Talk to the Llama:

AI-Enabled Mental Health Support for Students

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alongside
a mental health support app

Our Commitment: Every Student
Collaborative ★ Competitive ★ Successful

Presenters

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Executive Director, Student Services
Cumberland County Schools

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Head of Mental Health
Alongside

Kiwi
Alongside

alongside
*a mental health support app*

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Objectives

★ Describe how a local school district utilizes clinician-powered AI to provide immediate mental health support to middle and high school students.

★ Identify various ways to introduce an AI-powered application to students and parents.

★ Understand potential challenges of using AI-enabled mental health support and lessons learned.

slido

What AI products do you know about or have you used?

But wait...What is AI?

Input →

Output →

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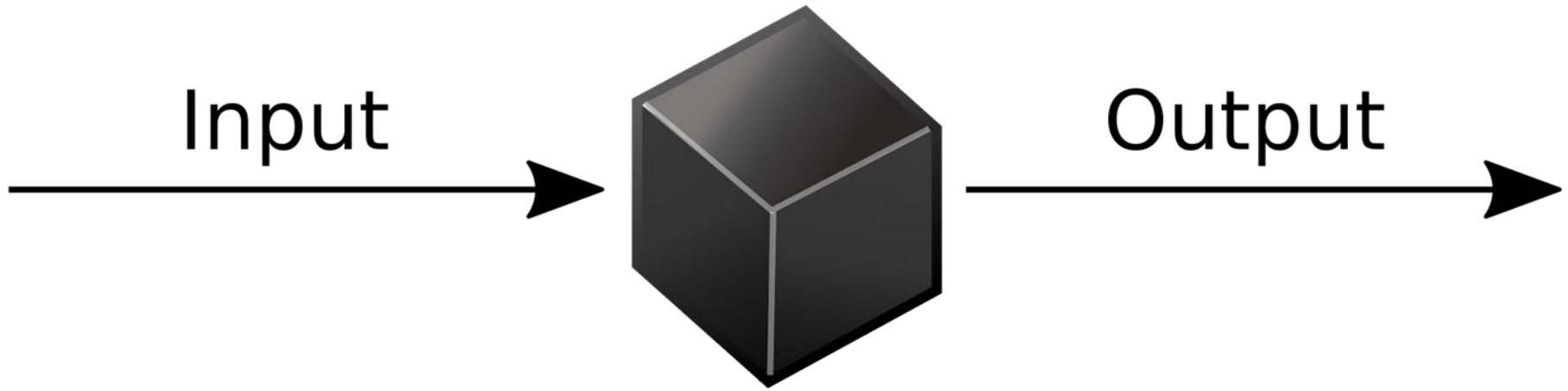
AI is not monolith

Define the problem	Determine the correct data	Choose the algorithm	Train the model	Evaluate
Identify pictures of horses	search google and get 1000s of pictures of horses	Choose a convolutional neural network (CNN)	Train the CNN using the training set, adjusting weights to improve accuracy.	Does the "AI" correctly identify a horse picture from a dog picture

