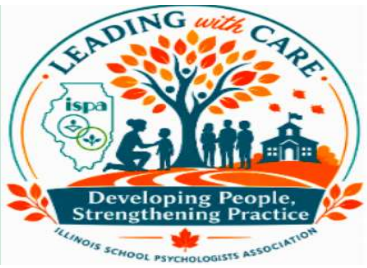
A Comprehensive MTSS Framework for Student Wellness: From Screening to Progress Monitoring and Intervention

Achilles N. Bardos, Ph.D.,
Professor of School Psychology (1988-2021)
CEO, EduMetrisis, LLC





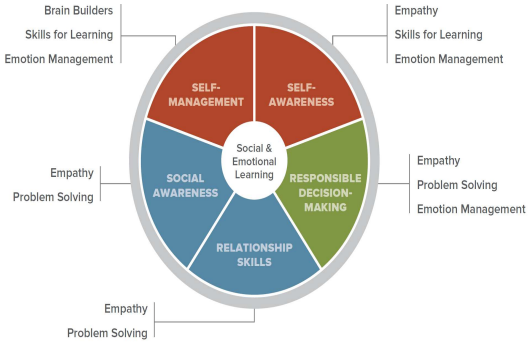
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"Moving our neurons to get ready or prove that we are…"

7H15 M3554G3 53RV35 7O PR0V3 H0W 0UR M1ND5 C4N D0 4M4Z1NG 7H1NG5! 1MPR3551V3 7H1NG5! 1N 7H3 B3G1NN1NG 17 WA5 H4RD BU7 N0W, 0N 7H15 LIN3 Y0UR M1ND 1S R34D1NG 17 4U70M471C4LLY W17H 0U7 3V3N 7H1NK1NG 4B0U7 17, B3 PROUD! 0NLY C3R741N P30PL3 C4N R3AD 7H15. PL3453 F0RW4RD 1F U C4N R34D 7H15.

•2

Social Emotional Learning Skills



- **Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL)**

•3

Background & Disclaimers

- Professional Training
  - Elementary education.
  - School psychology
- Professional Interests
  - Cognition, intelligence, LD, Plus.!!!
  - Test development.
- Beliefs in Practice
  - Need for science to support practice.
  - Solid Psychometrics in tools.
  - Evidence based interpretation.
- Co- author of tool (BIMAS) to be presented.

4

•4

Today's goal's and objectives

Evaluate key components of sustainable MTSS implementation and overcoming common implementation barriers.

Describe effective behavioral and SEL screening practices including methods for collecting and integrating data from students, teachers, and parents.

Interpret and integrate screening results with academic, attendance, and discipline data to support Tier I decision-making.

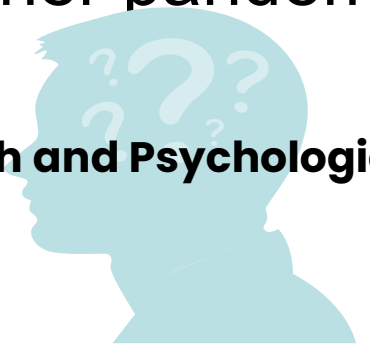
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- **Develop** data-informed intervention plans by applying structured decision-making protocols to select evidence-based supports, monitor intervention fidelity, and evaluate student response to intervention over time with progress monitoring plans (PM) and methods to build them..

Analyze equity considerations within an MTSS framework by examining patterns in screening, discipline, attendance, and academic data to support equitable identification, service delivery, and continuous improvement efforts.

