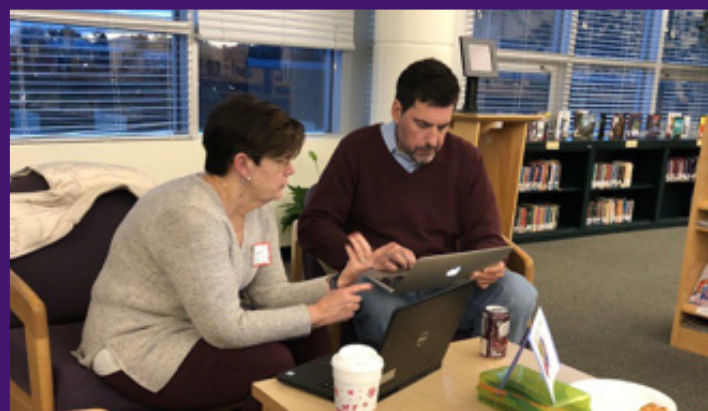


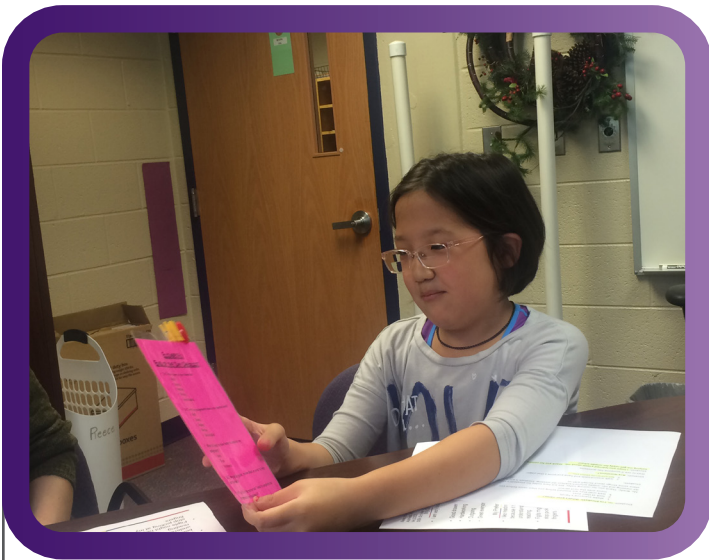


Arlington  
Public  
Schools



# Academic Support BRIEFING REPORT

MARCH 2021



---

# ACADEMIC SUPPORT

---

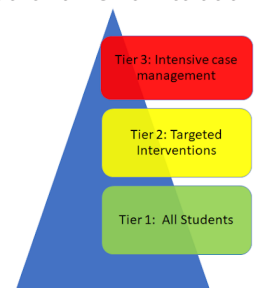
The Office of Student Services (OSS) provides a wide range of support services to all students in the Arlington Public School (APS) system in school psychology, social work and counseling. OSS staff members provide assessments of students being referred for special education services, reevaluate identified students with disabilities in accordance with federal and state regulations, and serve as consultants to schools for instructional issues, behavior management, and social/emotional development.

## **SUPPORTING STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH, SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND ACADEMIC PROGRESS**

Arlington Public Schools has taken a multi-faceted approach to meeting the academic and social emotional/mental health needs of its students. Strategies are implemented at the student, staff and community levels to provide prevention and intervention in the areas of academic and social emotional/mental health. With the understanding that strengthening of both academic and social emotional/mental health practices affects prevention of many secondary needs (e.i.substance abuse or depression), a comprehensive approach is deemed most effective.

## **SEL IS FOR ALL STUDENTS**

To this end, the Office of Student Services uses a multi-tiered system of support framework to address the academic, social emotional and behavioral needs of all students in APS. This framework is known as the Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS) and provides resources and support to help every student reach success in academics and behavior. It begins with systemic change at the division, school and classroom level that utilizes evidence-based, system-wide practices to provide a quick response to academic and behavioral needs. These practices include frequent progress monitoring that enable educators to make sound, data-based instructional decisions for students.



Throughout this past year, APS' priorities have focused on the social emotional and mental health wellbeing of all our students. APS understands that mental health is a broad area that encompasses the social, emotional, and psychological development in children. Through APS curricular areas and the elementary and secondary counseling programs, students are exposed to concepts relating to social skills, peer mediation, character education, citizenship, stress management, and recognition of psychological or emotional needs.

