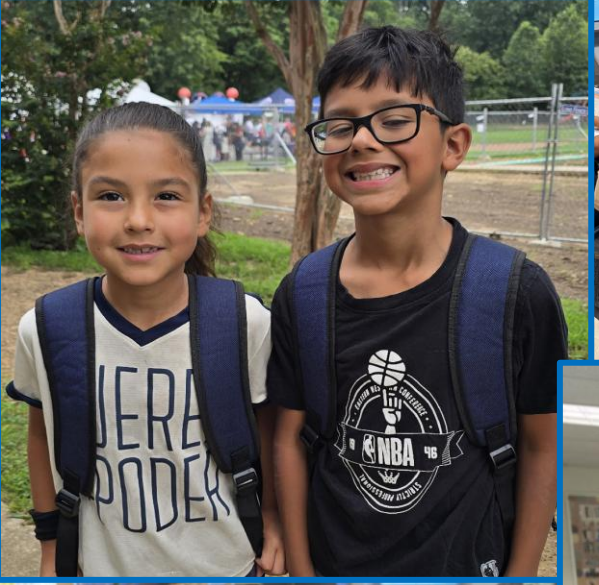
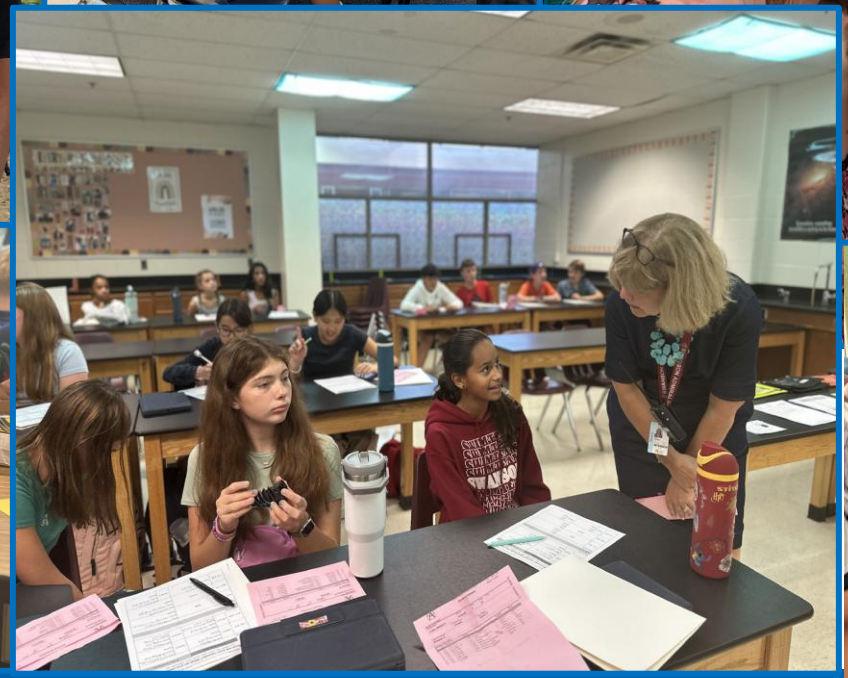








NOTE:
Slide 13 edited on 11/17/26.

Responsive School Communities

Department of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Student Support

November 17, 2026

Arlington Public Schools

Agenda

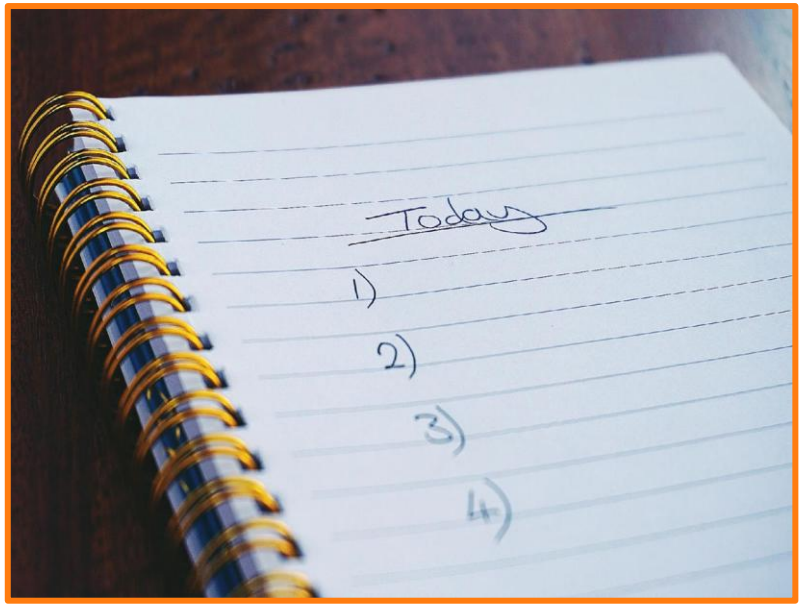
- **How we: Listen & Identify Needs:**
Analyze student, family, staff, and outcome data to pinpoint school community needs

- **How we: Respond Through Coordinated Supports:**
Deliver multi-tiered supports (Tier 1–3) with mental health and community agency partners

- **How we: Monitor Implementation & Outcomes:**
Track progress and equity to ensure interventions effectively reach all students

- **How we: Learn & Adjust Policy & Practice:**
Use outcome data to refine professional learning, resources, and instructional practices

- **How we: Refine & Reinforce the System:**
Continually optimize operations to sustain long-term Strategic Plan alignment.



Guiding Question

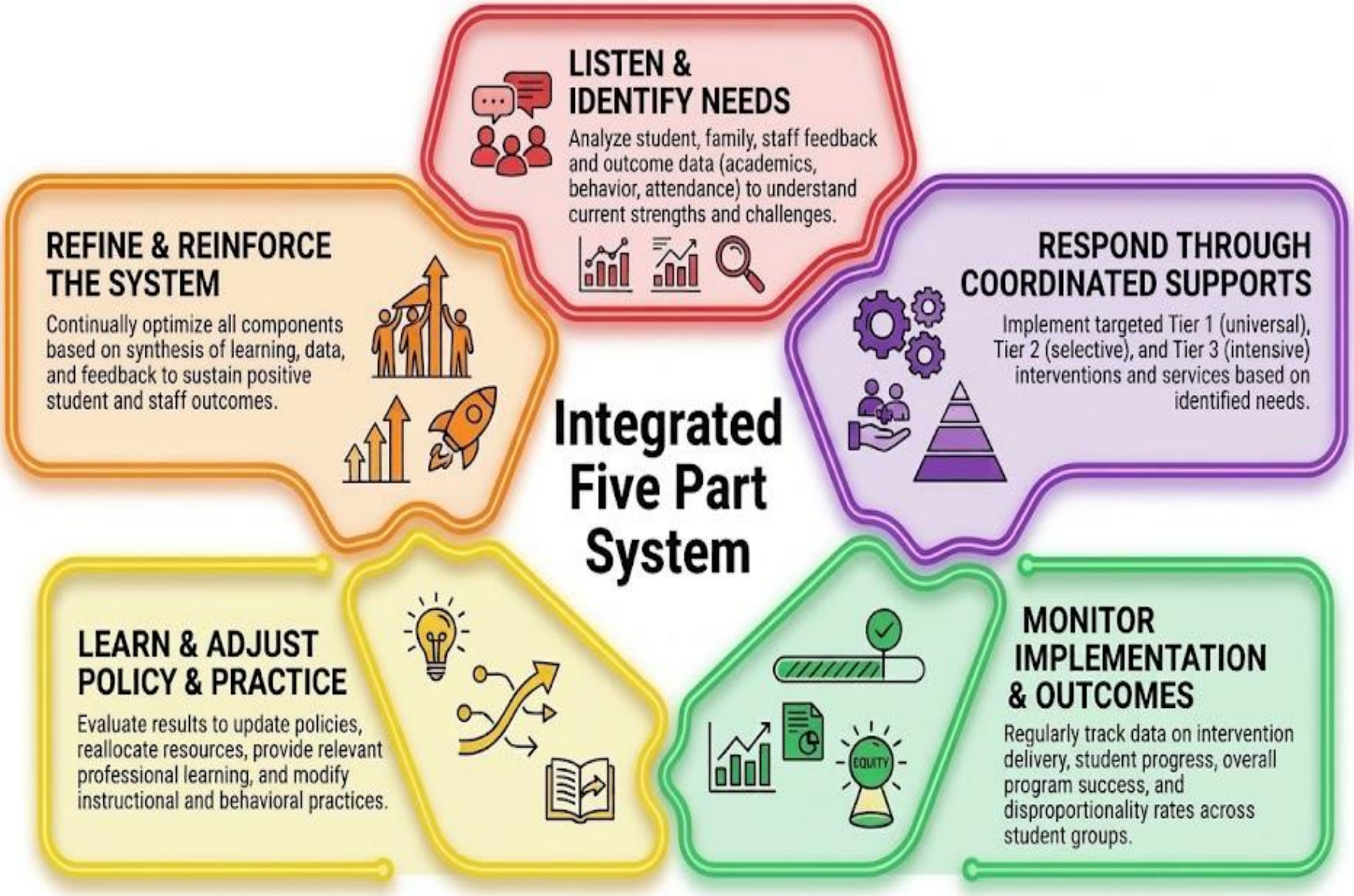
How does APS operate as an integrated system—fostering collaboration among schools, central departments, and community partners—to recognize student needs, deliver consistent responses, measure impact, and adjust strategies when outcomes are uneven?