•5

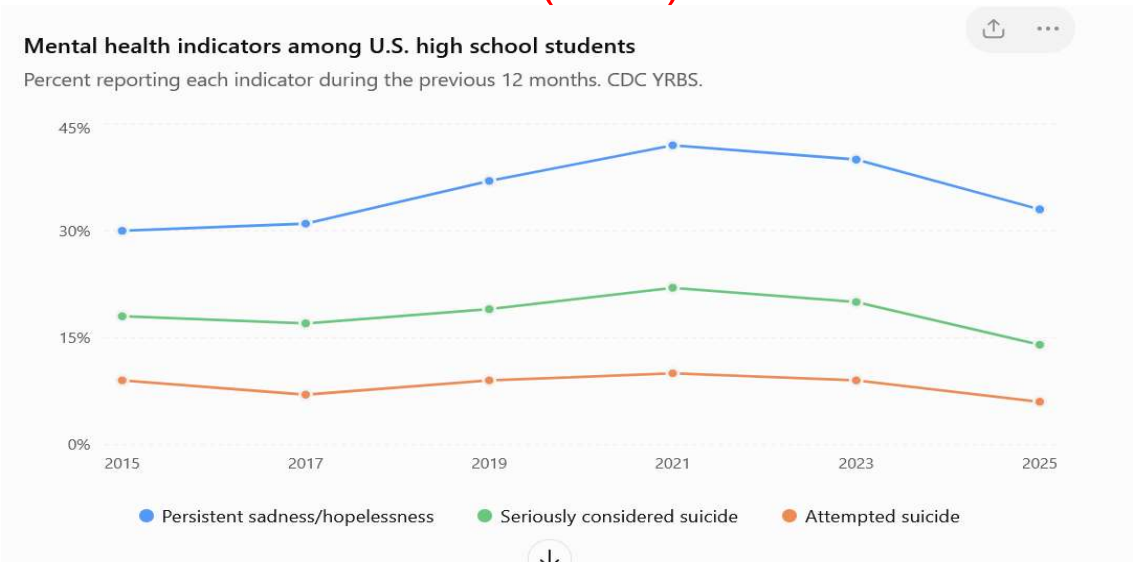
Another pandemic?



Mental Health and Psychological Well-being

•6

Mental health Needs (USA)



•7

•ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH | AGES 12–17

•Mental health needs remain substantial

•Reported past-year indicators • 2025 NSDUH figures supplied

•15.1%

•Major depressive episode

•3.7 million adolescents

•11.0%

•Depression with severe impairment

•2.7 million adolescents

•10.3%

•Serious thoughts of suicide

•2.6 million adolescents

•Percentages refer to adolescents ages 12–17; categories overlap.

•Source: SAMHSA NSDUH figures as provided in the supplied image

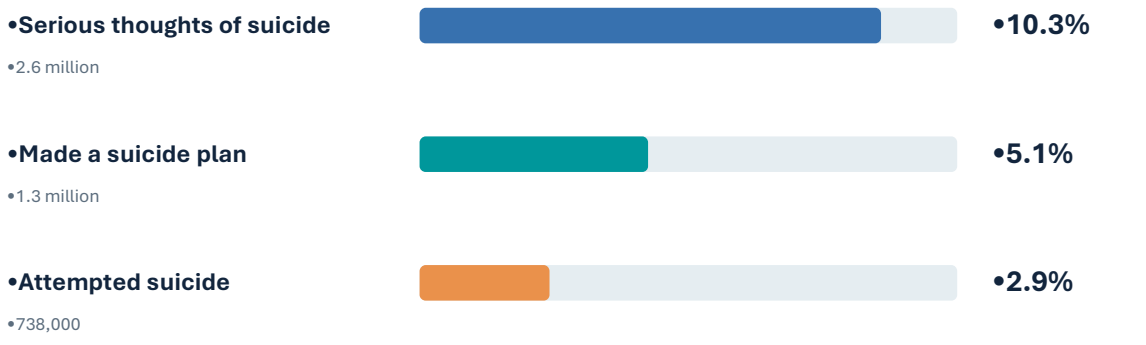
•01

•8

•RISK INDICATORS | AGES 12–17

•A closer look at suicide-related risk

•Share of adolescents reporting each indicator



•These indicators are not mutually exclusive and should not be added together.

•Source: SAMHSA NSDUH figures as provided in the supplied image

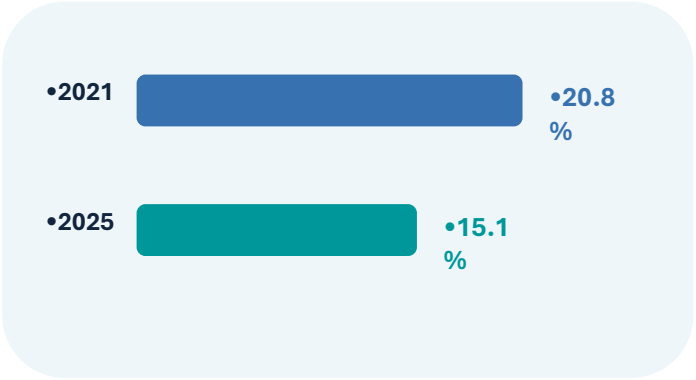
•02

•9

•TREND AND IMPLICATIONS

•Depressive episodes declined, but needs persist

•Major depressive episode in the past year • adolescents ages 12–17



•–5.7

•percentage points

•2021 → 2025

•Implication for schools: maintain systematic screening, coordinated supports, and progress monitoring.

