

A Pathway to Support: Introducing Youth Mental Health First Aid in Farmington Public Schools

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Vision:

To create a school environment where students with disabilities and mental health challenges feel **seen, safe and supported**.

Mission:

To pilot Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training for staff, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to recognize, respond to, and support students experiencing mental health concerns.



Agenda

01. *Why This? Why Now?*

Problem of Practice

02. *YMHFA*

What is it?

03. *Seeing the Signs - What the data tells us*

State & District Data

04. *Action Plan in Motion*

05. *Takeaways & Next Steps*





Why this? Why now?



Why This Matters – National and State Data

7.4% of children in the United States have a mental health visit in a given year. (National Council for Mental Wellbeing, 2024)

Suicide is the **second leading cause of death** among youth aged 10–14 (CDC, 2022).

CT-specific data: In 2023, **31.7%** of HS students reported feeling **sad or hopeless almost every day** for two or more weeks (CT YRBS, EdSight).

1 in 5 youth experience a mental health disorder annually (NAMI, 2023)

Children with disabilities are **2–7 times more likely** to experience mental health challenges. (CDC, 2022 MMWR Report)

Following the Covid-19 pandemic there was a **31%** increase in mental health-related emergency department visits for U.S. youth ages 12-17 (NAMI, 2024).

Why This Matters – Public Schools

Student mental health needs reported as a growing concern in stakeholder surveys (Farmington Strategic Planning Committee Summary, 2023).

Many educators feel unprepared to identify and support student mental health needs.
(Journal of School Health, 2023)

Increase in mental health-related referrals to support staff over past 3 years.

“When mental health needs go unmet in schools, they show up as attendance issues, discipline problems, and academic failure.”

— Mallett et al., 2016

(The School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Comprehensive Assessment)

Students At Greater Risk for Mental Health Challenges

Student Group	Why They're At Risk
Disciplinary Incidents	Often tied to underlying emotional or behavioral challenges; exclusionary practices (e.g., suspension) increase isolation, anxiety, and depression risk. (Mallett, 2016)
Chronic Absenteeism	Linked to anxiety, school avoidance, and depression; reduces access to support systems and worsens emotional well-being over time. (Finning et al., 2019)
IEPs (Special Education)	Many qualify under categories like ED, OHI, or Autism, which correlate with anxiety, depression, and behavior challenges. (Wagner et al., 2005)
504 Plans	Typically written for students with ADHD, anxiety, or depression; need mental health accommodations. (Suldo et al., 2014)
SRBI Counseling Interventions	Receive targeted emotional/behavioral supports; often early indicators of mental health needs. (Reback, 2010)



YMHFA, What is it?





What is it?

- A national, evidence-based training program
- Teaches adults how to support youth ages 6-18
- Australia in 2001

Purpose

- Build awareness and reduce stigma
- Help adults recognize signs of distress
- Provide support until professional help is available

The ALGEE Action Plan

- **A**ssess for risk of harm or suicide
- **L**isten nonjudgmentally
- **G**ive reassurance and information
- **E**ncourage professional help
- **E**ncourage self-help strategies



Key Skills Taught

- Recognize warning signs and symptoms
- Approach and support
- Offer reassurance and connect to appropriate help

Training Format & Cost

- One or two day, in-person instructor-led session
- Interactive, scenario-based learning
- **It's FREE**