What organizational conditions make responsiveness consistent across schools?

A responsive school community is not a program.

It's an operating system for

- **identifying student needs**
- **coordinating support**
- **monitoring results**
- **improving practice across schools.**

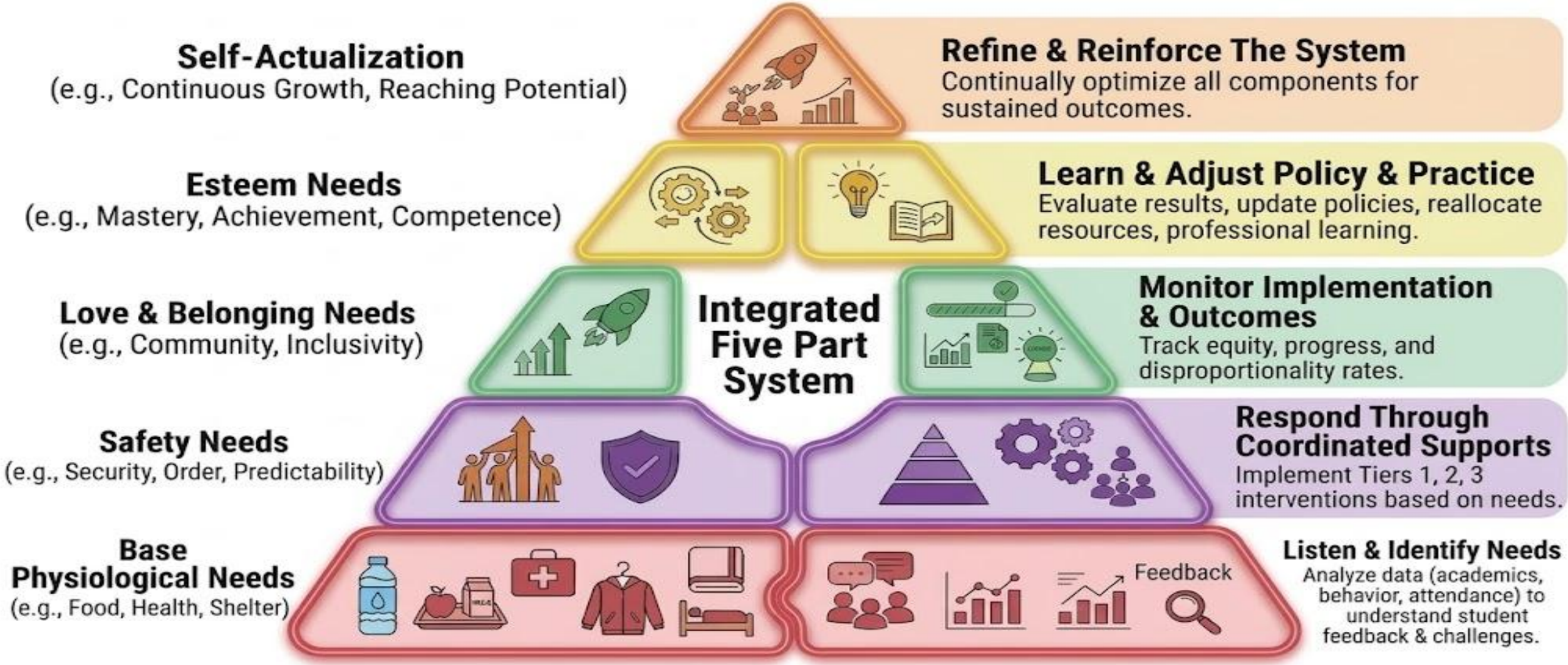


Responsive School Communities

Responsive school communities align theory with practice: Using the lens of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs we prioritize well-being as a prerequisite for learning. By actively listening to families and addressing foundational physical, emotional, and social barriers—such as safety and belonging—these communities establish consistent, caring practices that empower every student to thrive, achieve higher-level critical thinking, and reach self-actualization.

Responsive Schools Align Systems

A Hierarchy of Responsive School Systems: Aligning School Functions with Maslow's Needs



Responsive School Communities: Listen & Identify Needs

Superintendent's 3 Key Focus Areas this Year		
High-Quality Instruction	**Responsive Schools**	**Building Capacity through Coherent Coaching and Professional Learning Systems**
• High-Quality Tier 1 Instruction • Science of Learning for Math and New Resource Adoption • Specially Designed Instruction • Student Devices: Purposeful Learning & Digital Citizenship	• SEL Work • Chronic Absenteeism • Discipline Disproportionality • Family Engagement	• Updated Professional Development Plan • Coaching Framework • Job Embedded Professional Development • Specially Designed Instruction / Inclusion

Responsive School Communities: Listen & Identify Needs

Fostering **family and community engagement** directly embodies a **responsive school community practice** by recognizing families as essential, equal partners in a student's educational journey. A responsive community actively builds culturally inclusive, transparent, and bidirectional communication channels—welcoming family perspectives, removing participation barriers, and partnering with caregivers to support the holistic development of every child.





