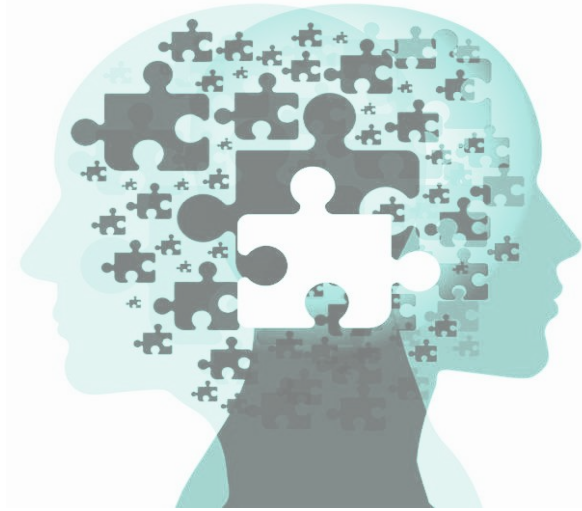


Youth Supporting Youth



Gonzales Youth Council

Joint Meeting of the
Gonzales Union School District and the Gonzales
City Council
April 27, 2021



Gonzales Youth Council (GYC)

- Partnership between GUSD and City began in 2006
- Commitment to formal youth leadership development began 2013
- Youth Commissioners established in 2014
- Formal GYC established in 2015
- Going on 7th generation
- Have supported other communities in establishing their own versions



With Support By:



- City of Gonzales
 - Rene Mendez, Carmen Gil, and Michelle Slade
- Gonzales Unified School District
 - Yvette Irving, Candice McFarland, Alicia Trentelman, and Rocio Quintero
- Cal State Monterey Bay
 - Claudia Rocha, Selina Espinoza, and Dr. Jennifer Lovell
- Trinidad & Lupe Gomez Family Fund

Overview

Purpose:

- A gap in mental health resources for middle & high school students
- Assess how students were coping with the COVID-19 crisis
- Support their peers in identifying strategies to help them

Research Question: How well are our GUSD youth doing during COVID-19?



Mental Health Survey Results - Infographics

- How the idea came about
 - Wanted to find different ways to get the information out
- Why they were done
 - Easy way to share the survey results
- What they are used for
 - Communication tool

Infographic Design

- **Page 1: Research Design and Demographic Information**
- **Page 2: Academic Success**
- **Page 3: Mental Health**
- **Page 4: Family and Social Support**
- **Page 5: Resilience**
- **Page 6: Action and Next Steps**

Research Design & Demographic Information



Gonzales Youth Mental Health Survey 2020

Collaboration: Gonzales Youth Council (GYC) & California University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB)



GYC Youth Commissioners

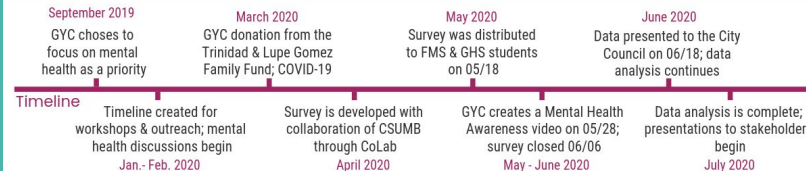
2019-2020: Isabel Mendoza, Amy Perez,
& Madsyn Schweitzer
2020-2021: Magaly Santos & Aidan Cervantes
gyc@gonzales.k12.ca.us

City of Gonzales

Carmen Gil: cgil@ci.gonzales.ca.us
Michelle Slade: michelle@myc4strategist.com

CSU Monterey Bay

Jennifer Lovell, PhD: jlovell@csumb.edu
Claudia Rocha: clrocha@csumb.edu
Selina Espinosa: seespino@csumb.edu
Community Solutions Lab (CoLab)



Research Design

- **Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR):** Youth are taught how to perform research to make positive changes in their lives, communities, and other institutions
- **Research Question:** How well are our Gonzales youth doing during the COVID-19 crisis?
- **Goals of the 2020 Survey:** Acquire information to advocate for students' wellbeing and identify what resources to provide in the future



- **Online Survey Distribution:** May 18 to June 6, 2020, to students grades 6-12 (via email) in Gonzales Unified School District. Survey questions covered academic concerns, mental health, overall wellness, and demographic information

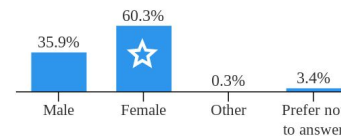


- **Mixed-Method Approach:** Qualitative data (open-ended responses) and quantitative data (frequencies, percentages) were retrieved for analysis



Demographic Information

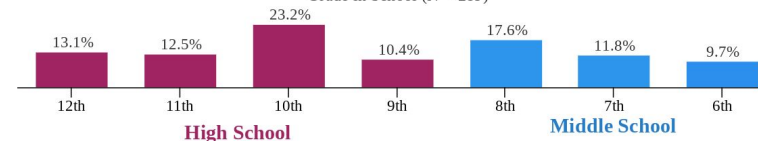
Gender (N = 290)



Ethnicity (N = 288)



Grade in School (N = 289)



Method

1. Decided that mental health would be a focus for a main action project
2. Asked Fairview and Gonzales High students about how were feeling, if the coursework was overwhelming and how they were coping
3. Distributed the survey on 5/18/2020 and began data and analysis phase on 5/22/2020.