Seeing the Signs: What the Data Tells Us

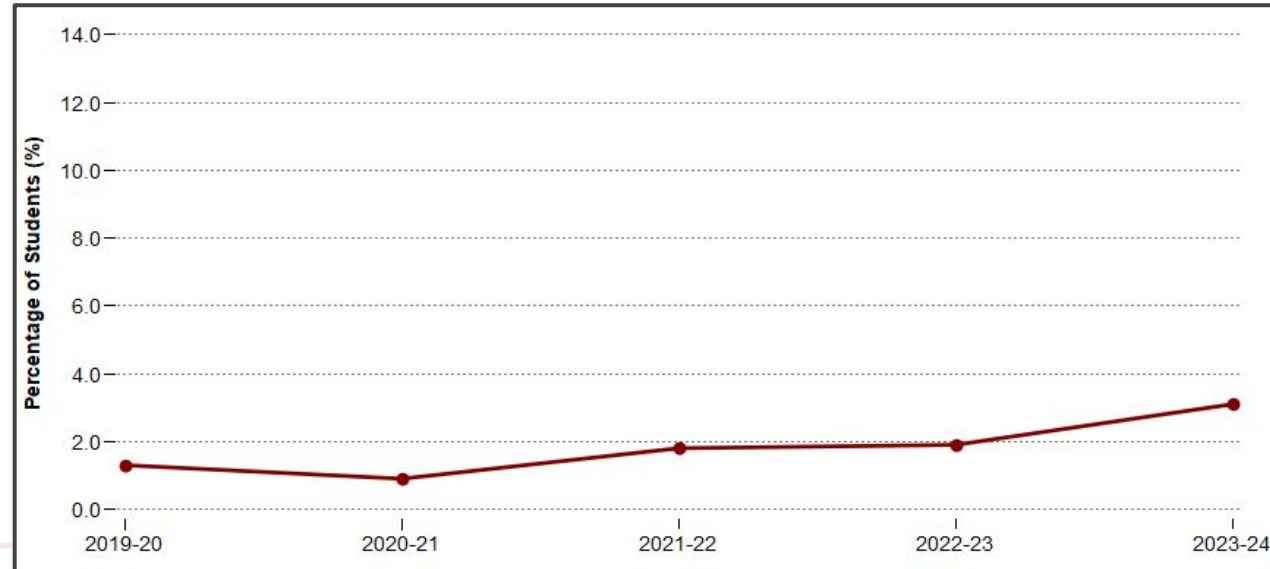
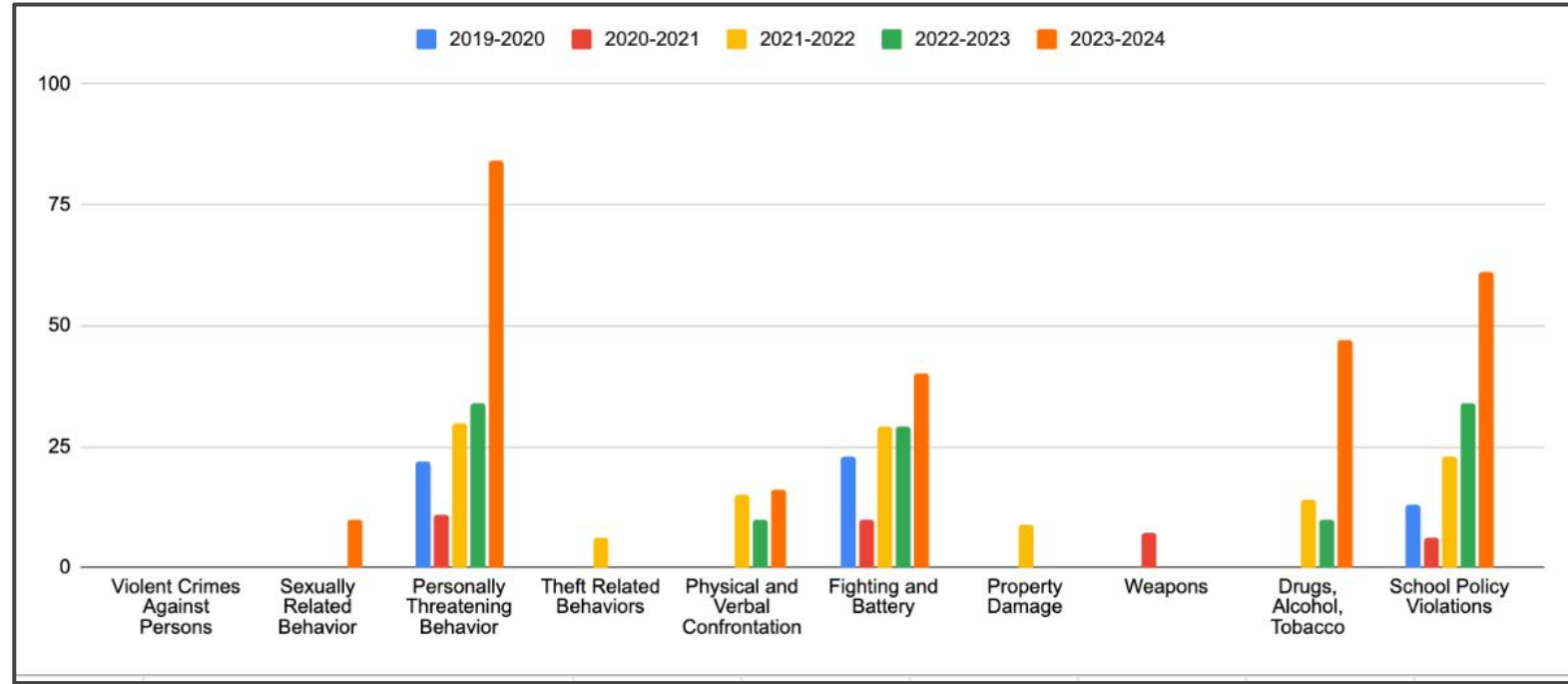


