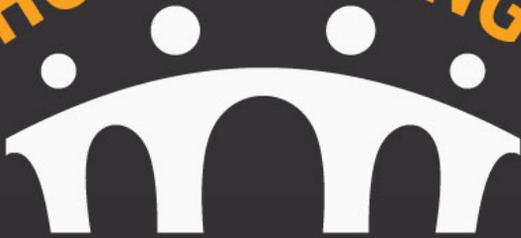NEW YORK CITY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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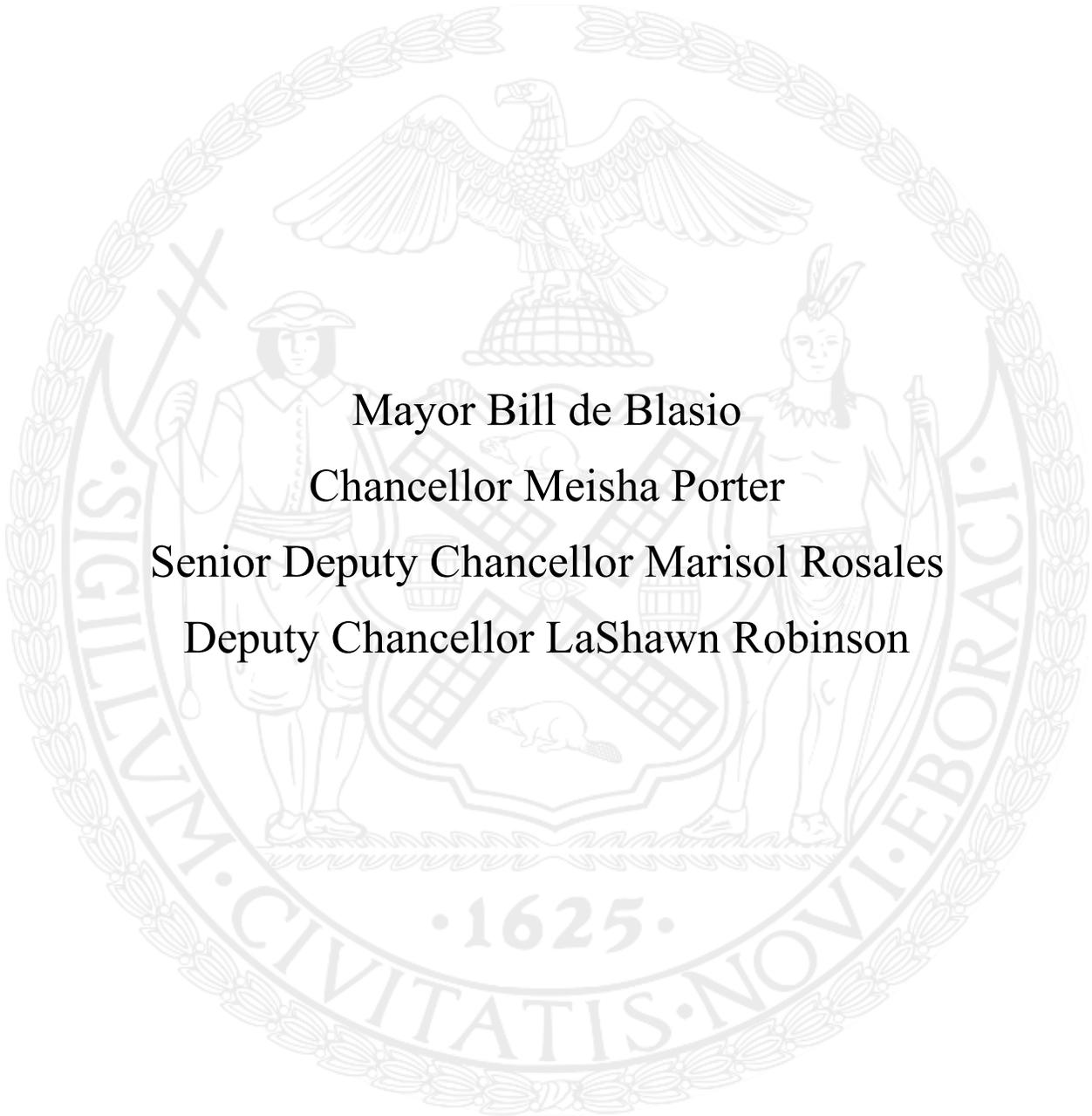
HOMECOMING

BRIDGE TO SCHOOL 2.0

Strengthening Community and Fostering Resilience

NYC Department of Education

Mayor Bill de Blasio

Chancellor Meisha Porter

Senior Deputy Chancellor Marisol Rosales

Deputy Chancellor LaShawn Robinson

Table of Contents

Letter from the First Lady of New York City

Dear Colleagues,

Two years ago, when we brought social and emotional learning and restorative justice to every New York City school, we did so to educate the *whole* child. When our children enter the classroom, they have more on their minds than math or science. Preparing our young people for success means helping them deal with the social, emotional, and academic challenges of their lives. It means teaching them ways to process their many emotions, and showing them how to build healthy relationships and resolve conflicts in a constructive way. That is how we help them flourish into happy, healthy adults.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, that mission has become more important than ever. Although some students may be upbeat and joyful, others may struggle with feelings of anger or frustration. Our youngest spent months isolated from their friends and away from social activities. Our high schoolers have had their routines disrupted, and witnessed a national reckoning with racial injustice. And sadly, many of our young people are grieving the loss of parents and loved ones to this virus. We must support them in every way.

As we bring every student back to the classroom, full-time, for the first time since the onset of the pandemic, we are doubling down on our efforts – to provide more support than ever to our children, educators, school leaders, parents, and families. On the following pages, you will see a plan that not only meets this moment, but equips our students with skills they will use for the rest of their lives.

I commend Chancellor Porter and the entire Department of Education staff for their diligence and leadership. New York City has roared back from this crisis because of our people —extraordinary school leaders, educators, parents, staff, and children who have stepped up and adapted when times were tough. As we prepare for the new school year, I am confident that this will be a safe, healthy, and successful year for our young people, because of those same extraordinary New Yorkers.

Chirlane McCray
First Lady of New York City

Introduction and Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic and attention on long standing racial injustice and social unrest throughout the past eighteen months, have resulted in significant stress, trauma, grief, and loss for our 1.1 million students and their families, as well as our nearly 150,000 educators. These realities require us to thoughtfully plan our homecoming experience as one that centers the humanity and lived experiences of our school communities. Homecoming should be a celebration of community, anchoring in positive relationships between staff, students, families, and communities. As Chancellor Meisha Porter has shared, "We owe it to our young people to provide a safe homecoming to their classrooms and a restoration of everything that was taken from them during this pandemic". This Bridge to School Plan Resource is a tool to help all schools do just that.

Proactive communication with families and caregivers during the weeks leading up to the beginning of the school year, as well as throughout the year, is critical to ensuring safety of every kind. Explicit instruction around responsible personal behaviors that can effectively reduce the spread of COVID-19 must also occur at all schools with both staff and students. Beyond physical health and safety, our primary focus for the initial re-opening transition should be social-emotional and mental wellness, ensuring that all staff and students have access to a foundational period of stabilization and support. Centering community and social-emotional wellness at the start of school will create a strong foundation for academic success and can reduce the number of students requiring intensive clinical mental health services later.

The first step in this process is to build adult capacity through the trauma-informed care training series developed in partnership with the Trauma Responsive Educational Practices (TREP) project at the University of Chicago. If you have not already, you are encouraged to click here to register and complete this free course as soon as possible. This Bridge to School Plan resource is intended to build on the competencies developed through the TREP training by offering tangible strategies and resources to welcome staff, students, and families to the new school year, emphasizing the importance of centering community and fostering resilience. In addition to building on the trauma training with resources and strategies for the first few weeks of school, this document includes recommendations, resources, and supports to guide the work of social-emotional learning and mental wellness throughout the year. This includes content resources and planning tools to ensure each school has a comprehensive plan for sustaining this work throughout the upcoming school year.

It is recommended that all school-based adults participate in the trauma-informed care professional learning series and the suggested learning experiences detailed in this plan, in addition to teachers and school leaders. This includes Main Office Personnel, School Aides, Paraprofessionals, Parent Coordinators, Community Coordinators, School Counselors, Social Workers, School-Based Support Teams, Related Service Providers, School Librarians and Custodial Staff, who all play unique and important roles in the life of the school community which exists for our young people. Whenever possible, School Safety Agents (SSAs) and Community Based Organization (CBO) partners should also be invited to learn, heal, and build community alongside DOE staff. To date, over 75,000 NYC Department of Education educators and partners have completed this professional learning opportunity.