May 2020						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Measures & Questions (Total: MS = 42 Qs, HS = 52 Qs)

Informed Consent

Coping and Tips (8 questions)

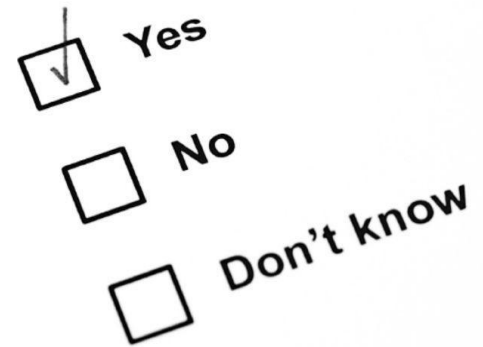
School (12 questions)

Mood and Social Support (5 questions)

- High Schoolers also completed:
 - Screener for Depression and Anxiety (PHQ-4; 4 questions)
 - Resilience Questionnaire (BRS; 6 questions)

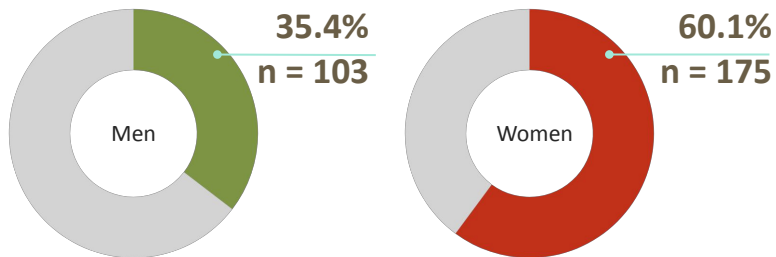
Screen Time Wellness (14 questions)

Demographic Information (3 questions)



Demographic Snapshot (Total Participants: N=374)

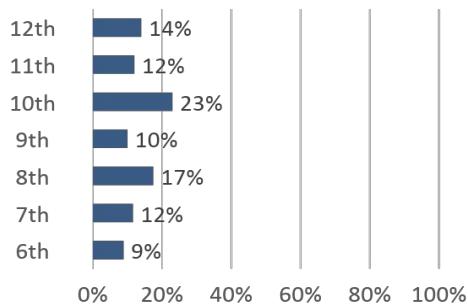
Gender (n = 291)



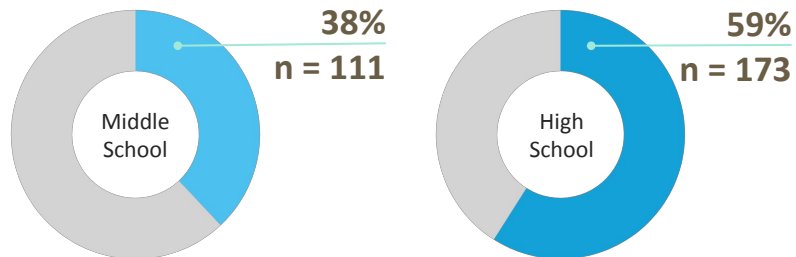
Ethnicity (n = 289)



Grade in School (n = 292)



Middle School vs. High School (n = 284)



Academic Success



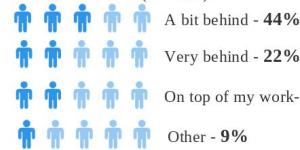
Academic Success

Research Summary: Claudia Rocha, Dr. Jennifer Lovell, & The Gonzales Youth Council (2020)



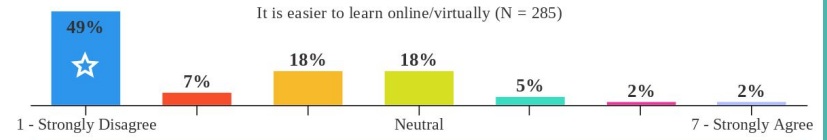
Workload & Online Learning

How do you feel you are doing in your classes?
(N = 334)



What has been the most challenging part of COVID-19 for you? (N = 340)

- "The most challenging aspect for me right now is that the teacher puts in way too much work, more than they do when we're in school."
- "There are multiple assignments being thrown at us every other day."



What else did students say about school?

- Only **12%** of students said they definitely understand their school material (N = 335)
- 31%** of students said their grades have **dropped** or their post-high school plans have changed (N = 288)
- 50%** said having an overwhelming amount of homework was **the hardest part of COVID-19** (N = 340)

How Teachers Can Help

Being motivated for school was one of the primary challenges expressed by students. Here are some potential tips to support remote learners, based on research:

- Encouragement: Showing genuine care can help students feel more motivated academically
- Growth mindset: Praise efforts, not intelligence
- Emphasize competence over performance
- Interest: Plan a lesson around around students' interests

Other Tips:



