Social Emotional Wellness: Considerations for Students in Grades K-5

7/28/20

Parent Advisory Panel 2 - Whole Child Wellness

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Executive Function, Emotion Regulation and School Re-Entry

"HOT" VS. "COLD" COGNITION

"Hot" processes: emotional, reactive, develops early, accentuated by stress

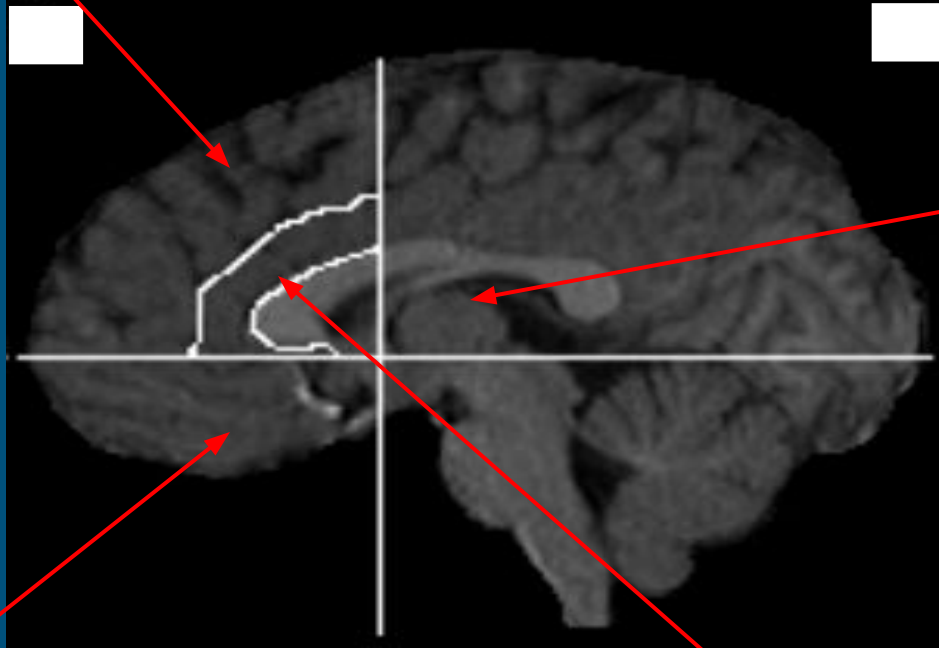○ "Cold" processes (executive functions) are nonemotional, reflective, develop later, impaired by stress

DEVELOPMENT OF COLD COGNITION: Executive Function

○Significant development is observed between 3-12 years of age, but continued development occurs into adolescence

○Cold cognitive processes include planning, organizing, strategic thinking, working memory, inhibiting impulses

○IF CHILD IS UNDER STRESS, DECLINE IN FUNCTIONING

DEVELOPMENT OF Emotion Regulation

"Hot" cognition develops early; young children are able to use emotional responses to learn from new situations

However, regulation of emotional responding relies on cold cognition to develop first and improves gradually

EMOTION REGULATION

The ability to regulate one's own response to emotion-inducing stimuli, either preventing the feeling of emotion or preventing the outward response to a natural emotion provoking stimulus or situation

The Orbitofrontal Cortex is Involved in Regulation of "Hot" Cognitive Processes

Orbitofrontal Cortex:

