

PILOT CASE STUDY 02 · EDMOTIONS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

When Emotions Become Visible

How a middle school pilot connected sleep, exercise, and emotional well-being, and helped students understand not just how they feel, but why.

Real Insight. Real Readiness. Every Student.



01 Executive Summary

During a multi-month pilot in Spring 2026, a high-performing suburban school district gave 58 middle school students and 8 teachers and counselors access to **EDmotions**. Students used daily emotional check-ins, reflection tools, coaching, and visual data that connected their feelings to everyday habits such as sleep and exercise. Participation across the target groups was 100%.

A clear pattern emerged. **98% of positive-emotion associations occurred when students reported medium or high sleep quality**, and 89% occurred when they reported medium or high exercise. Every student said they valued reflecting on their emotions, 86% found the data insightful, and every student also said they would still rather talk to a real person when it matters.

The takeaway: EDMotions doesn't just help schools understand **how** students feel. It helps students and educators understand **why**, and gives students a bridge to the trusted adults who can help.

FROM THE CLASSROOM

“Not sleeping makes me tired and grumpy.”

A teacher shared the story of a student who had always struggled to recognize and describe his emotions. Traditional conversations rarely helped him explain what he was feeling.

As he began using EDMotions, something changed. Seeing his emotional patterns displayed alongside his habits and daily routines, he started to notice connections he had never seen before. What began as simple daily check-ins became **a new way of understanding himself**.

Teacher account from the pilot. Student details withheld for privacy.

02 Introduction

Background

Most school well-being tools stop at the check-in. A student taps a mood, and the data sits in a report. What's missing is context: the habits and routines that shape how a student feels from one day to the next. Without that context, check-in data is noise to educators and meaningless to students.

EDmotions is the K-12 application of the TRUmotions **Human Intelligence Operating System (HIOS)**. Beyond check-ins, it gives students reflection and coaching tools and visualizes their emotions alongside lifestyle factors, so patterns become visible to both students and the educators who support them.

RESEARCH QUESTION

When students can see their emotions alongside their daily habits, do meaningful patterns emerge, and do students and educators find those patterns useful?

Purpose and scope

This study documents a multi-month middle school pilot in Spring 2026. It examines the relationship between self-reported sleep and exercise and positive emotions, student and educator perceptions of the platform, and the opportunities the pilot surfaced for the next iteration. It is a descriptive, correlational pilot study, not a controlled trial.

03 Case Description and Context

The pilot took place in a high-performing suburban school district. Students in grades 6, 7, and 8 participated alongside their teachers and counselors, with participation required within the target groups. Students explored emotional check-ins, reflection tools, coaching, and visual data that connected their feelings with factors, such as sleep and exercise. The result is more than a collection of responses: it was a clearer picture of emotional readiness.

SITE PROFILE

- High-performing suburban school district
- Middle school, grades 6–8
- Students, teachers, and counselors participating

STUDY DESIGN

- Multi-month pilot, Spring 2026
- Required participation; 100% engagement
- Four student focus groups
- Check-ins, reflection, coaching, and habit tracking

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- **58 students** in grades 6–8
- **8 educators:** teachers and counselors
- **TRUmotions team:** implementation, analytics, and focus groups

The challenges

- **Strong academics can mask emotional need.** In a high-performing district, students who are struggling can look fine on paper.
- **Many students can't name what they feel,** which makes conversations with adults harder to start.
- **Check-in data without context is hard to act on.** Educators need to know what is driving a student's emotions, not just what they are.
- **Asking for help still feels like a big step.** Students wanted a simple, visible, low-pressure way to reach a counselor.

04 Methodology

The pilot combined platform analytics with qualitative feedback from students and educators.

DATA SOURCE	WHAT IT CAPTURED
Platform analytics	Emotional check-ins paired with self-reported sleep quality and exercise level. Positive-emotion associations were grouped by low (under 30%), medium (30–69%), and high (70% and above) levels.
Student focus groups	Four focus groups with students in grades 6–8, exploring reflection, insight, support, and overall experience.
Educator feedback	Input from 8 teachers and counselors on the usefulness of emotional patterns and dashboards.
Student ratings	Overall student rating of the experience on a 10-point scale.

Framework

Five positive emotions were tracked: **joy, gratitude, optimism, belonging, and contentment**. Findings are organized using the TRUmotions **Human Intelligence (HI) framework**, five capacities that can be developed and measured: Emotional, Relational, Executive, Creativity, and Leadership.

05 Findings and Analysis

WHAT WE HEARD • KEY FINDINGS

100% Seek human connection Would like to talk to a counselor, teacher, parent, or trusted adult	100% see value in reflection On emotions and habits like sleep, exercise, and screen time	86% found the data insightful Valued seeing patterns between habits and emotions	74% want an easy way to get support A simple, visible way to request a counselor check-in	6–7 average student rating (of 10) Strong potential and excitement about what's next
“ <i>It helps teachers understand how we're feeling, especially if we don't talk about it.</i> 7TH GRADER	“ <i>I like that it can show how sleep and exercise affect our moods.</i> 6TH GRADER	“ <i>The system makes it really helpful to have an easy way to talk to a counselor.</i> 8TH GRADER		

Lifestyle matters: powerful connections to emotions

Each table shows how each positive emotion was distributed across students' reported sleep and exercise levels. Darker cells mark where positive emotions concentrate.

