District 49 | Community Care

Zone Report

4th Quarter 2022-2023

Prepared By:
D49 Community Care Team

A Seat at the Table: D49's Community Care Team
By: Amy Matisek

Educators today support more than academics. The everyday challenges of life and changes in society have taken a toll on students. Staff across District 49 knew learners would come out of COVID lockdown academically behind, but weren't quite ready for the lag in emotional well-being. Time away from schools meant less social interaction for students and to an extent, unlearning soft skills essential for success as a student.

Addressing challenges that impact the social and emotional wellbeing of students and staff in District 49 is critically important. Positive mental wellness plays a part in academics and serves as a foundation for healthy school communities. (For more details on why social and emotional support is needed in our schools, check out the first two stories in this three-part series on d49.org.)

Our schools are implementing programs to foster positive social and emotional wellness, and at the district level, one department exists specifically to extend care and compassion throughout our D49 community. One example of their work, that is driven by the D49 Cultural Compass, includes supporting student and staff mental health.

The D49 Community Care Team is made up of staff members who work together to support learners emotionally on their educational journey and fellow colleagues who serve in the role of educator. "We have a grassroots and very wrap-around approach to helping our students and staff," said Jason White, coordinator of Community Care. "There are so many people involved with support … our strategy includes systems, and includes people too."

Understanding the Climate in Schools

One system for helping the community care team truly understand the environment of each school is the Culture & Climate Survey that is facilitated annually to obtain feedback from school staff, parents and students in grades 3-12. Survey responders can share thoughts about campus safety and security, bullying, and suicide and substance abuse prevention. It's also vital to learning about relationships between all stakeholders in each building. "With the results of the survey, we take a look at perceived versus intended relational trust among adults and students in our schools," White said. "It's one tool we use to learn how we can enhance the culture and climate in each school community."

Offering Districtwide Training

Staff members in D49 can take advantage of another resource—several Pro Days each school year designated for professional development. Many sessions are facilitated by district team members, and educators can choose from a variety of topics, including mental wellness. "We collaborate with our coordinator of professional learning and the district's health and wellness specialist to address the needs of staff. Courses have helped equip staff members for taking care of themselves and for dealing with dysregulated students," White said. The April 3 Pro Day agenda included the courses, "Practical Wellness for Busy Professionals: Building a Pathway to Emotional & Social Wellness," and "Finding Work-Life Balance: A Panel and Facilitated Discussion for Women in D49."

Outside of Pro Days, the community care team coordinates training for parents and community members on topics sometimes difficult to discuss, like suicide prevention. Their QPR classes (QPR stands for Question, Persuade and Refer) teach strategies for learning how to interact with individuals who may be struggling with negative or suicidal thoughts. As the number of suicide assessments by D49 staff has grown during the last few years, the number of teen suicides in the Pikes Peak Region has decreased—a sign that addressing mental health struggles is making a difference.

Along with training sessions, D49 has partnered with UC Health to provide a free mental health hotline for educators in need of support. For students, the community care team is a proponent of the statewide "I Matter Program," a support system that connects students with free virtual counseling sessions when in need.

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Behavior Experts on Team 49

When it comes to helping colleagues deal with student behavioral issues in the classroom, it sometimes takes more than a training class. D49 has well-trained, board-certified behavior analysts like Amber Brown and Gretchen Vazquez on staff to teach colleagues how to respond to student behavioral challenges. "We look at the 'why' behind something happening, and we use a scientifically-backed strategy—Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)—which includes looking at the environment to create an intervention that will foster positive behavior changes," Brown said. "When a staff member needs support in the classroom, they reach out. From there, we set a meeting to talk and determine what support is needed. Sometimes staff on our team go into the classroom to model strategies for teachers."

Liaisons Partnering with Community

Thanks to resources across the Pikes Peak Region, D49's Community Care Team provides support that extends beyond the walls of each school. Community engagement advocates (CEAs) are licensed social workers who serve as a liaison between everyone in an important triangle—school, community and family. "Our resources go well beyond providing food and clothing to families in need," shared Jacki Ballou, CEA in the Falcon Zone. "We play a big part in attendance and truancy issues that sometimes start due to lack of basic needs, and we connect families to outside counseling in the Colorado Springs area when needed … I love working with families, and strengthening the relationship between student, family and school."

Counselors Contributing at District Level

Rocio Padilla, school counselor at Remington Elementary, serves not only the RES community, but also on the District Wellness Team. "One of our initiatives is staff mental wellness. At my school we created a space within the building for staff to re-charge and take care of themselves. We encourage staff to use the room to be their best self for our students," said Padilla. "In the room we provide coffee, tea and an iPad with the app 'Headspace' that offers self-guided meditation." It's proven to be a popular support system for employees. Since the start of the school year, the room has witnessed more than 400 visits.

To inspire up-and-coming building leaders, Padilla participates in the principal induction program to share ideas with future leaders for supporting social wellbeing in their buildings. "We talk about opportunities and strategies to create relationships as we know relationships are critical for all-around wellness."

Making a Difference Together

For this team, the proof is in the pudding, and they have learned that collaboration is key. "For us it is the relationships we build with staff in the schools. I know if they put in a referral for support, they trust us. People will call or text to reach out, and I know they see me as an important part of their team," Brown said.

"There are many times where it is all of us around the table working together," said Vazquez. "Some students might need a suicide risk assessment, truancy might be an issue, and we may have behavioral issues with the same student."

Carrie Clay, counselor at Falcon Middle School, agrees a team approach is essential. "I had a student who was having outbursts in class, and I needed new ideas, so I reached out to the community care team for help. I got ideas from Gretchen on how to help this particular student and went back to staff at my school to collaborate. And for students who continuously get in trouble, there is usually a community need too. I have reached out to Jacki for help with providing food and jackets to families."

It takes everyone around the table and across the district working together to benefit the staff and students of D49. "With this line of work, there is a certain amount of faith you need. The fruits of your labor are having an impact well beyond what we may be seeing," said White.
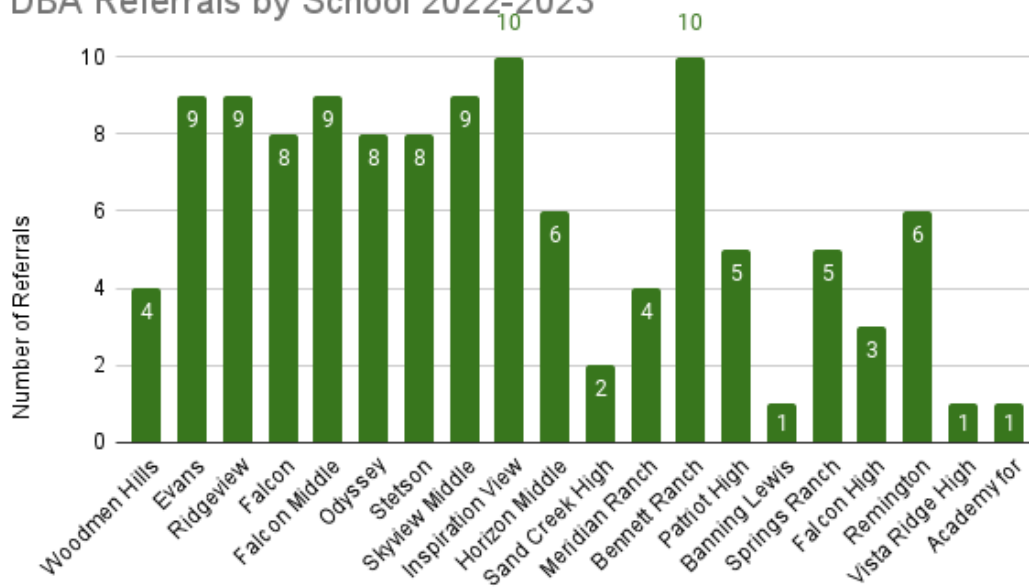
"We know students appreciate even the little interactions," Clay said. "Our students tell us, 'thank you' for being there."
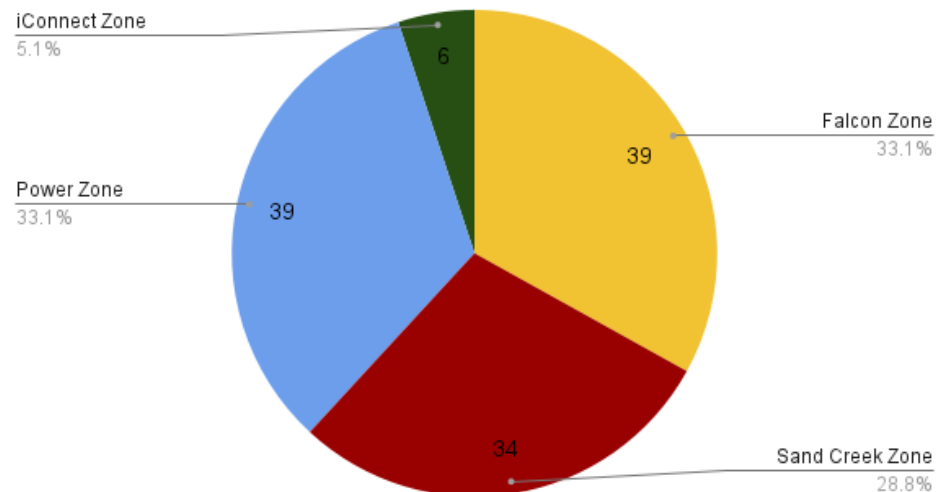
03 DBA Referral Data

