The New Normal

Understanding and Responding to
The New Normal

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Introduction

The New Normal: Addressing the Social-Emotional Needs of Students and Staff

The re-opening of schools in the 2020-2021 school year presents unique challenges for staff, students, and families. Addressing academic gaps will remain an important objective; however, students will not be ready to engage in formal learning until they feel physically and psychologically safe. Teachers and administrators should operate on the assumption that everyone, (students, families, and staff) will have experienced some degree of anxiety and stress, uncertainty, illness, grief, and loss. While not all students and families have been affected in the same way, the potential for having experienced trauma is heightened for many students and staff. Some will have been ill themselves, some will be grieving for a relative or friend who died, if not by illness, possibly from an accident or even suicide or violence. Some will have experienced hunger, abuse, neglect, evictions, domestic violence and/or community violence during this time. For some students, the experience of social distancing and being home during COVID-19 will have been traumatic. Stigma and racism may have been experienced, as well as secondary trauma from national events.

Schools will likely see an increased number of learning, behavioral, and emotional problems, from more students. For those who already have emotional and behavioral challenges, these may be exacerbated. Existing disparities also will be more pronounced. Stressors from the transition back to school are likely to intensify and may impact learning and teaching.

For these reasons the primary focus for re-opening will need to be on student and staff re-adjustment to school and the mental health needs of students and staff. Establishing a sense of safety and readiness for learning may take weeks or even months, depending on the evolving context in individual communities and a range of factors unique to each individual. Even within a school community, individual students and staff may be continuing to experience different stressors that could affect their personal sense of safety.

Local school systems and individual schools planning for students and staff to return following COVID-19 closures must prioritize efforts to address social and emotional learning and mental and behavioral health needs. Equally important is ensuring staff feel their physical and mental health needs are supported. As always, local school systems should ensure all policies or recommendations are culturally sensitive and ensure equity and access for all youth. Administrators are encouraged to call upon their student services personnel to inform plans to focus on student social-emotional needs. School counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, pupil personnel workers, school safety staff, and school health services staff provide expertise on the mental health needs of students. Other school personnel such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) and mental health coordinators, community mental health partners, and parents will be essential for the gradual successful transition back to school.

Together with families and community partners, students and staff will make successful transitions back to a new normal. This information is designed to help guide families, staff, and students as they transition from isolation to renewed interaction.

The Process of Change

Phase(s) of Implementation

x Preparing for Return
x Re-Opening-Early Phases
x Re-Opening Next Phase

Overview

Change is a normal part of our lives. It can happen suddenly, slowly or be reflected in an event that just never happened. Change is a process; it takes time to adjust. Time is needed to accommodate even the most anticipated kinds of changes. For some of our students the change to virtual learning was fun, for others, it was not as pleasant. Some lost their love of learning; others were able to learn more through the change in their learning environment. Regardless of how they felt, change took time and involved accommodation.

Considerations

- Change is a process, not an event.

- Self-initiated changes may be the ones most easily made.

- Adaptive changes affect us all as we grow and age.

- Non-events are changes that we hoped would happen, but that did not happen.

- Radical changes happen fast and can make us feel powerless.

- Changes, even the ones we wanted, involve a process of loss.

- Transitions alter life and require a period of adjustment.

- Like all losses, many people go through a period of accommodation to change. They may feel a sense of pervasiveness and cannot stop thinking about the change and loss. They may go through a period of disruptiveness when they feel untethered and not grounded. They will with time and strategies to cope, get to where they feel more bounded to the change.

- The process may also have signature thoughts:
    - Disbelief: I can't believe they closed schools!
    - Sense of Betrayal: Why weren't they more ready for this on-line stuff?
    - Confusion: I don't know how to learn (teach) like this.
    - Anger: Why can't I do this? Why is this so hard?
    - Resolution: We are all trying to do our best.

Staff: Think Abouts

What changes have you made in your life that were on purpose?

What changes were made for you. You had no choice. How did you feel about that?

The Process of Change

Staff: Think Abouts (Continued)

What changes do you think your students went through?

How did the isolation of COVID-19 change your life? What did you miss most? What did you like best?

The Vision of Equity

1. How did your family handle change? How might it have been different in other families?

2. What behaviors do you expect from students of different racial and cultural backgrounds?? What underlying beliefs might those expectations reflect?

3. What additional challenges might students who live with poverty (housing, food deserts, lack of transportation, etc.) have to face when dealing with change?

Strategies: For staff, students, and/or families

- Draw or write or talk with others about a change that occurred to you during the time at home.

- Draw a picture, or write, or talk with others showing what your life was life (at home, school, or your choice) before the epidemic. Then draw what it was like during the epidemic. What changed for you?

- Draw a picture or write, or talk about the changes that you liked and the changes you did not like.

- Make a list of the things you did to try to get used to the change? What was the hardest to do? What came easily?

- Discuss: How did the change with schools being closed affect your roles? Relationships? Routines? And assumptions?

- How did you handle change before the epidemic? What did you do to adjust to the change(s)?

- Who was able to help you make the adjustment to the changes? How did they help?

Trauma

Phase(s) of Implementation

x Preparing for Return
x Re-Opening-Early Phases
x Re-Opening Next Phase

Overview

COVID-19 may have had the effect of violating our students' basic sense of trust. They were exposed, either directly or indirectly, to deaths, illness, and isolation from which little protection could be offered. While many of our students received love and security from their family, some families may not have been equipped or been able to provide this stability due to economic, equity, or societal reasons. The pressures and fears of the adults around our students may, on some occasions, have resulted in outbursts of violence, abuse, substance abuse, arguments, and physical violence. Even trauma by proxy-the losses that happened to someone else, could result in our students suffering feelings of powerlessness and fear.

Considerations

- Trauma occurs when a person is exposed to an overwhelming event, or series of events, and is rendered helpless in the face of danger, anxiety, or instinctual arousal. They can be perceived as horrifying events and are experienced as unpredictable and uncontrollable.

- Trauma may occur when a child experiences home/food insecurity, fears for his or her own life, fears that important people in their lives will die, has a violation of their intactness (e.g., sexual abuse, loss of a limb) or clarity of consciousness (you are just making that up).

- Trauma forces us to accommodate new, discrepant, and threatening information and makes us feel vulnerable (Life is scary, no one can protect me).

- Traumas can be caused by a one-time event or a series of events and can affect overall physical health, brain chemistry, learning and behavior. (Violent event, repeated abuse, consistent, insidious racism).

- Traumatized children may internalize their fears, generalize their fears (e.g., all men are bad, all women lie), and may distrust adults' ability to protect them.

- Trauma may manifest itself in many ways-tiredness, exhaustion, helplessness, feelings of inadequacy, confusion, inability to sleep, and disorganization. Fears and anxieties become pervasive and the child may demonstrate external symptoms such as hypersensitivity, hyper- vigilance, behavior regression, verbal or physical aggression, drug/alcohol abuse, or elopement.

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a specific, more intense form of trauma with pervasive, intrusive, and reoccurring thoughts and memories. PTSD is often characterized by re-experiencing the trauma, diminished responsiveness, disinterest in significant events and activities, and feelings of detachment and estrangement from others. Staff or students demonstrating these characteristics should be referred to student service staff or employee assistance immediately.

Trauma

The Vision of Equity

1. How might living with stigma and racism contribute to feelings of trauma?
2. How much trauma do you think your students have encountered? What kinds of things might have been said, or witnessed by your students?
3. Recognize cultural difference in expression of trauma. Ask students about what they have been taught about expressing their feelings and experiences with others.
4. Understand that marginalized groups of people may not trust institutional supports.

Strategies: For staff, students, and/or families (Continued)

- Consider a whole-school or whole-class brief lesson on how traumatic stress impacts our brains to help normalize and reduce shame, as well as lessen the likelihood that schools will engage in punitive re-traumatizing reactions.

- Introduce the topic of trauma in health lessons or in literature lessons, when appropriate. Normalize the term so students who are dealing with trauma do not feel isolated.

- Encourage self-compassion and provide time, spaces and places for embedding self-care activities for both students and staff. Group spaces, breathing together, journaling time, art, and music, etc., can be integrated into classroom activities and staff meetings and routines.

- Have students draw or write about their scary experiences being sure to maintain confidentiality. Link the assignment to content that is being taught.

- Have students and staff identify what soothes them when they feel afraid or upset. Help them employ those strategies when they are struggling. Employ mindfulness and relaxation strategies.

- Seek student services supports for those students who identify violent or persistent fears. Create or implement a clear protocol to let counselors and other support staff know when a student is in distress.

- Identify community resources for students needing Tier 3 interventions.