Behavior inhibition, emotion regulation
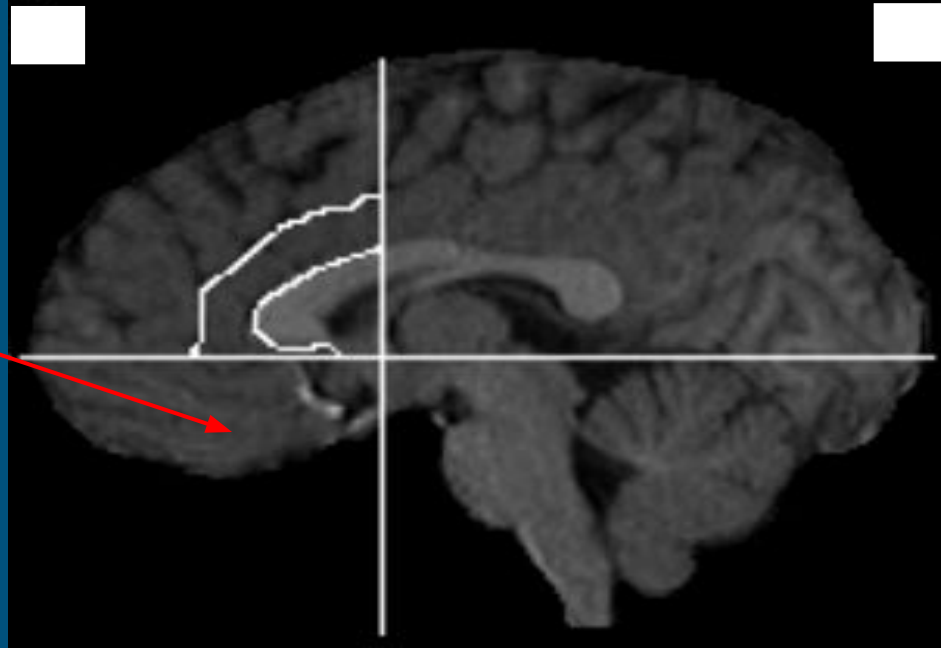
Emotion Regulation Demands

At School:

Keeping Masks On

Keeping Socially Distant

Calming Self Without Physical Comfort

At Home:

Sitting Still

Attending Over Zoom

Key Points

Emotion regulation depends on brain development: There is a limit of what is possible by age

Traumatized and stressed children will have more problems with attention, impulse control, and emotion regulation

If children are not emotionally regulated, school will not be safe and children will not be able to learn effectively.

COVID and SEB Functioning

Early research suggests that over 20% of students exhibited symptoms of anxiety and depression 1 month into quarantine (Xie et al., 2020)

Typically, about 20% of students require support for a social, emotional or behavioral concern in school. Researchers are expecting that number to double or triple this fall.

Social, emotional and behavioral concerns include pandemic-related fears, isolation, stressed family environments, unmet needs, etc.

- *Some students miss being in person, some prefer remote learning*

SEL considerations for
REMOTE + IN PERSON Learning

REMOTE : Anxiety, Depression, Isolation, Reduced Social Skills,

Lack of Eye Contact with others

IN PERSON LEARNING: Excited, Confused w/ new Routines, Anxiety

Processing ALL the former feelings plus **possible more anxiety** now coming into contact with more children than they've seen in 5 months.

Children all with different needs, yet ALL children can benefit form SEL skills

Center for Healthy Minds

University of Wisconsin - Madison

"The brain circuits important for social emotional learning interact with circuits that are important for cognitive learning - so if one is anxious, stressed or emotionally unbalanced, this has deleterious effects on the circuitry for other types of learning."

- Richard Davidson (Center Founder)

Indicators of Prolonged Trauma and Stress

Category	Indicators
Physical	• Increased somatic complaints (e.g., headaches and stomachaches) • Over- or under-reacting to stimuli (e.g., getting startled easily [or not at all] by bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens) • Increased activity level (e.g., fidgeting, getting out of seat) • Withdrawal from other people and activities
Cognitive	• Recreating the traumatic event (e.g., repeatedly talking about or "playing out" the event) or avoiding topics that serve as reminders • Difficulties with executive function (e.g., impulse control, attention) • Worry and fear about safety of self and others • Dissociation (e.g., disconnected from surroundings, "spacing out")
Social and Emotional	• Rapid changes in heightened emotions (e.g., extremely sad to angry) • Change in ability to interpret or respond appropriately to social cues • Difficulties with emotion regulation and impulse control (e.g., angry outbursts, aggression, increased distress) • Emotional numbness, isolation, and detachment
Language and Communication	• Language development delays and challenges • Difficulties with expressive (e.g., expressing thoughts and feelings) and receptive language (e.g., understanding nonverbal cues) • Difficulties with nonverbal communication (e.g., eye contact) • Use of hurtful language (e.g., to keep others at a distance)
Learning	• Absenteeism and changes in academic performance/engagement • Difficulties with authority, redirection, or criticism • Difficulties listening and concentrating during instruction • Difficulties with memory (e.g., may require more repititions) • Difficulties generalizing learned material in different contexts

[1] Honsinger & Brown, 2019.

[2] Symptoms adapted from Statman-Weil, 2015 and National Child Traumatic Stress Network Schools Committee, 2008.

