



## YOUTH WELLNESS SURVEY RESULTS

April 2022

Members of the Casa Grande Youth Alliance developed a youth survey in the context of early months of Covid 19 to learn how their peers were coping with the move to online school resulting from the pandemic. For this year's survey, we invited the participation of doctoral candidate Roberto Rivera, University of Illinois-Chicago to help us develop a new and more comprehensive survey we titled the Youth Wellness Survey. The new survey combined elements of last year's survey with many new elements brought in by Mr. Rivera. In October, we sent the survey to school district leaders for vetting and with the request that the survey be completed before Thanksgiving. One superintendent suggested the addition of the section of questions regarding social media, so that element was discussed by the youth and added. In addition, the CGYA adult advisors recommended breaking the survey into three part so that the whole survey could be accomplished during shorter time slots.

The survey remained open through the beginning of March 2022. The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative (open ended) questions are included. In addition, youth comments of note have also been included for consideration.

**Survey 1: Culture, Confidence, Mental Health and Social Media – 1571 responses**

**Survey 2: Supportive People and Community – 1166 responses**

**Survey 3: Stressors, Substances and School – 1086 Responses**

### OVERALL

**Usable Responses:** MHP – 317; CG Union – 384; Vista Grande – 667

**Gender:** 47% Male, 53% Female

**Age:** 54% 13-15; 66% 16-18

**Ethnicity:** 8% American Indian; 4% Asian; 7% African American; 43% Caucasian; 5% Prefer Not to Answer; 3% Other

**Hispanic Origin:** 58% Hispanic; 42% not Hispanic

**Grade:** 39% Ninth Grade; 29% Tenth Grade; 22% Eleventh Grade; 11% Twelfth Grade

### SURVEY 1: CULTURE, CONFIDENCE, MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL MEDIA

### **Survey 1: Quantitative Response Summary**

- About half of the youth feel connected to their own culture.
- Youth feel like they are not an important part of their community and that their lives do not make a difference.
- The majority are curious and like challenging themselves. They enjoy problem solving and trying new things.
- Stress levels are at an all-time high (Covid, school, family, peers). An unrelenting focus on academic performance can have an adverse impact.
- Youth use social media to escape, as a distraction, a stress reliever, a coping mechanism or purely for entertainment.

### **Survey 1: Qualitative Response Summary**

#### **Please share any other thoughts or observations about the role that social media plays in your life**

- 111 Social media is a useful tool for communicating, learning about a hobby, etc
- 65 Social media is not a major part of my life
- 40 Social media exists to be a distraction, entertainment, or an escape from reality
- 35 Social media is a mix of positive and negative influences
- 26 Social media is mostly a harmful thing with negative consequence

#### **Youth Comments of Note**

- I feel like social media is a double-edged sword. Sure, it can cause you to feel negative about any aspect of yourself, but one thing that many people don't realize is that a lot of people also support one another on social media. So, while some are tore down, some are built up by others. I feel like a lot of people, especially older, look at social media and immediately label it as negative and useless and such. They don't realize that social media can also do good things.
- Social Media plays a good and bad role in my life because seeing people live their best life makes me upset cause it makes me realize how boring my life is compared to theirs. It can also have a good impact because I see that I'm not alone in this world and the way I feel is only temporary.
- The people at school often use social media to bully and harass others. I personally try to keep my social media to myself because I wish to avoid any drama in my life
- Social media barely lets me have mental rest from school. I want endless naps. Naps help me forget about my school stresses (everyday). If I could drop out of school I would but I do not want to disappoint my parents
- Social media often gives me creative ideas. It motivates me to draw and write. I use it for inspiration and motivation. I also use it to escape form life.

### **SURVEY 2: SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITY SURVEY**

#### **Survey 2: Quantitative Response Summary**

- About half indicate that they have relationships with positive, supportive adults. Over half feel like they have supportive friends and family members.
- A significant majority expressed that parent are supportive and, at home, feel heard and appreciated.
- Youth feel disconnected from the other supportive adults in their lives.
- The majority feel like their voices are not heard. Youth feel like they do not have authentic opportunities to share their voices constructively.
- A vast majority of the youth are not concerned about gang violence.