4TH QUARTER

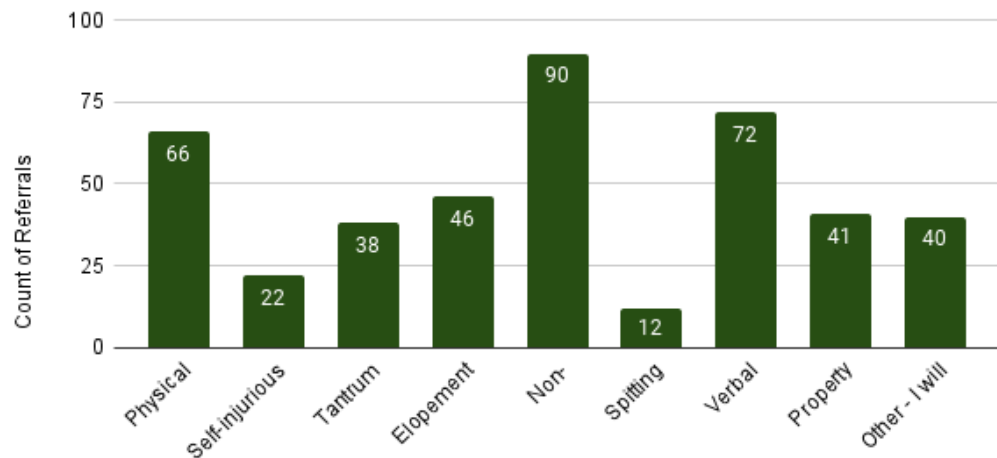### DBA Referrals by School 2022-2023

DBA Referrals By Zone

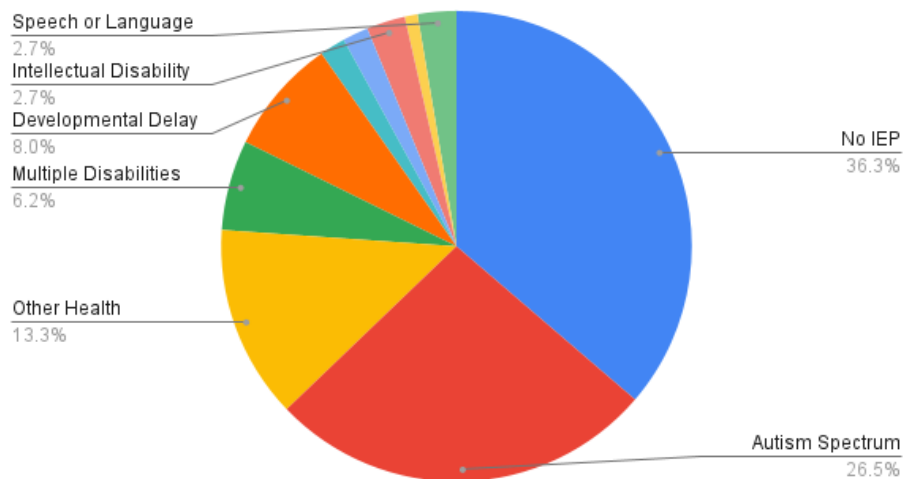
iConnect Zone 5.1%

Power Zone 33.1% — 39

Falcon Zone 33.1% — 39

Sand Creek Zone 28.8% — 34

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4TH QUARTER

Behaviors Supported Through Referrals

Topography of Behavior	Count of Referrals
Physical	66
Self-Injurious	22
Tantrum	38
Elopement	46
Non-	90
Spitting	12
Verbal	72
Property	41
Other - I will	40

Special Education Disability Category Served

- Speech or Language 2.7%
- Intellectual Disability 2.7%
- Developmental Delay 8.0%
- Multiple Disabilities 6.2%
- Other Health 13.3%
- No IEP 36.3%
- Autism Spectrum 26.5%