[3] Strategies adapted from Honsinger & Brown, 2019.

https://ies.ed.gov/

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
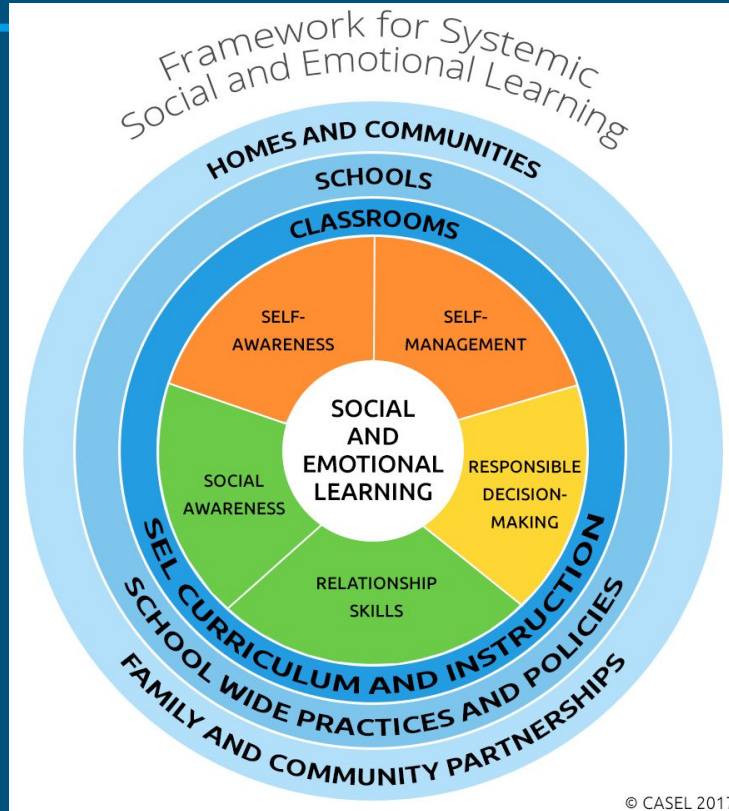
Considerations within an MTSS Context

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) refers to a systemic, prevention-focused framework for addressing student needs through the integration and continuous improvement of systems and services. A well-designed MTSS includes:

- Multiple tiers of integrated support

FEW
1-8% of Students
Require Intensive
Intervention

SOME
5 to 10 % of Students
Require Supplemental
Targeted
Intervention

ALL
80 to 90% of Students
Meet Performance
Indicators
All Staff Preventative and Proactive

Academics

Behavior

Matching Instruction to Need for Improved Student Outcomes

Matching Instruction to Need for Improved Student Outcomes

Matching Instruction to Need for Improved Student Outcomes

Multi-Tiered System of Support

Rockwall

Academic

Behavior

Social-
Emotional

Whole Child
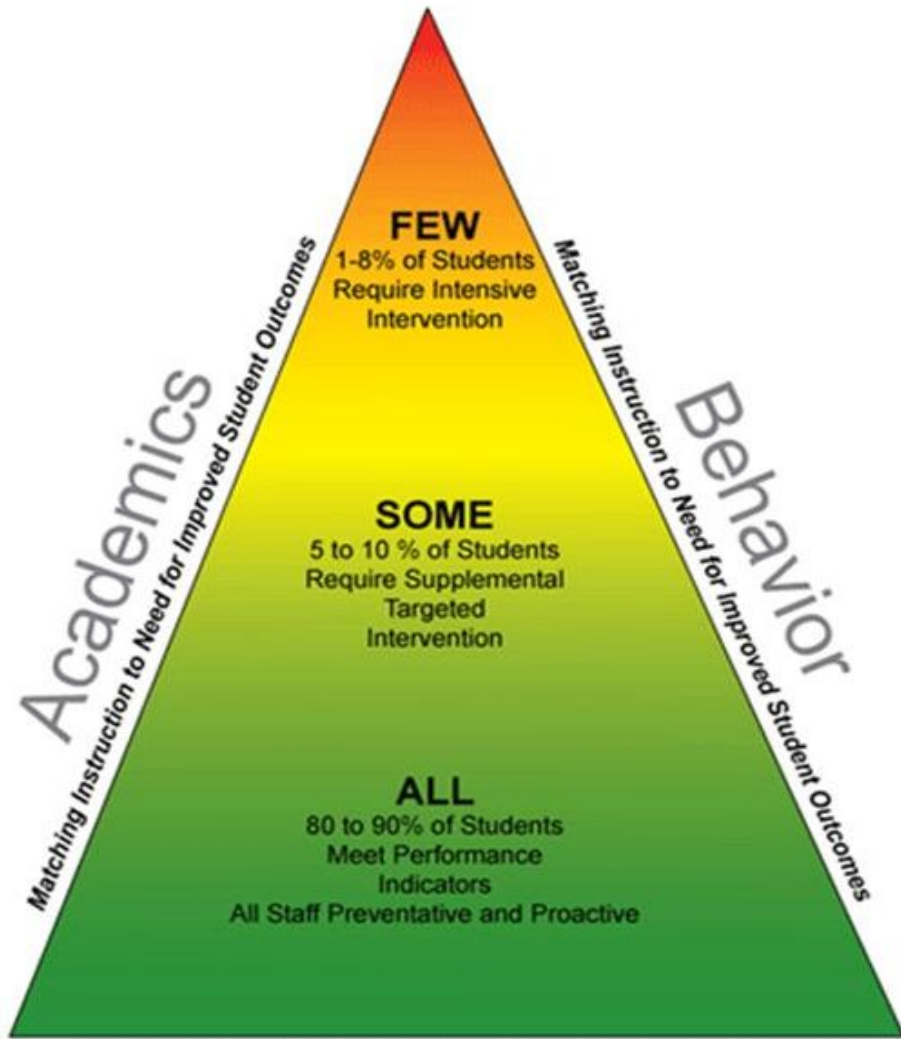
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- **Multiple tiers of integrated support**

