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Integrating a Social-Emotional Wellness Coach in a School Setting to Promote the Prevention and Early Identification of Mental Health Issues in Youth: Evidence from Two High Schools in San Antonio

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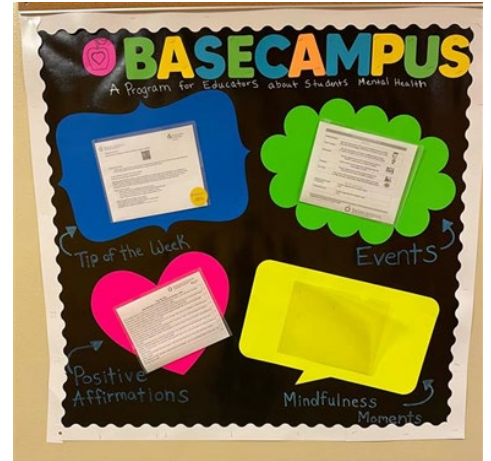
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Executive Summary

Schools are increasingly recognizing the importance of fostering social and emotional competence in youth, commonly leading to the adoption of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum. Integrating SEL into school settings is a complex endeavor that demands significant effort and resources. The successful implementation of quality SEL relies on educators' commitment to SEL and their level of knowledge and skills in this area. However, K-12 educators often receive limited training and support in SEL, and some may feel inadequately prepared to implement it. To address this challenge, it is critical to provide adequate professional development that equips educators with skills to address their own mental well-being as well as SEL information and tools they can incorporate into their classroom instruction.

The Basecampus program was designed and implemented to address mental health and wellness challenges faced by school staff in in two high schools in San Antonio. Its primary objective was to equip teachers, counselors, administrators, and school support staff with Social Emotional Learning (SEL) knowledge and tools to share with students. Additionally, the program provided direct support to teachers to help them cope with work-related mental health stressors. The goal of this study is to explore whether the Basecampus program positively influenced the mental health of school staff–specifically their level of stress, their perceptions of whether they would stay in the job, and their level of confidence in their ability to manage the identification of and response to mental health issues in youth during the school year 2022-2023.

Specifically, we investigated the following four research questions:

1. Was there a reduction of stress among Basecampus participants?
2. Did participation in Basecampus lead to improvement in participants' confidence in recognizing and responding when students experience mental health challenges?
3. Did participation in Basecampus affect participants' perception of leaving the profession?

Key Findings

The present study employs a mixed methods approach to address the study's research questions. The utilization of both quantitative and qualitative data paints a more multidimensional picture on participants' beliefs and experiences surrounding their participation in Basecampus program.

Key Quantitative Analysis Findings

- Basecampus participants were more likely to be in the low and moderate stress levels by 18 and 9 percentage points, respectively, and less likely to be in the high-stress level category by 27 percentage points than non-program participants. Staff stress levels increased as they perceived students' behaviors as more problematic, while their stress levels decreased as they perceived receiving more support from the leadership.
- Basecampus participants tended to be less overwhelmed when considering how to handle students with mental health challenges. The participants were more likely to be in the not-overwhelmed category by 37 percentage points than non-program participants.
- Basecampus participants were more likely to have confidence in recognizing signs and symptoms of students' mental health challenges. the participants were more likely to be in the confident-in-ability category by 50 percentage points than non-program participants. Moreover, Basecampus participants tended to be more confident in knowing when to handle student mental health issues themselves, and when to refer those students to more qualified personnel than non-program participants.
- Basecampus participants experienced a decreased frequency of considering leaving the profession than non-program participants during the last school year.

Key Qualitative Analysis Findings

- Participants reported several barriers and challenges that kept them from seeking help through Basecampus program. this included (a) lack of time and administrative support, (b) too much physical distance between classrooms and Basecampus office, (c) perceived social stigma associated with seeking help, (d) being overwhelmed with regular work responsibilities to have enough time or space for "one more thing," (e) feeling powerless to affect change, to protect themselves, or to enforce consequences for student behavior, and (f) feeling scrutinized or guilty for taking time,

- We asked participants' their perceptions about why teachers are leaving the profession. They reported a variety of reasons, the most common of which was the level of stress related to their job responsibilities. They also reported that many leave for other reasons such as (a) fearing for their own safety in the wake of many high-profile shooting incidents, (b) the demands are so high because there are so many inexperienced, untrained teachers, (c) the lack of compensation, and (d) the availability of other job opportunities.

- Teachers reported that there is a cyclical relationship between students' mental health challenges and their academic outcomes. For example, teachers reported that often students feel anxious about school, which leads to hesitancy to engage with the content, which leads to students falling behind academically, which leads to increased anxiety.

- Teachers and staff expressed a need to rethink the societal purpose of education, create more structure for students, invest more financially, and prioritize students' mental health.

- Even though teachers expressed there were many barriers precluding access to Basecampus, we found that those who did use it saw tremendous value in it.

Recommendations

For Improving Basecampus

- Develop long-term, sustainable processes that will allow teachers and other staff to have wellness support after Basecampus is gone. Teachers talked about hesitancy to trust temporary, grant-funded programs, so showing substantial, long-term investment may increase trust.
- Continue brainstorming ways to address the geographic limitations that affect staff's ability to regularly access the Basecampus Coach's office and group events.
- Work with campus and district-level administrators to develop ways to give teachers more time and incentives to access Basecampus.

For Campus Administrators

- Look for opportunities to increase staff and students' sense of safety. Individuals at both campuses said that everyone knows which areas are less secure either because they lack security cameras or because individuals can enter the building through doors that are not secured or monitored. These improvements may positively impact staff and students' sense of safety, which is a major challenge to both groups' mental wellness.

For East Central District Administrators

- Reconsider the cash incentive for teachers' perfect attendance. While it is understandable to reward and incentivize teachers for their attendance to meet campus needs, many teachers are foregoing taking care of themselves to earn the incentive.

Introduction

Schools are becoming increasingly involved in helping youth become more socially and emotionally competent (Elias, 2009; Gorman, 1998; Hoffman, 2009; Zin & Elias, 2007). Among the many ways schools may support students' mental and emotional health, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) has emerged as one of the more popular approaches (Hoffman, 2009). According to recent research conducted by Rand Corporation and Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), for the 2021-2022 school year, about three-fourths of principals and half of teachers nationally reported that their schools have employed some type of SEL program or have utilized SEL curriculum materials, a proportion that rose by 25 percentage points from Spring 2018 (Schwartz et al., 2022).

According to CASEL, one of the more respected resources for SEL materials, SEL is defined as "a process through which young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, and establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" (CASEL, n.d.). SEL focuses on five social and emotional competencies: *i*) self-awareness, *ii*) self-management, *iii*) social awareness, *iv*) relationship skills, and *v*) responsible decision-making (CASEL, n.d.). Ample research has demonstrated various benefits students receive by participating in SEL programs, such as improving academic performance (e.g., standardized tests), enhancing SEL skills, and reducing misbehavior in the classroom (e.g., Blewitt et al., 2018; Corcoran et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; Jones, McGarrah, & Kahn, 2019; Murano, Sawyer, & Lipnevich, 2020; Taylor et al., 2017).

Introducing and integrating SEL into a school setting is complex and requires substantial effort and resources. One of the major conditions for quality SEL implementation is educators' commitment to SEL and their level of knowledge about SEL as well as their own SEL skills (Durlak, 2015). SEL is a specialized curriculum area, that although backed by research often requires teachers to go beyond their content area expertise in order to adequately implement. Unfortunately, K-12 educators often receive limited relevant training and support (Buchanan et al., 2009; Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Martinez, 2016). Due to a lack of expertise and the onerous preparation time required, many teachers suggest that SEL should be offered by school counselors and school psychologists instead of by them (Buchana et al., 2009). Thus, to

successfully promote SEL, the provision of adequate professional development equipping educators with the information and tools needed to bring SEL into their classrooms is critical.