Record problems being solved



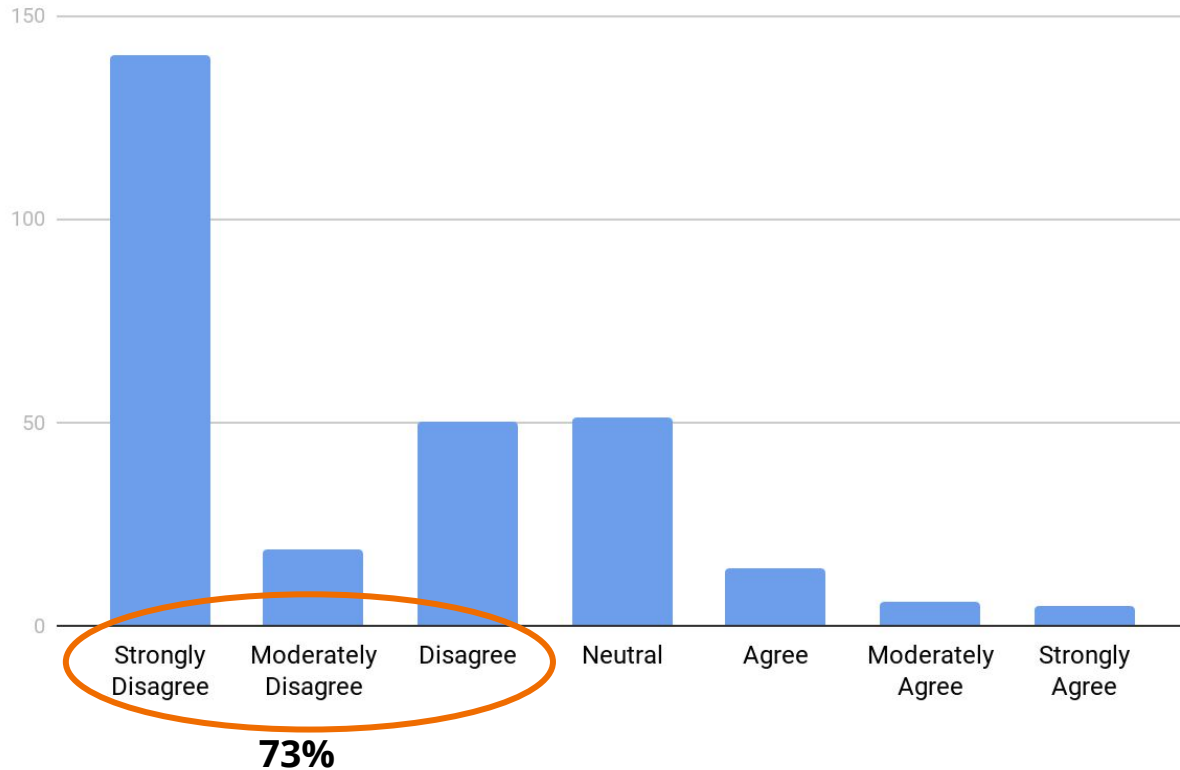
Host Zoom office hours



Email regularly to check in or answer questions

1. Tech, T., & Healden, S. (2014). How to motivate students to work harder. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/09/how-to-get-inecure-students-to-work-harder/379500/>
2. Dwyer, C., Dweck, C., & Carbon-Dierker, H. (2019). Using praise to enhance student confidence and learning outcomes. *American Psychological Association*. Retrieved from https://www.apa.org/education/11/2/using-praise?_ga=2.258793738.1408871217.1597044820.497391716.1597044820
3. Murayama, K. (2018). The science of motivation. *American Psychological Association*. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2018/06/motivation>
4. Psychology. *Motivation and Learning*. In A. Berkley & Graduate Division. Retrieved from <https://psyc.berkeley.edu/psyc/ucsf/education/learning-theory/research/motivation> (adapted by Claudia Rocha on 1/13/21)

When asked if it is easier to learn online/virtually...



How do you feel you are doing in your classes?



24%

I'm on top of my
work

44%

A bit behind

22%

I have no idea how
many missing
assignments I have

10%

Other

Are you understanding the material (assignments)? 📖

12% Definitely yes 👍

46% Kind of yes 😊

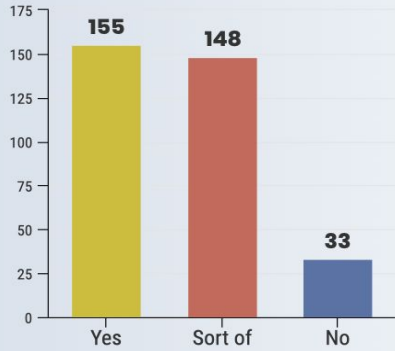
20% Might or might not 😐

14% Kind of not 😞

8% Definitely not 👎

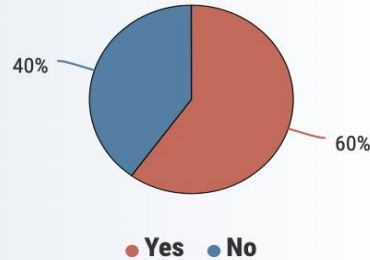
88%
Had trouble
understanding the
material

Do you have a quiet place to get your work done? N = 336




46% answered "Yes"
44% answered "Sort of"
10% answered "No"

Do you feel responsible for helping your younger sibling(s) complete their schoolwork? N = 220



Barriers to Learning

93%  **said they have all the materials they need to complete assignments**



What has been the most challenging part of COVID-19 for you?

“Well it is very stressful that both of my parents have to leave the house almost daily to go to work and provide for us and it makes me anxious each time they do. Not only that but teachers have been piling up on the homework adding more things to do along with chores and taking care of my siblings...”



