A Program Evaluation of the North East High School Student Assistance Program

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

the School of Education in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

University of Pittsburgh

2019

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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It was defended on

April 4, 2019

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University of Pittsburgh, 2019

Students struggling with mental health issues have more discipline problems, higher rates of absenteeism, and are less likely to graduate high school (Nelson, Benner, Lane, & Smith, 2004). The Student Assistance Program (SAP) is the primary support service for students struggling with mental health issues at North East High School (NEHS). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the NEHS SAP, determine what impact the NEHS SAP has on reducing barriers to learning, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the NEHS SAP team. This was accomplished through document collection and surveys.

One hundred and thirty-eight students were studied in a three-year historical analysis of the NEHS SAP. Additional participants of the study included 13 members of the NEHS SAP team, 18 SAP student participants, and 14 SAP parent/guardian participants. The NEHS SAP team completed a 48-item survey, SAP student participants completed a 16-item survey, and SAP parent/guardian participants completed a 17-item survey. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and coded using the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Performance Improvement Plan (Fertman et al., 2000b). Qualitative data, though minimal, were used to analyze the results from the open-ended questions in the student survey and the parent/guardian survey.

The results of this study indicate that the NEHS SAP has a negligible impact on reducing barriers to learning. GPA and attendance declined and disciplined worsened in 51.3% of the students who participated in SAP. A reason for this may be that the monitoring, tracking, and assessing of student outcomes was identified as a weakness of the NEHS SAP. Training for the

SAP team and professional development for teachers about student mental health was identified as an area of weakness as well. In contrast, parent participation was identified as a strength of the NEHS SAP. This has important implications because strong parent participation can lead to improvements in other SAP components (Fertman et al., 2000b). Furthermore, 66% of students and 100% of parents/guardians said they would recommend SAP as a place to get help.

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Preface

May 21, 2016 was the first official class of this program. During the class, the instructors defined a problem of practice and explained how this concept was going to be the focus of our work at the University of Pittsburgh for the next three years. The instructors asked us to brainstorm potential problems of practice. A diverse group of school administrators unanimously identified student mental health as a significant problem in their place of practice. Many of my classmates chose a different path for their dissertation, but my decision has not waivered since May of 2016. In fact, my decision has not waivered since I became a school administrator in 2014. The number one most significant issue at North East High School is mental illness and its impact on students. Berger and Johnston (2016) state, "in the complex world, often the solutions are not in a straight line to the problem" (p. 46). The research that I have conducted in conjunction with the course work of this program has helped me understand the complexity of student mental health and the leadership required to take on this issue.

This program has helped me grow as an educator and a leader, but it has also been one of the most difficult journeys of my life. Balancing work, family, and the demands of this program was challenging. Fortunately, I had a lot of help. I would first like to thank my dissertation committee. Dr. McClard's perspective as the Superintendent of the North East School District was invaluable to my study. However, it was his constant words of encouragement throughout this process that was most valuable. This study would not have been possible without Dr. Fertman. His work regarding student mental health and SAP was the basis of this study. Dr. Fertman's insight, suggestions, and guidance was instrumental to my study. Dr. Longo, my dissertation advisor, challenged me to be a better writer, a better researcher, and a better leader. His guidance

throughout this program forced me to “get on the balcony” and reevaluate my role as an educational leader. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with such an outstanding and dedicated professional. Dr. Longo has been one of the most influential persons in my professional life, and I cannot thank him enough.

I would also like to thank the North East High School SAP Team. Their feedback and suggestions throughout this study help me refine my research questions and data collection instruments. I would also like to extend a special thank you to Heidi Martin, North East High School’s Mental Health Counselor. Her knowledge and understanding of SAP was a tremendous help during the development of this study. A special thank you is also needed for Sarah Dugan. Sarah, thank you for your thorough edits. This dissertation would not have been possible without you. I would also like to thank my fellow classmates Matt Lane and Steve Karns. We started this journey together three years ago, and I know I could not have finished without the two of you. We laughed, we moaned, and we celebrated together! Thank you for everything.

The biggest thank you is reserved for my family. To Addison and Isabelle. You were there every Saturday and Sunday morning playing house as I worked. Your smiles, laughter, and hugs gave me the strength and determination to keep going. Finally, I would like to thank my wife. Jill, you taught me the value of education, the importance of hard work, and you demonstrated the passion it takes to be a great educator. You edited every paper, you reedited it 100 more times, and your feedback made me look like I knew what I was talking about. Without your love and support I would not be the person that I am today. You are the most important person in my life, and I could not have accomplished this without you. This is yours too!

1.0 Introduction

The National Alliance of Mental Illness or NAMI (2017) states, "mental illness is a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling or mood" (Mental Health Conditions section, para. 1). There are over 200 forms of mental illness that affect nearly 54 million Americans (Mental Health America, 2017). Schools can play an important role in addressing society's mental health needs because they are often the first and largest source of mental health services for children and adolescents (Rossen & Cowan, 2014). NAMI (2017) states, "half of mental health conditions begin by age 14 . . . Early engagement and support are crucial to improving outcomes and increase the promise of recovery" (Recovery and Wellness section, para. 2).

Anderson and Cardoza (2016) state that the mental health crisis in schools has reached an epidemic level. One in five students will experience a significant mental health incident at some point during their educational career (Rossen & Cowan, 2014). However, many schools lack the knowledge and resources to provide effective mental health supports (Phillippo & Kelly, 2013). Therefore, many students with mental health issues will not receive the help they need. For example, students with mental health issues have more discipline problems, higher rates of absenteeism, and are less likely to graduate high school (Nelson et al., 2004). In fact, studies have shown that over one-half of the students who do not finish high school have a diagnosable mental health disorder (Daly et al., 2006).

Many schools use Student Assistance Programs (SAP) to provide support for students struggling with mental health issues. In fact, Fertman, Tarasevich, and Hepler (2003) state, "SAP

is a primary vehicle for schools in Pennsylvania and across the nation to address students' behavioral health needs and concerns" (p. 19). SAP is the principal focus of this study.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

North East High School (NEHS) is a small rural high school with an enrollment of approximately 500 students. NEHS is consistently ranked in the top tier of Erie County high schools, and was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a National Blue Ribbon school in 2015. However, over the last 25 years, the North East School District (NESD) has experienced significant change. For example, the number of students identified as economically disadvantaged has increased by 250%. Today, over 50% of the student population is identified as economically disadvantaged.

Berliner (2013) states that mental health issues are found at much higher rates in lower income communities. A data analysis of the NESD found a strong correlation between this research and the student population of the NESD. For example, the number of students referred to SAP for mental health issues increased by 63% at NEHS since 2012. Additionally, the number of students placed in a partial hospitalization program for mental health issues increased by 500% in the NESD since 2012.

SAP is the primary support service for students struggling with mental health issues at NEHS. The mission statement of the Student Assistance Program (2017a) states, "Barriers to learning will be removed and student academic achievement will be enhanced through collaborative prevention, intervention, and post-intervention services" (Mission Statement section, para. 1). However, I have identified significant gaps between this mission and student outcomes

at NEHS. For example, during the 2016-2017 school year, academic achievement and attendance declined in over 30% of the students enrolled in the NEHS SAP. In comparison, the state average showed a 7% decline in academic achievement, and a 13% decline in attendance for students enrolled in SAP (Pennsylvanian Department of Education, 2016).

1.2 Purpose of this Study

Research indicates SAP can be effective at increasing student outcomes. For example, Fertman et al. (2003) states, "Referred students show positive improvements in attendance, a decrease in discipline problems . . . and positive promotion and graduation status after their SAP referral" (p. 20). However, positive improvements are not seen in a significant number of students referred to the NEHS SAP. This study evaluated the NEHS SAP, determined what impact the NEHS SAP has on reducing barriers to learning, and identified the strengths and weaknesses of the NEHS SAP team.

The findings from this study will be used to improve team functioning of the NEHS SAP team. Improved team functioning is linked to higher student achievement (Gaumer Erickson et al., 2014). Findings from this study will be shared with SAP teams throughout the NESD. This may increase communication and collaboration among district SAP teams, and may result in an SAP K-12 Bridge (Student Assistance Program, 2018a). Finally, findings from this study will be used to develop professional learning opportunities for teachers, parents, and community members to identify and provide supports for students struggling with mental health issues.

1.3 Research Questions Explored

Currently, student mental health is a popular topic in basic and higher education. However, few studies have analyzed the impact of mental health services on academic achievement. Hansen, Litzelman, Marsh, and Milspaw found:

> Despite the growing body of knowledge on demonstrably effective services, little is known about the delivery of these interventions in settings where most children are able to receive services—school settings—nor about the impact that these services may have on children's academic functioning. (as cited in Hoagwood et al., 2007, p. 67)

In addition to this, a review of literature found only a handful of studies that have analyzed the effectiveness of SAP. As a result, this study was guided by three research questions.

Table 1. Areas for Future Research and Research Questions

Areas for Future Research	Researcher(s) Who Suggested	Research Questions
What factors influence educational gains and the mental health of students in schools, and are these factors consistent to the goals of SAP?	Hoagwood et al., 2007; Fertman et al., 2000a; Fertman et al., 2003; Suldo, Gormley, DuPaul, & Anderson-Butcher, 2013	RQ 1: What impact does the NEHS SAP have on reducing barriers to learning?
How do you improve SAP implementation by focusing on SAP activities, functions, and team effectiveness?	Torres-Rodriguez, Beyard, & Goldstein, 2010; Fertman et al., 2000a; Fertman et al., 2003	RQ 2: Identify the strengths and weakness of the NEHS SAP that influence benchmarks of effectiveness.
Does SAP address the needs of students, and what strategies can SAPs incorporate to promote parental involvement?	Fertman et al., 2000a; Fertman et al., 2000b; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2013; Student Assistance Program, 2018b; Brown, Ford, Deighton, & Wolpert, 2012; Guindon, 2013; Simmons et al., 2013	RQ 3: Determine student and parent satisfaction of the NEHS SAP that influence benchmarks of effectiveness.

The three research questions identified in Table 1 guided this quantitative study of the NEHS SAP.

2.0 Review of Literature

National Public Radio (NPR) describes student mental health as a crisis in American schools (Anderson & Cardoza, 2016). Research indicates that 25% of students struggle with mental health issues, but 80% of the affected students will not receive the support they need (Anderson & Cardoza, 2016). This can result in developmental cascades that have effects far beyond the classroom (Suldo et al., 2013). Developmental cascades often begin with externalizing symptoms such as behavior issues, but can metastasize into internalizing symptoms such as depression and anxiety later in life (Suldo et. al., 2013). For example, behavioral issues in elementary school can result in academic difficulties in high school, which can predict higher rates of anxiety and depression in early adulthood (Suldo et. al., 2013). Developmental cascades can have a devastating effect on society. For example, the World Federation for Mental Health (2012) stated, "depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide in terms of total years lost due to disability" (p. 6). In the United States, studies have shown that mental health issues can cost society over 200 billion dollars a year in treatment and lost production (Greenberg, 2018). Without the proper intervention of supports from schools, these individuals will enter into society not knowing how to cope with these mental health issues.

Schools can play a major role in addressing this issue because they are often the first and largest source of mental health services for children and adolescents (Rossen & Cowan, 2014). A majority of schools use SAP to address the mental health needs of their students (Fertman et al., 2003). The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) mandates that all elementary and secondary schools implement SAP, using a core team of trained staff members (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1991). This core team is to identify at-risk students and develop

intervention strategies in collaboration with local mental health and drug/alcohol agencies to reduce barriers to student learning (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1991). However, there is a significant gap in research regarding mental health interventions such as SAP, and the impact these interventions have on student achievement. In fact, in the *Journal for Emotional and Behavioral Disorders,* Hoagwood et al. (2007) states, "the impact of school based mental health interventions on both mental health and educationally relevant behaviors is poorly understood" (p. 66).

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a better understanding of school based mental services. This literature review will focus on SAP and address the following questions:

- What is the theoretical framework in which SAP was developed?
- Is SAP effective at reducing barriers to learning?
- What components have proven to be successful for an effective SAP?
- In addition to SAP, what other school based mental health interventions do schools use to reduce barriers to learning?

2.1 Student Mental Health Policy

Schools have been slow to implement effective mental health programming. For example, in the early 20th century, educators labeled students with mental health issues as backward children. This resulted in schools refusing to educate these students, or segregating them from the rest of the student population (Spring, 2011). Labaree (1997) argues that the primary goals of American education have focused on democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility. Adelman and Taylor (2000) exemplify this point by stating, "Schools are not in the health or social service

business. Their mandate is to education" (p. 171). In short, many educators believe schools are not the appropriate setting for mental health interventions because it will reduce academic time (Adelman & Taylor, 2000).

Although education will continue to be the focal point of American schools, the role of the school is changing. For example, Rossen and Cowan (2014) argue for a multiteired system of mental health services in schools. They state, "Addressing student mental health is a prerequisite to learning and achievement, not an add-on or extracurricular luxury" (Rossen & Cowan, 2014, p. 8). Stephan, Weist, Kataoka, Adelsheim, and Mills (2007) state, "Schools need to promote the fact that grades, discipline referrals, student promotions, dropouts, and school connectedness are influenced by mental health promotion and intervention" (as cited by Macklem, 2011, p. 219). Research is helping schools realize the importance of mental health services, but gaps still exist.

To close these gaps, schools use outside agencies to address student mental health needs (Vaillancourt & Amador, 2014). However, challenges such as trust and confidentiality prevent schools and outside agencies from collaborating effectively. Vaillancourt and Amador (2014) state, "Tensions are most often caused by a lack of understanding of each other's qualifications, terminology, service delivery models, and perspectives" (p. 61). Confidentiality also increases tension between schools and outside agencies. As a result, schools and outside agencies operate in isolation reducing the effectiveness of mental health programing (Adelman & Taylor, 2000).

Adelman and Taylor (2000) developed a framework to address these policy deficiencies, and promote effective mental health programming in schools. The three components that make up this framework include a development and learning component, a management component, and an enabling component focused on addressing barriers to development and learning. This framework can increase the organizational capacity of a school. Adelman and Taylor (2000) state,

"The aim is to weave all these resources together into the fabric of every school, and evolve a comprehensive, integrated approach that effectively address barriers to development, learning, and teaching" (p. 178). The work of Adelman and Taylor provides the basis for the research of Pennsylvania's SAP.

2.2 The Theoretical Framework of SAP

In the 1980s, states developed SAPs due to an increase in substance abuse issues among teens and a rise in teen suicides. According to Torres-Rodriguez et al. (2010), the conceptual framework for SAP is based on the Ecological Model (see Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In particular, Torres-Rodriguez et al. (2010) states that this, "theoretical approach maintains that it is the dynamic interplay between individuals and their environment that determines individual development" (p. 95). Bronfenbrenner (1979) argues that four environmental levels impact human development (see Table 2).

Table 2. Bronfenbrenner's Four Environmental Levels

Level	Description	Example(s)
1	Immediate environment where the child/adolescent closely interacts	Classroom
2	Connections among contexts	Relationship between family experiences and school experiences
3	Links between the person's immediate context and a social setting where the person does not have an active role	A person's experience at home influenced by his/her spouse's/partner's experiences at work
4	Larger cultural context surrounding the person	Societal belief systems, cultural norms, ideologies, policies, laws that indirectly influence the person

Note. Contents of table cited in Onwuegbuzie, Collins, & Frels, 2013, pp. 2–3.

The ecological model also encourages the use of multidisciplinary teams (Torres-Rodriguez et al., 2010). In other words, SAP teams need diverse members willing to analyze a student's entire social context before recommending an intervention. SAP is also based on the philosophy that early intervention and support are necessary to help students overcome academic and behavioral problems (Scott, Surface, Friedli, & Barlow, 1999).

2.3 The Pennsylvania SAP

Most states have a version of SAP, but the major focus of this literature review is the Pennsylvania SAP. In 1990, The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) adopted SAP to fulfill the legislative mandate of Act 211. This act requires all schools to develop a SAP that can identify at risk students, and develop intervention strategies in collaboration with local mental

health and drug/alcohol agencies (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1991). PDE mandates that all elementary and secondary schools implement SAP through a core team of trained staff members (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1991).

To satisfy the PDE mandate, the NESD adopted Policy 5163: Student Assistance. This policy authorizes the establishment of SAP based on the PDE model (North East School District, 1990). As a result, SAP has become the primary support service for students struggling with mental health issues in the NESD. Through SAP, students have access to services such as a mental health counselor, outpatient therapy, and partial hospitalization programs.

In 2005, the Common Wealth of Pennsylvania formally adopted the Student Assistance Program or Pa. Code § 12.42. The mission statement of the Student Assistance Program (2017a) states, "Barriers to learning will be removed and student academic achievement will be enhanced through collaborative prevention, intervention, and post-intervention services" (Mission Statement section, para. 1). However, the Commonwealth Student Assistance Program Interagency Committee (2015) states:

> The team's effectiveness in helping the student and the parent remove the barriers to learning and improve student performance depends on the training of the individual team members, maintenance of the student assistance process, level of administrative commitment and board support, active parent and student involvement and the available resources both in school and the community. (p. 2)

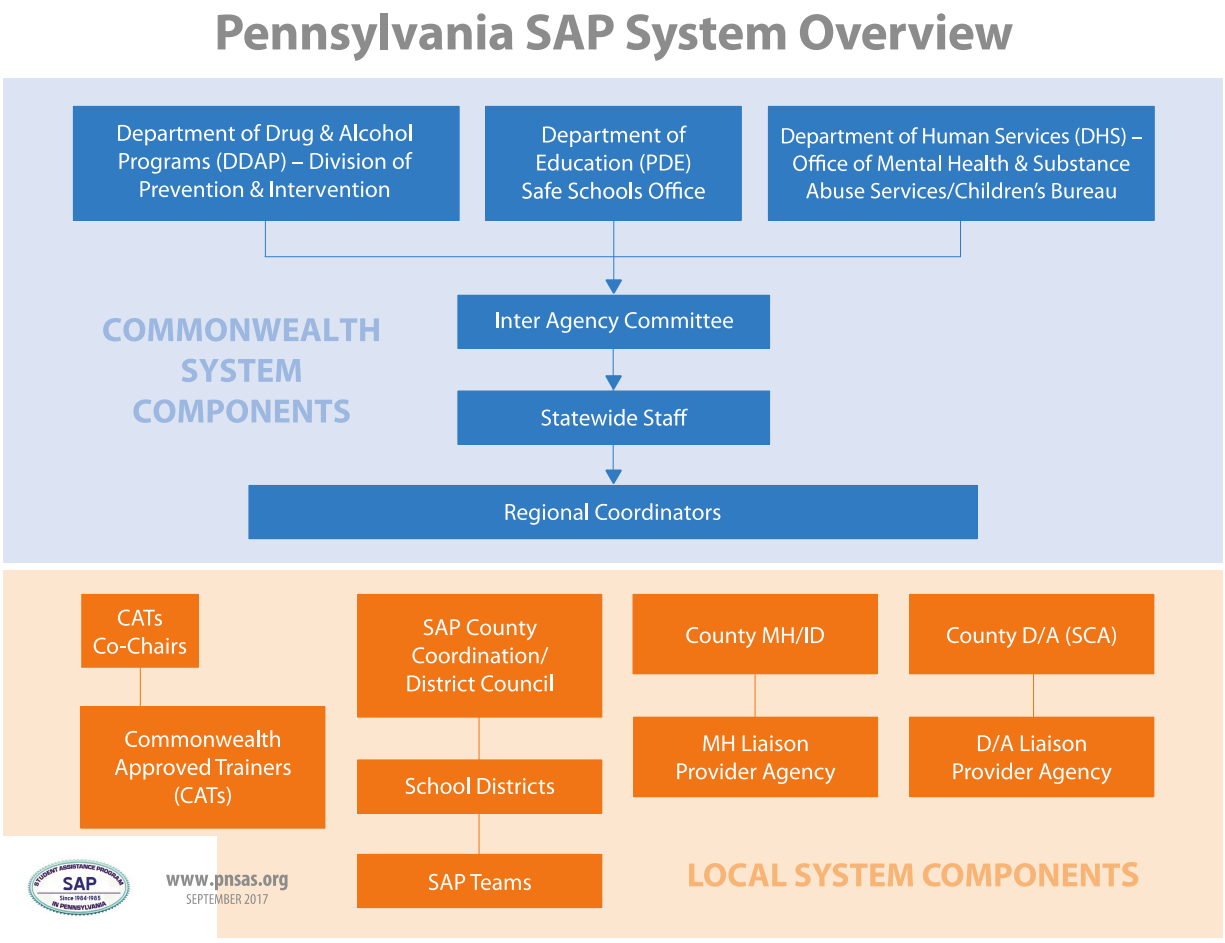

Figure 1. Pennsylvania SAP System Overview

2.4 Research of the PA SAP and Effective SAP Components

The most extensive research of the Pennsylvania SAP was conducted by Carl Fertman (Fertman et al., 2000a; Fertman et al., 2000b; Fertman et al., 2003). In 1998, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency funded a study to determine the effectiveness of SAP in

Pennsylvania (Fertman et al., 2000a). The study was based on nine essential components for an effective SAP. The nine components identified by Fertman et al. (2000a) are

- policy and procedures;
- communications;
- referral mechanisms;
- parent participation;
- team planning;
- intervention and recommendations;
- follow-up and support;
- training; and
- outcome indicators and evaluation.

