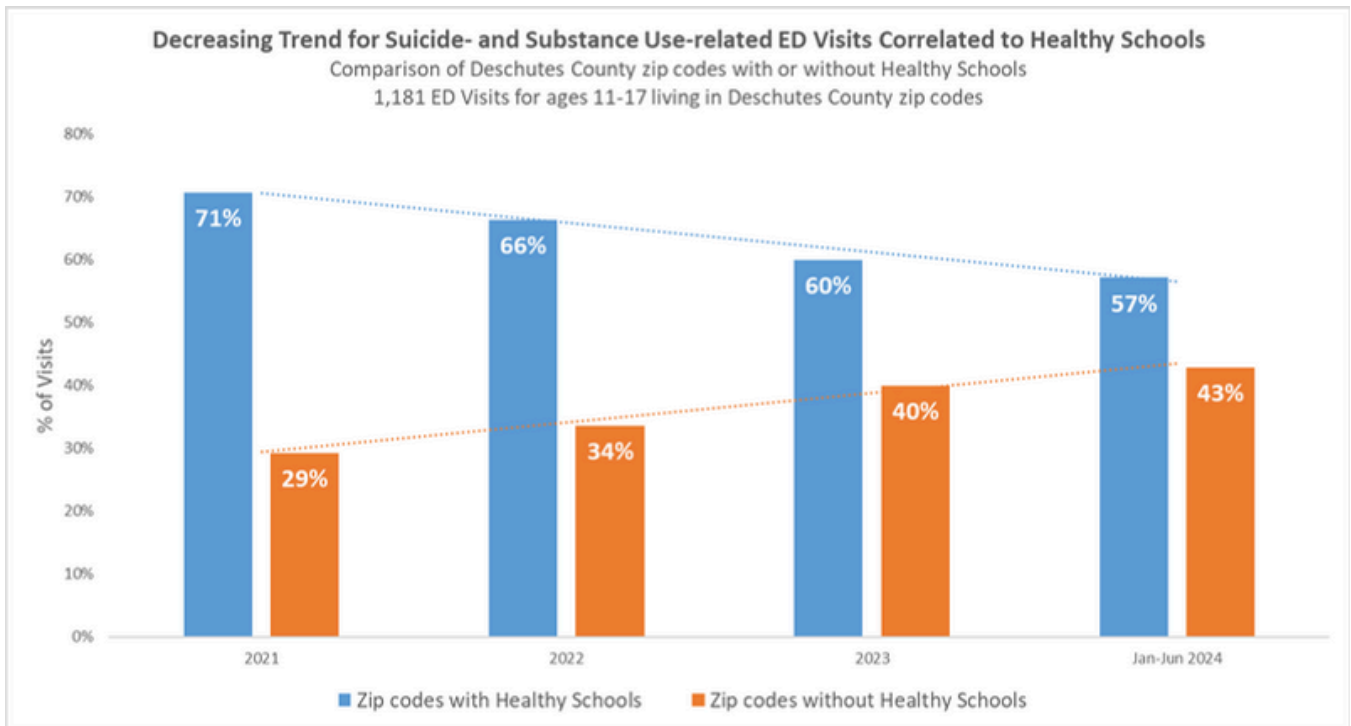
There is a decreasing trend for BLS secondary school students "feeling depressed, stressed, or anxious" as an obstacle to learning, especially for high school students.



Notably, BLS' rates were equal to a "Typical OR School" in the YouthTruth database at baseline (January 2022), but BLS' rates decreased while the comparison group stayed the same. This is an outcome we target with our services and the timeline of change aligns with *Healthy Schools*' 3-year phase in throughout all BLS secondary schools by January 2024.

Decrease in Behavioral Health Emergency and Crisis Visits

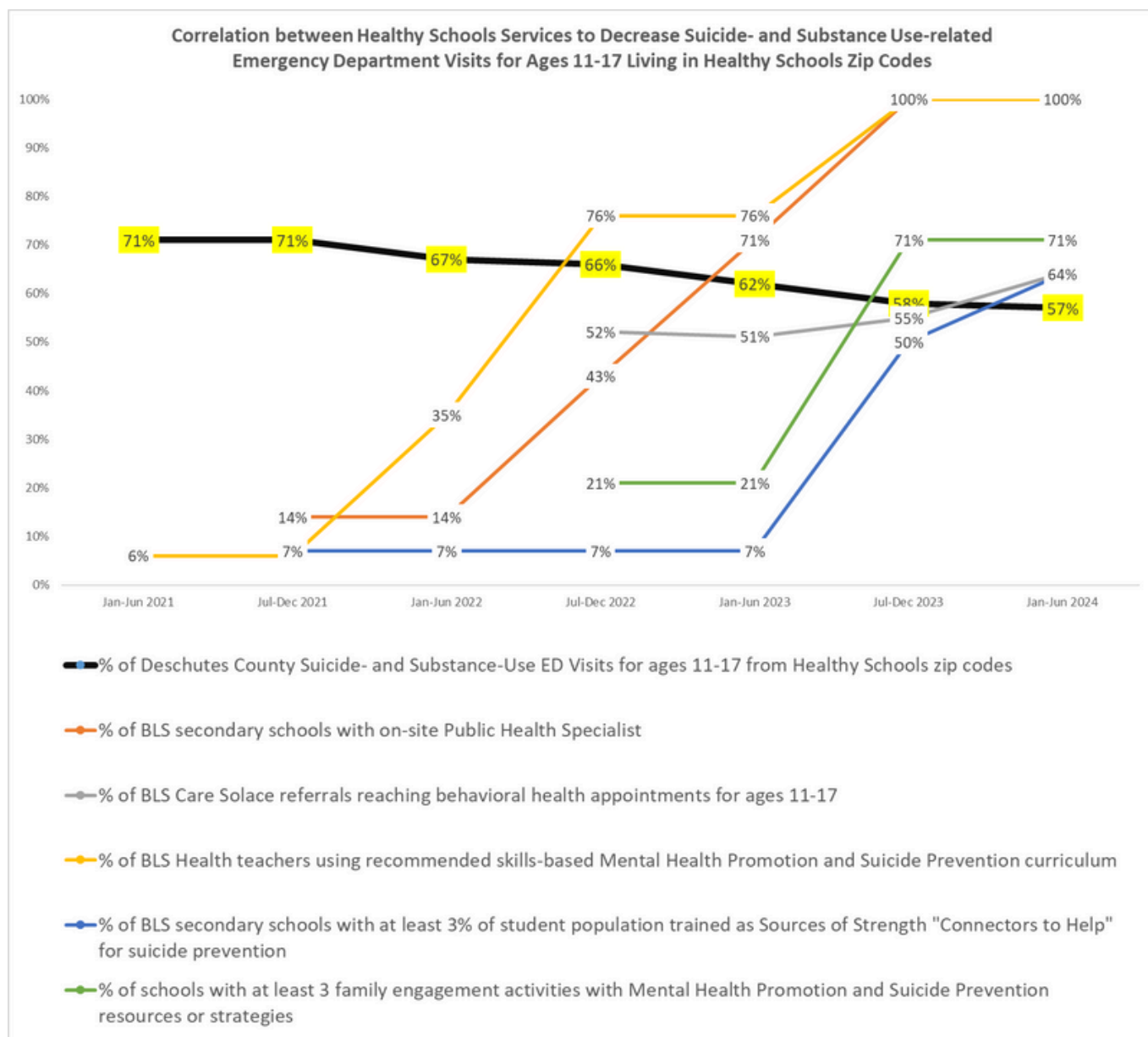
There are substantial decreases in two important student health outcomes correlated with *Healthy Schools* expansion over time: 1. Suicide- and substance use-related Emergency Department (ED) visits and 2. Stabilization Center (SC) visits. The same pattern is seen across two independent systems providing emergency and crisis behavioral health care: A **consistent, significant decrease** in the proportion of ED and SC visits **for only youth ages 11-17 living in zip codes with *Healthy Schools*** and not for zip codes without *Healthy Schools*.



Correlation between *Healthy Schools* and Decreased ED Visits

The line graph below shows the same reduction in suicide- and substance use-related ED visits for ages 11-17 living in zip codes with *Healthy Schools*. The **bolded black line** represents the same data from the bar graph on the previous page.

Overlaid with the ED data in the line graph are five *Healthy Schools* outcomes from services specifically targeting preventing behavioral health crises. See more details about *Healthy Schools* results through the remainder of this report.