What Teachers Can Do To Help

- Encouragement: Showing **genuine care** can help students feel more motivated academically
- Growth mindset: **Praise efforts**, not intelligence
- Emphasize **competence** over performance
- Interest: Plan a lesson around **students' interest**

Mental Health



Mental Health



Research Summary: Claudia Rocha, Dr. Jennifer Lovell, & The Gonzales Youth Council (2020)

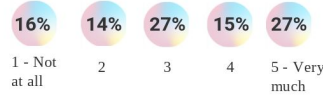
Stress

Stress: a situation where a person feels tense, restless, nervous, or is unable to sleep at night. Do you feel this kind of stress lately? (N = 354)



Loneliness

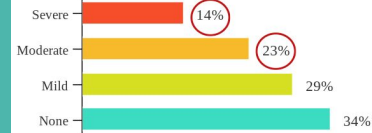
Do you feel lonely? (N = 309)



Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-4)

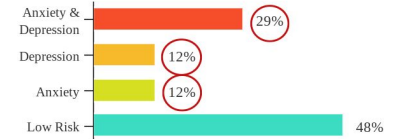
- The PHQ-4 is a reliable screener for anxiety and depression (Kroenke et al., 2009); Chronbach's alpha = .85
- Only high schoolers answered the PHQ-4 questions (N = 176)
- Students were asked to rate how often they felt anxious and depressed over the last two weeks

Level of Overall Emotional Distress



★ 38% of the students' scores fell within the moderate to severe levels for their overall level of emotional distress

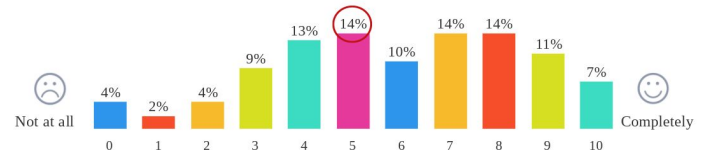
Risk for Anxiety & Depression (Subscales)



★ 52% of the students scored over the cutoff score for anxiety, depression, or both anxiety and depression

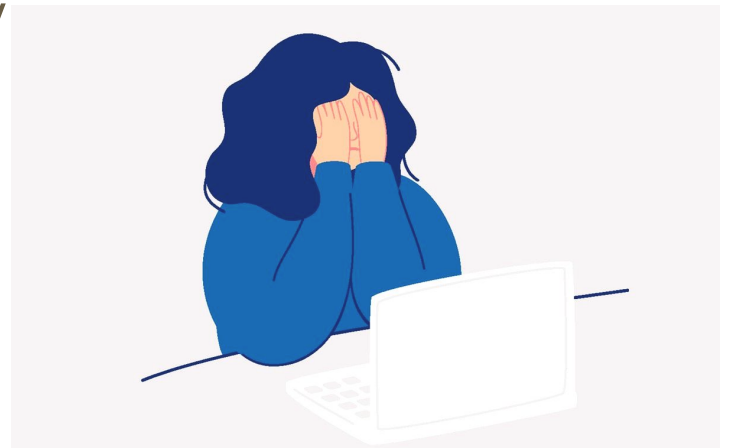
Happiness

Overall, how happy would you say you are? (N = 305)



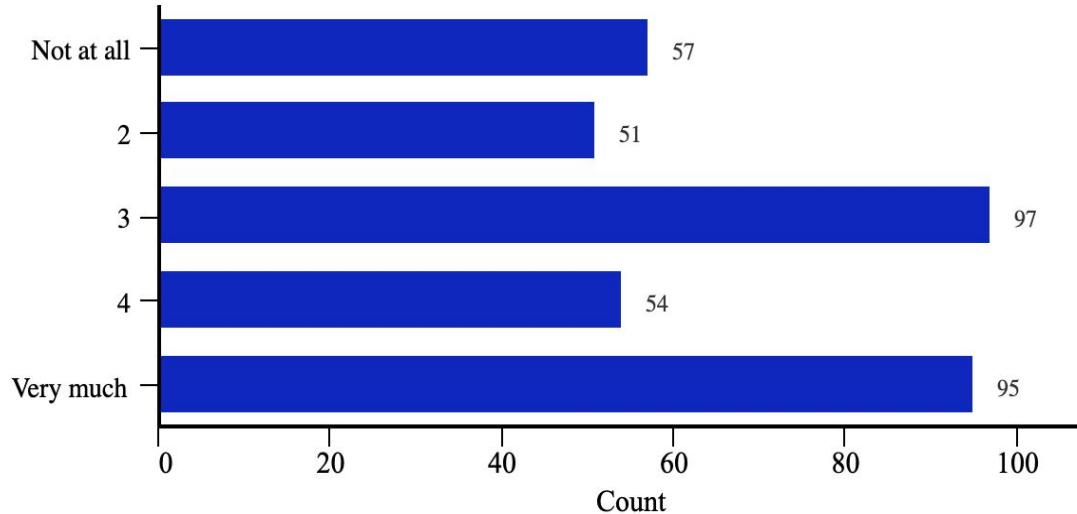
When asked the hardest part of COVID-19...

“The most challenging part is having one percent in a country that was really affected with COVID-19 cases and another living with me. Having to do many house chores and the stress with moving homes and on top of that I’m my opinion teachers give more work than usual and we don’t get an actual class just them explaining what we must do or they show a video. School was a way to get away from problems at home but now I must deal with them.



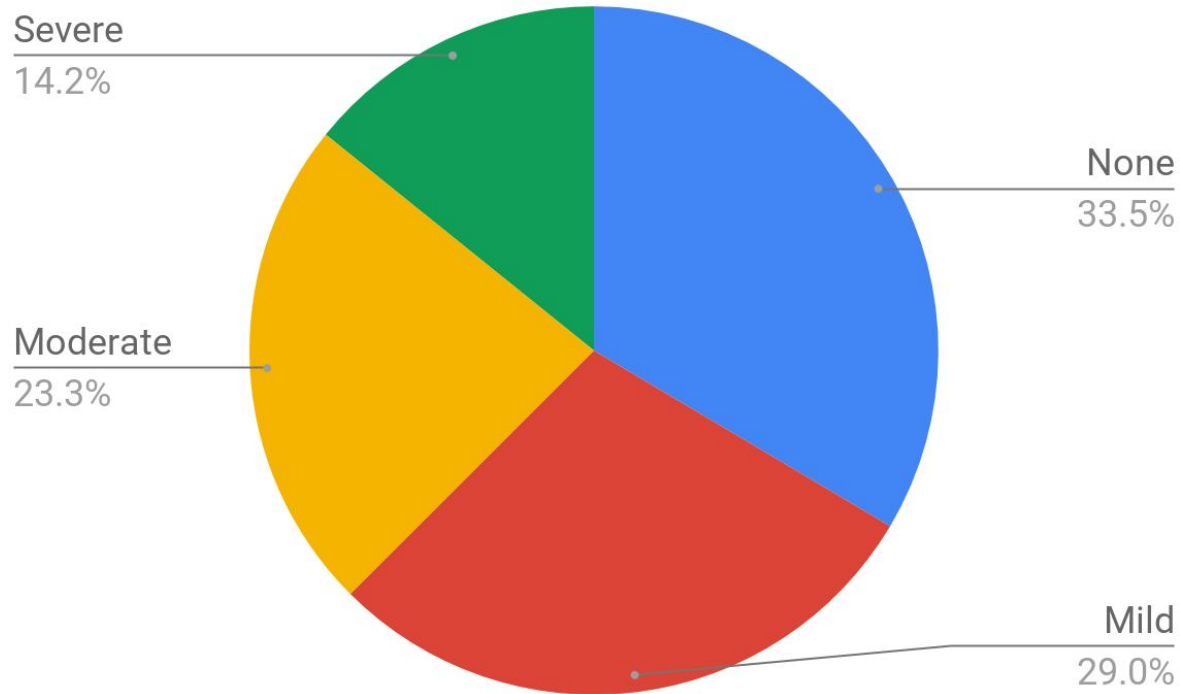
Stress

Stress means a situation in which a person feels tense, restless, nervous or anxious or is unable to sleep at night because his/her mind is troubled. Do you feel this kind of stress lately?



Screeners for Anxiety & Depression (PHQ-4)

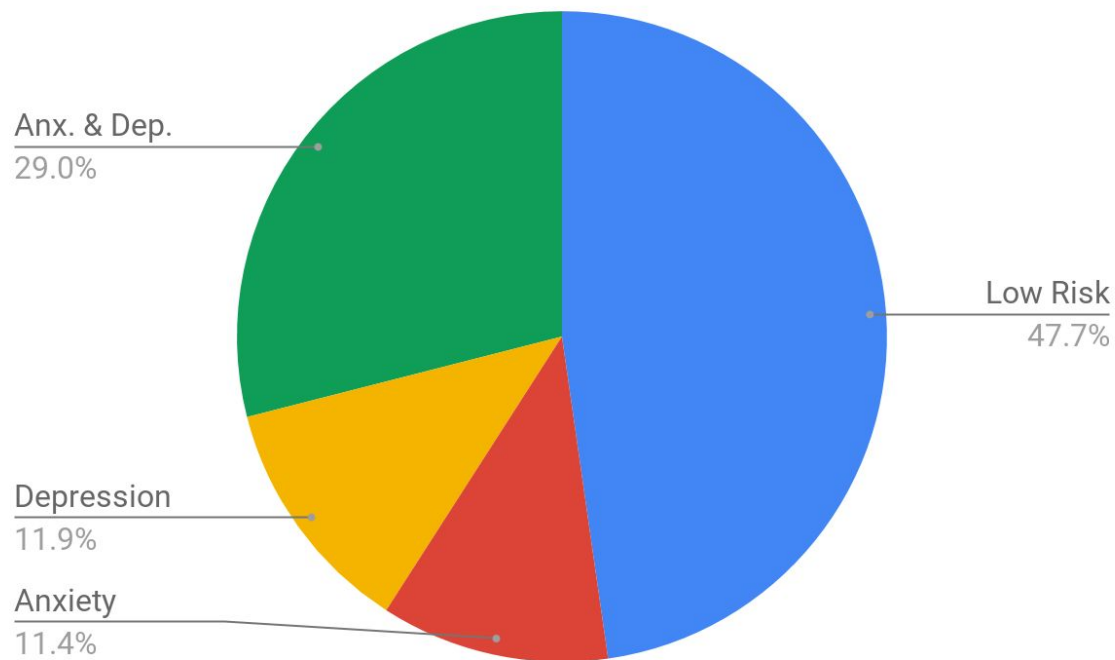
High School Students (n = 176)