- **Data-driven decision-making**
  - Screening and referral procedures to determine how to help students in need of support
  - Progress monitoring to check implementation and effectiveness of interventions

- Resources and support for **sustainable implementation**
  - Active administrator involvement and support
  - Representative team with relevant expertise
  - Time
  - Funds
  - Training

Central Unified School District
Model of Multi-Tiered System of Support
Behavior, Social-Emotional, & Restorative Practices

* Some Schools

** No schools

Functional Behavior Assessment**
Behavior Intervention Plan*
Behavior Contract*
Individualized Schedule

Behavior Support Plan

Individualized CICO
Check-in/Check-out (CICO)
Behavioral support/instruction

Continuum of Classroom Consequences
Classroom Expectations
Universal Teaching of behavior
expectations
Acknowledgment system

SAFE Team
CYS*
All 4 Youth*
Individual Counseling

Student Assistance Program
Social Skills Group
Social Emotional Learning group*
Mentors

Universal Screener*. clear entrance/exit for Tier 2

Core Social-Emotional Curriculum**
(Positive Action/ Second Step)

Class Circles/Meetings*

Individual respect agreement*
Alternative discipline*
Restitution/Reparation*

Classroom Reparative Circles**
Reflection Room/Thinkery Support*
Restitution/Reparation*
Mediation*

Classroom Circles/Meetings
Classroom Respect Agreement*
Usual Constructive
Reminders*
I-Messages*