The reopening suggestions outlined in this resource include daily opportunities for students and adults to re-connect, build community, share experiences, strengthen and share coping skills, process grief, and orient themselves to the new dual environments and expectations of blended and remote learning.

To this end, it includes recommendations for the first few weeks of school around two themes:

community and resilience. More information about these broad themes is included in the sections that follow.

As you begin to plan for the implementation of these activities, it is important to consider adaptations that may be required for unique populations that you serve. For example, Multilingual Learners and English Language Learners who are new to the country and those who are in the initial stages of English language development should have materials translated into the home language of the student to ensure access to the activities. When and where possible, MLs/ELLs should be paired with same-language peers for support in participating and engaging in the social emotional learning experience and encouraged to use their home language.

Proactive Family Communication and Engagement

We know that school opening this year, like last year, requires particular attention and support for students' social-emotional and mental wellness. Engaging a group of students and families across diverse racial, linguistic, and cultural identities in the re-opening process, with clear and consistent communication, is essential to positioning your students and communities for success! Something as basic as regular communication can have a profound impact. Because of all of the uncertainty and unpredictability experienced over the last 18 months, establishing regular communication with staff, families, and students helps to cultivate a sense of predictability. When life is unpredictable and uncertain, it is difficult to feel safe.

A few key actions to support a strong start to the year include:

1. *Initiate Proactive Communication to Assess Student Social-Emotional and Mental Wellness*

To ensure a successful start to the school year, it is critical that we hear from families, caregivers, and children about how they are doing and how our supports are working for them. Initiating proactive outreach to families in the first few weeks of school can help inform the social-emotional and wellness supports that staff provide in the initial transition period and throughout the year. It will also help signal if students may require more intensive services right away. Below are some suggested questions for staff to use in conversation/reflection with families and caregivers:

- How are you doing? *(As your relationship allows, be empathetic and sensitive to the immediate needs the family may have as well as recognize the strength and resilience of each family. Note that while you may not be able to support these challenges directly, being aware of them can help ensure that the supports you are able to provide are responsive to those challenges.)*
- How is your child doing? Is there anything you would like to share with me about how they are adjusting to returning to school?
- What have we offered that was helpful to your child last year or as they transitioned back into this school year? *(Follow-up questions may seek feedback about specific things that teachers tried, children's engagement, and how the child and family/caregiver experienced them.)*
- How can we best support your child and your family in the days ahead?
- Do you have any social or emotional concerns about your child that I should share with our support staff?

2. *Develop a Communications Plan*

Schools should develop a two-way external communication plan that ensures timely, consistent, and robust communications with families. A two-way system ensures that families have clear and consistent information from the school, and that the school receives regular feedback and recommendations from the families they are serving. Set expectations and make sure that families know how you will be reaching out to them. Additionally, engage families about their preferred language and means of communication and utilize translation and interpretation services as needed. The Language Access page has helpful information to support schools in accessing and leveraging relevant language access resources.

NYC Department of Education

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL
LEARNING AND WELLNESS

Social-Emotional Learning and Wellness

This document contains resources to help you in establishing a re-opening transition that emphasizes community, connection, and healing. Building upon and enhancing social-emotional learning and community building practices that are already embedded in your school is recommended whenever possible (i.e., Harmony, Circle practices, Health Education Instruction, School Wellness Councils, RULER, Restorative Practices, Advisory Programs, etc.). Additional recommendations are offered with consideration of schools being at varied stages of development with school-wide community building and social-emotional learning practices. Please remember that fostering social emotional and academic learning means that we need to consider student's strengths and needs in accessing instruction. For students with disabilities, this means that we need to use specially designed instruction.

The document is organized with a focus on strengthening community and fostering resilience. Following a grounding in adult Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and wellness activities, the social-emotional learning resources are organized by grade level and include Day 1 and Week 1 ideas for staff and students. There are also additional resources that extend beyond the first few week(s) of school, including:

- Activities and resources to support robust trauma-informed care and social-emotional learning school-wide; and
- Supplemental resources from the Trauma Responsive Educational Practices (TREP) Professional Learning series.

The themes of Community and Resilience are woven throughout the document, recognizing that strong relationships and strengthening emotional competencies are central to trauma-informed care. A focus on Community creates meaningful engagement for multiple stakeholders and serves as the foundation for relationship building. A focus on Resilience supports a strengths-based approach towards healing. The Bridge to School resource supports the social-emotional wellbeing of students and adults in order to create a safe, supportive learning environment.

Strengthening Community

The sudden closure of schools, abrupt transition to remote and blended instructional models in March 2020 and the periodic quarantines of individual classrooms and school communities through June 2021 created a profound disruption to the consistent, predictable routines and relationships that schools and partner organizations provide. Following a period of separation or interruption, it is necessary to cultivate a foundational sense of community and belonging at school before attempting to re-engage staff, students, families, and community partners in the academic experience. The first few weeks of school will be a critical period to connect all members of the school community, extend gratitude for how community sustained us during last school year, and share hopes for the type of community we will have this school year. Human-centered community building experiences, which place positive relationships (within and between staff and students) at the center of school life, can transform uncertainty to hope. This resource will guide you in embracing this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to rebuild strong, supportive, and equitable learning environments for all students.

Fostering Resilience

Investing time for staff and students to experience beginning-of-year transitions that are culturally responsive and healing-centered creates a strong emotional foundation for the school year. Anchoring

these experiences in exchanges of diverse strengths and assets ensures students develop perseverance as they continue to be presented with unprecedented and unpredictable circumstances including new learning models. Skills like decision making, developing relationships, and emotion regulation skills all help to foster and strengthen resilience. Simple activities included in this document address these skills and these skills can be taught across age groups.

Creating space for sharing about recent experiences and current mindsets can also activate future resilient performance aligned to shared core values; strengthen coping skills; facilitate the processing of grief; and ignite authentic engagement and achievement in the academic experience. The prioritization of social-emotional learning and mental health and wellness, including the explicit, culturally responsive teaching of social-emotional skills creates internal and external mechanisms that help with navigating and withstanding the stress that is inevitable with daily living—and that is amplified during times of crisis and lingering long after traumatic events have passed. In this resource you will find tools to use as you work to actively develop social-emotional literacy, fluency, and empowerment in your school community. Please note that this pandemic has affected students in different ways necessitating differentiated levels of support. Always refer to the multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS) when planning. For students with disabilities, please refer to the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and/or Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) to guide the planning process.

Special Considerations

Although we are excited to begin the school year fully in-person, we recognize that periodic closures may be required as we experience the continued evolution of the COVID-19 virus. To ensure SEL activities remain centered throughout all types of learning environments, the following section contains recommendations specific to in person and remote learning environments.

In Person Learning
- Prioritize health and safety guidance and expectations when planning staff and student experiences, such as:
  - Number of participants in Circle discussions and/or other activities.
  - Location: Try to meet in larger, more open spaces (cafeterias, gymnasiums, and/or outdoors) where recommended physical distances between participants are possible.
- Adapt all Circle protocols and prompts to meet the most current health and safety requirements available. For example: using a unique hand gesture or special word or sound as a verbal "talking piece" instead of passing a physical object to eliminate physical contact between Circle participants.
- Use the Restorative Practice Handbook to learn how to best facilitate Circles.
- Any theme of a suggested "Circle" can be utilized without following the Circle format. Try using the prompts listed as verbal and written conversation starters and discussion points.

Full Remote Learning
- Organize virtual opportunities for classroom, grade-wide and/or school-wide celebrations and other community activities.
- Provide guidance and support to students in writing Circles and practicing virtual Circle Keeping with their peers to increase student voice, engagement, and ownership of their learning and collective wellness of the school community.

- Any theme of a suggested "Circle" can be utilized without following the Circle format. Try using the prompts listed as verbal and written conversation starters and discussion points.

Personal Behaviors to Limit COVID Spread

COVID-19 has changed the way that we can be in community with one another. Keeping one another healthy and safe is a top priority.