Data Overview

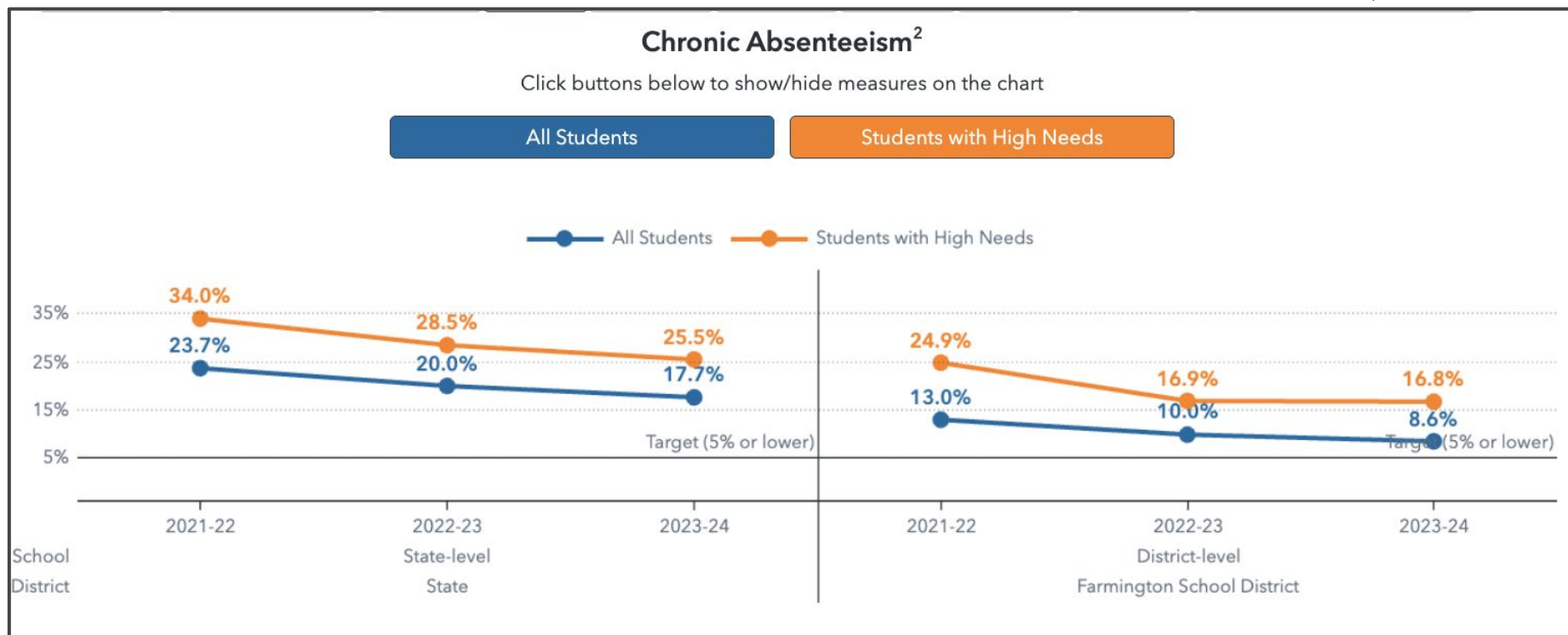
Districtwide Data - Disciplinary Incidents & Suspension Rates	1
Districtwide Data - Chronic Absenteeism	2
Districtwide Data - Sp. Ed. Status, Risk Assessments & FTE Staffing	3
Elementary School A- 5th & 6th Grade at risk	4



