



REPRESENTATIVE ALYSE GALVIN

Serving Alaska House District 14 | Anchorage: Roger's Park, Midtown, Tudor, and Spenard

March 14, 2025

The Honorable Rebecca Himschoot
Co-Chair, House Education Committee
Alaska State Capitol Room 411
Juneau, AK 99801

The Honorable Andi Story
Co-Chair, House Education Committee
Alaska State Capitol Room 403
Juneau, AK 99801

Re: Follow-up to Committee Questions on March 14, 2025

Dear Co-Chairs Himschoot and Story,

Thank you for the opportunity to present to the House Education Committee regarding House Bill 105. Below are follow-up responses to questions posed by committee members:

Has there been research on the outcomes on the impact of mental health education in other states?

As was mentioned during Committee, the State of Washington is a leader when it comes to implementing school-based mental health education and has been a longtime leader in this regard. Since 2002, the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has published the Healthy Youth Survey, which is administered to students in grades 8, 10, and 12, and evaluates the prevalence of a variety of behaviors among youth, such as substance use, dietary behaviors, family dynamics, alongside mental health. The most recent edition of this survey was administered in 2023, where more than 217,000 students participated. The link to this survey is below for reference. Upon entering this survey, please select the "Statewide" option under the "Select Location" question and "Mental Health" under the "Select Topic" question for the most relevant results to this inquiry.

[Data Dashboard – Healthy Youth Survey](#)

As a result, compared to the previous 2021 survey, there were major decreases in the percentages (ranging between 8-13% decrease) of students who reported feeling so sad or hopeless that they stopped doing some usual activities, reversing the increasing trend since 2010. The rates, listed in the table below, are the lowest rate amongst 10th graders since 2006, and the lowest rate amongst 8th and 12th graders since 2010. Similar sharp drops were seen the proportion of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders who have "contemplated suicide", "planned to attempt suicide", and "attempted suicide", with all these measures posting their lowest rates in 2023 across all grades, falling from a high of 9-10% in 2018 (after increasing for years) to a near all-time low of 6-7% in 2023.

This survey is especially notable as it is the second survey published after the COVID-19 pandemic and the results come in light after the state made a slew of major investments in its mental health programs and services. To illustrate this, as an example, between 2021 and 2023, the number of 8th grade students who received suicide prevention instruction in the previous year increased from 38.5% to 53.3%, the highest percentage recorded (a similar sharp increase was noted among 10th grade and 12th grade students). The percentage of students who reported

having no adults to turn to when depressed also decreased to its lowest levels in the past 10 years across all surveyed grades (i.e. Grades 8, 10, 12), going from a high of 15-16% down to lows of 10-11%.