Researchers have also found that in addition to knowledge about SEL, effective SEL implementation is correlated with educators' personal social and emotional competency and well-being (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schoner-Reichl, 2017). And yet, we know teachers tend to experience high levels of work stress and job-related anxiety. In fact, researchers found that during the height of COVID, compared to professionals in other job settings (health care, office), teachers experienced the highest levels of stress and anxiety (Kush et al., 2022). Teacher stress is often characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a low sense of accomplishment all of which lead to burnout (e.g., Maslach et al., 2001; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008). In addition, their stress has been linked to increased career dissatisfaction, turnover, and poor instructional practices, altogether resulting in negative consequences for students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016). Thus, an effective SEL program requires strengthening educators' ability to identify and deal with their own stress as well as regularly engage in self-care (Manian, Belfied, & Berger, 2021).

The Basecampus program was designed to address the challenges mentioned above. The program was implemented in two high schools in San Antonio to provide school staff (i.e., teachers, counselors, administrators, and school support staff) with SEL knowledge and tools to share with students, as well as supports provided directly to teachers to help address work-related mental health stressors. The Basecampus team placed a dedicated coach in the schools whose sole role was to provide support to teachers in two ways: (a) as an SEL support center and (b) as a resource center to provide mental health supports directly to school staff via various channels (e.g., through 1:1 and small group coaching, small group and school wide presentations, weekly tips, community events, and classroom observations). In this study, we explore whether the Basecampus program influenced the mental health of school staff–specifically their level of stress, their perceptions of whether they would stay in the job, and their level of confidence in their ability to manage the identification of and response to mental health issues in youth during the school year 2022-2023.

In this study, we employ a mixed methods sequential design to study the implementation and outcomes of the Basecampus program in two high schools in Bexar County. We collected

and analyzed qualitative data first, the results of which helped to inform our quantitative data collection and analysis. Our analytic approach was ongoing and iterative in which results from each data collection approach helped to inform our interpretation and takeaways about educators' overall beliefs and perspectives of Basecampus program.

We are guided by one overarching research question: What are Basecampus participants' beliefs about the role, value, and effectiveness of Basecampus program in their school? Specifically, we wanted to know the following questions organized by data collection approach. Qualitative Data Research Question:

1. How do Basecampus participants talk about their experiences with Basecampus?
    a. How did they talk about accessibility and barriers to Basecampus?
    b. How did they talk about Basecampus and its role in helping them identify student mental health challenges?
    c. How did they talk about their work environment and the ways they coped?

Quantitative Data Research Questions:

1. Was there a reduction of stress among Basecampus participants?
2. Did participation in Basecampus lead to improvement in participants' confidence in recognizing and responding when students experience mental health challenges?
3. Did participation in Basecampus affect participants' perception of leaving the profession?

Basecampus Program Overview

The Basecampus program was a collaborative effort that was supported by the H. E. Butt Foundation, Clarity Child Guidance Center (Clarity), and Communities in Schools of San Antonio (CIS-SA). This group of partners came together to create Basecampus to help address "a significant gap in the support and training of youth development workers to better understand, identify, prevent, or refer children and youth with mental health needs" (H.E. Butt Foundation et al., 2020, p. 2). In fact, H.E. Butt Foundation included this issue as a key area of concern in their 2020 Goals Work Plan: "There continues to be a stigma around mental illness. Yet 1 and 5 youth have a diagnosable mental health condition largely centered on anxiety and depression. We also know that treatment needs exceed the availability of treatment options. Hence, an upstream approach to mental wellness in youth and families seems to be the best way to combat many of

the barriers that exist." To address this issue, the H.E. Butt Foundation sought avenues for giving school staff access to a wellness coach and informational resources. Basecampus was developed to provide this resource with the goal of increasing school staff's confidence in recognizing and responding to students with mental health challenges.

In July 2021, Basecampus program developers partnered with East Central Independent School District (ECISD), and an agreement was established to place the Basecampus program in two high schools: CAST Lead and East Central. These two high schools were ideal since they shared many resources such as counselors and teachers, which offered unique opportunities for Basecampus service providers. However, they also differed in their leadership and instructional needs, approaches, and philosophies.

East Central High School is a public high school that serves a predominantly suburban and rural population in southeast San Antonio. The campus welcomed its first students in 1951, and the school staff currently serves approximately 3,100 students today (East Central High School, 2022). CAST Lead is one of five Centers for Applied Science and Technology (CAST) schools, a network of career-themed public high schools aimed at preparing students with the knowledge and skills to thrive in the fastest-growing industries in San Antonio (CAST Schools, 2021). The school admitted its first cohort of students in 2020, and it serves more than 100 8th-12th grade students. While East Central High School uses a conventional enrollment approach based on the district's attendance zone, CAST Lead has open enrollment based on a lottery basis (CAST Schools, 2021).

CIS-SA hired and placed a Socio-Emotional Wellness Coach (hereafter referred to as the Basecampus Coach) in these two high schools. The purpose of the Basecampus Coach was to provide school staff with a range of support for social and emotional learning that included: *i*) outreach (program kick-off presentations and promotion of Basecampus services); *ii*) training (workshop presentations and email tips); *iii*) teacher support (one-on-one and group consultations, care carts, praise boards, email encouragement, classroom observations and feedback, and self-care activities); and *iv*) school-level support (school-wide mental health advocacy events, and team building activities). Importantly, school staff (teachers, counselors, administrators, and school support staff) voluntarily participated in the program and received no supplemental services or support for their participation (e.g., a rotating substitute teacher was not provided).

During the program's duration of two academic years (2021/22-2022/23), nearly every school staff member from both schools participated in at least one of the school-wide events. The extent of their involvement in various activities, however, differed depending on the type of activity. For instance, approximately one-third of the school staff actively sought and engaged in at least one 1:1 consultation, while 214 staff members attended small group presentations, and 46 participated in small group/department coaching. For a detailed overview of the program services provided and their utilization in the schools during the 2022-2023 school year, please refer to Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Basecampus Program Services Offered and Their Utilization in the 2022-2023 School Year

Services	Number of Events	Number of Participants
1:1 Coaching & Consulting Educators	211	258 (98 unique individuals)
Small Group/Department Coaching	13	46
Small Group Presentations	32	214
School-Wide Presentations	14	424
E-News/Tip of the Week	37	250 Weekly
Community Events	47	4,078
Class Observation Requests	5	139

Notes. Numbers are not mutually exclusive. The number of 'community events' and 'class observation requests' includes students who participated in the events.
Source: Authors' information.

Importantly, the Basecampus program also included the availability of an interactive online platform for mental health information that is curated and managed by Clarity. This program, One in Five Minds, served as a resource for teachers, allowing them to learn about mental wellness and early detection at their own pace with paths to certification. The website also offered interactive, problem-solving tools to help navigate mental health challenges and crises and a referral database of local professionals.

Data Sources

This was a mixed methods sequentially designed study in which we collected focus group data first (December 2022) followed by survey data that included both closed and open-ended response opportunities (April 2023). Our data collection approach was sequential; however, our data analysis approach was an iterative process in which results from each data collection helped to inform our interpretation of the other. For example, what we learned from focus group interviews early in the year informed the development of our survey instrument and analysis.

For our focus groups, we spoke with 13 teachers and six staff members across three focus groups and three administrators during a separate focus group at East Central High School. At CAST Lead, we spoke with three teachers and two staff members during one focus group and two administrators during one focus group. We also conducted individual interviews with the Basecampus Coach (who worked in both high school settings) and with the District SEL Coordinator (See Appendices A and B for our protocols). All focus groups and interviews took approximately 50 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. We used a grounded theory analytic approach, looking for overarching themes and categories across the focus group, interview, and open-ended data sources. Members of our research team analyzed all data independently first, then met to discuss areas of convergence and divergence. This process was repeated until we reached over 80% agreement on our thematic characterizations across the qualitative data.

In Spring of 2023, we met to design a survey that would include questions that we believed would help to further clarify what we learned from our focus groups. Since our population frame for the survey was much larger than the focus groups, we hoped to be able to complement what we learned from focus groups from a broader sample of teachers and staff at our two study high schools. We invited via email all school staff at East Central High School and CAST Lead to respond to our survey (see Appendix C for the survey). To increase the likelihood of participation, we offered a chance to win one of 50 $10 gift cards for completing the survey. In addition, the Basecampus coach distributed small wellness items (fidget spinners and stress balls) to inform school staff of the survey and encourage them to complete it. A total of 292 school staff were invited for the survey, and 103 completed the survey, with a response rate of 35.3%.

