Student Support Personnel Aid

Report to the Legislature

As required by Minnesota Statutes 2023, section 124d.901

For more information:

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As requested by Minnesota Statutes 2023, section 3.197: This report cost approximately $6500 to prepare, including staff time, printing and mailing expenses.

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Legislative Charge

As required by Minnesota Statute 2003, section 124d.901,Subd 5,by February 1 following any fiscal year in which student support personnel aid was received, a school district, charter school, or cooperative unit must submit a written report to the commissioner indicating how the new position affected two or more of the following measures: (1) school climate; (2) student health; (3) attendance rates; (4) academic achievement; (5) career and college readiness; and (6) postsecondary completion rates.

Background

Minnesota Statute 2023, section 124d.901 established the Student Support Personnel Aid revenue account. “Student support services personnel" means individuals licensed to serve as school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, school nurses, or alcohol and chemical dependency counselors in Minnesota. The purpose of student support personnel aid is to address the increased student need for services brought on by the pandemic, to include shortages of student support personnel to ensure effective services; ensure that students receive effective student support services and integrated and comprehensive services to improve prekindergarten through grade 12 academic, physical, social, and emotional outcomes supporting career and college readiness and effective school mental health services; ensure that student support services personnel serve within the scope and practice of their training and licensure; fully integrate learning supports, instruction, assessment, data-based decision making, and family and community engagement within a comprehensive approach that facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration; and improve student health, school safety, and school climate to support academic success and career and college readiness. Aid is provided to respond to post-pandemic student needs and must be used to hire new positions for student support services personnel, increase current positions that are less than 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) to a greater number of service hours, or make permanent a position hired using one-time resources that would otherwise be eliminated.

Report

This report provides information on two data sets: the current known expenditures by local education agencies (LEAs) for Student Support Personnel Aid for the period of July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, as reported by districts through UFARS (Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards) submissions, and data reported voluntarily through a survey to school districts, charter schools, cooperative and intermediate districts on the accessibility, uses, and impact of the aid.

UFARS Identified Expenditures:

The summary data below is provided by an analysis of UFARS. Audited data is submitted annually by districts to Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to identify -- in detail -- their expenditures for the purpose of financial accountability.

Expenditures identified in Table 1 reflect data reported for fiscal year 2024 by districts, charters and cooperative *member* districts. Data reported by intermediate or cooperative services organizations is *not* used due to the pass-through nature of the funds.

Table 1: Entitlement and Expenditures Student Support Personnel Aid

Total Entitlement Student Support Personnel Aid	**Percent of Aid**	**$33,562,117.52**
District Charter Entitlement	63%	$21,282,117.52
Cooperative Entitlement	37%	$12,280,000.00
Expended Aid Determined by UFARS Reporting	**47%**	**$15,764,082.62**
Unexpended Aid	**53%**	**$17,798,034.90**

- A total of 508 independent, special and charter school districts were eligible for Student Support Personnel Aid.
- Two hundred thirteen, or 42%, report spending no aid. Of the 508 eligible districts:
  - One hundred eighty-one charter school districts were eligible for Student Support Personnel Aid. Ninety-five (52%) report spending no aid.
  - Three hundred twenty-seven independent and special school districts were eligible for aid. One hundred eighteen (36%) report spending no aid.
- Forty intermediate or cooperative services organizations were eligible for aid. Twenty (50%) are reported by member districts as spending no aid.

Table 2 identifies district expenditures by area of licensure and how the identified staff were retained. In summary, 70% of the aid expended was used for the direct hiring of staff, 30% was used for contracting. Combined, licensed school counselors and licensed school social workers represent almost 50% of Student Support Personnel Aid expenditures (47.97%) while alcohol and chemical dependency counselors represent only 1.25% of expenditures. Benefits comprised 14.97% of expenditures.

