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Salinas High School Virtual Wellness Center

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Abstract

Salinas High School, within the Salinas High School Union district, implements the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) initiative through the PBIS office on campus, working firsthand with students in the school's community. PBIS upholds a set of clear, positive behavior expectations to guide student behavior in the classroom environment while serving students who need extra support academically or emotionally. The SHS virtual wellness center webpage is for students, faculty, and parents to utilize, offering convenient access to mental health-related resources. Contesting barriers to access of mental health resources at Salinas High School, such as distance learning and lack of knowledge about the resources while simultaneously reducing poor mental health status. For project assessment, participants, including staff and several students, completed a questionnaire with 100% agreement that the virtual wellness center exceeded expectations of providing accessible resources. PBIS may consider continually updating resources to maintain a current and functional webpage.

Keywords: Mental Health, Students, Academic, Webpage, Resources

Agency & Communities Served

My internship and capstone was at Salinas High School in their Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) department. The mission of PBIS is to help students navigate all aspects of high school, including their educational and emotional needs. Ultimately PBIS is there to establish a positive school and classroom climate, in which expectations for students are predictable, directly taught, consistently acknowledged, and actively monitored. Salinas High mainly implements this through the "Cowboy Way." The Cowboy Way is implemented in school-wide lessons, modeling, posters, and more. The structure of PBIS is based on academic tutorials, mentoring, behavior support, and other interventions for students who are at a higher risk. One of the most wonderful aspects of PBIS at Salinas High is the incentives given to students when they are doing well by saying a student is "being #SHS." If a student is recognized for being #SHS, that student will be entered into weekly raffles and even acknowledged in the Cowboy Way Newsletter sent out to all students, parents, staff, and faculty.

The Cowboy Way embodies the values of PBIS, which is the expectation of students being "Safe, Honorable, and Sensible." The Cowboy Way can be seen throughout the campus demonstrated by students with support from all staff and faculty. Critical components of this are prevention, multi-tiered support, and data-based decision-making. Starting with the prevention, it is vital staff create an environment that defines a positive set of behavioral expectations throughout the school—furthermore, multi-tiered support focuses on the different needs within the community of students at the school site. The first being the universal community of SHS, entailing school-wide support and standards of positive behavior. Secondly, PBIS addresses selective interventions that are specialized to each student at risk.

Furthermore, tertiary or indicated interventions are the most advanced tier of PBIS, where attention and support are given to students at chronic risk. Moreover, there is also data-based decision-making that contributes to the functionality of PBIS. In data-based decision making information is collected and recorded in regards to students' suspensions. Allowing team members of PBIS to locate where the source of the problem is coming from to make practical students' resources. PBIS is considered a local government agency since it is a school within the Salinas Union High School District. One outside resource the school is given is a school psychologist provided by the Monterey County Health Department, who provides direct support to PBIS. Through this, PBIS hopes to help students find a path to success academically and emotionally.

Salinas high school is located at 93901 Zip Code of Salinas; its population comprises students from various zip codes throughout Salinas. As it is a high school, the general population consists of individuals under 18, individuals under 18 accounts for 30.9% of Salinas' population (Census, 2019). Ranking above the national average, only 22.3% of the population is under 18 (Census, 2019). Gender in this population is split evenly, with 50% male and 50% female, which coincides with Salinas's gender makeup (Census, 2019). The city of Salinas and Salinas high alike have very similar populations of race. The large majority being Hispanic or Latino, accounting for 78.7%, the next being White alone, making up 47.1% of the population, and the third-largest being White alone, not Hispanic or Latino 13.2% (Census, 2019). Comparatively, 70% of Salinas high's population is Hispanic, 20% white, 1.5% Filipino, 1% African American and the remaining 5.5% identify as different from the primary four ethnicities and races on campus (Synergy,2020).

