

Unicoi County High School Risk Behavior Assessment

A photograph of a large, two-story brick school building with a prominent arched entrance. The building is surrounded by a green lawn and several cars are parked in front. In the background, there are green hills under a blue sky with light clouds.

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Thank You!

- A special thanks to Dr. Rebecca Love, principal of Unicoi County High School, and also all the teachers and administrative staff at Unicoi County High School for all of their assistance

In the Beginning

- Window Survey
- Interviews:
 - Health Department: Becky Cassell
 - Health Council
 - Unicoi Faculty: Kathy Bullen, Tammy Larkey
 - Prior Researcher: Dr. Schetzina



Community Strengths

- High graduation rate
 - 90.9%-Unicoi County, 85%-US
- Very high community involvement
- Low pregnancy rate
 - 1.4%-Unicoi County, 6%- US



Community Weaknesses

- Tobacco Use
- Condom Use
- Alcohol Use
- Depression
 - Suicide has been on the rise
- High Mental/Physical Abuse



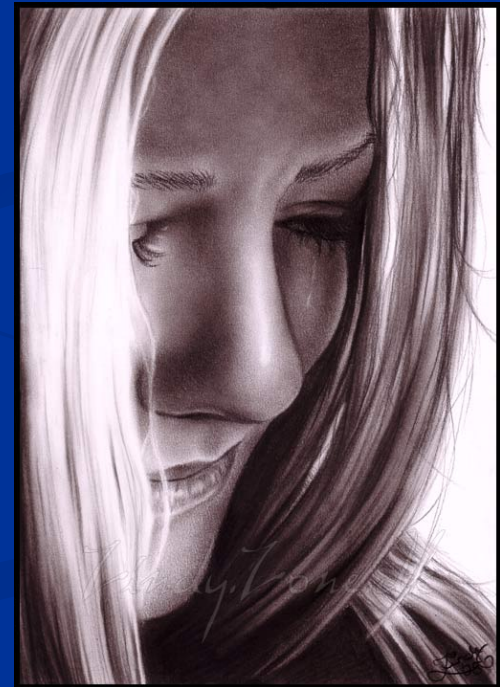
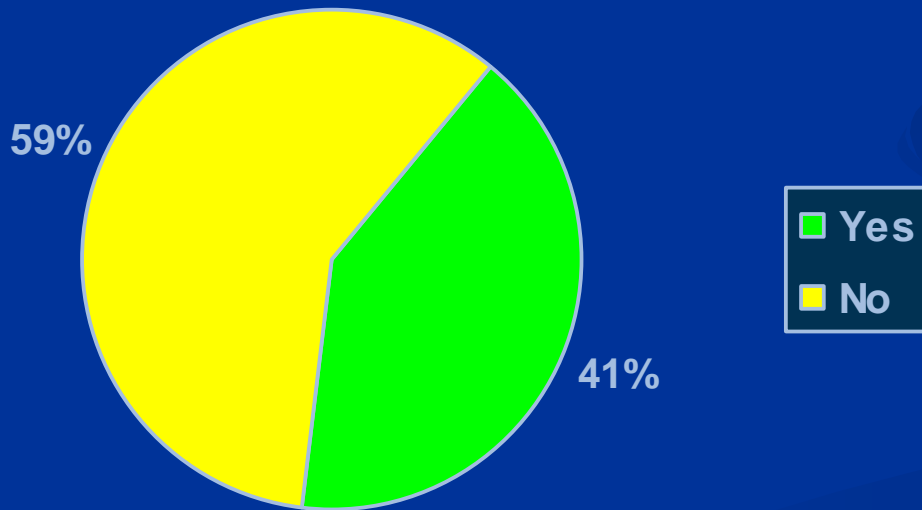
Survey



- How often do you wear a seatbelt?
- Do you feel or have you ever felt sad for more than 2 weeks at a time?
- Have you ever had thoughts of committing suicide?
- Have you ever hurt yourself on purpose?
- Do you find it difficult to fit in at school?
- Have you ever met in person with someone you met through the internet?
- Do you think verbal abuse occurs between students?
- Do you think physical abuse occurs between students?
- Do you think drinking at your age is okay?
- Have you ever driven after drinking alcohol?
- How often do you smoke cigarettes?
- Have you ever used chewing or dipping tobacco?
- Have you ever had sexual intercourse without a condom?
- Have you ever had sex because you felt pressured by your peers or partner?

