

# **R.E.A.C.H**

**Raising Expectations and Children's Hopes**



# Access to School-Based Mental Health Services:

- **BARRIERS:** 70% of students with a mental health disorder do not receive adequate treatment due to lack of access to services.
- **MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS:** Could impact academics, attendance, discipline, social and emotional well-being, and relationships with peers and adults
- **EARLY INTERVENTION:** Half of mental health disorders begin before the age of 14 and three quarter of people with disorders manifest symptoms before the age of 24
- **TREATMENT HELPS:** 81% of teens with anxiety and 71% of teens with depression see improvements in symptoms as a result of evidence-based treatment.

# The R.E.A.C.H Program:

## Services provided Included:

- Six Mental Health Clinicians
- A R.E.A.C.H Program Director and Assistant Director to supervise the clinical staff and provide administrative support
- Clinicians provide on-site daily support for staff
- Professional development for district staff
- Collaboration with administration throughout the year

School Year	Description:
2018-2019	<b>Methacton School District, in partnership with Springfield Psychological, implemented R.E.A.C.H as a pilot program at Arcola Intermediate School</b>
2020-2021	<b>The R.E.A.C.H program was expanded to Skyview and Methacton High School.</b>
2021-2022	<b>The R.E.A.C.H program was expanded to our elementary schools, as part of the SOAR program</b>

# R.E.A.C.H Clinicians: 2022-2023



Kane Williams, PsyD  
REACH Soar



Caraleigh Stifler, MA, R-DMT  
REACH Skyview



Melissa Pomerantz, MA, MT-BC  
REACH Arcola



Lauren Biase, MS  
REACH Arcola



Sarah Rosenthal, LCSW  
REACH Methacton HS



Chelsea Lee, MS  
REACH Methacton HS

# Current R.E.A.C.H Caseloads:

School	Current Students	Incoming Referrals	Discharged due to Meeting Goals	Alternative Placements
Elementary	18	0	0	0
Skyview	9	0	3	0
Arcola	18	0	3	0
MHS	17	3	0	3 (1 student returned to MHS and 1 student will be returning shortly)
Totals:	62	3	6	3

Elementary: 1 Clinician  
 Skyview: 1 Clinician  
 Arcola: 2 Clinicians  
 MHS: 2 Clinicians

# Overview of the R.E.A.C.H Program:

**Intensive therapeutic mental health services for students that provides access to this level of care within the school setting, using a proactive and evidence-based approach.**

## **R.E.A.C.H provides:**

Group therapy informed by evidence-based practices, such as Dialectical Behavioral Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Individual counseling to address symptom management, stress reduction/tolerance, relationship building, academic and personal success

Collaboration with families, school professionals, outside medical and mental health providers

Phone access for after-hour support – 24/7 crisis services

Family Therapy (as needed)

Continuity of Care – Summer Services – Based on Clinical Need



# Other Supports and Interventions:

**In addition to providing group and individual therapy sessions utilizing evidence-based practices, R.E.A.C.H Clinicians also:**

- Meet with school treatment teams to:
  - Debrief on students' progress and review any changes in behavior
  - Discuss students' strengths and de-stigmatize mental health disorders
  - Implement strategies in the classroom and review their effectiveness
- Meet with school counselors to collaborate on treatment plans, provide support with behavioral interventions and monitor students' progress
- Identify and refer students to community-based supports and outside treatment modalities
- Collaborate with students' community-based service providers to increase continuity of care
- Remain in close contact with parents via meetings, phone calls, and emails
- The R.E.A.C.H Program Director and Assistant Director provide supervision to review caseload, discuss treatment effectiveness, and adjust clinical interventions as needed

# Professional Development:

**R.E.A.C.H clinicians have presented on several different professional development topics to Methacton staff.**

**Topics include:**

- Helping Struggling Students in the Classroom: Building Relationships with *Child-Adult Relationship Enhancement*
- Successfully Managing Classroom Behavior
- De-escalation Strategies in the Classroom
- Tips and Strategies for Working with Students with Mental Health Needs



# Quotes from Students: What is helpful about R.E.A.C.H

It is GREAT to have someone who listens.

