

Individual Adopter School Case Study: Noble

Regional School Unit #60, Region 9 – York

Background

Regional school unit #60 (RSU #60) is a rural school administrative unit (SAU) that serves approximately 3,000 students across 8 schools in Berwick, North Berwick, and Lebanon. The median household income in the SAU (\$71,327) is higher than the state's median, although district administrators noted there is wide income disparity in the area, and more than a quarter of students classify as economically disadvantaged (Table).¹ Overall, the assistant superintendent described the SAU as a “working-class community...in the process of economic development,” but noted it lags behind some nearby towns on the coast that draw from a larger tax base. In September 2021, RSU #60 opened Noble Virtual Middle School (NVMS) for students in grades 5–8. There were 29 NVMS students during its first year (2021-22).

TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

	SAU	Maine
Number of Students	3,008	178,860
Locale Classification	Rural	N/A
Students Identified as White	93%	88%
Students Identified as Economically Disadvantaged	27%	41%
Students Eligible For Free/Reduced Price Lunch (Noble Virtual Middle School)	36%	44%
Students Identified with Disabilities	17%	18%
Median Household Income	\$71,327	\$57,918
Adults with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher	35%	32%
Adults in Labor Force	93%	63%

Sources: Maine Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, and U.S. Census Bureau

Development of pilot project

RSU #60 received a Rethinking Responsive Education Ventures (RREV) award (\$250,000) to create a student wellness program at NVMS called *Be Well Connected*. District leadership explained that they had been planning NVMS even before the pandemic because they wanted to offer students more learning options, but were concerned about the mental and emotional well-being of students who learned primarily in an online environment. The widespread shift to

¹ School data was collected from the Every Student Succeeds Act ([ESSA Dashboard](#)) reported by the Maine Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics ([NCES Search For Schools](#)) database. SAU information was collected from the Maine [ESSA Dashboard](#), the [NCES Search For Schools](#) database, and the NCES Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates ([EDGE](#)) database. Information about the State of Maine was collected from the [ESSA Dashboard](#) and the [U.S. Census Bureau Maine Quick Facts](#) report. Note, the Students Eligible For Free/Reduced Price Lunch on a state level contains data from the 2018-2019 school year (the most recent publicly available data for the state), while both school and SAU contain data from the 2019-2020 school year.

online learning during the pandemic exacerbated these concerns, and supporting student wellness was a major priority from the planning stages of NVMS. According to the superintendent, the Innovative Mindset Pilot Development (IMPD) course came at a “perfect time” because the district was grappling with ways to provide an alternative setting for some students without making them feel separated from the school community. A two-person pilot team consisting of the district school health coordinator and the Noble High School health teacher enrolled in the IMPD course. The team explained they were looking to incorporate wellness into virtual learning, but when they started the course they did not have a clear framework for translating this goal into a tangible program. They credited the IMPD course with giving them the tools to “create a structure for ideas” about how they can support wellness for students in a virtual learning program. In addition to helping translate their ideas into a workable structure, the team noted the IMPD course also motivated them to “dream big” about creative ways to support student wellbeing in a virtual setting, with the goal of helping students “find their spark and become immersed in their learning” through a project-based curriculum.

Program description

The *Be Well Connected* program is an integral component to NVMS, which opened during the 2021–22 school year to serve students in grades 5–8. Any family residing in RSU #60 may apply to attend NVMS, and students are eligible to participate in all the activities or clubs available to their in-person peers.

Students at NVMS learn at their own pace through project-based learning with a learning coach to set individual learning goals and establish a strategy for achieving them. The strategy is tailored to each student but generally involves project-based learning and one-on-one meetings with a learning coach, which may be in person or remote. The learning coaches help students stay on track with their academic progress by developing a tailored plan for each student, which includes daily and weekly tasks, activities, and goals. Learning coaches use a “dinner party” metaphor to guide their work to planning a dinner party, such that student tasks include “main dishes, sides, and desserts.” In this analogy, the students time is their plate, and their main dishes are the core coursework in areas like math or reading, and the sides are activities that students can choose from to complement the main, and desserts are the fun events that students can have after finishing their main and side dishes. In addition to their one-on-one relationships with their learning coach, the NVMS model also promotes student-to-student relationships by bringing all the students together for in-person learning and activities every Wednesday. During their in-person day, students work together on group projects, listen to guest presenters, and participate in team building activities.