Behavioral **Social-Emotional** **Restorative**
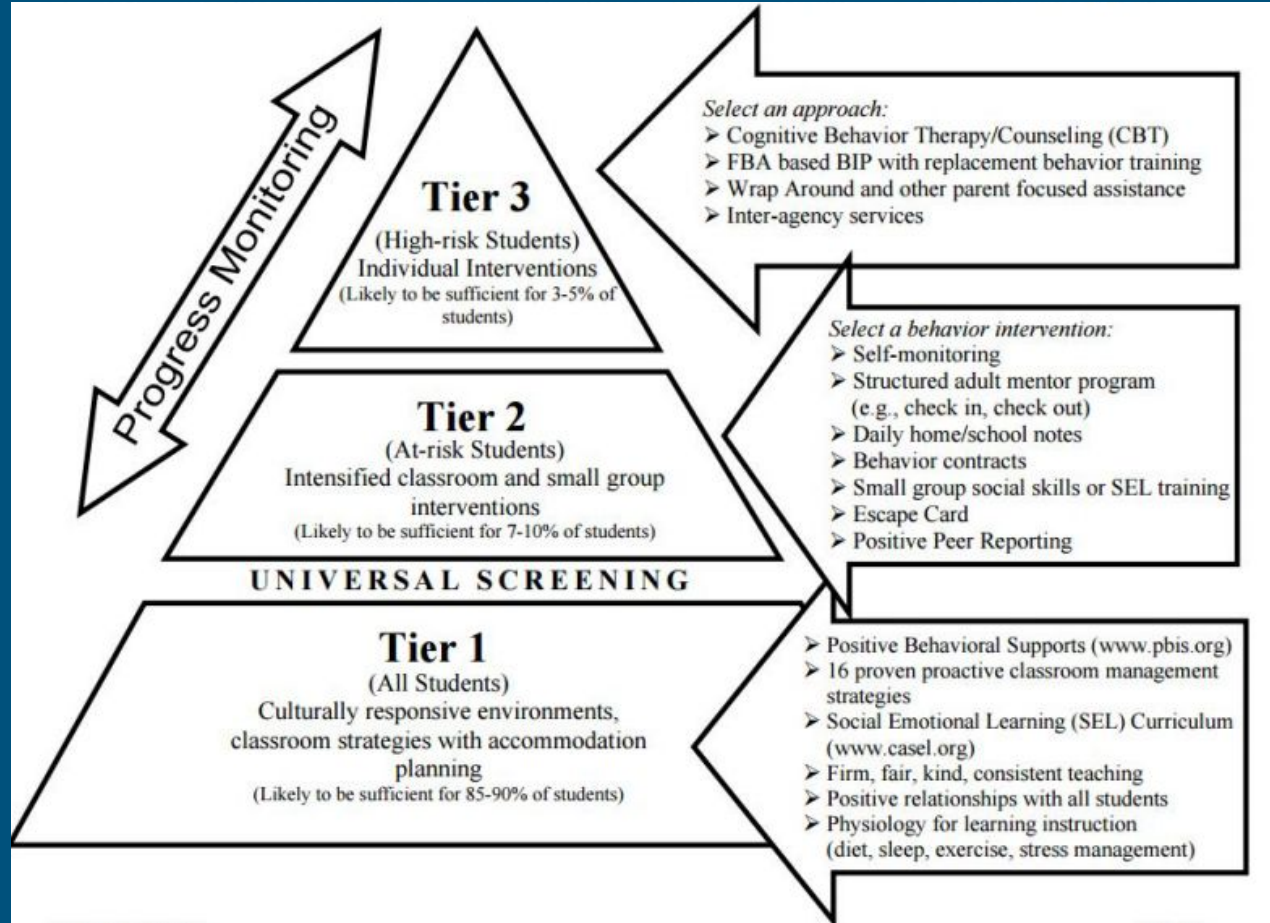
Step 1: Start with Resource Mapping

It is critical that there are resources devoted to SEB wellness at both the district and school level
- Wellness coordinator and/or team (district-level)
- Team with administrator and relevant expertise that can meet regularly (school-level)

Step 2: Figure out How to Identify what Supports Students Need

Progress Monitoring

Tier 3
(High-risk Students)
Individual Interventions
(Likely to be sufficient for 3-5% of students)

Select an approach:
➢ Cognitive Behavior Therapy/Counseling (CBT)
➢ FBA based BIP with replacement behavior training
➢ Wrap Around and other parent focused assistance
➢ Inter-agency services

Tier 2
(At-risk Students)
Intensified classroom and small group interventions
(Likely to be sufficient for 7-10% of students)

Select a behavior intervention:
➢ Self-monitoring
➢ Structured adult mentor program (e.g., check in, check out)
➢ Daily home/school notes
➢ Behavior contracts
➢ Small group social skills or SEL training
➢ Escape Card
➢ Positive Peer Reporting

UNIVERSAL SCREENING

Tier 1
(All Students)
Culturally responsive environments, classroom strategies with accommodation planning
(Likely to be sufficient for 85-90% of students)

➢ Positive Behavioral Supports (www.pbis.org)
➢ 16 proven proactive classroom management strategies
➢ Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum (www.casel.org)
➢ Firm, fair, kind, consistent teaching
➢ Positive relationships with all students
➢ Physiology for learning instruction (diet, sleep, exercise, stress management)

COVID Considerations

- **Identification of students**
  - **Multi-informant**
    - **Nomination** (parent, teacher, student referral)
    - **Behavioral indicators** (attendance, referrals to the office, nurse visits)
    - **Universal screening** - formal or informal
      - In a typical school year, teachers really can't do this until October
      - Recommendations during **COVID are the same**
      - Need a tool that can be completed by parents (and students), too