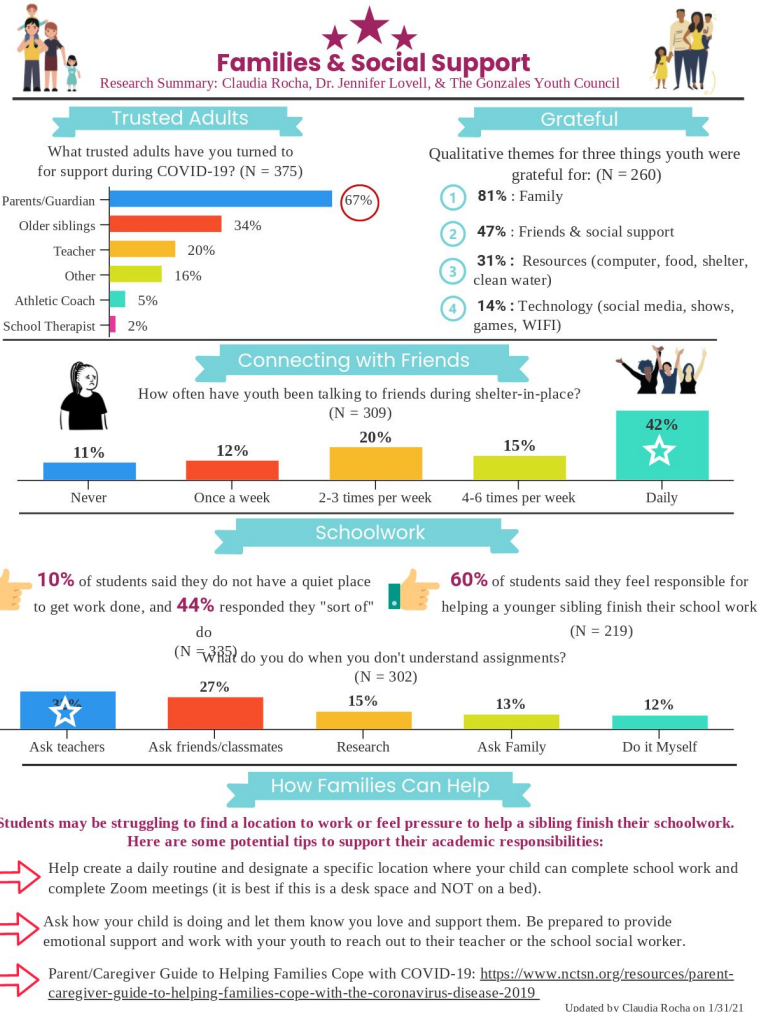
Risk for Anxiety & Depression

Based on analysis of the subscales of the PHQ-4:

52% of high school students scored above the **cutoff scores** for Anxiety, Depression, or Anxiety and Depression



Families & Social Support

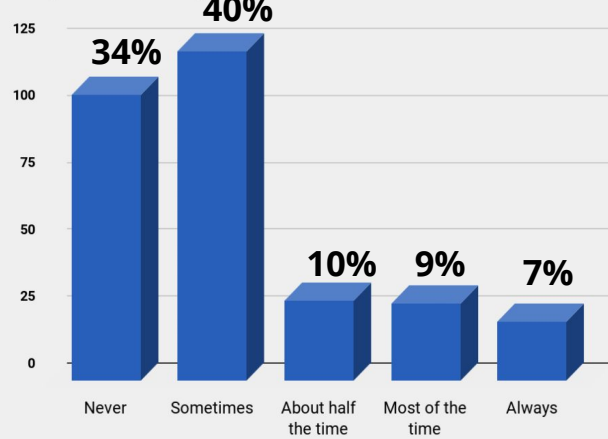


“...I don't really have anyone to help besides my mom and she's always at work so basically doing things on my own. Also when my brother's here and my mom's at work I have to help him as well with his stuff so it's kinda stressful and also because I'm going through family issues.”



Mood and Social Supports

Do you feel lonely?



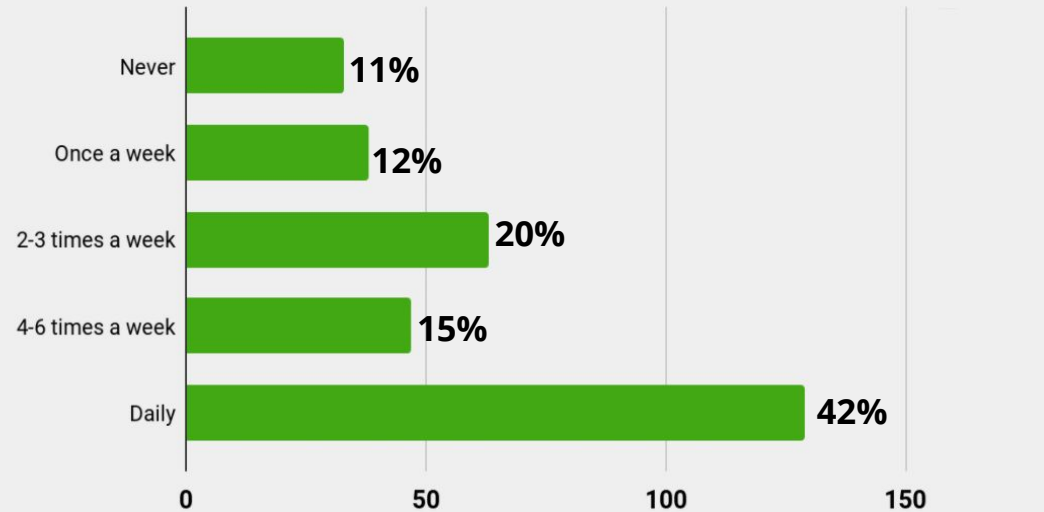
Loneliness

Description of results:

- 39.55% reported *sometimes*
- 34.41% reported *never*

Number of participants = 311

How often have you been talking to friends during shelter-in-place?