RREV funding supports the *Be Well Connected* program, which the pilot team characterized as inextricable from the overall NVMS model (Exhibit 2) because its support for student wellness is what underlies the flexibility and independence of virtual learning. The team observed that some students who could benefit from the flexibility of remote learning may shy away from the opportunity out of concerns for their social and emotional health. Moreover, even students who feel like remote learning is better for them overall could still benefit from wellness programming.

Be Well Connected is a proactive approach for supporting the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of all NVMS students. The RREV award provides funding to construct an in-person learning space for NVMS students, which will be used for their weekly in-person day. RREV funding also supports a partial position for a program coordinator to manage the planning,

budget, and evaluation of the Be Well Connected program. In the second year, RREV funds will support a full-time Virtual Wellness Counselor, a full-time position responsible for working with students, families, and learning coaches to develop and implement tailored plans to support the wellness of each NVMS students. The program also provides professional development for learning coaches focused on social emotional learning (SEL) techniques to prepare students for the challenges they may face.

Exhibit 2: Logic Model for Be Well Connected

Resources	Strategies and Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes	Impact
RREV program \$\$	Conduct outreach with students and families about their options for virtual learning, including wellness support.	Number of students enrolled at NVMS	Improved staff knowledge of and attitudes toward student wellness and its connection to academic growth	Student and families in RSU 60 have options for virtual and in-person schooling.	Increased adoption of wellness activities across the district.
NVMS curriculum		Number and duration of staff training activities	Improved parents' knowledge of and attitudes toward student wellness and its connection to academic growth	Learning coaches incorporate wellness in their teaching practices.	NVMS students and alumni live happy and healthy lives
NVMS staff, including Remote Learning Director and two learning coaches	Hire a Virtual Wellness Counselor to develop programs and activities to support student wellness, including individual wellness plans and in-person activities.	Number of staff who attend training	Students demonstrate socio-emotional learning	Increased graduation rate among NVMS alumni	
	Provide training to NVMS staff about student wellness, including links between wellness and academic outcomes and strategies for supporting student socio-emotional learning.	Number and duration of parent training activities	Improved student academic growth		
		Number of parents who attend training activities	Decreased incidence of chronic absenteeism among students		
	Develop individually tailored student learning plans that incorporate wellness as integral to students' success.	Number of individual student learning plans developed			

	<p>Provide resources to parents about how to support student wellness</p> <p>Establish a physical space for in-person activities, including team projects.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for student interaction and relationship building, including field trips and team projects</p>	<p>Number of field trips</p> <p>Number of team projects completed.</p>			
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Innovativeness and responsiveness of learning model

Be Well Connected is innovative and responsive for three main reasons:

1. **It promotes a culture of inclusion through the use of shared space, experiences, and activities.** A key component of *Be Well Connected* is its intentional approach to building a culture where students empathize and support each other academically and socially. The program builds this culture through educator training on student wellness and through activities, policies, and practices that reinforce solidarity, kindness, and empathy as core values. School-wide in-person activities play a key role in these efforts. During the 2021-22 pilot year, all NVMS students met in-person on Wednesdays for group activities in specially designated areas at Noble Middle School. Starting with the 2022-23 school year, students will meet in a new space specifically devoted to NVMS students. One parent said their child loves the mix of in-person and remote days because it allows them to socialize with their peers and work on team projects, which she felt contributed to a “sense of community” among students. One learning coach noted that during this in-person time, she and her colleagues are “very intentional” about how to spend their time and focus to ensure students are socializing while learning. During focus groups, students emphasized how much they value their peer relationships, which they described as qualitatively different than what they experienced when they attended school in person. For example, one student commented that her peers at NVMS have gotten to know her as a full person, and therefore do not prejudge her for her fashion choices but instead see how they reflect her real personality and interests. Other students said the underlying strength of their peer-to-peer relationships allowed them to have political conversations where people listened to each other instead of rushing to judgement or relying on stereotypes. Students agreed that these dynamics

helped them learn because they were less socially anxious with each other or distracted by tensions with their peers.