**Safe place to come if I am overwhelmed.**

My REACH clinician make me feel safe!

**I found someone who gets me!**

No judgement - Just willing to listen and help.

**Appreciate their help!**

The feeling of belonging. The helpfulness, the urgency and care received. The ability to freely use resources. Their willingness and desire to help.

I feel supported at school.

**My counselor respects me and I respect her.**

Feels good to talk to someone who cares!

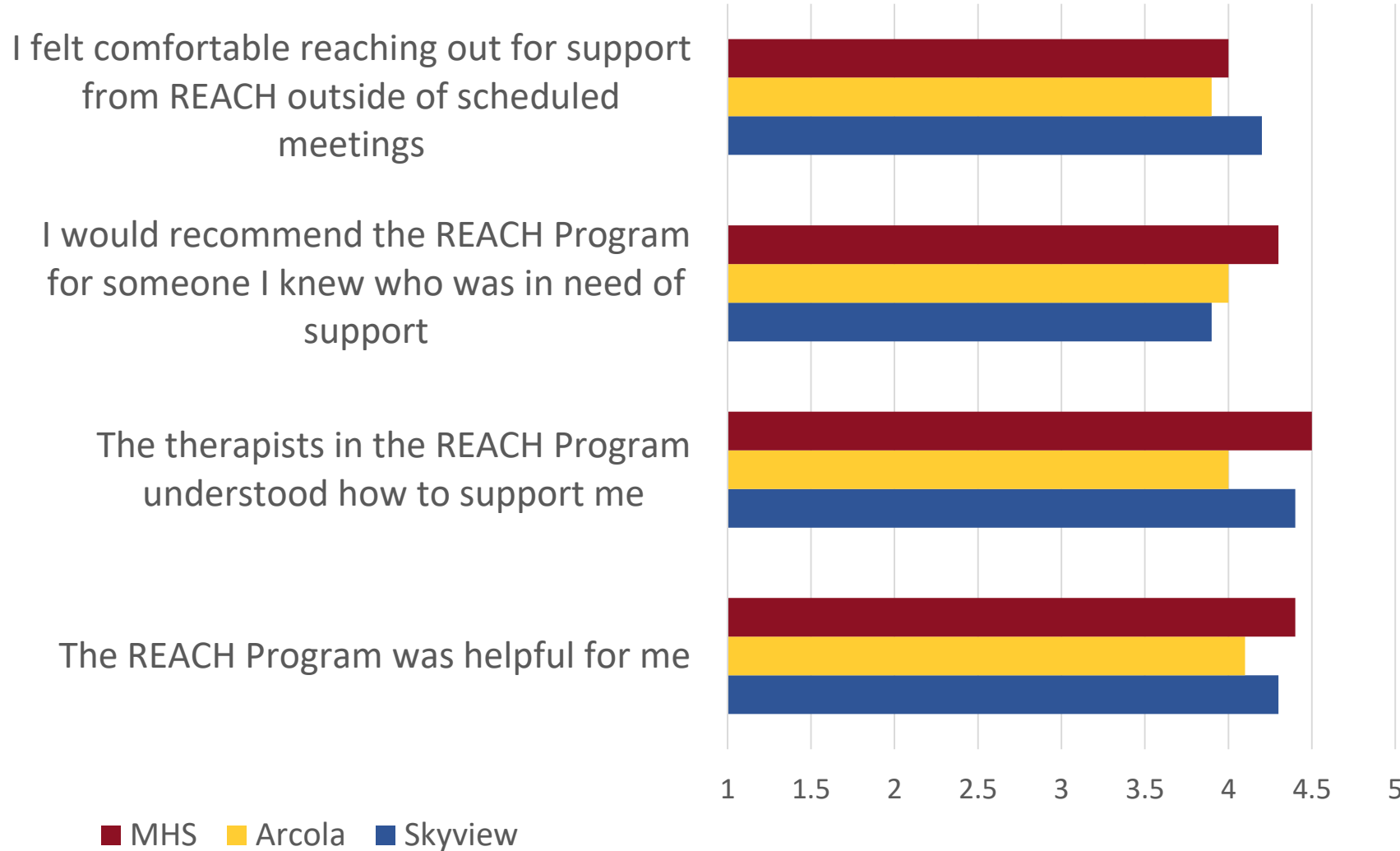
**Confidential - I can share whatever.**