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AI in Mental Health

Identification

Case Management/ Training

Coaching

AI-Enabled Chatbots

Figure 1. PHQ-8 Scores by Treatment Group

>= 10 implies at least moderate depressive symptomatology

Treatment Group
- W-GenZD
- CBT Skills Group
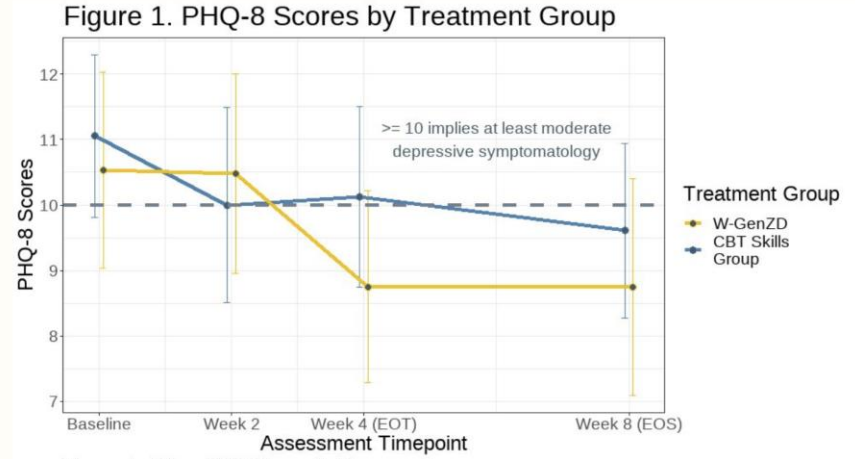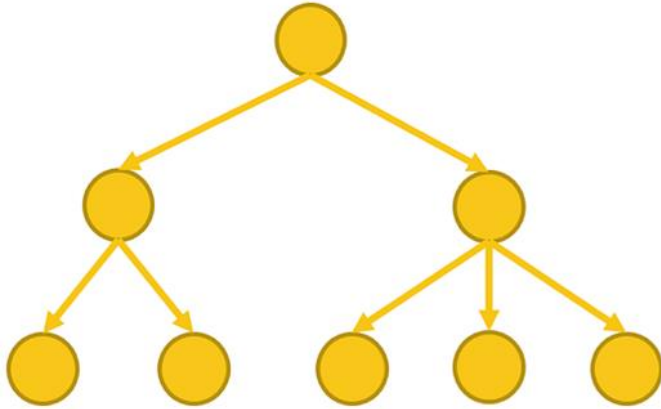
A meta analysis of 15 RCTs indicate chatbots can significantly reduce depression symptoms
(Li et al., 2023)

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What is Alongside?

Alongside is an app (computer or phone) where students get immediate tier 1 mental health support that is non-judgmental, 24/7, and in their native language.

- Students use a chatbot, and get personalized support developed by a team of doctoral clinicians

- Students can also journal, watch helpful videos, and set goals for improvement

- Severe issues are escalated to counselors and staff during school hours and 24/7 resources after hours

Contact the vendor for a demo

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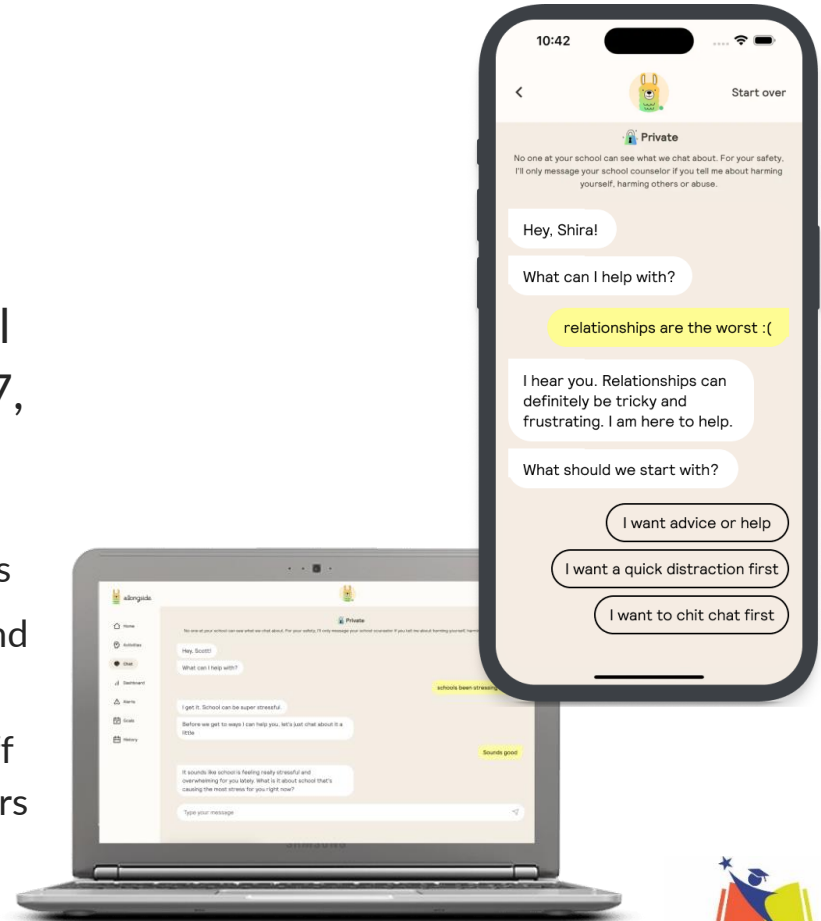
Severe issues are escalated during school hours & 24/7 resources after hours; silent & ELL students missed by screeners now get help
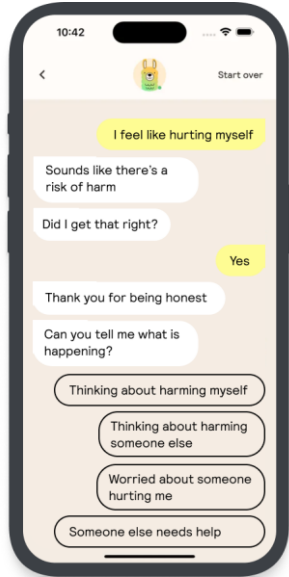
After Hours Protocol for suicidal ideation