COVID Considerations

- **Universal screening - informal**
  - Quick, easy, free
  - Customize the questions you ask
  - Not validated
  - Can take longer to administer, aggregate results, make decisions
- **Universal screening - formal**
  - Quick, easy, some are free (but require data analysis), some are not free ($3-$8 pp)
  - Can select a validated tool with strong technical properties
  - Many have items that are not worded for distance learning
  - Most common ones have a Spanish translation, but not all are translated into multiple languages

Screening Recommendations
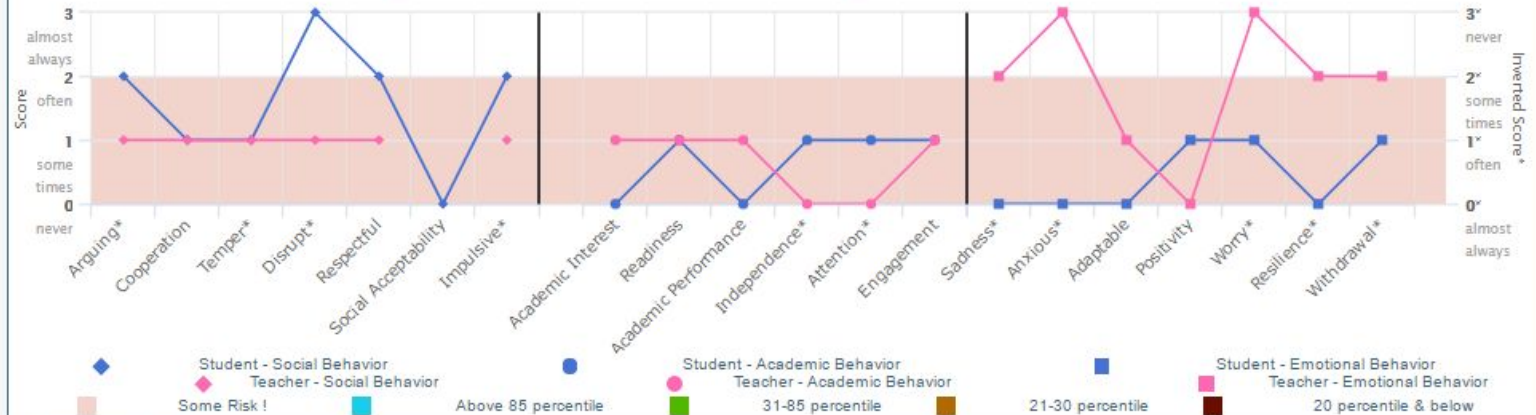
Step 3: Develop a Response Process

- Collaboratively develop a response process (flowchart) to guide school-based teams about response to concerns
  - This flowchart would outline what all students have access to (Zones of Regulation, mindfulness practice, restorative circles, schoolwide/classroom expectations, schedule)
  - Then, it would outline what happens if there is a student in need of support
    - First, a conference with school counselor and parent and child
    - Then, depending on response, child might receive more formal intervention
      - Placement in a small coping skills or social skills group via Zoom
      - Short-term behavior plan with parents (Check-in/Check-out)
    - Monitor progress
- Meet regularly as a team to review new business, old business, health of the system
- Training to staff and resources to implement

Step 4: Training for Educators and Families

- Ground it in available research
- Keep it as simple as possible
- Focus on developing understanding and strategy use
- Use the instructional hierarchy (I do - we do - you do)
  - Limit didactic instruction
  - "Train and hope" PDs do not work
- Prioritize topics for COVID: recognizing trauma, coping strategies

Step 5: Focus on Universal Supports

Invest in Tier 1 supports that will benefit both teachers and students, particularly in the start of the school year

These universal supports can include teachers or support personnel:

- Collaboratively create flexible routines and expectations across settings to build a supportive, predictable environment
- Spending time normalizing feelings
    - It's normal to feel fearful, angry, frustrated, lonely, sad (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network)
- Teaching healthy coping and problem-solving skills

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

Safe and Predictable Environment
- **Create** a welcoming classroom environment (e.g., greet students by name, do show and tells)
- **Post** class expectations at the front of the classroom
- **Display** a daily schedule and explain any deviations
- **Prepare** students for transitions (e.g., give a signal)
- **Communicate** clear safety procedures

Relationship Building
- **Talk** to students about their hobbies and interests
- **Use** a respectful tone during interactions
- **Involve** students in developing behavior/safety plans
- **Try** the 2x10 strategy with challenging students (talk with the student for at least 2 minutes each day for 10 days in a row)