The following personal health and safety lessons were designed to provide students with opportunities to learn the knowledge and skills they need to make informed decisions and adopt behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19. The three lessons at each grade level cover handwashing, face coverings, physical distancing, and vaccines, and include adaptations for remote or in-person learning. In addition to learning essential content, students have the opportunity to practice and demonstrate the skills they need to maintain healthy behaviors. While these lessons are designed to be taught by any teacher, students should continue to practice health and safety skills throughout the year as part of their comprehensive health education class. For more lesson planning resources, see the NYC Health Education Scope and Sequence.

Note: Activities in this resource guide should be modified to reflect health and safety protocols, as needed, to adopt behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19. For behavior support with students with disabilities in wearing masks, please see the webinar, Supporting SWD with Wearing Masks.

2021 2022

Department of Education

ADULT SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

ACTIVITIES

Adult Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Activities

Developed by the Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility, the adult SEL activities below are designed to build community amongst adults, strengthen adult SEL skills, and prepare adults to thoughtfully strengthen students SEL competencies in a culturally-responsive and sustaining manner. In addition to staff, these activities can be used with families or community partners as well.

● Session 1: Our Hopes and Dreams, Our Fears and Concerns ● Session 2: Sharing Our Home Artifacts ● Session 3: I Identify as … ● Session 4: Making Space for Joy ● Session 5: Perspective Taking & Cultivating Empathy	● Session 6: Supporting Ourselves with Self-Talk ● Session 7: Empathetic Listening & Paraphrasing ● Session 8: What We Need ● Session 9: What's Underneath the Anger? ● Session 10: Taking Pride in Who We Are

Adult Community Building and Resilience Activities

Building on the foundational adult SEL activities above, the following activities are intended to support adult wellness, community-building, and resilience. These activities are appropriate for staff working with students of all ages. Some of the activities use student facing language but are included here because they could be valuable for adults as well.

Community Building	Fostering Resilience
● Icebreakers and Warm-Ups ● Connections Activity ● Where I'm From/Name Story Circle ● It Takes A Village ● Coming Together in Hard Times: A Virtual "Gathering" ● Listening Circles ● Affirmation Cards ● A Trauma Informed Approach to Teaching Through Coronavirus	● Building Blocks of Resilience ● Challenge Irrational Thoughts ● Grounding Exercises.pdf (kprdsb.ca) ● CASEL Staff SEL Personal Assessment and Reflection ● What's Underneath? Enhancing Emotional Vocabulary ● Realms of Concern and Influence ● Self-Care Going Home Checklist ● Teach Deep Breathing: A Calming Technique ● Mindfulness ● Yoga Resources

SECTION I
EARLY CHILDHOOD

Section I: Early Childhood

Day 1 Staff

AM Community Building Activities	Midday SEL Activities	PM Close-Out Activities
● Welcome & Reflection ● Where I'm From / Story Circle ● Hopes and Fears	● 5 Minute Mindful Art Activity ● Body Scan Meditation ● It Takes a Village	● 3A's: Appreciate, Apology & Aha ● Self-Care Going Home Checklist

Day 1 Students

AM Community Building Activities	Midday SEL Activities	PM Close-Out Activities
● **Get Up and Dance**: During a short 5-minute morning meeting, practice gathering on the rug through a short and active song using children's names, such as: "*I have a friend, their name is _[name]_. Get up and dance _[name]_, Get up and dance _[name]_, Get up and dance _[name]_. We are happy that you're here.*" (See page 63 of Unit of Study 1 for larger group meeting tips.)	● Collective Classroom Agreement Activity ● During lunch, show children a short 2-3 minute puppet show that reinforces an expectation they have been introduced to such as washing hands, using walking feet, or mealtime practices. After the short puppet show sit with children and encourage discussion about their day so far.	● **Classroom Superpower Activity**: Introduce a class project about Classroom Superpowers. Share with children that a superpower is something you are really good at. Give an example of your own superpower, for example: being a great friend, listening to other people, or being an artist. Ask children what their superpowers are and write them down on chart paper. Invite children to create or draw their superpowers over the week during center time. Collect their art, photos of their block structures or dramatic play costumes about their superpower and compile them into a small art exhibit with the list of superpowers you collected. ● Before each child leaves for the day, write a

		short note about one thing the child enjoyed and a special quality they bring to the class. Read the note to children and let them know you appreciate having them as part of your school family. Send the note home so families can share a moment with their child celebrating their school day.

Circle Practices: Getting to Know You, Relationship Building, and Community Building

Consider introducing children to the idea of 'circles' to build community and practice skills. For 3-4 year olds, children are only expected to be able to sit for 5-10 minutes at a time. Therefore these circle suggestions may be best utilized during small group time.

- Unit 1: Getting to Know You
- Unit 2: Building Community - Mutual Unity
- Unit 3: Respect and Self-Respect
- Unit 4: Empathetic and Supportive Listening
- Unit 5: Deepening Connections

Recommended Activities – Community Building and Resilience

Community Building	Resilience
- FUN Skills Activity Suggestion - Cozy Corner Activity - Varying Emotions Activity - Family Portrait Activity **Finding Similarities**: Use transition activities that help children get to know each other and see some of their similarities and differences. For example you could say: If you have a _____ (insert common family trait, i.e., sister, cat) in your family you may go make a choice. Consider singing or chanting the words.	- Breathing Exercise for Students - Boundaries Exercise - For Students - Student Jobs Suggestion **Supporting a Growth Mindset (*Virtual and In-Person)***: Be intentional about giving children praise based on their growth and effort rather than outcomes. Rather than say "*Great job opening your milk!*" you might say "*I noticed you kept trying when it was hard to get your milk open, then asked me for help. You were really determined to try your best!*" - Tools to Support Grieving Students

Using your knowledge of children's diverse families, repeat with other traits until all children have transitioned to centers.

- **Classroom Tour**: Go on a field trip around your classroom. Introduce children to each center and space in the classroom. Ask children what they notice about each space and what they are looking forward to playing with in each space. You could also create a "scavenger hunt" to introduce children to different centers and materials.

Virtual Consideration: record or on live video give children a tour of the classroom and explain each space. Ask them to share what they might do in each center and how they play similarly at home.

- How Stress Inoculation Training Treats PTSD   A portion of this article provides examples for actively teaching and practicing Social and Emotional skills that reduce stress.
- Building Your Resilience
- Grounding Exercises.pdf (kprdsb.ca)

SECTION II
K THROUGH 5

NYC Department of Education

Section II: K - 5

Day 1 Staff

AM Community Building Activities	Midday SEL Activities	PM Close-Out Activities
● Welcome & Reflection ● Where I'm From/Name Story Circle ● Hopes and Fears	● 5 Minute Mindful Art Activity ● Body Scan Meditation ● Grounding Exercises.pdf (kprdsb.ca) ● Self-Care Going Home Checklist	● 3A's: Appreciate, Apology & Aha ● It Takes a Village

Day 1 Students

AM Community Building Activities	Midday SEL Activities	PM Close-Out Activities
● Welcome and Reflection ● **Get Up and Dance**: During a short 5-minute morning meeting, practice gathering as a group through a short and active song using children's names, such as: "*I have a friend, their name is _[name]_. Get up and dance _[name]_, Get up and dance _[name]_, Get up and dance _[name]_. We are happy that you're here.*"	● Homecoming/Welcome Back Circle (Unit 1, Lesson 1) ● Names and Points of Pride Circle (Unit 1, Lesson 2)	● Affirmation Cards Lesson Plan ● Supporting Hands

Circle Practices: Getting to Know You, Relationship Building, and Community Building

- Unit 1: Getting to Know You
- Unit 2: Building Community - Mutual Unity
- Unit 3: Respect and Self-Respect
- Unit 4: Empathetic and Supportive Listening
- Unit 5: Deepening Connections

Recommended Activities – Community Building and Resilience

Community Building	Resilience
- All About Me - Generating Classroom Shared Agreements - Listening Circles - Circles of Identity / The Paseo - Everyone's a Helper Lesson Plan - Friendships Lesson Plan (Grades K-2) - Fostering Belonging with Classroom Norms (Grades 3-5) - Managing Emotions Lesson Plan (Grades K-1), Grades 2-3, Grades 4-5) - Big Changes vs. Small Changes Lesson Plan - Acts of Kindness - How to Teach Positive Self-Talk (6 Strategies)	- Grades K-2: Self-Awareness: Movement and Feelings Lesson Plan - Grades 3-5: Self-Awareness and Self-Confidence Lesson Plan - Making a Feelings Thermometer - Teaching Self-Care: Breathing - Coping Skills Lesson Plan - Addressing Change and Loss Lesson Plans (Grades K-2) AND Grades 3-5 - Other People's Feelings Lesson Plan Using Simple Physical Activity (Grades K-2) - Self-Management: Movement and Feelings Lesson Plan Using Simple Physical Activity (Grades 3-5) - Social Awareness Lesson Plan Using Simple Physical Activity (Grades 3-5) - Tools to Support Grieving Students - How Stress Inoculation Training Treats PTSD - Building Your Resilience - Mindfulness