With a large majority of students being Hispanic, students within this population primarily know another language. 260 students at Salinas high school are English language learners(ELA), meaning their primary language is one other than English. In the case of the ELA students within the school's community, their primary language is Spanish (Synergy,2020). Approximately 75% of the population between the ages of 5-17 in Salinas speak Spanish at home (Census, 2018). Whereas the other 22% of that population only speak English (Census, 2018). Geographically students likely have lived in the same place for an extended period. As 91% of the population have lived in the same house for a minimum of a year (Census, 2018). The other 7% have moved within the same county, and the remaining 2% have moved here from a different country (Census, 2018). Some students fall under the poverty line, as 24% of the population under 18 in Salinas live in poverty (Census, 2018), which is above the state average of 17.4% (Census, 2018). Since the population at the agency are students, their educational level is determined but can be predicted with the city's census. Approximately 41% have no degree, 24% have only a high school diploma, 23% have some college, 9% have obtained a bachelor's degree, and the remaining 4% have achieved education at the postgraduate level (Census, 2018). Several external factors can impact the student population at Salinas High, the first being family income. The vast majority of the population in Salinas, approximated at 38%, make under \$50k annually (Census, 2018). The remaining 37% make anywhere from \$50k-\$100k, 21% earn between \$100k-\$200k, and 4% make over \$200k (Census, 2018). The median income for salinas is \$60,965 (Census, 2018). Another contributing factor could be the marital status of parents at home. In Salinas, 50% of males and 42% of females have never been married. Furthermore, 6% of males and 7% of females have experienced at least one divorce (Census, 2018), and the small

population that has become widowed is 1% of males and 7% of females in Salinas (Census, 2018).

The PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports) office at Salinas High has an umbrella of issues they tackle within the population of Salinas High. PBIS addresses problems inside the classroom academically and outside the classroom behaviorally as well. There is a strong belief within PBIS that they need to be emotionally well prepared academically to succeed. The social dilemma PBIS works to target is to improve school climate, reduce problem behaviors, and increase academic instruction in the school. To achieve this, some of the resources available to the student population through PBIS consist of classroom inventions, progress reports, semester remediation, check-in/check-out, virtual wellness center, and alternatives to suspension. Although PBIS can serve any student within Salinas High, they work primarily with students who are immigrants or are from first-generation families. They are seen most in the office for reasons such as not having the same English language understanding, so they easily fall academically behind. They may have parents who work in the fields or in intense labor jobs, which leaves lots of unsupervised time. In turn, the students find themselves getting into trouble both inside and outside of school, which can cause them to suffer emotionally. With this being a primary targeted population in PBIS, it does coincide remarkably with the population within Salinas. As the large majority being Hispanic or Latino, accounting for 78.7% of the city, this number is very present in the office of PBIS as well. It is traditionally seen in PBIS that families who have recently immigrated to Salinas are yet to be connected with proper resources and face a language barrier that can be troublesome.

Consequently these students make up a high rate within the school of students classified as English language learners, accounting for 10% of the population (Synergy,2020). These students cannot communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds. These students are likely to face the social challenge of inequality in the classroom academically, highlighting that 75% of the population between the ages of 5 and 17 in Salinas speaks Spanish at home (Census, 2018). Additionally, it should be noted that California has the highest percentage of English language learners in the nation, accounting for 29% of all students that meet that criteria (Migration Policy Institute, 2016). Therefore, PBIS is essential in assisting in helping these individuals flourish both academically and emotionally. The service of check-in/ check-out can be key to the success of some students. It creates a routine of checking in with a staff member of PBIS where grades are monitored weekly and behavioral evaluations. Through check-in/ check-out, the staff member can also connect students with tutoring resources as needed and provide emotional counseling. Many English language learner students do exceptionally well with this structure and guidance, helping them reach graduation.