Discipline Incident & Suspension Data Trends 2019-2024

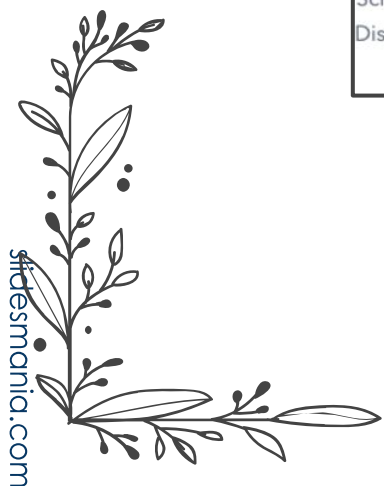


Chronic Absenteeism (3 year Trend - State & District Data)



All Students: 2021–22: 13.0% → 2023–24: 8.6% (steady improvement)

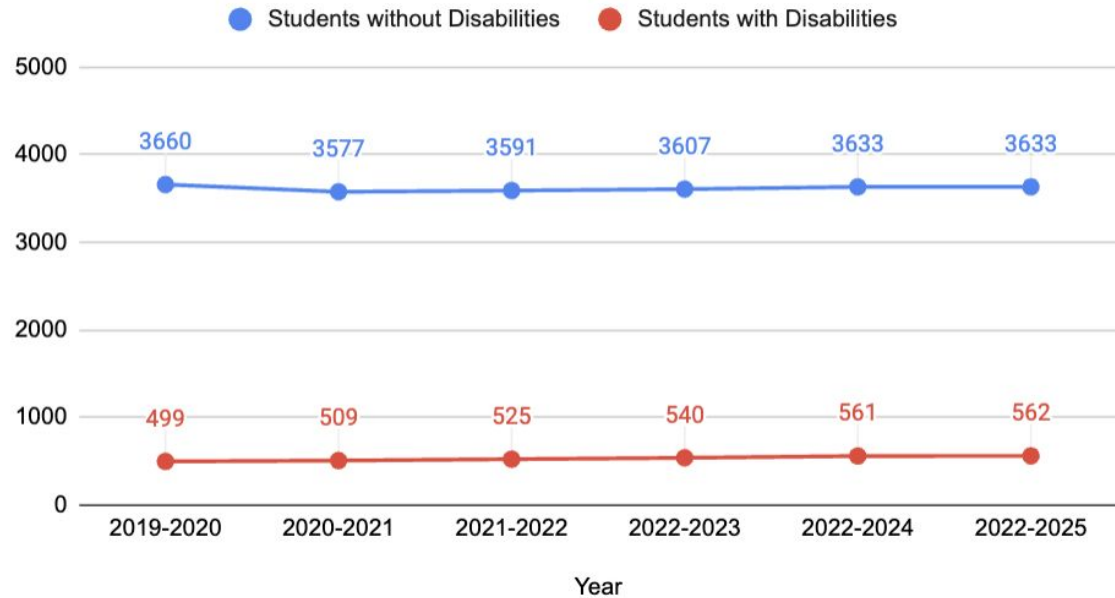
Students with High Needs: 2021–22: 24.9% → 2023–24: 16.8% (No significant change between 2022–23 and 2023–24)