Table 2: Student Support Personnel Aid Expenditures by Licensure and Retention

Total Expenditures	**100%**	**$ 15,764,082.62**	**$ 11,001,436.57**	**$ 4,762,646.05**
Description	Percent	Total	Direct Hire	Contract
School Nurse	10.44%	$ 1,645,195.18	$ 1,391,558.96	$ 253,636.22
School Social Worker	22.31%	$ 3,516,754.30	$ 2,846,619.15	$ 670,135.15
School Psychologist	3.85%	$ 607,112.84	$ 369,099.76	$ 238,013.08
School Counselor	25.66%	$ 4,044,500.06	$ 4,044,500.06	
Alcohol and Chem Dep Counselor	1.25%	$ 197,161.65	$ 197,161.65	
Salary Adjustments	5.00%	$ 8,347.63	$ 8,347.63	
Services Purchased from Joint Powers	11.55%	$ 1,821,167.17		$ 1,821,167.17
Salary Purchased from other District	9.92%	$ 1,564,480.19		$ 1,564,480.19
Benefits/Benefits purchased from other districts	14.97%	$ 2,359,363.60	$ 2,144,149.36	$ 215,214.24

Survey Responses

A survey was deployed by MDE on February 1, 2025. The survey addressed two core concerns regarding the aid. First, local education agency administrators were requested to respond to the need for and accessibility of the aid. Second, they were asked to identify the licensed staff retained by the local education agency with Student Support Personnel Aid funds and evaluate the impact of these new staff/additional full-time equivalency (FTE) on the measures identified in statute. In tandem with this evaluation districts were encouraged to provide comments and suggestions regarding their experience with the aid.

Of the 508 surveys deployed, MDE received 283 responses. The following is a summary of those responses. See the data aggregation tables in the appendices for more detailed information.

Staff Needs and Funding Allocation

District survey responses indicate that prior to the establishment of Student Support Personnel Aid for the school fiscal year 2024, 63% of local education agencies did not have sufficient student support personnel on staff to meet the needs of students. Fifty-nine (59) percent of local education agencies indicated they were able to spend close to 100% of their aid.

Fifty-nine (59) percent of districts responded that the funding provided to hire or contract student support personnel staff was insufficient to meet district goals and improve the overall student experience. Social workers and school counselors represent the highest need for licensed student support personnel, totaling a combined 60% of survey responses. In descending order of need, school psychologists, nurses and alcohol and chemical dependency counselors together represent the other 40%.

While 65% of respondents indicated that there was not an adequate pool of *direct hire* licensed staff in their community, 62% of respondents were either neutral, or agreed that it was easy for them to *contract* for student support service personnel. Seventy-nine (79) percent of respondents indicated that the reserve balance was insufficient to fund the direct hire or the contracting of needed staff.

Nineteen (19) percent of respondents indicated no needs outside of staffing to provide sufficient services to students. However, 27% of respondents identified the need for staff training, 23% identified the need for curriculum, 5% cited the need to fund travel/mileage reimbursement for itinerant support staff, and 26% specified “all of the above.”

Student Support Personnel Staffing Impact on Goals/Measures

Six measures/areas of improvement were identified in the legislation funding new or additional licensed student support FTE: (1) school climate; (2) student health; (3) attendance rates; (4) academic achievement; (5) career and college readiness; and (6) postsecondary completion rates. Districts were asked to identify *all* FTE licensure increased with student support personnel aid to improve the given measure. For example, 1 district may identify an increase in FTE for both counselors and social workers to address the measure of school climate. See the data aggregation tables in the appendix for detailed information.

School Climate

Two hundred eighty-three (283) local education agencies responded to impacts on school climate. One hundred seventy (170), or 60%, indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that the staff added with student support personnel funding had a positive impact on school climate. To support efforts to improve school climate, 98 districts added FTE for school social workers, 93 districts added FTE for school counselors. For more information on this measure visit the [MDE School Climate](#) webpage.

Student Health

Two hundred eighty (280) local education agencies responded to impacts on student health. One hundred sixty-two (162), or 58%, indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that staff added with student support personnel funding had a positive impact on student health. To support efforts to improve student health, only 46 districts added to their FTE for school nurses. In contrast, 75 districts added to school social worker FTE and 71 districts added to school counselor FTE. For more information on this measure visit the MDH School Health Services webpage.