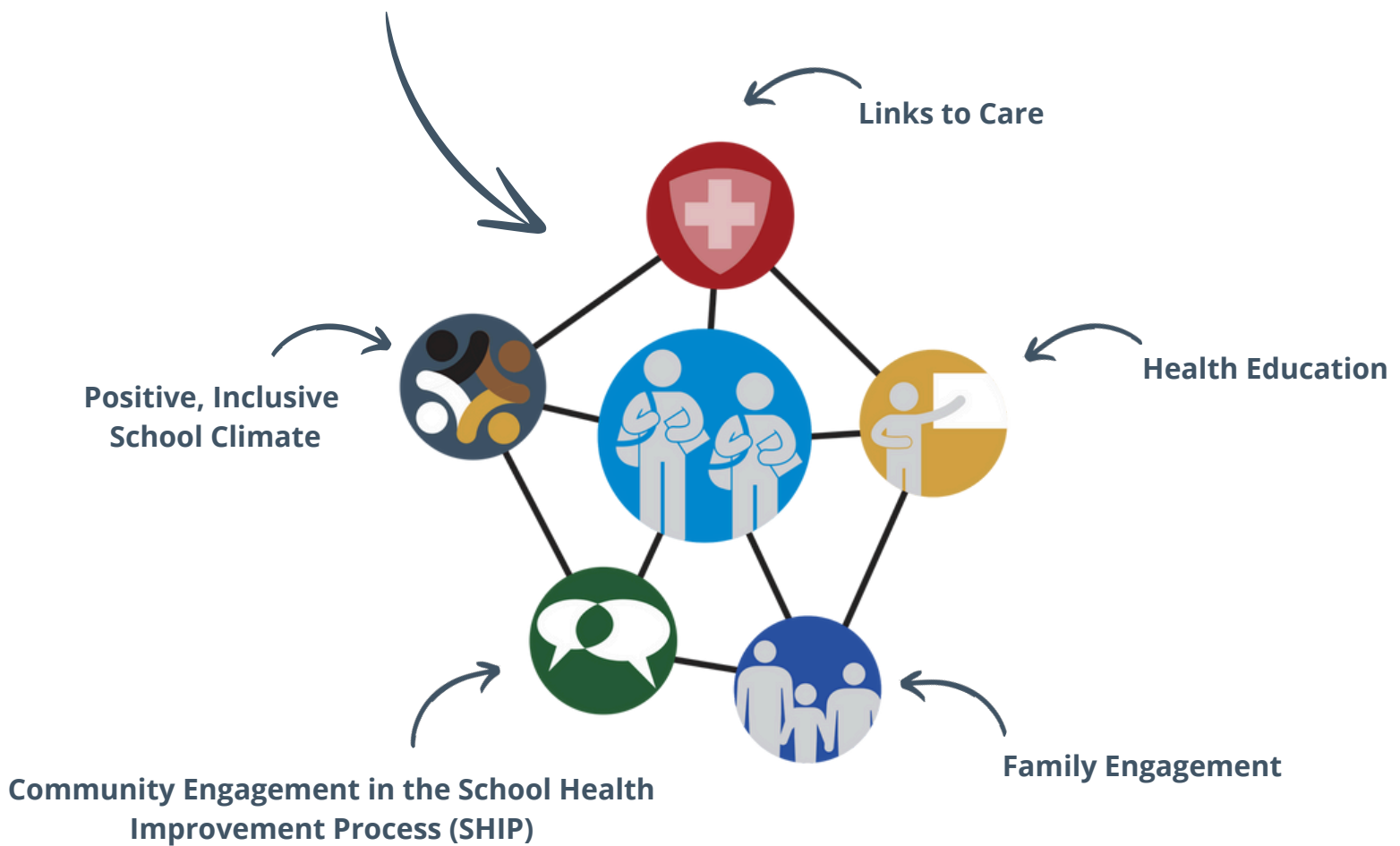
Formal Evaluation Expected Fall 2025

A formal evaluation of the impact of *Healthy Schools* will be published in Fall 2025. A quasi-experimental design (interrupted time series analysis) will be used to test whether there has been a change in targeted student health outcomes -- comparing a 3-year baseline to 3-years of data following *Healthy Schools*.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS RESULTS

Our Program Explained

Students are at the center of our community-engaged process to improve student health through schools. We employ multiple strategies, across 5 service areas, to address complex adolescent health issues from multiple angles. We use a public health approach to engage many school staff, students, families, and community partners in the process of improving the district and schools' prevention practices systemically. With this systemic, multi-angle approach, we prevent complex adolescent health issues across the whole student population. Below is an image that identifies our 5 service areas.



This program design is represented in our logo with the color-coded wrap-around "system of supports" icon in the top-right corner of the logo.

OUR FIVE PROGRAM AREAS: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

Healthy Schools has five service areas because **multi-component programs are most effective at changing adolescent health outcomes**. Adolescent health issues are complex, with many contributors. Therefore, we need to address these issues through multiple angles to provide enough protection. Below is a summary of each of our 5 service areas. The following pages show results for each service area.



1. Links to Care includes improving school staff's, students', and families' understanding of and connections to health and help resources in the community, including behavioral health services. This is critical for making it easier to address health issues early before they worsen into more complex and costly situations.¹²⁻¹³



2. Positive, Inclusive School Climate includes the use of school-wide interactions that create a social environment that improves student attendance, engagement in school, sense of safety and belonging, connection to staff and peers, and help-seeking. A safe and supportive school environment is linked to lower levels of student emotional distress, thinking about suicide, experiencing and perpetuating violence, substance use, and having risky sex or a sexually transmitted infection.¹²⁻¹⁴



3. Health Education, usually through Health classes, builds students' health and social skills to protect against future risks and practice healthy behaviors. Students build their health literacy -- the ability to find valid health information and use it to make health decisions based on their personal and family values and their personal needs.^{12-13,15}



4. Family Engagement includes engaging families (parents and caregivers) in their students' learning and development, informing them of student or school health issues and initiatives, and building their connections and sense of community in their school. Family engagement in school is linked to better, healthier student behaviors, academic success, and social skills.^{12-14,16}



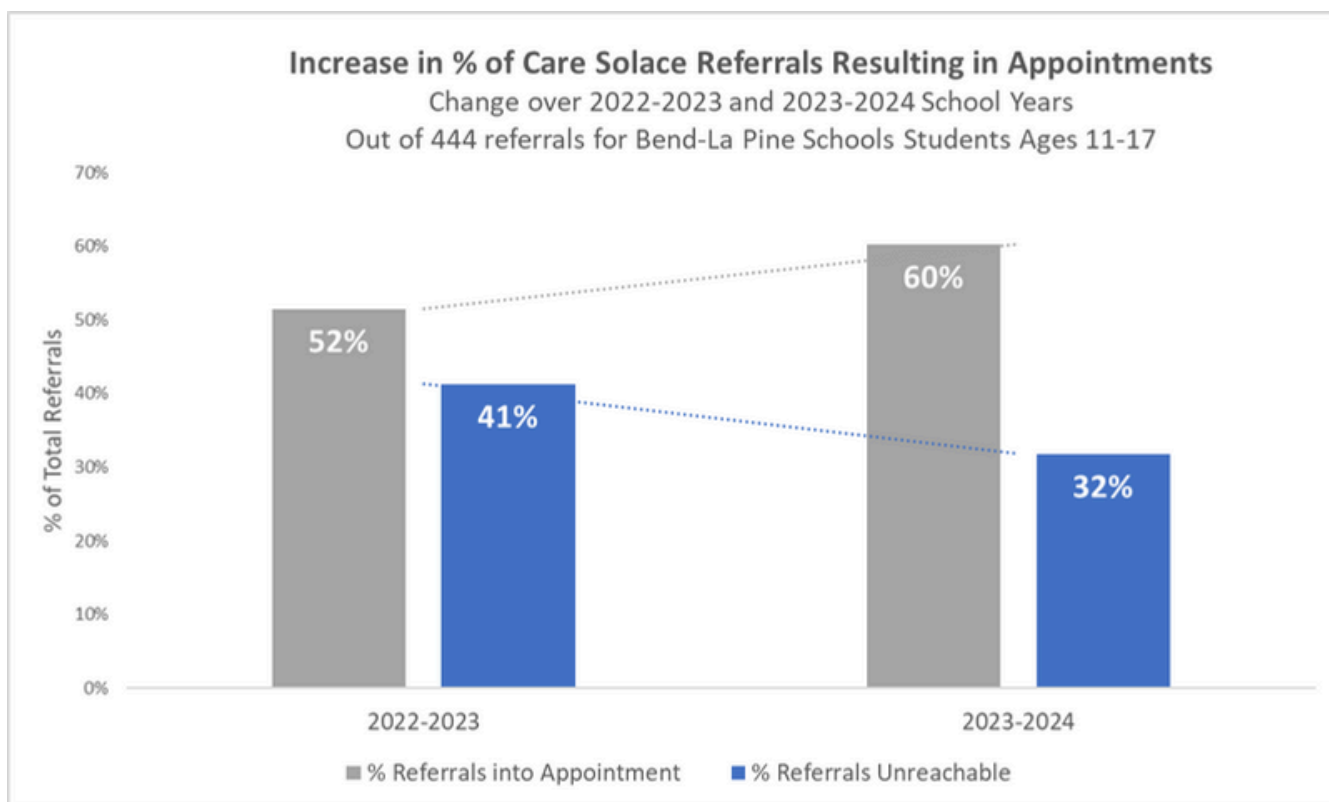
5. Community Engagement in School Health Improvement Process (SHIP) includes engaging a variety of people (staff, students, families, and community partners) in the process of making and doing plans to protect and promote the health of our students. Meaningful engagement in the process leads to more effective activities since there's more awareness, readiness, ownership, and commitment for positive changes.^{12-13,17}



Improved *Care Solace* Utilization and Resulting Appointments

Last year, our review of *Care Solace* utilization data found that only 52% of referrals resulted in behavioral health care appointments and 41% of referrals had no response (no answer) from the parents/guardians to consent or decline the referral. Unanswered referrals result in students waiting longer for care or support, at times in distress, while schools wait for a parent/guardian response.