Problem Description

For my capstone project, I directly addressed a micro-level problem. This problem is limited access to mental health resources. Salinas High School has thousands of students, each individual with varying complexity to their needs. With thousands of students and a much smaller staff and faculty, some students cannot necessarily address their needs. Whether they do not feel comfortable confiding in staff members to connect them to a resource, lack of education about resources available, or limited staff members to assist them, it can leave students unaware

or unconnected to resources. My capstone project's purpose is to directly target this problem by allowing students to have a central location where they can access all resources available to them in both spanish and english. Data has shown that when students receive support emotionally, they do better academically. An article, Emotional Support and Student Learning found that Maslow's hierarchy of human needs suggests that students who have their safety needs belonging to self-esteem met and their basic physiological needs possess a critical foundation for building knowledge (Nancy Protheroe, 2006).

Problem Model

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO AGENCY PROBLEM	AGENCY-SPECIFIC “MICRO-LEVEL” PROBLEM ADDRESSED BY PROJECT	CONSEQUENCES TO AGENCY
Poor mental health	Limited access to mental health resource	Poor mental health
Poor academics		Poor peer relationships
Students being unaware of resources available to them		Students dropping out

Capstone Project Description and Justification

Problem Statement

The problem statement that best reflects the agency-specific micro-level problem would-be students in the community of Salinas High have limited access to mental health resources.

Known Problem

Available research has found that 16.5% of adolescents experience a mental health disorder that can primarily affect students in a classroom environment (National Alliance on Mental Illness NAOMI, 2016). This is directly displayed in the agency environment when students are suffering from inferior grades. Two different programs are implemented to help these students get on track to obtain passing grades. The first program is a check and connect. With this program, a staff member in the PBIS team will check in weekly with the said student and help make goals and monitor their progress. They are essentially there to keep them accountable and to provide support. Although this is a great program to provide accountability, it does not dig deep into any emotional stressors or provide adequate counseling. The following program is check-in check-out, which my field mentor Angelica Simons directly runs. This program offers the same sense of accountability and support but is daily rather than weekly. Students then proceed to check in with academic and behavioral reports at the end of every school day. This program is naturally more hands-on since it requires students to meet daily with Angelica Simmons. Still, it is only for students failing more than three classes, leaving many opportunities for other students with less demanding needs to go unnoticed. Although there are these two programs, certain criteria must be met for students to participate in them. As previously stated, many students may not ever be given the attention they need to thrive academically. However, they may be suffering, just not in such a drastic way. These students who do not meet the criteria to receive services from PBIS are the ones my capstone hopes to connect

directly to services. Students who are not struggling so severely that they receive assistance from the school site leave them with limited access to mental health resources. Although the webpage is for any student, it intends to be utilized most directly by the students who do not have access to services at the school site due to limited resources.

Population

The most affected population by this capstone initiative is the 2,635 students within Salinas High. Although staff, faculty, and parents are also among the people that can be affected, there will be most effects on students. This capstone project is in place to provide resources to any student within the community; it is not specifically catered to any gender, demographic, socioeconomic standing, or ethnicity. Universal accessibility motivated me to develop a substantial webpage with various sections having Spanish resources accessible by any individual in the student population. This capstone goal is to be a neutral resource to any students with varying degrees of needs aimed at connecting them with a helpful resource and tool to assist them in any challenges they may face. It is essential for this wellness center to be neutral to the student population because it needs to be welcoming to anyone who might not feel comfortable finding resources through staff or doesn't meet the criteria to receive regular assistance in programs check-in check-out.

Contributing factors

Contributing factors for my micro-level problem include poor mental health, poor academics, and students being unaware of available resources. These contributing factors were the driving force behind my capstone project. There is strong evidence that shows the correlation between poor mental health and poor academics. It has been found that a large sum of research

suggests mental health can be an essential factor of academic performance in youth (U.S. National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, 2016). With the correlation being evident that mental health status affects academics, the students need to be at the forefront of the school environment. Separately from poor academic performance, poor mental health can have numerous other effects on students. While coping with mental illness impacts, it can be challenging for students to navigate social and behavioral aspects of friendships and peer relationships in the school community (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration SAMHSA, 2015). Not having peers lean on in an academic environment can make the challenges already being faced even more taxing.

