

Sandhills Mental Health Symposium - Lightning Sessions

10:40 AM - 10:55 AM

June 10, 2025

Building Healthy Student Relationships

Arthur Gilliam-Auditorium

Richmond County Schools, implements a data-driven mentorship program that connects at-risk students with adult mentors within the school building. The program focuses on fostering meaningful connections between students and school staff to improve retention rates and overall student success.

Student Services PLCs and Student Outcome Goals

Pamela Stevenson-Auditorium

Learn how Cumberland County Schools uses Student Services PLCs to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and support student success. Each PLC is tasked with developing a student outcome goal, implementing research-based strategies, and collecting data on student outcomes. A recognition program was also implemented to celebrate student success and Promising Practices.

SPARCS Small Groups

*Kelly Nolan, Pamela Story and Crystal Whitte
-Classroom C*

Cumberland County Schools implements SPARCS, a group counseling program, with secondary students (6-12). It is an evidence-based program for students who may still be living with ongoing stress or experiencing problems in several areas of functioning. SPARCS teaches self-regulation and mindfulness through interactive activities. This hands-on session allows participants to learn about the program.

Working Through A Crisis, Trauma and Mental Health Lens

Jessalyn Pedone-Classroom D

This presentation provides an overview of the current mental health landscape for youth, highlighting key statistics related to depression, trauma, and suicide. Attendees will learn about the district's layered support systems—the Mental Health Support Team, Crisis Response Team, and Student Support Services—as well as available suicide and self-harm protocols. The session will also emphasize the importance of the "3 C's": Connection, Collaboration, and Communication.

Thrive365

Kim Baker, Wendy Whittenton and Alexa Lewis-Classroom E

Thrive365 is Harnett County Schools' year-round commitment to student success through attendance and mental wellness, and the belief that consistent presence and emotional support help students thrive. The district implements creative strategies and incentives throughout the year, with special recognition during Attendance Awareness Month in September. Support includes group sessions led by trained staff and partnerships with families and community organizations to extend care beyond school. The program provides educational materials promoting the connection between attendance and mental health.

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Elementary Counselor Power

Natalie McCurley-*Classroom C*

Elementary School Counselors are often the first mental health professional that a child encounters. As students begin their school career, a supportive comprehensive school counseling program implemented by school counselors helps mold their personal, academic, and social/emotional development. These powerful realms help shape the trajectory of their lives and set students on successful paths for their futures.

Student Anxiety Disorders: Factors to Consider When Considering Section 504

Amy Maynor Crockett - *Classroom E*

The number of students diagnosed with some form of anxiety disorder continues to grow. Schools strive to provide support to assist these students and help them achieve academically. As supports and interventions are implemented, questions often arise surrounding protections and accommodations provided by Section 504. This talk will explore the factors that must be considered when determining Section 504 eligibility for students with anxiety disorders.

Blast Off to New Habits

Jennifer Butler and Kristy Newitt-*Auditorium*

Cumberland County Schools is implementing a systemwide Social Emotional Learning focus. We will briefly share our focus and also discuss The 5 Second Rule as described by Mel Robbins. We will give you the research behind the tool and ways of using it with both adults and students.

Building Community: Scaling Restorative Practices for Districtwide Impact

Melody Chalmers McClain-*Auditorium*

Cumberland County Schools is transforming school climate and student well-being through a strategic, districtwide restorative practices implementation plan. This lightning talk highlights key rollout phases, cross-department collaboration, and lessons learned in aligning restorative approaches with school mental health priorities. Participants will gain practical strategies for building staff capacity, fostering student voice, and creating sustainable systems that support both accountability and healing.

Every Day Counts: Unlocking Student Success Through the Power of Presence

Diamond Jacobs-*Classroom D*

This theme frames attendance not just as a requirement, but as a powerful tool for academic and personal growth. It allows you to explore creative subtopics such as:

- ☐ The link between daily presence and long-term success
- ☐ "Invisible absences" (mental/emotional disengagement even when physically present)
- ☐ Interactive visuals showing how just a few days missed can impact learning over time
- ☐ Strategies for building a culture of belonging and accountability