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SECTION III
MIDDLE SCHOOL

Section III: Middle School

Day 1 Staff

AM Community Building Activities	Midday SEL Activities	PM Close-Out Activities
● Welcome & Reflection ● Where I'm From/Name Story Circle ● Hopes and Fears	● 5 Minute Mindful Art Activity ● Body Scan Meditation ● Grounding Exercises.pdf (kprdsb.ca) ● Self-Care Going Home Checklist	● 3A's: Appreciate, Apology & Aha ● It Takes a Village

Day 1 Students

AM Community Building Activities	Midday SEL Activities	PM Close-Out Activities
● Welcome & Reflection ● Where I'm From/Name Story Circle ● Hopes and Fears	● Building Your Success Squad	● 3A's: Appreciate, Apology & Aha

Circle Practices: Getting to Know You, Relationship Building, and Community Building

- Unit 1: Getting to Know You
- Unit 2: Building Community - Mutual Unity
- Unit 3: Respect and Self-Respect
- Unit 4: Empathetic and Supportive Listening
- Unit 5: Deepening Connections

Recommended Activities – Community Building and Resilience

Community Building	Resilience
• Self-Esteem Community Building Circle • Establishing Community Agreements • Getting to Know You • Listening Circles • Circles of Identity / The Paseo • Pair Share Drawing Activity • Put Your Hands in Mine	• A Celebration of You • Building Your Support Team • Conscious Breathing • Tools to Support Grieving Students • How Stress Inoculation Training Treats PTSD • Building Your Resilience • Mindfulness • Emotions and Feelings • Gratitude Journal • Stress Management

SECTION IV
HIGH SCHOOL

Section IV: High School

Day 1 Staff

AM Community Building Activities	Midday SEL Activities	PM Close-Out Activities
• Welcome & Reflection • Where I'm From/Name Story Circle • Hopes and Fears	• 5 Minute Mindful Art Activity • Body Scan Meditation • Grounding Exercises.pdf (kprdsb.ca) • Self-Care Going Home Checklist	• 3A's: Appreciate, Apology & Aha • It Takes a Village

Day 1 Students

AM Community Building Activities	Midday SEL Activities	PM Close-Out Activities
• Welcome & Reflection • Where I'm From/Name Story Circle • Hopes and Fears	• Building Your Success Squad	• 3A's: Appreciate, Apology & Aha

Circle Practices: Getting to Know You, Relationship Building, and Community Building

- Unit 1: Getting to Know You
- Unit 2: Building Community - Mutual Unity
- Unit 3: Respect and Self-Respect
- Unit 4: Empathetic and Supportive Listening
- Unit 5: Deepening Connections

Recommended Activities – Community Building and Resilience

Community Building	Resilience
- Ice Breaker Activities - Name and Motion Activity (pg. 13) - Building/Strengthening Relationship Circle - Generating Classroom Shared Agreements - How To Listen Circle - Circles of Identity / The Paseo - Pair Share Drawing Activity - Cooperative Counting	- Refining Emotional/Feelings Vocabulary - Strengths Bingo Activity - Teach Deep Breathing: A Calming Technique - This Too Shall Pass: Short Story and Reflection Prompts - Pictures Speak Volumes: A Digital Collage Activity - Tools to Support Grieving Students - How Stress Inoculation Training Treats PTSD - Mindfulness

NYC Department of Education

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
& SUPPORTING RESOURCES

Stakeholder Engagement

We know that students are deeply impacted by the trauma of the pandemic and the tragic events that occurred throughout the past year and a half. We must address the mental, emotional, and physical needs of our students for them to recover and be ready to learn. Principals and School Leadership Teams will need help with focused communication and coordination around these key student supports. Borough/Citywide Offices (B/CO), Student Services staff, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), Family Healing Ambassadors, School Mental Health Specialists, students, School Wellness Councils, and Community Based Organizations (CBO) are a few of the key stakeholders that can support an effective transition to school and long-term social-emotional and mental wellness.

- **Borough Citywide Offices**: Every Borough/Citywide Office (B/CO) has a professional team dedicated to the provision of vital student support services aimed at promoting student success. The B/CO Student Services staff are important members of the B/CO leadership team and include a Director of Student Services, Health Director, Counseling Manager, Attendance Supervisor, Climate/Culture Manager, and Crisis Intervention Manager. B/CO Student Services teams work collaboratively with school staff, such as School Counselors, Social Workers, School Psychologists, School Nurses, and School Administration, to (a) foster school climates conducive to student achievement; (b) promote social-emotional learning and leadership; (c) advance student health and well-being; and (d) support interventions to address non-cognitive factors affecting student success, such as positive discipline strategies or chronic absence. B/CO Student Services staff have been trained, or have access to expertise, in various healing-centered approaches and practices identified within this Bridge to School resource, and will serve as resources to ensure schools are supportive environments during this unprecedented time in our lives. The expertise of the B/CO Student Services staff can be leveraged to support schools in obtaining resources, conducting trainings, and embedding the domains of the [Supportive Environment Framework.](#)

- **Parent Teacher Associations**: The Parent Association (PA) or Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is the official organization of the parent body in a school and can support schools with parent engagement and school enrichment. PA/PTAs were encouraged to meet during the summer, and many facilitated virtual meetings with parents to support a successful re-opening.

  PA/PTAs have their own communications channels (e.g., websites, newsletters, social media, etc.), which are a useful resource for distributing important information. In addition to finding ways to use existing infrastructure to support communication, schools should consider leveraging PA/PTA support to expand parent engagement opportunities, especially as it relates to students' social and emotional wellness.

  Here are some key ways to partner with your PA/PTA:
  - Provide the PA/PTA's executive board with regular updates and ask them to amplify your communications via their website, newsletters, social media, emails, and phone outreach.
  - Plan family meetings jointly with the PA/PTA to leverage parent leaders' support organizing logistics, identifying key engagement issues, and maximizing turnout.

- Share information on budget issues to encourage collaborative planning.

- **Family Healing Ambassadors:** In the summer of 2021, the Division of School Climate and Wellness and the Office of Family and Community Empowerment launched the Family and Community Wellness Collective, FCWC. The FCWC is a community of over 800 family leaders and parent coordinators who built their knowledge and expertise in the areas of healing centered, trauma informed care and are prepared to support families at their schools this Fall. In addition to their direct support to families, you are encouraged to engage the Family Healing Ambassador as you plan and implement the work this year. Your school Principal and PA/PTA lead will be able to connect you.

- **School Mental Health Specialists & Program Partners:** Schools with a Mental Health Specialist or School Based Mental Health Clinic or program are encouraged to partner with these stakeholders in the design and implementation of trauma-informed, social-emotional supports for young people. SMH Specialists are trained in Support for Students Exposed to Trauma (SSET), a small group, clinical intervention. SMH Specialists are also available for consultation when considering the training needs and other implementation considerations for non-clinical interventions.

- **Students**: Most schools have established student leadership structures (e.g., student government, student advisory councils, youth-adult equity teams), which are available to provide insight and feedback on reopening plans and strategies for supporting students' social and emotional wellness. Student leaders can serve as a sounding board or focus group for re-opening policies and supports. In addition, by involving student leaders, you can provide them with a unique learning opportunity to use collaborative problem solving to resolve complex policy issues. When working with students, consider strategies to ensure representation from students with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities to engage multiple perspectives and provide equitable access to leadership opportunities for all students.

- **School Wellness Councils**: School Wellness Councils can provide a centrally supported engagement structure that schools can launch, develop, and operate, remotely or in-person, and at no cost to schools, to assist with recovery in our school communities. School Wellness Councils draw from a Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) approach of intentional collaboration and communication among key stakeholders to ensure that everyone in the school community puts students' health and wellness at the center of their efforts. School Wellness Councils can work together to include the NYSED Physical Education and Health Education requirements in their school-level wellness policy, ensuring that students are programmed for PE and Health Education and can learn the skills needed to protect their physical, mental, and social-emotional health.

