



Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being in Schools:

How to Get Started

March 24, 2024

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WHAT: This resource provides practical tools that will help you determine

- 1) which of the mental health and well-being strategies and approaches described in [CDC's Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being in Schools: An Action Guide for School and District Leaders](#) (Action Guide) are most relevant to the needs of your school or district and
- 2) how you can begin to put them in place.

WHO: This resource is designed for leaders in kindergarten through 12th grade (K–12) schools and districts, and their mental health and well-being support teams.

WHEN: Use this resource after reading the [Action Guide](#) and before putting into place new mental health and well-being strategies in your school or district.

HOW: You and your team will use this resource to

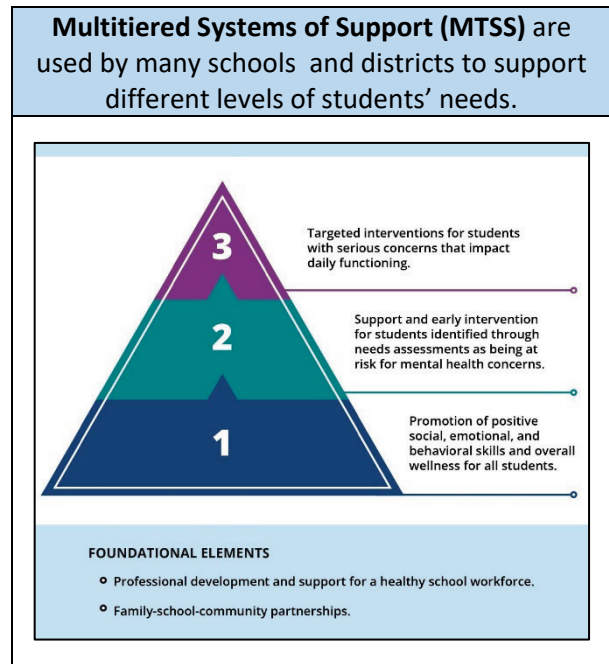
1. **REFLECT** on what your school is already implementing to address student and staff mental health and well-being,
2. **PRIORITIZE** strategies and approaches you want to focus your efforts on, and
3. **PLAN FOR ACTION** with your school teams to implement your selected approaches.

REFLECT – What are we already doing?

Get started in the table below by answering the questions and reflecting on

- Your district and school goals,
- The needs of students and staff,
- Current activities,
- The resources available to you, and
- The team you'll need for action.

As you answer these questions, you might consider your school's multitiered systems of support (MTSS) and the goals, staff, resources, and activities that are in place to support different levels of students' needs.



Reflection Questions

ALIGNING WITH GOALS

What are our **district** goals related to mental health and well-being for students and staff?

Consider the following:

- Are there goals identified in our district improvement plan that are related to mental health and well-being for students and staff (e.g., prioritize the strengthening of relationships between and among students and adults within our schools)?
- Are there goals identified in our district strategic plan that are related to mental health and well-being for students and staff (e.g., develop and implement an aligned, districtwide PK–12 multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) for all students)?

What are our **school** goals related to mental health and well-being for students and staff?

Consider the following:

- Are there goals identified in our school improvement plan that are related to mental health and well-being for students and staff (e.g., foster a sense of belonging among students to reduce absenteeism)?
- Are there goals identified in our school strategic plan that are related to mental health and well-being for students and staff (e.g., increase engagement with family and community members to increase support for students)?

IDENTIFYING NEEDS	<p>What are the needs of our students, specific to mental health and well-being?</p> <p>Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there specific populations of students whose needs are not being met? • What data sources do we use to determine student needs? • How are we using data to ensure we are meeting student needs? 	
	<p>What are the needs of our staff specific to mental health and well-being?</p> <p>Consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there specific populations of staff whose needs are not being met? • What data sources do we use to determine staff needs? • How are we using data to ensure we are meeting staff needs? 	
BUILDING ON CURRENT ACTIVITIES	<p>What is currently in place in our school and/or district to support mental health and well-being for students?</p>	
	<p>What is currently in place in our school and/or district to support mental health and well-being for staff?</p>	

<p>LEVERAGING RESOURCES</p>	<p>What resources (e.g., staff time, funding) are available to support efforts to promote mental health and well-being for students and staff?</p>	
<p>TEAMING FOR ACTION</p>	<p>Who is currently involved in our efforts to improve mental health and well-being within our school building and/or district?</p>	
	<p>Who should be involved in this planning process to improve mental health and well-being within our school building and/or district? (This could include teachers, students, parents.)</p>	

REFLECT – What are we already doing? (continued)

Now let's think about the evidence-based approaches from the [Action Guide](#). Your team can use the tables below to determine if and how each of these approaches is currently in place in your school. Rate whether each approach is **not in practice**, **somewhat in practice**, or **fully in practice**.

- **Not in practice:** Approach is not currently being implemented.
- **Somewhat in practice:** Part of the approach is being implemented, but not consistently or throughout the school.
- **Fully in practice:** Approach is being implemented consistently throughout the school.