REACH makes school better for me.

**My REACH counselor is kind and supportive!**

Group members could relate to similar problems I've gone through and would give support. We talked about feelings and listened to others.

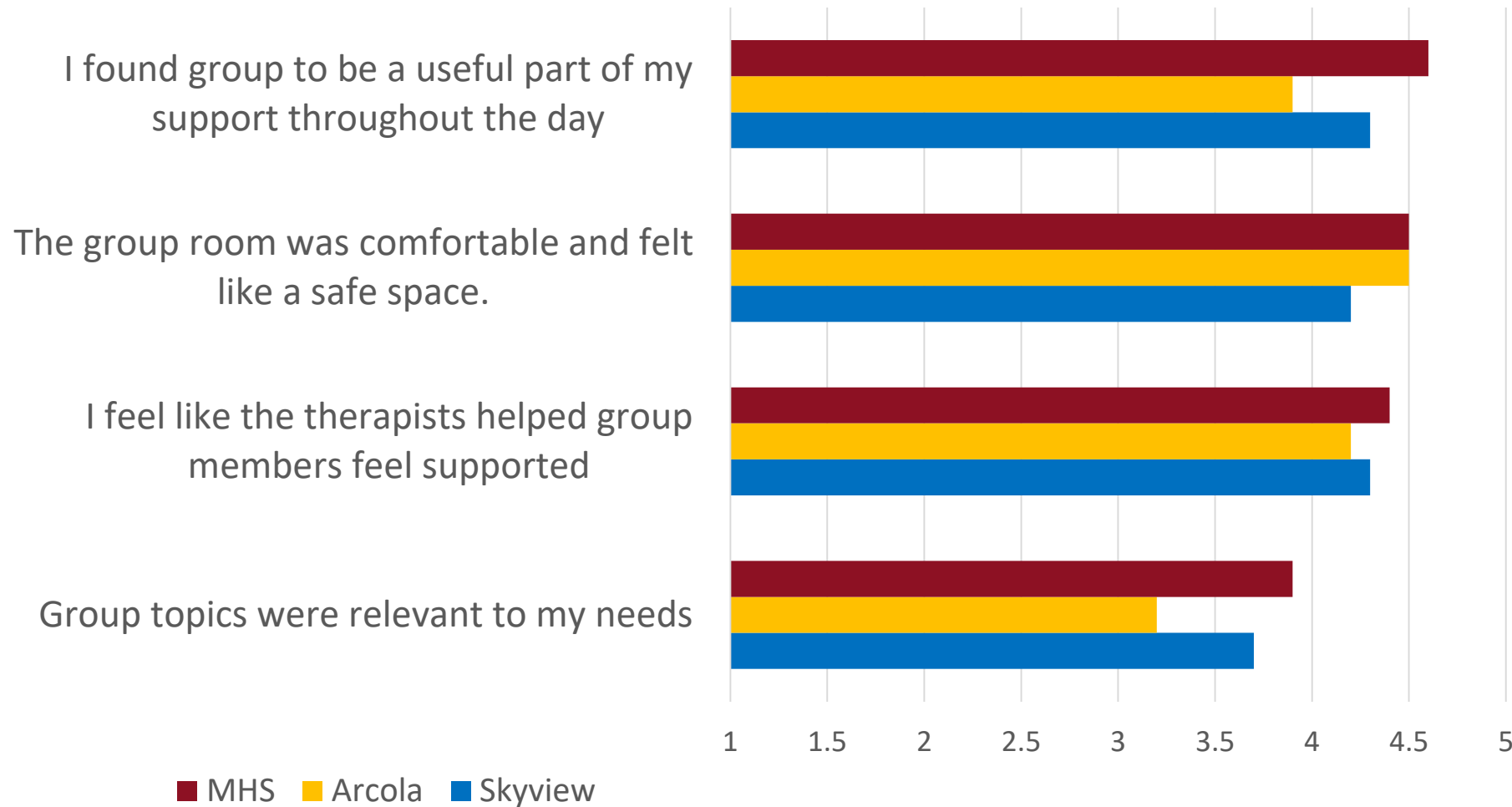
# Student Feedback: Individual Average



Students were asked to provide feedback about what they felt was effective about the REACH Program.

Scale = 1 (Disagree)  
5 (Strongly Agree)

# Student Feedback: Group Average



Students were also asked to provide feedback about what they felt was effective about the group therapy sessions.

Scale = 1 (Disagree)  
5 (Strongly Agree)

# Program Goals & Data



## **R.E.A.C.H Program Goals:**

- **Decrease symptoms related to emotional difficulties**
- **Increase attendance**
- **Increase or maintain grades**
- **Reduce need for alternative placements by supporting students in their home school**

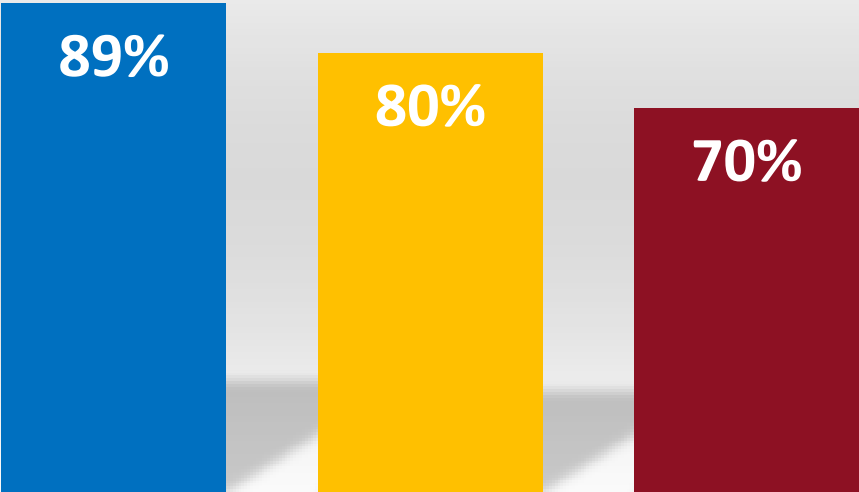
# Goal #1: Decrease Symptoms Related to Emotional Difficulties

Symptoms are tracked throughout the year with two different measures:

*CES-DC: Depression Scale for Children- includes symptoms such as eating less, feeling fatigued, feelings of loneliness/isolation, not feeling motivated, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and low self-esteem*