Attendance Rates

Two hundred eighty-two (282) local education agencies responded to impacts on student attendance rates. One hundred thirty (130), or 46%, indicated they were neutral on the positive impact of staff added with student support personnel funding for attendance rates. To support efforts to improve student attendance 76 districts added to school social worker FTE and 65 districts added to school counselor FTE, but with less favorable outcomes. For more information on this measure visit the MDE Implementing ESSA webpage.

Academic Achievement

Two hundred eighty (280) local education agencies responded to the impact of additional student support staff on academic achievement rates. One hundred thirty-six (136), or 48%, indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that the additional staff funded by student support personnel aid had a positive impact on academic achievement. Seventy-five (75) districts added FTE for counselors, 73 added FTE for social workers to support this measure. For more information on this measure visit the MDE Academic Achievement Summary webpage.

Career and College Readiness

Two hundred eighty-one (281) local education agencies responded to impacts on career and college readiness. One hundred forty-eight (148), or 53%, indicated they were neutral on the positive impact of staff hired with student support personnel aid on this measure, even though 79 districts indicate adding to school counselor FTE to support improvements. For more information on this measure visit the MDE Career and College Success webpage.

Post Secondary Completion Rates

Two hundred seventy-nine (279) local education agencies responded to the impacts of additional student support staff on post-secondary completion rates. One hundred seventy-nine (179), or 64%, indicated they were neutral on the positive impact of student support personnel on this measure. The number of districts adding staff to support this measure is significantly lower than in other measures with 44 districts reporting additional school counselor FTE to support the measure. For more information on this measure visit the MDE School Climate webpage. Post-secondary completion rates are defined as “students earning a high school diploma and who enroll in an institution of Higher Education within 16 months of graduation.”

Summary of District Comments, Experience, Suggestions

Positive Outcomes:

- Some districts successfully retained licensed student support staff using the aid, preventing immediate layoffs.
- Districts appreciated any level of funding, even if it was partial, as it helped subsidize essential student support roles.
- The ability to carry over unspent funds provided some flexibility for future hiring.

Challenges and Roadblocks:

- **Restricted Use:** Many districts found the funding constraints limiting, especially the requirement that Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) be above pre-pandemic levels. Some districts identify this restriction as supplanting local decision-making authority.
- **Insufficient Funding:** The aid often covered only a fraction (e.g., 45%-60%) of a position, making it hard to maintain full-time roles.
- **Licensing Barriers:** Some districts struggled to hire qualified professionals because they lacked the required PELSB licenses.
- **Shortage of Qualified Applicants:** Particularly in outstate areas, there were not enough licensed social workers or counselors available to fill open positions.
- **Cooperative Fund Allocation Issues:** Some districts reported that their co-ops were not fully utilizing the aid, forcing them to return unused funds.

Common Critiques:

- The aid and restrictive allowed uses are not adequate to address student needs across all six impact areas (climate, health, attendance, academic achievement, career and college readiness, and post-secondary completion).
- The lack of local control over spending decisions was a repeated frustration, as different districts have different needs.

Conclusion

The survey findings highlight both the critical need for student support personnel aid and the challenges districts face in implementing and sustaining these services. To review, prior to the availability of this funding, 63% of local education agencies reported insufficient student support personnel to meet student needs. While the aid has enabled districts to add vital staff, particularly social workers and counselors, 60% of districts report that funding is insufficient to fully address their goals. Moreover, 65% of respondents indicated that a lack of available licensed professionals in their communities further complicates efforts to hire directly.

Despite these obstacles, improvements have been noted, particularly in school climate (60%) and student health (58%), with some academic gains (48%). However, attendance, career readiness, and post-secondary success showed less impact, indicating the need for additional interventions.

The data also underscore the need for supplementary resources beyond staffing. Twenty-seven (27) percent expressed a need for staff training, 23% cited curriculum needs, and 26% indicated a combination of all identified needs. This suggests that a more holistic approach—including funding for professional development, curriculum enhancements, and logistical support—may be required to maximize the effectiveness of student support personnel aid.