Strategy #1: Increase Students' Mental Health Literacy			
Mental health literacy is having knowledge and understanding of mental health as well as skills that help people reach out for support when they need it.			
Approach	Not in practice	Somewhat in practice	Fully in practice
Deliver classroom-based mental health education curricula Teaching about mental health in core classes or including mental health in the overall school health education program.			
Use peer-led modeling programs Training teen leaders to model positive attitudes, skills, and behaviors.			
How else is your school/district increasing students' mental health literacy ?			

Strategy #2: Promote Mindfulness			
Mindfulness is the practice of being fully aware of your thoughts and feelings in a moment, without judging them or negatively reacting to them.			
Approach	Not in practice	Somewhat in practice	Fully in practice
Deliver classroom-based mindfulness education Helping students be aware of the connection between their minds and bodies.			
Dedicate time for students to independently practice mindfulness Giving students time to practice mindfulness every day on their own.			
Offer small-group mindfulness activities Giving students an opportunity to learn more about mindfulness and how to use it to cope with strong feelings or emotions.			
How else is your school/district promoting mindfulness ?			

Strategy #3: Promote Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Learning

Social, emotional, and behavioral learning focuses on developing skills to promote physical and mental health. These programs focus on five key areas: Self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, social awareness, and self-awareness.

Approach	Not in practice	Somewhat in practice	Fully in practice
Provide classroom instruction focused on building social skills and emotional development Helping students recognize thoughts, understand feelings, make decisions, solve problems, and have healthy relationships.			
Offer targeted education focused on teaching social skills and emotional development Teaching small groups of students who need additional support for emotional or behavioral challenges.			
How else is your school/district promoting social, emotional, and behavioral learning?			

Strategy #4: Enhance Connectedness Among Students, Staff, and Families

School connectedness is when students feel that adults and peers in school care about them and their learning. This feeling includes a sense of being cared for, being supported, and belonging at school.

Approach	Not in practice	Somewhat in practice	Fully in practice
Provide relationship-building programs Strengthening connections between students, families, and school communities.			
How else is your school/district enhancing connectedness among students, staff, and families?			

Strategy #5: Provide Psychosocial Skills Training and Cognitive Behavioral Interventions

Psychosocial skills training and cognitive behavioral interventions teach specific skills to students to help them cope with challenging situations, set goals, understand their thoughts, and change behaviors using problem-solving strategies.

Approach	Not in practice	Somewhat in practice	Fully in practice
Promote acceptance and commitment to change Using psychosocial skills training and dialectical behavior therapy to teach mindfulness, acceptance, and commitment skills.			
Provide cognitive behavioral interventions Often following a standardized manual of activities to help students examine their own thoughts and behaviors.			
Engage students in coping skills training groups Using principles of cognitive behavioral intervention to teach students skills to help them handle specific problems.			
How else is your school/district providing psychosocial skills training and cognitive behavioral interventions?			

Strategy #6: Support Staff Well-Being

Teachers and principals are more likely than other workers to report burnout and symptoms of depression. They are also less likely to say that they feel resilient (that they can “bounce back” when bad things happen). Putting school-based programs in place that support the mental health of teachers and staff can improve school climate and promote student mental health and success.

Approach	Not in practice	Somewhat in practice	Fully in practice
Offer mindfulness-based training programs Learning skills to help manage the demands of teaching and to reduce the physical and mental effects of stress.			
Provide therapeutic resources Supporting staff’s mental health by providing resources that guide teachers and staff through acceptance and commitment therapy approaches.			
How else is your school/district supporting staff well-being?			

PRIORITIZE – What else do we want to do?

As your team moves from reflection to action planning, you may find it helpful to prioritize where you want to focus your efforts for the next year. Use the table below to determine how well each approach fits with your district and school priorities, student and staff needs, and available resources. This will help you identify 1–3 approaches you would like to focus on for the next 12 months to improve mental health and well-being in your district/school.

Priority	Rating (for use in table below)
Fit with district priorities	How well does this fit with district priorities? ✓ Fits extremely well ● Fits moderately well ✘ Does not fit well
Fit with school priorities	How well does this fit with school priorities? ✓ Fits extremely well ● Fits moderately well ✘ Does not fit well
Fit with student needs	How well will implementation of this strategy/approach meet the needs of students in the school? ✓ Will meet the needs of students ● Might meet the needs of students ✘ Will not meet the needs of students
Fit with staff needs	How well would implementation of this strategy/approach meet the needs of staff in the school? ✓ Will meet the needs of staff ● Might meet the needs of staff ✘ Will not meet the needs of staff
Level of effort	How difficult would it be to complete the action? ✓ Not difficult ● Moderately difficult ✘ Very difficult
Estimated cost	How expensive would it likely be to plan and implement the action? \$ Not expensive \$\$ Moderately expensive \$\$\$ Very expensive