Sleep quality and positive emotions

POSITIVE EMOTION	LOW SLEEP under 30%	MEDIUM 30–69%	HIGH SLEEP 70% +
Joy	3%	49%	49%
Gratitude	0%	50%	50%
Optimism	0%	48%	52%
Belonging	0%	50%	50%
Contentment	7%	43%	50%

Exercise level and positive emotions

POSITIVE EMOTION	LOW under 30%	MEDIUM 30–69%	HIGH 70% +
Joy	9%	58%	33%
Gratitude	6%	72%	22%
Optimism	5%	67%	29%
Belonging	17%	67%	17%
Contentment	21%	50%	29%

98% MEDIUM OR HIGH SLEEP

of positive-emotion associations occurred among students with medium or high sleep quality.

Only 2% were associated with low sleep quality.

89% MEDIUM OR HIGH EXERCISE

of positive-emotion associations occurred among students with medium or high exercise levels.

Medium exercise alone accounted for 63% of positive-emotion associations.

Healthy habits. Positive minds. Better outcomes. Students who report better sleep and moderate to high exercise are far more likely to experience positive emotions.

What the data tells us

- 1. Sleep is the strongest signal.** Gratitude, optimism, and belonging never appeared at low sleep quality. For schools, sleep may be one of the most practical early indicators of emotional readiness, and one students can act on themselves.
- 2. Moderate movement goes a long way.** Medium exercise accounted for 63% of positive-emotion associations, more than high exercise. This may partly reflect how many students fell in each band, but it suggests students don't need to be athletes to feel the benefit.
- 3. Students want insight and people.** Every student valued reflection, and every student also said they would rather talk to a real person. Students see EDMotions as a bridge that helps them identify what they feel, build emotional vocabulary, and reach trusted adults, not a replacement for them.
- 4. The rating points to the opportunity.** An average of 6–7 out of 10 shows strong interest with clear room to grow. Students were specific about what would make it better, which shaped the recommendations below.

Reading the results through the HI framework

E	Emotional	Students connected habits to feelings for the first time. "I like that it can show how sleep and exercise affect our moods."
R	Relational	100% prefer human connection; 74% see the tool as want an easier way to request support from a counselor.
X	Executive	Students began recognizing behaviors, like sleep and movement, that support optimism, belonging, gratitude, joy, and contentment.
C	Creativity	100% saw value in reflection. Students are building the vocabulary to name and describe emotions.
L	Leadership	<i>Not measured in this pilot. A priority for future implementations.</i>

06 Solution and Outcomes

Where EDMotions adds real value

Data that drives insight Visual dashboards help students and educators see patterns and understand what may be influencing emotions. INSIGHT • AWARENESS • ACTION	Emotional awareness and literacy Students build vocabulary and identify emotions more clearly over time. UNDERSTANDING • CONFIDENCE	Support when it matters Requesting a check-in gives students a safe, low-pressure way to reach out. ACCESS • CONNECTION	Growth for every learner Especially powerful for students who prefer reflection, structure, or data to process emotions. PERSONALIZED • EMPOWERING	Stronger school communities Better information leads to better support and a positive school culture. CONNECTION • COMMUNITY
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THE IMPACT WE'RE BUILDING TOGETHER

Healthier students Stronger emotional well-being and resilience.	Empowered educators Actionable insights to support every learner.	Better outcomes Improved readiness, engagement, and achievement.	Stronger communities A culture of care, connection, and belonging.
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07 Recommendations

Students and educators were specific about what would make EDMotions even more valuable. These growth opportunities are shaping the next iteration of the platform:

- 01 Make use even more flexible.**
Add optional timing and personalization so check-ins fit each student's day.
- 02 Expand emotion vocabulary for all ages.**
Offer simple, relatable language so every student can name what they feel.
- 03 Elevate the "Request Support" feature.**
Make it highly visible so reaching a counselor is one easy step.
- 04 Enhance the conversational experience.**
Make coaching even more supportive and student-centered.
- 05 Strengthen communication about privacy.**
Clearly explain how student data is used and protected.

Limitations

This was a single-district pilot. Sleep and exercise levels were self-reported, and the findings show associations within the pilot sample, not cause and effect. Distributions may also reflect how many students fell into each sleep or exercise band. Findings should be read as strong early signals.

08 Conclusion

When emotional well-being is viewed over time, patterns emerge, and schools gain insights that were previously invisible. In this pilot, those patterns pointed to something simple and actionable: sleep and movement are closely tied to how students feel. Just as important, students told us they want those insights to lead them to people, not away from them.

The broader lesson applies well beyond one district: **EDmotions helps schools move beyond check-ins to guiding students in recognizing the behaviors that support optimism, belonging, gratitude, joy, and contentment**, and gives educators the clarity to act before challenges escalate.

Data note: Based on pilot feedback from 58 students and 8 educators (Spring 2026) and EDMotions platform analytics. Percentages are rounded to whole numbers (rows may not total exactly 100%) and reflect associations within the pilot sample; they do not imply causation.

EVERY EMOTION MATTERS. EVERY STUDENT COUNTS.

**Real Insight. Real Readiness.
Every Student.**

ABOUT EDMOTIONS

EDmotions translates student voice into actionable insight, building student self-awareness and helping educators see readiness levels before challenges escalate. It is the K-12 application of the TRUmotions Human Intelligence Operating System.

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