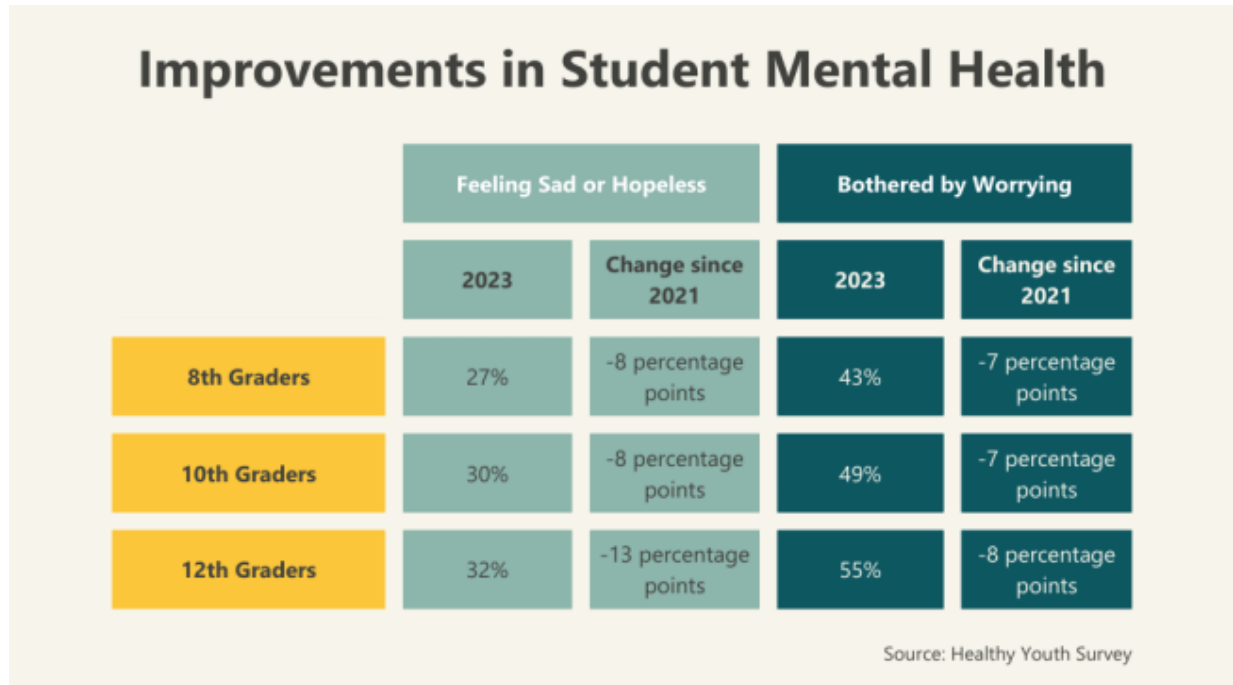
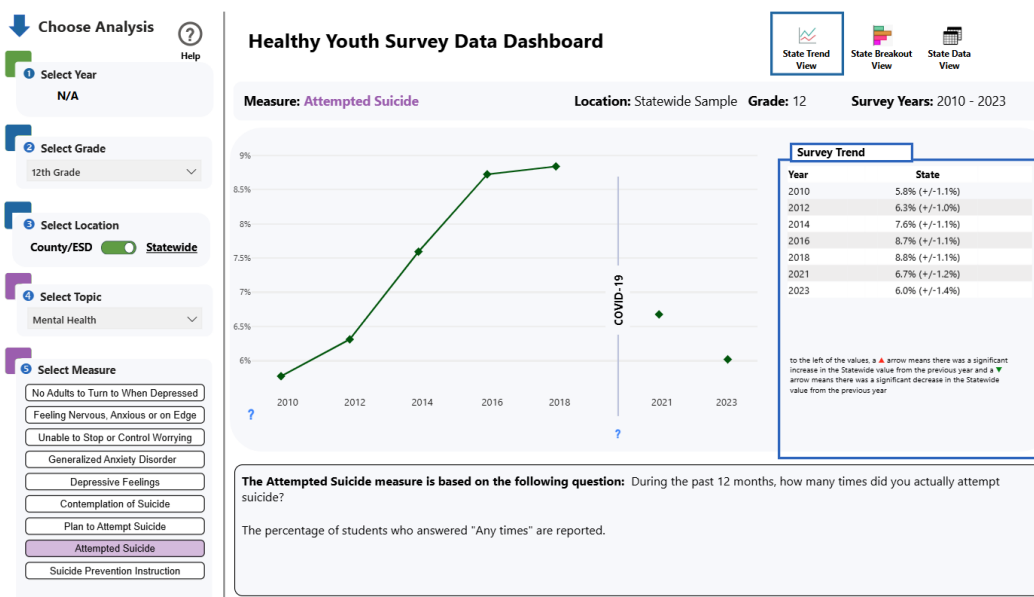


Figure 1: Improvements in Student Depression and Anxiety Levels between 2021 and 2023 Surveys