## COUNSELING SERVICES DURING THE PANDEMIC

During COVID 19, professional school counselors have continued to provide comprehensive counseling services during virtual instruction through the multi-tiered system of support identified by Arlington Public Schools' Office of Student Services. In Tier 1, all students have received Social Emotional Learning (SEL) instruction through the use of evidenced based programs. At the elementary and middle school level, using the Second Step program, school counselors have provided social-emotional skill building through classroom lessons virtually via synchronous Team meetings. The counselors have worked in collaboration with teachers to provide classroom strategies to reinforce concepts covered in SEL. Additionally, links were provided to parents with information they could use in the home setting.

In middle school, school counselors provided homeroom teachers with counselor-produced video lessons from Second Step as well as videos that focus on Mindfulness. These lessons and videos have been presented asynchronously on Mondays. Middle school counselors have also worked with teachers to ensure that the skills taught in SEL lessons have been reinforced in their classrooms. Information is sent home to parents via Homelink.

In addition to the lessons from Second Step, both elementary and middle school counselors have provided instruction on bullying prevention, substance abuse prevention and academic planning.

High school counselors have provided SEL instruction using the Sources of Strength program. During virtual advisory periods, teachers have shown counselor-produced videos based on Sources of Strength as well as mindfulness exercises. Teachers have been provided with all the materials and resources needed to show the lessons, practice skills and reinforce concepts presented.

Additionally, all three levels of counselors have provided information regarding College and Career readiness, Academic Course Planning and Transition.



## TARGETED INTERVENTIONS

Tiers 2 and 3 interventions are targeted supports for students who need more individualized assistance. Teachers, parents and administrators make referrals, often by information gleaned from SEL lessons. Tier 2 supports have continued to be provided by school counselors via check-ins, small groups and individual counseling. These services have been provided virtually during asynchronous Mondays and at times when synchronous teaching is not in session.

### Examples of Student Services and Supports by Tier

Tier 1	Tier 2-3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comprehensive School Counseling</li> <li>Professional Development for all staff on the topic of Trauma Sensitive Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual short-term and solution-focused counseling</li> <li>Individual Check-Ins</li> <li>CARS</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explicit instruction in Morning Meetings and TAs</li> <li>Second Step</li> <li>Sources of Strength</li> <li>Mindfulness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group Counseling (Targeted group counseling on issues such as grief and loss)</li> <li>Acculturation, trauma, and reunification support</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers reinforce and practice SEL lessons daily in Morning Meetings or TAs, and send HomeLinks or other materials provided by counselors to families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other skill development and program interventions (such as Superflex, Unstuck and On-Target, Check In-Check Out, Zones of Regulation, etc.)</li> </ul>

## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LESSONS AND SUPPORTS ADAPTED FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