Our analysis was an iterative process. Although we began with our analysis of focus groups and interview information early in the year-results of which helped to guide the development of subsequent survey instrument- our findings from the survey became the focal point of the analysis we present next.

Description and Summary Statistics of Key Variables from Survey

The survey utilized three sets of self-reported subjective outcome measures: *i*) stress level, *ii*) confidence in ability to identify and intervene with students experiencing mental health challenges, and *iii*) perception of leaving the current profession.

To assess stress levels, we asked, "How would you rank your general level of stress this school year?" (*Stress*). Responses were measured by a 3-point Likert scale (1=low; 2=moderate; 3=high). The confidence in ability measures included three questions to gauge the extent to which the respondent agreed or disagreed with the following statements: "I feel overwhelmed when thinking about how to handle students with mental health challenges" (*Overwhelmed*), "I have confidence in my ability to recognize signs and symptoms of students' mental health challenges" (*Recognize*), and " I feel confident in my ability to know when to handle student mental health issues myself, and when to refer them to more qualified person" (*Know*). Each item was rated on a 3-point Likert scale (1=disagree; 2=neither agree nor disagree; 3=agree). Lastly, for the perception of job turnover, we asked, "How often have you considered leaving your profession in this school year?" (*Leaving*), and their opinions were obtained using a 3-point Likert scale (1=less than once a month; 2=two to three times per month; at least once a week).

Table 2 presents the distribution of the outcome measures by the program participation status. It is worth noting that some outcome variables contained missing values, which led to the exclusion of approximately one-fifth of the study sample (21 observations). The data indicate that two-thirds of the study sample were engaged with Basecampus outside campus-wide activities in the 2022-2023 school year. We find that Basecampus participants reported a higher stress level and were more overwhelmed when thinking about how to handle students with mental health challenges than non-program participants. On the other hand, the program participants tended to be confident in their ability to recognize signs and symptoms of students' mental health challenges as well as know the timing of referring those students to more qualified

personnel. In addition, a higher proportion of the program participants considered quitting their job at least twice a month than non-program participants.

Table 2: Distribution of Self-Reported Outcome Measures by Basecampus Participation

	Participants			Non-Program Participants		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Stress	16.98%	20.75%	62.26%	13.79%	31.03%	55.17%
Overwhelmed	41.51%	5.66%	52.83%	44.83%	13.79%	41.38%
Recognize	13.21%	3.77%	83.02%	17.24%	13.79%	68.97%
Know	13.21%	5.66%	81.13%	17.24%	6.90%	75.86%
Leaving	49.15%	16.95%	33.90%	45.71%	22.86%	31.43%
Observations	53			29		

In this study, we control for respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and perceptions of students' behavioral problems and school/district support. The socio-demographic characteristics include head of household (1 if a respondent is a head of household; 0 if otherwise), having a child (1 if a respondent has a child; 0 if otherwise), White (1 if a respondent is a non-Hispanic white; 0 if otherwise), lower household income (1 if a respondent has household income less than $55,000; 0 if otherwise), and teacher (1 if a respondent is a teacher; 0 if otherwise). They also include years in current school ranging from 1 (1 year or less) to 5 (15 years or more) and the dummy variable that indicates the school they are hired (1 if East Central High School; 0 if otherwise).

The student behavioral problems variable is a composite variable based on 11 items that gauge respondents' perceptions of the extent to which certain issues have been problematic at the school throughout the year. These issues include students' aggression, anxiety, attention challenges, depression/withdrawal, drug use, hyperactivity, lack of emotional regulation skills/self-control, lack of executive functioning skills, lack of motivation, lack of social skills, and student absences. Respondents rated each item on a 4-point Likert scale (1=not at all; 2=a little; 3=some; 4=to a great extent). Similarly, the school/district support is the composite variable based on seven items that assess respondents' perceptions of the school/district climate and culture. These items include statements such as "the district takes the mental health needs of staff seriously," "the district provides the resources needed to effectively manage work-related stress," "it is okay in this school to discuss feelings, worries, and frustrations with the principal,"

"principal looks out for the personal welfare of the staff members," "the principal places the needs of students ahead of personal and political interests," "teachers can trust that the principals' decisions will be reasonable and justified," and "the changes in leadership on my campus had a positive impact on overall wellness." The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). We averaged the item scales to construct corresponding composite variables and affirmed the reliability of the index by performing Cronbach's alpha test (a value over 0.84 for both variables).

Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations of control covariates by the program participation status and statistical difference in each covariate between the two groups. The data show that, of school staff who completed the survey, the program participants tended to be teachers, non-Hispanic Whites, and hired in East Central High School. However, the differences are weakly significant at a 10 percent level. In addition, although we find some level of differences in other variables, they are statistically indifferent between the groups.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Control Variables

	Participants	Non-Program Participants	Difference
Teacher	0.698	0.483	0.173*
	(0.267)	(0.508)	[0.100]
Head of Household	0.509	0.759	-0.147
	(0.505)	(0.435)	[0.098]
Having a child	0.472	0.586	-0.059
	(0.504)	(0.501)	[0.104]
Years in Current School	2.415	2.069	0.219
	(1.200)	(1.252)	[0.264]
White	0.566	0.379	0.197*
	(0.500)	(0.494)	[0.101]
Lower Income (< $54,999)	0.528	0.448	0.056
	(0.504)	(0.506)	[0.103]
Student Behavioral Problem	3.371	3.351	0.042
	(0.557)	(0.476)	[0.113]
School/District Support	3.336	3.134	0.184
	(1.055)	(1.004)	[0.227]
East Central High School	0.925	0.828	0.126*
	(0.267)	(0.384)	[0.075]
Observations	53	29	82

Notes. Standard deviations are reported in parentheses, and standard errors are reported in brackets.
* $p < 0.1$. ** $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.01$.

Empirical Strategy

To account for the ordinal nature of response outcomes, we begin with the ordered probit model (Greene & Hensher, 2010). A general representation of the model is that a person has some levels of utility or opinion associated with the object of the question and answers the question on the basis of how great the utility is (Train, 2009). Let the ordinal dependent variable y takes the values $\{1,2,\ldots,J\}$ for some known integer J. Assuming that a latent variable y^* is determined by observed and unobserved components:

$$y^* = x_i'\beta + \varepsilon_i,$$

where ε_i is normally distributed with mean zero and variance of one, β is a vector of parameters to be estimated, and x is a vector of observed variables. If a person is asked to express an opinion in one of three categories: "low," "middle," and "high." This person chooses "low" if y^* is below a cutoff, k_1. He chooses "middle" if y^* is above k_1 but below another cutoff, k_2, and chooses "high" if y^* is above k_2. Assuming that $k_1 < k_2$ to be unknow threshold points (or cut points), the decision is represented as:

$y = 1\ (low)$ if $y^* \leq k_1$

$y = 2\ (middle)$ if $k_1 < y^* \leq k_2$

$y = 3\ (high)$ if $y^* > k_2$.

Since the error term is standard normally distributed, each response probability can be written as follows.

$$P(y = 1|x) = \Phi(k_1 - x'\beta)$$
$$P(y = 2|x) = \Phi(k_2 - x'\beta) - \Phi(k_1 - x'\beta)$$
$$P(y = 3|x) = 1 - \Phi(k_2 - x'\beta),$$

where $\Phi(.)$ is the standard normal cumulative distribution. The parameter k and β can be estimated by maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) with the log-likelihood function as:

$$l_i(k,\beta) = 1[y_i = 1]\log[\Phi(k_1 - x'\beta)] + 1[y_i = 2]\log[\Phi(k_2 - x'\beta) - \Phi(k_1 - x'\beta)]$$
$$+1[y_i = 3]\log[1 - \Phi(k_2 - x'\beta)].$$

However, Basecampus was not designed as a random-assignment experiment, and the empirical strategy has a self-selection problem. That is, instead of being randomly selected or assigned, school staff decided whether or not to participate based on their own preferences, interests, or characteristics. This could introduce biases into the study's results because those who

chose to participate might be systematically different from those who chose not. More specifically, teachers who were enthusiastic about the program components or who were currently handling students with mental health issues might be more likely to self-select to participate, while those who were skeptical or indifferent might choose not to take part. As a result, the findings might not accurately represent the average program effect and could be influenced by the characteristics of the participants who self-selected.