2. It incorporates a wellness component into the student educational experience.

Many middle school students experience physical, mental, and emotional challenges that affect their learning. . When in-person schooling was paused during the pandemic, the RSU #60 district school health coordinator noticed increasing signs of anxiety and depression, isolation, and academic struggle among many students in the district. At the same time, remote learning offered students more flexibility and independence, which was particularly beneficial to students who experienced social anxiety when attending school in-person. *Be Well Connected* is innovative because it draws a direct connection between students' wellness and their overall educational experience through its emphasis on socio-emotional learning, stress management, and physical and mental health resources. To achieve this, *Be Well Connected* encourages students to practice empathy toward themselves and others, develop a sense of personal responsibility, and become "advocates for positive change." By doing so, the program integrates wellness across students entire educational experience.

3. Students have more opportunities to exercise agency over their learning and pursue their interests through project-based learning.

The virtual aspect allows students to learn at their own pace and take classes that interest them. One parent described how NVMS gives their child the "broad space and ability" to learn and do what they want. Additionally, NVMS gives students a "sense of control" over their educational experience while still ensuring they take required classes and reach educational milestones. During a focus group, learning coaches drew connections between student wellness and student independence and leadership needed for project based learning. For example, one learning coach emphasized "the research skills, leadership skills, and problem solving skills" students develop through project-based learning, and observed that students' overall wellness helps them grow more confident as they try out those skills. Parents agreed that students' independence and their wellness are mutually reinforcing. For example, one parent commented that her child derives a "sense of accomplishment" when checking off their daily tasks and working at their own pace. In addition to exercising greater control over their course content and pacing, students are also encouraged to discover their interests by working on a "passion project," which is a self-directed exploration of a topic of interest to each student, with support from their learning coach, culminating in a presentation to their peers. For example, one student described an interest in blacksmithing, which he practices with his parents at home, and his passion project involves creating metal tools and learning about the science behind the process. Several students described their passion projects as their favorite part of school and demonstrated enthusiasm for applying academic principals to a topic of great personal interest. One parent relayed an anecdote about her daughter that she felt

INNOVATIONS

NVMS *Be Well Connected*

- Promotes a culture of inclusion through shared space and activities
- Wellness component
- Students have agency in their learning experience
- In-person space for students to connect with their peers

exemplified the confidence the program had instilled in her. This parent described how her daughter had previously been very shy and had trouble interacting with others, especially adults, but this year during a field trip “walked right up to the commander of the shipyard and introduced herself.” This parent credited her daughter’s confidence to her experience at NVMS, especially her growing ownership over her learning and the wellness aspects infused throughout the program.

Implementation of learning model

Student identification and recruitment

Students who were interested in this program were asked to submit an application with written and video components, and their parents also had to submit a written application. The leadership team then evaluated the student application alongside their work habits, grades, attendance, parent input, and teacher and counselor recommendations to determine if the student was a good fit for the virtual program. Although NVMS anticipated serving 60 students in grades 6–8 in the first year of implementation, only 29 students from grades 5–8 participated in the program during the pilot year. The leadership team received more applications but decided some were not a good fit while others were offered a position but chose not to participate. Although *Be Well Connected* has not reached the planned capacity of 60 students, the development team explained they are not actively trying to achieve that mark and are instead trying to “do a good job with what [they] have going.”

When asked about student demographics, the leadership team noted approximately one-third are strong students who were looking for flexibility and exploration in their education. Another one-third of students came from a homeschool experience and enjoy learning with an online option. The other one-third of the program are students who struggle with mental health issues as a result of the pandemic and are searching for learning options that allow them to interact with their peers while learning from home. However, these subsets are not mutually exclusive, and many students fall into more than one of these categories. Overall, many students are using the NVMS model as a transition to full-time in-person learning next year.

Staffing

When the development team drafted the pilot program, they anticipated hiring five staff members: three full-time learning coaches, a part-time special education teacher, and a Remote Learning Director. NVMS has hired two of these coaches, and the Remote Learning Director also serves as the third learning coach. Additionally, the development team has not yet hired the special education teacher and is using in-house support. They hope to fill these positions as the program grows over the next year.