Examples of APS outreach:

- Partnership with AGIA
- Partnership with Edu-Futuro
- Partnership with NAACP
- Partnership with SEPTA
- School Board's Student Health and Well-Being Council
- Community Town Halls (ex: Belonging and Respect Summit)
- Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Immigrant & Refugee Student Concerns

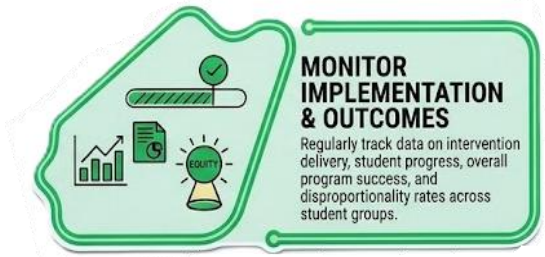
Responsive School Communities Listen & Identify Needs

Examples of division & school-level data

- Arlington Youth Survey
- *Your Voice Matters*
- SEL Survey
- Standards of Learning and other assessments
- Child Behavior Rating Scale (CBRS) (early childhood)
- Chronic Absenteeism data
  - Chronic Absenteeism is defined as 10% of the school year or 18 days
- Suspension Data
- Course enrollment
- Office Referrals
- Bullying Reports







Responsive School Communities Coordinate Responses

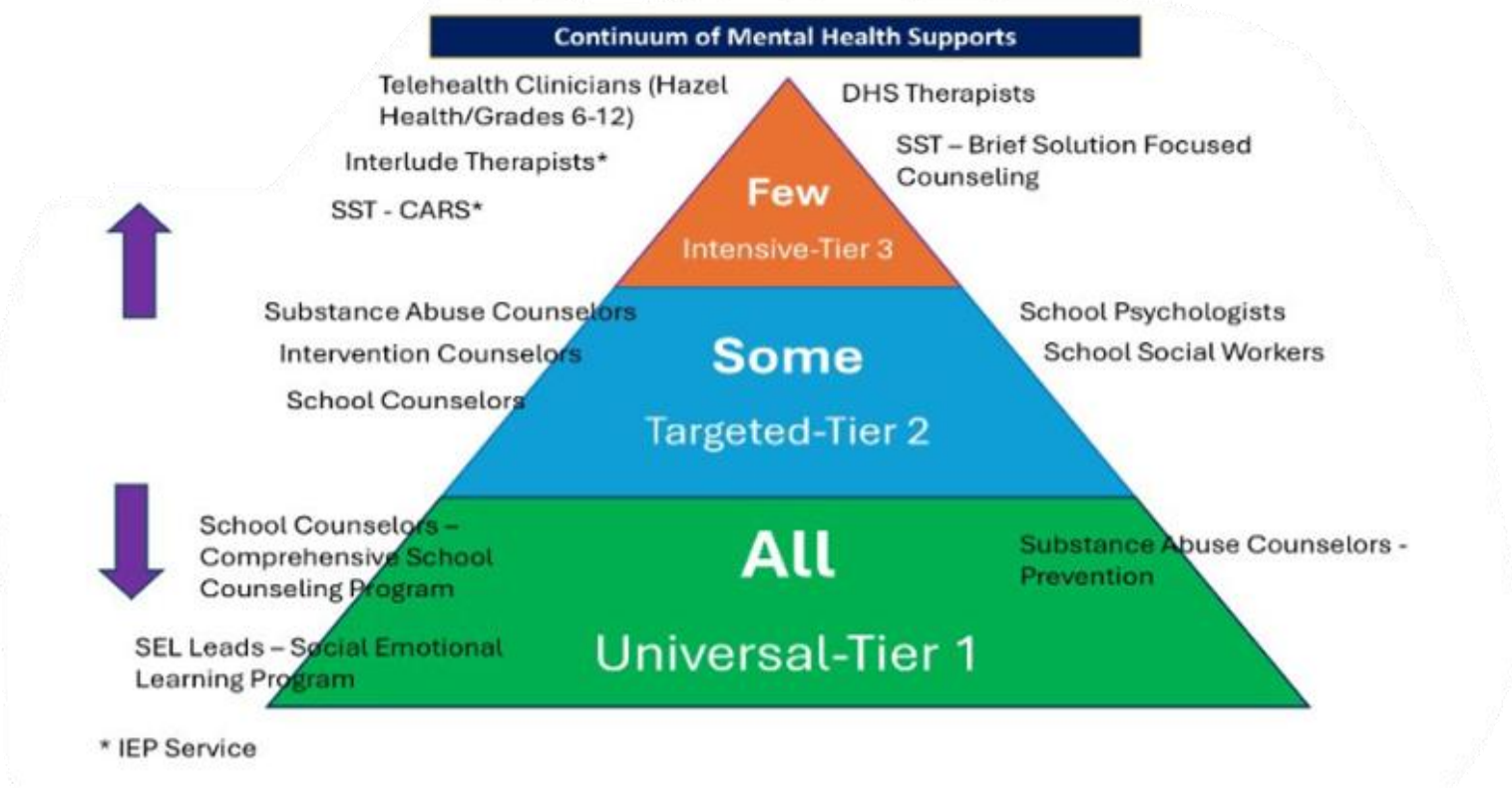
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) based on the CASEL Framework (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning)
  - Tier 1= classroom lessons provided by instructional staff
  - Tier 2= targeted interventions organized by school-based mental health teams
  - Tier 3 = individualized care supported by mental health professionals in school and the community
- Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to address academic and behavioral needs
- Safety, Security, and Emergency Management (SSEM)-- coordinated responses to urgent student needs



Responsive School Communities Coordinate Responses

Supporting **student mental health and wellness** directly embodies a **responsive school community practice** by recognizing that emotional, psychological, and mental well-being are foundational to academic engagement and life success.

A responsive community shifts from reactive crisis intervention to establishing proactive, multi-tiered systems of support—providing access to school-based mental health teams, wellness resources, and stress-management tools that adapt to the holistic needs of every student.







Responsive School Communities Coordinate Responses

Resource	Serves these grades/ages	Serves students with Medicaid insurance or no insurance	Serves students with private insurance	Service Modality (Telehealth and/or In-person)
School Counseling	Pre-K to Grade 12	Yes; no cost to APS students		In-Person
Hazel Health	Grades 6-12	Yes; no cost to APS students		Telehealth
Substance Abuse Prevention	K to Grade 12	Yes; no cost to APS students		In-Person
Arlington DHS Children's Behavioral Health	Children and Youth up to age 17.5 years old	Yes	No	Telehealth and/or in-person
School-based Crisis Services, Suicide or Threat Assessment	Pre-K to Grade 12	Yes; no cost to APS students		In-Person
CR2 Crisis Services	Serves the whole community across the lifespan	Yes	Yes	Via Phone Call or In-Person
Arlington Emergency Mental Health Services	Serves the whole community across the lifespan	Yes	Yes	In-Person



Responsive School Communities Coordinate Responses

- School Counselors
  - Staffing ratio varies by school level and program
  - Range is 1:325 at elementary to 1:250 at high school
- Additional Counseling Staff
  - College and Career Counselors (high schools; 1 per school)
  - Intervention Counselors (secondary schools; 1 per school)
  - English Learner Counselors (10 positions divisionwide)
- School Psychologists: 1.0 for 775 students; 3.0 for Child Find
- School Social Workers: 1.0 for 775 students
- Substance Abuse (Prevention) Counselors: 8 positions for the division



NOTE: Edited on 11/17/26

Responsive School Communities Coordinate Responses

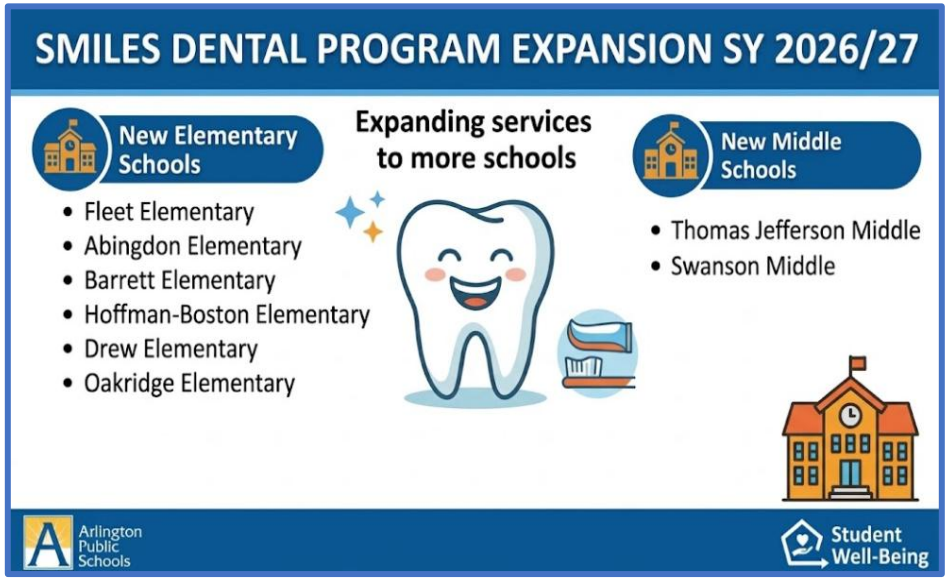
- Interagency Collaboration:
  - Children's Behavioral Health to provide services (**School-Based Therapy Program**)
  - Child Welfare to provide Mandated Reporter Trainings
  - DHS Prevention Team to provide mental health and suicide prevention trainings, including Youth Mental Health First Aid.