Over the 2023-2024 school year, *Healthy Schools* aimed to increase the proportion of referrals ending in appointments by reducing the proportion of referrals unanswered by parents/guardians. We did this by informing parents and caregivers about *Care Solace* throughout the year. We used multiple methods: through district and school newsletters and various in-person events. We asked caregivers to save *Care Solace* in their contacts and “answer the call” (or email) because it is a referral from school.



Care Solace is a third-party electronic closed-loop referral system for all students and their immediate families members as well as staff and their immediate family. *Care Solace* provides 1:1 care navigators to connect families to an appointment with a behavioral health care provider to meet their unique needs.¹⁸ *Care Solace* utilization is an essential part of connecting students early to qualified help in order to prevent issues from worsening into suicide or other types of mental health crises and emergencies.



Trained Sources of Strength Peer Leaders as “Connectors to Help”

The *Healthy Schools* team trained and supported 304 students across 12 middle and high schools to become Sources of Strength Peer Leaders. One role of Peer Leaders is to serve as a “Connector to Help:” to recognize suicide risk and warning signs in their peers and to connect them to a supportive adult (including helplines like 9-8-8 or *YouthLine*).¹⁹⁻²⁰

Of our trained Peer Leaders who completed the post-training survey, 91% felt confident in their ability to access help resources when needed and to connect a struggling friend to an adult for help.

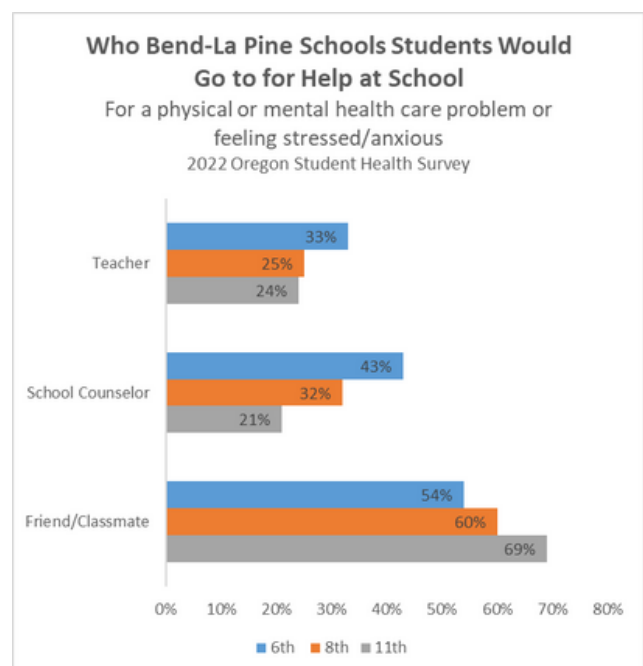
We aim to train at least 3% of each school’s student population every year so that, after 3 years, each school will have about 10% of their student population as “Connectors to Help.” This provides an important peer-to-peer safety net for every student in the building. Across the 12 schools with programs this year, **we trained 4% (304) of the total student population (7,533)**. We are on our way to reaching 10% over the next two school years.



Why are *Sources of Strength* Peer Leaders as “Connectors to Help” important?

As they age, students become more likely to go to a peer for help at school instead of a school counselor or teacher. For BLS 11th graders, about 70% said they would go to a peer for help while less than 25% would go to a teacher or counselor. Also, students are more likely than counselors and teachers to notice subtle changes in their peers’ moods and behaviors.

Training students to look for warning signs and connect peers to supportive, trusted adults improves early intervention before symptoms worsen to crisis and reduces gaps in the safety net for students not as visible to school staff.¹⁹⁻²⁰



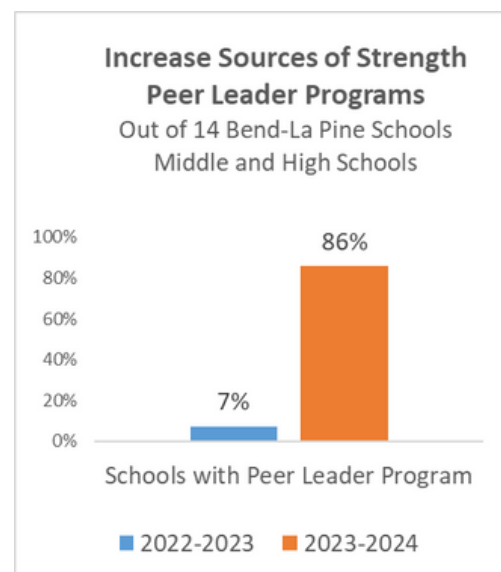


Increased *Sources of Strength* Peer Leader Programs District-wide

Our largest service for improving school climate has been starting district-wide *Sources of Strength*. Our aim is for every secondary (middle and high) school to have a *Sources of Strength* Peer Leader program.

This year, we coordinated the launch of 11 new Peer Leader programs, up from 1 before *Healthy Schools*. At the end of 2023-2024, 86% of BLS secondary schools have this program. The remaining 2 schools have committed to starting next year.

Sources of Strength is a research-tested program effective at preventing suicide, substance use, and violence. It works by increasing shared protective factors: engagement, belonging, connection, and community.¹⁹⁻²¹



What does a *Sources of Strength* Peer Leader do?

Peer Leaders have two leadership roles in their school: “Connector to Help” and “Agent of Change.” See page 14 for details about the Connector to Help role.

This section focuses on the Peer Leaders’ Agent of Change role. As Agents of Change, Peer Leaders improve school culture by leading positive mental health campaigns in their school: Engaging their peers in activities that are fun, build connection and community, and build personal strengths that buffer against stressors or risks.²¹

Last year, *Healthy Schools* trained **304 students to be *Sources of Strength* Peer Leaders**. As Agents of Change, Peer Leaders led **90 campaigns** -- delivering **35,332 doses of positive prevention messages** or **health-promoting activities** across 12 school communities.

See pages 23-31 for more examples of *Sources of Strength* campaigns.



The pictures above are a campaign example. Middle school Peer Leaders engaged students in identifying what “helps them soar,” written on paper feathers, and shaped into an eagle to be a daily reminder of their *Sources of Strength*.



Improved Quality of *Sources of Strength* Programs

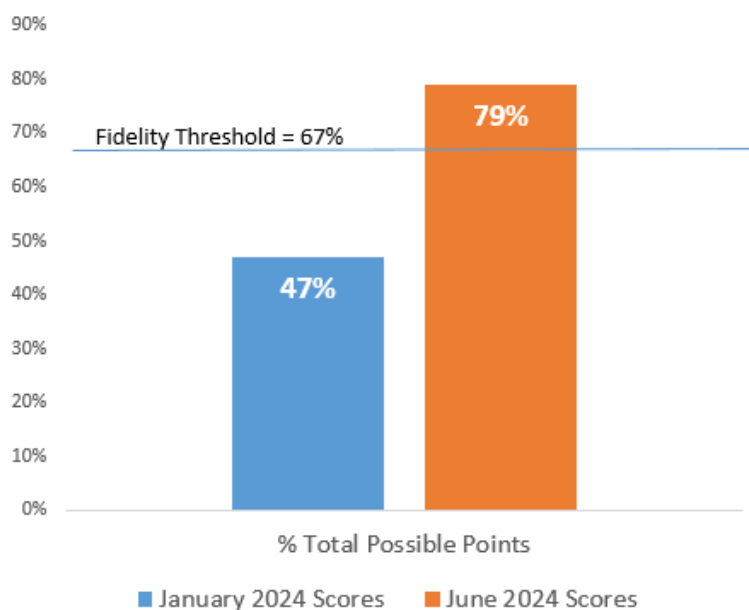
Beyond starting 11 new Peer Leader programs, we **assured the programs are being implemented well enough to be effective at preventing suicide, substance use, and violence**. A research-tested program only remains effective if we assure fidelity with the ‘active ingredients’ that make a program work.

At the end of each semester, each *Healthy Schools* Public Health Specialist (PHS) engaged all active Peer Leaders in assessing fidelity using a standardized tool. Each Peer Leader scored their program on 13 fidelity indicators using a 4-point scale, and provided suggested improvements.

At the end of the first semester, the new programs, on average, were not in fidelity. This is not unusual or unexpected since it usually takes at least 2 years for a new program to be fully implemented. This assessment allowed our on-site PHSs to identify which fidelity measures to focus on. The PHSs engaged their school admin and lead *Sources of Strength* Adult Advisor in reviewing the assessment results and creating an improvement plan to address 2-3 fidelity indicators. But, by the end of the 2nd semester, **in less than one year of implementation, our programs reached and exceeded the fidelity threshold**. This means that the “active ingredients” are in place to prevent suicide, substance use, and violence by increasing student belonging, connection, engagement, and help-seeking.