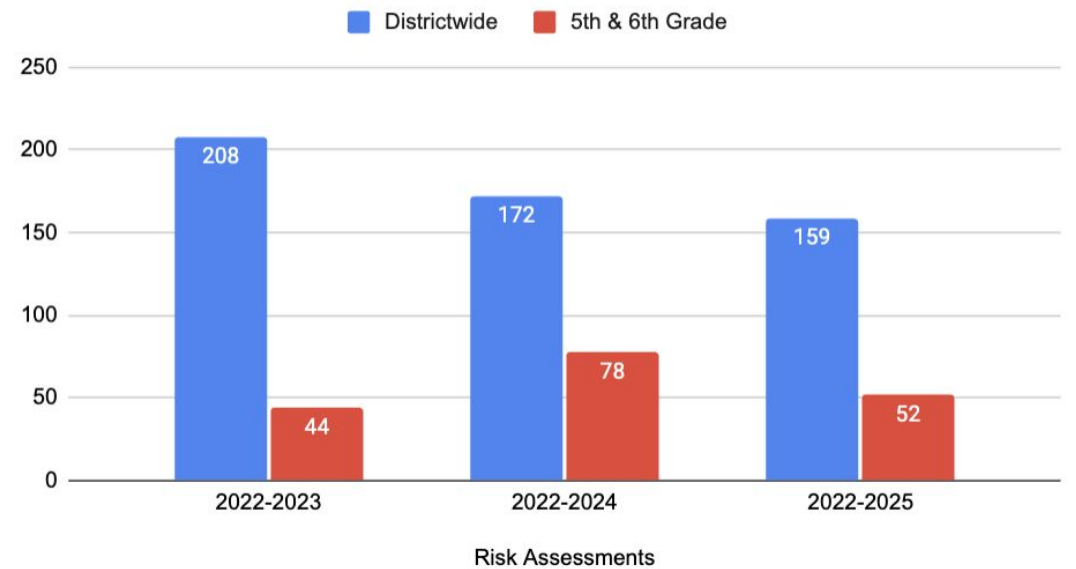
Districtwide Data

Special Education Status, Risk Assessments & FTE Staffing

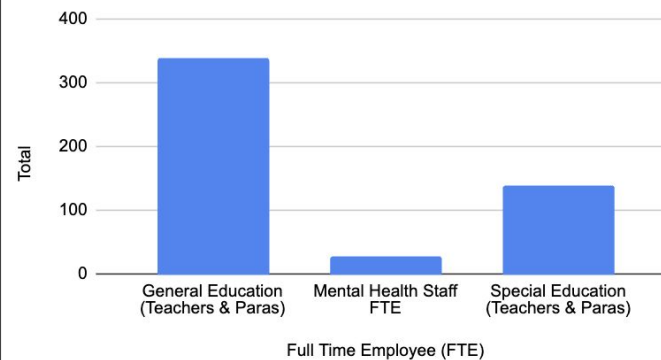
Enrollment Trend Data (Students with and without Disabilities)



Risk Assessment Data 2022-2025



Districtwide FTE Data 2024-2025



A closer look at Elementary School A - Students at risk in 5th & 6th Grade

<u>Group Data 2024-2025</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percentage</u> %
Total number of students	678	-
211 Calls Made (2023-2024)	7	
211 Calls Made (as of May 2025)	9	
Risk Assessments Completed (2023-2024)	78	
Risk Assessments Completed (as of May 2025)	52	
Total of students with IEPs	99	15%
Total # of students with counseling as a direct service to address S/E goals	44	6%
Total # of students with 504s	64	9%
Total # of students with IEPs or 504 Plans	163	24%
Total # of students who receive counseling interventions through SRBI	25	4%
Total at risk 5th & 6th Graders	188	27%





My Action Plan in Motion



Action Plan in Motion

**Nov 2024 –
Jan 2025**

Needs
identification
and data
Review began

**January –
Feb 2025**

Build
partnerships
and assess
feasibility

**February –
March
2025**

Review data
and needs with
administrators,
secure district
support

**April –
May 2025**

Identify pilot
school and draft
proposal for
implementation

**May – June
2025**

Discuss
implementation
and schedule next
steps



Takeaways & Impact





Takeaways

- Youth mental health needs are rising, especially for students with disabilities
- School staff are often first responders but lack formal training
- YMHFA provides tools to recognize, respond, and refer
- Starting with special education staff maximizes impact and builds capacity



Anticipated Impact

- Improved adult recognition of mental health warning signs
- Reduced stigma around mental illness
- Earlier identification and more appropriate referrals
- Stronger alignment with MTSS and inclusive practices
- Safer, more supportive school environment

The slide features decorative floral and leaf illustrations in the corners. Top-left: A pinkish-red wavy shape with a black line drawing of a flower and leaves. Top-right: A blue wavy shape with a black line drawing of a leafy branch. Bottom-left: A blue wavy shape with black line drawings of various plants and flowers. Bottom-right: A pinkish-red wavy shape with black line drawings of leafy branches.

Thank you!

Do you have any questions?

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