Resources
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/trauma-toolkit/schools

Anxiety

Phase(s) of Implementation

x Preparing for Return
x Re-Opening-Early Phases
x Re-Opening Next Phase

Overview

As the pandemic lingers and continues to complicate lives, children and teens are trying to make sense of it all. Covid-19 was, and is, complex for adults to understand and can be even more perplexing for our students to understand. The inequities and racism that our students hear about, experience, and witness, potentially further complicates preexisting feelings of anxiety. If the student was already anxious, the fears and worries they have may exuberate those feelings. Adults around the child may be anxious as well, causing the child to worry or dread even more. Media, and life in the virtual world may add stress and confusion to an already overburdened emotional system. When any or all of this begins to interfere with the child's normal functioning, the experience of anxiety may follow.

Considerations

- Anxiety can manifest itself in a variety of symptoms ranging from crying to irritability, to angry outbursts; from withdrawal to hyper-active behaviors.

- Children can feel anxiety about leaving home (separation), coming back to school (social), fears about the death or illness of their family members and friends, racism, police, authorities, hospitals, and a myriad of other topics (generalized).

- They may experience episodes of sudden, unexpected, intense fear/panic, and may show physical symptoms such as stomach upset, poor sleeping patterns, dizziness, or trouble breathing.

- High levels of anxiety may result in fight or flight behavior.

- They might worry about adult issues such as food shortages and income loss, loss of jobs and the behavior of their siblings. They may feel displaced guilt and responsibility for things over which they have no control.

The Vision of Equity

1. How might the behavioral demonstration of anxiety vary according to race, ethnicity, or religion of origin?

2. Understand the relationship between trauma and anxiety. The experience of racial trauma may manifest itself as anxiety.

3. Think about times you felt anxious. How did you convey those feelings to family members? How did they react? How might that affect your reaction to the students in your classes?

Anxiety

Strategies: For staff, students, and/or families

Check in with your students and ask them what questions they have about the epidemic, about coming back to school, and/or about their concerns in general. Use a variety of educational media such as writing, drawing, posting, or researching to find information and to let them express their concerns.

- Maintain routines and implement structure.

- Use mindfulness and other relaxation strategies with all of your students. It will help many anxious students to become centered. Short mindfulness breaks can enrich learning.

- Teach about healthy habits-sleeping, eating well, and exercise.

- Engage your class in empowering activities. If you can help them help others, they will often feel better.

- Modify assignments as needed.

- Create a safe space in your classroom if possible, with soft and comforting furniture or material's they can use when they feel worried.

- Arrange a safe space for the child to go if needed-the school counselor or school social worker's office. Students often can identify a calming person they will want to go to when they are upset.

- Establish a system with another teacher for the child to go to the other teacher's room (maintaining appropriate social distancing) if they need a time out to calm down or a change in scenery.

- Consult with the family to discuss any changes in behavior. Does the child seem stressed and are they sleeping well? Are they eating? Are there signs of separation anxiety or repetitive behaviors? Are they crying more or more often angry? Do family supports exist to address the child's struggles?
  - Help families learn to limit media coverage

- Refer students to student support services as needed.

Resources

https://www.heysigmund.com/anxiety-at-school/

Depression

Phase(s) of Implementation

x Preparing for Return
x Re-Opening-Early Phases
x Re-Opening Next Phase

Overview

Prolonged close confinement and isolation can be debilitating. For students with preexisting mild depression this level of isolation can have devastating effects. Other students who never displayed any symptoms of depression may be affected by the pandemic. Social distancing, worry and fear, coupled with disrupted access to mental health services have affected many of our students. Lack of access to favorite activities and uncertain futures may be especially challenging for adolescents. Worry, stress, and a lack of motivation may contribute to, or be symptoms of depression.

Considerations

- Depression can manifest itself in a variety of symptoms ranging from crying to irritability, to angry outbursts; from withdrawal to hyper-active behaviors.

- Depression can affect how students sleep, eat, and see the world.

- Students who report depression may have constant feelings of sadness or emptiness.

- Depression may affect concentration and memory, as well as lead to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. This may be misperceived as ADHD, especially in boys.

- Depression can easily be mistaken as a lack of motivation or an anger problem. Symptoms can look like a student is tense, unusually restless, and having a feeling that they may lose control.

- Depression is a serious mental health concern, but it is treatable.

- Often treatment comprises medication and psychotherapy.

- Many students who display signs of anxiety and/or substance use are also dealing with depression.

- Hyperactivity can be a symptom of depression.

- Negative feedback regarding one's sexual orientation, gender identity, racial, and other discriminatory experiences can have an emotional effect on students that can lead to depression.

The Vision of Equity

1. What personal beliefs do you have about depression? How might those beliefs affect how you interact with students?

2. What understanding do you have about depression in cultural and racial groups? About depression and gender? About depression and sexual orientation or gender identity? What data have you seen and how has it affected your beliefs?

Depression

Strategies: For staff, students, and/or families

- Ask the student about how they are feeling. That you care matters to them.

- Avoid punishment, sarcasm, or other negative reactions. Use as much positive reinforcement as you can. Consider alternatives to traditional disciplinary practices during this time. A student who is misbehaving or not completing academic work may be signaling that they were struggling emotionally during the pandemic or may have experienced a traumatic event.

- Consider alternatives to traditional disciplinary practices during this time. A student who is misbehaving or not completing academic work may be a sign that they are struggling emotionally during the pandemic or may have experienced a traumatic event.

- If needed, break assignments up into smaller pieces and offer supportive assistance.

- Consult with the family to discuss any changes in behavior. Does the child seem stressed and are they sleeping well? Are they sleeping a lot or not at all? Are they eating at all, too little, or too much? Are there signs of anxiety or are they crying more or more often angry? Do family supports exist to address the child's struggles?

- Help families limit access to fear inducing situations. Limit social media and television.

- Consider integrating social emotional learning (SEL) lessons into academic lessons. This will help all students in the classroom learn how to cope with the pandemic.

- Consult with your school counselor, school social worker and/or school psychologist.

- Refer students to student support service team.

- Help student establish and adhere to normal routines as much as possible.

- Encourage emotional outlets such as physical activity, music, dance, art or writing.

- Peer support can be helpful, as can group therapy.

- Provide mindfulness breaks during instruction and help students learn to calm themselves.

- Understand the relationship between depression and suicide. Know the warning signs of suicide and refer the student for immediate assistance should you be concerned about suicidal ideation. Ensure that parents are contacted.

Resources
https://casel.org/resources-support/
www.nasponline.org/assets/documents/.../Handouts/.../nahttps://casel.org/resources-support/sp_depreng.pdf
https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center

Stress

Phase(s) of Implementation

x Preparing for Return
x Re-Opening-Early Phases
x Re-Opening Next Phase

Overview

Stress is the body's reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response. The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental, and emotional responses. Stress is a normal part of life. You can experience stress from your environment, your body, and your thoughts. Even positive life changes such as a promotion, a mortgage, or the birth of a child produce stress. The COVID-19 pandemic has been, and continues to be stressful on everyone as it has created multiple forms of stress on everyone in a multitude of ways that are specific and unique to each individual.

Considerations

- How does stress affect physical and mental health?

- What are the signs of a stressed individual? What does stress feel like for an individual?

- What are the sources of stress for the individual?
  - Internal
  - External
    - Family
    - COVID-19
  - Good vs. Bad – (not all stress is bad)

- What are the side effects/impacts of stress?

- What are the tips/coping skills for dealing/managing stress?

- Who can help individuals deal/cope with stress?

- The more stress you are under the less sensitive you may become to the symptoms. Many people do not recognize they are under stress until the stressful situation is over.

- Stress in students can come from a variety of sources. During COVID they may feel stressed about their parents losing their jobs, the health of others, family relationship issues, recent changes, substance use of others, social unrest, inequities in society, and social media.

- Stress may manifest itself in several ways, ranging from agitation, moodiness, feeling overwhelmed, feeling angry, and feeling depressed.

- Somatic symptoms could include headaches, stomach aches, upset stomach, aches, insomnia, fatigue, and sweatiness.

- Cognitive symptoms might include constant worrying, racing thoughts, forgetfulness, inability to focus and thoughts that everything is bad.

Stress

Staff: Think Abouts

What are the current sources of stress in your life? What are you doing about them?

What are your coping strategies for managing stress? Is there an individual or a group that helps you?

What sources of stress do you think students experienced during COVID-19? How did the pandemic compound other sources of stress?

How can we help students manage their stress? What resources do they need? Who can help?

How do we create a less stress environment for students upon re-entry?

How do we help support stressed family members?

The Vision of Equity

1. How might stress look and feel different in other families?

2. What might you be assuming is true about how other cultures handle stress? What are other forms of cultural capital that can be utilized as a resource?

3. How might stress look and feel to students of color; to LBGTQ students; to English language learners; and to students receiving specialized services?

4. What additional challenges might students who live with poverty (housing, food deserts, lack of transportation, etc.) have to face when dealing with stress?