Consequences

There are several different consequences to the micro-level problem, poor mental health, poor peer relationships, and students' risk of dropping out. A student's poor mental health status can affect a student's energy level, concentration, dependability, cognitive ability, and optimism, hindering performance in academic aspects of their lives and emotional and social. Socially consequences can stem from troublemaking and maintaining friendships. Struggling with mental illness can make it even more challenging to navigate the world of teenage relationships. The cause of this could be for numerous reasons, but one of the most apparent being a low energy level for physical activities such as extracurricular sports or events (SAMHSA, 2015). One of the more severe consequences is the risk of students dropping out. The dropout rate for all students is approximately 7%, but that number can be increased when factors such as poor mental health status come into play (Child Mind Institute, 2016). Students who dropout of school face a petrifying statistic that has found them to be 63 times more likely to be jailed than students who

are four-year graduates (Child Mind Institute, 2007). As well as facing the risk of being detained, dropouts are more likely to live 9.2 fewer years than those who graduate from high (Child Mind Institute, 2002). Often this is thought to be because of factors such as opportunities that come with a GED competition and social skills that develop in high school.

Project Implementation

For the capstone project's implementation, the first step was researching other school virtual wellness centers and reflecting on similar projects implemented even within other school districts. It was important to find a mutual agreement between my field mentor and Salinas High Schools administrators of what they find most important to incorporate into the webpage. Thus I created a presentation of what seems to work well for other virtual wellness centers, resources available to the school, and outside resources that provide research-based evidence on the importance of mental health intervention. The presentation was shown to staff, faculty, and administrators. From that, open discussion was had about what they valued most and found the most important to the webpage. That discussion was translated into a spreadsheet that my field mentor, PBIS clerk, and I analyzed and conversed over to provide input on any other exciting or helpful points regarding the key components necessary to the webpage.

After this point, my field mentor, members of the PBIS team, and I analyzed the overall consensus and grasped what precisely needs to be present on the webpage. That is where my work on the development began at the start of spring 2021. The webpage intends to be a tool that directly tackles the limited school capacity to attend to students' emotional and mental needs. Once the webpage was completed, there was a period where students, staff, and parents had access to it before the post-survey was sent out. After the desired amount of time was completed

with access to the site, the post-survey was returned with the hopes of meeting the short-term goal and making any final adjustments to the virtual wellness center. Once final adjustments to the webpage were made, the final version of the webpage was uploaded onto the Salinas High School website for universal access throughout the school. Additionally, it was publicized in the school newsletter received by students, parents, and guardians.

Project Justification

This implementation is justified by a mental health journal published in the 1990s. Although the journal may be dated, the journal's content is still applicable to the overall umbrella of mental health within the population of teenagers. The Treatment Outcomes of School-Based Mental Health Services for Urban Teenagers was published by Mark D. Weist, Ph.D., David A. Paskewitz, Ph.D., Beth S. Warner, Ph.D., and Lois T Flaherty, M.D. The academic journal looked at the direct effects of students who received mental health services compared to those who did not. The research was conducted by separating students into two separate subject groups; this allowed them to monitor the differences between male and female test subjects within the groups receiving extra support compared to those who were not. The experiment ultimately concluded that when comparing the results to students who received no mental health services to those who did not, there was a significant decline in depression and self-concept improvements from pre to post-intervention. It was evaluated in the post-assessment that students who received no support had an increase in depression. It is important to note that this experiment can not be considered entirely equal for gender and age differences in the groups. Although there are subtle differences, the evidence still supports that the ultimate findings support that depression significantly decreased for the treated group while increasing for the

comparison group providing solid evidence to reinforce the intervention's effectiveness. For my capstone, in particular, this supports its underlying purpose of connecting students with the proper resources to be mentally well, which will help them succeed academically.

