

Back to School, Back to Basics: Meeting the Social-Emotional Needs for ALL

This document provides an introduction and overview for the July 30, 2020 webinar focusing on the social-emotional wellbeing of all as we return to schooling in the fall.

Introduction

Returning to school, (in person, online, or a hybrid of both), after an abrupt interruption, evokes the need for a continuum of social-emotional wellbeing and 'mental health for all' strategies. These strategies concentrate attention on building a resilient, culturally responsive community acknowledging the diverse populations and their needs. We do know from both our first webinar in this series, 'Effective Environments', and trauma-informed research that by developing safe and predictable environments, we can manage stress. With the current situation, we must be careful not to compound problems by attempting to jump back to where we were without consideration of the changes that impact our emotional and behavioral status. We need to develop skills that address the need for flexibility and agile thinking. MTSS teams will want to examine the recovery efforts (back to basics), the use of an expanded team and data sources (school plus community supports), and the screening approach each district uses to uncover needs. The systematic use of an MTSS framework to provide evidenced-based supports that span social-emotional tier 1 effort, trauma-informed practices, and mental health interventions allow educators to decrease collective and individual stress.

Part 1: SEL Wellbeing: Enhanced Core Features of the PBIS Framework

National Presenter: Susan Barrett

The use of the core features of MTSS will instruct our adoption of new strategies to work with our families, students, and staff. District and state leaders will assist with policy and funding to support the changes needed to build capacity and increase accessibility for community stakeholders. An expansion of the core features supports a 'whole child' view, with an instructional approach to teaching social-emotional competencies and the use of data to evaluate impactful or less than effective interventions. Three strategies covered within Part 1 are:

Strategy 1-A clear focus on recovery: Teams will consider how to keep a focus on establishing routines, developing relationships with families, students, and support systems for staff.

Strategy 2-Expanded team and data use: Teams will consider how to add community partners, staff, parents, and additional data sources to inform our decisions, selections of

interventions, and data. Rather than participating in parallel ventures, community leaders and school teams will want to work together.

Strategy 3-Screening for unmet needs: Teams will consider the need for assessment of students, staff, and other adults to inform our decisions and to address intervention impact.

Part 2: Deepening Strategy 1: Recovery Focus on Support Systems for Adult and Self-Care

State Presenters: Leisa Gallagher, Beth Hill, Tammy Morrow, and Sheila Williams-White

This portion of the webinar offers the how-to of wellbeing. School teams require both collective and individual plans for self-care in whatever setting they begin at the start of school: face-to-face, virtual, or a hybrid. In social work, the phrase 'person in the environment' acknowledges the interplay between our internal reaction and the environment's demands. Therefore, proactive approaches will need to span the personal and collective systems of support.

Self-care assessments, district and school wellness plans, and shared problem solving for wellbeing will only enhance the learning environment. Participating in a 'quality of life' assessment, using the assessment results to plan for self-care, and making a collective commitment to nurturing routines will help adults model their prosocial skills. These coping strategies will make it easier to self-regulate, remain socially aware, enrich relationships, and make decisions that stick.

Tying it All Together: The Four-Part Webinar Series

Productive environments, plans for SEL/Wellbeing, high-leverage instruction, and family engagement are all critical components of MTSS that complement the academic and non-academic dimensions of safety, connection, and learning. Rather than standing alone, these features of MTSS strengthen engagement and reinforce prosocial behavior.

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