NVMS also intended to hire a full-time Virtual Wellness Counselor with a background in school counseling or social work to support the learning coaches and guidance counselors throughout implementation. However, at the beginning of the first year, the pilot team decided to focus on developing and implementing the program in-house before hiring an external counselor. During the 2021-22 school year, the learning coaches, and district health coordinator shared the responsibilities of the Virtual Wellness Counselor. During a May 2022 focus group, the learning coaches agreed that sharing these responsibilities during the pilot year gave them a greater appreciation for the skills and experience necessary to succeed in this role, especially the

importance of a social work background. Based on this experience, the team collaborated on a job description and candidate search and hired a licensed social worker who will begin in September 2022.

Community partnerships

The team plans to develop relationships with community organizations that will support implementation. The learning director explained they currently have community partners—including local historical societies and fitness organizations—to provide ad-hoc, project-specific expertise for some of their initiatives. The district school health coordinator also mentioned they have partnered with the Choose To Be Healthy Coalition² to provide resources for substance use prevention and health and wellness support.

Construction of physical learning space

Shared physical space plays a key role in the Be Well Connected model, especially its emphasis on building a common culture among NVMS students. Throughout the pilot year, students met in person at Noble Middle School, but starting in Fall 2022 students will have a separate space for their program. In June 2022, the North Berwick town planning board approved NVMS' plan to purchase and install a modular 930 square foot yurt-style building with a bathroom. NVMS staff explained that they chose the round shape of the yurt to “create a calming and community-centered environment.” Pilot leadership originally envisioned this space to be on the site of Noble Middle School, but decided to move it to near the Mary Hurd Academy, which is approximately 5 miles from Noble Middle School, for two reasons. First, they discovered that plumbing and electricity would be more challenging on the property of Noble Middle School. Second, and more importantly, they realized that many NVMS would feel anxious going to the same location as the traditional middle school, whereas putting the yurt in a separate location would ease those concerns. As of May 2022, a foundation had been laid for the new space, and the structure was scheduled to be delivered in time for the 2022-23 school year.

Outcomes

NVMS educators have improved their understanding of connections between student wellness and academic outcomes. Educators at NVMS described growing confidence over the course of the pilot year in their role as learning coordinators, especially their dual responsibilities for student wellness and academic growth. Learning coaches said they appreciated how *Be Well Connected* centers student wellness and provides them “a structure” for integrating wellness in their overall approach. In particular, learning coaches described the Building Access Reducing Risks (BARR) model as a valuable tool for coordinating their support for students and drawing connections between their wellness and their academic performance. One parent commented that teachers at NVMS made “the impossible happen everyday.”

NVMS has developed a unique culture that centers student wellness and solidarity. As noted earlier, one of the innovations behind the Be Well Connected model is its culture of inclusion, which it develops through intentional teacher strategies and the use of shared space

² See [Choose to Be Healthy](#).

and experiences. On a student survey (Exhibit 2), 88% of students said they were glad they participated in the *Be Well Connected* program and 79% agreed that they liked their experience overall. When asked whether they thought participating in the program made them happier this year, 58% of students agreed or strongly agreed that it did, while 33% neither agreed nor disagreed (one student somewhat disagreed that the program made them happier). Almost three-quarters of students (74%) said they are “happy with their friendships and social connections” and “feel good about relationships with students” at least most of the time. During focus groups, students were asked to compare their experience at NVMS compared to in-person schooling, and several students emphasized their deeper and more supportive relationships with *all* their peers at NVMS. For example, one student commented that “the whole class is supportive, even if you mess up,” which he said helped him stay motivated even when he struggles with the content. Several students commented that they felt more comfortable expressing themselves authentically with their fellow NVMS students because of shared mores around kindness and understanding, and drew connections between this culture and their confidence and enthusiasm for academic aspects of school. Several parents described how their children exhibited several behavioral and social-emotional challenges before coming to NVMS, but “blossomed” since participating in the program, which they attributed to the school culture at NVMS. For example, one parent described how their child experienced major behavioral and social-emotional challenges while learning in person, but has become much happier and well-adjusted this year, which they characterized as “lifechanging for our whole family.”