The need for this project was very obvious to my field mentor. In a time of more prevalent distance learning during the covid-19 pandemic the capstone project provides students within the community of SHS access to all resources needed to improve their mental and emotional well-being. The PBIS department stresses the correlation between students' mental and emotional well-being correlating to their academic standing. A literary journal also supported this. Mental health predicts better educational outcomes: A longitudinal study of elementary school students in Chile. This study concluded a clinically significant relationship between mental health as assessed through standardized testing and two academic performance benchmarks known as grade point average and attendance percentage for students in first and third grades. This study allowed comparing relative impact within mental health and several risk factors for poor academic outcomes among elementary school-aged children, including low socioeconomic status male gender, and belonging to a single-parent household (U.S. National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, 2015). Although the study was done in much younger grades, it still is a testament to how even in the youngest of grades, there is a significant correlation between academic achievement and mental health.

Participants

Regarding my capstone projects participants, several different individuals are participating in this process besides myself. First and foremost, my field mentor whom guided me throughout the entire process. Moreover, Alexandria Martinez and Claudia Zullo are former

CSUMB students themselves but now are employees at SHS and members of the PBIS team.

Next, the principal and other school administration members who briefly participated by setting expectations of the project in addition to giving specific requirements of content on the webpage.

Students and staff also participated in the post survey that was used in determining if the short term goals of the project were met.. Lastly, Andi Rossi, a school partner from Monterey County Behavioral Health Services organization, who provided her input throughout the implementation process. My role in the project was to organize an effective plan to carry out this virtual wellness center webpage. In this role, I had to schedule meetings, collect resources, create surveys, manage survey feedback, translate the findings and resources into a functional and accessible webpage.

Resources

After discussions were had with my field mentor, we narrowed down exactly what resources are needed to complete this project. My project utilized all virtual resources free of cost, such as canva used to create graphic designs and Weebly the webpage's foundation. There was collaboration with Monterey county behavioral health, a fantastic agency partner. Of course, and previously mentioned, SHS Administration was a close resource and helped guide the project in the direction they would like to see. I was fortunate to have all resources free of cost accessible because it made my job a little easier in execution as there was no financial allowance.

Challenges

As far as potential challenges, there were several to overcome, such as technological challenges, remote communication, and ongoing adjustments to the plan. These challenges coincide with the foreign concept of creating a webpage. It was a learning curve in terms of

technology for me, in addition to the challenge of finding a platform free of cost to establish the webpage, as many services want organizations or individuals to pay for the URL domain.

Remote communication can be challenging with everyone's different schedules and to find a time that works for everyone who needed to review content and resources. Lastly, being flexible and open to any adjustments that had to be made to the plan as working on it can be difficult as unexpected challenges always can be. A challenge we all collectively faced was Covid-19. This, in turn, is why there was the challenge of remote communication and possible unforeseen challenges that might have arisen.

Overview

From the first stages of my project that began in September 2020 to the final steps completed in May 2021, there was a substantial amount of work, time, and effort in implementing my capstone project. At the beginning of researching and assessing the webpage's needs and stakeholders, the stages are developing the webpage itself and the final stretch when it comes all together. This capstone project is an excellent opportunity to serve my agency of Salinas High and create a resource for the beautiful students to utilize.

Assessment Plan

To accurately assess the results of my capstone, a post-survey was sent out to faculty members via a google survey. The google survey was the survey method because it is convenient for all survey recipients as they must have and use a google account accessible for all things related to Salinas High School. The post-survey assessed the input from staff and how well they felt the webpage functions, quality of the content, and accessibility. To evaluate these three components accurately, the survey used a number scale system with one being low with lots of