- A vast majority expressed interest in more and different kinds of activities in the classroom and afterschool.

## Survey 2: Qualitative Response Summary

### When you think about life in Casa Grande, what image comes to mind?

233	A place to call a home and be proud of; CG landmarks identified
129	Small town feel, lack of activities
126	Desert/Farm wide open spaces with little to do outside in the heat
56	Poverty/Homelessness, lack of access to resources, biases
22	Indifference

### Youth Comments of Note

- People who stay in their house and just do what they need to do, and when it comes to the children in specific i think of there being two groups: one unruly, and one normal.
- I think of a small little house with vines that have thorns but that also have flowers every now and then
- An image that pops inside on my head it a simple house and kind of messy. I say this because us as people did not take care of the earth like we should.
- Casa Grande is fine. There is no gang violence, the adults here are delusional and don't know what gang violence is and that's what makes Casa Grande a hard place to live.
- When I think about Casa Grande I think of a colorful place where they are multiple people of different ethnicities and races. We all have a different way of making our voice heard.
- Self-absorbed people who do things to only benefit themselves. Its quiet in some areas and loud in other. It is boring. There is no place to go and enjoy. Everything is bought with money, even the psych ward...

## SURVEY 3: STRESSORS, SUBSTANCES AND SCHOOL

### Survey 3: Quantitative Response Summary

- A vast majority report that schools and teachers have high expectations, encourage skill improvement, encourage goal setting and positive thoughts about the future.
- Youth do not feel pressured to use substances and they think prevention activities are very important.
- Youth also feel that substance use, dependence and addiction is a problem in our community.
- Youth feel like they need something more to help them take their minds of stress Many feel overwhelmed by school pressures.
- Overall, youth feel positive about their teachers, however they would like learning to be more relevant, interactive, creative and exciting.

### Survey 3: Qualitative Response Summary

#### Please share any other thoughts or ideas about how the school can offer more encouragement and support?

37	Be more helpful, encouraging, supportive, stable, open minded, welcoming, friendly
33	Improve school climate, culture

- 29 Emphasize preparation for future
- 24 Positive comments, like school
- 17 Strengthen teaching strategies, positive attitudes towards students
- 14 More activities, clubs, afterschool programs, assemblies
- 14 Support Groups, emphasize mental health
- 14 Youth Engagement; Youth Voice

### **Youth Responses of Note**

- I haven't a clue, the only support i get is from our social worker and psychologist.
- I think another way to make sure students are maintaining their best efforts would be by having mandatory one-on-one meets with the teachers.
- Most aren't asked what we love to do or about our interests and I think if we talked about it more it would help us feel supported.
- I wish some teachers would try to be less stern with their words and provide more constructive criticism and opportunities to improve classwork/quizzes than just marking your assignment wrong.
- Teachers not being so hard spirited
- I think I would feel more supported by the school if I wasn't being stopped three times by security between every class to ensure I have the ID that has been hanging around my neck since the first day of school. Not to mention not being able to even enter the school without visible ID and yet they aren't free. So those low-income students who cannot afford to pay for an ID are constantly being harassed by teachers, security, and other staff all because they don't have an ID that they don't have equal access too. I would feel more supported if my school owned up for its mistake and lack of proper response and response time than blaming every issue on students and parents. Keeping in mind that this school exists because of parents and students. Now we students are all being treated like criminals because OUR LIVES were put in danger.