  Schools need a structured way to plan, coordinate, and implement a comprehensive approach to wellness that utilizes all available resources, especially when budgets are tight, and strong School Wellness Councils fill this need. They can lead schools in reviewing the Supportive Environment Framework in order to develop, roll out, and reinforce actionable practices and

consistent health messages to students, staff, and families. By creating Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive and Equitable (SMARTIE) goals, identifying the available supports and resources, and engaging council members who represent all aspects of wellness in the school community, School Wellness Councils ensure that their schools can better meet students' social, emotional, mental, and physical health and safety needs. Councils are led by "champions" who recruit members including students, set agendas for meetings, and liaise with Central support staff.

When establishing a School Wellness Council:

- **Invite students to join the virtual council**. School Wellness Councils strengthen and support "Collaborative and Trusting Relationships and Equity and Student Voice" by including students as members and establishing a trusting relationships where students feel safe, supported and inspired to create change that supports student wellness.
- **Invite at least one person from an existing safety team or student health/well-being structure**. This can include someone from the crisis response team, sustainability coordinators, dining service managers, or parent ambassadors trained in trauma-informed approaches.
- **Designate at least one but no more than two members as the School Wellness Council champion**
- **Join the** School Wellness Council Online Community for wellness champions developed by the Office of School Wellness Programs. (DOE staff may join the School Wellness Council Online Community via MS Teams by using code ja6odd2.)

- **Community Based Organizations**: Robust school and community partnerships can help create supportive school environments through connecting students to social, emotional, and academic supports that build on the strengths of students, families, and communities. Many Community Based Organizations (CBOs) operate from a whole child lens, have expertise in SEL, and have developed deep and trusting relationships with students and families. By partnering with CBOs during and after school, schools can leverage these skills and relationships to better serve students and families and to build a stronger school community. For example, many CBOs have expertise in facilitating restorative circles—CBO staff can conduct these circles together with teachers in the classroom during the school day, and CBO staff can also use them during afterschool. Schools should deepen relationships with existing CBO partners and include them in plans for re-opening, as well as establish new CBO and community partnerships, where needed.

Consider engaging your community partners in your planning for school re-opening. Think broadly about which partners in your school are best positioned to support the transition back to school as well as the blended learning and remote teaching models. As we transition back to school, all relationships should be leveraged to ensure students feel supported and connected in this new environment. Community partners can also engage in personalized outreach to ensure that all students understand their schedule for the fall and are equipped to access remote learning through technology.

B/CO Student Services staff, PTAs, School Based Mental Health Centers, Mental Health Specialists, students, School Wellness Councils, Family Healing Ambassadors, and CBO partners should be leveraged in leading the school's social-emotional learning plan for students and school staff during school re-opening. These groups can provide comprehensive resources for families and ensure that information will be shared in a consistent and timely manner to allow families to plan and help their children to prepare for school re-opening. They can also help to communicate the social-emotional learning plan to school staff, so that staff are aware of the health and wellness services and supports available in the school and community and understand how to connect students and families to these supports.

Looking Ahead

The need for supportive school environments that prioritize student social-emotional wellness and honor the voices and lived experiences of students does not end after the initial transition period. Supporting students' social-emotional needs is critical to their academic success all year long. Schools are encouraged to plan for continued community building, explicit teaching of social-emotional learning skills, and embedding of social-emotional learning into core academic instruction, regardless of the learning model. Included below are considerations and suggestions for community building and social-emotional learning through in-person, remote learning, and blended learning environments. The Supportive Environment Framework also outlines four critical domains with specific strategies and practices to do this work well. You are encouraged to leverage the following resources to support the ongoing work of social-emotional learning and trauma-informed care within your school community, in partnership with existing systems and structures.

Resources to Support Ongoing Work: Early Childhood

In early childhood, we know the beginning of the year is a crucial time for establishing the best practices that help young children thrive: creating safe spaces, providing predictable routines, establishing trusting and caring relationships, and learning to recognize and work through big emotions. This plan offers some specific activity ideas to incorporate into blended learning during the first few weeks of school, but the work of building community and fostering social emotional development should extend into all of your daily activities and well beyond the first two weeks. Please refer to some of our key resources for supporting this time of transition in addition to this document:

- Instructional Resources
- DECE Curriculum (for all age groups)
- Explorations: Our Community
  - What does it mean to be 3? (page 2)
- Sample Schedules
- Tips for Easing Separation Anxiety (translations available)
- Why is it Important for Young Children to Learn about Feelings? (infographic)
- Why is it Important for Young Children to Learn about Feelings (Video with translated subtitles)

- Building Family-Community Relationships

- Beginning of the Year Questionnaire for Families (translations available)

- Birth – 5 Professional Learning Toolkit: Advancing Play-Based Learning and Responsive Instruction

- Early Childhood Framework for Quality (EFQ)

- Professional Learning available on Protraxx for Anxiety in the Early Childhood Classroom, Using Empathy to Establish Trusting Relationships, and other topics. Search "Thrive" to see the asynchronous opportunities available to all Early Childhood Educators.

Resources to Support Ongoing Work: K-12

DOE Resources	External Resources

● Supportive Environment Framework
 	
    ○ WeTeachNYC – Supportive Environment Framework
 	
● Health and Physical Education
 	
    ○ NYC K-12 Health Education Scope and Sequence
 	
    ○ NYC K-12 Physical Education Scope and Sequence
 	
● Sample DOE Initiatives
 	
    ○ Harmony SEL Program, Activities & Curriculum
 	
    ○ Yale RULER
 	
    ○ Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility
 	
    ○ Resources Overview (cornell.edu)
 	
    ○ Life Space Crisis Intervention
 	
● Community Schools
 	
● Community Based Organizations for Supporting Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Families: Geo Map
 	
● Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Practices for Partnering with Families of Multilingual Learners
 	
● Let's Talk NYC Campaign
	● Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)
	
	    ○ Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
	
	    ○ CASEL Roadmap for Re-opening Schools: Reunite.Renew.Thrive
	
	● National School Reform Faculty
	
	    ○ https://nsrfharmony.org/
	
	● Restorative Justice Practices
	
	    ○ Restorative Practice Handbook
	
	    ○ The Basics of Non Violent Communication
	
	    ○ Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth
	
	    ○ IIRP (The International Institute for Restorative Practices)
	
	    ○ Brene Brown's video on the power of vulnerability
	
	    ○ The power of story circles
	
	    ○ Brene Brown's video on the anatomy of trust called BRAVING
	
	    ○ Restorative yoga with Jessamyn Stanley
	
	● Greater Good in Education
	
	    ○ Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs

Resources to Support Ongoing Work: SEL for Families

The activities in the table below are designed for families to try at home with their students. They align to the skills and competencies taught in school-based SEL programs and present an opportunity to extend the learning, skill building, and routines to the home environment.

Early Childhood	● Creating a Comfortable Spot ● Feelings on the Outside ● Feelings Check In
K-5	● Making Connections ● Feelings Check In ● Creating a Comfortable Spot ● Feelings Detective
Middle School	● Story of My Name ● Feelings Check In ● Poem Reflection
High School	● Story of My Name ● Where I'm From ● Mental Wellness Plan

To support the at-home activities included above, the table below includes strategies for fostering positive family relationships and applying social-emotional strategies to staff-family relationships.

- **Day 1**
  - Send a text to all families thanking them for the first day
  - Share information about the Remind App, a free text- resource that translates into all languages
- **Week 1**
  - Share an affirmation with families at pick up, via Remind, or through another channel.
- **Ongoing**
  - Invite families to share wellness practices used at home that students can try in the classroom
  - Talk about the SEL and wellness strategies you are using in the classroom during family conferences or other engagement opportunities
  - Partner with your school PA/PTA to model for families the SEL and wellness practices used in your classroom

2021 — 2022

NYC Department of Education

TRAUMA RESPONSIVE
EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES RESOURCES

Trauma Responsive Educational Practices Resources
TREP Collective-Care: Quick Start

TREPEducator.org

Collective Care is one way administrators and colleagues striving to meet the needs of their staff emotionally, intellectually, and professionally can support their overall well-being. Rising to the challenges of reducing stress, improving job satisfaction, strengthening resilience, and, ultimately, preventing teacher burnout can feel overwhelming. It is more important that you simply start somewhere.

PRACTICE: All school leaders should begin every staff or team meeting with a brief mindfulness to give staff a moment to calm any emotional agitation that may have been activated during the day.