SEL Lessons and Supports			
MONDAY	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MON-FRI	MIDDLE SCHOOL MON-FRI	HIGH SCHOOL MON-FRI
<p><b>6-8</b> Asynchronous Video Based Delivery of Counselor Produced SEL using: 1) K-8 Second Step Lesson Videos* 2) Mindfulness Videos</p> <p><b>9-12</b> Virtual advisory periods for comprehensive high school students deliver SEL video based lessons based upon Sources of Strength* and a series of mindfulness videos. Teachers are expected to show/practice/reflect on lessons. Counselors are expected to support teachers by providing lesson materials.</p> <p>*Delivery of the video-based SEL lessons will contain information from our purchased SEL vendor programs and must be provided to students/parents in a secured protected environment (i.e., it cannot be uploaded to the school's website or other sources copyright)</p>	<p><b>K-5</b> - Synchronous lessons taught by counselors &amp; teachers (Tues-Fri) Counselors hold individual check-ins (office hours (by appointment with families and/or students) Teacher collaboration and consultation. Teacher collaboration and consultation.</p> <p><b>Support Teacher Advisory/SEL:</b> Counselors provide teacher practice strategies to use with students around SEL video-based lessons. Counselors and teachers collaborate to send HomeLinks to families for home practice. Counselors also provide lessons on bullying prevention, substance abuse prevention and academic planning.</p> <p><b>Synchronous Child Protection lessons</b></p> <p><b>Small Group Tier 2:</b> Based on teacher referrals from SEL instruction. Small Group Counseling (e.g., grief and loss) Individual Check-ins Individual Counseling (up to six sessions)</p> <p>Academic, College and Career Planning Transitions to HS</p>	<p>Counselors hold individual check-ins/office hours (by appointment with families and/or students) Teacher collaboration and consultation.</p> <p><b>Support Teacher Advisory/SEL:</b> Counselors provide teacher practice strategies to use with students around SEL video-based lessons. Counselors and teachers collaborate to send HomeLinks to families for home practice. Counselors also provide lessons delivery on bullying prevention, substance abuse prevention and academic planning.</p> <p><b>Small Group Tier 2:</b> Based on teacher referrals from SEL instruction. Small Group Counseling (e.g., grief and loss) Individual Check-ins Individual Counseling (up to six sessions)</p> <p>Academic, College and Career Planning Course Information &amp; Scheduling Transitions from ES and MS</p>	<p>Counselors hold individual check-ins/office hours (by appointment with families and/or students) Teacher collaboration and consultation.</p> <p><b>Small Group Tier 2:</b> Based on teacher referrals from SEL instruction. Small Group Counseling (e.g., grief and loss) Individual Check-ins Individual Counseling (up to six sessions)</p> <p>Academic, College and Career Planning Course Information &amp; Scheduling Transitions from ES and MS</p> <p>Posting of materials for students/parents in Canvas and on the school website to fully access the resources on the site</p>

#ReopeningAPS 14

In order to monitor the mental health and social emotional wellness of students, each middle and high school has surveyed their students about their moods and the effectiveness of supports provided during distance learning. Elementary counselors have continued to monitor wellness of students at their schools with weekly check-ins. For surveys, student IDs and emails have been captured in order for counselors to follow up with students. Mental health resources and support have been provided routinely to students throughout the school year.



In addition to its counseling staff, each school has an assigned school psychologist and school social worker that work with school staff to support students who require more individualized interventions. Thus, school social workers and school psychologists have continued to work individually or in a group setting with students struggling with emotional, behavioral, and social challenges. They have helped students manage issues such as anger, stress, anxiety, self-esteem and resiliency using strategies that include individual and group counseling, role modeling, mentoring, etc.

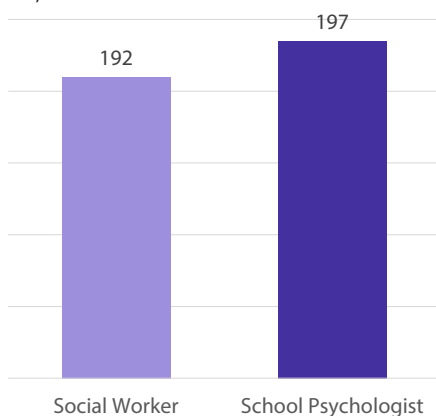
Social workers and school psychologists have shared the responsibility of providing Counseling as a Related Service (CARS) to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Counseling as a Related Service has been provided to students in individual or group sessions, as appropriate, as determined by the counseling provider based on the individual student's needs and the availability of group counseling opportunities at the student's school.



This picture is an example of an interactive virtual office. Many counselors, psychologists and social workers established these virtual spaces to be used in sessions with students, and to be available to students between sessions. Students can “click” on different features pictured here to access virtual calming rooms, books they can read or have read to them, games, or other interactive activities.

As a sample, the chart below reflects the number of counseling sessions conducted during the month of December 2020 with individual students as outlined in their IEP. In addition to each session, staff spent time planning activities targeted to the student's individual needs, consulting with families/staff for follow-up, or documenting the session through counseling notes.