### **How can teachers make learning more meaningful?**

- 307 Make learning more interactive, relevant, creative, varied; teach real life application
- 125 Be more passionate, personal, and interactive; spend more time engaging with students
- 51 Be more meticulous and ensure students are passing and understanding the lesson
- 39 Make being a student less stressful. e.g. decrease work load, work on it in class, be less strict, etc
- 38 The teachers are doing a good job
- 35 Teachers should be more understanding, supportive, and encouraging
- 33 Connect with each individual more; learn the best teaching methods for individual students

### **Youth Responses of Note**

- Actually liking their job and teaching instead of just giving us the work. them being negative about not wanting to be here at their job is a horrible environment for students.
- Be more aware of students' lives and rely don't on your own PAST experiences to compare to ours just to brush it off... It may not seem like it, but a LOT of us are in need of an reliable adult's support right now and not as a teacher, but as a person.

- being calm and try to help everyone individually, the teachers always seem mad or annoyed.
- By teaching it in more interesting and entertaining ways, because many times when we try to do it in the traditional way, many times we do not fully understand what we are learning
- Care about students trying to get their grade up instead of pushing them aside, Work with the students to help them achieve what they need
- connecting content with meaning
- Connecting with the students instead of forcing their learning and every minor rule on them every single day of the year. Never giving students a break or even a chance to learn how to adjust to the rules before implying disciplinary actions.
- Don't have teachers sit around just babysitting. Actually, make the teachers do something. But don't make it boring, because if it is, we can participate but not learn anything. So many teachers don't care and half of them are snobby and rude. They think that they are better than you and will get away with it because they are older. No. They won't. When you correct them, or state your opinion and they don't like it, they will say you are giving attitude and being rude. Hire teachers who actually want to teach and actually know what they're doing. A lot of teachers are here for a paycheck and nothing else. Even if teachers' pay isn't the best, they aren't here for a good reason. A great example of a good teacher is Ms. Clemons from Vista Grande high school. She is amazing and kind, she's always helpful and pushes you to be the best. She cares about you and want to teach. Don't hire teachers that don't want to and don't value us. We are the future, and we deserve respect, even if you are older. Respect isn't and will never be handed to someone just because they have experienced more, it will be handed to people who use those experiences to teach and help others. Don't hire those who won't.
- Don't teach for just a day and expect us to understand it for the whole week. Don't teach something one day and expect us to know and remember and teach something new the next day. some of us don't learn like that. some of us can't stay after school to get tutoring. We must hurry and learn this and that before finals, test, exams afraid that's going to determine everything for us. People expect us to be better in the "real world" but we won't learn if we get to know how our lives will be determined once we have those last test scores. Having a low GPA and basically saying I won't make it in "life", "in the real world"

#### **I believe the best way to prevent substance misuse is...**

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| 249 | Abstinence; resistance; don't hang out with people that do drugs |
| 123 | Spread awareness; primary prevention educational activities      |
| 43  | Individuals that are misusing need to get/ask for help           |
| 38  | Take political action; make changes to laws surrounding drugs    |
| 32  | effectively manage stress, hang out with good friends            |
| 26  | Offer and seek meaningful alternatives                           |
| 26  | Can't stop it; Pessimistic                                       |
| 24  | Schools need to better enforces rules around drugs and alcohol   |

#### **Youth Responses of Note**

- I don't know, sleep? I would rather just not care about myself in other ways like self-harm or something but substances, yeah no. I dread the moment I decide to start using drugs. In my community though, there is no way to prevent it. As long as everyone's lives are more or even exactly as hard as mine and school is doing the thing where they think they can pressure everyone into a mold of obedience, then maybe drugs wouldn't be so widespread and abused.
- I believe that we need to educate students more about this. When we were younger it was taught but as we aged it was taught less.
- Honestly, I feel like there's no set way; If people want to do something they'll do it. They don't care about the health risks. Just educating them on it more would maybe increase the odds of them shying away from it, but that would be a low probability. Most people just don't really care.

