



SURVEY REPORT

The State of Mental Health in Today's Schools: Understanding the Challenges & the Solutions that Work

INTRODUCTION

Many schools and school districts are at a crossroads. Long-standing challenges, like financial stress, family conflict, relational strife, and community instability, are negatively impacting students' mental health. Students are also grappling with new mental and emotional challenges caused by various factors, including the recent pandemic, social upheaval, school violence, and more.

Collectively, school social workers, teachers, counselors, administrators, and other stakeholders are working tirelessly and deliberately to develop solutions that meet students' multifaceted needs.

It's a high-stakes endeavor with important implications for schools, communities, and, most importantly, students. This unique moment requires clear insights to identify key opportunities to provide students with the resources they need to live the lives they deserve.

To help schools better understand the true state of students' mental health, an expansive survey was conducted of school personnel working on the front lines with students.



The State of Student Mental Health Survey



ABOUT THE SURVEY

The State of Student Mental Health Survey sought input from social workers, teachers, counselors, administrators, and district leaders who provided unique and valuable insights into students' most pressing challenges and the solutions making the most significant impact.

The results paint a clearer picture of students' declining mental health, its impact on academic achievement, and the solutions that can help schools best support their students this school year and beyond.



ABOUT THE KEY FINDINGS

The State of Student Mental Health Survey uncovered important insights and observations that provide valuable information for understanding students' mental health and the solutions that work. These findings are crucial for making informed decisions and understanding the implications of the research.

KEY FINDINGS



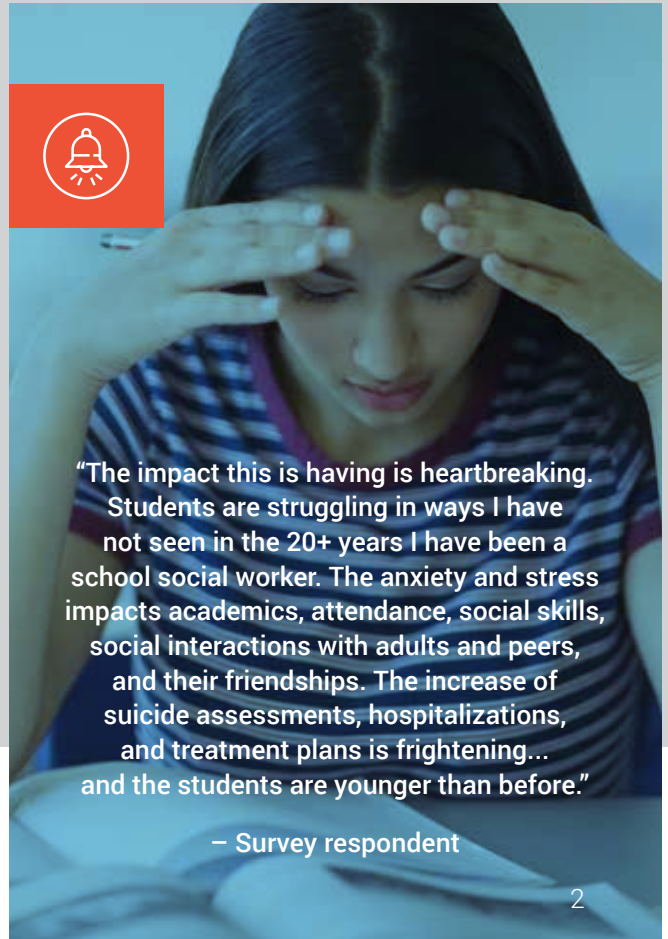
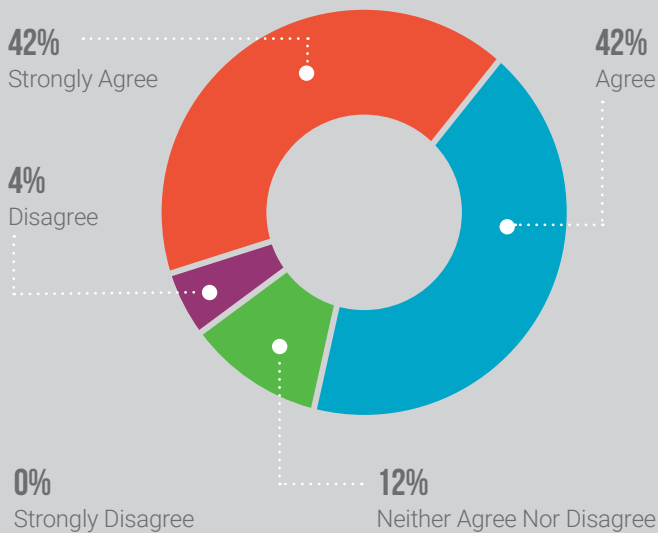
#1

EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS SEE DETERIORATING MENTAL HEALTH

- While stress and anxiety frequently accompany adolescent development, 84 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that the problem is worse this school year.
- Students' elevated stress and anxiety manifest in many ways, including behavioral and academic difficulties.

Eighty-four percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that students seem more stressed and anxious than in previous school years. Stress and anxiety can manifest in many ways, but existing research from the [Institute of Education Sciences](https://ies.ed.gov/schoolsurvey/spp/)¹ has documented more frequent “acts of disrespect towards teachers and staff and declining academic performance.” Correlation and causation are distinctly different, but it’s evident that students are exhibiting signs of heightened stress and anxiety in various capacities throughout the school day.

STUDENTS SEEM MORE STRESSED OUT AND ANXIOUS THAN IN PREVIOUS SCHOOL YEARS



“The impact this is having is heartbreaking. Students are struggling in ways I have not seen in the 20+ years I have been a school social worker. The anxiety and stress impacts academics, attendance, social skills, social interactions with adults and peers, and their friendships. The increase of suicide assessments, hospitalizations, and treatment plans is frightening... and the students are younger than before.”

– Survey respondent

¹ <https://ies.ed.gov/schoolsurvey/spp/>

KEY FINDINGS



#2

MENTAL HEALTH AND ACADEMIC PROGRESS ARE CLOSELY LINKED

- Most survey respondents see a clear connection between students' deteriorating mental health and academic performance.
- Math and reading scores declined sharply this year, leaving many districts scrambling to help students catch up.

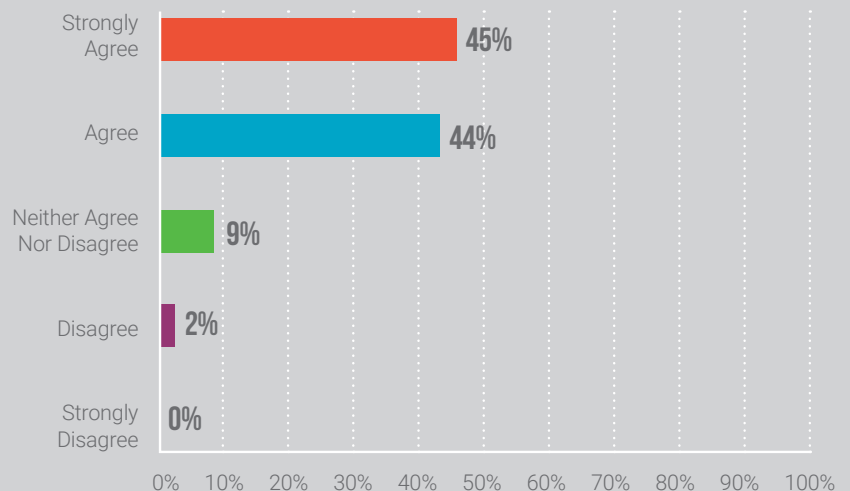
Eighty-nine percent of respondents note that mental health challenges have far-reaching implications, including negatively impacting students' academic achievements. While not painting a complete picture, this provides critical context to national standardized test results² where math and reading scores dropped across the country.

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/24/us/math-reading-scores-pandemic.html>

"More students are experiencing stress and anxiety that are negatively affecting their school success. Students seem less equipped to manage stress and typical demands of school. Students also seem to be experiencing social anxiety and difficulty attending school regularly and being around groups of people more than in the past."