Depression

- Do you feel or have you ever felt sad for more than 2 weeks at a time?

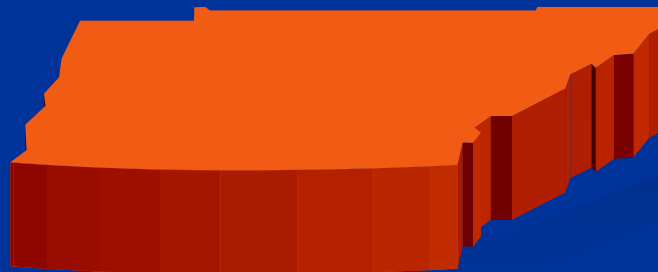


Depression Statistics

- Depressive disorders affect approximately 18.8 million American adults. As noted by the American Psychiatric Association, the direct cost of treating and supporting mental illness is \$55 billion a year (www.upperbay.org).
- About 9.5% of the U.S. population age 18 and older in a given year is affected by depression, but adolescents have the highest risk for depression at 20%. (www.aacap.org).

Tennessee Depression Statistics

- The TN Department of Health reported that the number of deaths from suicide between the ages of 10-19 in 2004 totaled 45.
- Unicoi County specifically had 4 suicides
- Based on the per capita average for suicide, 5 out of 8 Northeast TN Counties had an above average suicide rate (www.tspn.org).



Unicoi High School Statistics

Out of the 527 Unicoi High School student participants that completed our survey, 31.2% of males and 53.8% of females said they had felt sad for more than two weeks at a time; a significantly high number when compared to the national average of 20%-more than two times higher than the national average!



Common Reasons for Depression within the High School Population

- Students feel they have no one to talk to----isolation
- Students feel social pressure to “fit in”
- Students are exposed to major stressors such as

Relationships

Unclear expectations

Poverty

Family conflict

Pressure to succeed

Self-doubt

Hormones



Reasons for lack of Recognition

- Teachers lack the knowledge to identify depression in students
- The stigma associated with receiving professional assistance for a mental disorder can be a barrier to getting treatment
- The lack of a confidant with whom a student can talk



Project Goal

Our project was multifaceted encompassing many objectives, but our main goal was to educate the teachers and provide them with the resources necessary to identify high school students exhibiting signs and symptoms of depression and also those students who might be at risk for suicide.



Project Objectives

- Objective #1: to increase awareness of the results of the spring 2007 student and teacher survey by presenting results at Oct. 23rd intervention and supplying copies to the faculty
- Objective #2: to provide information in 100% of student restrooms and some other locations suggested by school administrators that informs students of free, available, confidential resources for them to access if they want help



Project Objectives



- Objective #3: Identify at least 2 themes from teachers about their concerns relative to being able to recognize and intervene and how to further help the population in relation to depression
- Objective #4: Long term objective: Decrease the prevalence of depression and thought of suicide as measured in future surveys in one year

Project Description



- After much group discussion, we decided to focus our efforts on educating the teachers as opposed to doing an intervention directly with the students.
- Teachers will be there for many years to come and have contact with both current and future students; therefore, they can continue to use our strategies to help the future students of Unicoi County High School.