Number of participants = 310

Who are Youth Connecting with?



Parent/Guardians

70%



Other

16%



Siblings

40%



Coaches

5%



Teachers

20%



Therapists/Counselors

2%

Resilience



Resilience



Research Summary: Claudia Rocha, Dr. Jennifer Lovell, & The Gonzales Youth Council (2020)

Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)

The BRS is a 6-item questionnaire that asked high school students to rate statements on their ability to recover from hard and stressful events

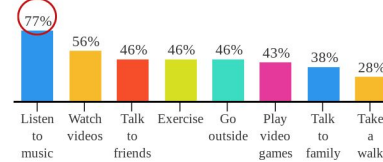
BRS Categories (N = 171)



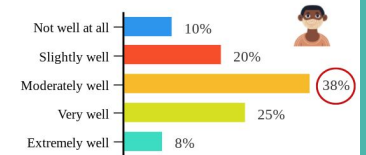
★ 41% of the students are considered to have **low resilience** and only 5% of students scored within the high resilience category

Coping

Most frequently used coping strategies (N = 375)

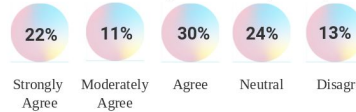


How well are you coping with COVID-19? (N = 306)

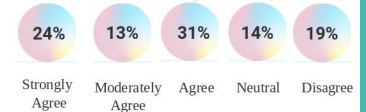


Digital Wellness

I find creative inspiration online (N = 285)



I take intentional breaks throughout the day (N = 285)



Resilience & Mental Health

41% of high school students may need help overcoming challenges, and 52% were at risk for depression and/or anxiety. Here are some research-based tips to support students:

- ➔ Find a place where youth can become actively involved in the community (e.g., volunteering remotely),¹ encourage youth to stay connected with peers and friends, and emphasize the importance of a self-care routine.²
- ➔ Learn ways to support young people's resilience, for example, the **American Psychological Association's Resilience Guide for Parents and Teachers**: <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience-guide-parents>
- ➔ Help develop youth's competence by focusing on strengths and empower youth to make decisions.³
- ➔ Reach out to the Gonzales school social worker, counselor, or community mental health provider if you see warning signs for depression, anxiety, or suicidal ideation (<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/publication/warning-signs-of-suicide/index.shtml>).

1. Lonczak, H.S. (2020, April 20). *Tips for building resilience in children*. PositivePsychology.com. <https://positivepsychology.com/resilience-in-children/>

2. American Psychological Association. (2020, August 20). *Resilience guide for parents and teachers*. <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience-guide-parents>

3. *Building resilience in children*. (n.d.). HealthyChildren.org. Retrieved on <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/Building-Resilience-in-Children.aspx>

Brief Resilience Scale

Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)

The BRS is a 6-item questionnaire that asked high school students to rate statements on their ability to recover from hard and stressful events

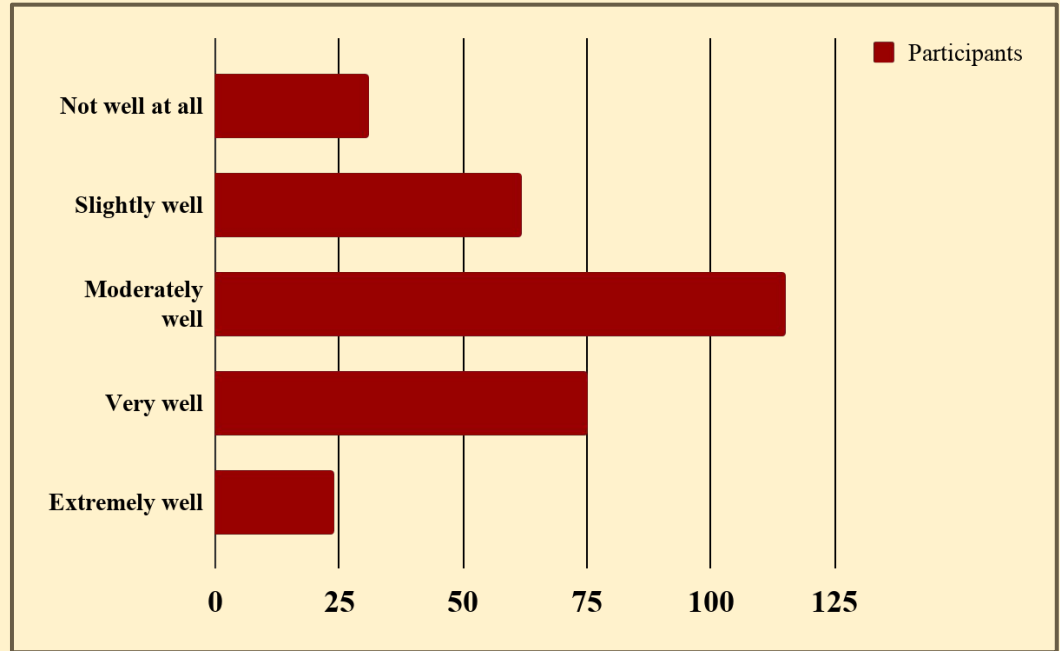
BRS Categories (N = 171)



★ 41% of the students are considered to have low resilience and only 5% of students scored within the high resilience category

(Smith et al., 2008)

Coping with COVID-19



“How well are you coping with COVID-19?”