Self-Regulation
- **Incorporate** activities that build coping strategies (e.g. identifying and validating emotions, deep breathing)
- **Create** calming spaces or break times with constructive activities that are *not* used as a punishment/time-out
- **Model and practice** appropriate social skills
- **Teach** students how to name and scale their emotions (e.g. rate anger on a scale of 1-5)

"IN THE MOMENT" STRATEGIES

Safe and Predictable Environment
1. **Be aware** of the student's body language, tone of voice, and emotional state
2. **Direct** other students to follow outlined safety procedures
3. **Provide** student with the opportunity to go to a safe space (e.g., meditation room, counseling office)
4. **Alert** appropriate support staff, when necessary

Relationship Building
1. **Project** calmness while approaching student using verbal and nonverbal techniques (e.g., using a respectful tone, sitting beside the student instead of standing over them)
2. **Show** you are listening and giving your full attention
3. **Express** that you care for the student and that they are safe

Self-Regulation
1. **Relax** before responding (deep breath, count to 10)
2. **Encourage** student to use relaxation and coping skills, and "comfort" objects
3. **Validate** student emotions (e.g., "You seem frustrated right now. Is that correct?")
4. **Assist** the student in identifying reasonable and safe response options (e.g., go to the counselor's office)

✖ When a student is in crisis, DO NOT: ✖
- Argue or get into a power struggle
- Raise your voice
- Handle the situation in public or in front of student's peers
- Use punitive punishment

"AFTER THE MOMENT" STRATEGIES

- **Provide** students with a safe place to talk about what happened
- **Engage** in a discussion with the student that includes:
  - Praise for any relaxation or coping skills the student used
  - Appropriate responses and strategies to use if the situation arises again
  - Potential consequences or negative outcomes if negative behavior continues
  - Specific steps for successfully resuming the classroom routine
- **Refer** students to other resources and supports or notify appropriate school support staff, when necessary

Conversations and Building Community

- Make time to talk
  - Lead calm, reassuring discussions
  - Listen to students questions and reflect or paraphrase concerns expressed
  - Be clear and concise with the information delivered, dispel inaccurate information

- Work collaboratively on projects that build empathy
  - Writing letters to essential workers, recording a read aloud for another individual or small group, coordinate virtual work sessions

Conversations and Building Community

- **Early elementary school children**
  - Provide brief, simple information
  - Give simple examples

- **Upper elementary and early middle school children**
  - More vocal in asking questions
  - May need assistance separating reality from rumor
  - May need help around being inclusive, digital citizenship

- **Upper middle and high school students**
  - Issues can be discussed in more depth
  - Engage them in decision-making

Caring for the Caregivers (e.g., Staff, Families)

1. **Acknowledge authentically staff and caregiver efforts**
2. **Normalize feelings** ("this is really hard")
3. **Encourage self-care** including boundary setting, taking care of own needs
4. Find ways to **lend a hand** to educators
   a. Leverage PTO room parents to help teachers with online content (read alouds, guest lectures)
5. Create supportive **online community spaces** for families
   a. Consider organizing regular virtual family meet ups
   b. Organize Slack or Teams channels for families

Thinking Strategically about Implementation

IMPLEMENTING SITE INDICATORS

CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT

Staff meet minimum qualifications

Able to sustain staffing, coaching, training, data systems, performance assessment, and administration

- Financial capacity
- Structural capacity
- Cultural responsivity capacity

Buy-in process operationalized

- Practitioners
- Families

FIT WITH CURRENT INITIATIVES

Alignment with community, regional, state priorities

Fit with family and community values, culture and history

Impact on other interventions & initiatives

Alignment with organizational structure

NEED

Target population identified

Disaggregated data indicating population needs

Parent & community perceptions of need

Addresses service or system gaps

PROGRAM INDICATORS

EVIDENCE

Strength of evidence—for whom in what conditions:

- Number of studies
- Population similarities
- Diverse cultural groups
- Efficacy or Effectiveness

Outcomes – Is it worth it?