In order to address self-selection concerns, this study employ an extended ordered probit model (the 'eoprobit' command in STATA), in which an instrumental variable (IV) is used to control for confounding errors when the endogenous covariate is discrete. The IV should have a significant correlation with the endogenous variable (program participation in our study) but should be independent of the error term in the outcome model. This assumption ensures that the IV affects the endogenous variable only through its correlation with the endogenous variable and not through any other channels that could bias the estimates. When these assumptions are met, the instrumental variable estimation can help mitigate the endogeneity problem, allowing researchers to obtain consistent and unbiased estimates of the causal relationship between the endogenous variable and the dependent variable.

We considered using the physical location of the Basecampus office as an instrument. According to the survey, school staff engaged in Basecampus activities, excluding school-wide activities, through various channels, such as one-on-one coaching, small and large group sessions, and classroom observations. Analyzing the data, we observed that 73% of program participants knew the office location, whereas only 37% of non-program participants did. This suggests a significant and positive correlation between these two variables. Thus, knowing the Basecampus office location would potentially increase the likelihood of school staff taking part in the program's activities. However, it is essential to note that knowing the location itself would not directly influence their stress levels or ability to identify and intervene with students experiencing mental health challenges. Instead, any observed differences in outcome measures are more likely attributable to changes in their social-emotional learning knowledge and improved mental health resulting from their active engagement in the program activities, predicted by being aware of the program's location.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, despite efforts made to ensure the data's representativeness, about one-third of school staff completed the survey. It leaves the possibility that school staff who agreed to participate in the questionnaire possessed unique characteristics that were not identifiable (the same may be true of the individuals who participated in the focus groups). This situation may have resulted in a response bias, as school staff who had a positive opinion of Basecampus or maintained a close relationship with the Basecampus coach might have been more inclined to take the time to complete the survey or attend the focus groups. Consequently, the results might be overly positive compared to the actual population, offering only a limited perspective on school staff's sense of stress and confidence in recognizing and intervening with students experiencing mental health challenges. Hence, we interpret the estimated effects as the upper limit of the program performance. Second, our work is based on non-experimental data. While our empirical strategy intends to help reduce bias stemming from the correlation of unobservables with Basecampus participation, the assumptions of a valid instrumental variable cannot be testable, and violating these assumptions may potentially lead to inadequate conclusions. Therefore, future research needs to develop an experimental design such as a randomized controlled trial (RCT). The third limitation pertains to the potential ambiguity in how participants interpreted the questions, and whether they perceived the constructs in the same manner as intended by the researchers.

RESULTS

Who Participated in the Basecampus Program?

This section identifies factors affecting school staff's Basecampus participation. We run a probit model of Basecampus participation on the instrumental variable and other controls. The results in Table 5 show that teachers and staff with a lower household income tended to participate in the program by 14.8 and 20 percentage points, while the head of households were less likely to participate in the program by 31.6 percentage points than those of non-program participants. We also find that the coefficient on the Basecampus office variable is positive and highly significant, indicating that knowing the physical location of the Basecampus office is associated with a higher likelihood of program participation (by 34.5 percentage points).

Table 5: Probit Regression Results of Factors Affecting School Staff's Basecampus Participation

	Basecampus (1 = Participated; 0 = Not Participated)	
	Coef.	dy/dx
Teacher	0.565*	0.148
	(0.325)	
Head of Household	–1.159***	–0.316
	(0.373)	
Having a child	–0.350	–0.075
	(0.349)	
Years of Current School	0.092	0.023
	(0.151)	
White	0.224	0.064
	(0.355)	
Lower Household Income	0.784**	0.199
	(0.378)	
Student Behavioral Problems	–0.247	–0.073
	(0.291)	
School/District Support	0.195	0.054
	(0.170)	
Basecampus Office	1.341***	0.345
	(0.358)	
East Central High School	0.271	0.080
	(0.530)	
Pseudo R²	0.244	
Observations	82	

Notes. Robust standard errors are reported in parathesis.
* $p < 0.1$. ** $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.01$.

Was There a Reduction of Stress Among Basecampus Participants?

To examine the effectiveness of Basecampus, we utilized the ordered probit model with an endogenous regressor. The regression results are presented in Table 6–8. As explained earlier, program participation is voluntary and considered endogenous. We instrument program participation by knowing the physical location of Basecampus office at school. The coefficients on the instrument reported in the first-stage regression of each result table (as well as Table 5) indicate that the instrument explains a substantial fraction of the variation in program participation. Additionally, a statistically significant correlation exists between the error terms of the participation and outcome models (σ), confirming that the Basecampus variable is indeed endogenous.

The results in Table 6 show that the coefficient on the Basecampus variable is negative and statistically significant (at the 1 percent level). A negative sign of the coefficient indicates that the likelihood of the response decreases with the level or presence of the variable, holding other variables constant, and vice versa. That is, the school staff by participating in Basecampus were predicted to decrease the stress levels. The magnitude of ordered probit regression estimates are not directly interpreted as ordinary least squares (OLS) estimates. Thus, we calculate the marginal effects of the variables. Specifically, the marginal effects of low, moderate, and high levels of stress are found to be positive (0.18), positive (0.09), and negative (–0.27), respectively. They suggest that the program participants were more likely to be in the low and moderate stress levels by 18 and 9 percentage points, respectively, and less likely to be in the high-stress level category by 27 percentage points than non-program participants. This result is opposite from the one we observed in the summary findings. This phenomenon can be attributed to the positive correlation between the error terms (σ), indicating that unobserved factors that would lead to an increased likelihood of program participation also raised the probability of experiencing higher stress levels. That is, when addressing omitted variable bias through the use of the IV approach, the direction of the program effect reversed.

We also find that non-Hispanic Whites and staff with a lower household income tended to reveal higher stress levels than their counterparts, while the head of households tended to have lower stress levels. The coefficient on student behavioral problems is positive and highly significant, indicating that staff stress levels increased as they perceived students' behaviors as more problematic. In contrast, school/district support is associated with decreased stress levels,

suggesting that their stress levels decreased as they perceived receiving more support from the leadership.

Table 6: Basecampus Effects on School Staff's Stress Levels

	Stress
Second Stage Regression Results	
Basecampus	-1.143^{***}
	(0.370)
Teacher	0.131
	(0.286)
Head of Household	-1.171^{***}
	(0.387)
Having a child	0.125
	(0.322)
Years of Current School	0.163
	(0.118)
White	0.583^{*}
	(0.313)
Lower Household Income	0.770^{**}
	(0.304)
Student Behavioral Problems	1.364^{***}
	(0.295)
School/District Support	-0.385^{**}
	(0.184)
East Central High School	-0.229
	(0.446)
First Stage Regression Results (BASECAMPUS)	
Bascampus Office	1.341^{***}
	(0.358)
σ (e.Basecampus, e.Stress)	0.656^{***}
	(0.227)
Observations	82

Notes. Robust standard errors are reported in parathesis. Regression results for other controls at the first-stage regression are omitted due to the space.

Did Participation in Basecampus Lead to Improvement in Participants' Confidence in Recognizing and Responding When Students Experience Mental Health Challenges?

Table 7 presents the results for the questions about whether Basecampus influenced school staff's confidence in identifying and intervening with students who were experiencing mental health challenges. The results in column (1) show that the coefficient on Basecampus is negative and statistically significant (at the 1 percent level), indicating that program participants were predicted to be less overwhelmed when considering how to handle students with mental health challenges. The marginal effects of disagree, neither agree nor disagree, and agree of the overwhelmed statement are found to be positive (0.37), negative (–0.02), and negative (–0.39), respectively. The results suggest that the participants were more likely to be in the not-overwhelmed category by 37 percentage points and less likely to be in the overwhelmed category (0.39) than non-program participants. At the same time, a slight difference is found in the middle (neither agree nor disagree) category.