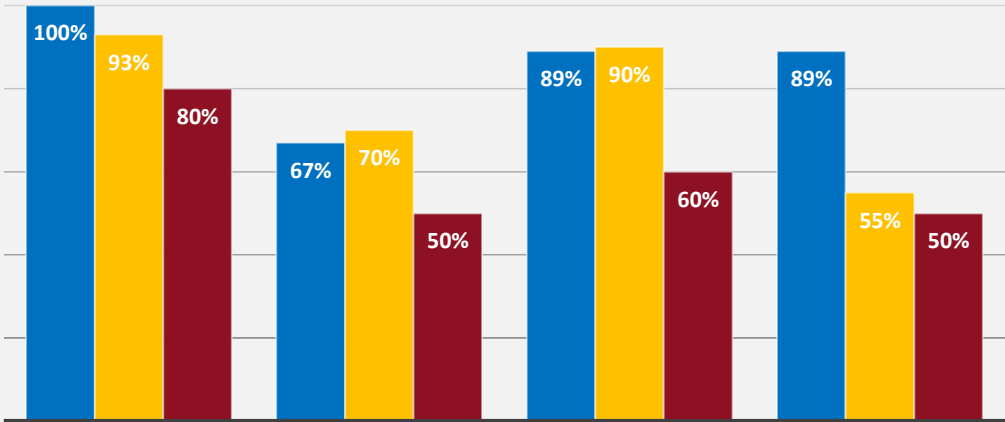
*SCARED-Youth Version: Youth Anxiety Scale- includes symptoms of generalized anxiety, social anxiety, and school avoidance.*