Strategies: For staff, students, and/or families

- Keep a positive attitude

- Accept that there are events that you cannot control.
   - Be realistic

- Be assertive instead of aggressive. Assert your feelings, opinions, or beliefs instead of becoming angry, defensive, or passive.

- Learn and practice relaxation techniques; try meditation, yoga, or tai-chi.

- Exercise regularly. Your body can fight stress better when it is fit.

- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals.

- Learn to manage your time more effectively.
   - Know your stress triggers.

- Set limits appropriately and say no to requests that would create excessive stress in your life.

- Make time for hobbies and interests. Engage students or self in art, music, writing, or other creative outlets.

Stress

Strategies: For staff, students, and/or families (Continued)

- Get enough rest and sleep. Your body needs time to recover from stressful events.

- Seek out social support. Spend enough time with those you love.

- Seek treatment with a psychologist or other mental health professional trained in stress management or biofeedback techniques to learn healthier ways of dealing with the stress in your life.

Retrieved from https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/11874-stress

Resources
https://www.stress.org/

Grief and Loss

Phase(s) of Implementation

x Preparing for Return
x Re-Opening-Early Phases
x Re-Opening Next Phase

Overview

Grief and loss are at the heart of much in our lives. We grieve deaths, changes in our lives, changes in our friends, families, and routines. COVID-19 created all these changes and for many, created a sense of loss that leads to grief. Changes do not have to be monumental to create a sense of grieving. A child going off to college, becoming a teenager, getting married, or even having a baby, are sometimes surprising losses. We don't always think of them that way. In many cases our children are taught to not talk about their losses and are not given an opportunity to grieve. People may feel awkward and do not know what to say. COVID created losses in our lives and may have exacerbated the loss by enforced isolation. Loss can also create opportunities for new events, people, and routines.

Considerations

- Loss does not have to be a big event to be hard to manage.

- Loss of face, loss of security, loss of a sense of safety, loss of a job or income are all significant.

- Losses touch off losses. If a student lost a family member, they may also be grieving a pet they loved who died years ago.

- Symptoms may include appetite changes, tiredness, somatic symptoms, forgetfulness, disorganization, detachment, and more obvious behaviors such as anger, sadness, and numbness.

- Males and females may grieve differently.

- Situational factors affect grieving-was it a sudden loss, a long illness, a violent death, a suicide, or, for some adults, a miscarriage, or some other anticipated event that did not happen?

- Grief creates conflicting feelings caused by the end of or a change in a familiar pattern of behavior.

The Vision of Equity

1. Place a priority upon honoring and respecting differing beliefs and rituals around dying. Ask about their family beliefs and rituals around loss.

2. Acknowledge the historical and socio-cultural dynamics impacting cultural groups (institutionalized racism, xenophobia).

3. Acknowledge how pre-incident stressors on a community or an individual can intensify or complicate the loss.

4. Acknowledge your cultural limitations and differences and convey your sincere desire to learn.

Grief and Loss

Strategies: For staff, students, and/or families

- Listen and look for signs that a person might be grieving.

- Acknowledge the loss.

- Check in informally just to say you care.

- Normalize the feelings that the person might be experiencing. There are no wrong emotions and expect that the feelings change.

- Encourage talking about what happened and how they feel. Ensure this conversation is happening in a safe space where there is truly time to communicate, share, empathize, and grieve as a group.

- Help others know what to say and how to act toward the person who is grieving. It is critical that they not shy away from someone who is grieving. All they need to do is say they are sorry about the loss and that they care.

- Have a designated person reach out to the family for support.

- Refer the person for counseling to help identify coping strategies.

Strategies for Students Who Have Experienced a Loss

- Talk to family or friends.

- Seek counseling and be around friends who make you feel better.

- Read poetry or books, listen to favorite music.

- Write, draw, create a memory book, blog, song or poem.

- Engage in social activities.

- Exercise, eat healthy, good foods.

Resources
https://www.edutopia.org/article/helping-students-through-period-grief
https://www.apa.org/news/apa/2020/04/grief-covid-19

Social and Emotional Learning

Phase(s) of Implementation

x Preparing for Return
x Re-Opening-Early Phases
x Re-Opening Next Phase

Overview

Social emotional learning (SEL) has been implemented in schools throughout Maryland. A large body of evidence to justify the value of SEL has been gathered in the last 20 years. The phrase SEL is being linked closely to trauma as experts advocate for "new" practices and strategies in the 2020-2021 school year to support students and families.

The following considerations are provided to assist those who are new to SEL implementation as well as those who are expanding their prior knowledge to consider elements of cultural responsiveness and family engagement. The five core competency areas containing 20 discrete skills proposed through Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) are those referenced within this document. Many of the following strategies are relevant for both students and adults.

Considerations

Planning in Advance of Return to School

- Classroom teachers found success this past spring during the "learn at home" period of time sharing SEL lessons with parents through the virtual learning platform. Teachers are encouraged to continue to utilize and/or create parent rooms within their virtual learning space to maintain and foster these partnerships.

- Families have natural opportunities to guide a student's practice of specific skill strategies when at home and in the community. Share with caregivers:
  - Skills currently being focused upon in the classroom.
  - The strategies being taught to students to help them acquire and use the skill.
  - When the skill should be used by the student.
  - Ways the parent can coach their child in using the strategies and reinforce success.

- Focusing on these skills prior to the start of school will increase the likelihood students and staff will enter the school year ready to learn and teach.
  - Identifying Emotions - this skill focuses upon students associating physical symptoms (crying, laughing, rapid breathing, etc.) with an emotion (sad, happy, afraid, etc.) and using oral and written language to identify and express themselves to adults in their life.

Social and Emotional Learning

Considerations (Continued)

Planning in Advance of Return to School (Continued)

- o   Respect for Others - this skill includes multiple behaviors that demonstrate to others they are respected and include turn taking, listening when others speak, physical boundaries of touching other people and their property, etc. This particular skill can now include behaviors that are unique for COVID 19 procedures such as covering a sneeze and cough, washing hands, and physical contact rules.
- o   Stress Management - this skill requires individuals to recognize the unique physical signs of stress they experience and then engage in specific actions and behaviors to reduce or neutralize these physical symptoms. The premise is early identification and action reduces the escalation of behaviors to more harmful ones.
- o   Organization - this skill set encompasses strategies of routines and procedures such as: a sleep and eating schedule, procedures for preparing items (lunch, backpack, charging electronics, etc.) for the next day before going to sleep, etc. and allow individuals to be physically, mentally and emotionally prepared to learn and teach.
- o   Communication - this skill supports several other skills but also includes knowing who to share what information with to get the intended support, when and how to share information, as well as the skill of listening and reading for information to inform oneself.

- School leaders will find that spending time exploring the resources available through the schoolwide CASEL framework https://schoolguide.casel.org/ and considering whether a schoolwide approach to SEL makes sense to meet their specific student needs may result in effective program implementation.

During the Initial Stage of School Return

Tips for school leaders:
- It is recommended that school leaders and leadership teams be prepared to start the year with expectations and procedures in place to ensure the implementation of SEL lessons during the school day. These expectations should be clearly communicated.

- Procedures to plan for are:
  - o   How will SEL be taught during the day? Are teachers expected to follow a defined curricular program or create their own lessons? Professional development, resources, and time need to be provided for each situation to ensure successful implementation.
  - o   When will SEL be taught during the day and over the course of a week? Is there a defined period of time built into the schedule or will teachers be given autonomy to determine when this occurs within their classroom?

Social and Emotional Learning

Considerations (Continued)

During the Initial Stage of School Return (Continued)

- o Who will conduct the SEL lesson? This decision is dependent upon existing capacity and structures. Ideally every adult in the building can be responsible for teaching and reinforcing social emotional learning. Professional learning opportunities may need to be provided.

Tips for delivery:
- School personnel, students, and caregivers focusing upon these additional social emotional skills in the initial return to school will increase the likelihood students and staff will proceed through the school year ready to learn and teach.
    - o *Identifying Emotions* should continue to be reinforced in the initial return to school. Time should be taken frequently during the initial days to check in with students and staff about how they are feeling.
    - o *Perspective Taking* - this skill encourages students to be mindful that their experience, feelings, thoughts are not necessarily the same as others. This skill is particularly important and salient during this initial stage as adults and students around them will be expressing different emotions and behaviors.
    - o *Empathy* - these initial weeks will create many teachable moments for students and staff to learn and practice empathy. Adults at home and school should be certain to use these experiences as a catalyst for student's "feeling for others".
    - o *Identify Problems* - this skill encourages students to engage other SEL skills of communication, identifying emotions, perspective taking to recognize when a situation or experience is causing some manner of harm to themselves or others. Harm can be the lack of learning, hurt emotions, physical distress to oneself or others.
    - o *Impulse Control* - this skill may be particularly difficult in the early weeks of school due to the extended school closure and autonomy students have had during social isolation and learning from home. Learning to control impulses requires knowledge of what an impulse is and when it is occurring. Impulses related to eating, drinking, moving, talking, checking electronics, are all going to be more pronounced upon the return to school.
    - o *Goal Setting* - this skill is best when taught in relationship to the previously listed SEL skills. Goals should be developed with and for students in relationship to the use of other SEL skills.
    - o *Relationship Building* - this skill should be developed slowly in the initial return to school through modeling by school personnel as they seek to develop relationships with students. The skill of students developing relationships with each other should not forego the potential need for students to need independent time as they navigate back to the large social setting of school. Thus, student-to-student relationship building should be a skill put forward in later weeks and months.