1) Conduct suicide screener (Columbia Protocol)

2) Any risk: Tell student to call 988 (we facilitate call and do q&a to reduce fears; 988 will call emergency services if needed)

3) High risk: Ask to send emergency responders (we facilitate 911 call)

4) High risk: Ask to notify parent (we send text to parent / guardian)

5) Send school or district admin text and email with details per desired timing

0.5% of students have expressed high risk suicidal ideation

A Counselor's Perspective

"She had made a suicidal outcry… It gave her an opportunity to say what she needed to say, and then I was able to step in and help." (video link)

School Counselor Anne Lantey

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Key insights from Alongside's Research

#1 Students want to feel heard...
no matter "who" is on the other end.

#2 It's not only social media reducing connection;
interpersonal relationships are just hard.

#3 Confidentiality and access matter; making reaching
out as simple as possible increased student's
reaching out to in-person supports

Key findings from more than 30,000 teen chat sessions during the 2023-24 school year.

SCAN TO LEARN MORE

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3 | EXCEPTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Integrate resources, facilities, and staff to maintain a safe, inviting learning environment for students to grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

3A: Maintain safe and secure schools

3B: Develop a behavioral and mental health framework

3C: Maximize student graduation rates

3D: Build the capacity of schools to serve all students

Roots
- Foundational Approach

Trunk
- Tiered Support System

Branches
- Research Based Practices
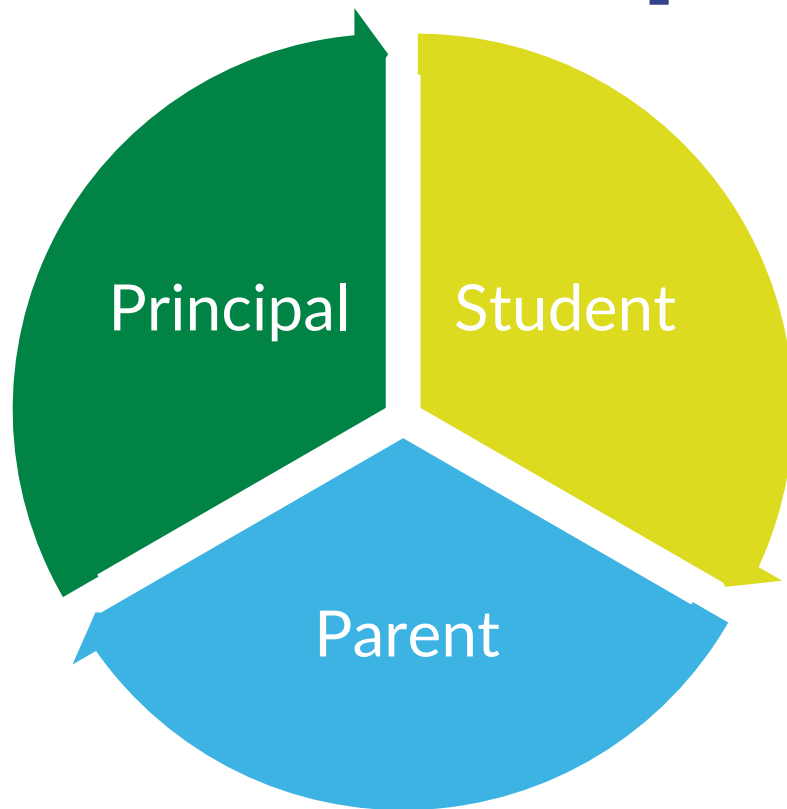
How does the Llama fit within the BMF?