change needed and five being high; it is acceptable. This was to accurately identify the areas that need the most significant improvement compared to areas that could be left as is. Apart from this, it was not limited to just those three topics, but any additional comments and suggestions survey participants felt would be valuable to the webpage, allowing comments to be more in detail. Once the survey was completed within the designated time frame, Angelica Simons and I collaborated, deciding what was most essential to change or add to the webpage. This step was crucial as it is vital that we used our time effectively in what specifically needs to be adjusted. Overall the survey results determined if the webpage successfully created an accessible space with relevant information and resources for students, parents, and staff, which dictated if the implementation of my capstone has succeeded. Determining if the expected outcome of implementing a fully functional webpage that provides access to resources for students in need of help and tools to improve their mental well-being was achieved. In addition to the expected short-term outcomes of implementing a fully functional webpage that provides access to resources for students in need of help and tools to improve their mental well-being, there are expected intermediate and long-term goals. The intermediate goal of the virtual wellness center is to have implemented a sustainable platform that is regularly utilized by students, parents, guardians, and staff. Comparatively, the webpage's long-term goal is to be an actively used resource that will subsequently improve the emotional well-being of students. Although the current assessment plan only measures short-term goals, there is an unsaid expectation that the webpage will exceed the short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals.

Project Results

After the post-survey was sent out to all project participants, including my field mentor, principal, and additional staff members, feedback was given by six participants. To accurately assess if the implementation of the capstone was successful, survey results from survey participants were analyzed and measured to determine if the webpage's implementation had met the short-term outcomes. The survey ultimately concluded that the implementation was successful and met the short-term outcome of project implementation. Chart 1 provided in the appendix below shows that 100% of survey participants felt that the webpage exceeded their expectations and is highly functional. Notable praise received in the survey from a survey participant was "The webpage provided all of the key components students need to feel supported and connected when needing social-emotional support." (Survey Participant, 2021)". As well as "The SHS virtual wellness center exceeded my expectations because web design alone is very time-consuming. The final product looks marvelous from its simplicity, cleanliness, and overall available content. It's both user and mobile-friendly." (Survey Participant, 2021)

Conclusion & Recommendations

The takeaways from the implementation of the webpage are that the project was successful. The new resource is publicized in the Cowboy Way newsletter that is sent to all staff and students. Additionally a voice-over I produced talking about all the different components of the webpage was played during the student's home period. Most importantly, it is a resource the school is excited to have and be self-sustained as my internship is complete. In addition to the project's conclusions, critical recommendations are made to meet the expected outcomes. First, the webpage should continually be updated to current and accessible resources, avoiding offering outdated resources to students and finally completing an annual survey from staff and students to

assess what level of functionality they feel the webpage is at. Overall I feel a great sense of satisfaction knowing that the implementation of the capstone project was successful. Through the process, I practiced and gained numerous skills such as information management, data analysis, collaboration, professional communication, and most importantly, how to develop a webpage.

Personal Reflection

As with any substantial project, there is a roller coaster of emotions experienced through the process. Although the primary feeling is stress during the building process, that emotion is almost completely forgotten once the project is completed. Reflecting on my capstone project and the countless hours spent on it, all the feelings of stress and panic about if I would even be capable of completing the webpage have been erased. Owing to the pure joy I am overcome with knowing the valuable resource I can contribute to my agency, I am proud to say it is formerly my alma mater. I am privileged to have had the opportunity to do my fieldwork at Salinas high school in the PBIS department and look forward to seeing the webpage self-sustained as I move forward and close my internship at the school.

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Appendix A

Scope of Work

Title: Cowboy Wellness					
Project description: A webpage that serves Salinas High students as a virtual wellness center provides them access to resources and tools such as crisis hotlines, LGBTQ+ organizations, mindfulness, and meditation videos to improve their mental well-being.					
Goal: Provide an easily accessible webpage to connect students in need of resources and tools to improve their mental well being. Students' mental well being has been found to directly correlate to student success in the classroom.					
Primary objective of the project: Provide students resources within the realm of social and emotional learning. One of the greatest barriers to serving this issue is the lack of knowledge about the resources and programs available to Salinas High School students. The goal is to streamline these services and tools into a functional webpage.					
Phases		Activities/Tasks		Deliverables	Timeli ne/ deadli nes
1	Select capstone project	1.1	Discuss capstone project ideas with mentor and agency staff	Generate a list of capstone project ideas.	Sept 2020
		1.2	Discuss ideas with agency staff	Submit a list of potential ideas to mentor for review/approval	Oct 2020