Fertman et al. (2000a) also identified indicators of effectiveness for each component. Results of the study indicate two components, parent participation and follow-up and support, can have a positive impact on SAP effectiveness (Fertman et al., 2000a). This study also produced the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Components and Indicators Handbook. This handbook provides SAP teams a 360-degree feedback process (Fertman et al., 2000a). This process helps SAP teams develop benchmarks of effectiveness based on feedback from multiple stakeholders (Fertman et al., 2000a). Fertman et al. (2000b) believes this will result in the continuous improvement of the SAP team.

The importance of parent participation and team functioning found by Fertman et al. (2000a) has been reinforced in additional studies. Wang and Sheikh-Khalil (2013) found improvements in academic achievement and student mental health when students engaged in academic socialization with parents at home. Torres-Rodriguez et al. (2010) identified several

components critical for effective SAP teams including the use of multidisciplinary teams, the understanding of team member responsibilities, and effective team meetings. Torres-Rodriguez et al. (2010) state these components can, "lead to improved SAP implementation" (p. 101).

Building on Fertman et al.'s (2000a) study, Fertman et al. (2003) conducted a three-year retrospective analysis of the Pennsylvania SAP. The first part of the study focused on student linkages to mental health services in schools and in the community. The second part of the study analyzed student outcomes such as attendance, suspensions, and grade promotion post SAP referral. Fertman et al. (2003) found that schools in Pennsylvania and across the nation use SAP as the primary support service for students struggling with mental health issues. The study found that nearly all students referred to SAP were linked to a school based program (Fertman et al., 2003). The study also found nearly half of all referred students were linked to a community based program as well (Fertman et al., 2003). After referral to SAP, Fertman et al. (2003) found that student outcomes improved. For example, homebound instruction was reduced by 50%, suspensions were reduced by 60%, and over 60% of students were promoted to the next grade level or graduated (Fertman et al., 2003).

However, several limitations were found in both of Fertman's studies. For example, when data from Fertman et al.'s (2000a) study were linked to the PDE State Performance Report on the Student Assistance Program, no significant correlation was found between the components and student outcomes. Fertman et al. (2000a) states, "With stronger, more valid outcome measures, it is possible that future analyses may discover potential predictive relationships between the proposed SAP components and indicators and student outcomes" (p. 35). In addition, Fertman et al. (2003) states, "the data consist of post-SAP measures and do not allow an adequate comparison

of the change in student performance that may be attributed to involvement in SAP" (p. 19). In other words, Fertman et al. (2003) is not sure if SAP caused the changes in student performance.

To address these issues, Fertman et al. (2003) suggests, "thought needs to be given to a set of performance measures consistent with the Student Assistance Program objectives to be collected and analyzed across settings, location, and model" (p. 23). Although not specific to SAP, Suldo et al. (2013) addresses part of this question in a review of literature about school based mental health supports. Suldo et al. (2013) advanced a framework for how schools should define success for students struggling with mental health issues. Suldo et al. (2013) argue that academic success should be measured in a variety of ways including attitudes, behaviors, and skills. They explain this by defining proximal and distal levels of student performance (Suldo et al., 2013). Suldo et al. (2013) state:

> Proximal measures reflect performance of specific skills and classroom behaviors typically over a short time period . . . or student attitudes that reflect perceptions of one's current abilities, motivation, or attachment at school. Alternatively, distal indicators measure global performance over longer periods of time, as reflected in end-of-course grades, skills demonstrated on state-wide accountability tests, or school records of accumulated attendance or office discipline referrals. (p. 86)

However, Suldo et al. (2013) state more research is needed to study the effects of different mental health interventions, and the impact they have on academic outcomes.

2.5 Additional Studies of SAP

Only three additional studies of SAP could be found that were relevant to the problem of practice (Scott et al., 1999; Torres-Rodriguez et al., 2010; Wilburn, Wilburn, Weaver, & Bowles, 2007). Two of these studies, Scott et al. (1999) and Wilburn et al. (2007), evaluated the impact that SAP had on student achievement. In both studies, researchers found a decrease in drug and alcohol use after a student was referred to SAP; however, only minimal impact was found regarding academic achievement (Scott et al., 1999; Wilburn et al., 2007). Both studies acknowledge their limitations. For example, Scott et al. (1999) states, "causality cannot be concluded based on this type of study" (p. 171). In other words, factors such as socioeconomic background and peer influence were not taken into account. The results of these studies indicate a correlation not causation.

As discussed earlier in this review, research conducted by Torres-Rodriguez et al. (2010) focused on the group dynamics of SAP teams, and how effective they are at addressing the needs of students. Torres-Rodriguez et al. (2010) used semi-structured interviews as the data collection instrument rather than surveys that were used in the two previous studies. As result, a more comprehensive understanding of the structural and operation elements of an effective SAP team were identified. Those elements include the need for multidisciplinary teams, understanding the role of each team member, and conducting effective and efficient team meetings (Torres-Rodriguez et al., 2010). Although not specific to SAP, Gaumer Erickson et al. (2014) also found team meetings that are focused and well-structured result in higher functioning school teams. Gaumer Erickson et al. (2014) states, "interdisciplinary teams are a key component of education improvement initiatives, which entail diverse professionals working together in a team setting" (p. 9). This research suggests that a high functioning team is essential for an effective SAP.

Torres-Rodriguez et al. (2010) found that teachers play an important role in the SAP process: "a clear message from the voices in this study that efforts to address the needs of students in our school often begin with, and depend on, their teachers, whose empowerment should be a goal of any SAP process" (p. 102). A number of additional studies have suggested that teachers play an important role in student mental health as well. For example, research conducted by Collins, Woolfson, and Durkin (2013) looked at a universal school based mental health intervention, and evaluated its ability to reduce student anxiety and improve coping skills. Results of the study indicate that teacher-led intervention groups are just as effective at reducing anxiety as psychologist-led intervention groups (Collins et al., 2013). A review of literature by Mychailyszyn, Brodman, Read, and Kendall (2012) also found that educators can be effective at implementing anxiety and depression interventions, and suggested that schools integrate mental health education into their curriculums. These findings have important implications for a teacher's role in student mental health. However, teachers need the knowledge and skills to provide effective support to students with mental health issues. The SAP team can be a resource to accomplish this goal (Torres-Rodriguez et al., 2010).

2.6 Additional School Based Mental Health Interventions

According to Fertman et al. (2003) a majority of students access mental health service through SAP. However, additional interventions are used by schools as well. In a review of literature about school mental health and its impact on academic outcomes, Suldo et al. (2013) found that most research on this topic can be split into three categories.

The first category described by Suldo et al. (2013) is research focused on the impact of school based mental health services on individual students. A majority of these studies were controlled efficacy trials, and focused on at risk students with behavioral problems (Suldo et al., 2013). For example, Carpenter-Aeby and Aeby (2005) found that psychosocial functioning improved for chronically disruptive students in an alternative school. These students participated in a variety of school based mental health interventions based on a psychosocial assessment. Carpenter-Aeby and Aeby (2005) also found educational outcomes improved for students at the alternative school, but this improvement could not be maintained when students returned to a traditional school. Carpenter-Aeby and Aeby (2005) state academic improvement could not be maintained because these students were so far behind academically. However, losing access to the robust mental health services available at the alternative school could also be a major factor.

The second category described by Suldo et al. (2013) is research focused on school-wide or universal mental health programs. This research tends to study prevention programs used in schools with large at risk student populations (Suldo et al., 2013). For example, Phillippo and Kelly (2013) studied how teachers respond to providing mental health care to students, the working relationship between teachers and School Based Mental Health Professionals (SBMHPs), and how school environments impacted the work of both groups. Results of the study indicate that very few teachers know how to address students with mental health issues. Phillippo and Kelly (2013) state, "Without clear guidelines for teachers and SBMHPs . . . both groups of professionals operated largely on their own with little collaboration at potentially crucial moments in their students' lives" (p. 196). However, teachers can effectively support students with mental health issues if given adequate training (Mychailyszyn et al., 2012; Torres-Rodriguez et al., 2010).

The third category described by Suldo et al. (2013) is current research focused on "evidence-based interventions by school personnel under less controlled, 'real-world' conditions" (p. 85). Doll, Spies, and Champion (2012) developed a framework for school mental health services based on the ecological model. Traditional mental health services focus on individuals or small groups. However, this framework provides support across the school environment (Doll et al., 2012). For example, educators are encouraged to use data to measure classroom characteristics such as social behavior and classroom routines (Doll et al., 2012). These data are then used to develop school-wide mental health programs. Studies have shown this framework can lead to improvements in student engagement and increase academic achievement (Suldo et al., 2013).

An additional intervention worth mentioning is cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). Kendall states, "CBT is a collaborative, problem-focused approach that seeks to address the underlying and maintaining factors of a child's distress" (as cited by Mychailyszyn et al., 2012, p. 130). CBT is traditionally used in a clinical setting to treat anxiety and depression. However, research indicates that CBT is effective in a school setting as well (Mychailyszyn et al., 2012; Shirk, Kaplinski, & Gudmundsen, 2008). For example, Collins et al. (2013) found that a universal program that used CBT was effective at reducing student anxiety and improving coping skills. Macklem (2011) summarizes several studies on CBT by stating, "The evidence is strong enough to say that cognitive-behavioral interventions are indeed what we should be using in schools" (p. 142). It should also be noted that several studies have found little difference between the teacher-led and the psychologist-led intervention groups when implementing CBT (Collins et al., 2013; Mychailyszyn et al., 2012).

2.7 Concerns Found in the Literature

Nearly every school in the nation provides mental health services, but the impact that these services have on academic achievement is largely unknown. Hoagwood et al. (2007) made this point very clear in a review of literature that examined school-based interventions targeting both mental health and academic outcomes. Results of the initial search found over 2,000 articles, however only 24 studies evaluated both mental health and academic outcomes. Furthermore, only fifteen studies found a significant effect on both mental health and academic outcomes, and only one of these studies was found at the high school level (Hoagwood et al., 2007). Several studies citied in this review of literature indicated an increase in academic achievement after a mental health intervention, but the increase in achievement was minimal (Fertman et al., 2003; Scott et al., 1999; Wilburn et al., 2007). The following paragraphs discuss possible reasons for the minimal increase in achievement. However, the methodology and measurements used in many of these studies are also factors. Hoagwood et al. (2007) states

> From a measurement standpoint, the evidence showing modest impact of mental health interventions on academic success suggests a need to more carefully consider the adequacy of academic outcomes that have thus far been the focus of school-based mental health interventions. Efforts to more fully delineate educationally relevant outcomes and to clarify the construct of academic success would aid future research efforts. (p. 89)

The literature also indicates that early intervention is critical to reduce barriers to learning for students with mental health issues. For example, Suldo et al. (2013) found that students who experience significant behavior problems in elementary school are more likely to experience difficulty in other areas such as academic achievement. This can result in developmental cascades, and predict difficulties in high school and even into adulthood (Suldo et al., 2013). Nelson et al.

(2004) believe that early academic intervention is imperative to prevent learning problems in students with emotional and behavioral problems. Bruhn, Woods-Groves, and Huddle (2014) suggest that universal screening tools can be used to identify students with behavioral problems early, and connect these students to the support services they need.

Additional factors impact this study as well. In his book, *Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman (2006) states that the first few years of a person's life are critical to brain development, and severe stress can limit this development. This can result in academic and behavior issues later in life. In his book, *Our Kids*, Putnam (2016) discusses the toxic effect that poverty can have on a child's development. Putnam (2016) states, "The roots of many cognitive and behavioral differences that appear in middle childhood and adolescence are often already present by 18 months, and their origins, we now know, lie even earlier in the child's life" (pp. 109-110). These factors, along with the numerous studies that stress the importance of early intervention, are of great concern to this study, which is focused on high school students.

2.8 Summary

This review of literature was guided by four questions. The first question was, what is the theoretical framework in which SAP was developed? The framework of SAP is based on the ecological model. The ecological model states an individual's interactions with their environment are critical for development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The framework of SAP is also based on the concept of multidisciplinary teams, and that early intervention is critical to reduce barriers to learning (Torres-Rodriguez et al., 2010; Scott et al., 1999). In addition, Adelman and Taylor (2000) developed a framework for schools to implement effective mental health programs. This

framework advocates schools to interweave resources to reduce barriers to learning (Adelman & Taylor, 2000).

The second question in this review of literature was, is SAP effective at reducing barriers to learning? Fertman et al., (2003) states SAP is the largest support service for students struggling with mental health issues, and SAP can be effective at reducing barriers to learning. For example, research indicates student outcomes such as attendance, discipline, and academic achievement improve after a SAP referral (Fertman et al., 2003). However, this review of literature also found that the impact of school based mental health supports on academic achievement was limited (Hoagwood et al., 2007; Fertman et al., 2003; Scott et al., 1999; Wilburn et al., 2007). Additional research is needed to address this issue.

The third question guiding this review of literature was, what components have proven to be successful for an effective SAP? The Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Components and Indicators Handbook provides the framework to develop an effective SAP, and also supports the continuous improvement of SAP (Fertman et al., 2000a; Fertman et al., 2000b; Fertman et al., 2003). Research shows that parent participation and follow-up and support are two components that can have a positive impact on SAP (Fertman et al., 2000b). Numerous studies also indicate that teachers play a vital role in student mental health (Collins et al., 2013; Mychailyszyn et al., 2012; Torres-Rodriguez et al., 2010). However, teachers must have the knowledge and skills to intervene and provide effective support for students struggling with mental health issues. The SAP team can be a resource to accomplish this goal (Torres-Rodriguez et al., 2010).

The fourth question guiding this review of literature was, in addition to SAP, what other school based mental health interventions do schools use to reduce barriers to learning? Research indicates that effective interventions utilize early intervention tools, school wide mental health

programming, and CBT (Collins et al., 2013; Mychailyszyn et al., 2012; Suldo et al., 2013). Research indicates that teachers can be just as effective implementing mental health supports as mental health professionals (Collins et al., 2013; Mychailyszyn et al., 2012).

Based on these findings, this study addressed the following questions:

- What impact does the NEHS SAP have on reducing barriers to learning?
- Identify the strengths and weakness of the NEHS SAP that influence benchmarks of effectiveness.
- Determine student and parent satisfaction of the NEHS SAP that influence benchmarks of effectiveness.

3.0 Methodology

Fertman et al. (2003) states that SAP is the most common school based support service to address the mental health needs of students. This research indicates that SAP effectiveness can have a profound impact on student outcomes. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the NEHS SAP, determine what impact the NEHS SAP has on reducing barriers to learning, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the NEHS SAP team. The aim of the study was to improve team functioning of the NEHS SAP team. Research indicates that higher functioning teams can have a positive impact on student achievement (Gaumer Erickson et al., 2014).

3.1 Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study:

Questions 1: What impact does the NEHS SAP have on reducing barriers to learning?

Question 2: Identify the strengths and weakness of the NEHS SAP that influence benchmarks of effectiveness.

Question 3: Determine student and parent satisfaction of the NEHS SAP that influence benchmarks of effectiveness.

3.2 Research Design

This study was a formative evaluation of the NEHS SAP. Mertens (2015) states, "Formative evaluations are conducted for the purpose of program improvement . . . and are reported to in-house staff that can use the information to improve the program" (p. 51). This evaluation used the transformative participatory evaluation model (Mertens, 2015). This model encourages collaboration among multiple stakeholders throughout the evaluation process (Mertens, 2015). For example, the research questions for this study were discussed, analyzed, and revised with the NEHS SAP team. Next, all data collection instruments were shared with the NEHS SAP team. The NEHS SAP team helped define the purpose of these instruments, and determined if additional instruments were needed to address the research questions for this study (Mertens, 2015). Finally, the NEHS SAP team participated in the data analysis and reporting for this study (Mertens, 2015).

This evaluation was a quantitative study, and surveys were the primary data collection instruments. The surveys used a cross-sectional design, which allowed multiple groups to be analyzed at the same point in time (Mertens, 2015). The surveys were used to address two research questions: (a) identify the strengths and weakness of the NEHS SAP that influence benchmarks of effectiveness, and (b) determine student and parent satisfaction of the NEHS SAP that influence benchmarks of effectiveness. Document review was used to collect quantitative data as well. These documents were used to address one research question, what impact does the NEHS SAP have on reducing barriers to learning?

3.2.1 Participants

The aim of this study was not to generalize its findings, but rather identify components specific to the NEHS SAP that influence benchmarks of effectiveness. Therefore, purposive sampling was used for this study. This sampling strategy combined with the cross-sectional survey design provided a 360-degree evaluation of the NEHS SAP (Fertman et al., 2000b).

Participants of the study included members of the NEHS SAP team, SAP student participants, and SAP parent/guardian participants. These participants were identified by the Student Assistance Program (2018b) as, "helpful to validate the standards and services you have established for the program, as well as identify areas for enhancement . . . This is a useful mechanism to ensure quality programming" (Team Self Check/Monitoring section, para. 1).

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) mandates that all elementary and secondary schools implement SAP through a core team of trained staff members (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1991). The NEHS SAP team consists of three school counselors, a mental health counselor, a drug and alcohol counselor, a school nurse, two regular education teachers, three special education teachers, the assistant principal, and the director of special education. Every member of the 2018-2019 NEHS SAP team completed the survey as a mandatory job related responsibility. This resulted in 13 surveys completed by the NEHS SAP team.

SAP student participants and SAP parent/guardian participants during the 2018-2019 school year completed a survey as well. In order to participate in the survey, student participants and parent/guardian participants must have been enrolled in SAP for a minimum of 30 days. Surveys were given from November 19, 2018 through December 21, 2018. The number of survey respondents depended upon the number of student referrals up to November 19, 2018. Eighteen student participants and 14 parent/guardian participants completed a survey.

3.2.2 Data Collection

Mertens (2015) states, "the main goal of the participatory evaluation is to provide information for project decision makers and participants who will monitor the progress of, or improve, their project" (p. 61). Program evaluations are also used to determine the merit of a program. Patton (2008) defines merit as, "how effective it is in meeting the needs of those it is intended to help" (as cited by Mertens, 2015, p. 49). The data collection instruments used in this study were designed to accomplish these goals.

Document/record review was the first evidence collection method used for this study. Mertens (2015) states that document reviews can give researchers a historical view of a program, while also providing an unbiased source of information. Student records were the documents used for this study. These records included student grade point average (GPA), attendance, discipline, and SAP records from 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018. These records were analyzed prior to SAP enrollment and post SAP enrollment. This provided a three-year historical perspective of the NEHS SAP and its impact on reducing barriers to learning. In addition, all NESD policies regarding SAP were collected. This information was analyzed to identify gaps in NESD policy regarding SAP. Most of this information is housed on the NESD's student information system (SIS) or the NESD's website. However, the SAP files are housed in the NEHS guidance office. This analysis provided context for this study.