Improved *Sources of Strength* Fidelity from January to June 2024

Scored by Active Bend-La Pine Schools Peer Leaders
Sources of Strength Team Self-Assessment Tool



Each *Healthy Schools* Public Health Specialist is a certified *Sources of Strength* Trainer who works on-site with their Peer Leaders, admin, and staff to guide high quality implementation and address any issues that arise over time. This includes identifying ways to adapt the program to adjust to each unique school context and the ever changing situations that develop. This on-going, on-site leadership and technical assistance provided by trained Deschutes County Prevention and Health Promotion staff assures quality implementation, fidelity, and the expected outcomes of an evidence-based prevention program.

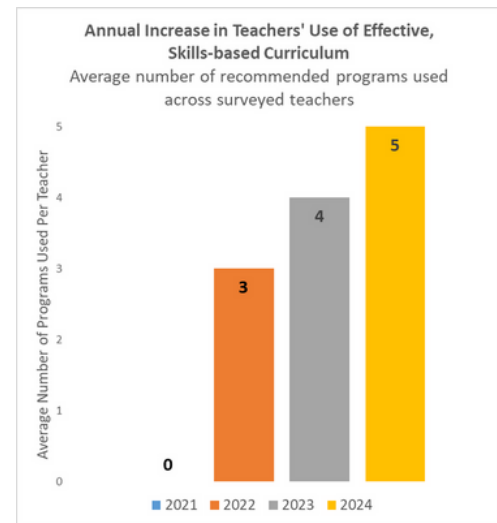


Improved Teacher Usage of Effective Prevention Education Programs

Each school year, Healthy Schools has gradually increased in number of effective, skills-based prevention education programs being used by Health teachers. An effective program is one that is **evidence-based** (proven through research) or **evidence-informed** (developed using behavior change theories based on a large body of research evidence).²²

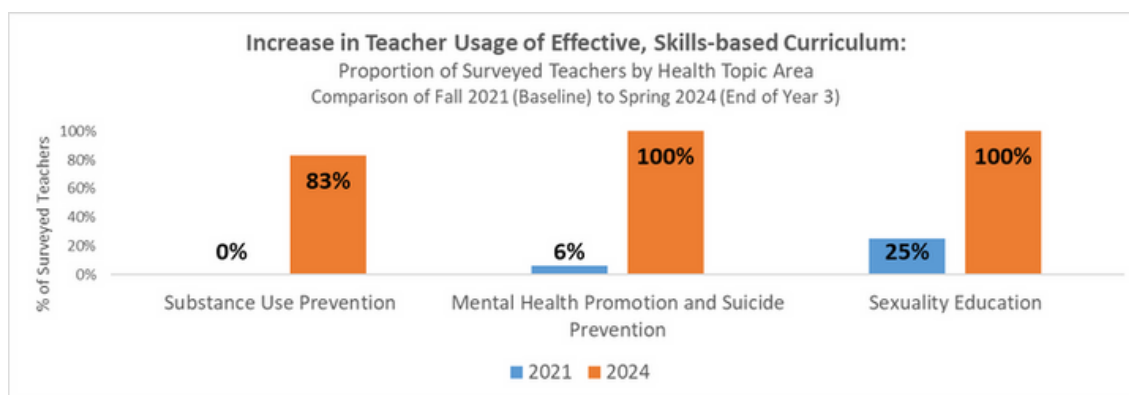
When averaged across all responding teachers each year, the average number of recommended programs used per teacher increased from 0 in 2021 to now averaging 5, across all targeted topic areas.

As of this year, **100% of Health teachers are now using at least two effective, skills-based prevention programs.** This is up from only 31% of teachers using at least one effective, skills-based program in 2021.



By topic area, 100% of teachers are now using effective programs for two important topic areas for public health: mental health promotion/suicide prevention and sexuality education, compared to 6% and 25% in 2021.

Now, about 5,000 adolescents are reached every year with effective programs to prevent suicide, bullying/violence, and risky sexual behaviors.



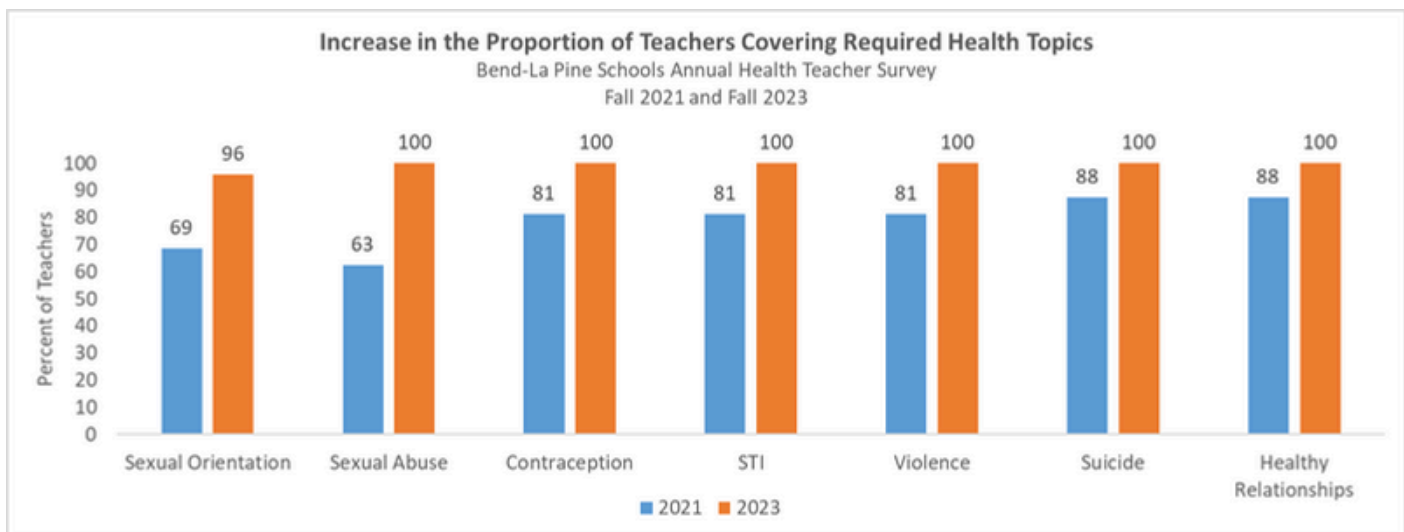
In January 2024, Lund Report published a statewide analysis of substance prevention programs in Oregon's schools, stating that the majority (60%) of Oregon schools do not use effective prevention education programs and that districts "receive little support and guidance from the state to select substance use prevention programs backed by evidence."²³ *Healthy Schools* has been an effective approach to closing this gap.



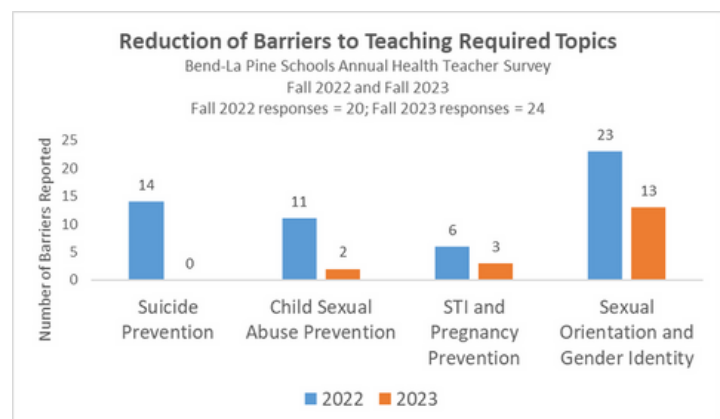
Reduced Barriers and Closing Policy-to-Practice Gaps

Healthy Schools has been effective at closing policy-to-practice gaps in K-12 prevention education. State legislation requires certain Health concepts to be taught, but teachers across the state are rarely provided with the effective training, curriculum, or materials they need to make and sustain these changes long-term. Few districts in Oregon have the funding or staff capacity and expertise to curate a comprehensive Health curriculum that covers all the laws, use effective behavior change programs, and continuously offer teacher trainings and implementation support to assure effective delivery.

Our collaborative improvement process with teachers, the district, and partners has resulted in a district-wide plan of instruction and reduced barriers systemically, resulting in **100% of teachers now covering most required topics**.



In Fall 2021, *Healthy Schools* began working with all BLS secondary Health teachers to assess barriers and priorities to improve instruction for these required topics. Between 2021 and 2023, we were effective at co-creating a district-wide plan of instruction and reducing the specific barriers teachers were experiencing to teaching these topics.