Table 7: Basecampus Effects on School Staff's confidence in ability to identify and intervene with students experiencing mental health challenges

	Overwhelmed	Identify	Know
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Second Stage Regression Results			
Basecampus	–1.142***	1.647**	1.315**
	(0.462)	(0.671)	(0.642)
Teacher	0.366	–0.117	–0.250
	(0.320)	(0.374)	(0.337)
Head of Household	–0.554*	–0.127	–0.236
	(0.328)	(0.453)	(0.320)
Having a child	–0.040	0.281	0.096
	(0.269)	(0.287)	(0.312)
Years of Current School	0.137	–	–
	(0.128)	(–)	(–)
White	–0.053	–0.231	–0.125
	(0.296)	(0.348)	(0.355)
Lower Household Income	0.613**	–0.602	–0.472
	(0.291)	(0.373)	(0.319)
Student Behavioral Problems	–0.052	0.309	–0.191
	(0.273)	(0.352)	(0.296)

School/District Support	–0.015	0.163	0.054
	(0.145)	(0.150)	(0.168)
East Central High School	0.552	–0.706	–0.260
	(0.446)	(0.433)	(0.445)
First Stage Regression Results (BASECAMPUS)			
Bascampus Office	1.330***	1.174***	1.218***
	(0.395)	(0.387)	(0.383)
σ (e.BASECAMPUS, e.DV)	0.827***	–0.904***	–0.784***
	(0.262)	(0.276)	(0.347)
Observations	82	82	82

Notes. The 'years of current school' variable is excluded from the models for the results in columns (2) and (3) due to the convergence problem. Robust standard errors are reported in parathesis. Regression results for other controls at the first-stage regression are omitted due to the space.

Column (2) also show that the Basecampus variable is significant and positively associated with the identify variable, indicating that program participants were more likely to have confidence in recognizing signs and symptoms of students' mental health challenges. The marginal effects of disagree, neither agree nor disagree, and agree of the statement are found to be negative (–0.45), negative (–0.05), and positive (0.50), respectively. In other words, the participants were less likely to be in the not-confident-in-ability and middle categories by 45 and 5 percentage points, while they were more likely to be in the confident-in-ability category by 50 percentage points than non-program participants.

The results in column (3) suggest similar findings as in column (2). Basecampus enhanced participants' confidence in knowing when to handle student mental health issues themselves, and when to refer those students to more qualified personnel. The results of marginal effects indicate that Basecampus participants were less likely to be in the not-confident-in-ability and middle categories by 37 and 4 percentage points, respectively, while they were more likely to be in the confident-in-ability category by 41 percentage points than non-program participants.

Did Participation in Basecampus Affect Participants' Perception of Leaving the Profession?

We find a significant and positive effect of Basecampus on the perception of school staff turnover (Table 8). The results show that Basecampus was predicted to reduce the frequency of considering leaving the profession during the last school year. The marginal effects of considering quitting a job less than once a month, two to three times a month, and more than once a week are found to be positive (0.37), positive (0.02), and negative (–0.39), respectively. That is, program participants were more likely to be in the first two categories than the third one–considering it every week–relative to non-program participants.

Table 8: Basecampus Effects on School Staff's Perception of Leaving the Profession

	Leaving
Second Stage Regression Results	
Basecampus	–1.801***
	(0.463)
Teacher	0.385
	(0.283)
Head of Household	–0.881***
	(0.292)
Having a child	–0.250
	(0.293)
Years of Current School	0.114
	(0.111)
White	0.487
	(0.304)
Lower Household Income	0.283
	(0.306)
Student Behavioral Problems	0.604*
	(0.348)
School/District Support	–0.341
	(0.214)
East Central High School	0.287
	(0.456)
First Stage Regression Results (BASECAMPUS)	
Bascampus Office	0.340***
	(0.119)
σ (e.BASECAMPUS, e.Leaving)	0.718***

	(0.205)
Observations	82

Notes. Robust standard errors are reported in parathesis. Regression results for other covariates at the first stage regression are omitted due to the space.
* $p < 0.1$. ** $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.01$.

Qualitative Data Findings

As can be seen in the survey, we asked participants to respond to three open-ended questions. We analyzed these themes and found overlap across what we learned from focus groups and interviews. What we present next are the main overarching themes gleaned from both data sources.

Barriers to Staff Wellness

Most of our respondents reported that the biggest barrier to staff wellness remained being assigned too many tasks with not enough time. In trying to meet all the daily demands, they lack the time to maintain their wellness. One administrator described the conflict she faces when encouraging teachers to take care of themselves:

> I feel like there's a disconnect between trying to tell an adult, "Hey, why don't you just take a deep breath, or go to yoga or do whatever, or take a break," when you've absolutely bombarded them with so much work. And it's physically impossible to use any of those strategies, right? They don't…have time to take a five-minute break, who's gonna watch their class? Like, "Am I supposed to do that when I'm having a meltdown in class? Are you going to watch my class while I go do my breathing techniques?"

Teachers also experience stress because of student behavior and negative experiences with reporting the behavior and not seeing any consequences. This is one aspect of the feelings of powerlessness teachers described where they feel unable to affect change, protect themselves, and enforce consequences for student behavior. For example, one teacher said, "We've been given the opportunity to give feedback, and we've completed surveys, and this is not the first time I participated in a focus group. And I feel like I've been giving feedback for well over a good solid dozen years…. but zero has changed." Where individuals usually take time off to relieve stress, teachers described feeling scrutinized or guilty for taking time off and motivated to

push through the stress because of the district's financial incentive for staff who have perfect attendance each semester. As one teacher explained, "I still have medical things that need to be addressed that I'm not addressing. One because it's so expensive. Two, I'm worried about missing too much work." Teachers' stress is also heightened by large classes, some that include four grades and some that include both general and special education students.

Staff Turnover

Another area of concern has to do with staff turnover. When asked why teachers are leaving the profession, the most common response was the high level of stress related to their job responsibilities. Teachers emphasized that there is more on their to-do list on any given day than they have time to accomplish. One teacher shared, "Education has always been tough. But we're really pushing the threshold of what anybody can handle as a professional." This increased workload leads to teachers working outside of their contracted hours and/or sacrificing important tasks to complete others. Teachers explained that the message they receive from district-level administrators is that being overwhelmed and working nights and weekends is expected as part of their job. One participant explained:

> There is a knowing and doing gap from the campus level to the district level, to the city level to the state level, all of it. We know teachers are overworked. We know they are taxed out; we know – we do absolutely nothing about it… Stop telling me I'm not doing enough. Stop telling me it's expected. 'Teachers have to know that when they go home, they have to work.' No, I'm sorry… So, until all of that changes, I think you're gonna see teachers are going to continue to leave the profession in droves.

Other factors that contributed to staff turnover were teachers' fear for their own safety and the increase in inexperienced, untrained teachers. Two administrators addressed the fear they recognize in teachers and other staff. One said, "I don't think in the past, teachers have ever had to say, I'm scared to come to work. And we hear that a lot more. Like, I don't want to come today, because there was a threat." The other spoke from personal experience, "Now you're asking me to put myself in a position where at any moment, I could be murdered within my job, and unlike law enforcement and military, there's no benefits for my family if I do."

For the first time in this study, teachers at both campuses expressed that they were personally looking to leave. The lack of compensation and availability of other job opportunities were tempting reasons to leave. When asked why staff chose to stay in education this year, teachers said if they retain some level of autonomy for how they do their job, and continue to see growth and change in students, they will stay.

Confidence and Frustration

Teachers also discussed their perceptions of responding when students experience mental health challenges. In past surveys, many teachers felt both confident in their ability to recognize and respond when students experience mental health challenges and frustrated about meeting these needs. When asked about this, teachers shared the reasons for this frustration. Some expressed that they know which resources can help students, but students' access to on-campus mental wellness service providers is limited because there are so many students and not enough providers. One teacher explained, "I do not feel qualified with the kind of mental issues that I see in some of my students to deal with them and it upsets me. And I'll go to the counselors and they're very busy and overwhelmed." One support staff member shared her own summary of this challenge:

> Those of us that work with very vulnerable populations find ourselves overworked and overwhelmed and we tend to be the ones that need to be here for the students. And when we're overwhelmed, and when we're overworked, it's hard for us and we forget IEP things. Or we…feel bad for snapping at a kid that we know we didn't do the feedback loop with.