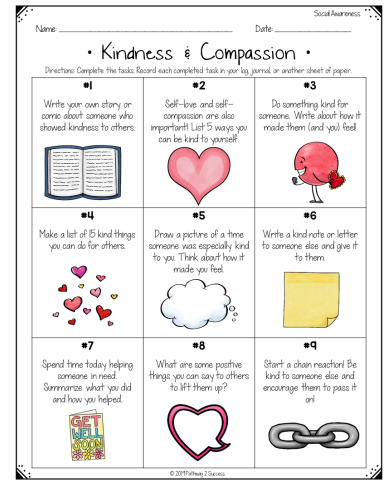
Counseling Sessions per month (approx. 30 min. each) with Individual Students as Outlined in their IEP, in December 2020



Additionally, school psychologists and school social workers have provided assessment consultation and intervention strategies to assist students who are experiencing difficulties in the school setting. As members of the mental health team, they are active members of the multidisciplinary team at their school buildings participating in Student Support Team, IEPs, Section 504 Eligibility and re-evaluation meetings. During these

meetings, they conduct file reviews, consult with staff members, plan/prepare for assessments, and create/develop/monitor student interventions. School psychologists developed new processes for assessment during distance learning. In addition to developing virtual testing practices, they created safe spaces to conduct in-person distanced learning, using new tools and technology to safely interact with students in-person. The Department of Teaching and Learning, Offices of Student Services and Special Education purchased a full digital assessment library to support this initiative. Collaboration with Emergency Management, Information Systems and Finance allowed for the purchase and distribution of necessary devices, PPE, and cleaning supplies in order to set up testing sites across the school division. Psychologists temporarily took on additional testing responsibilities (such as conducting achievement testing that is usually completed by special education teachers) in order to keep testing appointments to a minimum for the students, to reduce the number of staff entering buildings and interacting with families, and to free up special educators to focus on delivering instruction. An additional benefit to this temporary change is to introduce additional achievement testing that is culturally and linguistically more appropriate for English learners being evaluated for special education.

Multi-Disciplinary Team Meetings (SST, IEP, Re-Evaluation, Eligibility, 504) (approx. 60-90 min. each) in December 2020



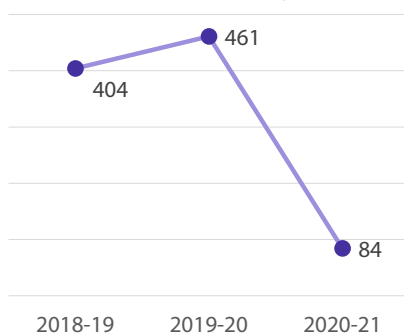
This is an example of a choice board used in counseling.

All school staff have been provided opportunities for training in recognizing signs of depression and suicidal ideation. Staff that are mandated to conduct risk assessments for suicide or violence (school psychologists, social workers, and counselors) have been trained in such procedures, with ongoing training in that area for new staff and to refresh current staff. Procedures and protocols for suicide risk assessment were adapted based on guidance from the American School Counseling Association and the National Association of School Psychologists.

During distance learning, schools continued to keep data on the number of suicide risk assessments completed this school year. All students who have exhibited thoughts or behaviors suggestive of self-harm (including suicidal ideation) have been referred to school counselors, social workers, and school psychologists for risk assessments. Referrals may come from staff, students, or parents. To keep student information confidential, staff continues to enter minimal data into Synergy to show that a risk assessment was conducted. This school year, there have been significantly fewer risk assessments administered than previous years. Although there may be many factors, we believe that some of the reasons may include:

- Staff and students are not physically in the schools and opportunities to observe student behaviors are severely limited;
- Staff are taking other steps such as calling parents and referring to outside services when concerning behaviors are observed or reported. If a student expresses suicidal thoughts verbally, in writing, or through gestures or behaviors, staff will conduct the risk assessment. Staff have responded to concerning messages from students, transmitted through instructional channels or via email, or based on reports from concerned parents about their own or another child.

Suicide Risk Assessments Conducted, September-January



Our school counselors, social workers, and school psychologists have maintained up-to-date information about community resources and are prepared to facilitate referrals to agencies and service providers, as necessary. Additionally, the Office of Student Services has maintained ongoing communication with other Arlington agencies and ensures regular opportunities for staff from APS and the Department of Child and Family Services/Social Services to interact, to participate in joint training and to ensure good communication between agencies.