POLICY: Foster a supportive and collaborative work environment by ensuring that EVERY staff member participates in ongoing grade level/cluster or other team meetings, to ensure that no staff member feels isolated. Policies regarding meeting agendas should ensure that a designated part of the time is spent on collective professional-level problem-solving.

REASSURANCE OF WORTH: Develop a culture of positivity. Even when you need to provide professional correction and critique, begin with a specific and concrete statement about what you notice they are doing well. Include a word of encouragement for your teachers in every school-wide communique, such as a weekly bulletin. When recognizing individual teachers, use a staff checklist, to ensure that EVERY staff member receives some form of positive recognition every few months.

CONTINUE: The following will help build a school climate that values educator wellness and reduces burnout.

Wellness Practices	Recognition & Reassurance of Worth	Relationship Building
Bring fun and wellness into your school atmosphere like massage therapists in the staff lounge one day.	Whenever possible, allow teachers to be a part of the decision-making process.	Include a team-building activity in every staff meeting or PD.
Encourage staff to leave work at a healthy time and leave their work bag at school once a week. Check on teachers who often stay late and ask how you can support them	Feature a few staff members each month with a casual, or silly picture along with a couple interesting facts about themselves and one educator-related quote.	Create a social club or having each grade level plan one monthly outing for the entire staff, for an early evening, weekend, or day off.
Provide an incentive for teachers to lead staff care classes before or after school: e.g., yoga, painting, dancing, or cooking.	Quarterly Staff Recognition lunches with a note of appreciation for their hard work including specific praise.	Ensure new teachers are paired with veteran teachers and schedule a time for them to connect monthly.
Teacher Book Character Read-In. All staff dress as a book character and read to a couple classes.	Teacher Appreciation Day: Consider small gifts and cards of appreciation. Include non-instructional staff.	Potluck/ Pot Blessing monthly, quarterly or holiday-themed lunches in the Teacher's Lounge.

Walk/ Run Events: Invite staff to be a part of a team at a walk/ run in the city related to a shared cause.	"Catch a Break Day": Administrator(s) visit classrooms to relieve the teacher for a 10-minute break.	"Secret Santa", "Halloween Ghosting" and staff birthday recognitions
To encourage the teacher's own self-care, issue a friendly weekly challenge related to their health and wellness,	Invest in professional development to strengthen classroom management and student behavior without compromising their own well-being.	Practice "give a break/ take a break": one prep time a week, each staff member offers another a 10 minute break, with a focus on new staff.

Which two collective care strategies do you think you could get started for your staff?

Which staff members may be able to take the lead getting these strategies started?

What resources will you need to get this started, time, space, materials?

TREP Mindful Self-Care

The pandemic is still ongoing, which means that educators must continue coping with the intersecting strains of compassion fatigue (the emotional strain of providing support to others who are suffering from traumatic experiences), and stress-based burnout (the overwhelming set of expectations and responsibilities at work and at home). We encourage you to integrate mindful self-care into your daily routine. It is supported by research showing that it is an effective and sustainable strategy for buffering against compassion fatigue and burnout.

Mindful self-care as engaging in a variety of brief mindfulness practices that focus on using your breath to pause and center yourself in the present moment—using your breath to push out regrets of the past and worries of the future.

For a moment—lasting the length of just one deep breath or maybe a full minute—allow yourself to non-judgmentally connect with your thoughts, your feelings, and your body. You don't need a special space to do this. You can ground yourself in the present moment wherever you are. You can do this while sitting at your desk, or slowly walk around taking deep breaths with each slow step. You can stand still, or you can stretch.

Over time, regular engagement with brief moments of mindfulness can increase your ability to regulate your emotions and tolerate emotional strains. The effects of mindfulness can also extend your ability to manage professional and personal frustrations.

Here's how to begin, (based on an exercise adapted from The Foundation for a Mindful Society)

- **Set aside some time to begin**, all you need is a few moments of time and some space—it doesn't even need to be a quite space. You just need to quiet yourself in whatever space you are in.
- **Observe the present moment,** including your thoughts, feelings, and body sensations. You are not trying to achieve a state of meditative calm. You are paying attention to and accepting the present moment for what it is.
- **Notice and release your judgments** by accepting all your thoughts, feelings, and sensations as being neither good nor bad, but simply as part of your human experience.
- **Actively engage in self-compassion** by not judging your wandering mind. When you notice your mind wandering, gently return, again and again, to the present moment.

Try Breath Signals to Integrate it Into Your Day

Integrate a list of breath signals throughout the day, such as when you finish a TV episode, before or after eating, or before using the stove or microwave. Each deep breath sends a message to your brain to slow down and relax.

Focus on Creating Consistency & Predictability

While consistency is important for all children, it is crucial for those who are coping with trauma and high levels of stress. Expectations, rules, procedures, rewards, and consequences should be consistent from teacher to teacher and across all school settings. Consistency at school will allow children coping with trauma to begin to differentiate between arbitrary rules, which they may be subject to in their lives outside of school, and purposeful ones at school. Consistency and predictability are especially important for students with disabilities. Academic routines, classroom structures, organizational routines, and classroom/ individual schedules are all examples of how to provide predictability and consistency. Some students will require explicit instruction, paired with concrete visuals/social scripts, on how to cope with change.

Consistently Repeat With Variation—have a morning welcome activity or post-lunch brain teaser on the board before students enter the classroom. Make it predictable, consistent, and clear by placing it on the schedule and projecting the instructions on the board each time. This activates learning as soon as students enter the room and reduces beginning-of-class classroom management challenges.

Consistently Use Mindfulness To Build Their Frustration Tolerance—make sure to utilize brief mindfulness practices in the classroom, on a planned and predictable basis to help develop students' self-regulation and self-calming skills that they can utilize during times of stress.

Don't Set Expectations You Can't Consistency Enforce—whether you are making rules or promises, or setting the consequences for not following the rules, do not set any expectations that you cannot or will not consistently enforce. You have to be consistent if you want your students to consistently follow your rules.

Consistently Praise Efforts—acknowledge and reward students when they exhibit the expected behaviors, and make sure to include students who attempt to exhibit these behaviors but may not be 100% successful. You have to consistently recognize and reward students for following classroom rules and procedures; otherwise, they will learn that they only get attention from you when they are breaking the rules.

When you do need to make unexpected changes, give lots of warnings for the quickly upcoming change and guide students through the change. For example:
> **1st Prompt:** "When math prep is over, instead of transitioning into our reading groups, we will go to an assembly."
> **2nd Prompt:** "We have five minutes left in math prep and then instead of reading groups, we will go to the assembly."
> **3rd Prompt:** "Math prep is over, please put your math books in your desk and line up at the door so we can go to the assembly."

When you do this, the **change feels predictable**.
Nothing should come as a surprise, give students at least a 10- to 5-minute warning coupled with a quick explanation of the "planned" schedule change.

Plan Calming Supports

Classroom calming centers provide students with the physical space needed to self-calm and self-regulate from something that may have triggered a dysregulating emotional reaction. The calming center provides them with the independent tools and sensory supports they need to become calm and ready to either resolve a conflict or re-engage in their academic tasks. Occupational Therapists can offer guidance on the set-up and acclimation to calming centers for students with disabilities.

The use of calming centers in the classroom is a proactive practice that enables students to recognize when they are feeling agitated, make the choice to go to the calming center before a conflict or disengagement occurs, and use the tools provided for them to self-regulate. Calming centers build student agency around controlling emotions, prevent conflict, and promote engagement. Post-traumatic growth occurs as students realize they have the ability to control their own emotions as well as the outcomes of their learning and social interactions.

Providing students with authentic opportunities to make choices, within the boundaries that you define, is an important aspect of trauma responsive teaching. This not only helps students develop self-regulation but also allows them to start having agency over factors that determine their success in school—all under the guidance of a caring adult.

To ensure that the calming center remains a safe space that rewards students for making the choice to self-regulate, it is important that there are strong routines and expectations in place. While teachers can and should suggest the use of the calming center when teaching self-regulation strategies, *the calming center should not be used as a time out*, which does not allow for student agency. The routines and expectations around the use of the calming center should be introduced and reinforced for use by all students along with the rest of the classroom routines and procedures.

While the ultimate goal is to help students learn strategies to calm and soothe themselves some students may struggle to use the calm center at first. It is important to have a plan in place for children who may need more time to develop the skills to use the calm center appropriately. Consider an option that keeps the child safe and limits disrupting other students such as a comfort object at their seat or a quiet activity near an adult.