- help people with mental and physical health and make it harder to access and make rehab more affordable and accessible.
- Have a useful class that explains how it affects your brain in the long run and what can happen to you physically should deter students from wanting to try the substance.
- Have addiction survivors, investigators, experienced cops and others come and speak at the school about the matter and what they have experienced/seen in the past that we as young kids can avoid.
- Give therapy. Most people who use just don't have an outlet and are numb. they use to be able to feel something. Give free therapy from actual licensed professionals who aren't going to just shove them in juvie or a mental hospital. I know so many people with traumatic events in their life that they don't know how to cope so they turn to drugs and alcohol. Get them help. Change the world so it's not shameful to seek help.
- drug test students every month and if they turn positive the parents will have to sign that they approve if not have ISS.
- Adults need to stop setting the example that it is okay to misuse substances. Young people see it as if it's not a problem because adults are supposed to be the more educated one. When a peer of mine is clearly using drugs or alcohol, it's obvious that someone at home is also doing it as well or the people at home simply do not care. It's not hard for a parent to notice that their kid is using substances. Even older siblings need to look out for their younger siblings. Best way to prevent is to not start.

#### **What is hard about life right now?**

- 105 Balancing schoolwork, extracurriculars, a job, family, sleep, and social life
- 101 Everything
- 43 Stress put on at home from family and friends; stress about family problems
- 39 Social challenges (not feeling confident, not fitting in, breakup, making friends, loneliness)
- 28 Covid 19
- 27 Going through changes; adapting (new environment, new people, becoming an adult)
- 24 Pressure of graduating and figuring out what's next

#### **Youth Responses of Note**

- Covid-19 and family, friend or peers getting sick or dying from it. Not much support regarding the school when this happens. Its been kind of just a "I'm sorry for what you're going through", or "thanks for letting me know" and then them telling us to continue to stay productive with schoolwork during events like this when I feel that isn't realistic.
- Currently, I live with my dad and my stepmom. The environment is extremely toxic and hostile. My dad is leaving very negative impressions on the people around him including family. He is impossible to talk or reason to him concerning his actions, so I just isolate myself from him. I would also like to say that he is not abusing anybody, but people do feel stifled by his decisions and emotional manipulation. On the other hand, my mom is actively looking out for me and is engaged with things concerning my scholastic activities and mental and emotional health. My sisters are also incredible during this time, they are so supportive of everything I do, and I know I can count on them to lean on.
- Dealing with depression, anxiety, fitting in, physical and mental confidence, socializing, and not being able to engage in activities besides school with others.
- Being calm and not stressing out and dealing with other people's emotional distress
- Coming to terms with the fact that I am almost an adult; also, the fact that I know nothing about BEING an adult.
- Balancing work and life are new to me.
- Balancing work, school, and taking care of my little sister. Being this close to graduation and feeling like i won't even make it to that.
- All the stress put on me by my family and friends, my struggling mental health that I can't talk with my parents about.

- A lot is hard in life right now there are things at home and at school with some people and I don't know what to do and it's just so much
- A lot of things but I've always stressed about these things, and I have learned that a lot of it is out of my control and that I just need to keep going.

#### **Casa Grande Youth Alliance Next Steps**

- Develop focus group questions based on findings.
- Youth Alliance members facilitate focus groups at each school.
- Identify priorities.
- Design culturally relevant opportunities for youth self-expression and voice. We hope to shine a light on what matters most to youth in Casa Grande.

#### **THRIVING RESEARCH**

1. **Relationships**—Students need positive developmental relationships with adults (other than parents) that they can go to in time of crisis.
2. **Sparks**—Students need to identify and cultivate their deepest interests and passions.
3. **Voice**—Students need opportunities to develop their confidence in influencing the things that matter to them.

Adolescents who scored high in all three areas did better on every academic (including standardized tests), psychological, social-emotional, and behavioral outcome that had been studied. Conclusions of the study suggest that young people who have these three strengths are more likely to thrive in school, work, and community life.

However, results with over 3,000 youth suggest that only 7% of all students studied scored high in all three areas of strength; and that roughly only 1/3 of youth scored high in any one area.

(Scales, Benson, Roehlkepartain 2011)