During this past year, our community partnerships have been essential in helping us navigate the challenges of the pandemic in our efforts to ensure that students and families have the resources and support they need with basic needs such as food assistance, rental and utility assistance, clothing, health screening, school supplies, etc. Arlington's students and families have experienced illness, loss, financial hardship, food insecurity, homelessness, unemployment, stress, isolation and other adverse impacts from the global pandemic. Our school social workers have worked closely with community agencies to ensure students and families had the resources and support they needed to navigate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

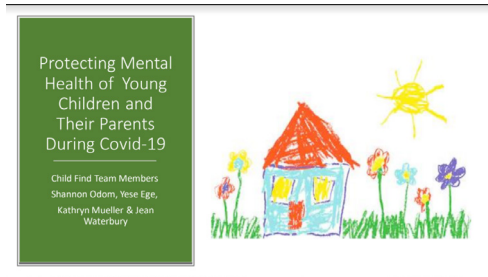
Community Partnerships

APS Collaboration with Community Partners*	Dept of Teaching & Learning Collaboration with Arlington Dept of Human Services (DHS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• APCYF (Wellness Roundtable)</li> <li>• Arlington DHS Children's Behavioral Health (Child and Family Subcommittee)</li> <li>• Arlington Family Engagement Network (AFEN)</li> <li>• Comcast Essentials</li> <li>• Amazon Right Now Needs</li> <li>• Cigna School Support Line Pilot Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Policy Management Team (CPMT)</li> <li>• Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT)</li> <li>• APS-DHS Collaborative Planning meetings (OSE and OSS)</li> <li>• Weekly Debrief meetings with DHS Public Assistance &amp; APS Social Workers</li> <li>• Joint Presentations for Parent Education/Parent Academy and Staff Development</li> <li>• Presentations by Arlington DHS Children's Behavioral Health to Student Services staff on Same Day Access referral process and intake criteria</li> <li>• Presentations by Arlington DHS Office of Disability and Aging to Social Workers on helping families access services through waiver programs for people with developmental disabilities</li> </ul>

\*not exhaustive; these are some examples focused on student connectivity and/or well-being

## PARENT EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

Student Services staff provided parent education opportunities at the school and division level, using Teams as the virtual platform. In Spring of 2020, our Child Find team created a resource for parents, entitled "Protecting the Mental Health of Young Children and Their Parents During Covid-19." Other staff offered sessions to parents both during the school day and in the evening on topics such as Supporting Social and Emotional Learning at Home, Substance abuse Prevention, and an Introduction to Student Mental Health for Parents of Secondary Students. These presentations and many more are posted on the [APS Parent Academy webpages](#).



## ACADEMIC PLANNING

Academic planning is based on the belief that families need timely information in order to participate effectively in planning their child's educational future in APS. Our goal is for all students to be college and career ready upon graduation from APS. In order to accomplish this goal, students and families need to begin planning alongside school staff as early as elementary school. Academic planning underscores the importance of all students drawing upon their individual strengths to select challenging courses and to meet rigorous graduation requirements in order to have multiple options after high school.

A variety of resources are available to assist families as they explore educational and career opportunities best suited for their child. In alignment with the Profile of Virginia Graduate, every student in grades 6-12 will have an academic plan that will chart the individualized sequence of courses for middle and high school leading to graduation. The plan will reflect high expectations, be based on the talents, interests and resources of each student. Each year, the student and his/her professional school counselor will review the academic plan and make revisions as needed. Families are strongly encouraged to be a part of these meetings to learn more about their student's career interests, the various academic options for earning a diploma, the difference between diploma types, as well as the most appropriate course selection.

For this academic year, all high school students will be using Naviance Course Planner for their academic planning and course scheduling. Both hybrid and distance learning high school students will be able to develop an online graduation plan, explore various career pathways and organize the completion of their requirements so they can stay on track despite not being in the classroom. Naviance course planner will help students create a multi-year plan

for tracking courses and alignment with career pathways offered at APS as well as improve parent engagement and awareness of the course selection process.

## BRIGHT SPOTS

### TRAUMA SENSITIVE SCHOOLS

In preparation for the opening of school, over 3,375 staff members completed the Trauma Sensitive Schools course in June-July, 2020. Trauma Sensitive Schools training is fundamental in building a learning community where all staff work together to create a school that embodies the values of safety, trusting relationships, connection, equity, belonging, and adaptability as prescribed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The course was developed by the Office of Student Services.