Social and Emotional Learning

Considerations (Continued)

Later Stages of Return to School

- As the school year progresses staff and students will settle into a routine of learning and teaching. It will be important for school leaders to remain mindful of the need to maintain the importance of teaching and reinforcing SEL for all students at school and home.

- The tendency may be for schools to pivot to a deficit-based delivery model as the school year advances. This could involve the use of a comprehensive SEL assessment or school personnel referring students who fail to demonstrate specific skills. While this is appropriate during the later stages of returning to school, staff should be careful to approach targeted support to individual students within a whole class/whole school approach to reinforcing skills.

- School personnel, students, and caregivers focusing upon these additional social emotional skills in the later stages of the return to school will increase the likelihood students and staff maximize their learning and teaching potential.
  - *Self-efficacy, Self-discipline, Self-motivation* - additional notes related to the "self" skills are provided further in this document and important to be mindful of when teaching and reinforcing these skills. It is recommended that the focus on these skills come later in this unusual year because of the anticipated anxiety and uncertainty upon the initial return.
  - *Recognize Strengths* - this skill aligns with the self-efficacy skill above where individuals are taught to be aware of their personal attributes for setting future goals as well as celebrating and advocating for the use of their strengths. Learning to use their strengths to overcome weaknesses reduces stress, builds resilience, and leads to positive feelings of self.
  - *Solving problems* - this skill obviously follows the identification of problems but should not be taught together as one skill. Each requires a unique set of actions.
  - *Relationship Building, Social Engagement* - each of these two skills are often addressed in the early weeks of school but the unique dynamic of students returning from social isolation and high levels of independent time should prompt adults to be mindful of not making students focus upon these skills until after having settled into the social setting.

Skills listed in the above content do not include all of those in the CASEL framework and are not meant to advocate for the lack of importance of those not specifically called out. Rather, it is the dynamic of the return to school that prompts some skills areas of focus and worthy of attention during this historical time.

Social and Emotional Learning

Additional Tips and Resources for Teaching and Learning Social Emotional Skills

- Teaching social emotional skills requires a minimum of two steps for success.
  - **Teaching the discrete skill and strategies** so as to develop an understanding of what the skill actually is and what it looks like in action. This strategy involves having no assumption of knowledge. Teaching the skill can involve a variety of methods including role plays.
  - **Reinforcing the generalization** and use of the skill in naturally occurring settings. Home and school adults should be consciously looking for moments to provide coaching and positive feedback when situations arise that the skill was used or could have been used in order for the skill to be internalized. Consider posting the CASEL competency wheel in school spaces and at home. https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CASEL-Competencies.pdf

- Integrating social emotional learning skill development within the curriculum has been a method many teachers and system leaders seek to accomplish. It is important that teachers operating with this method have knowledge of the competency skills so that they can seek out and maximize those "teachable moments" within the curriculum.

- Literature is the most common method and can be highly effective. When using literary methods consider the use of short stories, non-fiction text sets and picture books even at the middle school level. The use of shorter text rather than chapter books and novels allows the teacher to deliver a discrete skill lesson within a shorter period of time remaining focused upon the social emotional skill within 15-30 minutes. When using lengthier text, the discrete teaching of an SEL skill more often gets lost in the other literary standards that must be taught over the extended time, reinforcement rather than teaching of a skill is more apt in this context.

Social and Emotional Learning

Additional Tips and Resources for Teaching and Learning Social Emotional Skills (Continued)

- The development of social emotional skills begins to occur early in life thus is influenced by early environmental factors. The research and practices of trauma responsive care are meaningful when considering students demonstrating lagging SEL skills. Students with high Adverse Childhood Experience Scores (ACES) are likely to need ongoing adult support for most all SEL skills, but of particular concern are skills of stress management, impulse control, organization, and identifying emotions. Understanding the neurological impact of toxic stress upon the developing brain helps adults interpret these deregulatory behaviors in a therapeutic rather than disciplinary manner.

The Vision of Equity

1. Individuals new to SEL as well as veterans to the SEL movement should seek to gain a more complete understanding of how social emotional behaviors are influenced by culture. What is a socially and emotionally appropriate behavior in one culture may not be in another. Teaching students to demonstrate particular behaviors that are counter to their culture of origin only perpetuates systemic inequities. Likewise, educators looking for and holding students and families accountable for specific skills and behaviors that are not culturally responsive may perpetuate the gap in outcomes for students of color.

2. Competency skills of particular influence by culture include all of the "self" skills (perception, management, motivation, confidence, efficacy, and discipline) as the perspective is from an individualistic rather than collectivistic cultural lens. Teamwork and relationship building are other competency skills that have different levels of importance and meaning in different cultures.

Resources
https://nationalequityproject.org/about/social-emotional-learning-equity
https://casel.org/lever-for-equity/
https://medium.com/@justschools/when-sel-is-used-as-another-form-of-policing-fa53cf85dce4

A Safe Space to Speak
Encouraging Ongoing Feedback in an Evolving Environment

Phase(s) of Implementation

x Preparing for Return
x Re-Opening-Early Phases
x Re-Opening Next Phase

Overview

In order to measure the efficacy of the strategies or programs being implemented, an integrated feedback and evaluation mechanism is recommended. In the traditional classroom environment, educators often gauge subject matter assimilation through examinations at fixed intervals. The results of these examinations can often be benchmarked against students in the same peer group in order to obtain valuable information about the efficacy of instruction. So, too can instructors and administrators attempt to track the emotional state of returning students by instituting a formal system of socio-emotional evaluation at set intervals.

Considerations

- One possible implementation is a brief monthly "check-in" session held during homeroom or another communal period in which this process would not intrude on instruction time.

- A facilitated discussion period could be accompanied by a brief questionnaire which gives students a "silent" option to respond and voice anxieties and concerns without voicing them in front of peers.

- A system of feedback would need to be:
    - Age-tailored.
    - Trauma-sensitive.
    - Anonymous (for the sake of increased candor and FERPA compliance)
    - Unobtrusive to students and faculty
        - Frequency would need to be determined based on student needs.
        - Duration could be determined based on class schedules.
        - Timing (homeroom or another communal period) wherein this process would not intrude on instruction time.
    - Compatible with existing student services framework.

Data should be used exclusively to improve internal processes and not a part of the student record.

Formal data collection documentation, if implemented may need parental approval.

Possibility to implement similar methods on staff side to address needs of educators.

The Vision of Equity

1. Pains must be taken to ensure that facilitators approach conversations concerning inequity and civil reactions are approached with sensitivity while allowing students to voice and address their concerns.

2. Facilitators must also be sensitive to appropriate context for sensitive discussions.

A Safe Space to Speak

Encouraging Ongoing Feedback in an Evolving Environment

Strategies: For staff, students, and/or families

- Workgroup for planning
    - Produce survey/discussion materials and facilitator guidelines.

- Administration should consider:
    - Provide facilitator training.
    - Establish timelines.
    - Encourage participation.

- Faculty/staff
    - Administer and facilitate check-ins at predetermined times.

- Family
    - Discuss with parents/guardians the importance of data gathering in the effort to make schools more responsive to student needs.

Resources

https://resourced.prometheanworld.com/types-of-summative-formative-assessment/
https://www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/teaching-resources/classroom-practices/learning-contexts/discussions/

Implicit and Unconscious Bias

Phase(s) of Implementation

x Preparing for Return
x Re-Opening-Early Phases
x Re-Opening Next Phase

Overview

Everyone has biases of one type or another. Our brains are wired to sort the hundreds of thousands of bits of information it receives to create patterns and associations which can unconsciously become assumptions and generalizations. Things that are alike in the schema of our brains get ascribed characteristics of that category (e.g., night-dark, wolves-danger). Racial and other biases tend to reside in the unconscious network of our brains. When humans need to make quick decisions they draw on the brain's ability to automatically sort data into categories and make decisions based on those unconscious associations. For most people prejudices, racism, and other sensitive reactions are based on these unconscious implicit connections and categorizations.

Considerations

- Implicit bias is different from suppressed thoughts-those are conscious.

- Implicit bias is unconscious and automatic.

- Even the most dedicated and well-meaning of us holds stereotypes and beliefs that affect our students.

- Implicit bias is generally not an indication of our thoughtful beliefs and values.

- Implicit biases are most likely to influence snap decisions and decisions that are ambiguous.

- Implicit bias can be found in statements like, "They always", "You know how they are". "They never…"

The Vision of Equity

1. With which students are your most comfortable? Uncomfortable? Reflect on the thought that your discomfort may be based on unconscious associations about others

2. What immediate associations do you have to words like dreadlocks, undocumented, overweight, poor, dirty, rich? Do not overthink each word. Recognize what feelings surface immediately (from your unconscious) right away for each word.

3. To which students do you modulate your voice to make it soft and kind? Which receive shorter, harsher responses from you? Consider that may be a signal of unconscious bias.

Implicit and Unconscious Bias

Strategies: For staff, students, and/or families

- Accept that we all have brains, so we all have implicit, unconscious biases. It is how we are wired to categorize information.

- Being aware that we have implicit biases and the probability that we are influenced by them without conscious thought is the first step to correcting them.

- Assume you have blind spots.

- Surround yourself and your students with images and people that represent counter-stereotypes.

- Reflect on your interactions. Might they be more selective than you thought?

- Overcorrect yourself. Act as if you know you have unconscious biases.

- Look at the data. Who is most often identified as a discipline problem? Who is failing? Who is in special education and who is in gifted and talented classes? What feedback do you get from parents and students about how they are being treated? Consider how implicit bias might have influenced these decisions.

- Deliberately slow down your decision making. Reconsider your reasons for the decisions you are making. Would you react the same way if the child was rich? Attractive? White? Female? Male? Older?

- Questions cultural stereotypes you might hold.

- Monitor each other for unconscious bias.

- Take the free implicit bias test online (see link in Resources)

Resources
The Implicit-Association test https://implicit.harvard.edu/racial
https://www.pbs.org/video/pov-implicit-bias-peanut-butter-jelly-and-racism/

Meeting the Needs of Staff and Educators

Phase(s) of Implementation

x Preparing for Return
x Re-Opening-Early Phases
x Re-Opening Next Phase

Overview

Educators manage stress every day. They manage the stress of delivering rigorous instruction, managing a room full of students, and meeting the expectations of families, communities, and administrators. The national pandemic created an unprecedented need to provide on-line instruction which called for the fast application of new technologies. For some educators, family schedules had to be adjusted to meet the needs of working from home to deliver on-lie instruction. Like their students, many educators and support staff missed their students and the relationships they worked so hard to establish. They worried about the safety and survival needs of their students, while working hard to deliver rigorous content and instruction. Like the students, staff will be returning to on-line learning and/or to a classroom with students in a new normal. The rules may be in flux, the daily practices and management strategies that have worked in the past need to be altered to meet the new learning environments. Like their students, our educators and support staff may need time to talk about their stress and concerns. While most adults will re-enter the face to face environment with little concerns, a few may need more support and attention. Providing resources for the adults that work in the schools will be an important aspect of re-entry and successful instruction.

Considerations

- Adults may manifest stress in many ways, ranging from feeling ill, using or abusing substances or food, loss of sleep, worsening of previous mental health concerns, crying, yelling, and feeling frustrated or feeling anxious.

- Accurate information and support, provided in a transparent and through manner, helps reduce stress.

- Change may be the new normal. Helping adults understand that changes is a process that takes time for adjustment will help normalize their discomfort.

- Educators and support staff may react to demands to be flexible in their assignments. Teaching responsibilities will be different, driving students to school will be different, food service will be different, even managing the cleanliness of the school will be different. Staff will need support, resources and time to adjust to new demands.

Meeting the Needs of Staff and Educators

The Vision of Equity

1. Consider how race, ethnicity and family history may affect each staff member. Consider historical trauma and preexisting conditions in all staff to anticipate the supports that will be needed.

2. Understand the role of family history and culture in the management of stress. Talking about feelings outside the family unit is not valued in all cultures. Be sure to build in privacy and safety around all discussions. People have a right not to talk or work in these issues.

3. Consider the needs of staff who have suffered financial stress, health concerns, and other factors when talking about the epidemic.

4. Understand how the messages you received from your family about managing stress and talking about feelings and experiences might play into how comfortable you are with helping others.

5. Be cautious not to assume that anyone who looks to be managing their feelings is okay. Also be cautious not to assume that they are not okay. Ask and listen.

Strategies: For staff, students, and/or families

- Encourage educators to reach out to their peers. Like students, some educators may need the virtual company of people who are experiencing what they are experiencing.

- Reach out to educators, ask them how they are doing and what they need. Listen.

- Seek resource that might provide information and knowledge for educators. Mentors, Instructional specialist, and IT personnel may all assist the classroom teacher in the quest to deliver effective instruction. Refer educators and other adult staff to Employee assistance, Human Resources, ministry, or their family doctor if signs of stress appear to be manifested.

- Watch for signs of exhaustion. Listen to education sessions to hear the voices of educators. Listen for any signs that the adults may be struggling. Reach out to the educator and offer referrals for support and care.

- Encourage educators to employ mindfulness and relaxation activities.

- If possible, have Human Resources or the Local school system Wellness Office provide webinars on self-care, exercise, yoga, eating well, and stress management.

- Work with student support staff to identify school personnel who may have lost someone to the virus. Have the school social committee recognize their loss with a card or a direct expression of sympathy.

Resources
https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/covid-19-resource-center/crisis-and-mental-health-resources/coping-with-the-covid-19-crisis-the-importance-of-care-for-caregivers%E2%80%94tips-for-parents-and-teachers

Student Behavior Consideration for Return to School

Phase(s) of Implementation

x Preparing for Return
x Re-Opening-Early Phases
x Re-Opening Next Phase

Overview

Student behavior upon the return to school will be different than any other time in memory. Students will have been absent from the physical school building for no less (and possibly more) than five months. While there is always variability in the experiences students have outside of school they have a relatively common experience during the school day, within "normal" circumstances. The early closure of schools and extended social isolation period will have led to variability in the types of experiences had by students. Students will return to school with many different abilities and needs, thus communicating their needs through a wide variety of behaviors. Adults within a student's life will need to be prepared to plan for and support them during this difficult transition so that this experience results in positive growth. It is important for school personnel to be ever mindful that a student's zip code, street address, family finances, and relational dynamics are not necessarily predictive of the type of experience they had during the COVID closure. Now more than ever everyone must remain thoughtful and reflective of their personal biases that impact assumptions and perceptions. Interpreting student behavior from these assumptions and perceptions may lead to less than desired outcomes.

Considerations

Planning in Advance of Return to School

The more thoughtful we are about helping students get ready to return to school, either virtually or in person, the more likely the transition will be successful.

- Caregivers and school personnel must be active partners:
  - Provide honest and positive communication with the student. Adults need to be mindful of the messages they are projecting verbally and non-verbally, as fear and anxiety are contagious.
  - Adults should listen with both their heads and hearts to understand how the student is feeling. Student voice is critical at this time. Use the information students communicate to prepare the appropriate level of support as not every student will need the same thing.
  - As much as possible, re-establish procedures and routines at home that lead to learner success; sleep schedule, meal and snack schedules, decreased screen time (video games, television, computer and cell phone use), learning space free of distractions, daily activity schedules, etc. It is appropriate for school leaders to prompt these steps for families.

- School Personnel need to be united in the support of each other and students:
  - School leaders should use multiple methods of distributing and gathering information from parents and students leading up to the start of the school year. Recording video and audio messages that are pushed to parents and students through email, phones, text messages, and social media platforms over the course of the summer months and during the initial start of school will help to reassure individuals and build confidence.

Considerations (Continued)

Planning in Advance of Return to School (Continued)

o   Honest and positive communication amongst staff members recognizing the unique experiences each member of staff has had during the closure and preparing for the return to school will facilitate the successful return to school.

o   School leaders (administrators and teacher leaders) should seek to find ways for staff to engage in open dialogue with each other related to the unique support needed by individuals and agree upon rules ways to assist peers during the transition. It is critical that adults meet their own needs to be able to successfully meet the impending needs of students.

o   At least one direct contact should occur between a school person and each family prior to the start of school. Consider having a few simple questions to gather information related to any changes in the family, the student's feelings about returning, concerns the family or student has about the return, and what they are looking forward to most about returning. This allows staff to enter the first learning interaction with students with some basic understanding.

During the Initial Stage of Return to School

All members of the school community should be prepared for multiple scenarios and have plans for flexibility in helping students successfully return to learning.

- Caregivers and school personnel: the recommendations made in the preparing to return phase continue to be critical during the early weeks of school.
    - o   Caregivers must be made to feel comfortable sharing information with school personnel that students bring home related to concerns, emotions and joyful moments.
        - ▪ Create and communicate an easy, reliable way for this to occur and for the information to be captured and used by school leaders to inform future planning.
        - ▪ It cannot be assumed that students will communicate this information directly to school personnel and that school personnel will be able to listen and respond to every student.
    - o   Provide multiple methods for students to have an active voice in making decisions and plans for the future (day, weeks, months). Empowering all students to be heard, not just a small body of students, will increase the likelihood of student behavior conducive to learning and community of shared responsibility. This can happen at every grade level.

- School personnel:
    - o   It should be anticipated that the "new normal" changes rapidly (maybe daily) upon the initial return to school and school leaders should have created a method by which to gather and respond to the "data" quickly.
    - o   One idea to consider would be having a brief meeting to start or end the school day with the whole staff or critical teacher leaders who can be the conduit of information.   Plan for this and hold the time sacred in the first weeks of school. Be transparent with staff, students and parents about this time as it will reassure them that personnel are remaining vigilant.

Student Behavior Consideration for Return to School

Considerations (Continued)

During the Initial Stage of Return to School (Continued)

- o Learning expectations for students who are returning in the fall on-line will be very different than the expectations were in the spring.
    - School personnel need to be prepared to over-communicate (verbally and written) the expectations of grading, assignment completion, attendance, and engagement with students and caregivers.
- o Learning expectations for students who are returning to the physical building will be very different than those when they left school in March. Partnering with students in the development of "new rules and social norms" rather than merely presenting the new rules helps to ensure student ownership through the process of their creation. There will be non-negotiables that the teacher can present to students, but then allow students to be creative in the development of procedures or agreed upon language to post in the classroom or hallways.
- o Patience, persistence, and power - school personnel should be mindful of the three P's for students, but most importantly during the 2020 re-opening of school so as not to do harm.
    - Students may be demonstrating gaps in academic and social-emotional skills and require school personnel to be patient in identifying gaps while persistent in working to fill them. School personnel who remain mindful of sharing power with students as they seek to achieve the common goal of learning will achieve a classroom culture of success and each student will flourish.

Later Stages of Return to School

The year 2020 will have provided a catalyst for schools to reimagine what normal is to become in the future.

- Caregivers and school personnel must remain active partners:
    - o The partnerships and appreciation for the important role each plays in the educational success of a child that occurred during the early closure of brick and mortar schooling should continue to be fostered and capitalized upon.
        - The partnerships and appreciation for the important role each plays in the educational success of a child that occurred during the early closure of brick and mortar schooling should continue to be fostered and capitalized upon.
        - Caregivers should continue to attend to these resources and incorporate them into their day to day life.
    - o Through open dialogue school personnel will want to continue to seek to understand and value the unique culture of their student's families. Developing trusting relationships between the adults involved helps to create a safe place for caregivers to openly communicate with school personnel about any number of topics. This healthy partnership will allow for more culturally responsive teaching and an increase in student's sense of belonging to the school and classroom community.

- School personnel should maintain practices that elevate learning for all students:

Considerations (Continued)

Later Stages of Return to School (Continued)

- School personnel have acquired a new toolbox of instructional methods and will-continue to use them in their quest to ensure every student meets academic standards. Teaching and learning no longer needs to be bound by physical location. Regardless of where students spend the larger portion of their instructional day (on-line or brick and mortar) school personnel should seek to continue to encourage students to be mindful of learning opportunities everywhere, anytime.

- As the school year advances and the majority of students settle into learning and new routines, there will be a subset of students who continue to experience gaps and more likely communicate frustration through concerning behaviors.
  - School personnel can continue to increase their own knowledge and acquire additional skills related to instructional interventions, trauma, social emotional skill development, and restorative approaches. Many resources have become available to school personnel through a variety of free virtual experiences.

- Leaders will want to continue to be mindful of providing opportunities for staff to engage in open dialogue about their personal and professional needs. It is critical that staff be supported in their efforts to learn and use new strategies, make mistakes, and adjust for success, and persist in seeking excellence for each student.

- Leaders will also want to be mindful of supporting instructional staff as they do the heavy lifting with students while also holding them accountable to meeting the needs of students rather than relinquishing their role and referring students elsewhere.

- School leaders and leadership teams should ensure procedures are in place and used consistently for responding to student behavior in a manner that supports healthy outcomes for students and staff involved. All school personnel should be part of the utilization of strategies from multiple behavior models; trauma responsive, restorative practices, social-emotional learning, response to intervention, and positive behavior interventions and supports.

The Vision of Equity

1. Seek to develop relationships at a level that allows for honest and respectful dialogue among all stakeholders, caregivers, students, and school personnel. Seek relationships that make it safe for any individual to disagree and express opposing views without the fear of reprisal. All individuals should be able to walk away from an experience and feel that their voice was heard and valued

2. Seek to learn and integrate different cultural norms within instructional practices and schoolwide routines and expectations. Take time to ask questions about the behavior of a student, parent or colleague seeking to experience something that seems abhorrent to you from a new perspective of understanding.

The Vision of Equity (Continued)

3. Seek to acknowledge every day that student behavior reflects some type of gap between the teacher and the student; an expectation gap, a learning gap, a cultural proficiency gap. Filling the gap requires effort and action from both sides.

Resources

https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/culture-in-the-classroom

http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct12/vol70/num02/Cracking-the-Behavior-Code.aspx

Classroom Systems and the New Normal

Phase(s) of Implementation

x Preparing for Return
x Re-Opening-Early Phases
x Re-Opening Next Phase

Overview

"Classroom Systems and the New Normal" is designed for teachers to have an opportunity to learn or review the classroom systems framework developed through the PBIS model. Through this framework, teachers can provide a classroom environment that is trauma responsive. It is highly recommended that ongoing professional development to become proficient in the implementation of these supports be available to teachers.

"Students have to Maslow before they can Bloom," Dwayne Reed

Considerations

Connecting to the Challenges

- There will be many students who will need support.

  o Tier 1 supports for all students

  o Tier 2 for some students

  o Tier 3 for individualized support

- Teachers can seek support from the school based coordinated student services team at any time.

Safety

- Providing a physically and emotionally safe classroom environment is critical to addressing the needs of all students.

- Using a trauma informed approach will help students feel emotionally safe.

- Having structures in place that will keep students physically safe are important as well.

Equity

- The lens of equity should be a part of every decision a teacher and action that a teacher makes.

- This includes setting up and developing a classroom environment that is culturally responsive, from the visuals, to the classroom greetings/welcoming, to the active supervision, to the behavioral expectations.

- Aligning equitable practices within the classroom framework provides a seamless approach to learning

Classroom Systems and the New Normal

The Vision of Equity

1. Structured and predictable environments are less susceptible to implicit bias. Bias is the barrier that weakens relationships. Arrange the room in a way that reduces the physical barriers between students (within health guidelines) and allows for physical proximity between peers.

2. Classroom teachers will want to ensure that all students in the class can see their lives, histories, cultures, and home languages incorporated into the classroom environment, curricula, and instructional practices on a daily basis.

3. Check for Implicit Bias: Are there differences in how you acknowledge students?
   - More or less acknowledgement for certain students or groups of students?
   - More or less specific, immediate, genuine, or varied acknowledgement to a specific student or group of students?

4. Do you provide equitable greetings and personal interactions for all students? Have you implemented classroom entry routines and increased scanning and acknowledgement with a conscious focus on addressing potential biases? Do you ensure equity of voice among members of the community? Are all voices are valued; is everyone's heard?

5. Get to know your students and get to know their families and their backgrounds. Give them an opportunity to share their lives with you. Share your life with them.

Strategies: For staff, students, and/or families

Classroom Environment Strategies in the New Normal

- Draw or write or talk with others about a change that occurred to you during the time at home.

- Draw a picture, or write, or talk with others showing what your life was life (at home, school, or your choice) before the epidemic. Then draw what it was like during the epidemic. What changed for you?

- Draw a picture or write, or talk about the changes that you liked and the changes you did not like.

- Make a list of the things you did to try to get used to the change? What was the hardest to do? What came easily?

- How did the change with school closure affect your roles? Relationships? Routines? Assumptions?

- How did you handle change before the epidemic? What did you do to adjust to the change(s)?

- Who was able to help you make the adjustment to the changes? How did they help?

Classroom Systems and the New Normal

Strategies: For staff, students, and/or families (Continued)

Engaging Families

- Families are our partners now more than ever!

- Continue and enhance outreach to support remote learning.

- Engage families in back-to-school plans.

- Share matrix with COVID-19 related routines before school starts (e.g., face mask, hand washing, physical distance).

- Back-to-school – consider inviting families to tour the school or providing virtual tours.

- Establish a communication loop to address questions and concerns.

Resource
https://docs.google.com/document/d/16yrwZDuPbLlJHM8_wOLewFNf1TnSFjjroZPhhNZx_oo/edit?pli=1

Classroom Systems: Advisory

Phase(s) of Implementation

x Preparing for Return
x Re-Opening-Early Phases
x Re-Opening Next Phase

Overview

Students returning to school in fall 2020, whether in person or virtually, will face the unprecedented reality of a continuing global pandemic coupled with nearly six months of home instruction and limited social interaction with their friends, peers, teachers, and schools. Schools and school systems may consider using the advisory model to create communities of support; foster strong, sustaining relationships between peers and adults; and help students build resilience as they progress throughout what will likely be an unpredictable academic year. In advisory programs, students meet regularly with small groups of peers and an adult advisor over the course of multiple years. They are designed to serve as sustained, supportive communities. Advisory programs are typically built into a school calendar, providing and protecting time for students to meet regularly and sustain communities. Advisory groups may use their meeting time to set individual goals, check in with one another, engage in social emotional learning, discuss, connect, and learn from one another. For secondary students, advisory groups can serve as a critical social and academic support as they transition back into a physical school environment or continue distance learning. In order for advisory groups to maximize their impact, it is important that the school adopt a clear vision and goal for an advisory program, common expectations, provide professional learning and resources to advisors, and provide and protect time for the program to flourish. This document will assist practitioners with establishing an advisory program, as well as provide them with considerations for structure, safety, equity, and further resources for implementation.

Considerations

Connecting to the Challenges

Successful implementation of an advisory model requires careful consideration, collaborative planning, strategic scheduling, and professional development for school staff acting as advisors.

Role of Leadership and Student Support Teams

- Implementation of an advisory program requires careful planning on the part of school administrators in collaboration with student support teams.
  - All leaders need to embrace a shared vision for how the advisory program should look at the school, set clear goals for the advisory program, and determine how the advisory program will be implemented.

- Groups planning for the successful implementation of an advisory program must take student needs into consideration when determining how to structure advisory meetings and how frequently advisories should meet. Meeting times should be built into the academic schedule.

- School leadership will need to be sure to allocate enough time for quality advisory meetings.
  - Quick, daily check-ins do not necessarily constitute a quality advisory program. If schools wish to use check-ins, they may consider also providing longer, regular meeting times for advisory groups to engage in discussions, social emotional learning, and other critical functions.

Classroom Systems: Advisory

Considerations (Continued)

Role of Leadership and Student Support Teams (Continued)

- Administrators and students support teams should prepare to provide initial professional learning to all school staff who will serve as advisors.
  - Professional learning should include a clear explanation about the advisory program, a discussion about how it will be used to support students, and how adults can contribute to its success.
  - Educators unfamiliar with an advisory program may have some concerns about lost instructional time. Schools may consider preparing information addressing the link between social emotional support, resilience, and a student's capacity for learning in order to address these concerns.

Structure of Advisory

- Students may need a great deal of support following the immediate transition back to a school. This is especially important for students returning to a physical school environment that may look radically different from their previous experience with school.

- Advisory groups may serve as a means to support students with social emotional and academic needs as they transition back to school.

- Advisory groups may focus primarily on relationship building, social emotional support, and building community.

- Advisory groups are often structured as open, caring communities. This may involve seating students in appropriately spaced circles so that they can physically see one another and connect. It also often involves creating safe spaces for all students to feel heard and valued.

- Advisors may consider spending the initial time together getting to know one another, building community, and setting norms for how each member of the advisory group wishes to be treated and heard. Student support staff such as school counselors, school social workers ad school psychologist may want to provide professional development on these topics.

- Advisory groups should consist of small groups of students (ideally 10-15) paired with one adult advisor. In order for this to be feasible, it does mean every adult employee in the building serves as an advisor. One method of supporting reluctant staff is to create an advisory team, pairing a more skilled and enthusiastic person with a less skilled and reluctant person.

- Initially, schools may consider holding daily advisory periods as students transition back to school.

- Advisory groups may meet each morning to set the tone for the day, at lunch to reset, or at the end of the day to reflect.

- Advisory time should be provided and protected. Advisors should be afforded time and a variety of resources to plan for quality advisory programming. Resources include items such as indoor and outdoor games, team building activities, and print or digital material to prompt creative planning. Google searching for "icebreaker" and "team building" activities will offer a plethora of ideas and materials.

Classroom Systems: Advisory

Considerations (Continued)

Structure of Advisory (Continued)

- Should it become necessary to transition back to distance learning, advisory groups could continue to meet online throughout an extended school closure. This would allow for students to develop meaningful connections with peers and adults in a distance learning environment.

Support for Teachers and School Staff

- Schools should provide ongoing professional development and support to adult advisors.
  - The role of advisor often requires a more informal, closer relationship to students than the role of administrator, classroom teacher, or other support staff may traditionally have with students. For this reason, some advisors might find themselves unprepared to create a close, caring advisory community. Schools should be prepared to offer advisors ongoing support and resources as they establish and develop their advisories.
    - This may include strategies for developing student teacher relationships, strategies for creating fostering leadership, facilitation exercises, guiding questions, lessons, activities, and other professional support.
    - Because of the closer relationships that are developed in an advisory model, school leaders should communicate and reinforce with all advisors' clear expectations of personal and professional boundaries between advisor and students.
  - Schools may consider providing curricula and/or resources on building structure and rituals throughout an advisory group. These structures and rituals may foster discussion, promote sharing of thoughts and feelings, facilitate goal setting, visions, and promote resilience among students.

Safety

- If advisory groups are meeting in a physical space, all appropriate social distancing should be maintained.

- For advisory to be effective, it is critically important that students feel physically and emotionally safe in their advisory groups. In order to ensure that advisories function as a supportive community, advisors should do initial work to ensure that advisory groups create norms, boundaries, and open lines of communication between one another.

- Students support teams may also provide advisors with additional resources that assist in fostering safe spaces and resources for trauma informed practices for working with teens and adolescents.

The Vision of Equity

1. Advisory programs can create supportive, safe communities that are critical for all students, but may be especially important for students of color, students identifying as LGBTQ+, and other students from traditionally marginalized backgrounds. Advisory programs allow for the creation of supportive communities guided by a caring adult where their voices are centered, heard, and supported throughout the course of their academic years.

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Classroom Systems: Advisory

The Vision of Equity (Continued)

2. Advisory programs can serve as a vehicle for equity by creating supportive systems for all students to thrive. However, it is critical that student support teams and school leadership provide advisors with the training needed to create warm, safe, communities where students feel comfortable expressing themselves

3. Schools may consider providing additional training for advisors on facilitating conversations that address issues of race, gender, and sexuality in a trauma- informed, culturally sensitive way.

Resources

https://www.studentachievement.org/wp-content/uploads/Designing_Advisories_A.pdf
https://mikefalick.blogs.com/my_blog/files/aera2005_Advisory.pdf
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/five_tips_for_teaching_advisory_classes_at_your_school

PBIS Classroom Systems for the "Time of COVID-19"
Professional Development for Educators Returning to Classrooms for the 2020-2021 School Year

Overview

The purpose of this professional development is to provide educators with evidence-based strategies that will help them re-engage with students during the re-entry process for the 2020-2021 school year. There are many ways for educators to support positive, proactive, and responsive school environment. The goal with these strategies is to allow teachers and educators to be instructional and decrease behavioral disruptions so that students can maximize their learning time. These strategies will be most effective when they are implemented within a school-wide multi-tiered behavioral framework such as PBIS. As schools revise their behavioral expectation to address the needs that the new normal has brought to all, they may want to include safety as a behavioral expectation. This would include physical and emotional safety.

PBIS Classroom Practice #1
Physical Classroom Environment in the Time of COVID-19

Description - **A classroom is physically designed to meet the needs of all students during re-entry phase**.

Strategy 1 - Design the physical classroom with safety in mind that will allow for instructional and restorative activities.

Strategy 2 - Arrange desks and chairs to ensure safety and social distancing. Ex: Independent work, circle time (with social distancing)

Strategy 3 - Post visuals that provide reminders about the behavioral expectations and the classroom practices and routines.

Rationale - Teachers can prevent instances of problem behavior and keep students safe by strategically planning the arrangement of the physical environment.

PBIS Classroom Practice #2
Classroom Routines That Focus on Social Distancing and Personal Safety

Description - Classroom routines are developed to address the physical and emotional needs of all students during re-entry and a plan is in place to teach the classroom routines to all students.

Strategy 1 - Establish predictable patterns and activities. Promote smooth operation of classrooms such as safe and socially distant arrivals and dismissal, following patterns for transitions, requesting help, and completion of work.

Strategy 2 - Outline the steps for completing specific activities. Teach routines and procedures directly such as hand washing and walking in a single file line six feet apart.

Strategy 3 - Create routines and procedures for the most problematic areas or times such as before or after lunch and the beginning and the end of the day, where students tend to not keep a safe distance based on past activities.

