

Youth Access to Healthcare Resources and Education in Public School Communities



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INTRODUCTION

Context:

- **Public School Requirement** - The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) determines the needed curriculum for high school students
- **Counselors & Admin Trained** - School counselors are trained with lessons such as Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Mental Health Awareness Training (MHAT), etc.
- **Lack of Student Input** - High school students who are receiving these lessons are not represented when their health-related courses and materials are developed

Question: How accessible are relevant and quality healthcare resources and education for high school students, both within and outside the school community of rural and suburban/urban areas?

Purpose: To identify the patterns and analyze the causes of differences in high school students access to healthcare resources and education in suburban/urban areas in comparison to high school students in rural areas

METHODOLOGY

Target populations: high school students of suburban/urban areas, high school students of rural areas

Process:

- 1) Multiple choice or multi-select confidential 25-question online survey
 - All questions were optional
 - Participants were given the option to participate in the follow-up focus group
- 2) Focus group of open-ended questions
 - Engaged in discussion with other high school students
- 3) A high school counselor was interviewed for a non-student perspective of youth access to healthcare resources and education
- 4) Results of the survey, focus group, and interview were analyzed in a comparative system between the two populations

REFERENCES

RCW 28A.150.210: Basic education—Goals of school districts., 28A.150.210.

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.150.210>

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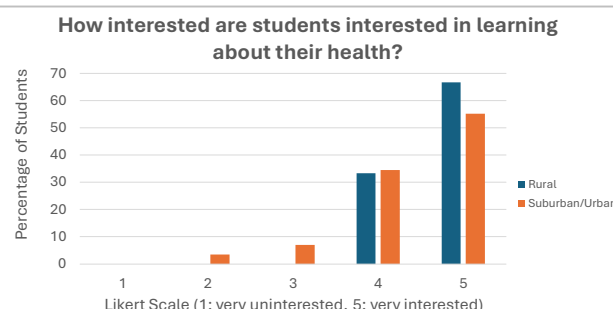
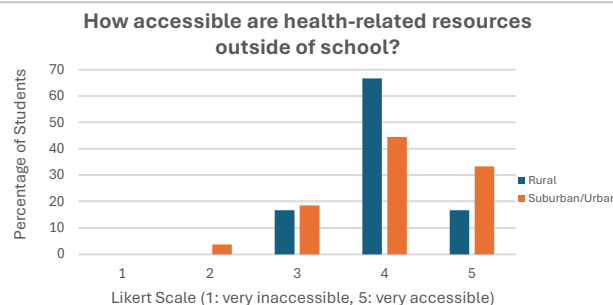
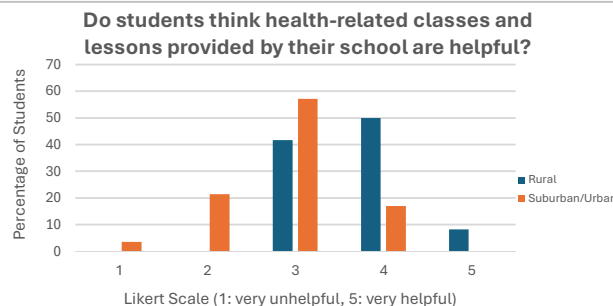
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RESULTS

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES



COUNSELOR PERSPECTIVE

Students and school staff both find youth health to be important

Students disengage when they do not think something is relevant to them

- Many students believe that the counseling lessons they receive are not necessary for them, given the school environment
- Students do not find their health to be their main priority, resulting in lack of engagement and seriousness around the subject

CONCLUSION

- 1) **Quantity vs. Quality** - While suburban/urban areas tend to have a greater number of health-related resources, making access to these resources easier, the effectiveness of the resources available in rural areas appear to be more significant
 - The small community of rural areas has allowed the resources provided to be well catered towards the needs and wants of the youth of the community
 - Lack of funding, limited resources, and the physical distance are all likely factors that prevent these helpful resources from being more accessible in rural areas
 - Larger, suburban/urban communities need to focus on developing their current resources to be appealing and engaging to youth today
- 2) **Focus on Mental Health** - The most popular topic that students of both suburban/urban areas and rural areas wanted to learn more about was their mental health, specifically in relation to school and social media
 - First generation of students to experience the clash between social media, AI, and competitive school environments
 - Redevelop resources with direct input from today's youth
 - Being a topic of interest among high schoolers reflects how present mental health issues are in youth lives

Interested Health Topics (Quotes from students)

Suburban/Urban Area High School Students	Rural Area High School Students
"how to treat common mental health conditions that sometimes happen to do with school like depression and anxiety"	"depression and other mental health problems, such as how to deal with it, how to get help things like that and or just general mental health information"
"how to stop my raging social media addiction"	"how to be mentally strong, and have a positive mindset towards myself."
"Mental and sexual health disorders and diseases and the diagnostic criteria of them"	"Physical, social, mental, etc. As much as possible. I love learning about health related topics!"

- 3) **Open-Door Policy** - An in-school counseling system in which students are allowed to walk-in to their counselor's office during any time during the school day for support with no prior appointment
 - Ensures that students are able to communicate with their counselor whenever they need support or advice
 - Presents the counseling system to be more inviting, helping destigmatize the language around mental health