Percentage of Students with CES-DC Scores Decreases



Skyview      Arcola      MHS

Percentage of Students with SCARED Scores Decreases



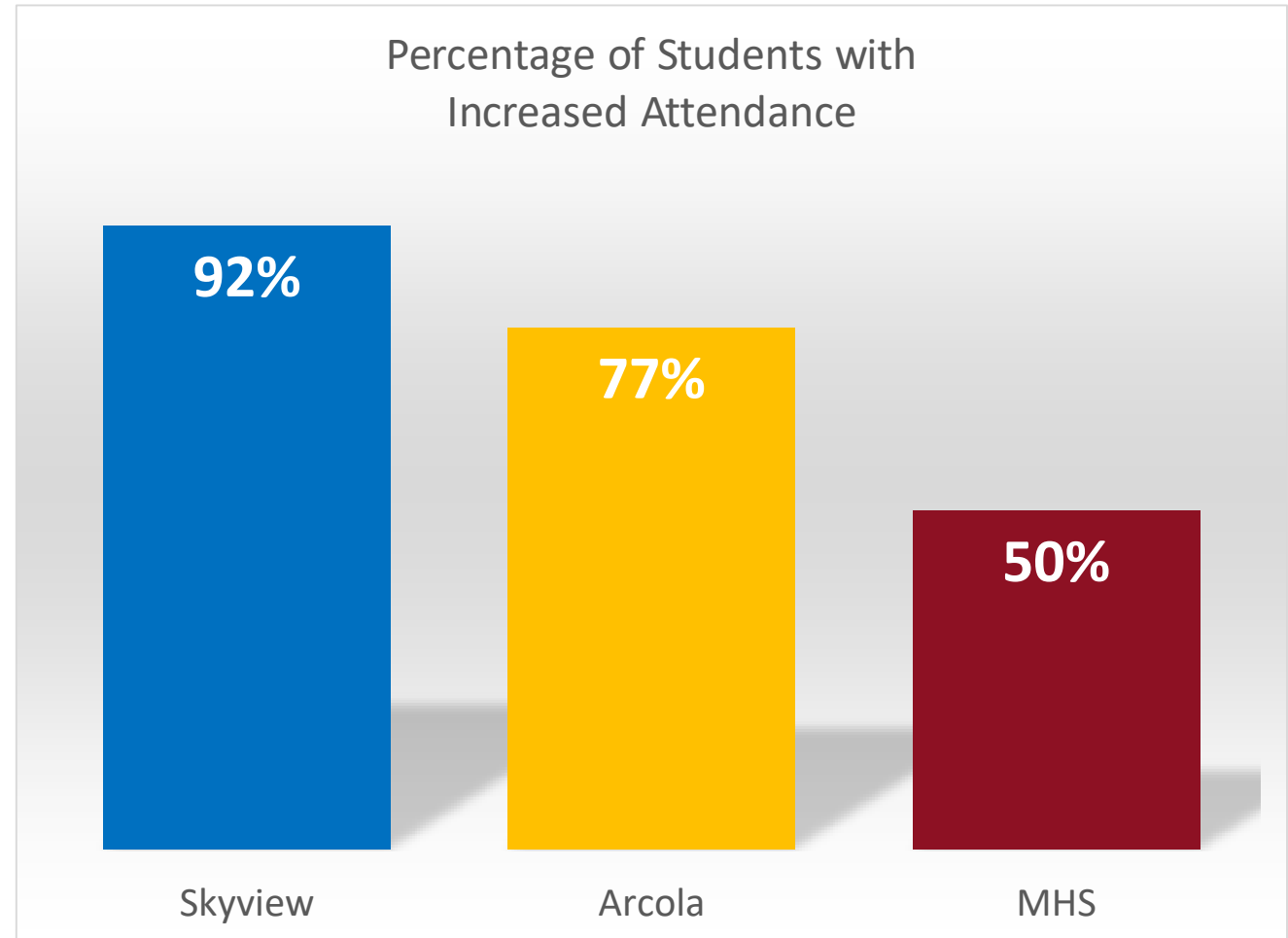
Skyview      Arcola      MHS



## Goal #2: Increase Attendance

REACH Clinicians work with students to increase attendance in school, as well as decrease tardiness.