– Survey respondent

STUDENTS' STRESS AND ANXIETY ARE NEGATIVELY IMPACTING ACADEMIC OUTCOMES



KEY FINDINGS



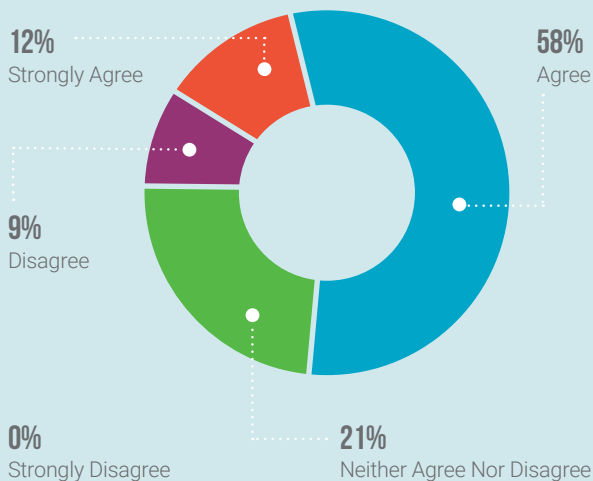
#3

STUDENTS ARE WILLING TO COMMUNICATE THEIR NEEDS AND ASK FOR HELP FROM TRUSTED ADULTS AT SCHOOL

- School staff continue to be an invaluable resource for students.
- Trusted adults are often the first point of contact for students in need.

Seventy percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that students are willing to communicate mental health challenges to a trusted adult at school. When school social workers, teachers, coaches, and support staff cultivate student relationships and supportive learning environments, students more often communicate challenges, which opens the door to providing solutions that meet their needs.

STUDENTS ARE WILLING TO COMMUNICATE MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES TO A TRUSTED ADULT AT SCHOOL



“People need to know that relationships are so important in an educational environment. When students feel safe and supported, they will talk and share.”

– Survey respondent

KEY FINDINGS



#4

SOCIAL WORKERS AND TEACHERS FEEL UNPREPARED TO SUPPORT STUDENTS' NEEDS

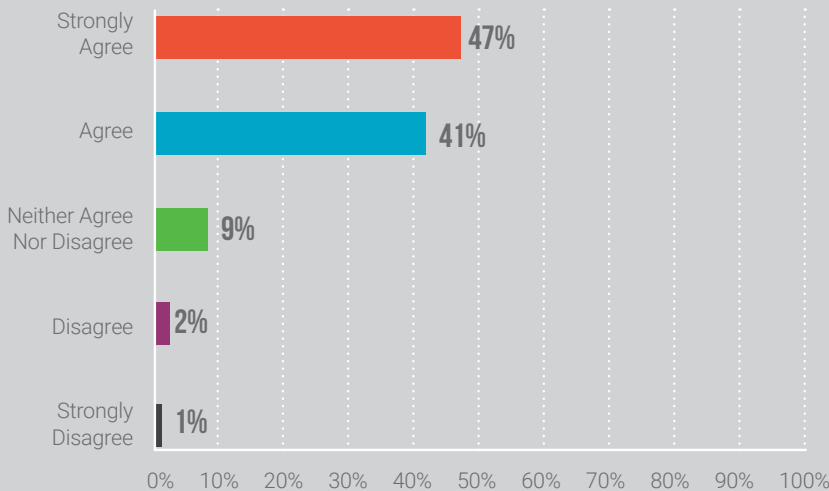
- Social workers, teachers, and other school personnel desperately want to help students thrive, but many feel unprepared to help.
- School personnel are looking for resources to help support their students.

Eighty-eight percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that they wish they had more tools or resources to help students address their various mental health challenges. Additionally, 81 percent of respondents are indifferent or disagree that their school district's existing support structure adequately meets students' needs.