Calming Center Steps to Implementation

The following steps outline one way to successfully guide students through the use of a calming center:

1. Begin by describing for students what it feels like to be too upset to think or make decisions, or to be too sad to focus on school work. You can use an example from your own life or a character from a shared text.

2. Explain that it is important to accept how you are feeling and try and calm down or cheer up before the feelings get stronger or worse.

3. Explain the expectations you have for the calming center. Be sure to explicitly demonstrate:
   - Appropriate ways to sit
   - How to use the manipulatives and sensory tools
   - How long students can be in the calming center (While students should be able to visit the calming center as long as they need, visual cues such as sand timers help students regulate their time).

4. Model for students how to use the calming center as a way to calm down.

5. Teach, practice, and reinforce use of the calming center. Allow all students to try out the calming center when they are calm so they know what to expect.

Ask Yourself as You Plan

✓ Have I provided a quiet space to separate but still engage in the learning?

✓ Have I provided comfortable seating?

✓ Have I included tactile materials for fidgeting or focusing?

✓ Have I provided materials for drawing, coloring, journaling, or writing?

Tips

- Choose a space that will allow students to get some distance/space from the main activities in the classroom, from other students, and/or from you while still ensuring they are in your line of sight and can easily re-engage in instruction or other academic tasks.

- The center can be put together before the first day of school, or constructed together as a classroom community during the first couple of weeks.

- All children should be encouraged to use the calming center, not just those who have outward displays of challenging emotions. This reduces any stigma around the space and also promotes healthy emotional regulation habits among all students in the class.

- Including comfortable seating with visuals that remind students of calming center expectations, relaxation strategies, strategies for emotional processing, and students' own power and value.

- Be sure to include manipulatives and tools such as reflection sheets, glitter jars, and books or short stories with socioemotional themes.

- The following elements add to a calming environment: special lighting, plants, iPad and headphones with music or guided meditations.

Monitoring Success

Reflect periodically on the following questions:

- ✓ Are there students who experience moments of emotional distress or dysregulation and rarely or never use the calming center?
- ✓ Are there children who use the quiet place to avoid doing something?
- ✓ Is it time to review or reteach the routines and procedures of the calming center?

See the practice in action:

Edutopia. (2018). "Creating a Dedicated Space for Reflection." Video.
- https://www.edutopia.org/video/creating-dedicated-space-reflection

Edutopia. (2018). "Helping High Schoolers Manage Emotions." Video.
- https://www.edutopia.org/video/helping-high-schoolers-manage-emotions

Calm-Down Center Starter Kit
- https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Calm-Down-Center-Starter-Kit-750600

5 Things To Have In Your Classroom Calming Area
- https://www.whatihavelearnedteaching.com/5-things-classroom-calming-area/

How to Create a Calm Down Corner in 5 Easy Steps
- https://theartofeducation.edu/2019/01/21/how-to-create-a-calm-down-corner-in-5-easy-steps/

Calming Center Implementation Checklist

Calming centers strengthen students' ability to self-manage high levels of agitation. The most effective centers contain at least one element from each of the categories below. This checklist works well as a tool for planning as well as a means of identifying areas for improvement.

The calming center is located in a space that is visible to the teacher and allows student to remain aware of instructional activities. The calming center is visually appealing and organized, students are able to independently access materials.

The calming center contains materials that support students in meeting expectations of the space:
- Poster with expectations (words and/or pictures)
- Poster with steps to take to use the calming center
- Sand timer
- Directions on how to get additional assistance from the teacher

The calming center contains materials to help students independently bring down levels of agitation or take a "brain break:"
- Calm Jar
- Guided meditations
- Manipulatives
- Puzzles
- Coloring

The calming center contains materials to help students independently identify, understand and asses their emotions and actions:
- SEL Literature at various reading levels
- Emotion cue cards
- Reflection sheets
- Comforting objects:
  - Comfortable seating
  - Pillows
  - Stuffed animals
  - Plants
  - Flameless candle

COVID-19 Psychoeducation Resources

Normalizing talking with Students about COVID-19 related mental health challenges is a form of psychoeducation.

Psychoeducation is offered to individuals who are suffering from mental health challenges that are impairing their quality of life. The aim of psychoeducation is to give both the individuals who suffer from psychological conditions and their families a stronger base of knowledge regarding ways to cope and thrive—providing the person suffering from the psychological condition a better road map towards healthy functioning and management of their challenges.

Use this work time to brows these COVID-19 psychoeducation resources and identify a couple that you will return to later to prepare yourself (and your staff) to talk with families and children about these issues at start of the academic year.

- The Pandemic Parenting Guide: How to Improve Your Child/Teen's (and Your Own) Emotional Well-Being in Times of COVID-19
- A Compassionate Guide to Anxiety During the COVID-19 Pandemic Part 1: Understanding Why We Are so Anxious Right Now
- A Compassionate Guide to Anxiety During the COVID-19 Pandemic Part 2: Managing Your Anxiety
- How to Talk to Your Anxious Child or Teen About Coronavirus
- COVID-19 MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE HUB
- COVID-19 BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INFORMATION HUB--Resources to Support Children
- Cognitive Behavioral Strategies to Manage Anxiety: Tools to Build Resilience
- A YouTube series on coping with COVID-19 Anxiety
- Supporting children and young people with worries about COVID-19
- Talking to children about illness
- National Center for School Mental Health—COVID-19
- National Association of School Psychologists-COVID-19: Crisis & Mental Health Resources

Easy-Read Digital Stories For Kids

- My COVID-19 Capsule Workbook
- Getting Ready To Go To The Test Centre - Story for Children
- Coronavirus Test - Social Story
- I Feel Worried About Coronavirus - Social Story
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPS) - Social Story
- Social Distancing - Social Story
- Coronavirus - A Book for Children
- My Hero is You - Storybook for Children on COVID-19

COVID-19 Graphic Comics/Novels

- My Hero is You
- A Kid's Guide to Coronavirus
- Digital book for primary school children
- NPR comic
- Wazi
- Vaayu and Corona
- Oaky and the Virus
- Baffled Bunny and Curious Cat

Talking with Children about Interpersonal Traumas

Interpersonal traumas are those events that occur between people, such as experiencing physical or sexual abuse, observing domestic violence, or feeling unsafe outside in one's neighborhood. All schools have a protocol for dealing with suspicions of such abuse or neglect and spend time and money assuring that staff is trained and know how to carry out that protocol. But, there are times when a student just wants to talk about how they're feeling or coping with what's going on in their lives. There's no straightforward protocol for these conversations.

It can be disconcerting to think about the difficult experiences that some children go through and even more uncomfortable to consider initiating conversations about it with students. So, it's important to check in with yourself first regarding your own level of anxiety or fear about what may come up during the conversation. Remind yourself that many children are relieved when someone takes the time to notice and ask about what's going on. It begins with an adult being courageous enough to ask, especially when we suspect that there may be a problem.

Do reach out to your school's counselor, dean, or other administrator who can help you think about next steps and brainstorm potential ways of reaching out to the student.

Before sharing some principles for conversations about interpersonal trauma, let's review some general Do's and Don'ts for interacting with students who have experienced traumatic events. The response of the first person a child opens up to, strongly impacts the way the child interprets what has happened, as well as how they will cope with their experience.

Some Do's and Don'ts for Interacting with Students Who Have Experienced Traumatic Events

DO	DON'T
Do Listen, intently and non-judgmentally, and minimize interruptions.	Don't try to investigate or provide counseling if this is not your role
Believe the child. Take their fears and concerns seriously. It is normal for your initial reaction to be shock or denial, don't communicate them to the child.	Don't ask a lot of personal details or try to force a person to disclose. Once you have a suspicion or confirmation of anything abnormal or unsafe, turn it over to an administrator or counselor to investigate.
Reassure the child and emphasize that it's not their fault that something bad has happened to them. Remind students they do have adults at school they can talk to. They are not alone.	Don't tell the child what they could or should have done or ask questions that may lead the child to believe they were in any way at fault, such as, "Why didn't you tell me?" or "Why were you even there?"
Use a child-centered and strength-based approach in responding. Let them know how courageous they have been in coming forward and highlight their strengths	Don't degrade or talk badly about the person who the child has identified as a perpetrator. Despite what has happened, this person may still be someone that the child loves or cares about.
Show compassionate emotions, while limiting the display of intense emotion, which can overwhelm a child and can cause them to not want to express their thoughts or emotions, out of concern for upsetting others.	Don't try to connect, using, "I know how you feel". This could distract from what the person is sharing, shifting their focus to ways in which you or others couldn't possibly understand the particulars of their experience.
Be patient and accept silence. If a student takes a long pause to gather thoughts, emotions, or words, allow them that space to do so, without breaking the silence out of your own discomfort.	Don't detract from the student's experience by talking about your own experiences at length.
Let students know, in words and actions, that all emotions are okay, instead of suggesting that they shouldn't feel a certain way. Let them express their fears and concerns.	Don't be afraid to admit you don't have an answer. State that you will find out or find someone who can help.
Be clear about the limits to confidentiality. Let them know that you may have to share some of this information with someone who can help more than you can, to try to keep them safe.	Don't try to fix the problem for the student or tell them what they need to do. It's more empowering to provide them with information and guide them through making their own decisions.