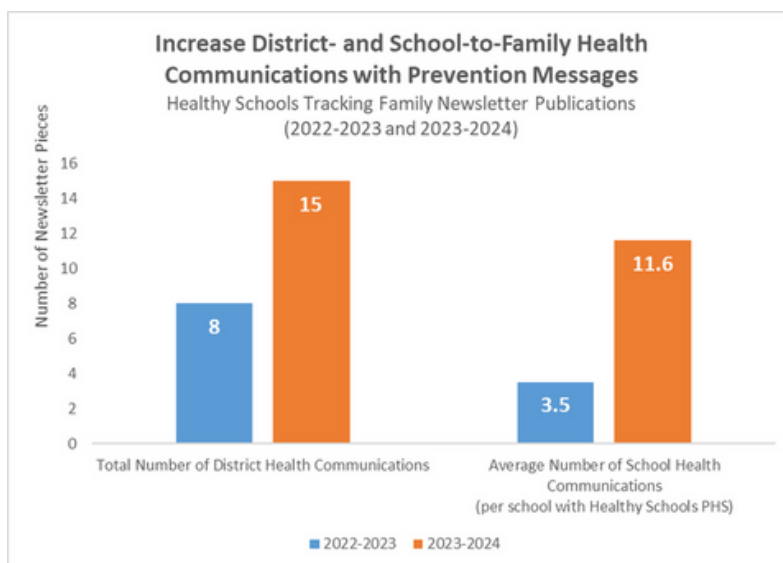


The reduced barriers include: inadequate materials (44% to 17%), not being trained (38% to 17%), not having enough instructional time (19% to 4%), and not having the topic included in the curriculum (19% to 4%). The remaining barrier, concerns about a lack of parent support, is now part of our Family Engagement work. See page 20 for an example of how we have started to work on the remaining barrier.



Increased Health Communications to Families from District and Schools

Mass communications is one way we reach a large amount of families with effective prevention messages. This year, we **more than doubled the health communications distributed to families via both district and school newsletters**. We did this by developing a *Healthy Schools* Family Communications Toolkit, and worked with various health experts to organize parent-centered health communications into ready-to-go monthly segments. We also established procedures with district and school leaders to review and approve the health communications before publishing in district and school newsletters.



Doses of Prevention Messages Delivered

60,418 Actual total numbers of views for district newsletters.

199,500 Estimated number of parent email addresses reached with school newsletters. There is no way to track total number of actual views of school newsletters. Using the district's view rate of about 10%, that's about 20,000 views.



Think of prevention messaging like daily doses of medication. One dose alone is not effective. It takes frequent, consistent doses. Ideally, we want doses of prevention messages coming from a variety of trusted sources.

Example *Healthy Schools* Newsletter Pieces

News from Healthy Schools

Every day matters: The benefits of good attendance

Every day at school matters. Good attendance in school is considered 95 percent or higher (missing fewer than 9 days of school all year). Attending every day helps your child to:

- Reduce stress
- Connect with friends and teachers
- Prevent falling behind in classes

Getting into the habit of daily attendance is important. This habit building starts now.

Need some help?
Read [this letter](#) from Dr. Amy Yillik. The letter covers:

- 5 tips for how to support your child's attendance
- What's going on at this stage of development
- Why attendance matters
- Where to go for help

Tips to reduce risk of online gaming and social media

Two ways kids may interact with others online is through:

- Online games (like Animal Crossing or Minecraft) and
- Social media (like SnapChat, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube)

Common Sense Media provides tips for parents and caregivers for how to help your student safely and responsibly use – or not use – these online tools.

Click the links below to see general tips for how to reduce risk by age group:

- [For elementary schoolers](#)
- [For middle schoolers](#)
- [For high schoolers](#)

Look at these [Parents' Ultimate Guides](#) to explore specific games or social media apps. These guides include information such as:

- How it works and potential risks
- Recommended and legal age limits
- Privacy settings, parental controls, and parent monitoring



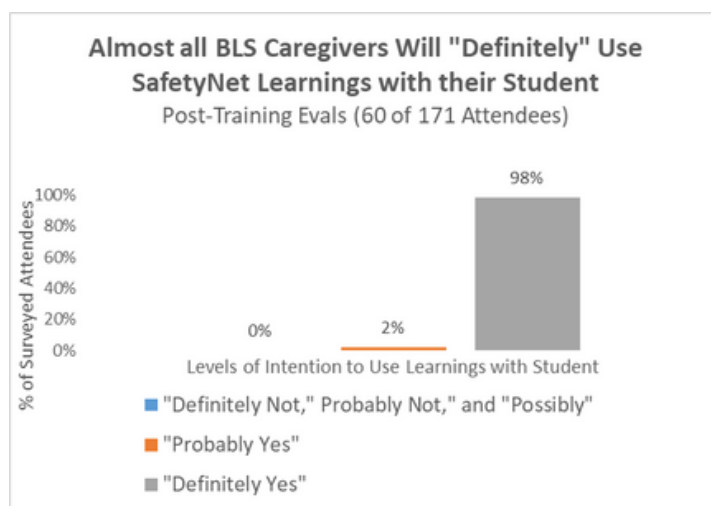
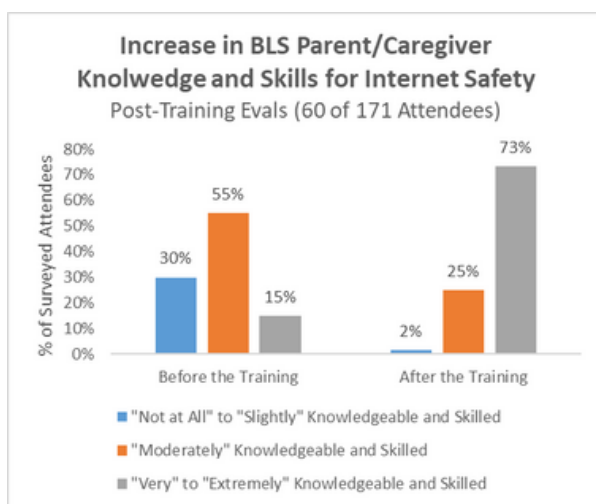
Developed a Strategic, Layered Family Engagement Campaign

School admin, staff, and families have expressed concerns about student technology usage and the need for education and support for parents. This year, *Healthy Schools* wove together 3 family engagement approaches to address parent and school concerns about student technology use. These 3 approaches are described below.



Internet Safety Prevention Education Workshop

We partnered with KIDS Center to offer SafetyNet® (an internet safety) workshop at every BLS middle school and K-8 school. Each workshop was open to any parent or caregiver for students in grades 4-10. Six workshops were held over January to May, with 171 attendees (mostly caregivers of middle and elementary students). Surveyed attendees reported **the training improved their knowledge/skills and an intention to “definitely” use what they learned with their student.**



Sexuality Education and Safe Tech Use

We worked with the district and Deschutes County Adolescent Health to inform families, through the SafetyNet® workshops, about BLS's Sexuality Education (Sex Ed) and provide a summary list of the district's programs. **Many parents were surprised to learn that Sex Ed covers many topics parents want their student to learn** (including internet/tech safety, setting boundaries in-person and online, conflict resolution, avoiding risky social situations, and the influence of media).



Technology Safety Tips and Resources through Family Newsletters

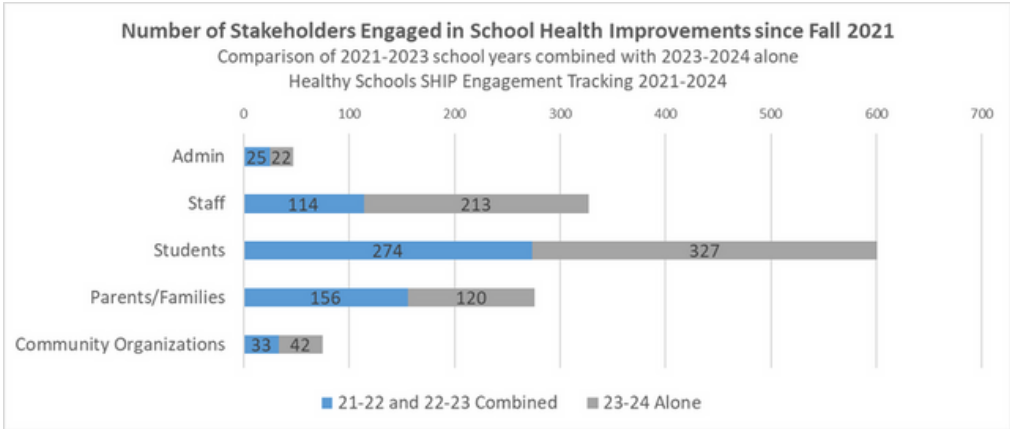
Over the months leading into SafetyNet® workshops, *Healthy Schools* delivered 8 technology-related articles through district and school family newsletters. The articles covered topics like preventing and responding to cyberbullying, a parent cellphone guide, what parents should know about online gaming and social media, and why instructional technology is used in the classroom.