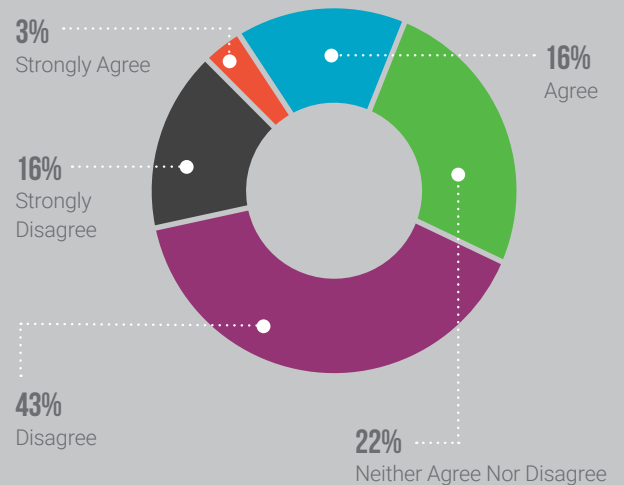
"More support is needed. A school social worker can't do it all, but that seems to be the expectation."

– Survey respondent

I WISH I HAD MORE TOOLS OR RESOURCES TO HELP STUDENTS ADDRESS THEIR VARIOUS MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES



MY SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT'S EXISTING SUPPORT STRUCTURE ADEQUATELY MEETS THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS



KEY FINDINGS



#5

SCHOOLS CAN DO MORE TO HELP

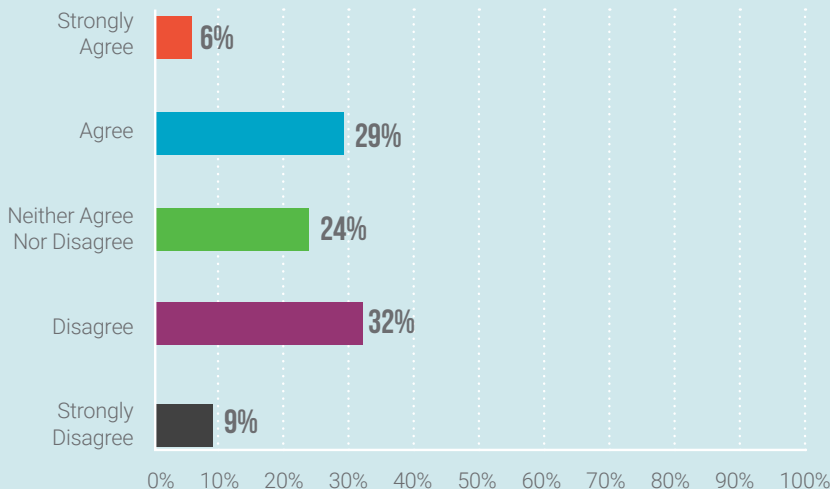
- School personnel believe that technology can help bridge the gap, creating connections between schools and the support services students want and need.
- Only one-third of respondents feel their schools or school districts are doing enough to help.

Only 35 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that their school or local communities have a tool for reporting, supporting, and maintaining student mental health challenges and outcomes. Similarly, just 33 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that their school or school district is leveraging technology to identify, track, and enhance students' mental health outcomes.

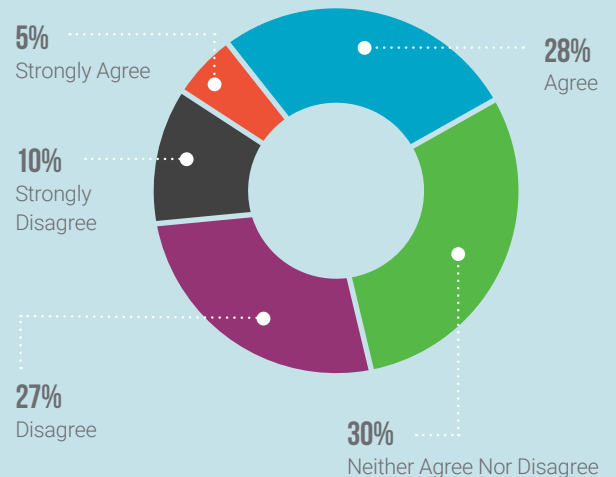
"Collaborative technology exists and can assist school social workers to support more students."