Moving forward, addressing the gaps in funding, staffing availability, and additional resource needs will be crucial to fully realizing the potential benefits of this initiative. Future efforts may benefit from exploring strategies to expand the pipeline of qualified professionals, increase financial support, and align staffing allocations with evidence-based interventions that drive improvements across all student success measures.

Appendix A: Survey Results: Need for and Accessibility of Aid

	COUNTS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Prior to Student Support Personnel Aid, my LEA had sufficient student support staff to serve students	**Total Responses**	49	128	69	34	3
	District	36	97	45	24	3
	Charter	13	19	16	10	0
	Inter/Co-op	0	12	8	0	0

Appendix A: Survey Results: Ability to Spend Aid

	COUNTS	0 Percent	25 Percent	50 Percent	75 Percent	100 Percent
My LEA was able to spend about the following percentage of aid	**Total Responses**	71	13	16	16	167
	District	49	9	12	9	126
	Charter	14	3	2	5	34
	Inter/Co-op	8	1	2	2	7

Appendix A: Survey Results: Received Sufficient Aid

	COUNTS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My LEA received sufficient aid to hire or contract the staff needed to support students, meet goals, and improve overall student experience	**Total Responses**	77	88	64	38	12
	District	59	66	43	25	8
	Charter	17	16	15	8	2
	Inter/Co-op	1	6	6	5	2

Appendix A: Survey Results: Need for Student Support Personnel

	COUNTS	More Counselors	More SW*	More Nurses	More Psychs**	More ACDCs***
My LEA's outstanding FTE needs for Student Support Personnel are (check all that apply)	**Total Responses**	162	164	69	95	48
	District	118	120	46	68	29
	Charter	33	30	17	17	14
	Inter/Co-op	11	14	6	10	5

*Social Workers, ** Psychologists, ***Alcohol Chemical Dependency Counselors

Appendix A: Survey Results: Adequate Pool of Hirable Staff

	COUNTS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
There is an adequate pool of hirable, licensed Student Support Staff in my LEA's community	**Total Responses**	86	96	50	43	6
	District	61	75	33	28	6
	Charter	18	13	13	14	0
	Inter/Co-op	7	8	4	1	0

Appendix A: Survey Results: Able to Contract for Staff

	COUNTS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My LEA was able to contract for student support services staff easily.	**Total Responses**	59	47	131	37	6
	District	45	32	100	21	5
	Charter	10	7	24	15	1
	Inter/Co-op	4	8	7	1	0

Appendix A: Survey Results: One-Year Reserve Balance

The one-year reserve balance for Student Support Personnel aid is	COUNTS	Enough to Hire needed staff	Enough to Contract needed staff	Not enough to hire needed staff	Not enough to contract needed staff	Allows more time, but doesn't really help the cause
	Total Responses	21	5	155	34	22
	District	18	3	122	22	17
	Charter	3	2	27	11	3
	Inter/Co-op	0	0	6	1	2

Appendix A: Survey Results: Other Needs

In addition to Student Support FTE, my LEA needs:	COUNTS	Training	Curriculum	Travel/Mileage	None of the Above	All of the above
	Total Responses	95	79	17	68	90
	District	61	52	14	60	63
	Charter	30	24	2	5	15
	Inter/Co-op	4	3	1	3	12

Appendix A: Survey Results: Statutory Requirement that Aid be Spent on FTE Above Pre-pandemic Levels

The statutory requirement that Student Support Personnel Aid be spent on FTE above pre-pandemic levels....	COUNTS	Assists Effort	Impedes Effort	Doesn't help, Sufficiently Staffed	None of the Above
	Total Responses	114	116	14	0
	District	86	89	10	0
	Charter	22	17	4	0
	Inter/Co-op	6	10	0	0

Appendix B: Survey Results for Staff Impact on District Goals/Measures

School Climate	COUNTS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Student Support Personnel Aid had a positive impact on this measure:	Total Responses	13	20	80	101	69
	District	9	17	56	74	49
	Charter	4	2	14	21	17
	Inter/Co-op	0	1	10	6	3