Teachers also felt frustrated by being asked to perform duties without proper training and when optional training is offered, they do not have time to attend. An administrator said, "We're trying to tell teachers to respond to these things and it's like, 'Oh, here, watch this seminar.'…. I don't even have time to watch that seminar.'" Finally, teachers expressed not having enough time to fully serve the students. One teacher described his experience:

> "I'm either really on top of grading, and actively engaged in lessons, but maybe I'm behind on my parent communication or one of those other things, so…. I do want to be able to help students emotionally and mentally, but for me, it really comes down to being

a time thing because if a student's crying, I know that might take 10 minutes for me to be able to get them to a better place. I don't feel like I have an extra 10 minutes in my day."

Barriers to Student Wellness

In the focus groups we conducted in fall 2021 and spring 2022, we heard a lot about student anxiety and a lack of motivation and engagement in school. This time we heard about these same issues and their visible, negative impacts on students' academic outcomes. The issue was described as cyclical: students feel anxious about school, which leads to hesitancy to engage with the content, which leads to students falling behind academically, which leads to increased anxiety. The connection between anxiety and academics was also described within students' hierarchy of needs. Teachers mentioned students lacking a sense of safety more in this group than previously. Because they feel unsafe, students' basic needs are not met in the classroom, and they are unable to learn and grow with their peers. One teacher explained, "It's almost like they can't learn when they're hungry, they also can't learn when they're afraid of the people that they're sitting next to."

Teachers also spoke at length about the COVID-related gap in skills and the lack of resources to fill those gaps. These skills, including social, problem-solving, executive functioning, and emotional coping, existed before COVID but have grown noticeably. Teachers at both campuses have observed an increase in behavior issues and serious mental health needs. As one administrator explained, "[Last year] I think I had 30 office referrals for the whole school year. I'm already over 100 and it's only December 1st. So, you're really seeing a marked increase in behavior that our teachers were not accustomed to." Unfortunately, staff also described a lack of available resources to support students' needs.

One teacher explained feeling like everyone is waiting for another tragedy to happen before the students get the help they need. Another suggested the system be redesigned so teachers can work with students in small groups from the beginning instead of only after they fail the STAAR exam. At the time, teachers had not seen a change in student behavior from the addition of the Communities in School site coordinator, which is a separate role from the Basecampus coach. One teacher expressed her frustration with having the resources but not enough time: "I think one of the biggest things that has affected kids is their mental health since COVID, and we're not dealing with that. We really aren't… Basecampus is helping and

Communities in Schools. But we're not given the time or the opportunity to address those things." Finally, external factors, such as difficulties at home and drugs on campus were described as barriers to students' mental wellness.

Thoughts on Admin Changes

In August 2022, CAST Lead welcomed a new principal, a full-time counselor, and a mostly new teaching staff. The returning staff shared how the changes in campus administration has changed the culture of their campus, specifically related to student behavior. They reported seeing minimal structure and lax and unclear consequences, which they feel has contributed to an increase in behavior issues on campus. One teacher said, "I just feel like there could be more disciplinary boundaries, really. It's really difficult with kids wandering the halls, with kids walking out of your classroom, and no consequences. And there just don't seem to be any consequences for anything. Unless it's so egregious that the police show up." Additionally, the shift to back to in-person meetings both for ECISD and CAST Networks means the principal is frequently off-campus so other staff must step up and address student behavior. CAST Lead staff also shared the positive impact that having a full-time counselor on campus has had on their wellness and student wellness.

At East Central HS, teachers had mixed feelings about the administrative change. The new principal and administrators were not new to the campus and teachers felt these internal hires were beneficial because the administrators were already familiar with the district, campus, staff, and students. Some teachers shared positive reactions to the principal's presence and support in their department, while others wished for more interaction with administrators. One teacher explained, "We feel kind of like, alone over there. Like nobody really checks in on us. I kind of miss the every-few-weeks check-ins that we would get just to see how are you doing, how's your family doing? That hasn't happened at all this year. But I miss it, I miss having somebody stop by and check on us and ask me about my family and know everything about them." Additionally, staff suggested some of the students' behavioral issues were related to their adjustment to the new administration, but not a result of the specific people in charge.

Barriers to Using Basecampus

Lack of time was still the biggest reason why teachers were not able to access Basecampus. One administrator explained, "Their lunchtime…they use it for like the demands of the job versus being able to use it for getting some extra support." At East Central HS, the location of the Basecampus office is a barrier for teachers who teach in other buildings and rarely visit the main building. Additionally, since the Basecampus Coach is now fully housed at East Central HS, CAST Lead teachers have decreased utilization of Basecampus. Several teachers still expressed a social stigma related to needing and seeking help either related to their age or the culture in Texas. More teachers expressed that they prefer to rely on their established resources, including their peers, instead of using Basecampus. Even though several barriers exist to accessing Basecampus, those who do use it value it greatly. They mentioned noticing positive impacts on their own mental wellness and their students' mental wellness.

Discussion

Extensive research has suggested that SEL can enhance students' SEL skills, improve academic performance, and reduce problematic behaviors. Additionally, the increased SEL skills predict such important life outcomes as completing high school on time, obtaining a college degree, and securing stable employment (Hawkins et al., 2008). So far, the emphasis on the impacts of SEL has predominantly centered on students, leaving little attention directed toward educators who are responsible for implementing these programs. However, recent evidence suggests that educators play a crucial role in promoting successful SEL programs (e.g., Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). They argued that teachers not only need to know how to explicitly teach social and emotional skills, but also need to enhance their own social and emotional competence and well-being, which affect their classroom management strategies, the relationships they form with students, and their ability to implement SEL programs and practices.

The Basecampus program aimed to assist educators in integrating SEL into their classrooms by equipping school staff with SEL knowledge and tools to impart to students. Additionally, it supported teachers to help address work-related mental health stressors. Our study results suggest that, of those who completed the survey, by participating in Basecampus

school staff could reduce the level of stress and enhance their confidence in ability to identify and intervene with students experiencing mental health challenges. The observed outcomes might be attributed to the negative correlation between reinforced social and emotional competence in educators and the positive correlation with their commitment to the profession (Brackett et al., 2010; Collie et al., 2011; Ransford et al., 2009). Additionally, educators with strong social and emotional competence were better equipped to identify students with mental health issues. This enabled them to provide timely support and guidance, fostering the development of essential qualities such as self-control, empathy, and other positive attributes from an early age.

Another factor that impacts the success of Basecampus and likely similar intervention programs is support from the district. In this case, East Central ISD received a grant that allowed them to bring Basecampus to these two campuses, but teachers are still unsure about the district's investment in the program. As one teacher said, "I think the only way to make those Basecampus sessions really impactful is if they invested as a district to say, 'Once a month, you are going to get a sub for this one period so that everyone can go and…it's designated for you to have that time off.' …It doesn't seem like it's completely supported."

Additionally, when asked for last thoughts that teachers, administrators, and staff would like to share with Basecampus, and campus, district, and state leaders, they expressed a need to rethink the societal purpose of education, create more structure for students, invest more financially, and prioritize students' mental health. One teacher explained, "We need to address students' mental health…. forget the test…. because if we don't, we're just going to keep losing students and losing students and losing students or passing them on and saying, 'Oh, good luck,' and what are we setting them up for in the future? We're going to have a generation of very maladjusted adults." As for the financial investment, administrators said they need more autonomy: "We're often given a ton of money, but we're told how we have to spend it. And if we were just given the money, and they leave us alone, you'd probably see better changes." These focus group findings suggest that administrators, teachers and staff see the benefit of the Basecampus program, but changes must be made at the state, district and campus level to increase participation and the effectiveness of the program.

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Appendix A
Teacher Focus Group Protocol (Fall 2022)

Baseline Information

- *Your role on campus*
- *How long have you been in education*

Topic 1: Questions about Campus Culture/Staffing

1. We know that your campus had changes in leadership this school year. How have these changes in administration impacted your (staff) wellness?

Probes: Have you noticed changes in students' mental wellness related to this?

    a. CAST - Has having a full-time counselor on campus this year improved support in managing students' mental wellness?

Probes: Why or why not? Which needs have been satisfied and which have not?

    b. EC – How has having a site coordinator on campus impacted teachers' mental health culture? Have you personally noticed changes? Has having a site coordinator on campus this year improved support in managing students' mental wellness?

Probes: Why or why not? Which needs have been satisfied and which have not?

Topic 2: Questions about Basecampus

2. We sent out a survey this past August and over half of the respondents reported that they engaged with Basecampus less than 5 times last school year. Why do you think people aren't utilizing more of Basecampus' resources?

Probes: barriers to using resources; solutions to barriers

Topic 3: Questions about Students

3. From last year's focus groups, teachers identified several issues that seemed to serve as barriers to students' mental wellness. Those barriers included: a lack of social skills, social connection, motivation, trust, and academic skills, as well as general mental health challenges. Could you please share an example of a time you noticed a student struggling with any of these?

Probes: What were they saying or doing that drew your attention? What were you feeling or thinking? Did you respond immediately or wait? How did you choose to respond the way you did? Did you feel confident in the way you responded? How could you have handled the situation better if you had more resources? What resources would have helped in that situation? Did you notice any effects that day? Did you notice any effects throughout the semester?

4. This semester's survey results also indicated that most staff felt confident in their ability to recognize and respond to student mental health challenges but also felt frustrated and overwhelmed when dealing with those challenges. Describe your level of confidence in recognizing these challenges versus responding to them.

Probes: Why do you think this contradiction exists? Do you feel more comfortable serving students before or after finding out about their diagnoses?

5. How do these mental health issues in students impact their learning?

Topic 3: Questions about School Staff

6. In last year's focus groups, we heard there wasn't enough time in the day to get everything done, which was the primary barrier to personal mental wellness. Do any of you agree with this?

Probes: If so, can you share an example of how this issue presents itself in your life and how it impacts your personal wellness?

7. When you're experiencing a particularly stressful morning, what do you typically do to make it through the rest of the day?
8. When you've experienced a particularly stressful day, what do you typically do when you get home to deal with the stress and mentally prepare for the next day/week?
9. Staff turnover is a big issue in education. What are the reasons you decided to stay in this job this year?

Probes: What do you think are the main reasons teachers are deciding to leave? What do you think would need to change to make more teachers want to stay?

Topic 4: Final Thoughts

10. This is our third and final round of focus groups and interviews. If there is one last message you'd like to share with Basecampus, the state policymakers, and your district and campus administrators, what would it be?

Appendix B:
Administrator Focus Group Protocol (Fall 2022)

Baseline Information

- *Your role on campus*
- *How long have you been in education?*

Topic 1: Questions about Campus Culture/Staffing

1. We know that your campus had changes in leadership this school year, so we wanted to give you the opportunity to share your thoughts about campus this year. How would you describe your campus' culture?
2. How would you describe your leadership style?
3. What are the biggest challenges that you feel your students face?
4. What are the biggest challenges that you feel the school staff faces?
5. CAST – Have you observed any impacts of having a full-time counselor on campus this year as it relates to students' mental wellness?
6. EC – Have you observed any impacts of having a Psych Coordinator on campus this year as it relates to students' mental wellness? What about students' mental wellness?
7. What mental wellness needs in staff and students have you already attempted to address?
   a. Which are you hoping to address in the future?

Topic 2: Questions about Basecampus

8. We sent out a survey this past August and over half of the respondents reported that they engaged with Basecampus less than 5 times last school year. Why do you think people aren't utilizing more of Basecampus' resources?

Probes: barriers to using resources; solutions to barriers

9. Have you been able to observe any impact Basecampus has had on you, your staff, your students, or the campus culture?

Topic 3: Questions about Students

10. From last year's focus groups, teachers identified several issues that seemed to serve as barriers to students' mental wellness. Those barriers included: a lack of social skills, social connection, motivation, trust, and academic skills, as well as general mental health challenges. Have you noticed any of these issues and if so, could you please share an example of a time you noticed a student struggling with one of these?

Probes: What were they saying or doing that drew your attention? What were you feeling or thinking? Did you respond immediately or wait? How did you choose to respond the way you did? Did you feel confident in the way you responded? How could you have handled the situation better if you had more resources? What resources would have helped in that situation? Did you notice any effects that day? Did you notice any effects throughout the semester?

Topic 4: Questions about School Staff

11. In last year's focus groups, we heard there wasn't enough time in the day to get everything done, which was the primary barrier to personal mental wellness. Do any of you agree with this?

Probes: If so, can you share an example of how this issue presents itself in your life and how it impacts your personal wellness?

12. When you're experiencing a particularly stressful morning, what do you typically do to make it through the rest of the day?
13. When you've experienced a particularly stressful day, what do you typically do when you get home to deal with the stress and mentally prepare for the next day/week?
14. Staff turnover is a big issue in education. What are the reasons you decided to stay in this job this year?

Probes: What do you think are the main reasons school staff are deciding to leave? What would need to change to make more people want to stay?

Topic 5: Final Thoughts

15. This is our third and final round of focus groups and interviews. If there is one last message you'd like to share with Basecampus and the state policymakers to know, what would it be?

Appendix C
Spring 2023 Basecampus Survey

Q1 Where do you work? If you work at both schools, please select the school where you spend most of your time.

- CAST Lead High School (1)
- East Central High School (2)

Q2a How many years have you...

	1 year or less (1)	2 to 5 years (2)	6 to 9 years (3)	10 to 14 years (4)	15 years or more (5)
Worked at CAST Lead? (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Worked in education? (2)	○	○	○	○	○

Q2b How many years have you...

	1 year or less (1)	2 to 5 years (2)	6 to 9 years (3)	10 to 14 years (4)	15 years or more (5)
Worked at East Central? (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Worked in education? (2)	○	○	○	○	○

Q3 Please select the position in which you spend most of your time.

- Teacher (All Departments and Subjects) (1)
- Special Education Service Provider (2)
- Counselor, Social Worker, Case Manager (3)
- Administrator (4)
- Support Staff (5) _____
- Other (6) _____

Q4 What is the primary subject you teach or provide support to?

- CTE (1)
- Electives (2)
- English/Language Arts/Reading (3)
- ESL (4)
- Mathematics (5)
- Athletics/Physical Education/Health (6)
- Science (7)
- Social Studies/History (8)
- World Language (9)
- Other (10) _____

Q5 What grades are you primarily responsible for during the school day? Check all that apply.

- 8th grade (1)
- 9th grade (2)
- 10th grade (3)
- 11th grade (4)
- 12th grade (5)
- Not Applicable (6)

Q6 Please select the highest degree you have earned.

- Bachelor's Degree (1)
- Master's Degree or Above (2)
- Not Applicable (3)

Q7 Which of the following best describe(s) you? Check all that apply.

- Native American or Alaskan Native (1)
- Asian or Pacific Islander (2)
- Black or African American (3)
- Latino/a/x or Hispanic (4)
- White or Caucasian (5)
- Self-Describe (6) _____

Q8 What is your household income?

- $29,999 or less (1)
- $30,000-$54,999 (2)
- $55,000-$79,999 (3)
- $80,000-$104,999 (4)
- $105,000-$129,999 (5)
- $130,000 or more (6)

Q9 Including yourself, how many people live in your household?

- Adults (18 years or older) (1) _____
- Children (17 years or younger) (2)

  _____

Q10 We have defined head of household as the primary financial provider for your household. Do you identify as the head of household?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Basecampus

Q11 The formal purpose of Basecampus is to provide non-mental health professionals with the tools, resources, and personal wellness support they need to confidently manage the prevention and early identification of mental health issues in youth.

This school year, how many times did you engage with Basecampus outside of campus-wide presentations?

- I have not engaged with Basecampus (1)
- About 1-4 times (2)
- About 5-9 times (3)
- 10 or more times (4)

Q12 What Basecampus tools have you used? Check all that apply.