- Grant funding to purchase additional services, such as virtual therapy (ex: Hazel Health).

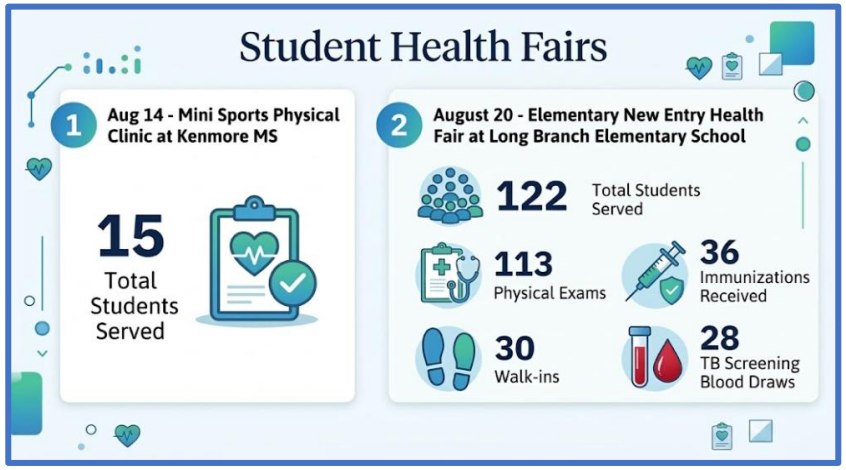


Responsive School Communities Coordinate Responses

Supporting **student health** directly embodies a **responsive school community practice** by recognizing that health and wellness is the foundational prerequisite for student engagement, growth, and academic achievement. A responsive community shifts beyond reactive treatment to establish proactive systems of care—integrating school clinic services and health education to meet the diverse and holistic needs of every student.







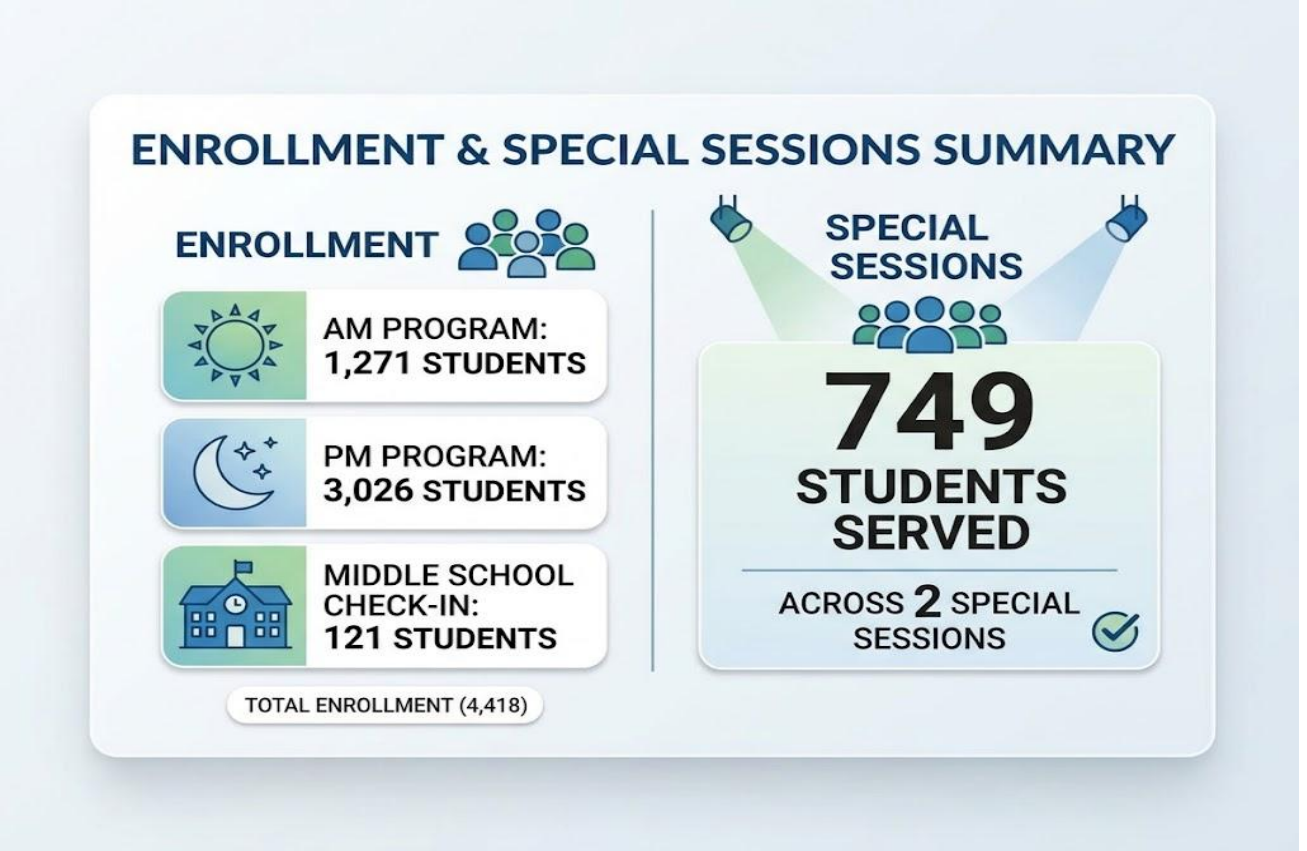


Responsive School Communities Coordinate Responses

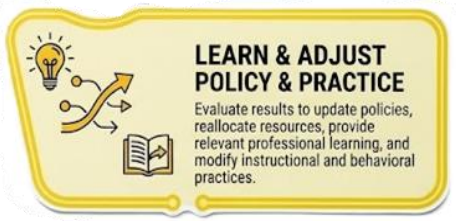
Supporting students through **Extended Day programs** directly embodies a **responsive school community practice** by addressing the practical, financial, and emotional realities of modern families.

A responsive community recognizes that learning and support extend beyond traditional school hours, offering structured care, healthy snacks, and safe supervision that ease family stress, boost enrollment capacity, and promote equity.

Extended Day has also increased opportunities for student engagement in 2026-2027 by offering a full-day program on select non-school days.