Intervention Day-October 23rd

- Presented and provided results from the Spring 2007 Survey
- 25-30 minute Presentation given to faculty during their 45 minute break to increase their knowledge about signs and symptoms of depression and how to intervene



Intervention Day-October 23rd

- 9 Line Signs placed in private locations
- Self-esteem building activities for homeroom periods
- Faculty volunteer sheet

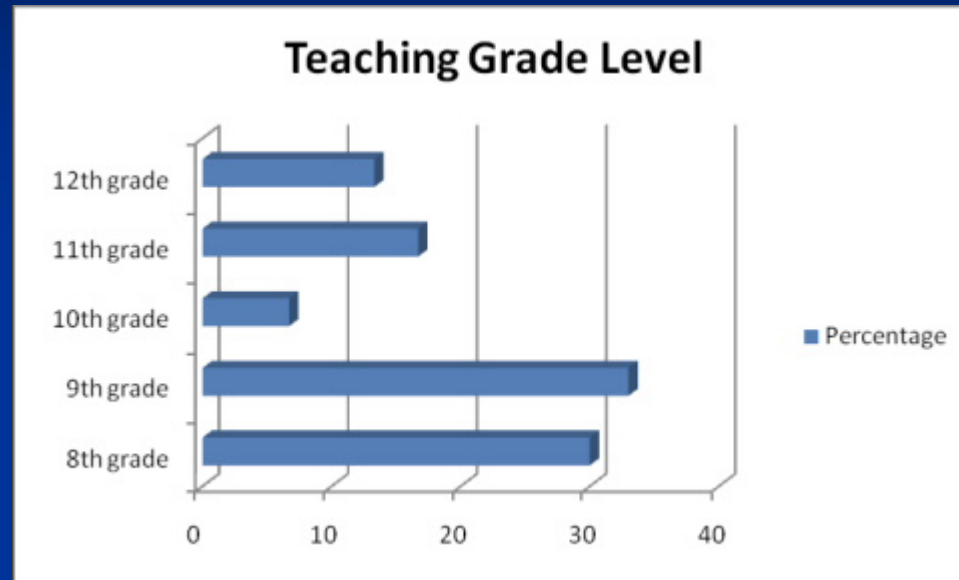


Evaluation



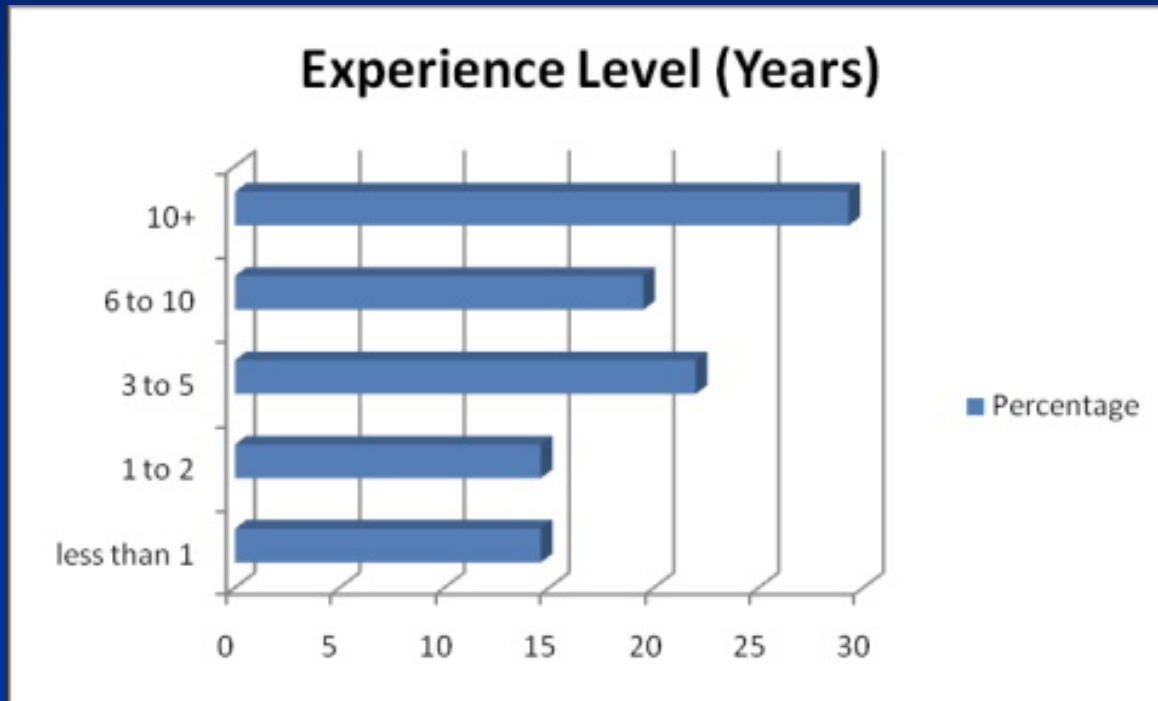
- Teachers completed a pre and post survey
- After each presentation, group members discussed ways to improve the presentation for the next program; this allowed for improvement throughout the day