The primary data collection instruments used for this study was surveys. This method provides researchers the ability to target a large number of stakeholders in a quick and efficient manner (Mertens, 2015). The surveys used in this study were analyzed, discussed, and refined by the NEHS SAP team prior to distribution. This is consistent with the participatory evaluation model (Mertens, 2015).

The Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Effectiveness Checklist was used to evaluate the NEHS SAP (see Appendix A). This survey is found in the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Components and Indicators Handbook (Fertman et al., 2000b). Fertman et al. (2000b) states, "The goal of the components and indicators is to support and involve all SAP stakeholders in continuous improvement of SAP" (p. 1). This instrument provides a deep analysis of SAP because the survey is linked to essential SAP components that have been validated through research (Fertman et al., 2000b).

The SAP Student Satisfaction Survey and the SAP Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey was used to evaluate the NEHS SAP as well (see Appendix B and Appendix C). Constructs for these surveys were defined using the nine essential components identified in The Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Components and Indicators Handbook (Fertman et al., 2000b). In addition, several resources regarding school based mental health programming and stakeholder satisfaction were used to develop these surveys as well (Brown et al., 2012; Guindon, 2013; Simmons et al., 2013; Student Assistance Program, 2018b).

The surveys were uploaded to Qualtrics. Qualtrics is an online survey development tool that makes it easy to distribute surveys to participants, and organizes the data in an efficient manner (van Riel, 2016). The NEHS SAP team received an email requesting their participation in the Program Effectiveness Checklist (see Appendix D). A majority of the email's content was derived from The Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Components and Indicators Handbook (Fertman et al., 2000b). The purpose, importance, and instructions for completing the checklist were explained in the email. The NEHS SAP team completed the 46-question Program Effectiveness Checklist.

Student participants and parent/guardian participants who were enrolled in SAP during the 2018-2019 school year for a minimum of 30 days completed the SAP Student Satisfaction Survey and the SAP Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey. A letter was mailed home to all eligible participants prior to survey distribution (see Appendix E). The letter explained the purpose of the survey and discussed how the student participants and the parent/guardian participants should complete the survey.

Student participants completed the 13-question survey in school during a session with the school's mental health counselor. All answers were collected on a school laptop using Qualtrics. This procedure was similar to a typical session with the mental health counselor. Parent/guardian participants completed the 15-question survey over the phone. The phone survey/interview was conducted by the primary investigator. The primary investigator used the parent/guardian survey as a script, and all answers were collected on a school laptop using Qualtrics. Handwritten notes were also taken when the parent/guardian participants provided additional information. All data were stored on the Qualtrics server until the data were ready to be analyzed. Any handwritten notes taken during the interviews were stored in the primary investigator's office.

The Student Assistance Program Effectiveness Checklist and the SAP Satisfaction Surveys provided a 360-degree evaluation of the NEHS SAP (Fertman et al., 2000b). Fertman et al. (2000b) states, "The 360 degree feedback process is designed to contribute to continuous SAP improvement. Using the process each SAP can establish their own unique Benchmarks to guide their program's development" (p. 12).

3.3 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data for this study. Delaney (2009) states, "The purpose of undertaking descriptive analysis is to closely examine the collected data in order to describe its salient features. The process involved allows for gaining a sense of order in the data so 'the story' of the sample group can be told" (p. 283). Descriptive analysis was used to address the following research questions.

3.3.1 Research Question 1: What Impact Does the NEHS SAP Have on Reducing Barriers to Learning?

This study began with a three-year historical analysis of the NEHS SAP (2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018). This analysis was based on a three-year retrospective analysis of the PA SAP conducted by Fertman et al. (2003). The descriptive statistics used to measure student outcomes included student GPA, attendance, and discipline. These data were measured prior to SAP enrollment and post SAP enrollment. A student must have been enrolled in SAP for a minimum of 30 days to be eligible for the study. In addition, data from the previous year were used for any student who was enrolled in SAP prior to end of the first quarter. For example, data analysis was not possible for a student enrolled in the 2015-2016 NEHS SAP on August 27, 2015. Therefore, GPA, attendance, and discipline data from 2014-2015 were analyzed and compared to GPA, attendance, and discipline data from 2015-2016. This analysis was compared to the NESD's theory of action regarding SAP polices to identify gaps in policy implementation (The Wallace Foundation & Center for Educational Leadership, 2013).

3.3.2 Research Question 2: Identify the Strengths and Weaknesses of the NEHS SAP That Influence Benchmarks of Effectiveness.

The NEHS SAP team wass the primary focus of this study. To analyze the strengths and weakness of the NEHS SAP team, The Student Assistance Program Effectiveness Checklist was used. This survey was based on nine essential SAP components identified by Fertman et al. (2000b) in The Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Components and Indicators Handbook. The components identified were policy and procedures, communications, referral mechanisms, parent participation, team planning, intervention and recommendations, follow-up and support, training, and outcome indicators and evaluation. These components were the descriptive statistics used to analyze this survey.

The survey used a Likert-type scale (1 = Never Present, 3 = Present All Of The Time), and each survey was uploaded to Qualtrics. Data from this survey were uploaded to the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). SPSS is a software program used for data cleaning and data analysis.

The Program Effectiveness Checklist was coded using the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Performance Improvement Plan (see Appendix F). The Improvement Plan was based on the nine essential SAP components identified in the Student Assistance Program Components and Indicators Handbook (Fertman et al., 2000b). This analysis identified inadequate components of the NEHS SAP, and was used to develop benchmarks of effectiveness based on the inadequate components (Fertman et al., 2000b). Fertman et al. (2000b) states, “In order to establish benchmarks that are meaningful to a specific SAP, each program must develop an individually tailored action plan associated with each component and indicator” (p. 14). Upon completion of

this study, the NEHS SAP team developed an action plan to address each benchmark using the "Student Assistance Program in Pennsylvania Evaluation Final Report" (Fertman et al., 2000a).

3.3.3 Research Question 3: Determine Student and Parent Satisfaction of the NEHS SAP That Influence Benchmarks of Effectiveness.

The SAP Student Satisfaction Survey and the SAP Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey was used to evaluate the NEHS SAP as well. The constructs used to develop these surveys were based on the essential SAP components identified in the Student Assistance Program Components and Indicators Handbook (Fertman et al., 2000b). The SAP Student Satisfaction Survey analyzed the following components: communication, intervention and recommendations, follow-up and support, and outcome indicators and evaluation. The SAP Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey analyzed the following components: communication, parent participation, intervention and recommendations, follow-up and support, and outcome indicators and evaluation. These components were the descriptive statistics used to analyze both surveys. Both surveys used a Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), and each survey was uploaded to Qualtrics.

Data from these surveys was uploaded to SPSS and coded using the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Performance Improvement Plan. This analysis identified inadequate components of the NEHS SAP specific to student participants and parent/guardian participants. This information combined with the data obtained from the Program Effectiveness Checklist completed the 360 evaluation of the NEHS SAP for this study.

4.0 Results

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the NEHS SAP, determine what impact the NEHS SAP has on reducing barriers to learning, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the NEHS SAP team. This was accomplished through document collection and surveys. A total of 138 students were studied through document collection, and 45 individuals completed a survey.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the descriptive statistics used to analyze the results of this study. It begins with a demographic summary of students analyzed in the document collection and those who responded to the surveys. Next, a comprehensive explanation of the study's findings will be discussed. This discussion is organized by the research questions used for this study. Finally, Chapter 5 provides an interpretation of this study's findings.

4.1.1 Demographic Data from the Document Collection

This study began with a three-year historical analysis of the NEHS SAP. A total of 216 students were referred to the NEHS SAP from 2015-2016 to 2017-2018. However, only 138 students were analyzed for this study. This difference is primarily a result of student or parent refusal to participate in SAP (see Table 3). In addition, several students were not enrolled in the NEHS SAP for a minimum of 30 days and therefore did not meet the criteria to be eligible for the

study. This included three students who were referred to an alternative education placement, four students who were court placed, three students who transferred to another school, and two students that dropped out of school. About 37% of student referrals originated in ninth grade. Behavior concerns and "other" were identified as the primary reason for referral 14.8% of the time (see Table 3). Chapter 5 will discuss the impact of "other" as a primary reason for referral.

Table 3. Demographics of the NEHS SAP Student Participants

Variable	2015-2016 n (%)	2016-2017 n (%)	2017-2018 n (%)
Number of students referred to the NEHS SAP	61	70	84
Number of students that received services from the NEHS SAP for a minimum of 30 days (*Students analyzed in study)	51 (83.6)	48 (68.6)	39 (46.4)
Grade level:			
9	25 (41)	25 (35.7)	30 (35.7)
10	12 (19.7)	20 (28.6)	21 (25)
11	18 (29.5)	16 (22.9)	22 (26.2)
12	6 (9.8)	9 (12.9)	11 (13.1)
Primary reason for referral	Attendance 11 (18) Behavior 11 (18) Drugs 10 (16.4)	Academic 16 (22.9) Other 12 (17.1) Behavior 11 (15.7)	Other 20 (23.8) Attendance 10 (11.2) Behavior 10 (11.2) Family 10 (11.2)
Repeat referrals	15 (24.6)	20 (28.6)	12 (14.3)

4.1.2 Demographic Data from the Program Effectiveness Checklist

The NEHS SAP team completed the Program Effectiveness Checklist. An email was sent to 14 members of the team requesting their participation in the survey. A follow-up email was

sent 29 days later requesting completion of the survey. Thirteen members (n = 13) of the NEHS SAP team completed the survey (92.9% response rate).

Counselors make up a significant part of the NEHS SAP team. Five respondents (38.5%) identified themselves as a counselor, but one identified themselves as a substitute school counselor. This is an important distinction to note, because this respondent is not a usual member of the NEHS SAP team. Teachers account for the second largest group on the NEHS SAP team. Four respondents (30.8%) identified themselves as a teacher (see Table 4). Nine respondents (69%) stated that they had been a member of the NEHS SAP for 0-5 years (see Figure 2).

Table 4. Demographic Information: Program Effectiveness Checklist (n = 13)

Primary Position	n (%)
School counselor	3 (23.1)
Special education teacher	3 (23.1)
Substitute school counselor	1 (7.7)
SAP mental health therapist	1 (7.7)
Regular education teacher	1 (7.7)
Librarian	1 (7.7)
School nurse	1 (7.7)
Special education administrator	1 (7.7)
Assistant principal	1 (7.7)

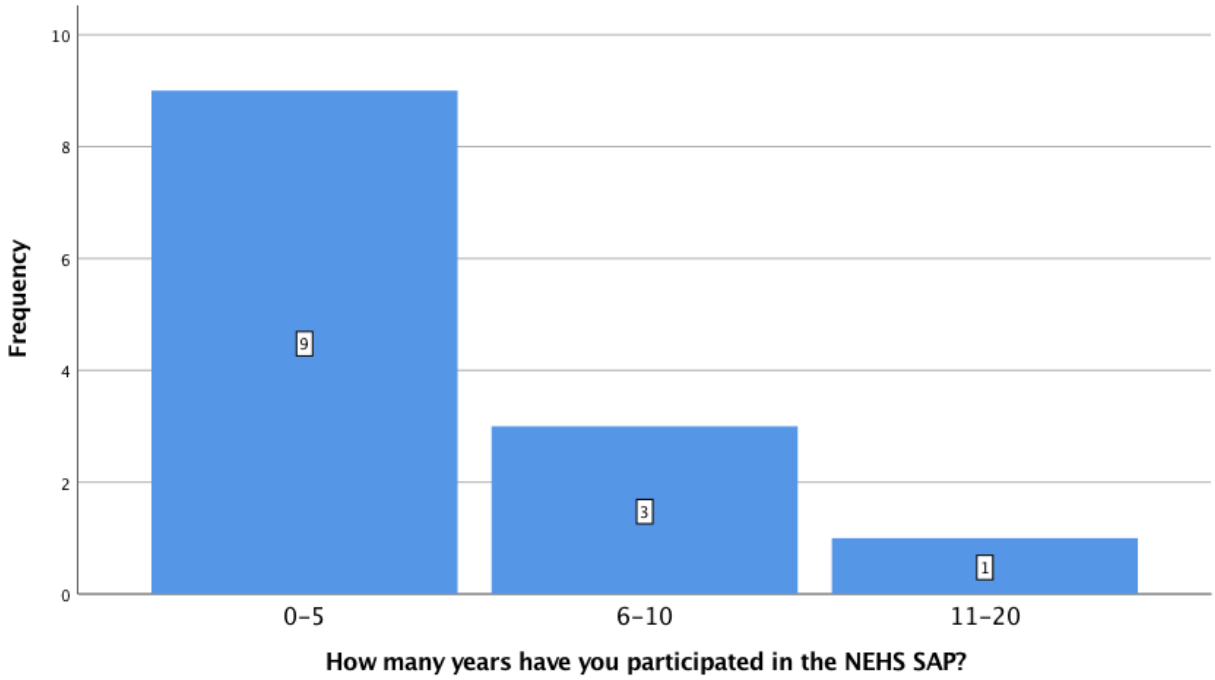

Figure 2. Years of Service in the NEHS SAP (n = 13)

4.1.3 Demographic Data from the SAP Student Satisfaction Survey

Students completed the SAP Student Satisfaction Survey. A letter was mailed home to the parent/guardian of 21 student participants. The NESD's mental health counselor began administration of the survey three weeks later. The surveys were completed in one week. Eighteen participants (n = 18) completed the SAP Student Satisfaction Survey (85.7% response rate). Two students were removed from participation because of absenteeism and eventually withdrew from NEHS. One student was removed from participation because of an ongoing crisis issue. Underclassman, ninth and tenth grade students, accounted for 83% of the respondents in this survey (see Figure 3). Therefore, a majority of the students have been in the NEHS SAP for less than two years (see Figure 4).

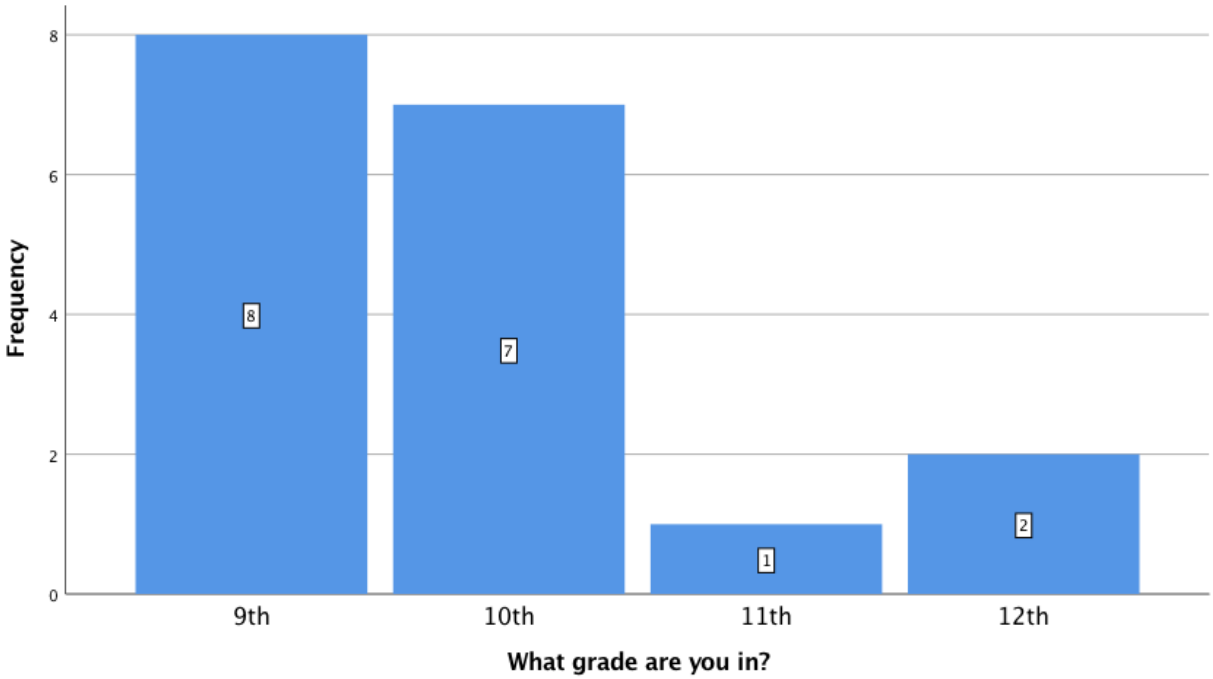

Figure 3. Grade Level of Student Participants (n = 18)

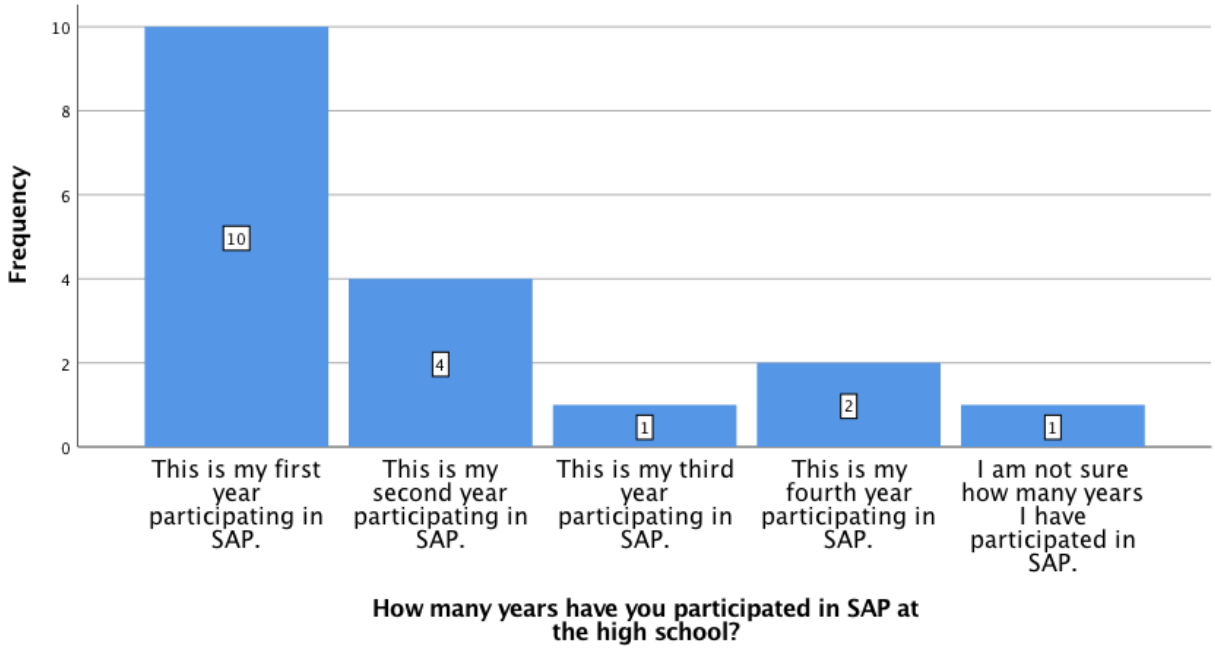

Figure 4. Years of Student Participation in the NEHS SAP (n = 18)

4.1.4 Demographic Data from the SAP Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey

Parent/guardians completed the SAP Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey. A letter was mailed home to 21 parent/guardian participants. The primary investigator began administration of the survey three weeks later. The surveys were completed within four weeks. Fourteen (n = 14) participants completed the SAP Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey (66.7% response rate). One participant was removed because of their child's absenteeism and eventual withdrawal from NEHS. Six participants were removed from the study because contact could not be made. Contact was attempted for each of the six participants on three separate occasions, but no contact was made.

A majority of the respondents (85.7%) identified themselves as a biological parent. One respondent selected other as their answer. The primary investigator asked for clarification and the respondent stated that they are the adopted parent of the child (see Table 5). Most respondents (85.7%) stated their child has participated in the NEHS SAP for two years or less (see Figure 5).