Fidelity data

Cost – effectiveness data

USABILITY

Well-defined program

Mature sites to observe

Several replications

Adaptations for context

SUPPORTS

Expert Assistance

Staffing

Training

Coaching & Supervision

Racial equity impact assessment

Data Systems Technology Supports (IT)

Administration & System

EVIDENCE

USABILITY

CAPACITY

FIT

SUPPORTS

NEED

NIRN | NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH NETWORK

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

2

Considerations for Implementation - Suggestions

- "SOFT OPENING" of schools - First month or two
  - Focused on SEL Skills
  - Routines + Expectations for classroom + Remote learning Plan
- Incorporation of MINDFULNESS PRACTICES in Classroom
  - READY TO LEARN - AWARE of present moment (in your body + in your environment)
  - Emotional Regulation Skills   (Zones of Regulation) (Mindful Schools Curriculum)
  - Mindfulness practices can help reduce anxiety and heal traumas
- SEL for TEACHER + STAFF
  - Anxiety is a very contagious emotion
  - Regular check ins / surveys
  - Self Care Options
  - Support + Connection - ACCOUNTABILITY BUDDY
- COMMUNITY BUILDING for staff + Students

IMPLICATIONS FOR REMOTE STUDENTS

If we go back to In Person Learning - HOW DOES THAT AFFECT those still IN REMOTE LEARNING?

- Possible Increased Feeling of Isolation
- Disconnect from School Community + Activities
- Possible reduction in Motivation / Increase in Anxiety + Depression (FOMO)
- NEED FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING for Remote + In School students
- Need for INTENTIONAL CONNECTIONS -
  - Zooms with live classrooms for lessons/ activities
  - REMOTE / SCHOOL BASED BUDDIES - Study buddies
  - OUTSIDE COMMUNITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES - LIve or Assigned (Virtual Fun Run)

MINDFULNESS in the "CLASSROOM"

Remote or In School

- Helps to teach <u>HOW TO BE READY TO LEARN</u>
  - Not thinking about future worries or past traumas
  - Training to think in the present moment
  - Has been proven to reduce anxiety

- Could help improve student :
  - ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE,
  - NURTURE THEIR EMOTIONAL WELL BEING and
  - BOLSTER THEIR BEHAVIOR

- Is a secular technique that can heighten attention, empathy and other pro-social emotions through an awareness of thoughts, external stimuli and bodily sensations such as breath.
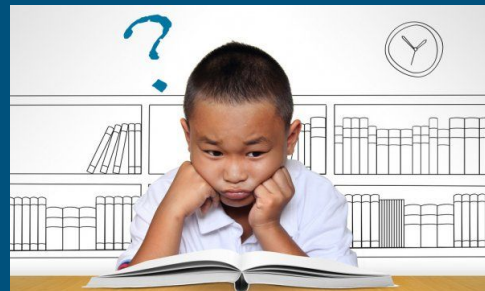
"Such practices, particularly early in life when neuroplasticity is at its peak, have the potential of helping children pursue a tragjectory of healthy development"

- Richard Davidson, founder or CHM and professor of psychology and psychiatry at University of Wisconsin - Madison
-

"Mindfulness is like a muscle, you need to keep using it to keep it trained."

Hence SEL skills CAN NOT be just taught in 1 or 2 lessons through a second step curriculum. It needs to be imbedded into daily life in school.

MIndfulness in the classrooms can help <u>BOTH STUDENTS + STAFF.</u>

Staff stress + burnout is a major concern among teachers during normal times, during this time of extreme heightened stress, it could affect our students even more.

Direct Benefits of Mindfulness

Increases focus + attention

Calms the mind and body

Activates the parasympathetic nervous system & decreases toxic stress

Increases social and emotional awareness (Emotional Intelligence)

Cultivates sense of compassion + Self Acceptance

Increases ability to respond vs. react

Increases behavioral, emotional, and mental regulation

SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCES ANXIETY

ALL STUDENTS + STAFF CAN BENEFIT ...

...From MINDFULNESS PRACTICES

"We take care of the future best by taking care of the present now."   -Jon Kabat-Zinn

"If we want to grow as teachers and as an educational system, we must do something alien to academic culture: we must talk to each other about our inner lives - risky stuff in a profession that fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical, the distant, the abstract."   - Parker J. Palmer

"The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence."   - Rabindranath Tagore

Mindfulness Curriculums

1. Benson Henry Institute Education Initiative - Relaxation Response
2. Mindful Schools
3. Educate 2B - Occupational Therapists got a grant for training
4. Breathe For Change - Mind-Body Wellness + SEL Training
5. Probaby many others......