SHIP stands for school health improvement process. We aim to engage as many people as possible in the process of improving school health practices. High levels of engagement means greater fit, ownership, and acceptance of the selected activities.¹⁷

Increased Engagement in the School Health Improvement Process (SHIP)

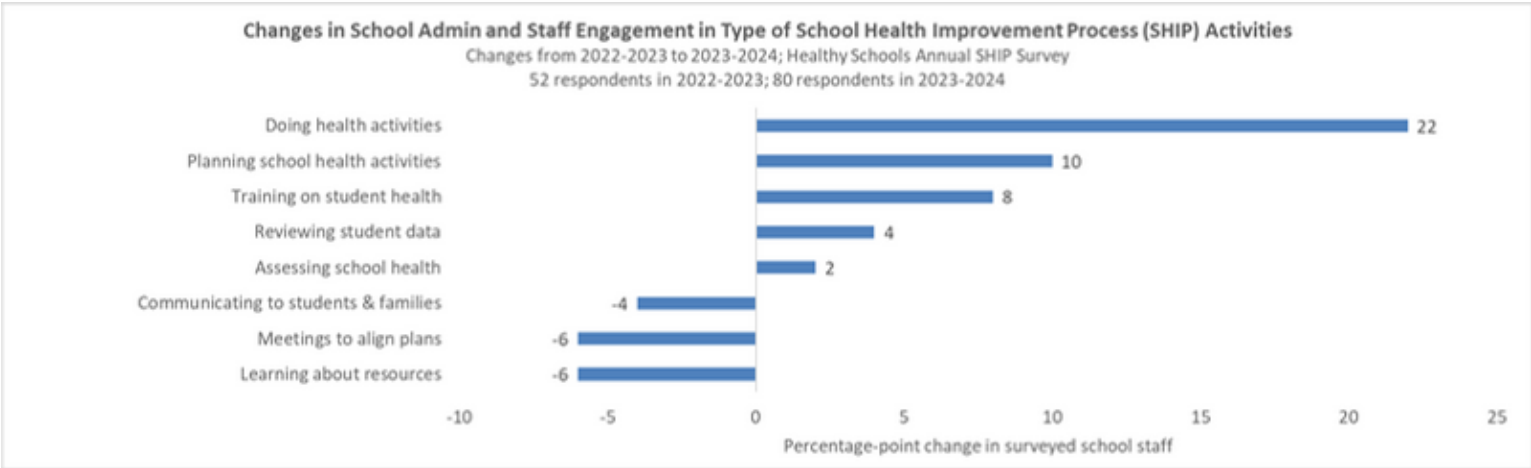
As of June 2024, 1,251 admin, staff, students, and parent/caregivers engaged in the process of making schools health-promoting environments for all students. We also engaged 75 different community-based organizations.



Between the first two years and this year, we more than doubled the students and nearly doubled the staff engaged in SHIP. Establishing Sources of Strength Peer Leader programs at 12 schools likely contributed to the dramatic increase in student and staff engagement.

Increased Proportion of Admin and Staff Reporting “Doing Health Promotion”

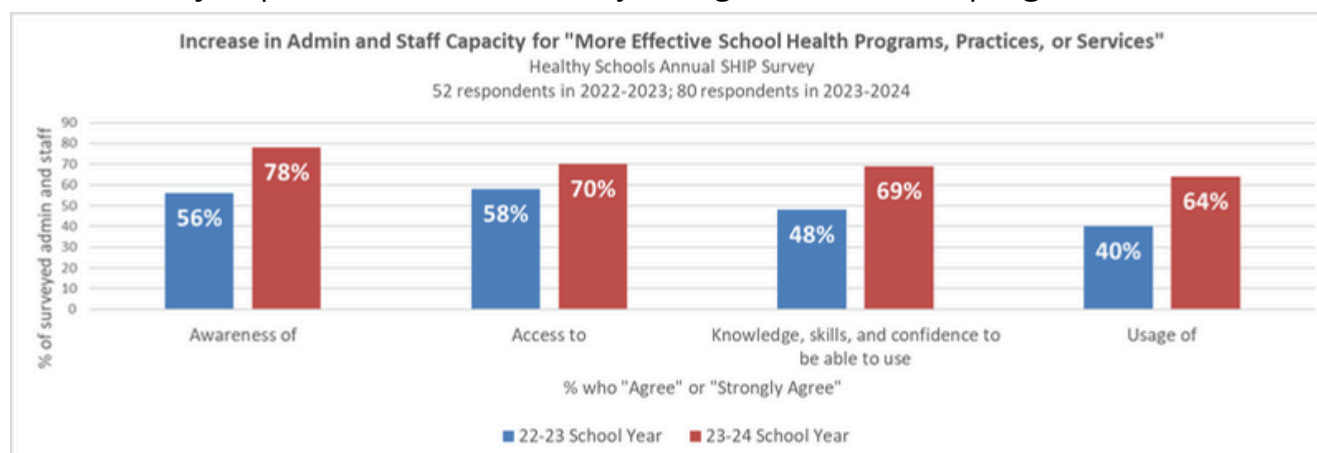
The type of improvement activities admin and staff engage in matter. Last year, “planning” and “doing” school health promotion activities were the lowest SHIP activities admin and staff reported. We aimed to increase that this year, and we did. There was a 22% point increase in “doing school health promotion activities.” The more admin and staff “doing” health promotion, the more students are reached with effective prevention practices.





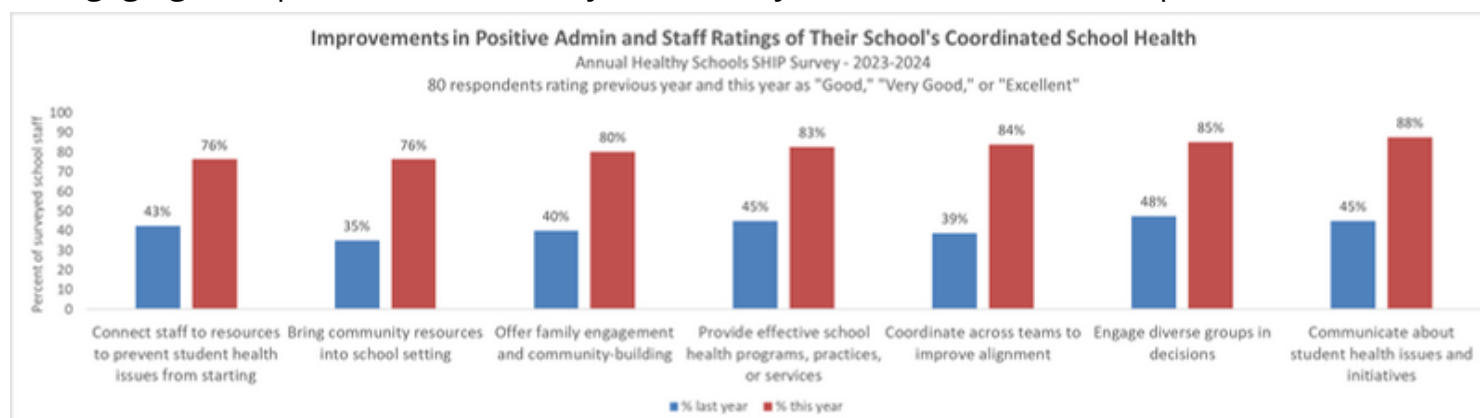
Increased Admin and Staff Capacity for Effective School Health Practices

Beyond just “doing” health promotion activities, admin and staff who engage in SHIP also reported an improved capacity and usage of effective school-based prevention and health promotion practices (called “school health practices” for short). The large improvement this year is likely due to our strategic rollout of *Sources of Strength* Adult Advisor and Peer Leader trainings and our ongoing coaching and support for Adult Advisors as they implement their *Sources of Strength* Peer Leader program.

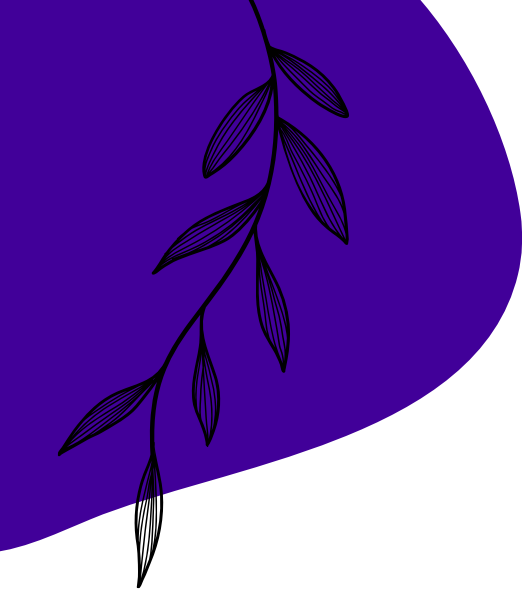


Increased Coordinated School Health Practices District-wide

Overall, we almost doubled positive ratings schools’ coordinated school health practices this year compared to the previous year. School admin and staff engaged in SHIP across our 14 schools reported improvements in their school’s usage of recommended coordinated school health practices. These improved school practices are the result of the engaging SHIP process facilitated by the Healthy Schools Public Health Specialist.