– Survey respondent

MY SCHOOL AND LOCAL COMMUNITY HAVE A TOOL FOR REPORTING, SUPPORTING, AND MAINTAINING STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMES



MY SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT LEVERAGES TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS TO IDENTIFY, TRACK, AND ENHANCE STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES



CONCLUSIONS



Based on the key findings presented, it is clear that there are significant issues with mental health among students in schools. The high percentage of respondents who agree that students seem more stressed and anxious than in previous years, as well as the close link between mental health and academic progress, highlights the importance of addressing these issues.

The survey results provide a valuable glimpse into how schools address student needs while highlighting the services, workflows, and product solutions that can help schools succeed this school year and beyond. Following is a summary of the key takeaways from this report.

WE CAN'T WAIT TO TAKE ACTION.

While students are willing to share mental health challenges with a trusted adult, many school staff feel unequipped to directly support those students. In response, schools must equip their staff with the tools, training, and experience to meet students' mental health needs.

START BY FOSTERING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN SCHOOL PERSONNEL AND SUPPORT RESOURCES.

When coupled with effective reporting protocols, schools and communities can communicate and collaborate on intervention strategies and solutions, allowing anyone to quickly and efficiently connect students with the support resources they need.

A PROVEN, EFFECTIVE, AND DOCUMENTED COLLABORATION PROCESS CAN HELP IMPROVE OUTCOMES.

This will allow teachers or other staff to quickly refer students to appropriate services and ensure they receive the needed care. Software solutions can help make the connection by tracking students' progress, empowering schools to better understand students' needs and the impact of existing in-progress responses to intervention strategies.

Creating connections and effective protocols between students, social workers, teachers, counselors, and other school personnel, as well as leveraging technology to identify and track mental health outcomes, could be key to providing sustainable, impactful mental health support services.

STUDENTS ARE WILLING TO ASK FOR HELP, YET THE TOOLS TO SUPPORT THEM MUST BE IN PLACE.

The fact that students are willing to communicate their needs and ask for help from trusted adults at school shows that there is potential for addressing these issues effectively. However, the finding that social workers and teachers feel unprepared to support students' needs and wish they had more tools and resources, as well as the low percentage of respondents who report that their school or local communities have a tool for reporting, supporting, and maintaining student mental health challenges and outcomes, suggest that there is a need for more action to be taken in addressing these issues.



“The number of referrals we receive for services far outnumbers the capacity we have to meet the needs. Students appear to feel more isolated and are at an increased need for adult support and positive relationships, but there are not enough resources to provide that.”

– Survey respondent

“Students are burnt out just as much as teachers, staff, and administrators. We need to invest in supporting students' mental health needs if we want students to meet learning outcomes.”

– Survey respondent



SURVEY METHODOLOGY

**IN DECEMBER 2022, ECINS
CONDUCTED A SURVEY** of 353 U.S.

K-12 professionals, including school social workers, superintendents, teachers, and counselors. Participants responded to a formal survey, answering 12 questions and sharing their unique insights into the challenges facing students and the solutions making the greatest impact.