### CIGNA STUDENT SUPPORT LINE

In February, APS partnered with Cigna to make a Student Support Line available to pilot locations, including Washington-Liberty, the Arlington Career Center, Arlington Community High School, the H-B Woodlawn Secondary Program, Langston High School Continuation Program, and New Directions. This pilot program is limited to a total of 3300 enrolled students. This is a great opportunity to provide APS students with mental health and crisis support, 24/7/365 in both English and Spanish, with a language line available to assist speakers of other languages. The Office of Student Services supported the set up of this program by coordinating early training for staff, gathering a list of local resources to be used by the Support Line responders, and developing (along with School and Community Relations) communications for the pilot schools to disseminate.

### CCPTA SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF ARLINGTON'S SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS, SCHOOL COUNSELORS, AND PSYCHOLOGISTS

The CCPTA recognized these staff for exceptional commitment and services to students and families during COVID-19 global pandemic. APS school social workers, counselors and psychologists were recognized for their critical, front-line work to mitigate the adverse impacts of the pandemic in the communities they serve, identifying needs and confidentially distributing goods often in





conjunction with local PTA unit donation efforts It required extraordinary dedication, professionalism, compassion and creativity to identify ways to support the well-being of students and families outside of the normal structures for providing services and support.

### COMMUNITY FOUNDATION’S ANNUAL “SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY” HONOREES



Recognition of APS Social Workers, represented by Phyllis Thompson, by the Community Foundation’s annual “Spirit of Community” honorees, in September 2020. This recognition honors the front-line human service workers in the Arlington community. The Spirit of Community is an annual recognition given by the Arlington Community Foundation to people who demonstrate a tireless and unselfish commitment to improving the quality of life in Arlington. The 2020 Spirit of Community Award winner is a group - the front-line human service workers of Arlington. This includes the front-line staff of our nonprofit organizations, the County, and the schools.

### AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELING ASSOCIATION-RECOGNIZED ASCA MODEL PROGRAM: RAMP SCHOOLS

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has a national framework for recognizing school counseling programs that are integral to the school’s academic mission and have a positive impact on student achievement, attendance and discipline. RAMP (Recognized ASCA Model Program) is a recognition awarded to schools that have successfully demonstrated and documented their implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program. Being a RAMP school ensures that data is used in decision making, that counseling services are provided to all students systematically and that counselors offer developmentally appropriate curriculum that focuses on the mindsets and behaviors all students need for postsecondary readiness and success.

This year, two APS elementary schools earned RAMP recognition. Randolph Elementary School achieved RAMP status under the leadership of school counselor Jennifer Baitinger. Co-counselors Erin Upton and Danielle Fuller at Alice West Fleet also achieved RAMP recognition . In addition, Gina Rocco and Heather Davis at McKinley Elementary School applied for RAMP status and their counseling department was named a Program of Promise.

## MOVING FORWARD

APS students’ mental health and wellness continues to be our priority. It is critical to understand that mental health and social emotional services and supports are essential to student learning and wellbeing. Therefore, our office will continue to provide a continuum of school mental health

services to effectively address the needs of our students which include support in the areas of social emotional learning, mental wellness, resilience, and positive connections between students and adults. Our mental health and social emotional services are delivered by our school counselors, social workers, and psychologists through a multi-tiered system of support which is most effective in promoting mental wellness for all students, identifying and addressing problems before they escalate or become chronic.

Moving forward, we will continue to enhance our partnerships with community agencies as meeting the full continuum of student needs is dependent on collaboration between schools and community mental health providers. School and community collaboration is critical to providing the full continuum of mental health services. Our community providers offer supplementary or intensive services that go beyond school capacities. A multi-tiered system of support approach helps facilitate effective collaboration while ensuring that services provided in school are appropriate to the learning environment and those that are provided after school hours are appropriately supported in the school setting. This approach reduces stress on families and supports their roles as primary caregivers and decision-makers regarding their child’s safety and wellbeing.

Finally, our student services staff will continue to focus on enhancing the continuum of mental health services and supports in the following areas:

- Redefine academic, social emotional needs in light of virtual/hybrid learning
- Develop and administer uniform surveys at the end of each quarter to all elementary, middle and high school students to determine SEL needs
- Retain the many new virtual platforms and interactive online resources that have appealed to students as we work with them in counseling and in providing SEL.
- Forge and strengthen partnerships with outside community providers, find new partnership based on the unique needs of students and families as they navigate the pandemic
- Prepare students for the transition back to school
- Provide a high level of support and coordination of services from APS Student Services staff

