

Large school district **successfully builds capacity** to meet the urgent need for student mental health support

Wayzata helps all students improve mental health with EmpowerU's highly-supported and easy-to-implement curriculum

SITUATION

There is an urgent need to address mental health in schools. Recent stats show that 80% of students report feeling stress often. Stressors have only mounted during the past two years.

In addition, school leaders nationwide have noted an increase in mental health symptoms, including increased anxiety and depression

- Disruptive behaviors
- Decreased attendance
- Unmotivated and disengaged students



Student support staff at Wayzata High School noticed an uptick in stress, anxiety, and depression among its 3,700 students even before the pandemic. Veteran school counselor Debbie Kimlinger recognized that students at the high-performing school west of Minneapolis, Minnesota, needed an additional resource to prevent them from becoming overwhelmed as they learned to better manage classwork, personal goals, and daily responsibilities.

PARTNERSHIP

EmpowerU semester courses are rooted in skill building, resilience, and empowerment, making them a valuable option for all students.

By partnering with EmpowerU, Wayzata High School is able to expand its capacity and reimagine how mental health could be addressed in the school. Thanks to EmpowerU's turnkey program, school staff had a minimal workload. Vital, skill-building instruction was supported by highly personalized, motivational coaching for each student, delivered with an abundance of care.

How did it work? Wayzata High School enrolled students in EmpowerU's online elective course through Northern Star Online. Students earned high school credit while focusing on mental health and overall well-being. Aligned with state and national health education standards, the course teaches essential skills, such as stress-coping techniques, self-regulation, goal-setting, motivation, and resiliency. Asynchronous coaching provides immediate feedback, celebrates small wins, and motivates students to stay engaged.



Driving measurable positive change...

Wayzata High School student Natalie completed the class as a sophomore and said it helped her to manage depression and anxiety better, as well as learn strategies to avoid procrastination. "I over-stress myself. Through EmpowerU, I learned to stop — notice what I was feeling and thinking — and replace it with a helpful thought that would help me meet my goal." That's what EmpowerU calls recruiting your inner coach to replace your inner critic.

Natalie said what was different about this class was that her coach reached out and encouraged her every day. "It was different from other online classes. EmpowerU is the only online class I've taken where you have a very strong and supportive connection with the instructor—even stronger than many in-person classes."

Natalie's SMART goals throughout the program allowed her to take small steps to solve more significant problems — turning problems into progress.

RESULTS

Another benefit of EmpowerU is data. Students and school staff receive progress updates via a tracking dashboard. Students use the data to measure their progress, and schools can see the data-driven results. Staff also have access to the platform, which can spur future discussions about academic outcomes, college, career, and life readiness. Plus, school staff are alerted if students disengage.

Kimlinger added that the course also helps Wayzata students boost confidence and ease stress, positively impacting grades and attendance. "The students I've been working with have shown improvements," she said. "It certainly has impacted how they feel about each other and themselves. They learn some really valuable skills."

STUDENT OUTCOMES



made significant progress on their set goals



would recommend the course to other students or friends



said the individual coaching they have received is valuable

TESTIMONIALS

"Students say this is the class where the teachers and the coaches really care about you as a person."

LEAD SCHOOL COUNSELOR

"A majority, if not all of my friends, suffer from anxiety and depression. [EmpowerU] is a stepping stone into helping you cope with your own emotions."

HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR