



# Building Resiliency, Social-Emotional Learning and Safe School Climates

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Many boards, providers and school districts are concerned about the trauma that children may have experienced related to the COVID-19 Pandemic. This document provides examples of evidence-based practices that will help to increase resiliency in youth, promote social-emotional learning, and build safe school climates. At this time, theory, research, and practice have evolved to support an approach to prevention that aims not only to prevent disorder, but also to promote positive mental, emotional, and behavioral (MEB) health in young people. Prevention strategies are offered prior to the onset of a disorder that are intended to prevent or reduce the risk for its development. Mental health promotion develops skills-based positive attributes, such as self-regulation, self-efficacy, goal setting, and positive relationships. MEB health disorders include but are not limited to substance use disorders, mental illness, suicide, and problem gambling.

## Social and Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions. Research demonstrates that students who receive support for social and emotional learning in schools do better academically, socially and behaviorally. Social-emotional learning has also been shown to positively impact economic mobility and mental health outcomes. Developing these skills in our students is an important part of meeting the needs of the whole child.

## Ohio K-12 Social and Emotional Learning Standards

<http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Social-and-Emotional-Learning/Social-and-Emotional-Learning-Standards/K-12-SEL-Standards-Full-Final.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>

Ohio's K-12 Social and Emotional Learning Standards are provided by grade bands (kindergarten-grade 3, grades 3-5, middle grades and high school) and provide a continuum of development across five competencies: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision-Making. The social and emotional learning standards are for all students, kindergarten through grade 12, with the understanding that each child develops at his or her own pace and may excel in one set of skills while struggling in another. The Ohio Department of Education provides guidance and professional development around these standards, including [implementation guides](#) for teachers.

## Positive Action

Positive Action aims to improve social and emotional learning and school climate. It consists of a detailed curriculum of approximately 140 short lessons throughout the school year in kindergarten through 6th grade and 82 lessons in 7th and 8th grade, along with materials to promote school-wide reinforcement of positive actions learned in the classroom. The program includes training and professional development for teachers, resource coordination, and incentives for positive behavior. The studies in this analysis included both elementary and middle school students and evaluated schools after implementing the Positive Action program for four school years, on average.

<https://www.positiveaction.net/>

## Trauma and Resiliency

We understand that everyone experiences trauma differently, and not everyone will experience behavioral health issues due to a traumatic experience. The identified best practices for trauma exposures in children are focused on

universal resiliency strategies that can benefit all students. Screening practices should be built into the school's continuum of prevention and treatment services. If a need is identified for further assessment or treatment, a referral can be made.

Providing teachers and school personnel with training to understand trauma, recognize signs and symptoms and what to do about them, is important, and several of the identified best practices here address this need. Parents are another population of focus and there are parenting programs available to help them gain this knowledge as well.

### **Foundations of the Resiliency Framework**

Resiliency research provides a powerful rationale for moving our narrow focus in the social and behavioral sciences from a risk, deficit, and pathology focus to an examination of the strengths youth, their families, their schools, and their communities have brought to bear in promoting healing and health. The acknowledgment that everyone has strengths and the capacity for transformation gives the prevention, education, and youth development fields not only a clear sense of direction — informing us about “what works!” — but also mandates that we move beyond our obsession with risk identification. Read more by Bonnie Bernard.

<https://www.resiliency.com/free-articles-resources/the-foundations-of-the-resiliency-framework/>

### **Ready, Set, Go, Review: Screening for Behavioral Health Risk in Schools**

This toolkit is designed to guide schools through the process of developing comprehensive screening procedures, as well as provide readily available resources to facilitate the implementation of effective behavioral health screening in schools.

[https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/ready\\_set\\_go\\_review\\_mh\\_screening\\_in\\_schools\\_508.pdf](https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/ready_set_go_review_mh_screening_in_schools_508.pdf)

### **National Child Traumatic Stress Network Courses: Schools and Trauma (no cost with an account)**

<https://learn.nctsn.org/course/index.php?categoryid=39>

This series of presentations focuses on partnering with schools to enhance mental health and trauma-informed services and is designed to inform both school personnel and mental health professionals about methods for integrating trauma-informed services and evidence-based practices with school, state, and federal initiatives, such as PBIS and RTI.

### **Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach for Youth across Service Sectors**

This brief discusses the concept and prevalence of trauma; techniques for coping with and recovering from trauma at an individual and systems level; the core principles for building a framework for understanding trauma; and implementation of elements essential for a trauma-informed system as presented by the featured experts.

[https://youth.gov/docs/Trauma\\_Informed\\_Approach\\_508.pdf](https://youth.gov/docs/Trauma_Informed_Approach_508.pdf)

### **Youth-led Prevention**

Youth-led groups can also play an important part in the students' return to the classroom. These groups can provide mentoring to peers and younger students, focus on increasing the positive messaging in the schools, and provide support for each other. Support groups, a common prevention strategy, would be very beneficial in this and any time period. They can be done universally to discuss emotions and feelings, as well as to address specific issues such as grief, loss and anxiety.

### **The National Mentoring Resource Center**

Find focused resources on [peer](#), [group](#) and [school-based](#) mentoring models and research. Application can be made for **no-cost training and technical assistance**, including customized coaching to enhance your program and troubleshoot challenges using evidence-based practices and specific tools for use [during the pandemic](#).

<https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/index.php>

**Positive Youth Development** is an intentional, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities,

schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people's strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths. Interagency Workgroup on Youth Programs

<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>

### **SOS Signs of Suicide**

Middle and high schools across the country use **SOS Signs of Suicide** to educate students about suicide prevention and to identify students in need. SOS has shown a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40-64%. Through a video and guided discussion, students learn to identify warning signs of suicide and depression in a single class period. At the end of the session, students complete a seven-question screening for depression (anonymous or signed – the school can decide) to further encourage help-seeking and connect students at-risk with trusted adults. The curriculum raises awareness about behavioral health and encourages students to ACT (Acknowledge, Care, Tell) when worried about themselves or their peers.

<https://www.mindwise.org/what-we-offer/suicide-prevention-programs/>

### **Summary of Recognized Evidence-Based Programs**

These programs were implemented by "Expanded School Mental Health Programs Center for School Mental Health, University of Maryland School of Medicine, 2008." This compendium of mental health prevention/promotion programming is appropriate for use in school-based settings.

[https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/sssta/20110322\\_EBPMatrix6.08.pdf](https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/sssta/20110322_EBPMatrix6.08.pdf)