Results



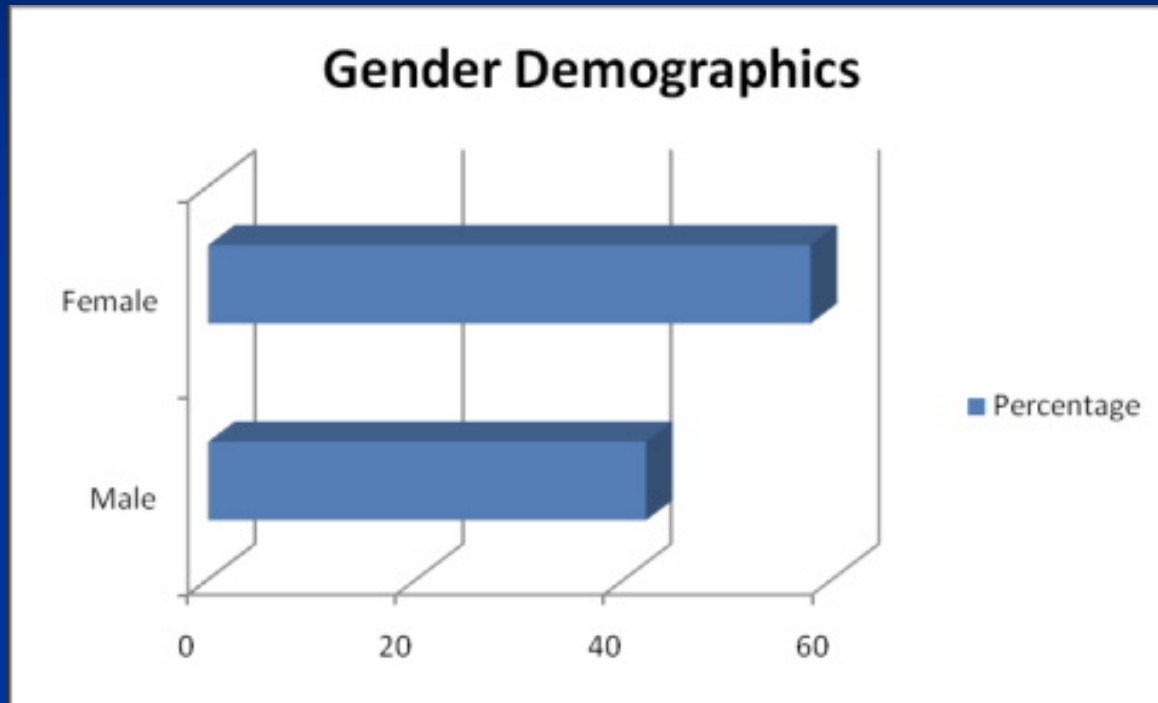
This is the analysis of the demographics of the teachers. The majority of those surveyed were 8th and 9th grade teachers. As an aggregate, the total number surveyed was 41. Only 30 gave their grade level, and this is the breakdown of the 30 minus the 11 non-responses.