★ District sponsored Tier 1 Intervention (MTSS)
  – All Secondary Students
  – Immediate Mental Health Support for minor issues
  – Does NOT replace our SS Staff
★ Promotes mental health stigma reduction
★ Data dashboard on student usage & issues

Student and Parent Feedback

Students

★ This is pretty cool!
★ I would use it to manage all of my weekly tasks.
★ Kiwi gave good advice on self-care tips.
★ It didn't feel like I was talking to an adult. I appreciated that Kiwi told me upfront what the rules were.

Parents

★ I wish this was available when I was in school.
★ We sat down as a family & reviewed it. We found tools such as journaling that we will use for discussion prompts.
★ How can I help make this happen?

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S49 Parents' Bill of Rights

★ Student Participation = Opt-in *__Only__*

★ Parent Permission is Required
 – Electronic and Paper Forms Available

★ Work *Alongside* Parents/Guardians

Getting Started...

1 Watch brief overview video together

2 Open a browser on your device and
go to **https://www.ccs.k12.nc.us/alongside**

3 Complete the Parent/Guardian Permission form:

Digital - **Alongside App Google Permission Form**

- Scan the QR code or Click the link/Complete the form/Submit

Paper - **CCS Alongside Permission Form**

- Download the form/Print/Sign/Return to school

4 Once the form is submitted, the student will receive a
Welcome Email from Alongside. Create your account and
get started!

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Primary Challenges

★ AI-Enabled Mental Health Support is ***New…Sort of***.

★ Marketing that appeals to Students & Parents Simultaneously

★ The logistics of Opt-In

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Primary Challenges

★ AI-Enabled Mental Health Support is _**New**_
  - ○ *So you don't know what you don't know*!
  - ○ Myths and misinformation
  - ○ Concerns around safety

Primary Challenges

★ Marketing that appeals to Students & Parents Simultaneously
  ○ Mental Health Stigma
  ○ Parents want to know everything students are saying, express concern about 'values'
  ○ Students want agency and confidentiality

Primary Challenges

★ The Logistics of Opt In *v* Opt Out
  ○ Time delay between obtaining parent permission and student account creation
  ○ Students need constant reminders
    ■ 834 Student Accounts Activated
    ■ 234 Students Actively Using the app
    ■ 117 Students are Repeat Users