$N = 307$

$M = 3.00, SD = 1.08$

Digital Wellness

Youth reported using technology and digital platforms in some ways that support their social, physical, academic, cognitive, and emotional wellness

- Most common strategies for coping included: listening to music and watching videos
- 63% reported finding creative inspiration online
- 68% reported taking intentional breaks from screen time throughout the day

(Lovell, Tewari, Rojas, in preparation)

Action & Next Steps



Action & Next Steps

Research Summary: Claudia Rocha, Dr. Jennifer Lovell, & The Gonzales Youth Council (2020)

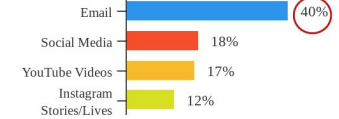


Receiving Tips

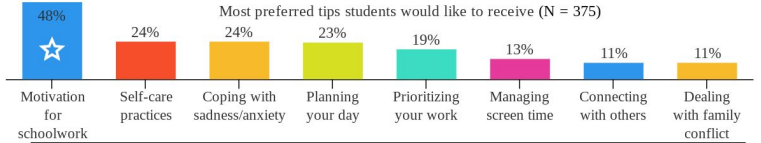
Would you like tips on how to stay motivated to complete schoolwork and cope during COVID-19? (N = 359)



How would you like to receive tips? (N = 237)



Most preferred tips students would like to receive (N = 375)



Tips for Other Youth

Five themes emerged when youth were asked what tips they have for other youth during the pandemic (N = 242)

Theme	Description	Percent	Example Quote
Positivity & Faith <td>Students endorsed words of encouragement, messages of motivation, to be grateful and have faith</td> <td>25%</td> <td>"Everything will be fine. We will get through this pandemic."</td>	Students endorsed words of encouragement, messages of motivation, to be grateful and have faith	25%	"Everything will be fine. We will get through this pandemic."
Virus Safety <td>Students wanted other to practice social distancing, wear masks, wash hands, and only leave the house when necessary</td> <td>18%</td> <td>"To fight the urge of going out and socializing; to please practice social distancing and shelter in place."</td>	Students wanted other to practice social distancing, wear masks, wash hands, and only leave the house when necessary	18%	"To fight the urge of going out and socializing; to please practice social distancing and shelter in place."
School Responsibilities <td>Students advised others to do work before it accumulates, keep grades up, contact teachers if needed, focus on school, and try to get good grades</td> <td>15%</td> <td>"Do not procrastinate on work because one way or another you will have to finish it if you want a good future."</td>	Students advised others to do work before it accumulates, keep grades up, contact teachers if needed, focus on school, and try to get good grades	15%	"Do not procrastinate on work because one way or another you will have to finish it if you want a good future."
Distractions / Entertainment <td>Students encouraged others to read, play games online, listen to music, and watch shows as they are at home</td> <td>15%</td> <td>"...stay positive and think ahead. Make sure you are being as healthy as possible, and that you have enough entertainment to satisfy yourself... be healthy, stay smart, be creative, and stay motivated."</td>	Students encouraged others to read, play games online, listen to music, and watch shows as they are at home	15%	"...stay positive and think ahead. Make sure you are being as healthy as possible, and that you have enough entertainment to satisfy yourself... be healthy, stay smart, be creative, and stay motivated."
Self Care <td>Students said to take breaks from technology, take walks for fresh air, make time for relaxation, and set boundaries in relationships</td> <td>14%</td> <td>"Relax. Take a break once in a while"</td>	Students said to take breaks from technology, take walks for fresh air, make time for relaxation, and set boundaries in relationships	14%	"Relax. Take a break once in a while"

Conclusions

- **Most participants** were struggling to stay motivated with schoolwork
- **52%** of high school students scored above the cutoff score on a screener for anxiety, depression, or both
- **39.5%** of participants wanted to receive tips and support via email

GYC Next Steps

- Continue to push mental health resources
- Support/advocate for the creation of safe spaces that support youth mental wellness
- Continue to research and share findings to inform distance learning approaches and well-being of youth in Gonzales, California

Survey Results

- Majority of survey participants were **having trouble staying motivated**
- **52%** of participants could have used a **follow up for mental health** (scored above the cutoff for anxiety, depression, or anxiety & depression)
- **62%** of survey participants **wanted to receive tips and support via email**
- **28%** wanted **tips and support through social media posts**



Post Survey Actions

- GUSD hired another social worker making that two social workers for the district that could support student mental health and well-being.
- Is now looking at hiring another bringing the total to 3 LCSWs.
- The GYC has continued to advocate for resources and has supported stigma reduction through messaging a social media campaign and has supported the City's efforts to establish a more effective partnership with all local mental health providers.
- The GYC, GUSD, the City and Behavioral Health are collaborating on mental health stigma reduction and on service advocacy and promotion.

Continued Action...

- Infographic will be printed and available to those who are interested in the information
- Our data has been shared and will continue to be shared with allies and mental health supporters and educators to improve our systems and access to services
- **The GYC with its CSUMB partners would like to distribute another survey in the next few months (*1 yr. post the original*) to:**
 - Understand what has changed, if anything, since the survey was taken
 - Continue to identify and support student's needs
 - Gather data for potential improvement areas

Questions



Thank You!



“If not us, who? If not now, when?”

GYC Email: gyc@gonzales.k12.ca.us

GYC Social Media:

- Instagram: [gonzalesyouthcouncil](#)
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GonzalesYouthCouncil/>

City of Gonzales:

<https://gonzalesca.gov/government/gonzales-youth-council>