05 CEA Referral Data

4TH QUARTER

Count of CEA Referrals By Grade Level

CEA Referrals By Zone

iConnect Zone
0.7%

Sand Creek Zone
11.3%

Power Zone
35.8%

Falcon Zone
52.1%

48

152

221
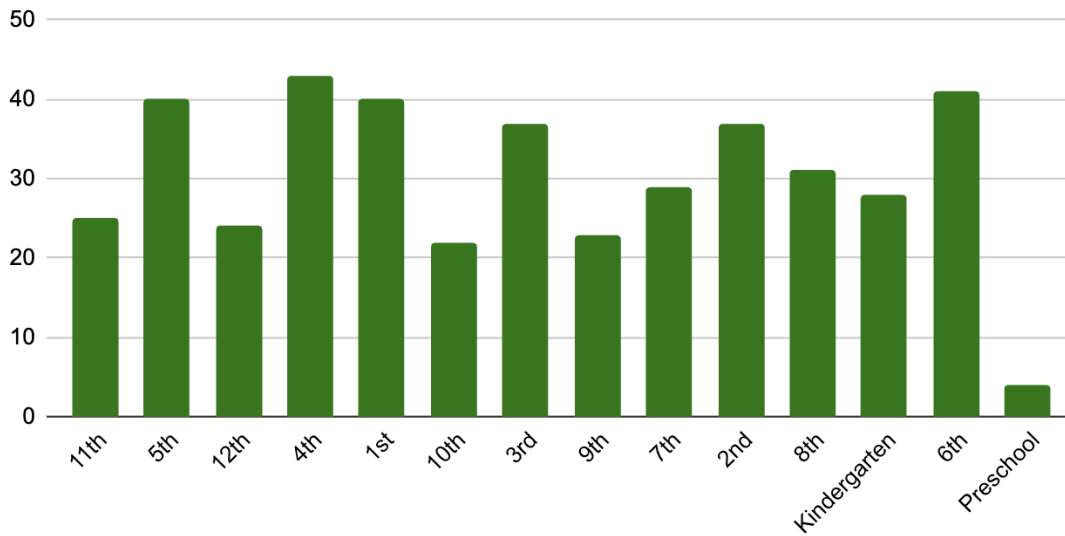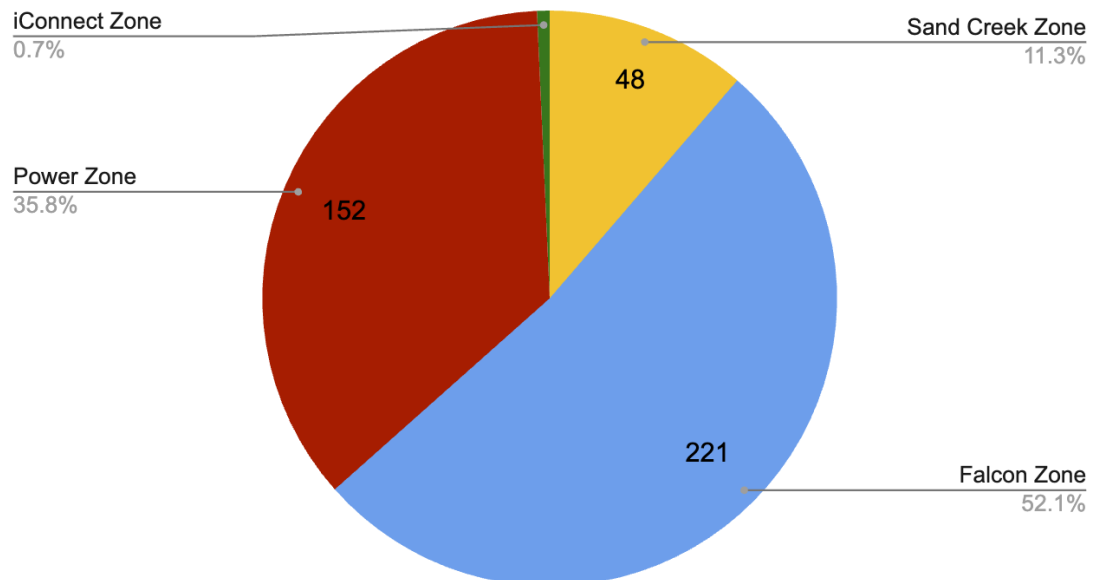
We completed 41 district wide trainings through the 2022-2023 school year. Thank you for partnering with us!

TRAININGS AVAILABLE

- ABC Data Collection
- Antecedent Strategies
- Applied Behavior Analysis
- Behavior 101
- Behavior Teaching Strategies
- BIPs & Escalation Cycle Management Plans
- Building Relationships
- Class-wide Reinforcement Systems
- Classroom Management Strategies
- Contracts (Student)
- Counselor Behavior Training
- Data Collection
- Discrete Trial Training (DTT), Errorless Learning, & Reinforcement
- Early Childhood Behavior Training
- Functions of Behavior/Functional Behavior Assessments
- Group Contingencies
- Guest Teacher Behavior Training
- Paraprofessional Behavior Training
- QPR Suicide Prevention
- Reinforcement & Punishment
- Social Stories
- Teaching Replacement Behaviors
- Token Boards
- Visual Schedules
- K-2 Behavior Interventions
- 3-5th Grade Behavior Interventions
- Secondary Behavior Interventions
- Secondary Absenteeism & Truancy
- Verbal De-escalation Strategies

We would be happy to put together a specific training based on your needs!

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET A TRAINING ON THE CALENDAR FOR NEXT SCHOOL YEAR, PLEASE FILL OUT OUR TRAINING REQUEST FORM!

https://forms.gle/hXkaDVf4DxjCehBa6

Looking at the "Why" Behind Behaviors

Functions of Behavior

Attention: The individual engages in behavior in order to receive attention from those in the environment (parents, teacher, siblings, peers). Attention functions as a reinforcer because it increases the individual's behavior that has, in the past, resulted in attention.

Escape: The individual engages in behavior in order to get out of doing something he/she does not want to do. In the past, the individual has engaged in this behavior and it has resulted in the removal of the task, therefore the removal of the task functions as a negative reinforcer, and increases the likelihood that the individual will engage in this behavior to escape/avoid work.