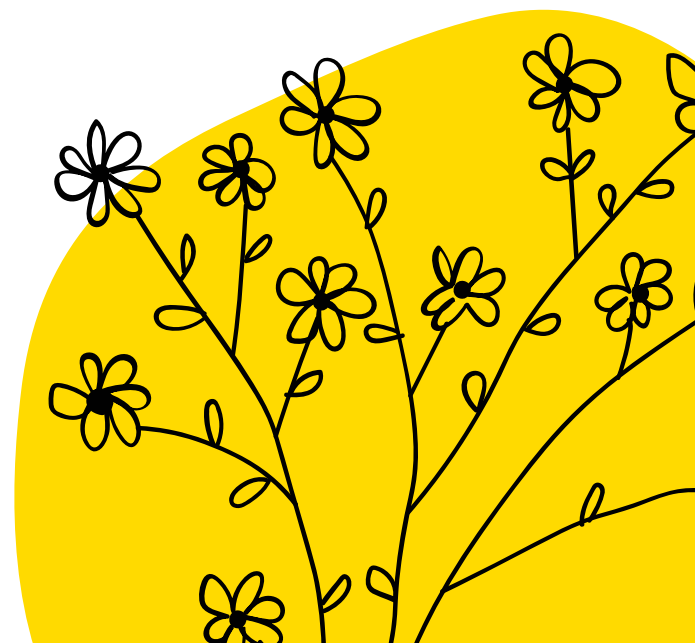
These CDC-recommended practices are associated with positive student health outcomes.⁵ Coordinated school health practices also reduces duplication and gaps in services, and reduces burden on school staff by drawing in external resources.⁶ Examples of these practices include: connecting staff to preventative resources for students, bringing community services into schools, coordinating across teams, engaging diverse groups in decisions, and communicating about student health issues and school health initiatives.⁵



Success Stories

2023–2024

The following pages include a variety of successes from various schools that serve as highlights for the 2023–2024 year.



Sources of Strength Awards

We had several Peer Leaders, Adult Advisors, and one school win the Sources of Strength Awards for the 2023-2024 year. Congratulations to all of our winners!

Peer Leader Award Winners



Jay Beagles
Mountain View High



Peyton Thrasher
La Pine High



Gunther Karle
La Pine High

Adult Advisor Award Winners



Kelly Peters
Bend-Tech Academy



Stuart Johnson
La Pine High



Lani McQuilkin, Amanda Armstrong,
Lindsay Seibel
Healthy Schools Public Health Specialists

Team Award Winners



La Pine Middle School



LPMS Sources of Strength Family Night



On May 2nd, La Pine Middle School was buzzing with energy as we hosted our Sources of Strength Family Night, a celebration of mental wellness and community support. The evening was led by our dedicated students who are part of the Sources of Strength class. The event showed the power of student leadership and connection with others.

Kicking off the event was a dinner from Jimmy John's. Three students from our Sources of Strength program took the lead, guiding attendees through a presentation that introduced the core principles of Sources of Strength, and shared their personal story of its impact on their own lives.

The gym was transformed into a place of positivity and engagement, with Sources of Strength Stations awaiting attendees. From activities designed to support mental health to promoting physical well-being, there was something for everyone. A particular highlight was the Mental Health table, where families crafted first aid kits for their mind, including items to activate each of the five senses.

Families had the chance to capture precious moments together, posing for family photos with playful props. Families wrote thank-you notes to those who have supported them in their lives. Meanwhile, at the Physical Health table, families enjoyed recipe samples while receiving all the ingredients needed to recreate the dishes at home. The competitive spirit was in the air as families engaged in friendly cup-stacking races.

In a display of friendship, families wrote the names of their positive friends on a flower cutout and their friend's qualities on the petals. This activity serves as a reminder of the connections that uplift us. The positive friend flowers will be posted on a bulletin board here in our school.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the families whose support made this event a success. As we reflect on the joy and connection shared throughout the evening, we are excited to make Sources of Strength Family Night an annual tradition.

We want to also thank the students in Sources of Strength who put in a ton of effort into making our family night a success. They worked hard to build the recipe bags, cut out over 100 flowers, planned the games, and showed up to lead the event. This semester's Sources of Strength class is doing some amazing work in our school and community.

"Family night was a success. I feel that people now know what Sources of Strength is and why it is important. I feel that the family night was fun and I think we should do another family night next year."
-LPMS Peer Leader



A huge thank you to our partners for supporting the event:

- **La Pine School Based Health Center** for providing the bags and getting the food donations for the recipe bags
- **OSU Extension Nutrition Education Program** for providing the recipe samples, and spices for the recipe bags. **Deschutes County Health Services** for providing the supplies for the Mental Health station.

BTA Students Lead Sources of Strength Workshop



Bend Tech Academy (BTA) students hosted a workshop for over 80 high school students across five schools to build their skills as youth leaders in their Sources of Strength programs. Students developed a sense of community together by playing games, sharing ideas for mental health promotion projects, and planning a district-wide Sources of Strength theme for the 2024-2025 school year.

Students engaged in many activities throughout the workshop. Students and adults laughed while battling each other in lively games of charades and Rock, Paper, Scissors. Students also enjoyed making new friends during lunch and other free time. One student from Bend High was particularly thankful for lunch when she said, "Bless BTA's hearts for feeding us!"

Another highlight was when teams shared mental health projects they've completed throughout this school year. Teams shared about thankfulness challenges, trusted adult campaigns, food drives, messages of hope, and many other inspiring projects. The final activity invited students to brainstorm a theme that all high school Sources of Strength programs can use for the 2024-2025 school year. After presenting each group's ideas, students voted for their favorite theme of "Better Together."

Students left the workshop feeling part of a bigger community. Students enjoyed making new friends, hearing creative mental health projects, and collaborating with other teens. They were also impressed and inspired by the BTA students who planned and hosted the entire event. The BTA students ensured that each person felt included and understood their value in the community. The students' time together is commemorated in an artwork of a tree covered with many colorful handprints. These students are truly Better Together.



Vaping Prevention Education at BTA

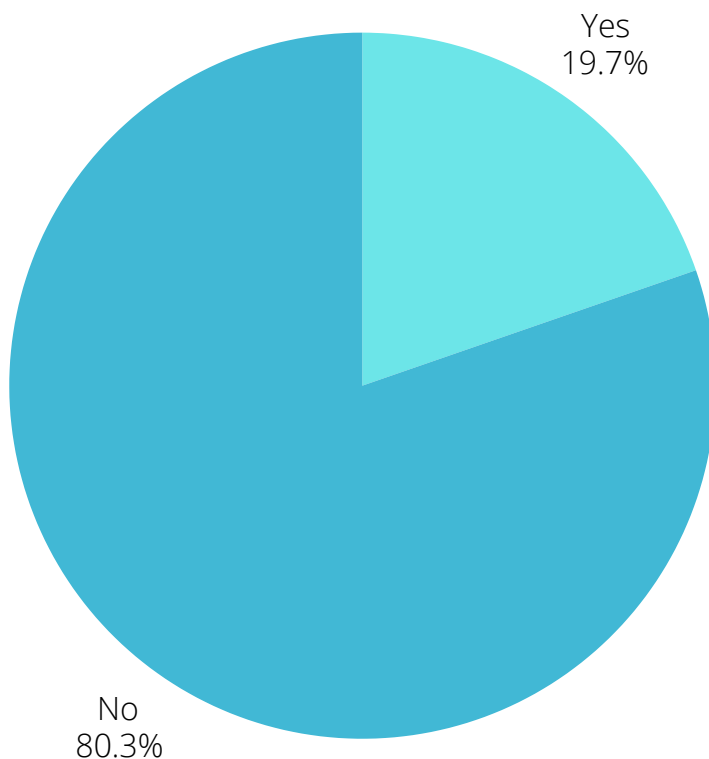
Bend Tech Academy (BTA) taught all students *CATCH My Breath* in the 2023-2024 school year as part of their substance use prevention efforts. *CATCH My Breath* is a vaping prevention curriculum that is proven to reduce youth vaping by half.²⁴ The Healthy Schools Public Health Specialist provided the training that teachers needed in order to teach the curriculum.



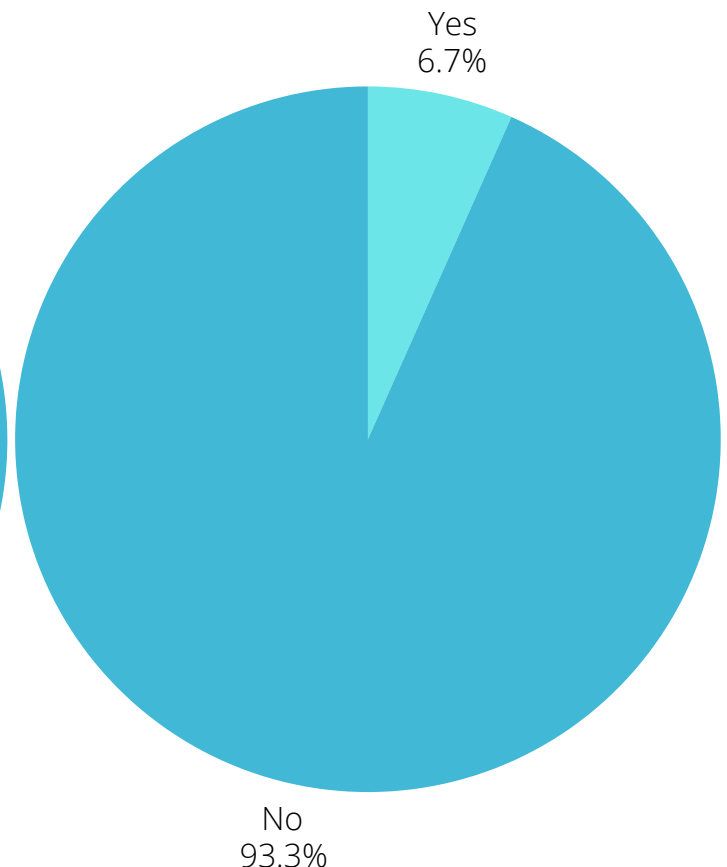
Students took a pre-test before taking any lessons and a post-test after receiving the full curriculum in order to help show the impact of the *CATCH My Breath* lessons. Results showed a decrease in the proportion of students who thought they would vape in the next 6 months (from 20% to 7%).