PBIS Classroom Practice #2 (Continued)
Classroom Routines That Focus on Social Distancing and Personal Safety

Rationale - Establishing classroom routines and procedures in The Time of COVID-19 will take time. It will require teaching and re-teaching of the procedures needed to keep all students safe. When clear routines are in place and consistently used, students are more likely to follow the rules, keep themselves and others safe by following the social distancing protocols and will remain engaged with school and learning and less likely to demonstrate problem behavior.

PBIS Classroom Practice #3
Post, Define and Teach Three to Five Positive School Wide/Classroom Expectations That are Revised to Reflect the Time of COVID-19 and Create a Safer Classroom Environment

Description - Three to five positive school wide/classroom expectations to include safety as one of the expectations that are posted, defined, and explicitly taught.

Strategy 1 - If a school is implementing a multi-tiered behavioral framework, such as school-wide PBIS, adopt three to five positive school-wide expectations as classroom expectations.

Strategy 2 - Teach expectations using examples and non-examples and with opportunities to practice and receive feedback.

coverStrategy 3 - Involve students in defining expectations within classroom routines (especially at the secondary level).

Rationale - Teaching rules and routines to students at the beginning of the year and enforcing them consistently across time increases student academic achievement and task engagement.

PBIS Classroom Practice #4
Active Supervision and Proximity

Active supervision practices are practices that are used in a preventive manner in order to keep students safe and following the guidelines of the schools.

Description - A process for monitoring the classroom, or any school setting, that incorporates moving, scanning, and interacting frequently with students.

Strategy 1 - Visual Scanning: Scan and focus on the entire classroom to ensure that students are keeping a safe distance and that all students are physically and emotionally safe.

Strategy 2 - Moving: continuous movement, proximity. While monitoring students, move around the area, interact with students, and observe behaviors of individuals and the group; scan the entire area as you move around all corners of the area.

PBIS Classroom Practice #4 (Continued)
Active Supervision and Proximity

Strategy 3 - Interacting: verbal communication in a respectful manner, any pre corrections, noncontingent attention, specific verbal feedback. Briefly interact with students: ask how they are doing, comment, or inquire about their interests; show genuine interest in their responses. This is an opportunity to connect briefly with a number of students.

Rationale - Combining prompts or pre-correction with active supervision is effective across a variety of classroom and non-classroom settings.

PBIS Classroom Practice #5
Engaging Students and Providing Opportunities to Respond

Opportunities to respond are varied and are provided at high rates that reflect the new classroom dynamic where students will be further apart, in a virtual setting, or some kind of hybrid model.

Description - A teacher behavior that requests or solicits a student response by either asking a question or by teaching prompt.

Strategy 1 - Individual or small group questioning. Use a response pattern to make sure that all students are called on and allowed to respond in a way that they feel valued and accepted.

Strategy 2 - Group responding. All students in a class respond in unison to a teacher question that allows them to remain a safe distance apart and still participate as a class.

Strategy 3 - Nonverbal responses: Response cards, student response systems, and guided notes will give students a safe way to demonstrate their learning progress.

Rationale - Increased rates of opportunities to respond in a safe manner will support student on-task behavior and will decrease the amount of disruptive behaviors.

PBIS Classroom Practice #6
Specific Praise and Other Strategies are Used to Acknowledge Behavior

Description - Verbal statement that names the behavior explicitly and includes a statement that shows approval.

Strategy 1 - May be directed toward an individual or group. Following a transition where students quietly listened to instructions, "You did a great job sitting quietly and listening for what to do next."

Strategy 2 - May be directed toward an individual or group. Following a transition where students quietly listened to instructions, "You did a great job sitting quietly and listening for what to do next."

Strategy 3 - Deliver approximately five praise statements for every one corrective statement Reinforcement should happen frequently and at a minimal ratio of five praise statements for every one correction.

PBIS Classroom Practice #6 (Continued)
Specific Praise and Other Strategies are Used to Acknowledge Behavior

Rationale - Contingent praise is associated with increases in a variety of behavioral and academic skills. Behavior-specific praise has an impact in both special and general education settings.

PBIS Classroom Practice #7
Prompts, Pre-corrections, and Reminders are Consistently Given Before a Behavior Might Occur

Description - Provided reminders that describe what is expected before a behavior might occurs.

Strategy 1 - Preventative reminders take place before the behavior response occurs. Before students begin seatwork, provide a reminder about how to access help and materials, if needed.

Strategy 2 - The prompt is delivered by the teacher in a way that the student will understand.

Strategy 3 - Specific and explicit reminders describe the expected behavior and link to the appropriate expectation.

Rationale - Delivering prompts and pre-corrections for appropriate behavior results in increases in improved behavior. Use prompts during transitions to new routines and for routines that are difficult for students to master.

PBIS Classroom Practice #8
The Responses to Misbehaviors in the Classroom are Appropriate and Systematic

Description - An informative statement, typically provided by the teacher, that is given when an undesired behavior occurs, states the observed behavior, and tells the student exactly what the student should do in the future. This may apply to safety infractions that have been developed as a result of the "The Time of COVID-19".

Strategy 1 - Delivered in a brief, concise, calm, and respectful manner, typically in private that addresses the possible safety infraction and provides an opportunity for students to learn from the situation.

Strategy 2 - Pair with specific contingent praise after the student engages in appropriate behavior that allows the classroom to remain a physically and emotionally safe environment.

Strategy 3 - Disengage at end of error correction and redirection— avoid "power struggles" that may escalate into unsafe situations where students may act erratically because of negative feelings.

Rationale - Error corrections that are direct, immediate, and end with the student displaying the correct response are highly effective in decreasing undesired behaviors (errors) and increasing future success rates.

Engaging Families

Phase(s) of Implementation

x Preparing for Return
x Re-Opening-Early Phases
x Re-Opening Next Phase

Overview

As schools begin the process of preparing for students' return to school, it is important that they reimagine the way that they engage with families. While much remains uncertain about the 2020-2021 school year, school will undoubtedly look much different than it has in the past for students, teachers, and families. Rotated schedules, distance learning, and school closures will require more frequent, robust communication with families as schools strive to ensure that they are meeting the needs of students when they are learning in the building and at home virtually. This will require engaging families throughout the year through respectful, culturally responsive two-way communication.

Considerations:

- All efforts to engage families must be respectful and culturally sensitive.
    - Written and oral communication should be available in a variety of formats and languages, depending on the needs of the school community. Translation services are available through many applications and local school systems and may be utilized by schools to ensure that families are receiving communication in their home language.
    - Schools may consider providing training on culturally responsive family engagement practices to front office staff, teachers, and other staff who frequently interact with families.

- Schools could engage families using a variety of modalities to ensure that they have multiple ways of receiving important information.
    - Schools may consider communicating with families using calls, text messaging, social media, use of local radio and public television, etc. They also may consider developing staff points of contact for families should they have any questions about school reopening, closures, or other important announcements.
    - Schools may work in collaboration with communities and active families to designate and train family leaders. These family leaders could serve as liaisons between the school and reluctant families, taking a leadership role in assisting the school in providing outreach to and communication to families who may not otherwise have a consistently communicative relationship with the school.

- Schools may involve families in planning and implementation of reentry plans.
    - While no perfect solution for school reentry exists, social distancing needs mean that students will spend less time at school and more time with families. In order to ensure that schools' plans are considering the ongoing need of families, schools may involve families in committees, focus groups, and other means of continuous feedback.

Engaging Families

Considerations (Continued)

- Schools can provide targeted support to families throughout the year.
  - In order to determine what resources and supports families need, schools may consider using surveys, focus groups, and existing parent committees and/or organizations to get feedback on what supports and resources parents may need in order to serve as partners in their child's academic and social/ emotional development.
  - Students will likely be spending more time learning at home through a combination of distance learning and rotating schedules, making the line between school and home less defined than it has been in the past. Schools may consider how to build structures to build two-way communication with families, so that staff and families can easily communicate about assignments, challenges, successes, and other needs.
  - Families will face unprecedented challenges as they try to juggle supporting their children with distance learning, complicated school schedules, work, and other hardships brought on by the continued pandemic. Schools and staff should be mindful of these challenges and associated stress and try to plan and react with sensitivity and empathy.

- Involve student services personnel and outside agencies to help meet the needs of families. Mental, physical, food, substance abuse, violence, and other family dynamic issues may be ongoing challenges for families. Asking about what they need and work with your student services team members to link them to resources.

The Vision of Equity

1. Consider your beliefs about the families of the children you work with. Might you have any hidden biases or preconceived notions that you need to examine?

2. Equitable, culturally responsive family engagement strategies are respectful of families' home cultures, languages, and parents' role as their child's first teachers.

3. Providing culturally responsive methods of communication in a variety of languages ensures that all families can access information and content and can be involved in their child's education.

4. Empowering parents to become involved in the school community, planning, and decision making promotes equity by ensuring that the needs of all students and families are centered.

Resources
https://statesupportnetwork.ed.gov/system/files/equitable_family_engag_508.p