Table 5. Relationship to Student (n = 14)

What is your relationship to the student?	n (%)
Biological parent	12 (85.7)
Step parent	1 (7.1)
Other	1 (7.1)

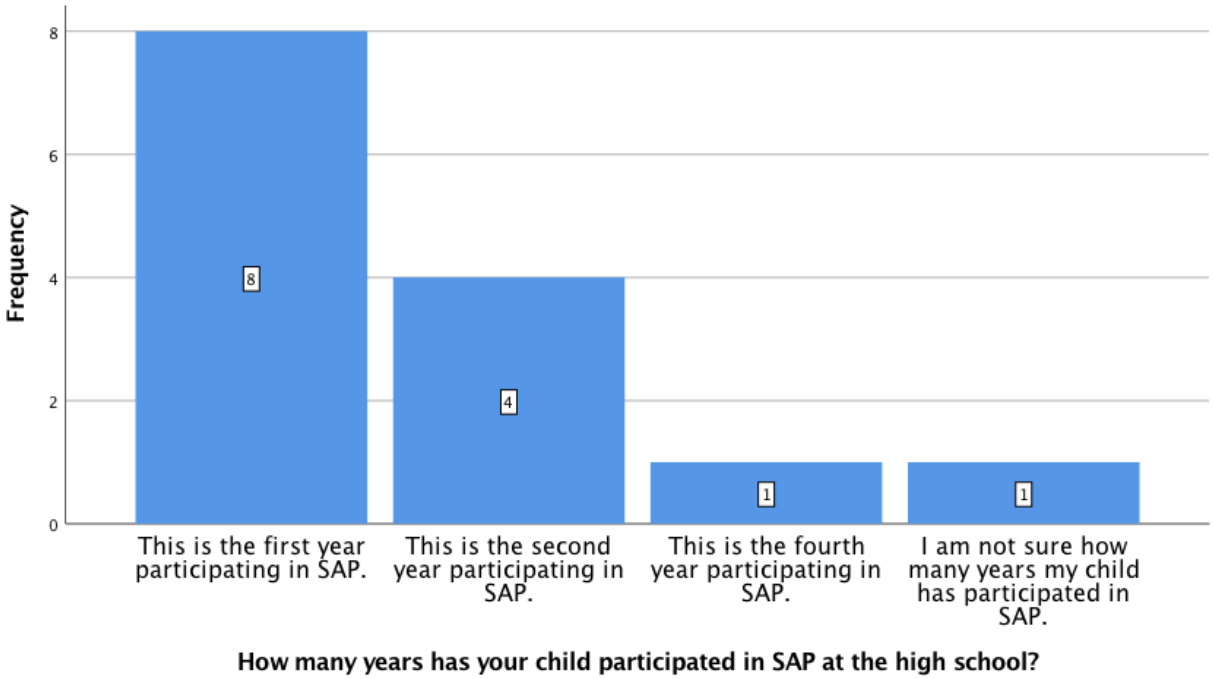

Figure 5. Years of Student Participation in the NEHS SAP (n = 14)

4.2 Research Question 1: NEHS SAP'S Impact on Learning

The first research question of this study states, what impact does the NEHS SAP have on reducing barriers to learning? A three-year historical analysis of the NEHS SAP was conducted to address this question. One hundred and thirty-eight students received services from the NEHS SAP from 2015-2016 to 2017-2018. Student referrals increased by 37% over this time period. However, the number of students receiving services decreased by 23.53% (see Figure 6). GPA declined by 57.33%, attendance rates declined by 67%, and disciplined worsened by 43.67% after participating in the NEHS SAP. Overall, student outcomes declined by 51.33% (see Figure 7).

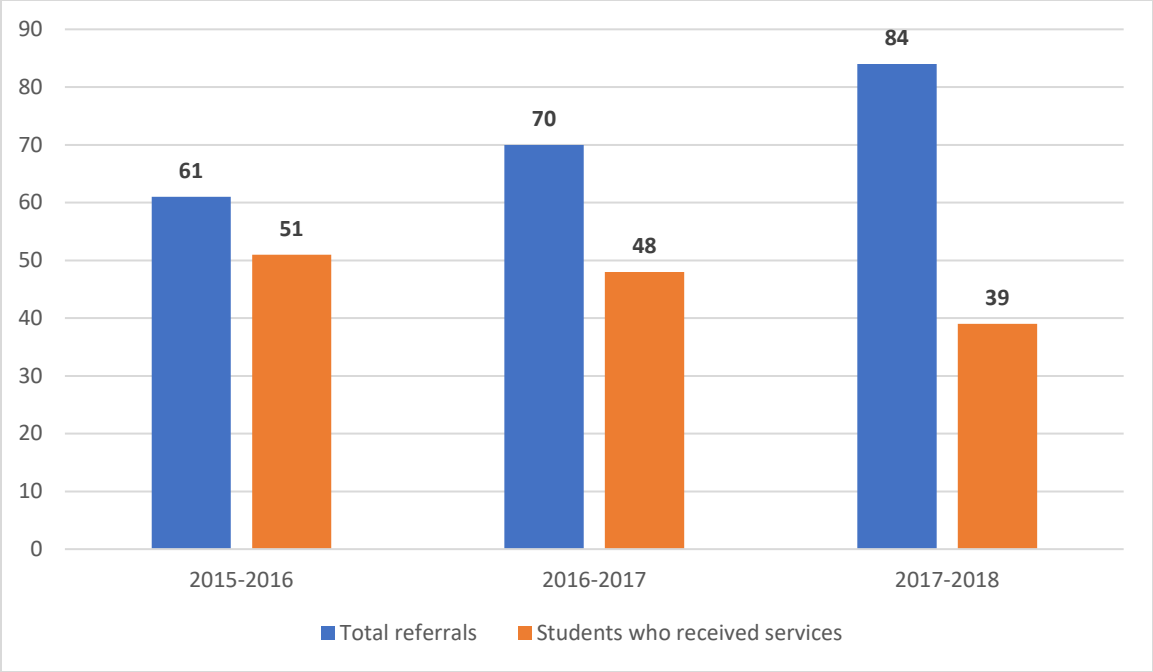

Figure 6. Student Referrals to the NEHS SAP

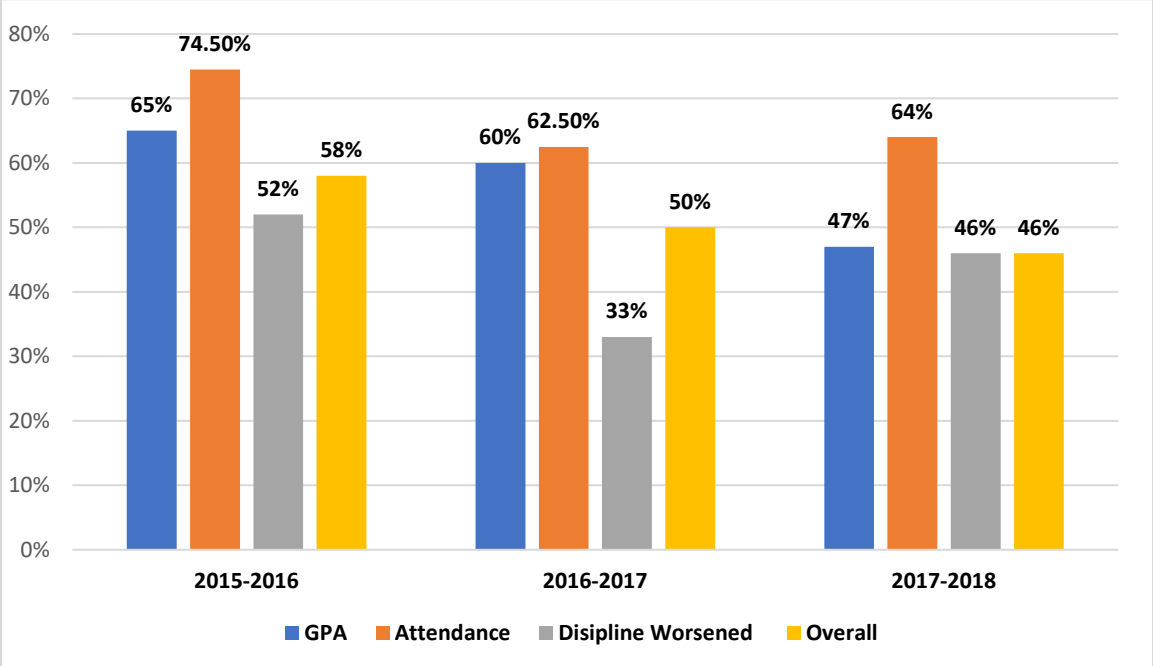

Figure 7. Percent of Student Decline after Enrollment in the NEHS SAP

4.3 Research Question 2: Strengths and Weaknesses of the NEHS SAP

The second research question of this study states, identify the strengths and weakness of the NEHS SAP that influence benchmarks of effectiveness. The Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Effectiveness Checklist was used to address this question (Fertman et al., 2000a). Data from this survey were scored using the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Performance Improvement plan (Fertman et al., 2000b). The Improvement Plan is based on the nine essential SAP components, and was scored using the following scale:

- Exemplary = mean score of 3.0 – 2.5 (Present all of the time)
- Adequate = mean score of 2.49 – 1.5 (Present some of the time)
- Inadequate = mean score of 1.49 – 0 (Never present)

For the purpose of this study, exemplary scores exceed the minimum standard of an effective SAP, adequate scores meet the minimum standard of an effective SAP, and inadequate scores do not meet the minimum standard of an effective SAP. This rating system is based on exemplary and struggling SAPs described in *The Student Assistance Program in Pennsylvania Final Report* (Fertman et al., 2000b).

4.3.1 Component 1: Policy and Procedures

Component 1 earned an exemplary rating with an average indicator score of 2.81 (see Table 6). This was the highest component score in the survey and appears to be a strength of the NEHS SAP. Respondents indicated that administrators, the drug and alcohol liaisons, and the SAP building coordinator are supportive members of the NEHS SAP team. However, the last indicator of the component about SAP structure and organization had one of the highest variance scores of

the survey (i.e., variance = .50). This finding suggests that half of the respondents are unsure of their role and responsibility on the SAP team.

Table 6. Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 1: Policy and Procedures (n = 13)

Component Indicator	3 Present All of the Time n (%)	2 Present Some of the Time n (%)	1 Never Present n (%)	Mean
Building administrators are involved and support SAP	13 (100)			3.0
Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health SAP liaison works with team	12 (92.3)	1 (7.7)		2.92
SAP Coordinator for the building	12 (92.3)	1 (7.7)		2.92
District policy defines violations and consequences for alcohol, drugs, involving weapons, and tobacco	9 (69.2)	4 (30.8)		2.69
SAP Structure and organization (including members and titles, clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, meeting times, membership selection criteria, etc.)	7 (53.8)	6 (46.2)		2.54

4.3.2 Component 2: Communications

Component 2 earned an adequate rating with an average indicator score of 2.27 (see Table 7). This was the second lowest component score of the survey. A major reason for this score was

an indicator about in-service training for non-SAP staff members. This was the lowest rated indicator in Component 2 and one of the lowest scoring indicators of the survey. Sixty-nine percent of respondents said this indicator is present some of the time, and two responders stated this indicator is never present. Component 2, specifically regarding in-service training for teachers and support staff, is a weakness of the NEHS SAP. An action plan needs to be developed to address this issue.

Table 7. Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 2: Communications (n = 13)

Component Indicator	3 Present All of the Time n (%)	2 Present Some of the Time n (%)	1 Never Present n (%)	Mean
Description of SAP services for faculty, students, and others including handbooks, brochures, etc.	7 (53.8)	6 (46.2)		2.46
In-services for teachers, pupil personnel, support staff, and administrators provide time and support for SAP informational updates	2 (15.4)	9 (69.2)	2 (15.4)	2.00
Specific student communication strategy	5 (38.5)	7 (53.8)	1 (7.7)	2.31
Specific parent communication strategy	5 (38.5)	7 (53.8)	1 (7.7)	2.31

4.3.3 Component 3: Referral Mechanisms

Component 3 received an exemplary rating with an average indicator score of 2.71 (see Table 8). A majority of respondents indicated that SAP is accessible to all students, and confidentiality is respected. However, the study's first indicator about case monitoring was found in Component 3. Case monitoring refers to the ongoing process of monitoring, evaluating, and adapting supports to meet the needs of a student. This indicator received the only adequate rating of Component 3. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that cases are monitored some of the time, and one respondent reported that cases are never monitored. Several indicators regarding case monitoring received lower scores in the three surveys used in this study.

Table 8. Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 3: Referral Mechanisms (n = 13)

Component Indicator	3 Present All of the Time n (%)	2 Present Some of the Time n (%)	1 Never Present n (%)	Mean
SAP is accessible to all targeted students	11 (84.6)	2 (15.4)		2.85
Formal referral procedures and decision-making process	9 (69.2)	4 (30.8)		2.69
Screening process includes clear and consistent student data collection and review procedures	9 (69.2)	4 (30.8)		2.69
Confidentiality guidelines for team are well delineated with members demonstrating respect for and understanding of parents' and students' privacy rights	12 (92.3)	1 (7.7)		2.92
Cases are continuously monitored	6 (46.2)	6 (46.2)	1 (7.7)	2.38

4.3.4 Component 4: Parent Participation

Component 4 earned an exemplary rating with an average indicator score of 2.73 (see Table 9). This was the second highest component score in the survey, and clearly a strength of the NEHS SAP. Five of the six indicators earned an exemplary rating. Three of the indicators involved the privacy rights of students and parents. Respondents gave the NEHS SAP high marks in these areas with an average indicator score of 2.87. The only indicator that earned an adequate rating involved

parent involvement procedures. Just 54% of respondents reported that the parent involvement indicator is present all of the time, and two respondents said this indicator is never present.

Table 9. Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 4: Parent Participation (n = 13)

Component Indicator	3 Present All of the Time n (%)	2 Present Some of the Time n (%)	1 Never Present n (%)	Mean
Formal parent involvement procedure	7 (53.8)	4 (30.8)	2 (15.4)	2.38
Policy statement defining parents/guardians as decision makers who provide active consent and includes a formal parent involvement and satisfaction procedure	8 (61.5)	4 (30.8)	1 (7.7)	2.54
Confidentiality guidelines known and respected	12 (92.3)	1 (7.7)		2.92
Demonstration of respect for parent and family privacy rights	12 (92.3)	1 (7.7)		2.92
Clear and consistent parent consent process and procedures	11 (84.6)	2 (15.4)		2.85
Information release form process and procedures for consent to exchange confidential student information	10 (76.9)	3 (23.1)		2.77

4.3.5 Component 5: Team Planning

Component 5 scored an exemplary rating with an average indicator score of 2.61 (see Table 10). A majority of respondents indicated that communication, case assignment, and meeting space are exemplary indicators of Component 5. However, two indicators in Component 5 require further discussion. Member roles and responsibilities were tied for the lowest indicator scores of the component. Two respondents said this indicator is never present. Member roles and responsibilities are a part of SAP structure and organization. SAP structure and organization received the lowest indicator score in Component 1. These findings suggest the SAP procedures regarding team member roles and responsibilities could be an area of concern. In addition, inter-team communication was the highest scoring indicator of Component 5. However, only 11 participants responded to this question. This is the only question in the entire study that was not completed by all participants. Respondents may not have understood the question or they simply forgot to answer the question.

Table 10. Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 5: Team Planning (n = 13 & *n = 11)

Component Indicator	3 Present All of the Time n (%)	2 Present Some of the Time n (%)	1 Never Present n (%)	Mean
Regular meeting time sufficient to complete SAP work	6 (46.2)	7 (53.8)		2.46
Members' roles and responsibilities are articulated (e.g., leaders, secretary, case manager)	8 (61.5)	3 (23.1)	2 (15.4)	2.46
Case assignment and management procedures	9 (69.2)	4 (30.8)		2.69
Regular meeting space with access to technology (e.g., computers, internet, etc.)	9 (69.2)	4 (30.8)		2.69
Inter-team communication system (*n = 11)	8 (61.5)	3 (23.1)		2.73

4.3.6 Component 6: Interventions and Recommendations

Component 6 scored an adequate rating with an average indicator score of 2.34 (see Table 11). Linking students and parents to community resources was identified as an exemplary indicator in Component 6. This is a core objective of the PA SAP, and these findings suggest it is a strength of the NEHS SAP (Fertman et al., 2003). In contrast, two case monitoring indicators are in Component 6. The first indicator states, team monitors and receives feedback on school and community assessments. Just 15.4% of responders said this indicator was present all of the time. The second case monitoring indicator states, continuous monitoring of student progress, parent

involvement, and recommendations. Thirty-eight percent of responders said this indicator was present all the time. Parent involvement earned high scores in other components in this survey, and could be the reason for the higher score in the second case monitoring indicator. However, results could also suggest something else. The first indicator states that the SAP team receives feedback from school and community stakeholders, but the second indicator appears to place the responsibility of case monitoring on the SAP team. The lower score in the first case monitoring indicator suggests that the SAP team is not as effective monitoring cases when it has to rely on feedback from stakeholders outside of the SAP team.

Table 11. Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 6: Interventions and Recommendations (n = 13)

Component Indicator	3 Present All of the Time n (%)	2 Present Some of the Time n (%)	1 Never Present n (%)	Mean
Support and provide linkages for students and parents to access school and community services	7 (53.8)	6 (46.2)		2.54
Team monitors and receives feedback on school and community assessments	2 (15.4)	10 (76.9)	1 (7.7)	2.08
Continuous monitoring of student progress, parent involvement, and recommendations	5 (38.5)	7 (53.8)	1 (7.7)	2.31
Written guidelines for dealing with problems that are beyond the scope of the school's responsibility (e.g., provision of treatment, suicidal assessment)	5 (38.5)	8 (61.5)		2.38
Written information available on community resources, services, and other options	5 (38.5)	8 (61.5)		2.38

4.3.7 Component 7: Follow-up and Support

Component 7 scored an adequate rating with an average indicator score of 2.40 (see Table 12). Many indicators in Component 6 and Component 7 were similar in nature. For example, in Component 7, 61.5% of respondents stated that school resources are available all of the time. This is similar to the indicator in Component 6 in which 53.8% of respondents said that SAP links

students and parents to school and community resources all the time. It is important to note that school resources and community resources were assessed in the Component 6 indicator. In contrast, just 38.5% of respondents said that community resources are available all the time in a Component 7 indicator. Only community resources were assessed in the Component 7 indicator. These findings suggest that the NEHS SAP is more effective at linking students and parents to school resources, but not as effective linking them to community-based resources. In addition, case monitoring indicators received the lowest scores of Component 7, just as they did in Component 6. Only 38.5% of respondents said that continuous monitoring of student progress takes place all of the time. The findings of Component 6 and Component 7 suggest that case monitoring is an area in need of development.

Table 12. Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 7: Follow-up and Support (n = 13)

Component Indicator	3 Present All of the Time n (%)	2 Present Some of the Time n (%)	1 Never Present n (%)	Mean
Procedures promote student access to and compliance with school and community services and treatment recommendations	6 (46.2)	6 (46.2)	1 (7.7)	2.38
School resources are available and accessible (e.g., access to the mental health counselor, access to outside services such as outpatient therapy and partial, etc.)	8 (61.5)	5 (38.5)		2.62
Student follow-up procedure and process promotes student contact and support	4 (30.8)	8 (61.5)	1 (7.7)	2.23
Community resources are available and accessible	5 (38.5)	8 (61.5)		2.38
Continuous monitoring of student progress, parent involvement and treatment recommendations compliance	5 (38.5)	8 (61.5)		2.38

4.3.8 Component 8: Training

Component 8 scored an adequate rating with an average indicator score of 2.25 (see Table 13). This was the lowest score for any component of the survey. Eleven of the 13 respondents stated they took part in initial trainings to become a member of the SAP team. However, trainings stop once a member becomes SAP certified. Two indicators illustrate this point: the training

schedule and budget of the SAP team, and the opportunity for advanced SAP training. These indicators received the lowest indicator scores of the entire survey. In fact, 23.1% of respondents stated that an adequate training schedule and budget is never present. These findings suggest that the lack of an adequate training schedule and budget impact the SAP team's ability to engage in advanced trainings. In addition, an indicator in Component 2 about in-service trainings for teachers and support staff received one of the lowest indicator scores of the survey as well. This finding combined with the findings of Component 8 suggest that training about student mental health is an area in need of development for the SAP team and teachers and support staff at NEHS.