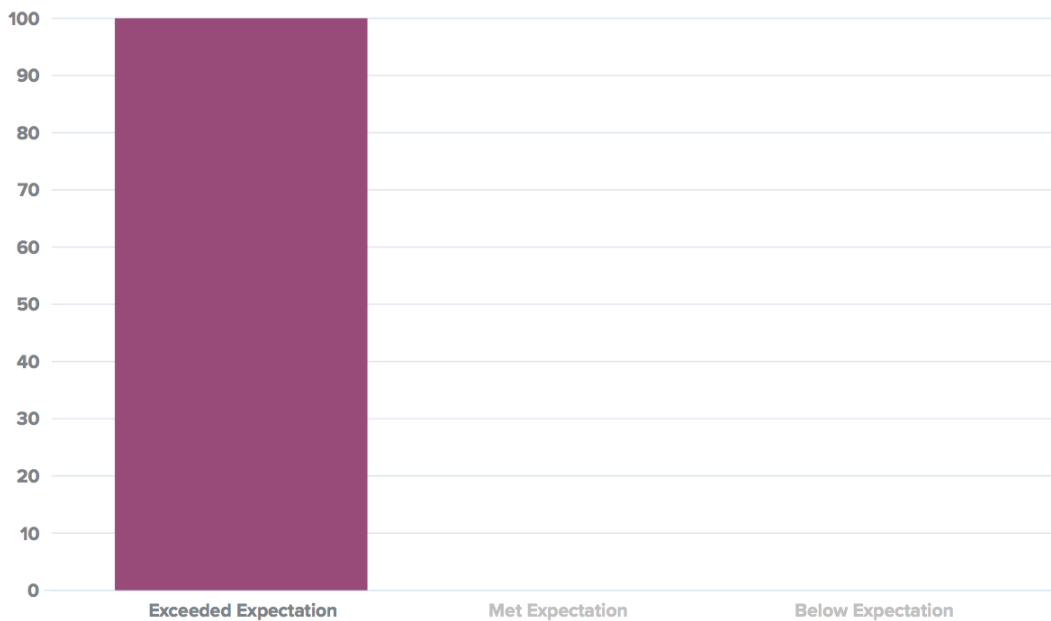
2	Plan project	2.1	Narrow down the steps that will be need to be taken to execute the webpage	Research functional virtual wellness centers within the district, organize meetings with participants, and begin finding resources.	Nov 2020
		2.2	Present findings to school administration and field mentor.	Collect research and information into a thoughtful presentation to show school admin to find what they would like to see in the webpage.	Nov/ Dec 2020
3	Implement project	3.1	Organize all resources and tools	Collect all resources, tools, and information needed for the web page	Dec/ Jan 2020/1
		3.2	Begin webpage design	Start to implement resources, tools, and information to a functional webpage	Jan/ Feb 2021
		3.3	Finalize cowboy wellness webpage	Finish and check all details of the webpage and ensure it is accessible and functional	Feb/ March 2021
4	Assess project	4.1	Analyze Data	Analyze data from pre and post surveys from stakeholders	April 2021

		4.2	Survey analysis	Look at what can be improved or changed to better the Cowboy webpage	April 2021
5	Report on project findings	5.1	Complete reporting requirements	Final agency and capstone reports	May 2021
		5.2	Prepare capstone presentation in selected format	Present at Dress Rehearsal for grading	May 2021
		5.3	Final preparation for capstone festival	Final Capstone Festival presentation!	May 2021

Results

Chart 1

Assessment: Did the webpage meet your expectation?



Assessment: Do You Find The Webpage To Be Functional?