Principles for How to Respond When Students Disclose

REMAIN CALM. Take comfort in knowing that the student trusts you enough to share this sensitive information. Often, the act of finally sharing is an important part of healing in itself. The student is not necessarily looking for you to solve the problem. They're looking for you to hear them, accept what they are saying without judgment, and model for them an understanding that problems do have solutions.
- Take gentle, deep breaths throughout the conversation.

REFLECTIVELY LISTEN. Listen attentively and non-judgmentally to the student. Rephrase what they are saying, to ensure that you're understanding them correctly.
- "It sounds like you're saying…" (use a version of their own words)

RESPOND. Thank the student for bravely sharing what is going on. Give an empathy statement, such as, "I'm sorry you are feeling this way" or "I'm sorry that you are having to experience this". Reassure the student that you and others at the school want them to be safe and are here to help. If you will be sharing this information with another staff member or if it falls under mandated reporting guidelines, let the student know that you will be reaching out to others for help. Refrain from making any promises, such as "Everything is going to be alright". If needed, make an appointment to check on the student later that day.
- "I'm so sorry you're going through this."
- "It's not your fault."
- "I want to help make sure that you're safe, so I need to share this with ___. They know much more about how to help."

REACH OUT. Contact your school counselor, social worker, or principal, in accordance with your school's protocol. If the situation demands immediate attention, such as is in the case of suicidal and homicidal ideation, do not get off of the phone or video call with the student right away. Try to bring in a counselor, social worker, principal, or other support onto the call to assist, in the moment.
- "I need some help with a student who has shared…"

REACH BACK. Structure reminders for yourself to reach back out to the student and family, as appropriate. If you have made an appointment or commitment to calling the student back, do everything in your power to uphold that commitment.
- "I just wanted to check and see how you're doing. It was so brave of you to share."

Non-Clinical Tier 2 Supports that Can Be Implemented in the Classroom

First, take some time to browse each intervention, then complete the staffing inventory

Each intervention equipped with its own manual and certification for these programs is easily obtained or generally not required allowing for effective and efficient implementation.

Support for Students Exposed to Trauma (SSET)	**Demonstrated results:** Support for Students Exposed to Trauma (SSET) has shown to be effective among middle school students (between the ages of 10-14), SSET has been associated with decreases in depressive and PTSD symptoms.
Description: SSET is a group intervention for students who have experienced traumatic events and display post-traumatic stress (PTSD) symptoms. Adapted from the Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) Program, SSET is a non-clinical intervention intended specifically for use by teachers and school counselors. Like CBITS, SSET helps students to develop cognitive and behavioral skills such as relaxation and social problem solving. Certification is available for free through an online course.	
Implementation considerations: Evaluations of the SSET program have been conducted with middle school students, but the program will likely fit the needs of children from late elementary to early high school. The format of this program is ideal for classroom use within 10 user-friendly session plans.	**Staffing:** Although the program can be implemented by educators, having the involvement of a clinical staff member can improve the capacity of the program for supporting clinical decision-making.
Manual: The SSET Program	**Additional resources:** SSET Fact Sheet

Psychological First Aid in Schools (PFA S)	**Demonstrated results:** Interventions derived from the PFA-S framework have demonstrated reductions in depressive and post-traumatic stress symptoms in students.

Description: Psychological First Aid (PFA) is designed to provide support immediately following a disaster. This approach focuses on addressing primary needs, decreasing stressors, and improving practical and social support. The five key principles of PFA include the promotion of safety, calm, efficacy, connectedness and the instilling of hope--all of which help to facilitate positive adaptation and readjustment. Core practitioner actions include gathering information, stabilizing situational stressors, providing instrumental assistance, connecting clients with mental health services and coping techniques, and empowering individuals to take an active role in their recovery. The aim is to quickly assess coping skills and needs in order to refer individuals to appropriate resources based on the level of severity of their symptoms. Although this approach was designed to be used directly following a disaster, the returning of students to schools will provide the first opportunity for the implementation of such supports.

Implementation considerations: Although the manual provides a helpful overview of how to apply the principles of PFA in a school setting, designated school staff will need to take the time to prepare a specific plan for how the various suggestions can be made to work within the specific school context. Although PFA is designed to be done directly following a disaster, the temporal dimensions of the current pandemic are uncertain. As such, the return to physical school buildings will be an opportune moment to begin implementing PFA-S in order to establish supports that will enhance the school experience for all.	**Staffing:** There are guidelines for each school professional's role in administering PFA-S including both clinical and non-clinical staff: Principals and Administrators, Teachers, Health Professionals and Support Staff.

Classroom Integration: ● Listen, Protect, Connect - Model & Teach	**Manual:** ● Psychological First Aid for Schools (PFA-S) Field Operations Guide ● Psychological First Aid TEACH - Apps on Google Play

Coalition to Support Grieving Students	**Demonstrated results:** Supporting grieving students is a highly situational process which should be undertaken with special consideration for the specific student involved. The Coalition to Support Grieving Students provides a host of resources but there is no one comprehensive program to be evaluated.

Description: The Coalition to Support Grieving Students is comprised of numerous organizations, school professionals, and other stakeholders who are concerned with ensuring that grieving students

have needed supports from the entire school community. Their overarching goal is to create and share quality resources with schools across America. This work is primarily facilitated through their [website](#).

Implementation considerations: The resources available through the Coalition to Support Grieving Students are not presented as a singular program. Instead, the available trainings and modules give practitioners the opportunity to reflect on their current understandings and practice with the intention of improving their approaches to supporting grieving students.	**Staffing:** Broad range of school personnel including clinicians but ranging from community members and parents to school-based mental health practitioners.
Manual: [Tools to Support Grieving Students](#)	**Additional resources**[: Supporting grieving students during a pandemic](#)

Which of the above interventions is best suited for your school site? Why?

What considerations need to be made or additional resources are needed to implement this intervention effectively?

Preparing All Staff to Implement Effective Tier 2 Interventions

Childhood trauma is a local, national, global crisis—no school is untouched by this issue. Schools are often the one place students can have their safety restored and benefit from access to strong positive relationships that can help them heal and experience post-traumatic growth.

Supporting students struggling to cope with the effects of toxic stress and trauma requires a multidimensional approach that includes:

- Interdisciplinary teams
- Strong communication systems
- Whole-school initiatives
- Teacher-led instruction
- Strategic family connections

- Counselor- or social worker-led interventions brought into the classroom
- Partnering with community supports and resources

Find ways of bringing all your staff to the table to present information and gather ideas. Then, a smaller, more focused team may consolidate ideas and finalize approaches before bringing the whole team back together to get all adults in the school involved. Use small and large group processes to ensure that all classrooms and non-classroom spaces are equipped with standardized processes and tools to meet students' needs.

Staffing Inventory

In order to determine designated leaders of your school's socioemotional support system, identify who has the background and skill set to best support students. Reflect on the following and complete the staffing inventory on the next page.

- Who is part of the core set of professionals who will tackle the day-to-day behavioral health supports for the school? This can include school mental health professionals, school partners, deans, specific teachers, etc.?

- What do you know of their strengths, professional experiences, expertise, and training/ certifications?

- Which classroom teachers are the best equipped to join this process?

- Which classroom teachers have a large number of students who need support and will need assistance from a colleague to implement any of these interventions in their classroom?

Staffing Inventory

Name & Role in the School	Strengths, Experience, Expertise, Certifications, Support Needs, etc.