Table 13. Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 8: Training (n = 13)

Component Indicator	3 Present All of the Time n (%)	2 Present Some of the Time n (%)	1 Never Present n (%)	Mean
Team members participate in all Commonwealth approved training	11 (84.6)	2 (15.4)		2.85
Team members participate in a maintenance and development training program	4 (30.8)	8 (61.5)	1 (7.7)	2.23
Team has adequate training schedule and budget	2 (15.4)	8 (61.5)	3 (23.1)	1.92
Team members have opportunity and support for advanced SAP training		12 (92.3)	1 (7.7)	1.92
School and community agency staff participate in ongoing SAP training	5 (38.5)	7 (53.8)	1 (7.7)	2.31

4.3.9 Component 9: Outcome Indicators and Evaluation

Component 9 scored an adequate rating with an average indicator score of 2.32 (see Table 14). This was the third lowest component score of the survey. As seen in previous components, indicators associated with monitoring, evaluating, and assessing student outcomes in relation to SAP services received lower scores. For example, 61.5% of respondents indicated that a system is in place to track student outcomes such as GPA and attendance all of the time. However, 61.5% of respondents said that these outcomes are not regularly assessed. These findings suggest that a system is in place to continuously monitor student cases, but the NEHS SAP team does not take advantage of this system. Furthermore, just 23.1% of responders said stakeholder input is solicited all the time. This is another indication that the NEHS SAP rarely evaluates the effectiveness of its services.

Table 14. Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 9: Outcome Indicators and Evaluation (n = 13)

Component Indicator	3 Present All of the Time n (%)	2 Present Some of the Time n (%)	1 Never Present n (%)	Mean
SAP monitoring and improvement mechanisms are in place	6 (46.2)	5 (38.5)	2 (15.4)	2.31
SAP team maintains a student data management system to track student attendance, GPA, failed courses, grade retention, and school leaving	8 (61.5)	3 (23.1)	2 (15.4)	2.46
Student SAP service participation and utilization system provides accurate and timely information (to the student, to the parent, to the teachers)	5 (38.5)	8 (61.5)		2.38
Student interventions, recommendations, and outcomes are regularly assessed for quality and goal attainment	5 (38.5)	7 (53.8)	1 (7.7)	2.31
Stakeholder input and suggestions are solicited and utilized	3 (23.1)	9 (69.2)	1 (7.7)	2.15

4.4 Research Question 3: Participant Satisfaction of the NEHS SAP

The third research question of the study states, determine student and parent satisfaction of the NEHS SAP that influence benchmarks of effectiveness. The SAP Student Satisfaction Survey

and the SAP Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey were used to address this question. Like the Program Effectiveness Checklist, data from the surveys were coded using the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Performance Improvement plan. However, only four of the nine essential SAP components were used for the student survey, and five of the nine essential SAP components were used for the parent/guardian survey (see Section 3.3.3). The Satisfaction Surveys also used a five point Likert scale, rather than the three point Likert scale used in the Program Effectiveness Checklist. The following scale was used for the Satisfaction Surveys:

- Exemplary = mean score of 5.0 – 4.50
- Adequate = mean score of 4.49 – 2.50
- Inadequate = mean score of 2.49 – 0

As stated earlier, for the purpose of this study, exemplary scores exceed the minimum standard of an effective SAP, adequate scores meet the minimum standard of an effective SAP, and inadequate scores do not meet the minimum standard of an effective SAP. This rating system is based on exemplary and struggling SAPs described in *The Student Assistance Program in Pennsylvania Final Report* (Fertman et al., 2000b).

4.4.1 Student and Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Component 2: Communications

The Student Satisfaction Survey scored an adequate rating with an average indicator score of 4.00 (see Table 15). This was the second lowest component score of the student survey. The Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey scored an adequate rating with an average indicator score of 4.47 (see Table 16). This was the second highest component score of the parent/guardian survey. The questions in this component focused on the initial stages of a SAP referral. Sixty-four percent of parents/guardians strongly agreed that they were given an explanation of what SAP is, and

57.1% of parents/guardians strongly agreed that they understand why their child was referred to SAP. In comparison, 22.2% of students strongly agreed that they were given an explanation of what SAP is, and 33.3% of students strongly agreed with the reason they were referred to SAP. These data suggest that parents/guardians are more satisfied with initial communications from the NEHS SAP, but initial communications with students about SAP could be improved.

Table 15. Student Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 2: Communications (n = 18)

Question	5 Strongly Agree n (%)	4 Agree n (%)	3 Neutral n (%)	2 Disagree n (%)	1 Strongly Disagree n (%)	Mean
I was given an explanation of what SAP is, and how SAP could benefit me.	4 (22.2)	10 (55.6)	4 (22.2)			4.0
I understand the reason why I was referred to SAP.	6 (33.3)	8 (44.4)	2 (11.1)	2 (11.1)		4.0

Table 16. Parent/Guardian Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 2: Communications

Question	5 Strongly Agree n (%)	4 Agree n (%)	3 Neutral n (%)	2 Disagree n (%)	1 Strongly Disagree n (%)	Mean
I was given an explanation of what SAP is, and how SAP could benefit me.	9 (64.3)	4 (28.6)	1 (7.1)			4.57
I understand the reason why I was referred to SAP.	8 (57.1)	3 (21.4)	3 (21.4)			4.36

4.4.2 Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Component 4: Parent Participation

Component 4 was assessed in the Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey. The component earned an exemplary rating with an average indicator score of 4.54 (see Table 17). This was the highest scoring component of the parent/guardian survey. A majority of respondents (85%) stated that they are treated well and their input is valued by the SAP team. This suggests that parents are highly satisfied with their treatment and participation in the SAP process.

Table 17. Parent/Guardian Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 4: Parent Participation (n = 14)

Question	5 Strongly Agree n (%)	4 Agree n (%)	3 Neutral n (%)	2 Disagree n (%)	1 Strongly Disagree n (%)	Mean
I am treated well by the SAP team.	10 (71.4)	2 (14.3)	2 (14.3)			4.57
The SAP team allows me to share ideas, concerns, and develop goals for my child (e.g., I am involved in the decision-making regarding my child).	9 (64.3)	3 (21.4)	2 (14.3)			4.50

4.4.3 Student and Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Component 6: Interventions and Recommendations

The Student Satisfaction Survey scored an adequate rating with an average indicator score of 4.06 (see Table 18). The Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey scored an adequate rating with an average indicator score of 4.36 (see Table 19). Component 6 was the second highest rated component in the student survey. However, 57.1% of parents had a strong belief that the SAP team was working together to help their child, compared to just 27.8% of students. The word, team, is a possible explanation for these scores. When a student referral is made, parents are often contacted by several members of the SAP team (i.e., case manager, counselor, administrator, mental health counselor, or drug and alcohol counselor). However, students often speak with one or two members of the SAP team (i.e., counselor or administrator and mental health or drug and

alcohol counselor). In short, parents communicate and collaborate with several more members of the SAP team than students do.

Table 18. Student Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 6: Interventions and Recommendations (n = 18)

Question	5 Strongly Agree n (%)	4 Agree n (%)	3 Neutral n (%)	2 Disagree n (%)	1 Strongly Disagree n (%)	Mean
I feel that the SAP team is working together to help me.	5 (27.8)	9 (50.0)	4 (22.2)			4.06

Table 19. Parent/Guardian Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 6: Intervention and Recommendations (n = 14)

Question	5 Strongly Agree n (%)	4 Agree n (%)	3 Neutral n (%)	2 Disagree n (%)	1 Strongly Disagree n (%)	Mean
I feel that the SAP TEAM is working together to help my child with their problems.	8 (57.1)	4 (28.6)	1 (7.1)	1 (7.1)		4.36

4.4.4 Student and Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Component 7: Follow-up and Support

The Student Satisfaction Survey scored an adequate rating with an average indicator score of 4.25 (see Table 20). This was the highest rated component of the student survey and appears to be an area that students are satisfied with in regard to SAP services. Eighty-four percent of students said they were treated well by the SAP team. This was one of the highest scores of the student survey. However, 27.8% of students strongly agreed that it is easy to talk to a member of the SAP team. These findings combined with some of the results found in the open-ended section of the student survey suggests that students would like more time speaking to a member of the SAP team (see Section 4.4.6). The Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey scored an adequate rating with an average indicator score of 4.05 (see Table 21). This was the lowest rated component of the parent/guardian survey and appears to be an area that parents/guardians are not satisfied with in regards to SAP services. The biggest difference between the two surveys involved a case monitoring question in the parent/guardian survey. Just 14.3% of the respondents said they received feedback from the SAP team about their child's progress all the time. This is in stark contrast to Component 2 in which 77.8% of parents/guardians stated that initial communication about SAP was good. This is another indication that the monitoring of student cases in regards to SAP services is an area of weakness.

Table 20. Student Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 7: Follow-up and Support

Question	5 Strongly Agree n (%)	4 Agree n (%)	3 Neutral n (%)	2 Disagree n (%)	1 Strongly Disagree n (%)	Mean
I am treated well by the SAP team.	15 (83.8)	1 (5.6)	2 (11.1)			4.72
It is easy to talk to members of the SAP team	5 (27.8)	6 (33.3)	5 (27.8)	2 (11.1)		3.78

Table 21. Parent/Guardian Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 7: Follow-up and Support (n = 14)

Question	5 Strongly Agree n (%)	4 Agree n (%)	3 Neutral n (%)	2 Disagree n (%)	1 Strongly Disagree n (%)	Mean
My child received support in a timely manner after being referred to SAP.	10 (71.4)	1 (7.1)	2 (14.3)	1 (7.1)		4.43
It is easy to talk to the members of the SAP team.	7 (50.0)	3 (21.4)	4 (28.6)			4.21
The SAP team communicates with me on a regular basis about my child's progress.	2 (14.3)	5 (35.7)	5 (35.7)	2 (14.3)		3.50

4.4.5 Student and Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Component 9: Outcome Indicators and Evaluation

The Student Satisfaction Survey scored an adequate rating with an average indicator score of 3.65 (see Table 22). This was the lowest component score of the survey. The parent/guardian survey scored an adequate rating with an average indicator score of 4.11 (see Table 23). This was the second lowest component score of the survey. The student survey included more questions about Component 9 than the parent/guardian survey. However, the overarching theme of the questions in each survey was student outcomes in relation to SAP services. For example, 48.7% of students and 64.3% of parents/guardians indicated that success in school remained the same or did not improve after participating in SAP. Similar data were identified in the three-year historical analysis of SAP in which academic achievement declined in 57.33% of students following participation in SAP (see Section 4.5). These data indicate that students and parent/guardians are not satisfied with student outcomes resulting from SAP services. It is also important to note that students and parents/guardians recommend SAP as a place to get help. However, 100% of parents/guardians strongly agree or agree with this statement, whereas 66.6% of students strongly agree or agree with this statement. These findings suggest that students are more critical of SAP services as it relates to student outcomes.

Table 22. Student Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 9: Outcome Indicators and Evaluation (n = 18)

Question	5 Strongly Agree n (%)	4 Agree n (%)	3 Neutral n (%)	2 Disagree n (%)	1 Strongly Disagree n (%)	Mean
As a result of the services that I received from SAP, I am better able to cope when things go wrong (e.g., I can deal with problems more effectively).	4 (22.2)	5 (27.8)	7 (38.9)	2 (11.1)		3.61
As a result of the services that I received from SAP, I am doing better in school.	3 (16.7)	7 (38.9)	5 (27.8)	3 (16.7)		3.56
As a result of the services that I received from SAP, I get along better with other people (e.g., peers, teachers, family).	2 (11.1)	7 (38.9)	7 (38.9)	2 (11.1)		3.50
If I had a friend with a problem, I would recommend SAP as a place to get help.	6 (33.3)	6 (33.3)	5 (27.8)	1 (5.6)		3.94

Table 23. Parent/Guardian Frequency (%) and Mean of Component 9: Outcome Indicators and Evaluation (n = 14)

Question	5 Strongly Agree n (%)	4 Agree n (%)	3 Neutral n (%)	2 Disagree n (%)	1 Strongly Disagree n (%)	Mean
As a result of the services that my child received from SAP, my child is doing better in school.	3 (21.4)	2 (14.3)	7 (50.0)	2 (14.3)		3.43
I would recommend SAP to other parents if they had a child that needed help.	11 (78.6)	3 (21.4)				4.79

4.4.6 Student Satisfaction Qualitative Data

Two open-ended questions were used to assess one indicator in Component 9. The following indicator was assessed:

- SAP satisfaction information is solicited and utilized.

The first question used to address this indicator was, "What has been the most helpful part of participating in the SAP?" All 18 participants (100%) responded to this question. Talking and help were identified as common themes. Eleven respondents (61%) made statements like:

- "Being able to talk to her about anything that is bothering me."
- "Being able to talk to someone."
- "There is someone to help me with my problems in school."
- "That the members are willing to help me and they are there if I need them."

The second question used to address the indicator was, "How could SAP improve?" All 18 participants (100%) responded to this question. However, 11 respondents (61%) made comments like, "I don't really know." Three respondents (17%) stated that they would like to see the mental health counselor more often.

4.4.7 Parent Satisfaction Qualitative Data

Three open-ended questions were used to assess one indicator in Component 9. The following indicator was assessed:

- SAP satisfaction information is solicited and utilized.

The first question used to address this indicator was, "How has SAP helped your child?" All 14 participants (100%) responded to this question. The mental health counselor and talking were identified as common themes. Seven respondents (50%) made statements like:

- "She is very comfortable talking with the mental health counselor. That has really helped her open up."
- "The mental health counselor has been extremely helpful."
- "Sometimes you just need someone outside of a parent that is trust worthy to talk too."

Three respondents (21.4%) referred to SAP connecting their child to outside services.

The second question used to address the indicator was, "How could SAP improve?" All 14 participants (100%) responded to this question. However, five respondents (35.7%) made comments like, "I am not sure." Five respondents (35.7%) made comments about better communication. For example:

- "I don't get much feedback."
- "There could be better communication."

- "More communication . . . all around."

Additional themes identified in the second question include references about increasing the number of sessions with the mental health counselor (14.3%) and knowing all the members of the NEHS SAP team (14.3%).

The third question used to address the indicator was, "If the SAP team referred your child to an outside support service was the service helpful, what service was recommended, and was the NEHS SAP effective in follow-up care and support?" All 14 participants (100%) responded to this question. Seven respondents (50%) stated that their child did receive support from an outside service, and four respondents (57.1%) said it was helpful. However, only three respondents (21.4%) gave reasons why the service was not helpful. The reasons identified were a lack of communication with the outside service, and the time it took to set up additional services. The most recommended outside service was acute partial (n = 4, 28.6%), followed by outpatient therapy (n = 3, 21.4%). Acute partial is a partial hospitalization program for students with emotional, behavioral, or psychiatric difficulties. It is one of the highest levels of care the SAP team can recommend.

4.5 Compare and Contrast the Surveys

To compare and contrast the results of the three surveys, the Student Satisfaction Survey and the Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey were converted into a three-point scale. The following conversion formula was used:

- (average mean score x 3) /5

For example, the average mean score of Component 2 in the Student Survey was 4.0. The conversion formula is as follows:

- (4.0 x 3) = 12
- 12/ 5 = 2.4

This formula helped identify common themes and differences in the surveys (see Table 24). Four components were measured in all three surveys. These components included Component 2, Component 6, Component 7, and Component 9. Component 4 was measured in the Program Effectiveness Checklist and the Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey. In addition, questions from the Student Satisfaction Survey and the Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey were matched to component indicators in the Program Effectiveness Checklist. This provided a thorough comparison of the components throughout the surveys (see Tables 25 through 29).

Table 24. Average Component Mean Scores of the Surveys

Component	Program Effectiveness Checklist	Student Satisfaction Survey (3-point scale score)	Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey (3-point scale score)
1: Policy and Procedures	2.81		
2: Communications	2.27	4.00 (2.4)	4.65 (2.68)
3: Referral Mechanisms	2.71		
4: Parent Participation	2.73		4.54 (2.72)
5: Team Planning	2.61		
6: Interventions and Recommendations	2.34	4.06 (2.44)	4.36 (2.62)
7: Follow-up and Support	2.40	2.55	2.43
8: Training	2.25		
9: Outcome Indicators and Evaluation	2.32	3.65 (2.19)	4.11 (2.47)

Common areas of weakness were identified in Component 9: Outcome Indicators and Evaluation (see Table 25). This was the only component identified as an area of weakness by all three surveys. Indicators regarding monitoring, tracking, and assessing student outcomes in relation to SAP services were the primary reasons for low scores in this component.

Table 25. Mean Scores of Component 9: Indicators and Evaluation

Program Effectiveness Checklist Indicator	Checklist Score	Student Satisfaction Survey Question	Student Score	Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey Question	Parent Score
SAP monitoring and improvement mechanisms are in place	2.31	As a result of the services that I received from SAP, I am better able to cope when things go wrong	3.61 (2.17)		
SAP team maintains a student data management system to track student attendance, GPA, failed courses, grade retention, and school leaving	2.46	As a result of the services that I received from SAP, I am doing better in school.	3.56 (2.14)	As a result of the services that my child received from SAP, my child is doing better in school.	3.43 (2.06)
Student interventions, recommendations, and outcomes are regularly assessed for quality and goal attainment	2.31	As a result of the services that I received from SAP, I get along better with other people	3.50 (2.10)		
Stakeholder input and suggestions are solicited and utilized	2.15	If I had a friend with a problem, I would recommend SAP as a place to get help.	3.94 (2.36)	I would recommend SAP to other parents if they had a child that needed help.	4.79 (2.87)

Another area of weakness was identified in Component 2: Communications. This was one of the lowest scoring components in the Program Effectiveness Checklist and the Student Satisfaction Survey. Most indicators in Component 2 received high scores in the Program

Effectiveness Checklist. However, an indicator that measured in-service trainings for non-SAP staff received one of the lowest scores of the survey (see Table 7). In contrast, Component 2 was one of the highest scoring components in the Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey (see Table 26).

Table 26. Mean Scores of Component 2: Communication

Program Effectiveness Checklist Indicator	Checklist Score	Student Satisfaction Survey Question	Student Score	Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey Question	Parent Score
Description of SAP Services for faculty, students and others including handbooks, brochures, etc.	2.46	I was given an explanation of what SAP is, and how SAP could benefit me.	4.0 (2.4)	I was given a thorough explanation of what SAP is, and how it could benefit my child.	4.57 (2.74)
Specific student communication strategy	2.31	I understand the reason why I was referred to SAP.	4.0 (2.4)		
Specific parent communication strategy	2.31			I was given a thorough explanation about why my child was referred to SAP.	4.36 (2.62)

Component 7: Follow-up and Support received lower scores in the Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey and the Program Effectiveness Checklist. Like Component 9, low scores in Component 7 were primarily because of case management indicators. However, Component 7 was the highest rated component of the Student Satisfaction Survey (see Table 27).

Table 27. Mean Scores of Component 7: Follow-up and Support

Program Effectiveness Checklist Indicator	Checklist Score	Student Satisfaction Survey Question	Student Score	Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey Question	Parent Score
Student follow-up procedure and process promotes student contact and support	2.23	I am treated well by the SAP team.	4.72 (2.83)	My child received support in a timely manner after being referred to SAP.	4.43 (2.66)
School resources are available and accessible	2.62	It is easy to talk to members of the SAP team.	3.78 (2.27)	It is easy to talk to the members of the SAP team.	4.21 (2.53)
Continuous monitoring of student progress, parent involvement and treatment recommendations compliance	2.38			The SAP team communicates with me on a regular basis about my child's progress.	3.50 (2.10)

Common areas of strength were also identified. Component 4: Parent Participation received high scores in the Program Effectiveness Checklist and the Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey (see Table 28). This is an important finding because research has shown that strong parent participation can help strengthen other SAP components (Fertman et al., 2000b).