Responsive School Communities Monitor Outcomes

Student Well-Being

- By 2030, at least 80% of students will respond favorably about their school climate, mental health and self-management skills. *2025-26 Target: Varies by level 63-78%*

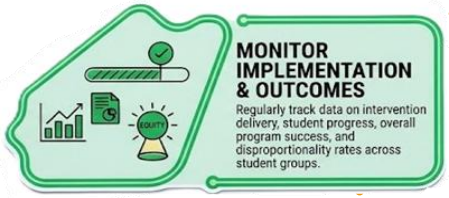
  Significant Progress

- By 2030, APS will reduce the chronic absenteeism rate to no more than 8% of students and reduce over-representation of student groups. *2025-26 Target: 10.7*

  Annual Targets Met

- By 2030, APS will reduce suspensions by 25% with a focus on incidents that do not pose a safety risk to self or others and reduce over-representation of student groups based on race/ethnicity, students with a disability, and English Learners
  2025-26 Target: Reduce suspensions by 4%, over-representation by 1%

  Some Progress



- By 2030, at least 80% of LGBTQ+ students will respond favorably to questions related to a sense of belonging, trusted adult and if they are treated poorly by others due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. *2025-26 Target: 70%*

  Significant Progress



- By 2030, at least 90% of APS students will report feeling safe at school. *2025-26 Targets: Gr. 4-5 - 74% | Gr. 6-12 – 75%*

  Annual Targets Met

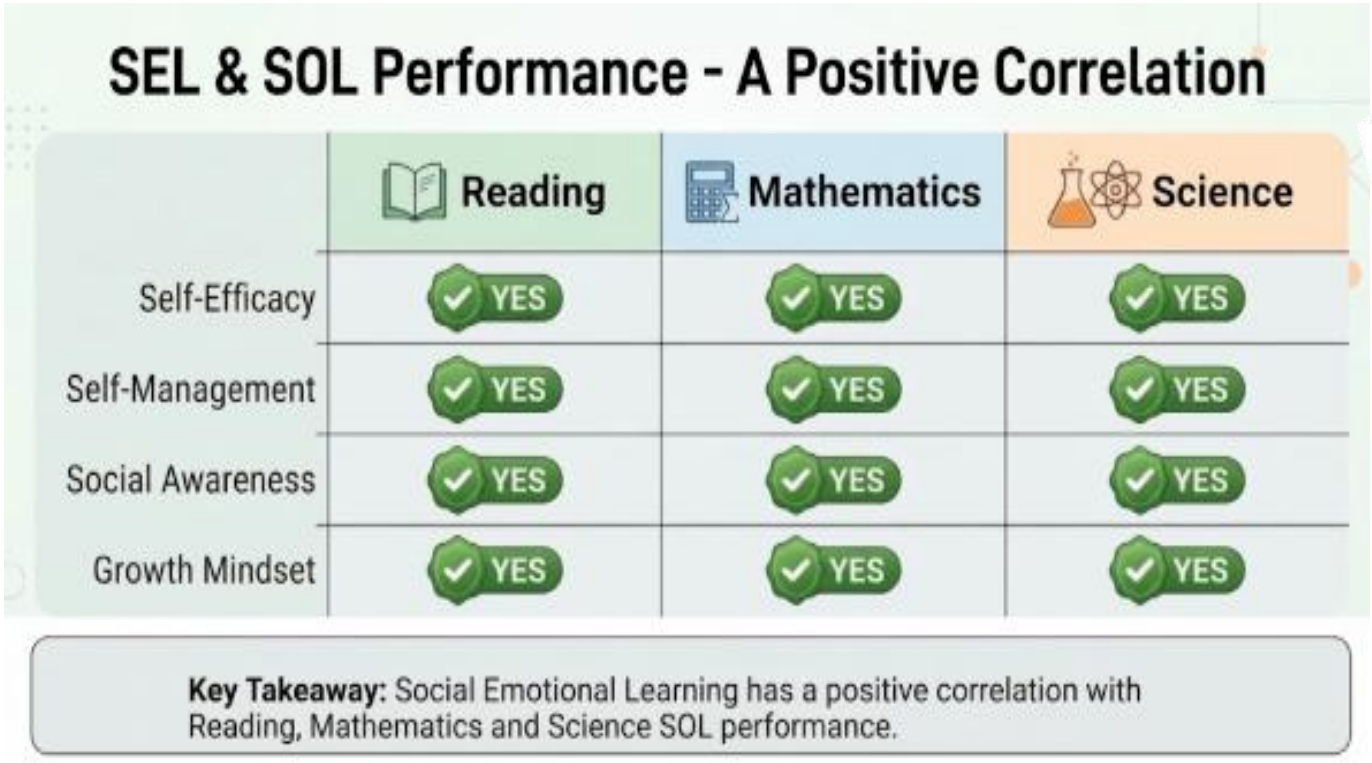
Responsive School Communities Monitor Outcomes

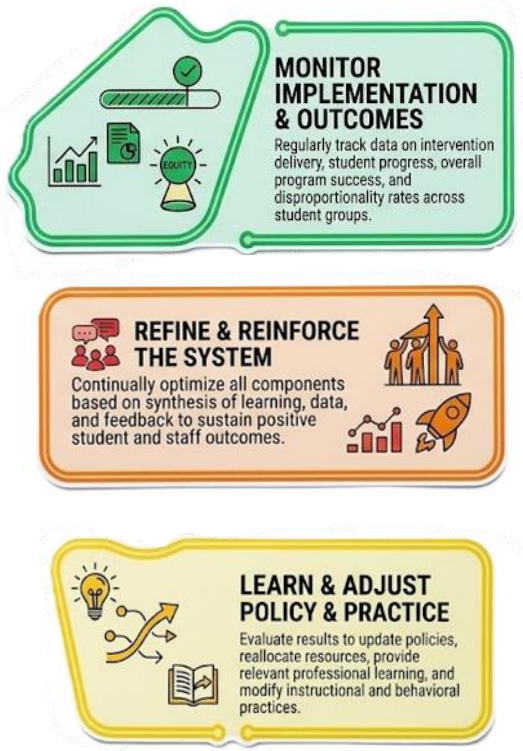
Integrating **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)** directly embodies a **responsive school community practice** by recognizing that academic success is deeply intertwined with emotional well-being and interpersonal skills.

A responsive community shifts beyond purely academic instruction to proactively teach self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making—creating a supportive environment that adapts to the holistic emotional and developmental needs of eve student.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Competencies



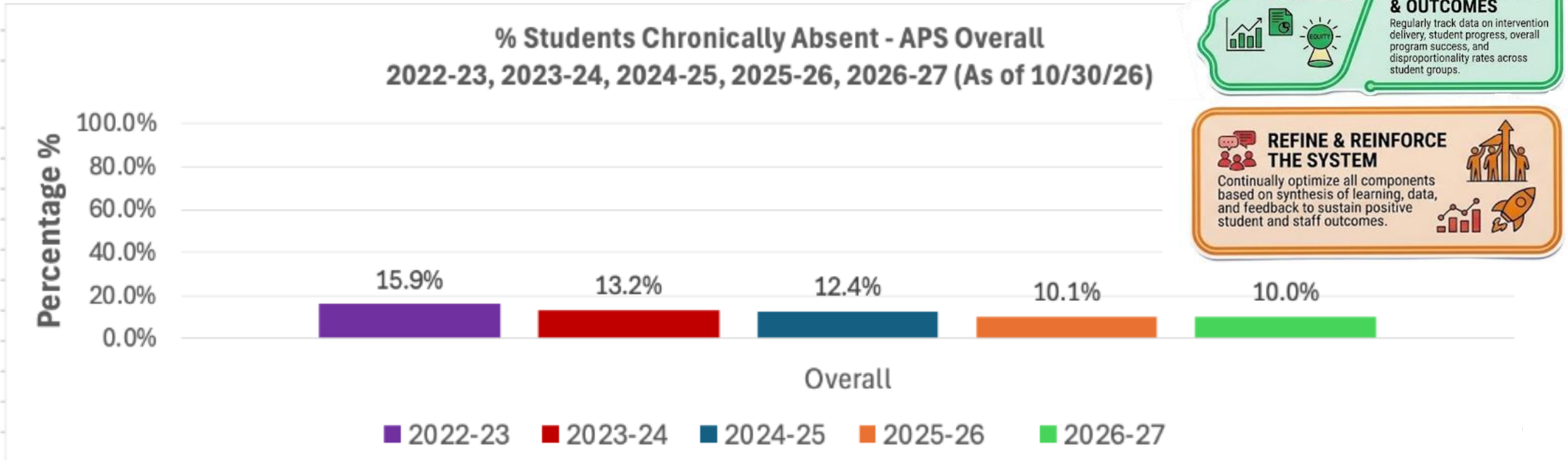




Responsive School Communities Monitor Outcomes

Addressing chronic absenteeism directly embodies a **responsive school community practice** by recognizing that frequent absences are often symptoms of systemic, personal, or environmental challenges rather than disinterest in learning.