Approach	Fit with district priorities ✓ ● ✕	Fit with school priorities ✓ ● ✕	Fit with student needs ✓ ● ✕	Fit with staff needs ✓ ● ✕	Level of effort ✓ ● ✕	Estimated cost \$, \$\$, \$\$\$	How will this strategy/approach meet the needs of students who are more likely to be marginalized (e.g., students of color, LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, English language learners)?	Top priority action? (Y/N)
Strategy #1: Increase Students' Mental Health Literacy								
• Deliver classroom-based mental health education curricula								Yes No
• Use peer-led modeling programs								Yes No
Strategy #2: Promote Mindfulness								
• Deliver classroom-based mindfulness education								Yes No
• Dedicate time for students to independently practice mindfulness								Yes No
• Offer small-group mindfulness activities								Yes No
Strategy #3: Promote Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Learning								
• Provide classroom instruction focused on building social skills and emotional development								Yes No
• Offer targeted education focused on teaching social skills and emotional development								Yes No

Approach	Fit with district priorities	Fit with school priorities	Fit with student needs	Fit with staff needs	Level of effort	Estimated cost	How will this strategy/approach meet the needs of students who are more likely to be marginalized (e.g., students of color, LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, English language learners)?	Top priority action? (Y/N)
Strategy #4: Enhance Connectedness Among Students, Staff, and Families								
• Provide relationship-building programs								Yes No
Strategy #5: Provide Psychosocial Skills Training and Cognitive Behavioral Interventions								
• Promote acceptance and commitment to change								Yes No
• Provide cognitive behavioral interventions								Yes No
• Engage students in coping skills training groups								Yes No
Strategy #6: Support Staff Well-Being								
• Offer mindfulness-based training programs								Yes No
• Provide therapeutic resources								Yes No

PRIORITIZE – Top Priority Approaches

Based on the Prioritization Activity, list up to 3 strategies and the associated approaches that you would like to prioritize in the coming year.	
Strategy	Approach(es)
EXAMPLE	
1. Increase Students' Mental Health Literacy	Deliver classroom-based mental health education curricula
1.	
2.	
3.	

PLAN FOR ACTION – How do we do it?

Now, you and your team are ready to plan for action! Use the table below to get started on putting in place your priority approaches. Use one blank table for each approach you have prioritized.

Refer to the example below as a guide.

PLAN FOR ACTION				
TEAM	ENGAGEMENT WITH PARTNERS	EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT	TIMELINE
<p>What <u>team(s)</u> will be working on this strategy/approach? Is there an <u>existing team</u> that would be a good fit to take this on?</p> <p>Who is the person responsible for <u>leading</u> the approach?</p> <p>Who will be <u>implementing</u> the approach?</p>	<p>Who needs to be <u>informed</u> about the new approach?</p> <p>Whose <u>support/approval</u> will be needed to help make implementation go well?</p> <p>How will <u>students, families, and community partners</u> be included?</p>	<p>What <u>considerations and adaptations</u> will be needed to help ensure the diverse needs of our students and staff are met by the approach? (Refer to the <u>Action Guide</u> for ways your school can <u>Focus on Equity</u> for each approach.)</p>	<p>What will support successful implementation?</p> <p>For example, consider what training might be involved, the ongoing support or staffing needed, any guidelines or procedures to establish, etc. (Refer to the <u>Action Guide</u> for <u>Implementation Tips</u> for each approach.)</p>	<p>What is the <u>timeline</u> for putting this approach in place?</p>

EXAMPLE

STRATEGY: Promote Mindfulness

APPROACH: Dedicate time for students to independently practice mindfulness

<p>The school counseling team will lead implementation.</p> <p>The school counseling team will work with grade-level teams to identify ways to support implementation during the school day.</p> <p>One school counselor will be identified to lead implementation.</p> <p>Classroom teachers will implement “Mindful Moments” for practicing mindfulness twice daily--during homeroom and during another class period.</p> <p>School nurse will implement “Mindful Moments” with students during clinic visits.</p> <p>Health education teachers will take a leadership role in supporting classroom teachers and school staff and in guiding implementation.</p>	<p>District personnel will need to approve payment for training for the counseling team.</p> <p>School and district personnel will need to approve an “opt-out” parental notification form.</p> <p>Grade-level leads will need to help identify the best ways to integrate mindfulness practices into homeroom as well as into another time of the school day (e.g., after lunch).</p> <p>Administrative personnel responsible for scheduling would be able to help ensure that class scheduling is not impacted.</p> <p>We will identify local providers with advanced training in mindfulness practices who might provide training on mindfulness to counseling staff and teachers.</p>	<p>The Student Health Advisory Committee will be involved in the initial planning to ensure activities resonate with students and to identify ways that students can be involved in leading mindfulness activities.</p> <p>English as a second language (ESL) teachers will be included in initial trainings so students and families who are English language learners receive the support they need.</p> <p>The school counseling team will attend a PTO meeting to discuss strategies with families and to gauge interest and potential for additional family involvement.</p>	<p>The counseling team, health education teachers, and school nurse will engage in the first round of training during spring 2024.</p> <p>Questions that still need to be answered regarding implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will counselors be able to train teachers (train the trainer), or will teachers need to be trained by outside providers? • When might teacher training feasibly take place? Is there funding for substitutes to cover classes while teachers attend training? 	<p>We will begin preparations in spring 2024, including training for counselors and an initial group of teachers.</p> <p>Kickoff/launch in the 2024–2025 school year.</p>
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