Results



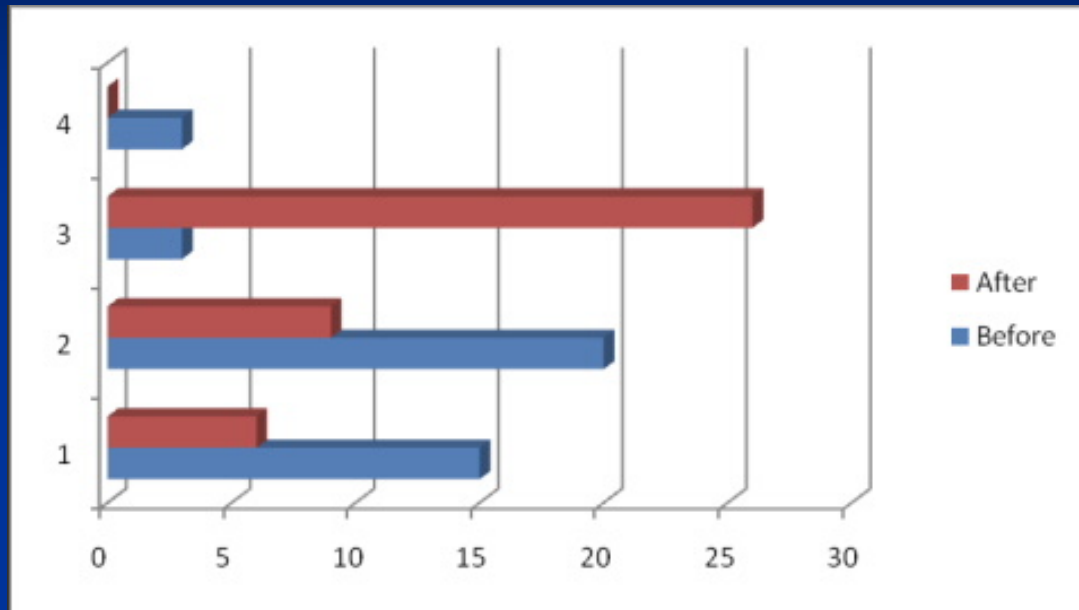
This is the categorization of the teacher's experience level in years. Of the 41 teachers surveyed, all 41 disclosed their experience level.

Results



Of the teachers surveyed, 42.1 were male and 57.9 were female. Of the 41, only 38 disclosed their gender.

Results

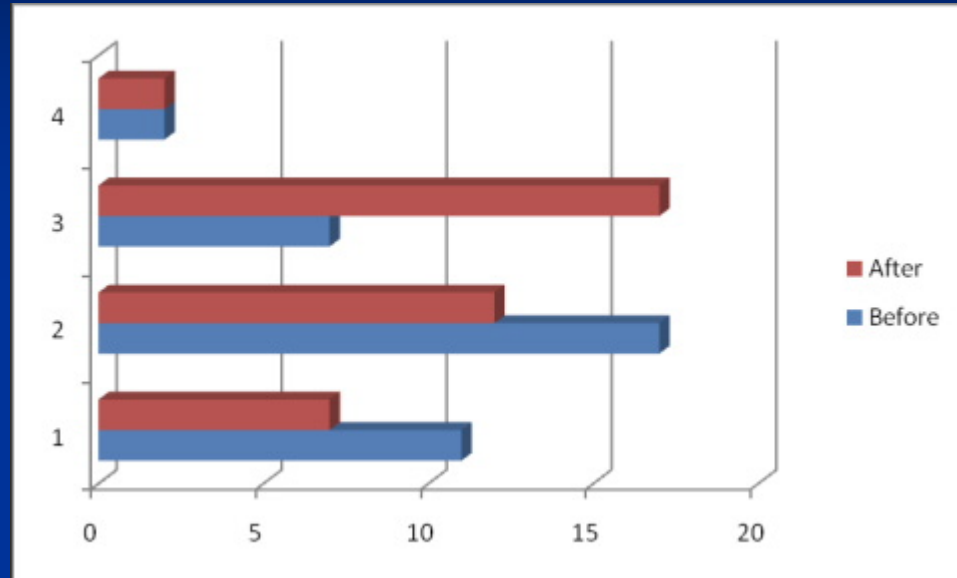


Question 1 was asked before and immediately after the presentation to determine if the intervention caused a change in attitudes or beliefs. Question 1 was worded “depression is a problem among Erwin HS students” and teachers selected an answer between 1 and 4 on a continuum. In this question, 1 meant ‘strongly disagree’ and 4 meant ‘strongly agree.’