Access to Tangible: The individual engages in the behavior in order to get a preferred item or activity. In the past, when the individual has engaged in this behavior, it resulted in receiving an item or activity. The item or activity is a reinforcer because it increases the likelihood that the individual will engage in the behavior to have access to it.

Automatic: The individual engages in the behavior in order to get a preferred item or activity. In the past, when the individual has engaged in this behavior, it resulted in receiving an item or activity. The item or activity is a reinforcer because it increases the likelihood that the individual will engage in the behavior to have access to it.

Example: Johnny screams every instance that his mother walks away from him. When he engages in this behavior, his mother returns to him and asks, "What's wrong Johnny?" This behavior is attention-maintained because the behavior consistently results in attention. When Johnny "wants" attention, he screams.

Example: Every time Ms. Smith puts a math worksheet on Johnny's desk, he rips up the paper and throws it on the floor. As a result, Ms. Smith does not make him do his math homework. In the future, Johnny continues to engage in this behavior every time he receives a math worksheet because it results in escaping the behavior of doing the math worksheet.

Example: When Stevie cries, his mother gives him a pacifier. In the future, Stevie cries because it consistently results in access to the pacifier.

Example: Stevie engages in hand flapping in the absence of any specific antecedent or consequence stimulus. This behavior provides automatic sensory stimulation.

Bullying of our youth

By Deb Risden

The Feb. 3 suicide of 14-year-old Adriana Kuch two days after she was assaulted by students in the hallway of her New Jersey high school is an example of bullying in more than one form. Not only was Kuch physically abused, but her assailants also recorded the incident, posted it on social media and then sent her the videos and screenshots to continue the harassment.

The National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice reports that about one out of five students ages 12 to18 have experienced bullying. Of the students who have been bullied, 41% think they will be bullied again.

There are fewer available statistics for bullying in elementary schools, and some suggest an even larger percentage. In a 2021 literature review published by The International Journal of Educational Research, bullying in younger children tends to start as physical violence and turns into nonverbal and cyberbullying as they progress in age.

Bullying and cyberbullying defined

The National Bullying Prevention Center defines bullying. "When someone aggressively uses their 'power' to target another individual with repeated, unwanted words or actions. Those targeted are hurt either physically or emotionally and have a hard time stopping what is happening to them."

Bullying is about a power imbalance — a person who bullies is usually physically stronger, more popular and/or has more money than the person who is being bullied, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

The American Psychological Association defines cyberbullying as "verbally threatening or harassing behavior conducted through such electronic technology as cell phones, email, social media or text messaging." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has revealed that about 16% of reported bullying takes place online or by text.

Aggressive behavior can come in many forms. The NCES reports that students ages 12 to 18 have reported being the subject of rumors; made fun of, called names or insulted; excluded from activities on purpose; pushed, shoved, tripped or spit on; threatened with harm; made to do things they did not want to do; and having their property destroyed on purpose.

Boys experience more physical bullying; girls are more often subjected to rumors and purposely excluded from activities.

There is a higher presence of bullying in middle schools than high schools and rural schools more than urban. There is more bullying of females, children of multiple ethnicities, lower socioeconomic status, children with disabilities and those who identify as LGBTQ. Religious beliefs are also a factor.

Effects of bullying

According to StopBullying.gov, bullying

Resources

In case of emergency, dial 911
Safe2Tell: 1-877-542-SAFE (7233)

Colorado Educator Support: 303-724-2500
https://www.coloradoeducatorsupport.com

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
Dial 988 or 1-800-273-8255
or Text "START" to 741741

Colorado Crisis Center: 1-844-493-8255
or Text "TALK" to 38255

Bullying Recovery Resource Center:
303-991-1397 or
www.bullyingrecoveryresourcecenter.org

Free counseling is available through
iMatter, https://www.imatter.org

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