The focus shifts from punitive measures to **supportive, data-driven interventions** (identifying root causes such as transportation barriers, health issues, or family hardship) and providing targeted proactive resources to keep students engaged and connected.



Responsive School Communities Monitor Outcomes

PREVENTIVE & PROACTIVE TIER 1 SUPPORT

CORE PRACTICES FOR ALL STUDENTS



SCHOOL & DIVISION-WIDE MESSAGING

- Clear, consistent expectations (e.g., Be Responsible, Be Respectful)
- Common language across settings (hallways, classrooms, buses)
- Teaching positive behaviors explicitly
- Visible reminders and posters



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- Strong school-home partnerships
- Shared goals for student success
- Regular communication and updates
- Collaborative problem-solving
- Providing family resources



CELEBRATIONS OF SUCCESS

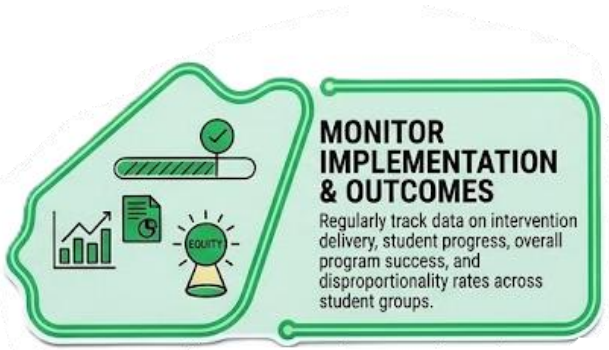
- Positive reinforcement for expected behaviors
- Recognizing student achievements and efforts
- School-wide assemblies and events
- Awards and special recognitions
- Building a sense of community

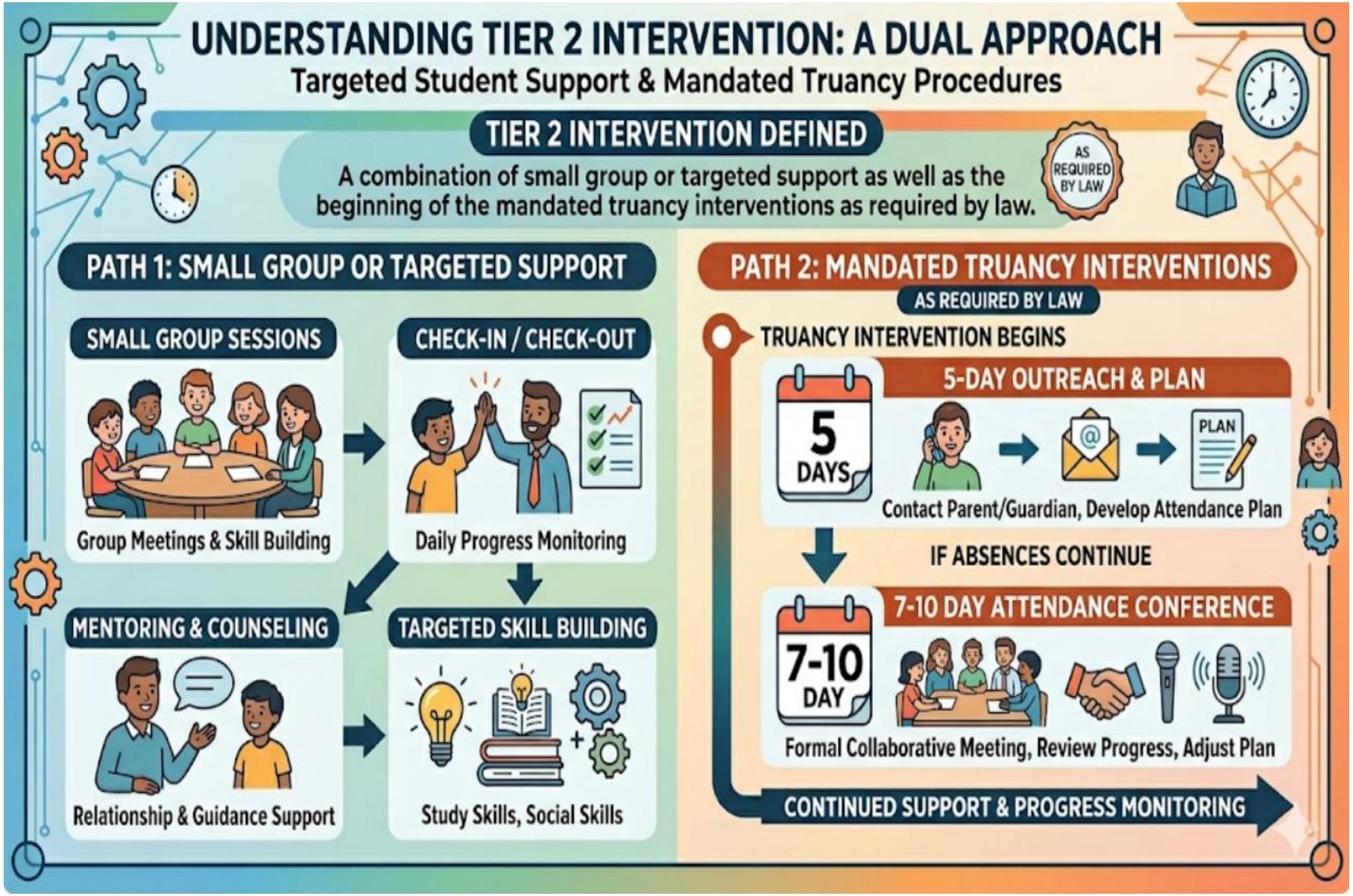


MONITOR IMPLEMENTATION & OUTCOMES

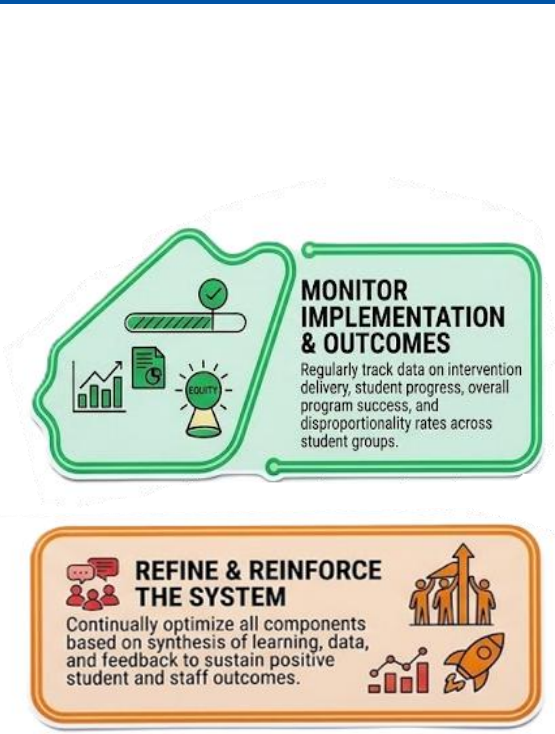
Regularly track data on intervention delivery, student progress, overall program success, and disproportionality rates across student groups.