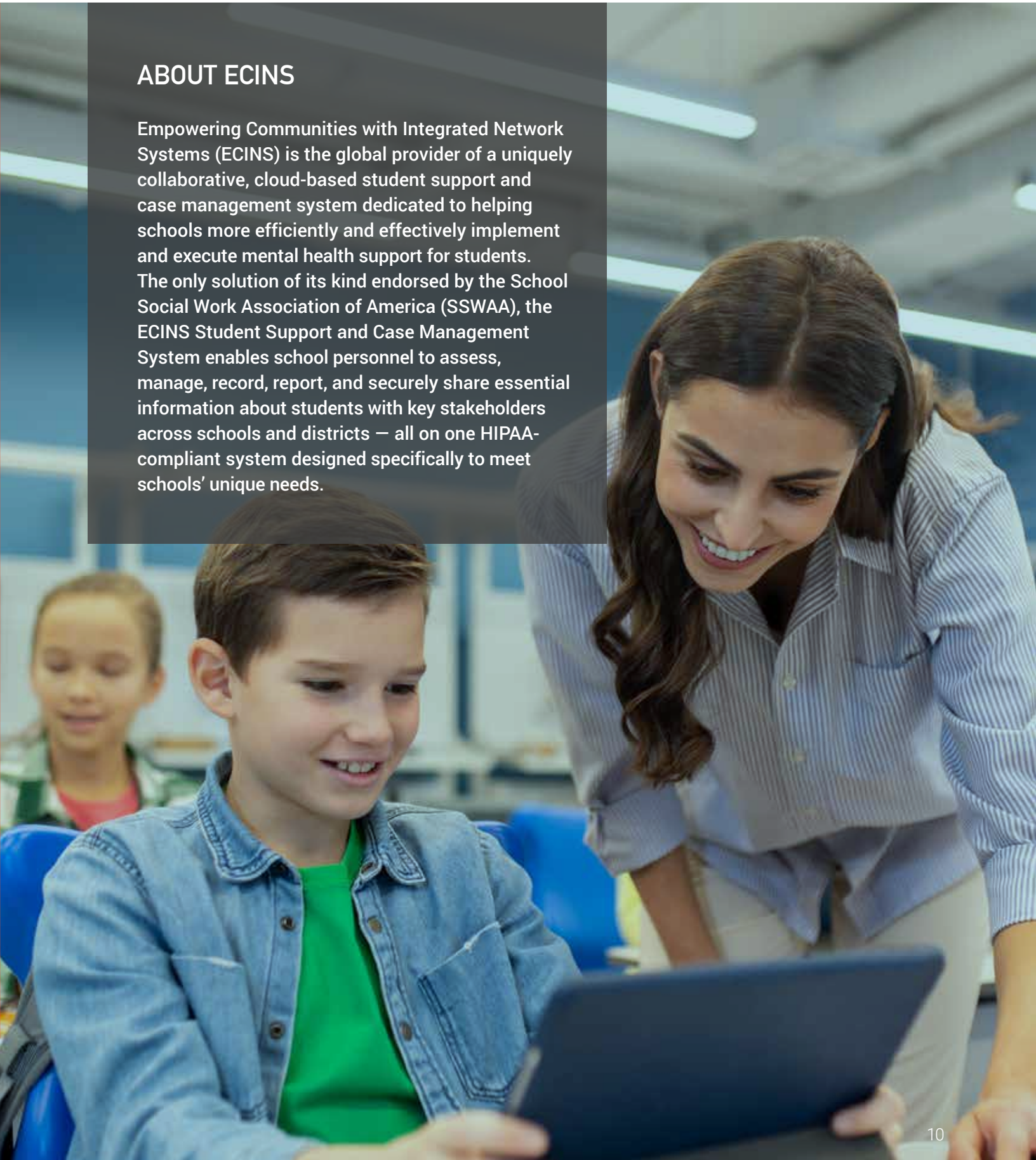


THE SURVEY WAS DESIGNED to provide results in aggregate to compile a comprehensive snapshot of the problems facing today's K-12 students and the solutions propelling positive change. All responses remain anonymous, and high-level data and insights in this report are organized and shared publicly at a national aggregate level in the form of an independent research report.



ABOUT ECINS

Empowering Communities with Integrated Network Systems (ECINS) is the global provider of a uniquely collaborative, cloud-based student support and case management system dedicated to helping schools more efficiently and effectively implement and execute mental health support for students. The only solution of its kind endorsed by the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA), the ECINS Student Support and Case Management System enables school personnel to assess, manage, record, report, and securely share essential information about students with key stakeholders across schools and districts – all on one HIPAA-compliant system designed specifically to meet schools' unique needs.





SURVEY REPORT

The State of Mental Health in Today's Schools: Understanding the Challenges & the Solutions that Work

CONTACT INFORMATION

ECINS U.S.

Tel: 862.822.3438

Email: inquiries@ecins.com

Web: ecins.com