Exhibit 2 Summary of Student Survey Results (n=24)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements	Strongly or somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat or strongly disagree
I am glad I participated in the Be Well Connected program this year.	88%	13%	0%
The Be Well Connected program helped me learn this year.	71%	25%	4%
Overall, I liked my experience with the Be Well Connected program this year.	79%	17%	4%
This year, I had more opportunities to learn outside a traditional classroom than in	100%	0%	0%
Be Well Connected has helped me be a happier person this year.	58%	38%	4%

Students have demonstrated academic growth. On the student survey, 71% of students agreed that Be Well Connected helped them learn this year, and only one student disagreed with that statement. All students who were enrolled for the entire school year passed all of their classes, and chronic absenteeism (defined as 9 or more absences) decreased from 35% to 15% among students with baseline data. During a student focus group, students drew connections between their overall wellness and their academic performance. For example, one student credited her experience with project-based learning with teaching her not be “be afraid to try things,” which she has applied to her schoolwork overall.

Parents were not familiar with Be Well Connected as a specific program, but were satisfied with their children’s options for responsive education and their experience NVMS. When asked about their children’s experience in the “Be Well Connected” program, most parents were not familiar with this term, but instead referred to their child’s overall experience at NVMS. All 7 parents who completed the survey stated that they were satisfied with their experience and would recommend the program to other families. One parent commented that “the program has helped my daughter more than any typical school has,” which they attributed to “one-on-one” support. A different parent stated that the program “really eased (my child’s) anxiety levels,” and reported that “being able to watch your child grow in confidence is by far the best thing.”

Exhibit 4 Summary of Parent Survey Results (n=7)

Question	Results
How important is it to you that schools offer responsive educational activities?	Very important – 86% Somewhat important 14%
How satisfied are you with the availability of responsive education activities offered through your child’s school?	Very satisfied – 86% Somewhat satisfied (14%)
Compared with last school year (2020-21), how much opportunity has your child had to participate in responsive educational activities this year?	A lot more opportunity – 86% Slightly more opportunity – 14%
Would you recommend this program to other parents	Yes – 100%

Future Plans

Move into the dedicated space. Noble will move into the new physical space at the start of the 2022-23 school year.

Hire a Virtual Wellness Counselor with a background in social work. During the pilot year, NVMS chose not to hire a full-time Virtual Wellness Counselor because district leadership felt they would better understand the needs and role of this position after the first year, especially as they got to know the students and their needs. According to one member of the pilot team, when they initially conceptualized the role, “we were looking at someone more with a physical fitness or health wellness background (but) as we met with students it became obvious...it would be helpful to have someone on our staff who was a mental health professional and could help us better meet those needs and provide services.” In light of this experience, the district is searching for a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) to start for the 2022-23 school year. In the meantime, the existing staff have attended training on physical wellness, including sleep habits, healthy eating, and exercise. One teacher commented that she incorporates “stretching, dance, or a workout for 10 minutes a couple days per week” to ensure that physical wellness is part of students’ experience.

Conduct more field trips. NVMS leaders described plans to conduct more field trips in the future. One educator explained that they wished to have more field trips during the pilot year, but Covid-related closures and a bus driver shortage disrupted those plans. A few parents also expressed interest in more field trips, especially those that involve local community. Going forward, program leaders said they intend to commit more time for advanced planning of field trips, especially arranging transportation several months before scheduled trips.

Develop programming for 9th grade students who wish to stay primarily virtual learners.

NVMS intends to expand to 9th grade in the 2022-23 school year so that current students have an option to continue with virtual schooling. Program leaders reported that many of the current 8th grade students “don’t want to miss out on a traditional high school experience” and so plan to return to in-person schooling. However, other students have indicated a preference to continue learning online. Expanding NVMS to 9th grade will allow these students to maintain an approach that is working for them and avoid a return to a traditional school model after an extended period at NVMS. However, the district health coordinator cautioned that “there are developmental differences between a 5th grader and a 9th grader” that could pose a challenge to the inclusive, whole-group aspects of the program model. To address this challenge, NVMS is exploring ways to include 9th graders in the program but provide more individualized support. There are no plans to expand NVMS to 10th grade or beyond, but the health coordinator observed that students in these grades have more options for online classes or dual enrollment at community colleges in Maine.

Lessons learned

Allowing students opportunities for self-expression and reinforcing positive peer relationships are key building blocks to a culture of inclusion. During focus groups, students consistently emphasized how much they valued being seen as unique individuals. Several students described negative past experiences when they felt judged by stereotypes, which in turn caused them to resent their peers and school environment, and ultimately disengage academically and socially. By contrast, at NVMS they felt like their peers and teachers appreciated them for their true selves, which they found motivating. In particular, students felt that their passion projects and the supportive relationships with their peers and teachers helped them build their confidence and be more engaged learners. Moving forward, a challenge will be maintaining this culture as the program grows and more students are integrated into the environment.