A significant change was discovered between the pre and post-intervention assessments. Teachers generally tended to believe that depression was less of a problem among their students prior to the survey. Immediately following the intervention, the post survey revealed that a higher percentage of teachers now believed depression was a problem among their students.

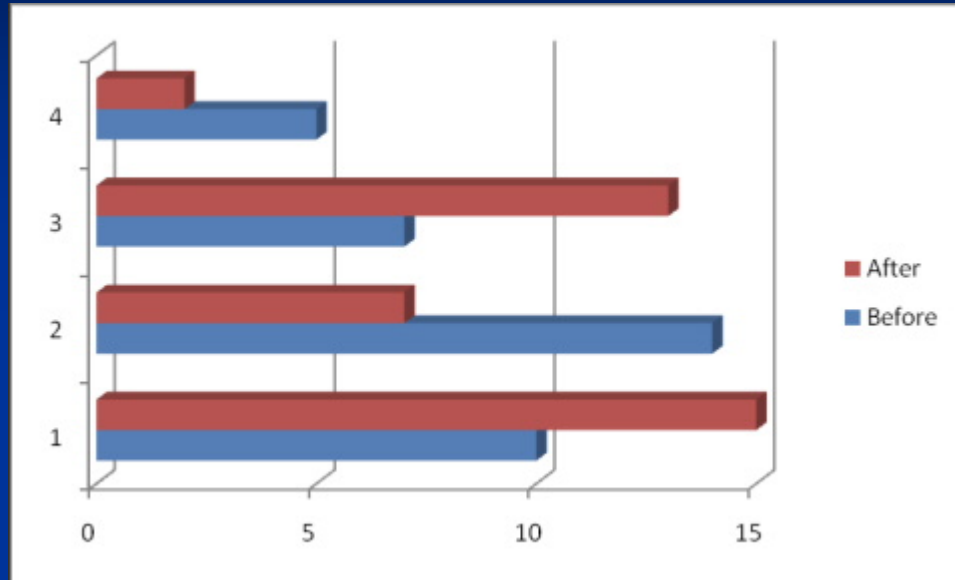


Results



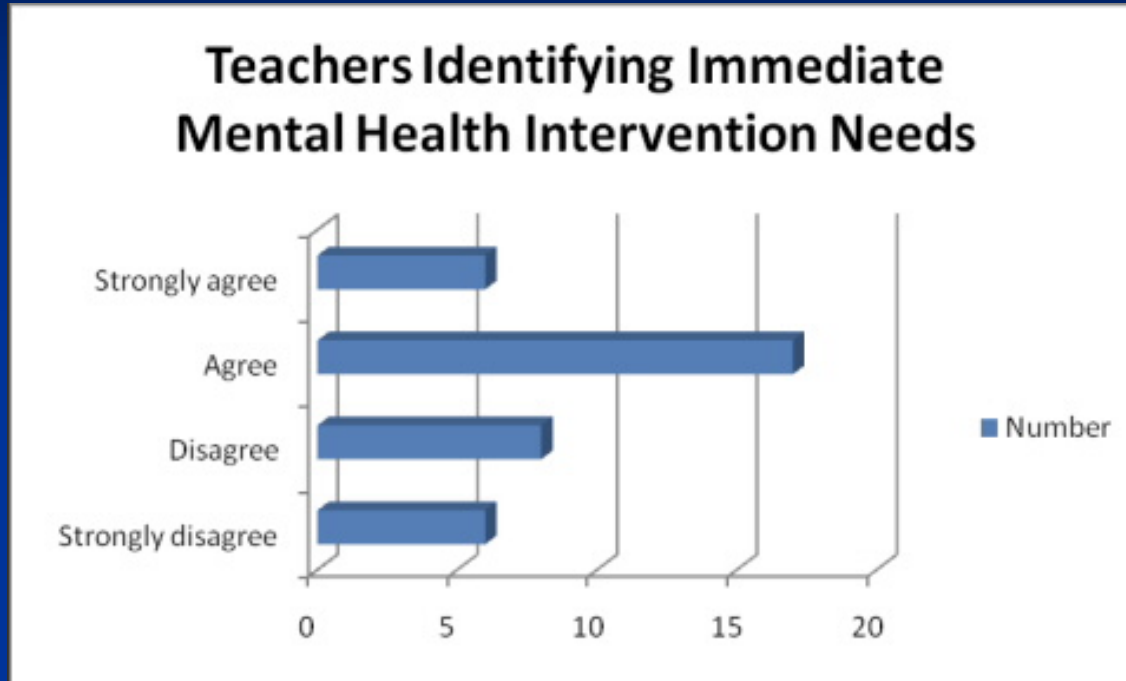
Question 5 was worded “I could effectively identify high school students at risk for suicide.” There