Appendix B: Survey Results for Staff Impact on School Climate

School Climate	COUNTS	Counselor	Nurse	Social Worker	Psychologist	ACDC*
Districts adding FTE aid to support this measure	Total Responses	93	33	98	22	6
	District	71	18	74	12	2
	Charter	19	11	17	7	1
	Inter/Co-op	3	4	7	3	3

*Alcohol Chemical Dependency Counselors

Appendix B: Survey Results for Staff Impact on Student Health

Student Health	COUNTS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Student Support Personnel Aid had a positive impact on this measure:	Total Responses	19	15	84	98	64
	District	14	11	66	68	44
	Charter	5	3	10	23	17
	Inter/Co-op	0	1	8	7	3

Appendix B: Survey Results for FTE on Student Health

Student Health	COUNTS	Counselor	Nurse	Social Worker	Psychologist	ACDC
Districts adding FTE aid to support this measure	Total Responses	71	46	75	20	6
	District	54	27	57	12	2
	Charter	14	12	12	6	2
	Inter/Co-op	3	7	6	2	2

Appendix B: Survey Results for Staff Impact on Attendance Rates

Attendance Rates	COUNTS	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Student Support Personnel Aid had a positive impact on this measure:	**Total Responses**	18	16	130	83	35
	District	12	11	97	60	24
	Charter	6	3	20	21	8
	Inter/Co-op	0	2	13	2	3

Appendix B: Survey Results for FTE on Attendance Rates

Attendance Rates	COUNTS	Counselor	Nurse	Social Worker	Psychologist	ACDC
Districts adding FTE aid to support this measure	**Total Responses**	65	12	76	17	6
	District	52	8	56	11	2
	Charter	10	3	13	4	2
	Inter/Co-op	3	1	7	2	2

Appendix B: Survey Results for Staff Impact on Academic Achievement

Academic Achievement	COUNT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Student Support Personnel Aid had a positive impact on this measure:	**Total Responses**	17	16	111	99	37
	District	11	13	80	74	24
	Charter	6	2	20	20	10
	Inter/Co-op	0	1	11	5	3

Appendix B: Survey Results for FTE on Academic Achievement

Academic Achievement	COUNT	Counselor	Nurse	Social Worker	Psychologist	ACDC
Districts adding FTE aid to support this measure	**Total Responses**	75	18	73	17	5
	District	60	10	57	10	2
	Charter	12	6	9	5	1
	Inter/Co-op	3	2	7	2	2

Appendix B: Survey Results for Staff Impact on Career/College Readiness

Career /College Readiness	COUNT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Student Support Personnel Aid had a positive impact on this measure:	**Total Responses**	22	18	148	61	32
	District	16	14	106	46	21
	Charter	6	2	28	12	10
	Inter/Co-op	0	2	14	3	1

Appendix B: Survey Results for FTE on Career/College Readiness

Career /College Readiness	COUNT	Counselor	Nurse	Social Worker	Psychologist	ACDC
Districts adding FTE aid to support this measure	**Total Responses**	79	13	37	13	5
	District	59	7	28	9	1
	Charter	17	4	5	3	2
	Inter/Co-op	3	2	4	1	2

Appendix B: Survey Results for Staff Impact on Post Secondary Completion

Post Secondary Completion	COUNT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Student Support Personnel Aid had a positive impact on this measure:	**Total Responses**	19	18	178	45	19
	District	13	15	128	34	12
	Charter	6	1	36	8	6
	Inter/Co-op	0	2	14	3	1

Appendix B: Survey Results for FTE on Post Secondary Completion

Post Secondary Completion	COUNT	Counselor	Nurse	Social Worker	Psychologist	ACDC
Districts adding FTE aid to support this measure	**Total Responses**	44	9	34	12	6
	District	34	6	27	8	2
	Charter	8	3	4	2	2
	Inter/Co-op	2	0	3	2	2