Table 28. Mean Scores of Component 4: Parent Participation

Program Effectiveness Checklist Indicator	Checklist Score	Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey Question	Parent Score
Formal parent involvement procedure	2.38	I am treated well by the SAP team.	4.57 (2.74)
Policy statement defining parents/guardians as decision makers who provide active consent and includes a formal parent involvement and satisfaction procedure	2.54	The SAP team allows me to share ideas, concerns, and develop goals for my child	4.50 (2.70)

Component 6: Interventions and Recommendations was identified as an area of strength as well. This component received high scores in the Student Satisfaction Survey and the Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey (see Table 29). However, like Component 9 and Component 7, indicators about case monitoring received lowers scores. This was especially true in the Program Effectiveness Checklist.

Table 29. Mean Scores of Component 6: Interventions and Recommendations

Program Effectiveness Checklist Indicator	Checklist Score	Student Satisfaction Survey Question	Student Score	Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey Question	Parent Score
Team monitors and receives feedback on school and community assessments	2.08	I feel that the SAP team is working together to help me.	4.06 (2.44)	I feel that the SAP TEAM is working together to help my child with their problems.	4.36 (2.62)
Support and provide linkages for students and parents to access school and community services	2.54	I feel that the SAP team is working together to help me.	4.06 (2.44)	I feel that the SAP TEAM is working together to help my child with their problems.	4.36 (2.62)
Continuous monitoring of student progress, parent involvement and recommendations	2.31	I feel that the SAP team is working together to help me.	4.06 (2.44)	I feel that the SAP TEAM is working together to help my child with their problems.	4.36 (2.62)

Additional comparisons worth discussing are the average component scores of the surveys, the variance scores among the surveys, and the component scores over the duration of the surveys. The Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey had the highest average component score of the three surveys, and the least amount of variance between component scores (see Table 30).

Table 30. Average Score and Variance Score of the Surveys

Survey	Average Component Score	Variance Score
Program Effectiveness Checklist	2.49	0.049
Student Satisfaction Survey	2.40	0.023
Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey	2.58	0.016

The Program Effectiveness Checklist experienced the most variation among component scores. Figure 8 illustrates this point. These findings suggest that components focused on case management and student outcomes are areas in need of development.

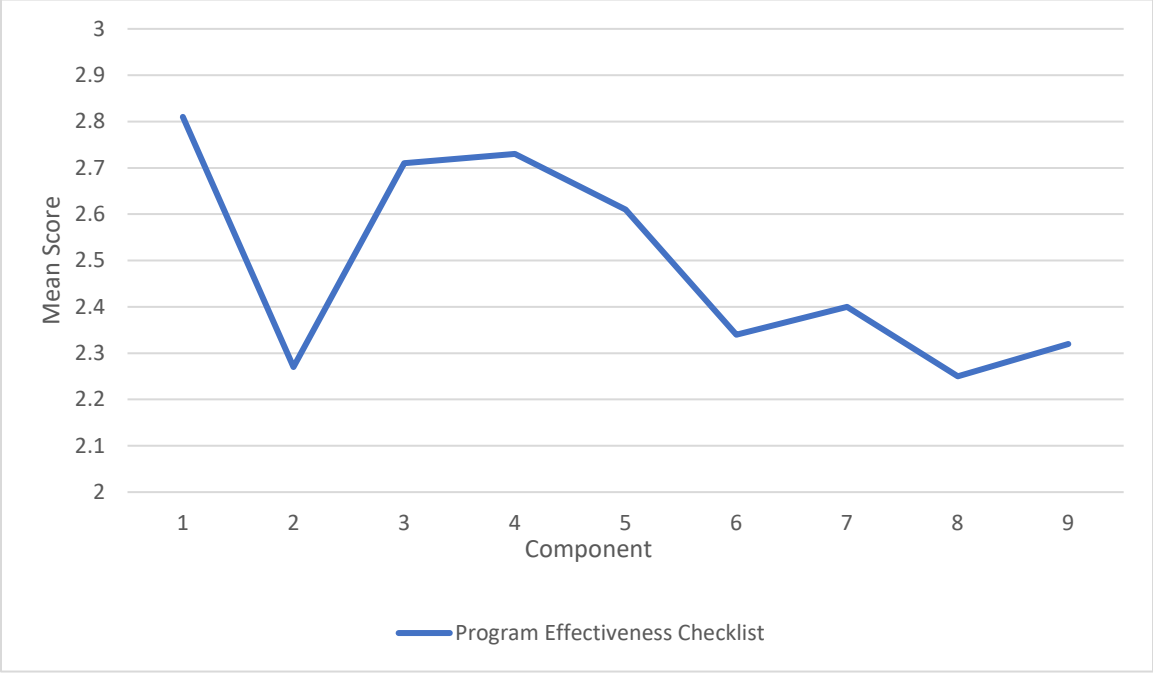

Figure 8. Component Scores over the Duration of the Program Effectiveness Checklist

The Student Satisfaction Survey and the Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey did not experience as much variation among component scores. However, both surveys had declining scores in components focused on case management and student outcomes, just as the Program Effectiveness Checklist did (Figure 9).

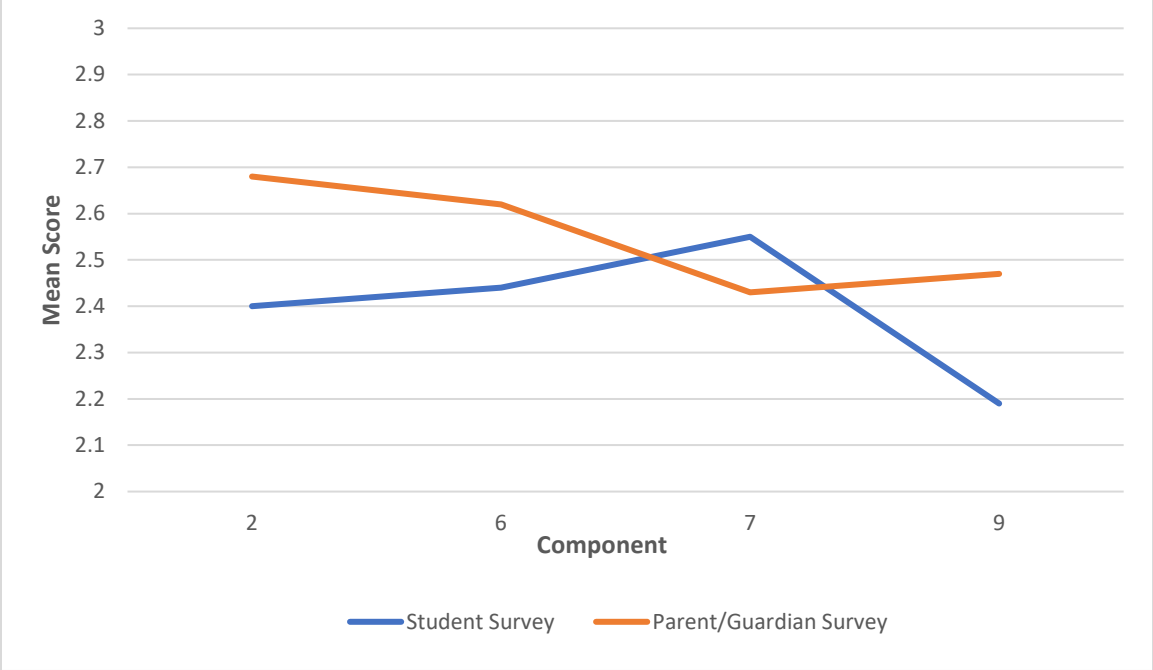

Figure 9. Component Scores over the Duration of the Student and Parent/Guardian Surveys

5.0 Discussion

The number of students with mental health issues is increasing. Some studies indicate that depression has increased in teens by 40% and anxiety has increased by 20% over the last decade (Nutt, 2018; Sugarman, 2017). Similar trends are present at NEHS. Referrals to the NEHS SAP have increased by 121% from 2012 to 2018. Mental health issues can have a profound impact on student learning. The increase in students with mental health issues, the impact that mental health issues have on student learning, and SAP as the primary vehicle to address student mental health issues were the primary motivations for conducting this study.

The setting for this study was NEHS. NEHS is located among the sprawling grape vineyards in the northeastern corner of North Western Pennsylvania. NEHS is a small rural high school with a total student enrollment of approximately 520 students. Over 50% of the student population is identified as economically disadvantaged, nearly 14% are identified as special education, and approximately 94% of the students are white. SAP is the primary support service to address student mental health issues at NEHS. Therefore, members of the NEHS SAP team, SAP student participants, and SAP parent/guardian participants were the population of this study.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the NEHS SAP, determine what impact the NEHS SAP has on reducing barriers to learning, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the NEHS SAP team. This chapter provides an interpretation of the study's findings. Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research will also be discussed.

5.1 What Impact Does the NEHS SAP Have on Reducing Barriers to Learning?

To provide context for this study a document review was conducted. The first step was to identify all NESD policies regarding SAP. Two policies were identified: Policy 5163, Student Assistance and Policy 146, Student Services. Policy 5163 was adopted by the NESD in 1990 to meet the legislative mandates established by PDE under Act 211 (see Section 2.3). This policy authorizes the establishment of SAP based on the PDE model (Student Assistance, 1990). Policy 5163 emphasizes the importance of the multidisciplinary team, data informed decision-making, and student and parent confidentiality. This policy was last revised in 2004, but is currently under review by the North East School Board.

Policy 146 Student Services was adopted in 2018. The purpose of this policy is to, "develop a written plan for implementing a comprehensive and integrated K-12 program of student services, based on the needs of students" (Student Services, 2018). The plan must provide for a SAP. The policy also discusses the need for counseling and psychological services to address the academic and behavioral needs of students. Like Policy 5163, Policy 146 emphasizes the use of the multidisciplinary team.

These two policies in conjunction with Act 211 and Pa. Code § 12.42 create a "simple" theory of action. SAP is to identify at-risk students struggling with substance abuse or mental health issues, and refer these students to the appropriate support service. These actions are intended to reduce barriers to learning and enhance student achievement. However, these policies, at both the district and state level, provide little guidance regarding policy implementation. The flexibility to determine a locally developed process can be beneficial because each school in a school district can develop an SAP to fit the unique needs of its students. However, this lack of guidance may also result in policy fragmentation. For example, the NESD is composed of four

schools. PDE mandates that each school building have a SAP. The result is four different SAPs with variations in services and supports for students. In other words, the "simple" theory of action to identify students and reduce barriers to learning is far more complex than it appears (see Figure 10).

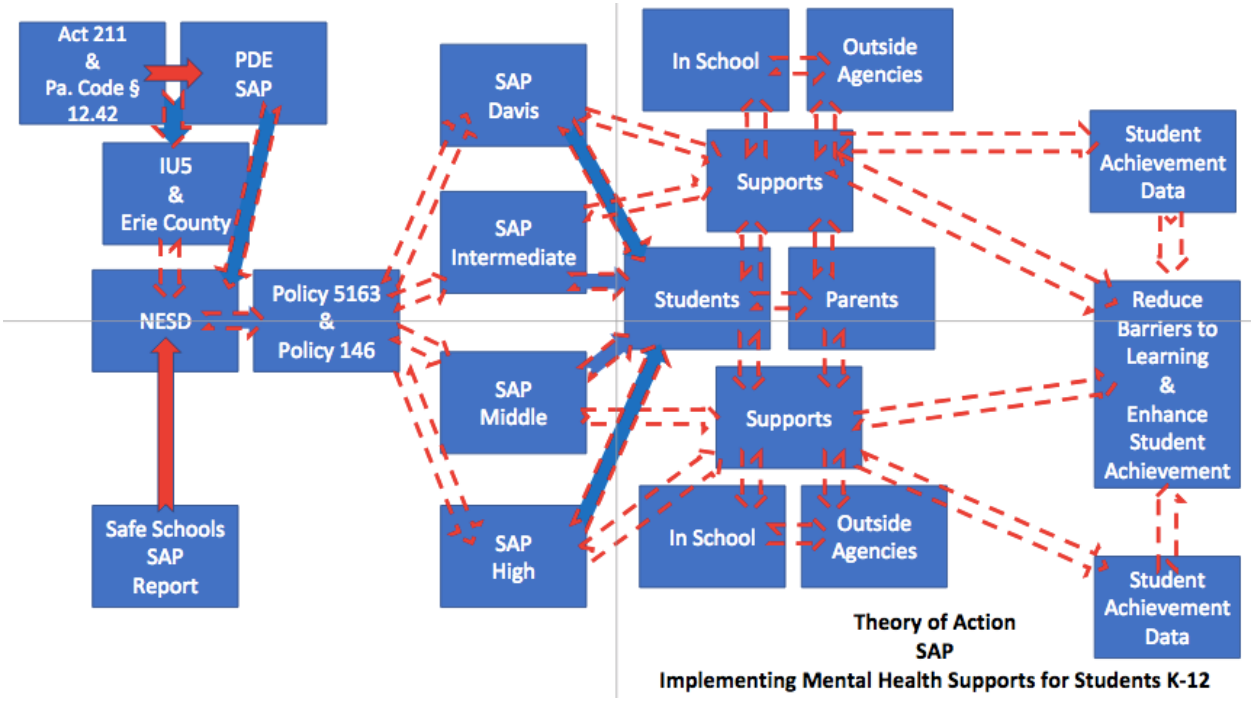

Figure 10. Theory of Action in the NESD

The document review also included a three-year historical analysis of the NEHS SAP. Several important themes were identified in this analysis. First, student referrals to the NEHS SAP are increasing annually. The increases correlate with the literature that states mental health issues are increasing in youth across the nation. However, while the number of student referrals has increased, the number of students who receive services from the NEHS SAP has decreased. Only 46.4% of the students referred to the NEHS SAP during the 2017-2018 received services. By

contrast, 83.6% of student referrals received services during the 2015-2016 school year. The major reason for this decline is student and or parent/guardian refusal to participate in SAP. This finding suggests that additional analysis is needed to determine why students and or parent/guardians are refusing services. This analysis should include a review of the communication strategy used following a student referral. In addition, future analysis needs to determine the primary reasons for a referral. During the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 "other" was identified as the primary reason for referral nearly 20% of the time. This could be a simple error such as the referral source forgetting to identify the reason for the referral. However, a lack of clarity regarding the reason for referral slows down the SAP process and makes the job of the SAP team more difficult.

Student GPA, attendance, and discipline were analyzed prior to SAP enrollment and after SAP enrollment. The analysis suggests that the NEHS SAP has a negligible impact on reducing barriers to learning. For example, over the last three years, 51.3% of students declined in all three categories after participating in the NEHS SAP. Attendance experienced the most significant decline with 67% of students missing more days of school. In short, the NEHS SAP does not appear to be effective at reducing barriers to learning. The NEHS SAP is not unique regarding these findings. Much of the literature states that mental health supports have at best a minimal impact on student achievement (Fertman et al., 2000b; Hoagwood et al., 2007; Scott et al., 1999; Wilburn et al., 2007). This is especially true at the high school level (Hoagwood et al., 2007).

The analysis found positive themes as well. The number of referrals to the NEHS SAP has increased. On the surface, this appears to be a negative trend. However, research indicates that 80% of the students who suffer from mental health issues do not get help (Anderson & Cardoza, 2016). Referrals to the NEHS SAP have increased because teachers, counselors, and administrators are identifying more students in need of help. In other words, students who may

have fallen through the cracks in the past are now being identified and have the opportunity to access mental health services through SAP. In addition, GPA and discipline have improved in students who have been referred to SAP since 2015-2016. In comparison to the 2015-2016 school year, GPA improved by 5% in 2016-2017 and 18% in 2017-2018 (see Figure 7). Using 2015-2016 as the comparison year, discipline improved by 19% in 2016-2017 and 6% in 2017-2018 (see Figure 7). Overall, GPA, attendance, and discipline improved by 12% from 2015-2016 to 2017-2018 (see Figure 7).

5.2 Identify the Strengths and Weaknesses of the NEHS SAP

SAP is the primary support service schools use to address the mental health needs of their students (Fertman et al., 2003). The effectiveness of a SAP is dependent on the training, functioning, and resources of the SAP team (Commonwealth Student Assistance Program Interagency Committee, 2015). To evaluate a SAP, the Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistance Services recommends the use of the Program Effectiveness Checklist (Student Assistance Program, 2018b). The Program Effectiveness Checklist was used to evaluate the NEHS SAP, and this evaluation was based on nine essential SAP components.

5.2.1 Component 1: Policy and Procedures

Successful programs start with clear policies and procedures. Although state and district policies do not provide detailed implementation procedures, several policy guides are available through PDE and the Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistance Services. These instruments

have helped the NEHS SAP establish clear policies and procedures. As a result, Component 1 was the highest rated component of the NEHS SAP.

The highest rated indicator of Component 1 was, building level administrators are involved and support SAP. This indicator was also the highest rated indicator of the entire survey, and received the survey's only perfect score. Research indicates this is an important component for a successful SAP. Fertman et al. (2000b) states, "The overriding critical element to SAP policies and procedures was building administrator involvement and support. Having a building administrator who actively sits on the team was stated to be the key to long-term success" (p. 22). One building level administrator sits on the NEHS SAP, the assistant principal. However, a central office administrator also sits on the NEHS SAP, the director of special education. Strong administrator support emphasizes the importance of SAP in the overall function of the school. This is a significant strength of the NEHS SAP.

SAP structure and organization is an indicator of concern in Component 1. SAP structure and organization refers to such things as member titles, member roles and responsibilities, and member selection criteria. This indicator received an exemplary rating, but this indicator had the highest variance score of Component 1. Team member turnover is one reason for the high degree of variance. For example, nine of the 13 members (69%) have fewer than five years' experience participating in the NEHS SAP. This includes two administrators, three counselors, and three different SAP building coordinators. Although there has been a high degree of turnover, the policies and procedures put in place by the NEHS SAP have ensured a high degree of functionality. Fertman et al. (2000b) states, "As new people join the team, having clear policies and procedures assure that the process can continue uninterrupted" (p. 22).

5.2.2 Component 2: Communications

The primary goal of SAP is to identify students who are experiencing learning difficulties, and connect these students to the appropriate support service to reduce barriers to learning (Student Assistance Program, 2017). SAP teams need effective communication strategies to achieve this goal. However, Component 2 was the second lowest component score of the survey.

In-service training about SAP for teachers is an area in need of development. This indicator was one of the lowest scoring indicators of the survey. These findings suggest that staff members outside of SAP play a vital role in addressing the mental health needs of students. This belief has been validated by research. Torres-Rodriguez et al. (2010) found that successful SAPs depend on classroom teachers to identify students and to carry out the recommendations of SAP. Woodruff, Shannon, and Efimba (1998) found that, "Adult collaboration is important in the development of a community of caring and to ensure that all those involved grow from the process" (as cited in Fertman et al., 2000b, p. 5).

5.2.3 Component 3: Referral Mechanisms

The first step to remove a barrier to learning is identification of a student struggling to learn. In SAP, this is accomplished through the referral process. The NEHS SAP earned an exemplary rating in Component 3. This suggests that the NEHS SAP is highly effective at identifying students who are struggling to learn. These findings are supported by the 37% increase in referrals to SAP since 2015-2016.

However, an indicator about case monitoring earned a significantly lower rating than the other indicators in Component 3. Forty-six percent of responders said cases are only monitored

some of the time. This is often the most difficult part of the referral process (Fertman et al., 2000b). Case monitoring is an ongoing process that involves many responsibilities beyond regular SAP meetings. Responsibilities include such things as phone calls to parents/guardians, collaborating with outside agencies, and constant monitoring of student outcomes such as GPA, attendance, and discipline in relation to SAP services. The findings of this component and this survey indicate the NEHS SAP team is not effective at monitoring student cases. Fertman et al., (2000b) states, "Case monitoring is essential for any referral to be effective . . . Monitoring must continue until the student's needs have been addressed" (p. 6). Case monitoring is a weakness identified by this study and an action plan will be developed to address this issue.