was some apprehension in the responses pre-intervention. However, following the intervention more teachers believed they could at least identify students at risk. This illustrates that the intervention demonstrated skills and reinforced confidence in the teaching sample.

Results



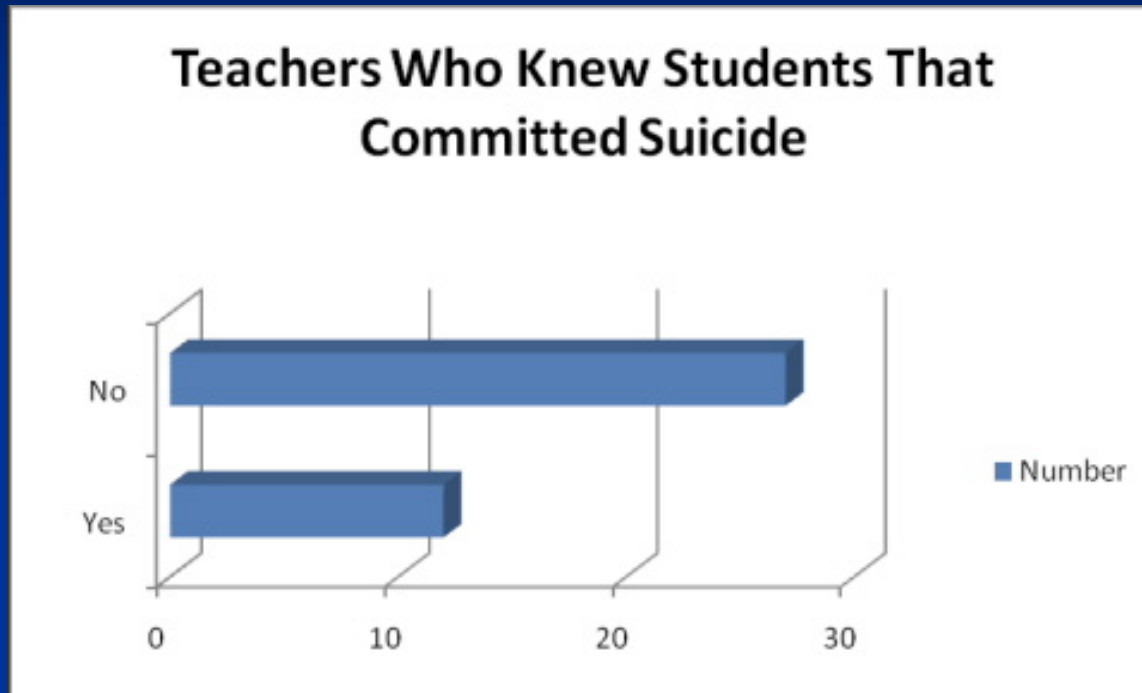
Question 6 compared the belief “depression is a temporary condition that everyone experiences.” A significant percentage of teachers moved towards the belief that it is not a temporary condition as a result of the intervention.