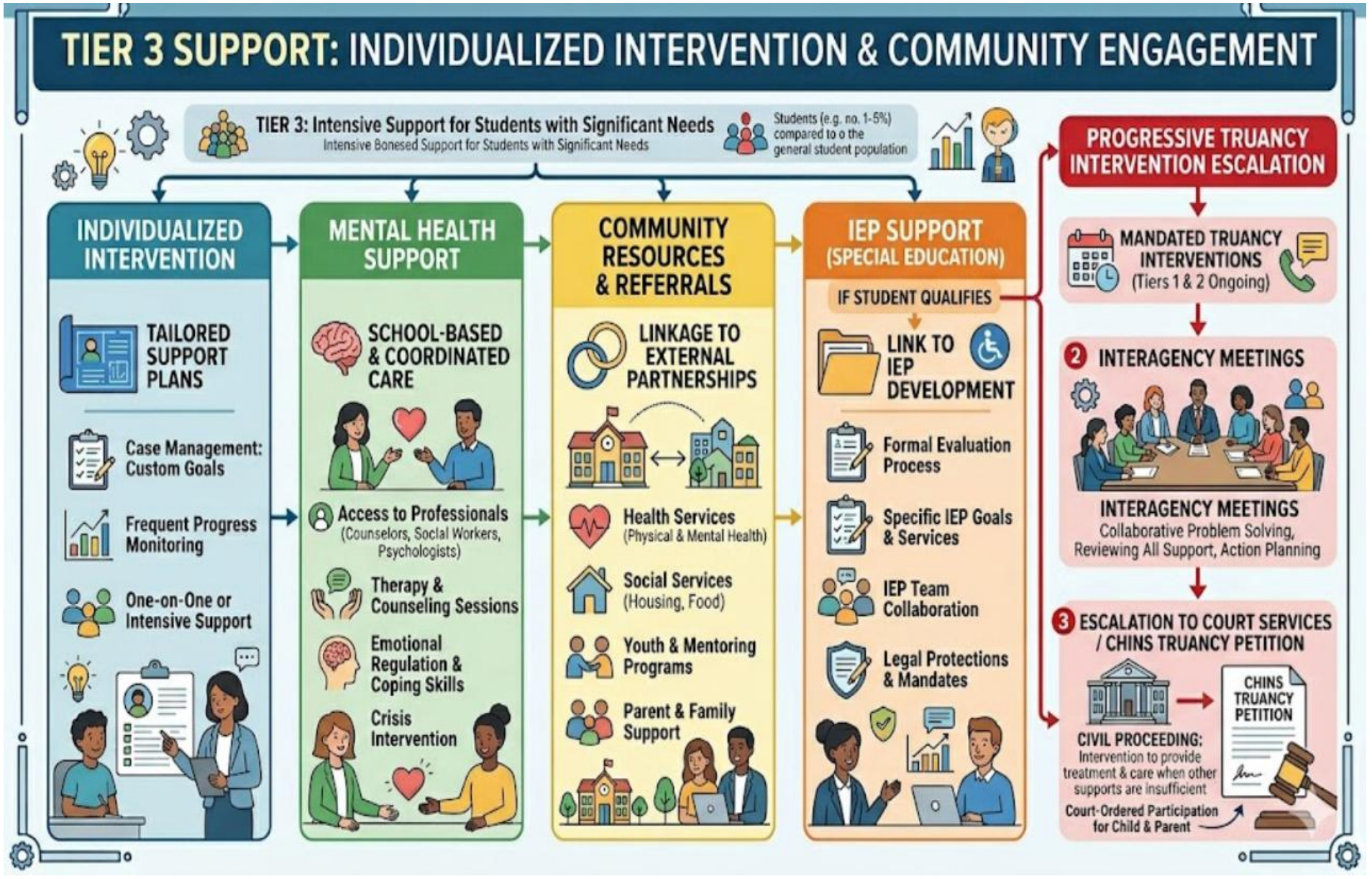
Responsive School Communities Monitor Outcomes





Responsive School Communities Monitor Outcomes



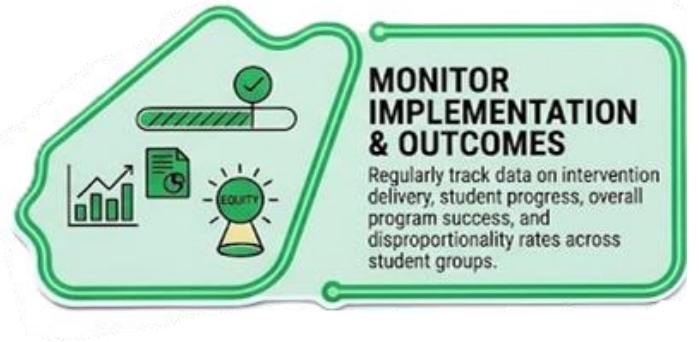


Responsive School Communities Monitor Outcomes

Supporting students experiencing homelessness directly embodies a **responsive school community practice** by actively identifying and removing structural barriers to learning, ensuring every child receives equitable access to education regardless of their living situation. By offering wraparound supports—such as free school meals, transportation, fee waivers for extended day programs, and essential academic materials—schools foster an inclusive, empathetic environment that adapts to the unique, holistic needs of vulnerable students.

		Year to Year Data	
	SY 24-25 (EOY data)	**SY 25-26 (EOY data)**	**SY 26-27 (Q1) (as of 10/9/26)**
Unhoused Students	258	318	152
Unaccompanied Youth	28	25	5

Current McKinney-Vento numbers show a decrease of 12% compared to SY 25-26, but a 31% increase compared to SY 24-25.





- **All McKinney-Vento Students are provided:**
- School meals (free breakfast and lunch)
- Extended day (fee waiver)
- School supplies & other materials as needed
- Tutoring support
- Specialized transportation provided to & from school of origin as needed

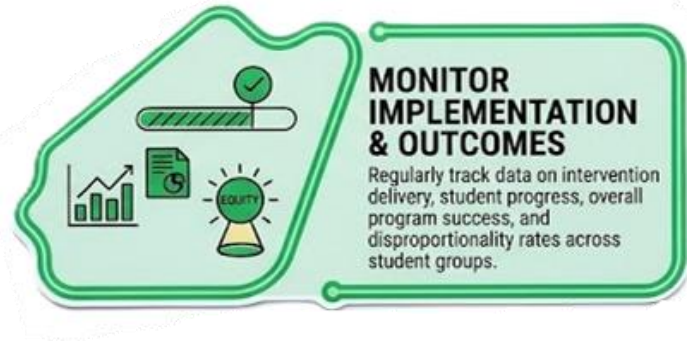
Responsive School Communities Monitor Outcomes

Managing student behavior and discipline through restorative, supportive, and proactive practices directly embodies a **responsive school community practice** by shifting away from punitive exclusion and toward understanding the root causes of behavioral challenges.

	Q1 Suspensions	
	SY 25-26	SY 26-27
Total # of Distinct Suspensions (distinct suspensions includes repeating offending students)	242	127
In-School Suspension (ISS)	106	56
Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)	136	71
Elementary	45	16
Middle	188	48
Secondary	206	56

Total # of School Consultations	
Elementary	**126**
Secondary	**143**

Total # of Professional Learning Sessions
11





Responsive School Communities Monitor Outcomes

New this year:

3 Lessons related to *APS Student Rights & Responsibilities* are available for teachers to use with their students in the first 30 days of school.