5.2.4 Component 4: Parent Participation

Parental involvement is one of the most important factors in student success (Fertman et al., 2000b; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2013). However, Eppler and Weir (2009) state, "Families who do not feel understood by school personnel may either disconnect or remain disengaged from the school system" (p. 502). Therefore, SAP teams need to make parent engagement a top priority. The NEHS SAP received an exemplary rating in Component 4, and was the second highest rated component of the survey. An exemplary rating was also earned in the parent/guardian survey in Component 4 as well. These results suggest that parents are valued partners in the SAP process. The NEHS SAP achieved this through their commitment to confidentiality (see Table 9). This has helped build strong and trusting relationships with students and parents. Parent participation is a major strength of the NEHS SAP and is an area that can be used to strengthen other SAP components (Fertman et al., 2000b).

5.2.5 Component 5: Team Planning

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (1991) Plan for The General Assembly: Student Assistance Program states, "A core team is the heart of the student assistance program" (p. 2). The core team is responsible for processing student referrals, communicating and collaborating with multiple stakeholders, and making data informed decisions to reduce barriers to learning. Teams must be operating at a high level to be effective and achieve this goal. The NEHS SAP received an exemplary rating in Component 5. These findings suggest that SAP meetings and preparation time to carry out SAP related responsibilities such as document collection and parent communications are a high priority of the NEHS SAP.

However, an indicator about member roles and responsibilities requires further discussion. This indicator received an adequate rating, but it was tied with another indicator in the survey receiving the highest degree of variance (variance = .56). These findings suggest that nearly 40% of SAP team members are unsure of their role and their responsibility. Fertman et al. (2000b) states, "For a SAP team to function properly it needs an organization structure that clearly defines what is expected of team members" (p. 10). Strength in this indicator can make meetings more productive and help case managers effectively address the needs of their students.

5.2.6 Component 6: Interventions and Recommendations

SAPs do not diagnose or treat students. Fertman et al. (2003) states, "rather, they link students and their families to behavioral health education, programs, and services" (p. 4). The first step in this process takes place in Component 6. The NEHS SAP scored an adequate rating in this component, but earned an exemplary rating in the indicator about linking students and parents to

school and community services. This suggests that the NEHS SAP is meeting one of the core objectives of SAP, linking students and parents to behavioral health services.

In contrast, an indicator about case monitoring received the lowest score of Component 6 and one of the lowest indicator scores of the entire survey. These findings indicate that communication and collaboration is reduced after SAP links students and parents to behavioral health services. Similar results about case monitoring were also found in Component 3, Component 7, and Component 9. Fertman et al. (2000b) states, "Vigilant case monitoring is vital" (p. 23).

5.2.7 Component 7: Follow-up and Support

The next step in the SAP process linking students and parents to behavioral health services occurs in Component 7. The NEHS SAP scored an adequate rating in Component 7. As seen in previous components, indicators about access to behavioral health resources received high scores in Component 7. However, indicators related to case monitoring received lower scores. Fertman et al. (2000b) states, "Monitoring and follow-up of referred students are crucial as often a team lets go of a student prematurely" (p. 23). In other words, the SAP team closes a student's case before determining if an intervention is effective. These findings suggest that the NEHS SAP team is effective at identifying students struggling with mental health issues and linking them to behavioral health services. However, the effectiveness of these services is rarely assessed in relation to student outcomes. This makes it difficult to remove barriers to learning and enhance academic achievement (Student Assistance Program, 2017).

5.2.8 Component 8: Training

The core team is the heart of SAP. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (1991), states, "Members of the team need to have a common base of knowledge regarding student assistance programs in relation to adolescent chemical dependency, suicide, and other mental health concerns" (p. 2). Component 8 was the lowest scoring component of the survey. Two indicators about the professional development needs of the SAP team earned the lowest scores of the entire survey.

The findings of this study suggest that students and parents have access to resources in school and outside of school through SAP. On the other hand, the findings in Component 8 suggest that the SAP team does not have access to adequate resources such as the opportunity to participate in advanced trainings. In addition, several members of the NEHS SAP team are not trained in counseling or psychology (e.g., teachers, administrators, nurse). Research indicates that many educators are not comfortable addressing the mental health needs of students without appropriate and ongoing training (Mychailyszyn et al., 2012; Phillippo & Kelly, 2013; Torres-Rodriguez et al., 2010). The results of Component 8 suggest that several members of the NEHS SAP team believe this is the case.

This study identified several components of the NEHS SAP in need of development (see Section 5.5). Many of these components can be addressed through core team trainings. For example, results of this study indicate that nearly 40% of NEHS SAP team members are unsure of their role and responsibility on the SAP team. To address issues such as this, Intermediate Units (IU) have developed team maintenance workshops. Many of these workshops provide strategies to help SAP teams strengthen the core structure and organization of their team. Previous trainings have also focused on educating SAP teams in areas such as youth suicide and school law.

5.2.9 Component 9: Outcome Indicators and Evaluation

The primary goal of SAP is to reduce barriers to learning and enhance student achievement (Student Assistance Program, 2017). To ensure that a SAP is working towards this goal continuous monitoring and evaluation is needed. The NEHS SAP scored an adequate rating in Component 9. This was the third lowest component score of the survey.

Schools typically fulfill this requirement by analyzing the data provided in the annual PDE 4092 report. This report provides anonymous student data and is not a rigorous measure of student outcomes. For example, 79,775 students were referred to SAP in PA during the 2017-2018 school year (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). However, only 3,109 students were listed in the attendance category. This is not an adequate measure of student outcomes in relation to SAP services. The NEHS SAP team appears split on this issue. One indicator in Component 9 that measured student outcomes such as attendance and GPA had the highest variance score of the survey (variance = .56). This finding suggests that many members of the NEHS SAP do not believe the PDE 4092 report is an adequate measure of student outcomes.

The lowest indicator score of Component 9 was about stakeholder input. It is worth noting that stakeholder input was solicited for this study by using the Student SAP Satisfaction Survey and the Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey. Component 9 was the lowest rated component in the student survey, and the second lowest rated component in the parent/guardian survey. These results suggest that greater stakeholder input is needed to evaluate and improve the NEHS SAP.

5.3 Determine Student and Parent Satisfaction of the NEHS SAP

Multiple stakeholders are involved in SAP. An evaluation of a SAP must include these stakeholders in order to get an accurate assessment of a program. Fertman et al. (2000a) calls this a 360-degree feedback process. The SAP Student Satisfaction Survey and the SAP Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey were designed to collect stakeholder information specific to the NEHS SAP. Both surveys were developed based on essential SAP components. The following analysis will refer to the three-point scale discussed in Section 4.5.

5.3.1 Component 2: Communications

The NEHS SAP scored an adequate rating in Component 2 in the student survey, and an exemplary rating in the parent/guardian survey. Component 2 was the second highest rated component score in the parent/guardian survey. In contrast, Component 2 was the second lowest component score in the student survey. These results suggest that parents have a clear understanding of SAP and why their child was referred to SAP. However, students do not have a clear understanding of SAP or why they were referred to SAP. One explanation for this difference is the dissemination of SAP information. Parents/guardians are given a detailed explanation about SAP and why their child was referred to SAP prior to SAP participation. Literature about SAP and permission to participate in SAP is sent home prior to SAP participation as well.

However, a majority of the student participants in this study were referred to SAP for disciplinary reasons (64.29%). Many of these referrals were generated automatically (i.e., a suspension generates an automatic referral). Very little information about SAP is visible throughout NEHS. Therefore, many students are introduced to SAP for the first time after a

disciplinary incident. Fertman et al. (2000b) states, "Maintaining consistent visibility by the use of pictures, posters, flyers, brochures, websites, and so forth, was seen as contributing to accessing SAP" (p. 22).

5.3.2 Component 4: Parent Participation

The NEHS SAP scored an exemplary rating in Component 4 in the parent/guardian survey. This was the highest rated component of the parent/guardian survey. Similar results were found in Component 4 of the Program Effectiveness Checklist. As stated earlier, these findings suggest that parents believe they are valued and respected stakeholders in the SAP process. This information is encouraging because research has shown that strong parental involvement is an important factor in student success (Fertman et al., 2000b). In addition, Fertman et al. (2000b) found that strong parent participation can lead to improvements in other SAP components such as Policy and Procedures, Referral Mechanism, Team Planning, Follow-up and Support, and Outcome Indicators and Evaluation. Parent participation is clearly a strength of the NEHS SAP.

5.3.3 Component 6: Interventions and Recommendations

The NEHS SAP scored an adequate rating in Component 6 in the student survey, and an exemplary rating in the parent/guardian survey. This was the second highest rated component score in the student survey. The SAP team was the focus of this question in both surveys. Results of the survey suggest that the SAP team is effective in working together to address the mental health needs of students. This is consistent with the literature that states a multidisciplinary team

that uses multiple intervention strategies is necessary to reduce barriers to learning (Fertman et al., 2000b; Student Assistance Program, 2017; Torres-Rodriguez et al., 2010).

5.3.4 Component 7: Follow-up and Support

The NEHS SAP scored an exemplary rating in Component 7 in the student survey, and an adequate rating in the parent/guardian survey. Component 7 was the highest rated component of the student survey, and the only component of the survey that scored an exemplary rating. In contrast, Component 7 was the lowest rated component in the parent/guardian survey. The findings suggest that students and parents/guardians believe they have adequate access to SAP and are treated well by members of the SAP team. However, a case monitoring question was asked in the parent/guardian survey but not in the student survey. This question earned one of the lowest scores of the parent/guardian survey. Fertman et al. (2000b) states, "A key to follow-up activities is the sharing of status updates among all parties involved" (p. 11). Results of the parent/guardian survey indicate that this is not taking place. These results are consistent with other case monitoring questions/indicators found in this study.

5.3.5 Component 9: Outcome Indicators and Evaluation

The NEHS SAP scored an adequate rating in Component 9 in the student survey and the parent/guardian survey. Component 9 was the lowest component score in the student survey and the second lowest component score in the parent/guardian survey. Most of these scores can be attributed to case monitoring type of questions.

The open-ended section of the surveys illustrates this point. Both surveys asked respondents, "How SAP can improve?" Students said:

- "Checking in with students more frequently."
- "See her more throughout the week."

Parent/guardians said:

- "More feedback would be good."
- "More communication about progress in the program."

This is interesting because Component 2: Communication scored an exemplary rating in the parent/guardian survey. These findings indicate that parents/guardians understand what SAP is, but they are not satisfied with the amount of feedback they receive about their child's progress in SAP.

The results of Component 9 also suggest a connection between case monitoring and success in school. For example, student participants and parent/guardian participants were asked a series of questions about SAP participation and success in school. The questions were aligned with indicators in Component 9 that monitored, tracked, and assessed student outcomes. These questions earned the lowest indicator scores in both surveys. In short, indicators that evaluated both case monitoring and student outcomes were some of the lowest scoring indicators in both the student survey and the parent/guardian survey.

5.4 Identifying Benchmarks of Effectiveness and Action Plans

This study engaged key stakeholders in a 360-degree evaluation of the NEHS SAP. Fertman et al. (2000a) states, "The 360 degree feedback process is designed to contribute to

continuous SAP improvement. Using the process, each SAP can establish their own unique Benchmarks to guide their program's development" (p. 12). Benchmarking is common among educational and organizational settings. Benchmarking Human Resource Activity (1999) states, "benefits include . . . promoting an organizational dialogue about how things are and what needs to change . . . and encouraging innovation and exchange of ideas" (as cited in Auluck, 2002, p. 116).

The findings of this study suggest that benchmarks should be developed in the following areas:

- Component 9: Outcome Indicators and Evaluation;
- Component 2: Communications;
- Component 7: Follow-up and Support; and
- Component 8: Training.

5.4.1 Component 9: Outcome Indicators and Evaluation

Component 9 was the lowest rated component in the student survey, the second lowest rated component in the parent/guardian survey, and the third lowest rated component in the Program Effectiveness Checklist. It was also the only component of the study that all three stakeholder groups identified as an area in need of development. As stated earlier, most of the indicators in Component 9 are about monitoring, tracking, and assessing student outcomes in relation to SAP services.

5.4.2 Component 2: Communications

Component 2 was the second lowest rated component in the student survey and the Program Effectiveness Checklist. It was also the only other component in which two of the three stakeholder groups identified as an area in need of development. These findings suggest a need to educate students and teachers about SAP, who makes up the SAP team, and the services that SAP can provide. Fertman et al.'s (2000b) 1999 study of SAP described exemplary schools. They stated, "Teams updated and revised their communication literature yearly disseminating this information widely through multiple sources. Constant and ongoing communication made SAP accessible to students, parents, and school personnel" (p. 24).

5.4.3 Component 8: Training and Component 7: Follow-up and Support

Component 8 and Component 7 were identified by one stakeholder group as an area in need of development. Component 8 was identified by the Program Effectiveness Checklist, or the NEHS SAP team as an area of need. This was the lowest rated component of the Program Effectiveness Checklist. These findings suggest that the NEHS SAP team believes ongoing training is essential for an effective SAP. This is supported in the literature. Fertman et al. (2000a) states, "The benchmarks must promote substantial, long-term professional development for teachers and administrators" (p. 14). Component 7 was identified by parents/guardians as an area of need. Clearly, Component 7 is about follow-up care, but one indicator was specifically about case monitoring. Fertman et al. (2000a) states, "A single indicator must not drive the benchmarks" (p. 14). However, the score of this indicator drove down the component score to such a degree that Component 7 became the lowest rated component of the parent/guardian survey. Furthermore,

indicators regarding case monitoring received lower scores in multiple components in all three surveys.

5.4.4 Action Plans

Fertman et al. (2000a) states, "In order to establish benchmarks that are meaningful to a specific SAP, each program must develop an individually tailored action plan" (p. 14). The first action plan will address Component 9: Outcome Indicators and Evaluation, and Component 7: Follow-up and Support. The plan will also address the case monitoring indicators that received low scores in this study. This action plan will modernize the collection, storage, and accessibility of documents used by the NEHS SAP. This will be accomplished by converting paper documents into electronic fillable forms. Information from the electronic forms will be stored on the district's secure Google Drive account. Currently, all information is collected using a paper and pencil method and it is stored in the NEHS guidance office. For example, the SAP team collects student information from teachers by sending out teacher checklists. The checklists are paper documents and teachers frequently misplace the checklist. It can take several weeks to complete the document collection for a student. This slows down the SAP team's ability to provide interventions and reduce barriers to learning. Teachers that are members of the SAP team do not spend a lot of time in the guidance office, and do not have regular access to SAP records. Therefore, SAP files are rarely used after the SAP team recommends an intervention for a student. An electronic case monitoring document will be developed as part of this action plan as well. This document will help case managers monitor student outcomes such as grades, attendance, and discipline in relationship to SAP services. Feedback from students and parents/guardians about SAP services will also be collected in this document. Case managers will complete this document once a quarter

for every student on their caseload. This action plan will make data collection more efficient, and help the SAP team monitor student progress more effectively.

The second action plan will address Component 8: Training, and Component 2: Communications. This action plan will be a proposed professional learning program about student mental health for the NESD and the North East community. The program will target specific stakeholder groups such as the SAP team, teachers and support staff, students, and parents and community members. This program will be a coordinated effort among administrators in the NESD and local mental health experts. Several sessions about student mental health will be proposed throughout the 2019-2020 school year to increase awareness of mental health issues and offer practical supports for educators and parents. Each session will be developed to meet the unique needs of each stakeholder group. For example, trainings for teachers will focus on topics such as the impact of trauma on child development and strategies to support students struggling with anxiety in the classroom. However, sessions for parents will focus on the warning signs of mental illness and the services available in the community to support children struggling with mental health issues. The SAP team will also engage in advanced trainings concerning student mental health and will lead some of the professional development sessions for teachers and support staff. This action plan is primarily focused on Component 8: Training and Component 2: Communications. However, this plan could strengthen nearly every component of the NEHS SAP and play a significant role in reducing barriers to student learning (Fertman et al., 2000a).

This study provided a comprehensive analysis of the NEHS SAP, but many questions remain about SAP and school based mental health services. The third action plan is a series of questions directed at educational leaders at the local and state level, community members, and

policy makers. These questions will encourage stakeholders to evaluate the current SAP model and the state of student mental health policy at the local and state level.

1. The results of this study indicate that SAP has a negligible impact on reducing barriers to learning. Is the current SAP model outdated? Does the current model meet the needs of schools, students, and parents?
2. Parental consent is needed for a student to participate in SAP. This procedure does not align to the current legal framework regarding the mental health treatment of a minor (Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and Pennsylvania Department of Health, 2018). The law states that a minor can consent to mental health treatment without the consent of a parent. The law also states that a parent can give consent for a minor to receive mental health treatment without the consent of the minor. Is the current procedure requiring parental permission for SAP services the most effective method to reduce barriers to learning?
3. There is no direct funding for SAP (Commonwealth Student Assistance Program Interagency Committee, 2011). Does the current funding formula provide sufficient resources and help schools develop and administer effective SAPs?
4. Research indicates that teachers play an important role in supporting students struggling with mental health issues (Collins et al., 2013; Mychailyszyn et al., 2012; Phillippo & Kelly, 2013; Torres-Rodriguez et al., 2010). How can SAP better support teachers? What practical knowledge do teachers need to support students struggling with mental health issues and reduce barriers to learning?
5. A growing body of research indicates academic success is connected to the social–emotional functioning of a student (Mychailyszyn et al., 2012; Suldo et al., 2013).

Should schools be mandated to include social and emotional learning in their K-12 curriculum?

6. Outside agencies help schools fill the gap in services for students struggling with mental health issues, but collaboration with outside agencies is difficult for schools (Vaillancourt & Amador, 2014). How can schools strengthen collaboration with outside agencies to remove barriers to learning while maintaining student confidentiality, and ensuring that the school remains a safe and productive learning environment for all students?

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The variety of scales used in the surveys was a limitation of this study. The Program Effectiveness Checklist used a three-point scale, but the Student Satisfaction Survey and the Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey used a five-point scale. The difference in scales made data analysis difficult. A conversion formula was used to convert the student survey and parent/guardian survey into a three-point scale (see Section 4.5). This helped identify common themes and differences in all three surveys. However, this conversion could also confuse the reader. Future research should use a backward by design model and develop the scales for the survey first.

The study's focus on the NEHS SAP was a limitation as well. For example, purposive sampling was used rather than random sampling. This strategy helped identified stakeholders specific to the NEHS SAP. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) also recommend 100 observations as a sample size for survey research (as cited in Mertens, 2015). However, the design of this study

limited the number of survey participants to 45 people. In addition, the SAP Student Satisfaction Survey and the SAP Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey were specifically designed to evaluate the NEHS SAP. Therefore, the results of this study are not generalizable (Mertens, 2015).

A lack of longitudinal data was a limitation of this study. The document review conducted for this study provided three years of historical data about the NEHS SAP. However, the SAP Satisfaction Surveys collected data from participants who were enrolled in SAP for less than three months. For many of these participants (55%), this was their first year participating in the NEHS SAP. In other words, many of the survey respondents had very little knowledge or experience in the NEHS SAP.

Another limitation of the study was its use of quantitative methods. A small percentage of data were collected using qualitative methods in the open-ended sections of the SAP Satisfaction Surveys. A phone interview was also used to conduct the parent/guardian survey. However, the survey questions were read as a script. This kept a majority of respondents on track and focused on the survey questions. Most of the data for this study were collected using quantitative methods. This provided access to a lot of information very quickly. However, quantitative methods are impersonal; it does not allow for deeper probing questions and provides little flexibility to adapt a study after it begins (Mertens, 2015). Future research regarding SAP and school based mental health supports should explore the use of a mixed method study. The design of the study should also be longitudinal in nature, which will provide repeated measurements of a student and the program over long periods of time. These steps will provide a deeper analysis of the subject and make the findings of the study more generalizable.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Studies

The number of students struggling with mental health issues is increasing, and mental health issues can have a negative impact on student outcomes (Anderson & Cardoza, 2016; Daly et al., 2006; Nelson et al., 2004; Rossen & Cowan, 2015; Suldo et al., 2013; Weist et al., 2007). If this is the case, why have so few researchers explored this topic? As stated earlier, a review of literature conducted by Hoagwood et al. (2007) found only 24 studies in which both academic and mental health outcomes were examined. The vast majority of these studies were also conducted at the elementary school level (Hoagwood et al., 2007). Even fewer studies have examined SAP. Dr. Fertman's research aside, just three additional studies about SAP could be found. PDE promotes SAP as a vehicle to reduce barriers to learning and enhance academic achievement (Student Assistance Program, 2017). However, there is little empirical evidence to support this claim. Additional research in this area could make student mental health a national, state, and local priority.