- Using the designated wellness spaces (Zen Room at East Central and Teachers' Lounge at CAST Lead) (1)
- Classroom Observations (2)
- Individual Coaching (3)
- Optional Group Sessions (4)
- Basecampus Wellness/Mental Health Advocacy Events (5)
- Other (6) _____

Q13 Do you know where the Basecampus office is located?

- No (1)
- Yes (2)

Q13a If yes, how many minutes would it take you to walk to the Basecampus office from the classroom or office where you spend most of your time?

- Minutes (1) _____

Q14 What is your preferred approach to learn about how to serve your students in the classroom?

- Brochures (1)
- One-on-one training (2)
- Research Reports/Articles (3)
- Retreats (4)
- Self-paced Handouts (5)
- Webinars (6)
- Other (7) _____

End of Block: Basecampus

Start of Block: Staff Wellness

Q15 As this year ends, what is top of your mind concerning staff mental wellness?

_____

Q16 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I feel overwhelmed when thinking about how to handle students with mental health challenges. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
I have confidence in my ability to recognize signs and symptoms of students' mental health challenges. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
I feel confident in my ability to know when to handle student mental health issues myself, and when to refer them to a more qualified person. (3)	○	○	○	○	○

Q17 How would you rank:

	Very Low (1)	Low (2)	Moderate (3)	High (4)	Very High (5)
your general level of stress this school year? (1)	○	○	○	○	○
your level of stress specifically related to addressing student mental health needs this school year? (2)	○	○	○	○	○

Q18 What strategies do you employ to deal with stress?

_____

Q19 In this last school year, how often have you considered leaving your profession?

- Never (1)
- Less than once a month (2)
- 2 or 3 times per month (3)
- 1 or 2 times per week (4)
- Almost daily (5)

Q20 What is the main reason you have stayed in your job this year?

- Approaching Retirement (1)
- Autonomy (2)
- Consistent Pay (3)
- Relationships with Coworkers (4)
- Relationships with Students/Student Growth (5)
- Teaching Ability (6)
- Other (7) _____

Q21 Rank the options below from most likely to improve your work-related mental health (#1) to least likely (#9).

_____ Fewer job responsibilities (1)
_____ More support staff (2)
_____ Higher pay (3)
_____ More substitute teachers (4)
_____ More training for supporting students' mental health (5)
_____ Less emphasis on testing (6)
_____ Increased campus security (7)
_____ Only working within contracted time (8)
_____ More support from administrators (9)

Q22 Thinking about the amount of time you have on an average day, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I have enough time in the day to address students' mental health needs. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
The number of tasks I am expected to do in a day is reasonable. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
It is likely that I will have to work outside of contracted hours. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
I have time to take a break for at least ten minutes. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
I am able to have an uninterrupted lunch. (5)	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Staff Wellness

Start of Block: Self-care

Q23 A general definition of self-care is the process of taking care of oneself with behaviors that promote physical, mental, and emotional health.

How often do you engage in self-care behaviors?

- Less than an hour a week (1)
- 1 to 2 hours a week (2)
- 3 to 4 hours a week (3)
- Over 5 hours a week (4)
- I don't have time for self-care (5)

Q24 Are you aware of your employee benefits through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) related to mental wellness?

- No (1)
- Yes (2)

Q24a If yes, have you used any of the benefits provided by the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for mental wellness?

- No (1)
- Yes (2)

End of Block: Self-care

Start of Block: Student Wellness

Q25 As this year ends, what is top of your mind concerning students' mental wellness?

_____

Q26 Thinking about the students you interact with, to what extent have each of the following been a problem at your school this year?

	Not at all (1)	A little (2)	Some (3)	To a great extent (4)
Aggression (1)	○	○	○	○
Anxiety (2)	○	○	○	○
Attention Challenges (3)	○	○	○	○
Depression/Withdrawal (4)	○	○	○	○
Drug Use (5)	○	○	○	○
Hyperactivity (6)	○	○	○	○
Lack of Emotional Regulation Skills/Self-Control (7)	○	○	○	○
Lack of Executive Functioning Skills (Organizing, Planning) (8)	○	○	○	○
Lack of Motivation (9)	○	○	○	○
Lack of Social Skills (10)	○	○	○	○
Student Absences (11)	○	○	○	○

Q27 Mental health issues can be categorized as externalizing or internalizing. Externalizing mental health issues are characterized by actions in the external world. Examples include acting out and aggression. Internalizing mental health issues are characterized by processes within the self. Examples include anxiety and depression.

Thinking about this school year, how often...

	Never (1)	Less than once a month (2)	2 or 3 times per month (3)	1 or 2 times per week (4)	Almost daily (5)
Did you notice a student was showing signs of experiencing an externalizing mental health issue? (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Did you intervene with a student experiencing an externalizing mental health issue? (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Did you notice a student was showing signs of experiencing an internalizing mental health issue? (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Did you intervene with a student experiencing an internalizing mental health issue? (4)	○	○	○	○	○

Q28 Mental health issues can be categorized as externalizing or internalizing. Externalizing mental health issues are characterized by actions in the external world. Examples include acting out and aggression. Internalizing mental health issues are characterized by processes within the self. Examples include anxiety and depression.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
It is part of my job to intervene when a student is experiencing an externalizing mental health issue. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
I feel prepared to intervene when a student is experiencing an externalizing mental health issue. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
It is part of my job to intervene when a student is experiencing an interrnalizing mental health issue. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
I feel prepared to intervene when a student is experiencing an internalizing mental health issue. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
I have been instructed by admin to intervene in any student mental health need that arises. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Other staff are available to intervene in any student mental health issues when I am not. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
I trust other staff to intervene effectively in any student mental health issues. (7)	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Student Wellness

Start of Block: District/Campus Culture

Attendance Incentive We have heard about a district policy where teachers can receive a cash award each semester for perfect attendance.

Q29 Are you aware of this policy?

- No (1)
- Yes (2)

Q30 To what degree does this incentive impact your decision to take days off of work?

- Not at all (1)
- A little (2)
- Some (3)
- To a great extent (4)

Q31 In what way do you think this incentive impacts staff wellness?

- Extremely negative (1)
- Somewhat negative (2)
- Neither positive nor negative (3)
- Somewhat positive (4)
- Extremely positive (5)

Q32 How often do you worry...

	Never (1)	Less than once a month (2)	2 or 3 times per month (3)	1 or 2 times per week (4)	Almost daily (5)
about your personal safety while on campus? (1)	○	○	○	○	○
about students' safety while on campus? (2)	○	○	○	○	○

Q33 Thinking about your own work-related mental health, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
The district takes the mental health needs of staff seriously. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
The district provides the resources needed to effectively manage work related stress. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
It's okay in this school to discuss feelings, worries, and frustrations with the principal. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
The principal looks out for the personal welfare of the staff members. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
The principal places the needs of students ahead of personal and political interests. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers can trust that the principal's decisions will be reasonable and justified. (6)	○	○	○	○	○
The changes in leadership on my campus this year have had a positive impact on overall wellness. (7)	○	○	○	○	○

Q34 Thinking about students' mental health needs, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
The district provides adequate resources to meet students' mental health needs. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
My campus has enough resources to meet students' mental health needs. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
If I report a behavior/mental health concern, the issue will be resolved. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
The ratio of staff to students is adequate to meet the needs of every student. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Smaller class sizes would help ensure more students' mental health needs were met. (5)	○	○	○	○	○
My students have the prerequisite skills necessary to be successful in my class. (6)	○	○	○	○	○

Q35 Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following:

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Teachers in this school are comfortable asking colleagues to help them develop weaker areas of their practice. (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers in this school value each other's point of view. (2)	○	○	○	○	○
It's okay in this school for teachers to discuss feelings, worries, and frustrations with other teachers. (3)	○	○	○	○	○
I look forward to going to work on Monday mornings. (4)	○	○	○	○	○
I have felt pressured to not take time off of work, even when I felt I needed to. (5)	○	○	○	○	○

Q36 How would you rate your school on the following?

	Poor (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Excellent (4)
Resources for teachers who need help with challenging student behavior. (1)	○	○	○	○
Availability of support staff, such as counselors or social workers, to help students who need further intervention. (2)	○	○	○	○