Results



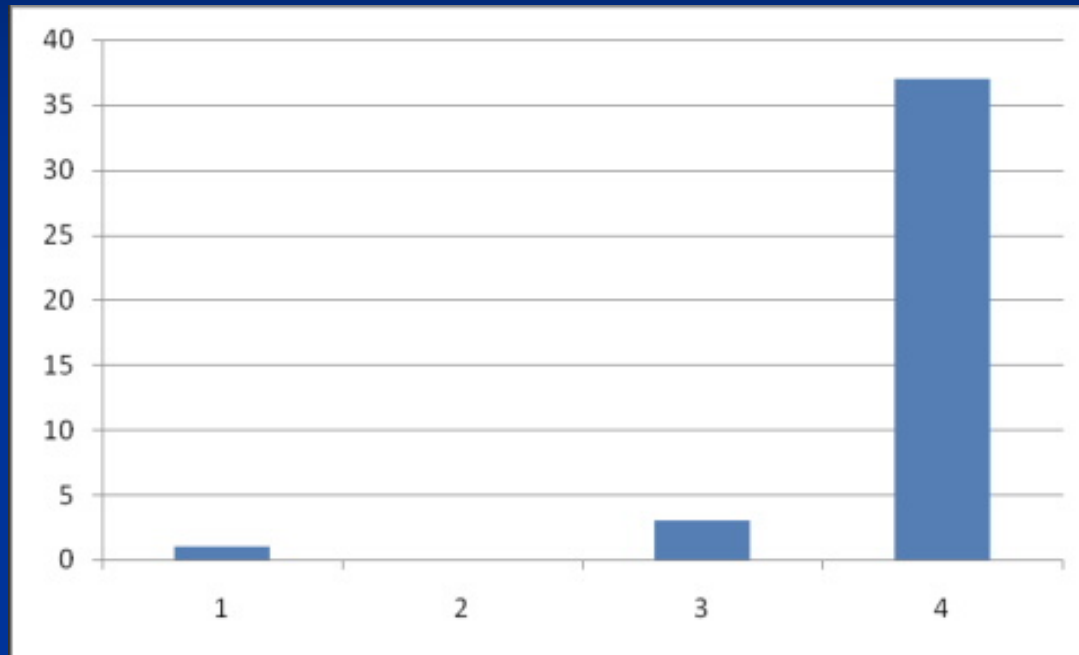
Question 12 made the statement “I know students who need mental health intervention right now.” The pre and post-intervention numbers did not see any significant improvement, but the majority of teachers did identify students with immediate intervention needs.

Results



Question 13 was a background question to see if the teachers knew students that committed suicide. It was theorized that teachers who knew students that committed suicide would also be more sensitive and knowledgeable about the issue.

Results



The last question dealt with the usefulness of the presentation on the same 1 to 4 continuum. Of our teacher sample, one individual strongly disagreed while 3 agreed it was useful and informative. The remainder, 37 strongly agreed it was useful and helpful.

Discussion

- The post survey revealed that teachers believed they could better identify depressive symptoms in their students, thus accomplishing the group's primary goal
- Overall, teachers' perceptions about the prevalence of depression as a problem among their students was increased substantially



Discussion

From our intervention surveys, one can draw the conclusion that if our group's 25-30 minute presentation was able to provide teachers with the information needed to raise their confidence about recognizing depressive symptoms, then the same can be done for others

Lessons Learned



- We were appreciated by most faculty and administration
- Teachers thought it was a good idea to speak with the students about depression (long term objective for future classes)

Continuing Work...

- Many questions were raised by the participants during our intervention sessions which remain unanswered and will require further research into these questions
- Additional research is needed to determine whether there was a positive effect on the rate of depression among the Unicoi High School students following our interventions

THE END!