Interventions might involve speaking with families before the school day if their child is having a hard time coming to school, meeting students as they enter the building, or working with students to plan their mornings.



## Goal #3: Increase or Maintain Grades

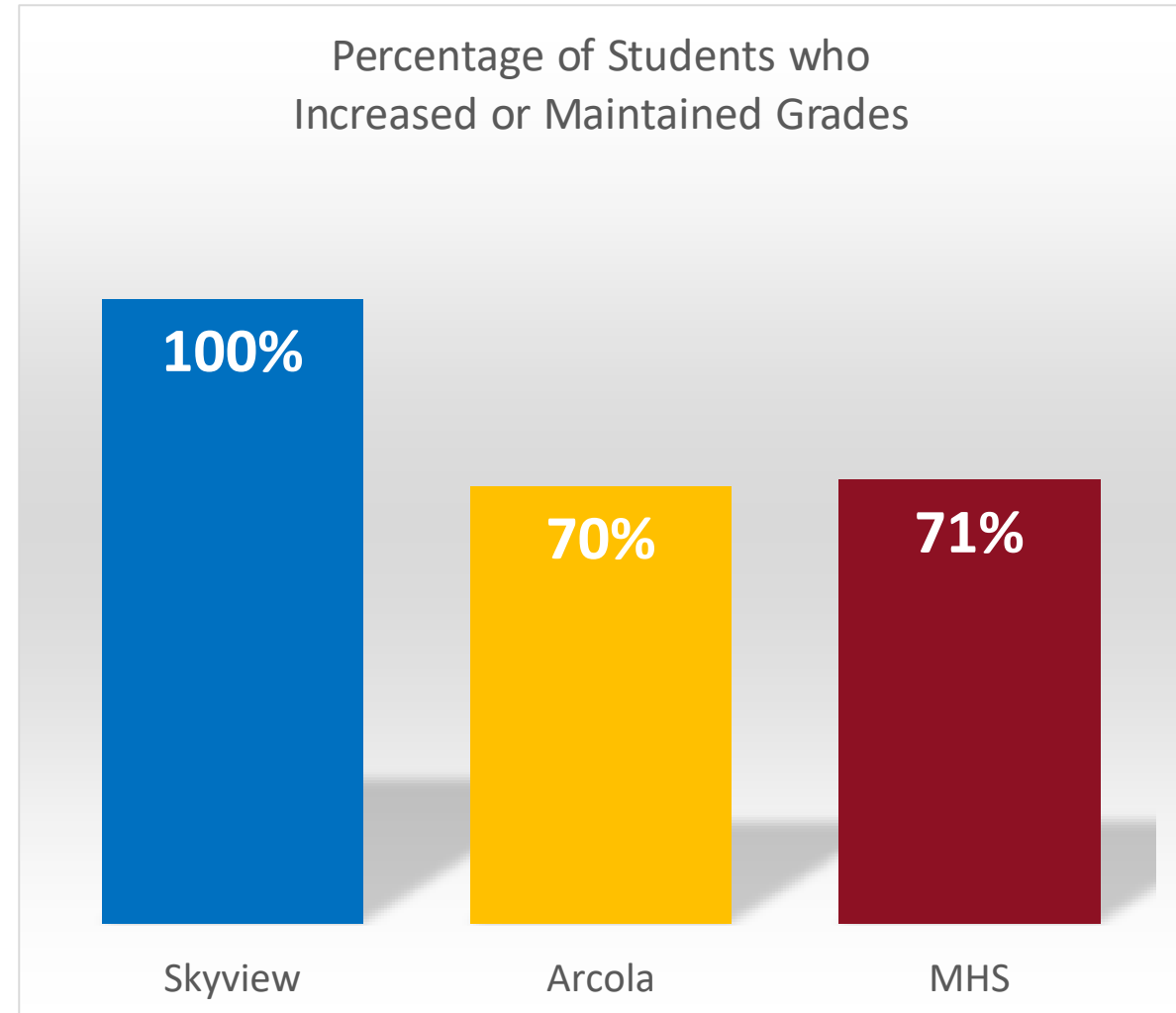
REACH Clinicians work closely with the school team to support students' grades.