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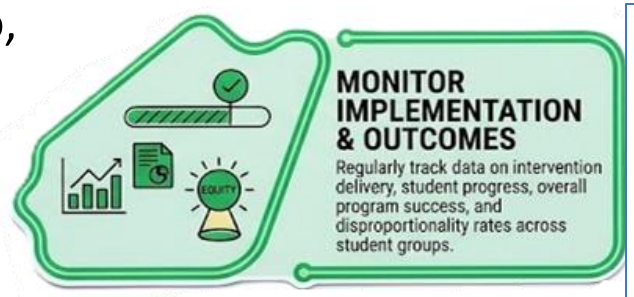
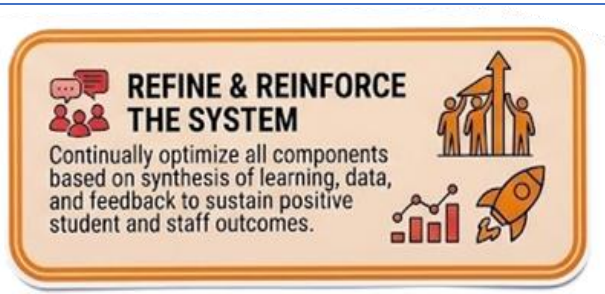
3 Lessons related to *APS Student Rights & Responsibilities* are available for teachers to use with their students in the first 30 days of school.

What are the goals/purpose of these lessons?

- **Establish Consistent Messaging & Understanding:** To ensure all APS students understand their rights and responsibilities related to student conduct, bullying/harassment, school safety, violence, and hate speech.
- **Empower Students to Respond & Report**: To equip students with practical strategies to recognize, respond to, and report unsafe behaviors.
- **Strengthen Culture of Safety, Respect, and Belonging**: To empower every student to help create a safe, inclusive, ar respectful school community.

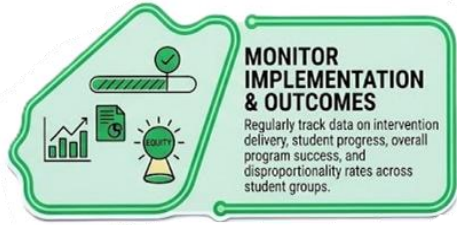
	Topics		
	APS Student Rights & Responsibilities	**School Safety, Violence, Bullying/Harassment**	**Hate Speech & Harmful Language**
Department & Point of Contact	School Climate & Culture (Ivan Lopez)	Student Services (Jen Gross)	Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (Cristin Schulman)
Grade K-2	Link Adapted Lesson for ELs 1-2	Link	Link
Grade 3-5	Link	Link	Link
Grade 6-8	Link Adapted Lesson for ELs 1-2	Link	Link
Grade 9-12	Link Adapted Lesson for ELs 1-2	Link Adapted Lesson for ELs 1-2	Link Adapted Lessons for ELs 1-2
SEL FOR ALL - Adapted Lessons for Students with Disabilities			





Responsive School Communities Monitor Outcomes

Mental Health & Psychological Services: Professional evaluation, individual/group interventions, and psychological assessment support. Community Partnerships (e.g., Department of Human Services, HAZEL Health).



School Counseling & Social Work: On-site school counselors and school social workers dedicated to supporting academic, personal, and social-emotional needs.



Social Emotional Learning (SEL) & Bullying Prevention: Structured programs and proactive guidance aimed at building emotional resilience, interpersonal skills, and maintaining safe school environments.

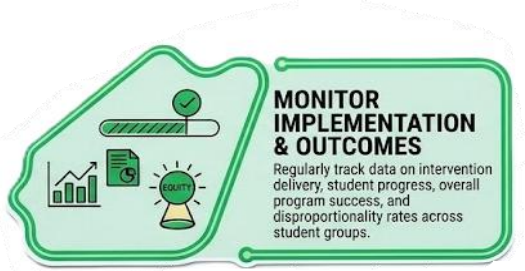
Substance Abuse Prevention: Prevention programs, education, and intervention resources tailored for students (e.g., RESET)

Safety & Prevention	**RESET (Reflect, Educate, Support, Engage, Thrive)**	**3** middle/high school sessions facilitated by Substance Abuse Counselors; **13** students and families served; **4** students completed Tier 2 RESET
	Save a Life Day (Sept. 24)	**168** boxes of Narcan distributed to families during high school drop-offs; **52** staff members received flash Narcan training
	Substance Use Prevention Education	**23** elementary prevention lessons delivered; **7** secondary prevention lessons delivered (**30 total lessons**)
	Red Ribbon Week	**100%** of APS schools participated in this national drug, alcohol, and tobacco prevention awareness campaign

Responsive School Communities Monitor Outcomes

Supporting **college and career readiness** directly embodies a **responsive school community practice** by recognizing that education must prepare every student for life beyond graduation through personalized, equitable pathways. A responsive community actively removes barriers to higher education and future employment by offering accessible dual enrollment courses, hosting comprehensive college/career fairs, providing financial aid guidance (such as FAFSA and webinar series), and utilizing digital planning tools like SchooLinks to meet students' diverse aspirations.

College & Career Readiness	**College Fair (Oct. 7)**	**550+** students and family members attended; **130** college and career representatives; **30** JROTC cadet volunteers
	Ready, Set, Go! Webinar Series	College Essays: **34** attendees; Paying for College/Understanding Financial Aid: **58** attendees; Direct Admissions (GMU): **74** attendees (**166 total webinar participants**)
	SchooLinks (as of Oct. 27)	**258** college representative visits; **2,860** student event registrations; **590** seniors submitted college applications; **215** students working on or completed FAFSA
	Dual Enrollment	**1,227** students enrolled in NOVA dual enrollment courses with 42 credentialed teachers

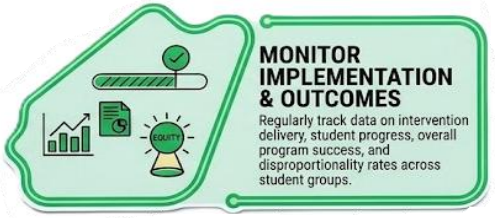




Responsive School Communities Monitor Outcomes



Student Well-Being





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	Red Ribbon Week	**100%** of APS schools participated in this national drug, alcohol, and tobacco prevention awareness campaign
Student Well-Being	**Bullying Prevention Month**	**100%** of APS schools facilitated bullying prevention lessons during Bullying Prevention month in October

Responsive School Communities Learn & Adapt

Division-wide professional learning should address:

- Culturally responsive leadership and practice
- Trauma-informed and student-centered approaches
- Restorative practices and conflict resolution
- Bias, disproportionality, and equitable discipline
- Student mental health and well-being
- Family and community engagement
- Listening, communication, and collaborative problem-solving





Professional learning should be reinforced through coaching, collaborative inquiry, and opportunities to examine real school-based situations

Responsive School Communities Learn & Adapt

Supporting **equity in schools, programs, and practices** directly embodies a **responsive school community practice** by intentionally identifying and dismantling systemic barriers to ensure every student—regardless of race, background, ability, or socioeconomic status—receives the tailored resources, access, and support needed to thrive. A responsive community actively adapts its policies, instruction, and culture to eliminate disparities, ensuring fair opportunities for all learners.





Gunston MS – In collaboration with Gunston's DEI Coordinator, the DEI Team presented to all students on responding to hate speech and using prosocial behaviors.



Student Advisory Board – 20 students representing APS high schools are meeting monthly at Grace Hopper Center and have started their committee work.



MSAN Students are continuing their project from last year (making postsecondary resources more accessible to all students) and attended the MSAN Student Conference in Cleveland, OH this month.

Thank you!