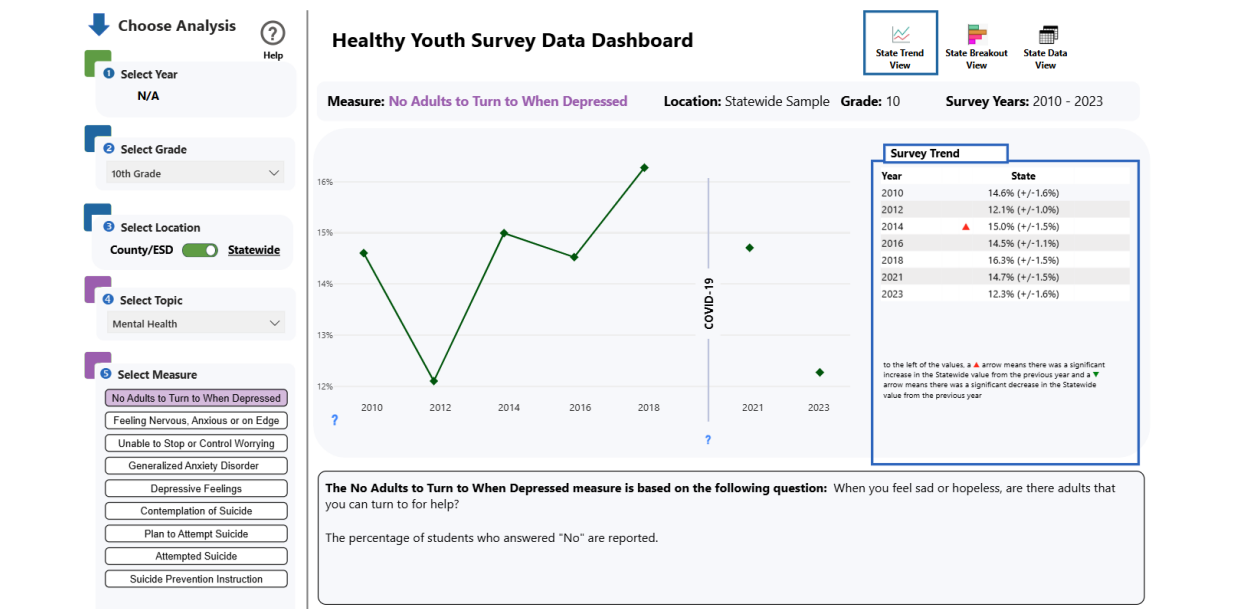


Figure 3: Survey Chart of 10th Grade Students who Reported having “No Adults to Turn to When Depressed”

Given recent discussion about youth, social media/technology, and anxiety, can you elaborate on the need for mental health education?

In the age of social media and the increased accessibilities of mobile phones and associated technologies to these networks, greater scrutiny has been placed on the potential harms that this can have on the still-developing minds of youth and adolescents. The [U.S. Surgeon General’s 2023 Advisory](#) cited a longitudinal cohort study of over 6,500 adolescents aged 12-15 which found that adolescents who spent more than 3 hours per day on social media faced double the risk of experiencing poor mental health outcomes including symptoms of depression and anxiety (Riehm et al 2019). This stands alongside with another study cited that found that 8th and 10th grade students spend an average of 3.5 hours per day on social media (Miech et al 2021). The U.S. Surgeon General’s 2023 Advisory also cited that social media may perpetuate body dissatisfaction, disordered eating behaviors, social comparison, and low self-esteem, especially among adolescent girls. In certain tragic cases, childhood deaths have been linked to suicide- and self-harm-related content and risk-taking challenges on social media platforms, with a systematic review finding that some social media platforms show live depictions of self-harm acts and found that discussing or showing this content can normalize such behaviors.

In short, the statement and findings above demonstrate the connections between social media use and mental health problems. The earlier that students can be aware of the risks of social media usage through mental education and awareness initiatives, the better they are able to utilize social media in a safe and responsible way. We know that with the passage of HB 69, there will be reduced usage of mobile devices in schools during regular school hours, and HB 105 will continue to be relevant in educating students about the risks of social media on individual mental health and utilizing this technology responsibly and in a healthy manner.

Sincerely,

Representative Alyse Galvin