The clinicians attend IEP and Team meetings.

They speak regularly with school counselors and administrators.

They also collaborate with teachers on possible academic interventions to help students.

Homework check-ins occur during group throughout the year to facilitate student accountability.



# Goal #4: Reduce Need for Alternative Placements

The R.E.A.C.H program reduces the need for alternative placements to address mental health needs by providing access to intensive mental health services in the school setting.

At times, students in R.E.A.C.H sometimes need to utilize a higher level of care, such as inpatient, partial hospitalization, or intensive outpatient therapy.

R.E.A.C.H Clinicians coordinate care with these programs to ensure students' feel supported when they are able to return to their home school.

School	Alternative Placements
Elementary	0/18
Skyview	0/12
Arcola	0/21
MHS	3/20
Totals:	3/71

## Next Steps:

- Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the R.E.A.C.H Program
- Work with Springfield Psychological to analyze and discuss caseloads, monitor the mental health needs of our students, and enhance the R.E.A.C.H program in our schools.
- Continue to provide opportunities for Springfield Psychological to conduct mental health trainings for district staff to increase awareness

## R.E.A.C.H Program Honors and Recognition:

- In March 2019, the Pennsylvania Association of Pupil Services Administrators recognized the R.E.A.C.H program with an award of Honorable Mention for its contribution to supporting students.
- **In March 2020, the Methacton's R.E.A.C.H program was honored by the Pennsylvania Association of Pupil Services Administrators and selected as the recipient of the *Robert B. Cormany Award of Excellence*, an award of distinction.**
- In October 2021, the Center for Safe Schools *Behavioral Health/Climate Assessments* noted that the R.E.A.C.H program was a strength for the schools in our districts that were implementing these school-based intensive behavioral and mental health services.
- **The Methacton Education Foundation has supported the expansion of the R.E.A.C.H program.**
- The District has received various competitive and non-competitive grants to support the expansion and sustainability of the R.E.A.C.H program.
- **The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Mental Health wrote a grant using the district's R.E.A.C.H program and its' outcomes as a model. The office was awarded \$5 million that was shared with the schools in the county to develop school-based intensive mental health programs.**
- Several other schools in the county have implemented a mental health program similar to R.E.A.C.H (North Penn SD and Pottsgrove SD) after learning more about the district's program.

**Thank You!**