CCS Data Highlights

**Student Feedback (Taken from the App 6/4/2024)**

- I liked that you tried to understand.
- You helped me set a goal, and now I know the steps for calming down
- I like how its like kiwi is a real human and understands
- THIS WAS AMAZING UNDERSTOOD HOW I FELT
- I definitely like brain breaks because I don't do them often. So this is helpful.
- Helped calm me down so I can go back to sleep to wake up for school
- I liked the fact that even though this is an AI, they still can at least give you a response that is similar to your problem
- That you helped me
- I love the app it's amazing and kiwi is so knowledgeable!
- i liked everything ur such a good helper
- I liked how you gave me a summary at the end of the topic
- I liked how you were to the point
- I liked that the Llamabot had actual insight on my favorite game
- that its easy to be able to talk and for someone to understand yet give advice
- the positive messages
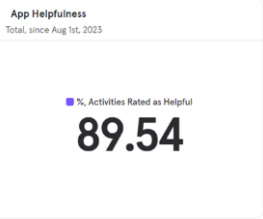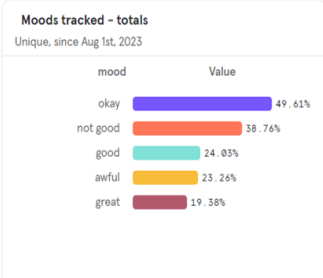
Solutions & Lessons Learned
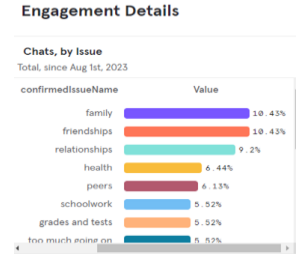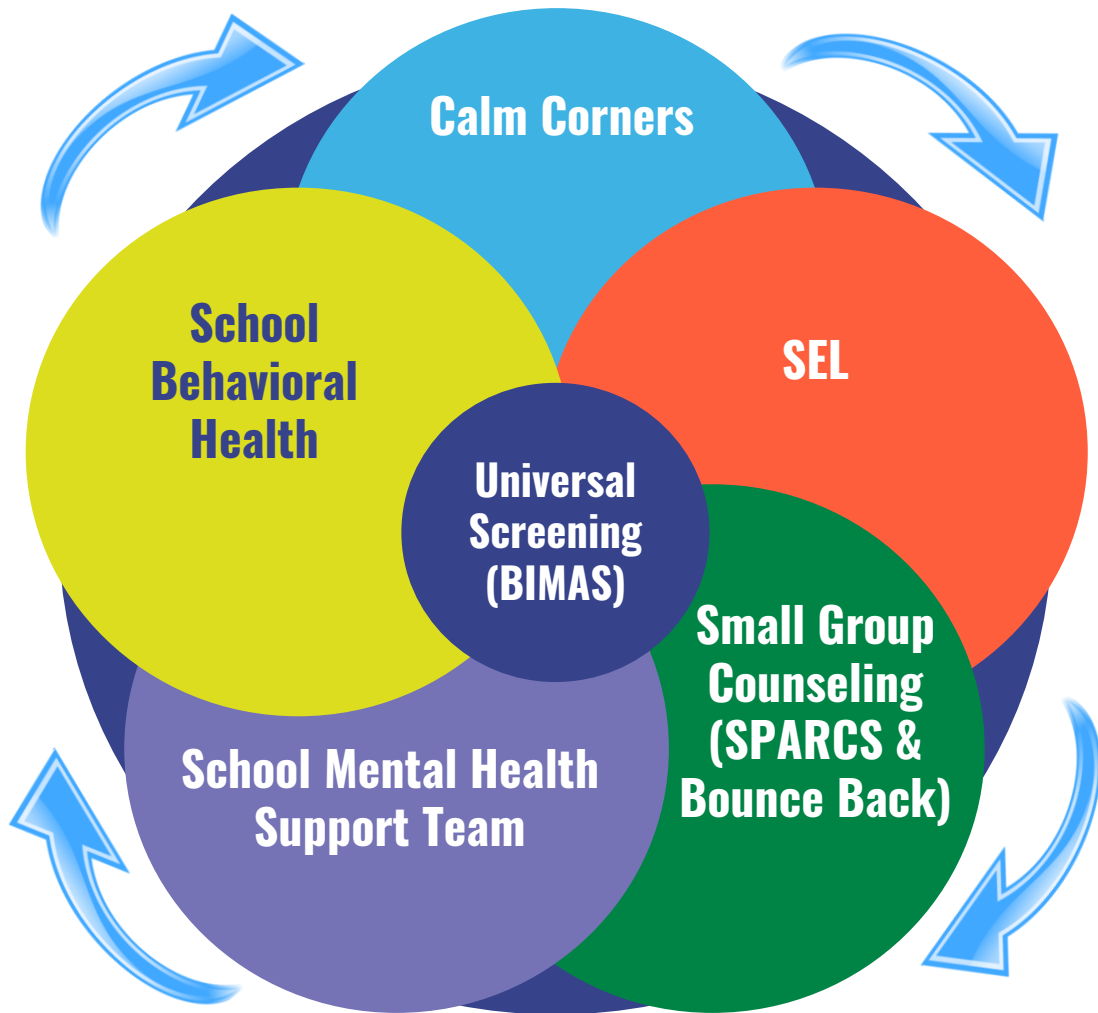
★ Generate trust with **_STUDENTS AND PARENTS_**
★ Partner with your Communications Department and the Vendor to align your marketing campaigns
★ Create a robust marketing campaign to counter mental health stigma, debunk myths, generate interest, provide updates, etc
★ Use a variety of methods to market to **_STUDENTS AND PARENTS_**
    ○ Press Conference
    ○ District Sponsored Landing Page with links to the Vendor, FAQ, & Permission Forms, Etc
    ○ Promo Videos featuring students, parents, and staff
    ○ Facebook Live Update
    ○ Digital Billboards around town
    ○ Social Media Posts
    ○ District website
    ○ Student Emails
    ○ Classroom Presentations
    ○ Include Permission Forms in Enrollment Packets
    ○ Teacher Support

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Solutions & Lessons Learned

★ Partner with community agencies and the faith community
★ Harness the power of Student Groups (i.e. SGA, Student Voices, Clubs, etc)
★ Reinforce the message that AI-enabled mental health support is one of several school-based mental health initiatives offered in the district
★ Implementation is key

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THANK YOU!
ANY QUESTIONS?