Student wellness and self-confidence are vital to achieving their academic potential. The pilot team recognized that student wellness and mental health play a critical role in students’ motivation and academic performance. Emphasizing the importance of socio-emotional learning in *Be Well Connected* has provided students with the support and services to overcome the challenges brought forth by the pandemic while growing into independent and motivated learners. In interviews with parents of students in the program, there was a common theme: This program is really meeting the needs of its students and allowing them to feel more confident, independent, and in charge of their educational goals. As one parent put it, the program has “cracked the code” of how to keep their child engaged in school and excited about learning. Another parent said he was “shocked” at the change in his child’s attitude toward school since starting at NVMS, which he described as “a total 180” in terms of her academic engagement and mood after school.

Offering students greater flexibility and empowerment also requires sustained focus on accountability and structure. Several learning coaches observed that there is a risk to giving students too much flexibility and empowerment over their learning, which is a lack of accountability and ultimately slower academic progress. One learning coach stated that she over the course of the year, she adjusted her practice to be more firm with deadlines for assignments. “We were being super flexible with students and what we found was students are

actually motivated by due dates and so we started clamping down on those [because] the students are still middle schoolers” who need accountability. Another learning coach said she learned that “our students need structure. When I gave them too much freedom, it was hard” because students were not always sure about expectations. In response, learning coaches emphasized due dates, and the reasons for them, more consistently and firmly with students.

Strong communication between teachers, students, and parents can identify early warning signs that a student is struggling. The district school health coordinator observed that NVMS’ model, especially its focus on student flexibility and independence, elevates the need for regular and multidirectional comprehensive communication across all stakeholders, especially teachers and parents. A centerpiece of this communication is the weekly student goal sheet. Program leaders described this document as a place for students to reflect on their progress, including their strengths and areas to work on. Students and teachers meet each week to review and update the sheet, and parents receive a copy and encouragement to reflect with their students on their goals, strengths, and priorities. In addition to this structure, parents also described ad-hoc check-ins with teachers, and stated that teachers have been terrific at responding to emails promptly and go “above and beyond” to get parents involved in their student’s learning experience. This includes holding monthly “coffee chats” to update parents on the progress of the program and get feedback from parents on how to improve the program going forward. The teachers have also noted that parents are doing an excellent job of communicating with teachers, supporting their children, and adapting as the program evolves. Although parents were very positive about substantive communication about their children’s learning and wellness, a few parents suggested improvements to communications about logistics, especially advance planning of in-person activities and field trips.

A virtual program for middle school students should have a plan for transitioning students to high school. One of the reasons Noble targeted students in grades 5-8 is that students in these grades are often especially vulnerable to social anxiety or other emotional challenges, and therefore benefit more from additional wellness support. However, creating a program for students in these grades demands planning for their transition out of middle school. Many students may decide to return to traditional high school programming, but for some students, a return to traditional, or even alternative but in-person programming, could pose an acute challenge after multiple years in a virtual environment. Programs seeking to replicate the NVMS model should develop plans for supporting students when they transition out of the program.

Students, parents, and teachers are motivated by the opportunity to pioneer new approaches to virtual education, sustaining and scaling the program will require deliberate effort to keep stakeholder engaged beyond the “honeymoon period.” Program stakeholders consistently adopted a self-conception as innovators seeking to develop new and better educational models for current and future students. Multiple parents used the term “pioneers” to describe their children and teachers and NVMS, including one parent who commented that *Be Well Connected* and NVMS can be a “good model for future education,” since it offers a good balance of independent work and socialization. The teachers said the program has “exceed[ed] what they thought they could accomplish,” and they hope the program can continue to expand in the future. Stakeholders expressed optimism about the model moving forward, even as program leaders cautioned that the “honeymoon period” could wane as the program becomes more established. Some educators also observed that sustaining the

unique culture of NVMS could become more challenging as it expands with more students and grade levels, including teachers and students who were not present as the culture was built during the first year. To address these concerns, program leaders plan to celebrate the reasons NVMS is unique, be deliberate in hiring new staff who buy-in to the model, and continue to keep student wellness at the center of the NVMS model.