Do you think you will vape in the next 6 months?

Before CATCH My Breath



After CATCH My Breath



Sources of Strength Week at PBMS



The PBMS Sources of Strength club organized a fun week of activities focused on mental health and wellbeing this spring. Students were invited to dress up in specific colors or themes every day to keep the spirit high. The week's themes included mental and physical health, generosity, positive friends, mentors, and healthy activities.

The Sources of Strength club organized activities around the themes. These included coloring, writing in thankfulness journals and thank you notes, writing and posting positive notes around the school, creating friendship bracelets, and even making pet toys! Local community organizations joined the activities, including Mosaic Medical, Healing Reins, YouthLine, the Bend Fire and Police Departments, Cascade Youth and Family Center, Deschutes Public Library, and the Humane Society.



Congratulations to the Sources of Strength club for organizing such a fun week that reminds us of our strengths!



Sources of Strength Impacts Students at BSH



"I think it's really important for Sources of Strength to be a part of school because it gives people the opportunity to reach out if they need help and also teaches peers how to help others if they are facing mental health struggles, which is really important in school these days."

- Bend Senior High Student





Students Educate Peers about the MVHS School-Based Health Center

Leaders from the Mountain View High School (MVHS) Teen Action Committee (TAC) presented to all freshman students about the new School-Based Health Center. Roughly 300 freshmen participated in the educational presentations, including Q&A interviews with clinicians and a quiz competition to test what they learned. The goal was to raise awareness and lower barriers for students and their families to get help with their medical needs.

"It feels good knowing I can get health support at school and the resources are on-site. And everyone can get free care."

~ MVHS Freshman

"This access makes a big difference to everyone and it makes me happy to inform the freshmen who might not know about it. It will make a lasting impact after I'm gone."

~ MVHS Senior, TAC Presenter

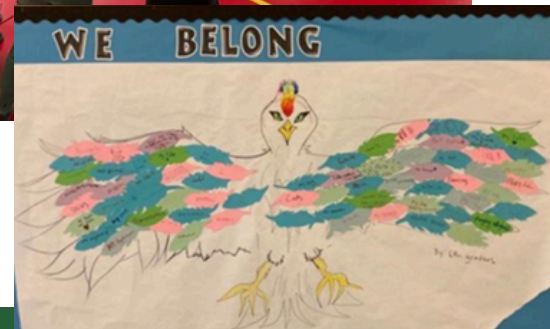


Students Define Belonging Together at Realms

"We Belong" was the first Sources of Strength campaign organized by high school Leadership students last December. Leadership students led a classroom lesson to inspire belonging and connection across 6th grade students.

Each student wrote down a person, place, or thing that makes them feel like they belong on a paper feather and shared what they wrote in a large closing circle. The feathers were made into a display that hangs in the middle school. Roughly 60 6th graders and 10 high school leaders participated.

Leadership students reported the "We Belong" lesson sparked meaningful conversations and positive interactions.

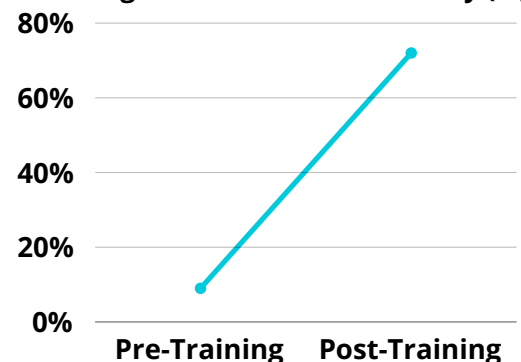


Families Equipped for Online Safety at SVMS

Sky View hosted about 30 parents and guardians at the end of February for a SafetyNet: Smart Cyber Choices® training. SafetyNet teaches safe, ethical technology use, and provides the tools to safely manage online lives for adults and children.

Of participants who took the post-training survey, **100% said they would use the new online safety skills they learned** with their student(s) after the training. Participants who reported feeling **very or extremely knowledgeable about online safety** rose from **9% to 72%** in a pre- and post- training survey.

Survey Participants who Felt Very or Extremely Knowledgeable about Online Safety (%)





Summit High Students Boost Unity and Connection

Students at Summit High elevated mental health promotion this year using strategies from a new, upstream mental health program - Sources of Strength. Trained Peer Leaders first took over an all-staff meeting early in the year to introduce the program, and then rolled it out to the whole school through two all-school assemblies. Strengths-promoting campaigns engaged students and staff in honoring trusted adults and mentors, celebrating positive friends, promoting mental health resources, and building a network of connectors to help who wear a special orange bracelet.

"Sources helps build community and foster a place where everyone feels that they can belong" ... "Overall, that really is the goal.... we want Summit to be a place of unity and connection. To find what makes us feel strong is to find what we have in common." -Summit Peer Leader



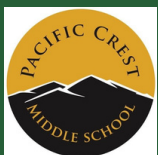
Cascade Middle School Promotes Health through Family Connection and Education

Cascade Middle School's School Health Team prioritized connecting with families to promote health and well-being for their students this year. In addition to providing health resources at family engagement events throughout the school-year, CMS hosted three family education nights on health-related topics. Events focused on the developing brain and supporting executive function skills, digital/online safety awareness and tools, and parenting strategies for the pre-teen/teen years that work with adolescents' changing brains and emotional lives.

More than 100 parents and caregivers attended, and families reported the events were highly relevant and impactful. In post-training surveys, 100% of respondents said that: "This training improved my knowledge of this topic." And, "As a result of this training, I have at least two new tools and/or strategies to try at home." One parent also wrote, "I didn't want this to end...". Thank you CMS for connecting with families to help support their middle schoolers!

"I feel like I have so many actionable goals... I am totally rejuvenated and ready... to facilitate needed changes at home."

- parent



Pacific Crest Students "Soar" with Sources of Strength Program

Pacific Crest 8th grade Peer Leaders launched Sources of Strength, promoting mental health, hope, and strength to the Golden Eagle school community this year. Sources Peer Leaders brought awareness to all the areas of strengths that all students have - emphasizing how to lean on their strengths to connect with others in times of need. The students completed three campaigns: an all-staff training, a week of advisory activities, and a gratitude Golden Eagle art installation (see page 15 for photos). Over 500 students shared what helps them "Soar"!

Our Greatest Strengths are...

**Creativity | Community |
Getting the word out to our
whole school |**

Making everyone feel welcome!

~ Sources of Strength Peer Leaders

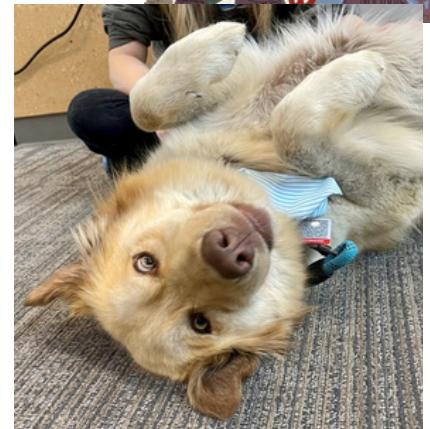


Wellness Week at Caldera High School

During May's Mental Health Awareness Month, Healthy Schools supported Wellness Week at Caldera, offering student enrichment opportunities, mental health resources, and a safe space to relieve stress and anxiety. One of the activities included engaging with the Sources of Strength program, which promotes mental health and protective factors to prevent suicide, substance use, and violence. They identified positive aspects of their lives and displayed them as murals in the Future Center, gaining confidence in recognizing and utilizing internal and external resources during difficult times.



A major highlight of Wellness Week were the daily visits by therapy dogs from Compassionate Canines, providing a calming presence for students and staff. One student noted that 15 minutes with Dune, a golden/husky mix, significantly reduced their anxiety and stress.



Student-led Sources Assembly at HDMS

In an effort to spread awareness about the importance of mental health while reducing stigma around this subject, four trained Sources of Strength Peer Leaders at High Desert Middle School planned and successfully implemented a school-wide assembly.

The Peer Leaders interviewed 4 of their classmates and 2 teachers, asking them to share about their own mental health journeys to help normalize this topic. These Peer Leaders organized responses into a video, received Admin support, and projected their positive messages during a school-wide assembly. This was no easy feat, and this group bravely helped our HDMS community learn more about their own mental health while gaining the confidence to ask for help when needed.



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Special thanks to our colleagues in the following organizations for the extensive time and effort they have contributed to the development of Healthy Schools:

- Bend-La Pine Schools district directors
- Bend-La Pine Schools school admin and staff
- High Desert Education Service District
- Deschutes County Health Services

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Reach out and ask us questions. We are eager to talk about this program. Contact us by email or find out more from our webpage:

- healthyschools@deschutes.org
- deschutes.org/healthyschools