In combination with the first recommendation, future studies need to focus on practical school based supports. The research available highlights the negative impact that mental health issues have on student outcomes such as academic achievement and attendance in school. However, very few studies provide practical solutions for educators to address these problems in a school setting. Again, this is especially true at the high school level. For example, a recent article in the *School Administrator* discussed the impact of student depression. Akhavan (2019) states, "All staff members need to become competent in understanding mental health issues of students" (p. 29). This statement is very true. Empathy, compassion, and awareness are very important. However, knowing that a student is struggling with mental health issues, and being able to provide support for a student are two very different things. A few studies have explored

the use of cognitive behavioral therapy, mindfulness, and Growth Mindset techniques in the classroom as methods to address the mental health needs of students (Collins et al., 2013; Matsuda, 2019; Mychailyszyn et al., 2012; Shafer, 2017; Torres-Rodriguez et al., 2010). Additional research in these areas could provide teachers with the tools necessary to combat the mental health crisis in our schools.

5.7 Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from this evaluation of the NEHS SAP. First, referrals to SAP have increased dramatically over the last three years, suggesting that the numbers of students struggling with mental health issues is increasing at NEHS. Second, participation in the NEHS SAP has a modest impact on removing barriers to learning. GPA and attendance declined and discipline referrals increased in a majority of students participating in SAP. Yet, improvements were found in this area. GPA improved by 18% since 2015-2016. Third, all nine components used to evaluate the NEHS SAP scored either an adequate or exemplary rating, suggesting that stakeholders believe the NEHS SAP is an effective program. These findings seem to contradict the findings associated with student learning. How could the NEHS SAP be an effective program if it has minimal impact on reducing barriers to learning? The participants in this study were clear. One hundred percent of parents/guardians and 66.6% of students said they would recommend SAP as a place to get help. Likewise, 85.7% of parents/guardians and 89.4% of students said they are treated well by the SAP team. These findings suggest that student outcomes such as GPA should not be the only measure of an effective mental health program.

Similar conclusions were found in similar studies (Fertman et al., 2003; Hoagwood et al., 2007; Suldo et al., 2013).

Although no component of the NEHS SAP was deemed inadequate, several components were identified as areas in need of development. These components include outcome indicators and evaluation, communications, follow-up and support, and training. Inefficient case monitoring practices and a lack of ongoing professional development regarding student mental health for the SAP team and the NEHS staff were the major reasons these components received low scores. This study also identified parent participation as a significant strength of the NEHS SAP. This has important implications because strong parent participation can lead to improvements in other SAP components (Fertman et al., 2000b). The willingness of parents to communicate with the SAP team indicates that a procedure to inform parents of their child's progress within SAP needs to be developed. An action plan to modernize the collection, storage, and accessibility of documents used by the NEHS SAP team along with the development of an electronic case monitoring document will address this issue.

More youth are struggling with mental health issues than ever before, and this is creating a substantial barrier to student learning (Anderson & Cardoza, 2016; Daly et al., 2006; Nelson et. al., 2004; Rossen & Cowan, 2015; Suldo et al., 2013; Weist et al., 2007). There is no silver bullet to address the mental health crisis in our schools, but an effective Student Assistance Program can help improve the social and emotional health of a school and reduce barriers to learning (Fertman et al., 2003). This study identified components of the NEHS SAP that are in need of development. However, far more positive elements were found in this study than negative ones. The positive elements of this study, such as parent participation, will become the foundation on which the NEHS SAP can continuously improve. This study has already spurred a dialogue among educators

in the NESD and mental health experts in the community. The results of this study were shared at a community event titled *Let's Talk About It* in February of 2019. The program covered topics such as the signs and symptoms of mental illness and resources available in the school and the community. Audience members also had the opportunity to hear testimony from individuals struggling with mental illness. The success of this event will assist in the development of a professional learning program for the NESD and the North East community about student mental health. This study will continue to promote an ongoing dialogue about student mental health among the NEHS SAP team, educators in the NESD, and parents and community members in North East. This dialogue will encourage collaboration among these stakeholders to find practical solutions to reduce barriers to learning.

Appendix A Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Effectiveness Checklist

Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program
Effectiveness Checklist

Member name	Date
Building	District

Instructions: Please rate each SAP component indicator for your SAP by using the following scale:
1: = Never Present 2: = Sometimes Present 3: = Present All Of The Time

Component 1 Policy and Procedures

Building administrators are involved and support SAP	1	2	3	
Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health SAP liaison works with team	1	2	3	
SAP Coordinator for the Building	1	2	3	
Policy violations and consequences for alcohol, drugs, involving weapons, tobacco	1	2	3	
SAP Structure and organization (including members and titles, clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, meeting times, membership selection criteria, etc.)	1	2	3	Total

Component 2 Communications

Description of SAP Services for faculty, students and others including handbooks, brochures, etc.	1	2	3	
In-services for teachers, pupil personnel, support staff, and administrators provide time and support for SAP informational updates	1	2	3	
Specific student communication strategy	1	2	3	
Specific parent communication strategy	1	2	3	Total

Component 3 Referral Mechanisms

SAP is accessible to all targeted students	1	2	3	
Formal referral procedures and decision-making process	1	2	3	
Screening process includes clear and consistent student data collection and review procedures	1	2	3	
Confidentiality guidelines for team are well delineated with members demonstrating respect for and understanding of parents' and students' privacy rights	1	2	3	
Cases are continuously monitored	1	2	3	Total

Component 4 Parent Participation

Formal parent involvement procedure	1	2	3	
Policy statement defining parents/guardians as decision makers who provide active consent and includes a formal parent involvement and satisfaction procedure	1	2	3	
Confidentiality guidelines known and respected	1	2	3	
Demonstration of respect for parent and family privacy rights	1	2	3	
Clear and consistent parent consent process and procedures	1	2	3	
Information release form process and procedures for consent to exchange confidential student information	1	2	3	Total

Component 5 Team Planning

Regular meeting time sufficient to complete SAP work	1	2	3	
Members' roles and responsibilities are articulated (e.g. leaders, secretary, case manager)	1	2	3	
Case assignment and management procedures	1	2	3	
Regular meeting space with access to telephone	1	2	3	
Inter-team communication system	1	2	3	Total

Component 6 Intervention and Recommendations

Support and provide linkages for students and parents to access school and community services	1	2	3	
Team monitors and receives feedback on school and community assessments	1	2	3	
Continuous monitoring of student progress, parent involvement and recommendations	1	2	3	
Written guidelines for dealing with problems that are beyond the scope of the school's responsibility (e.g. provision of treatment, suicidal assessment)	1	2	3	
Written information available on community resources, services, and other options	1	2	3	Total

Component 7 Follow-up and Support

Procedures promote student access to and compliance with school and community services and treatment recommendations	1	2	3	
School resources are available and accessible	1	2	3	
Student follow-up procedure and process promotes student contact and support	1	2	3	
Community resources are available and accessible	1	2	3	
Continuous monitoring of student progress, parent involvement and treatment recommendations compliance	1	2	3	Total

Component 8 Training

Team members participate in all Commonwealth Approved training	1	2	3	
Team members participate in a maintenance and development training program	1	2	3	
Team has adequate training schedule and budget	1	2	3	
Team members have opportunity and support for advanced SAP training	1	2	3	
School and community agency staff participate in ongoing SAP training	1	2	3	Total

Component 9 Outcome Indicators and Evaluation

SAP monitoring and improvement mechanisms are in place	1	2	3	
SAP team maintains a student data management system to track student attendance, GPA, failed courses, grade retention, and school leaving	1	2	3	
Student SAP service participation and utilization system provides accurate and timely information	1	2	3	
Student interventions, recommendations, and outcomes are regularly assessed for quality and goal attainment	1	2	3	
Stakeholder input and suggestions are solicited and utilized	1	2	3	
SAP satisfaction information is solicited and utilized	1	2	3	Total

Appendix B SAP Student Satisfaction Survey

1. What grade are you in?

    a. 9th
    b. 10th
    c. 11th
    d. 12th

2. How many years have you participated in SAP at the high school?

    a. This is my first year participating in SAP.
    b. This is my second year participating in SAP.
    c. This is my third year participating in SAP.
    d. This is my fourth year participating in SAP.
    e. I am not sure how many years I have participated in SAP.

Read each statement below, and circle the number to indicate how much you agree or disagree.

3. I was given an explanation of what SAP is, and how SAP could benefit me.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. I understand the reason why I was referred to SAP.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. It is easy to talk to members of the SAP team.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. I am treated well by the SAP team.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. I feel that the SAP team is working together to help me.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. As a result of the services that I received from SAP, I am better able to cope when things go wrong (e.g., I can deal with problems more effectively).

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. As a result of the services that I received from SAP, I get along better with other people (e.g., peers, teachers, family).

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. As a result of the services that I received from SAP, I am doing better in school.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

11. If I had a friend with a problem, I would recommend SAP as a place to get help.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Read each statement below, and provide a brief description for your answer.

12. What has been the most helpful part of participating in the SAP?

13. How could SAP improve?

Appendix C SAP Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey

1. What is your relationship to the student?
    a. Biological parent
    b. Step parent
    c. Foster parent
    d. Grandparent
    e. Sibling
    f. Aunt or Uncle
    g. Other
        i. Please explain

2. How many years has your child participated in SAP at the high school?
    a. This is the first year participating in SAP.
    b. This is the second year participating in SAP.
    c. This is the third year participating in SAP.
    d. This is the fourth year participating in SAP.
    e. I am not sure how many years my child has participated in SAP.

Read each statement below, and circle the number to indicate how much you agree or disagree.

3. I was given a thorough explanation of what SAP is, and how it could benefit my child.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

4. I was given a thorough explanation about why my child was referred to SAP.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. It is easy to talk to the members of the SAP team.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. I am treated well by the SAP team.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. I feel that the SAP **TEAM** is working together to help my child with their problems.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. The SAP team allows me to share ideas, concerns, and develop goals for my child (e.g., I am involved in the decision-making regarding my child).

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

9. The SAP team communicates with me on a regular basis about my child's progress.

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

10. My child received support in a timely manner after being referred to SAP.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

11. As a result of the services that my child received from SAP, my child is doing better in school.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

12. I would recommend SAP to other parents if they had a child that needed help.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Read each statement below, and provide a brief description for your answer.

13. How has SAP helped your child?

14. How could the SAP improve?

15. If the SAP team referred your child to an outside support service,

    a. Was the service helpful?
    b. What service was recommended?
    c. Was the NEHS SAP effective in follow-up care and support regarding the recommendations of the outside service?

Outside Support Services:

- Outpatient therapy (Achievement Center, Safe Harbor, etc.)
- Acute Partial Program (Sarah Reed, Barber Center)
- School Based Partial Program (Sarah Reed, Community County Day School)
- Crisis Services
- Millcreek Community Hospital
- Additional therapy our counseling (Family based therapy, mobile therapy, etc.).

Appendix D NEHS SAP Informed Consent

Members of the NEHS SAP Team,

In an effort to maintain high standards and quality of service, I am seeking your input on the NEHS SAP. The Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Component Indicator Checklist is designed to help determine the strengths and weaknesses of our SAP program. Feedback from the Checklist will help us build upon our strengths, and address our SAP program's specific developmental needs.

This survey is also part of a dissertation project for the University of Pittsburgh. The project is under the direction of William Renne. The NEHS SAP team will analyze the data, but your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in any reports.

Instructions for Completing the Checklist

1. Click on the link below. This link will bring you to The Program Effectiveness Checklist. The survey has been uploaded to Qualtrics. Qualtrics is an online tool used to distribute the survey, and organize the data.
2. Be sure to complete the basic demographic information at the beginning of the survey.
3. This checklist consists of 46 items that represent the essential SAP components. Read each item carefully and consider as it pertains to our SAP program. Do your best to answer each item.
4. The survey uses a Likert-scale: 1= Never Present, 2 = Sometimes Present, 3 = Present All Of The Time.

Contact

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this project, please feel free to contact me or my advisor. I appreciate your time, and look forward to your feedback.

William Renne

wrenne@nesd1.org

814-725-8671 (1002)

Dr. R. Gerard Longo,

Ph.D., Dissertation Advisor

University of Pittsburgh

longoj@pitt.edu

412-648-1937

Appendix E Student and Parent/Guardian Informed Consent

November 16, 2018

Mr. and Mrs. Doe

Street Address

North East, PA 16428

SAP SATISFACTION SURVEY

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Doe,

Your child is enrolled in the North East High School (NEHS) Student Assistance Program (SAP). The mission statement of the Student Assistance Program states,

"Barriers to learning will be removed and student academic achievement will be enhanced through collaborative prevention, intervention, and post-intervention services."

In order to ensure that our team is working towards this mission, we are seeking student and parent/guardian input on the NEHS SAP. This survey is also part of a dissertation project for the University of Pittsburgh. The study is under the direction of William Renne.

Students will complete the survey in school, using a school laptop, during a session with our mental health counselor, Heidi Martin. All surveys will be completed in private. The survey will be distributed the week of November 27th. The survey is 13 questions long, and should take 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Parents will complete the survey over the phone. Mr. Renne will conduct all of the interviews and record all the answers. The interviews will begin the week of November 27th, and all interviews will occur between 11:00 AM and 1:00 PM. The survey is 15 questions long, and should take 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary, however your feedback is very important to us. The NEHS SAP team will analyze the data, but your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in any reports.

The data generated from these surveys will be used to identify the strengths and weakness of the NEHS SAP. The SAP team will use this data to improve the areas of weakness. The NEHS SAP team believes multiple stakeholders are necessary to accomplish this goal, and we welcome your feedback.

Thank you for your participation in this project. However, **if you do not want your child to participate in this survey please contact Mr. Renne**. In addition to this, **if you do not want to participate in this survey, or you are not available during the times listed above please contact Mr. Renne**. If you have any additional questions or concerns regarding this study, please feel free to contact me or my advisory. I appreciate your time, and look forward to your feedback.

William Renne
Assistant Principal and SAP Team Member
North East High School
wrenne@nesd1.org
814-725-8671 (1002)

Dr. R. Gerard Longo,
Ph.D., Dissertation Advisor
University of Pittsburgh
longoj@pitt.edu
412-648-1937

Appendix F Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Performance Improvement Plan

Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program
Performance Improvement Plan

(Use the data gathered from the component and indicator checklist to develop an action plan)

Member name	Date
Building	District

Component 1 Policy and Procedures

	PERFORMANCE (Select a rating for each indicator)			Performance Goal	Indicators or Measurement of Goal Achievement	Strategies for Achieving Goals	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Target Date for Completion	Outcome	How do other SAPs achieve this goal
	Exemplary	Adequate	Inadequate								
Building administrators are involved and support SAP											
Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health SAP liaisons works with team											
SAP Coordinator for the building											
Policy violations and consequences for alcohol, drugs, involving weapons, tobacco											
SAP Structure and organization (including members and titles, clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, meeting times, membership selection criteria, etc											

Component 2 Communications

	PERFORMANCE (Select a rating for each indicator)			Performance Goal	Indicators or Measurement of Goal Achievement	Strategies for Achieving Goals	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Target Date for Completion	Outcome	How do other SAPs achieve this goal
	Exemplary	Adequate	Inadequate								
Description of SAP Services for faculty, students and others including handbooks, brochures, etc.											
In-services for teachers, pupil personnel, support staff, and administrators provide time and support for SAP informational updates											
Specific student communication strategy											
Specific parent communication strategy											

Component 3 Referral Mechanisms

	PERFORMANCE (Select a rating for each indicator)			Performance Goal	Indicators or Measurement of Goal Achievement	Strategies for Achieving Goals	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Target Date for Completion	Outcome	How do other SAPs achieve this goal
	Exemplary	Adequate	Inadequate								
SAP is accessible to all targeted students											
Formal referral procedures and decision-making process											
Screening process includes clear and consistent student data collection and review procedures											
Confidentiality guidelines for team are well delineated; with members demonstrating respect for and understanding of privacy rights											
Cases are continually monitored											

Component 4 Parent Participation

	PERFORMANCE (Select a rating for each indicator)			Performance Goal	Indicators or Measurement of Goal Achievement	Strategies for Achieving Goals	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Target Date for Completion	Outcome	How do other SAPs achieve this goal
	Exemplary	Adequate	Inadequate								
Formal parent involvement procedure											
Policy statement defining parents/guardians as decision makers who provide active consent and includes a formal parent involvement and satisfaction procedure											
Confidentiality guidelines are known and respected											
Demonstration of respect for parent and family privacy rights											
Clear and consistent parent consent process and procedure											
Information release form process and procedure for consent to exchange confidential student information											

Component 5 Team Planning

	PERFORMANCE (Select a rating for each indicator)			Performance Goal	Indicators or Measurement of Goal Achievement	Strategies for Achieving Goals	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Target Date for Completion	Outcome	How do other SAPs achieve this goal
	Exemplary	Adequate	Inadequate								
Regular meeting times sufficient to complete SAP work											
Members' roles and responsibilities are articulated (e.g. leaders, secretary, case manager)											
Regular meeting space with access to telephone											
Case assignment and management procedures											
Inter-team communication system											

Component 6 Interventions and Recommendations

	PERFORMANCE (Select a rating for each indicator)			Performance Goal	Indicators or Measurement of Goal Achievement	Strategies for Achieving Goals	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Target Date for Completion	Outcome	How do other SAPs achieve this goal
	Exemplary	Adequate	Inadequate								
Team monitors and receives feedback on school and community assessments											
Support and provide linkages for students and parents to access school and community services											
Continuous monitoring of student progress, parent involvement, and recommendations											
Written guidelines used for dealing with problems that are beyond the scope of the school's responsibility (e.g. provision of treatment, suicidal assessment)											
Written information available on community resources, services, and other options											

Component 7 Follow-up and Support

	PERFORMANCE (Select a rating for each indicator)			Performance Goal	Indicators or Measurement of Goal Achievement	Strategies for Achieving Goals	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Target Date for Completion	Outcome	How do other SAPs achieve this goal
	Exemplary	Adequate	Inadequate								
Student follow-up procedure and process promotes student contact and support											
School resources are available and accessible											
Community resources are available and accessible											
Procedures promote student access to, and compliance with, school and community services and treatment recommendations											
Continuous monitoring of student progress, parent involvement and treatment recommendations compliance											

Component 8 Training

	PERFORMANCE (Select a rating for each indicator)			Performance Goal	Indicators or Measurement of Goal Achievement	Strategies for Achieving Goals	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Target Date for Completion	Outcome	How do other SAPs achieve this goal
	Exemplary	Adequate	Inadequate								
Team members participate in all Commonwealth approved training											
Team members participate in a maintenance and development training program											
Team has adequate training schedule and budget											
Team members have opportunity and support for advanced SAP training											
School and community agency staff participate in ongoing SAP training											

Component 9 Outcome Indicators and Evaluation

	PERFORMANCE (Select a rating for each indicator)			Performance Goal	Indicators or Measurement of Goal Achievement	Strategies for Achieving Goals	Person(s) Responsible	Resources Needed	Target Date for Completion	Outcome	How do other SAPs achieve this goal
	Exemplary	Adequate	Inadequate								
SAP monitoring and improvement mechanisms are in place											
SAP team maintains a student data management system to track student attendance, GPA, failed courses, grade retention, and leaving school											
Student SAP service participation and utilization system provides accurate and timely information											
Student interventions, recommendations, and outcomes are regularly assessed for quality and goal attainment											
Stakeholder input and suggestions are solicited and utilized											
SAP satisfaction information is solicited and utilized											

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