•Source: SAMHSA NSDUH figures as provided in the supplied image

•03

•10

Mental health Needs (USA)

Differences between female and male students

The 2025 CDC survey found:

Indicator	Female students	Male students
Persistent sadness or hopelessness	43.4%	23.9%

Female students reported these feelings at nearly twice the rate of male students. MMWR

•11

Persistent sadness or hopelessness

Reported by female and male students

FEMALE STUDENTS

43.4%

Nearly 1 in 2 students

MALE STUDENTS

23.9%

Nearly 1 in 4 students

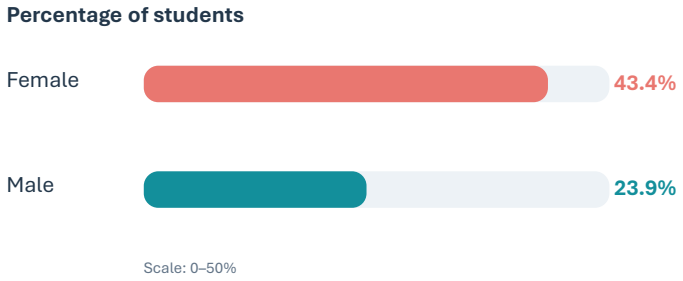
Source: CDC survey (2025), as described in supplied material; original report not independently verified.

1

•12

A substantial gender difference

Female students reported persistent sadness or hopelessness at nearly twice the rate



19.5

percentage-point gap

1.8×

female-to-male rate

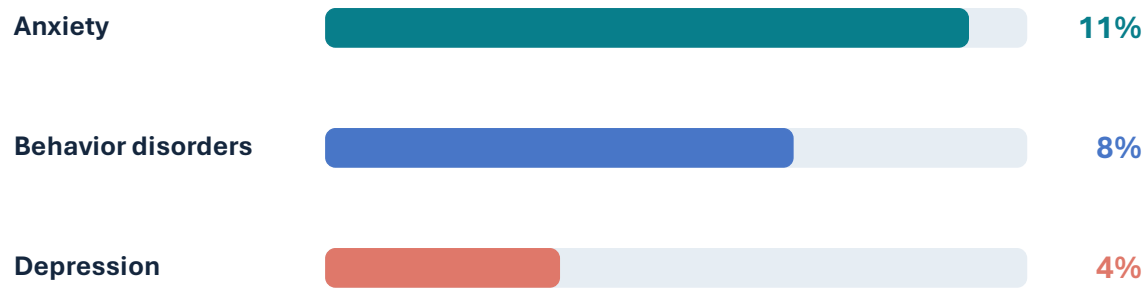
Source: CDC survey (2025), as described in supplied material; original report not independently verified.

2

•13

COMPARATIVE PREVALENCE

How common are diagnosed conditions?



Source: CDC, Data and Statistics on Children's Mental Health | 2023–2024 estimates

02

•14

•Adolescent depression and suicide risk (2025)

•Adolescents ages 12–17

Indicator	Percentage	Estimated number
Major depressive episode in past year	**15.1%**	3.7 million
Major depressive episode with severe impairment	**11.0%**	2.7 million
Serious thoughts of suicide	**10.3%**	2.6 million
Made a suicide plan	**5.1%**	1.3 million
Attempted suicide	**2.9%**	738,000

•Source: SAMHSA, 2025 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (as cited in supplied image)

•15

Mental health Needs (USA)

Access to mental health services remains a major concern

One particularly important finding in the CDC's October 2026 report concerns students who need mental health services but do not receive them.

Among high school students reporting persistent sadness or hopelessness in 2025:

- Approximately one-third received counseling or therapy.
- Another one-third wanted counseling or therapy but did not receive it.
- The remaining students did not report receiving services or an unmet need.

Barriers included cost, uncertainty about where to obtain services, and other access difficulties. MMWR

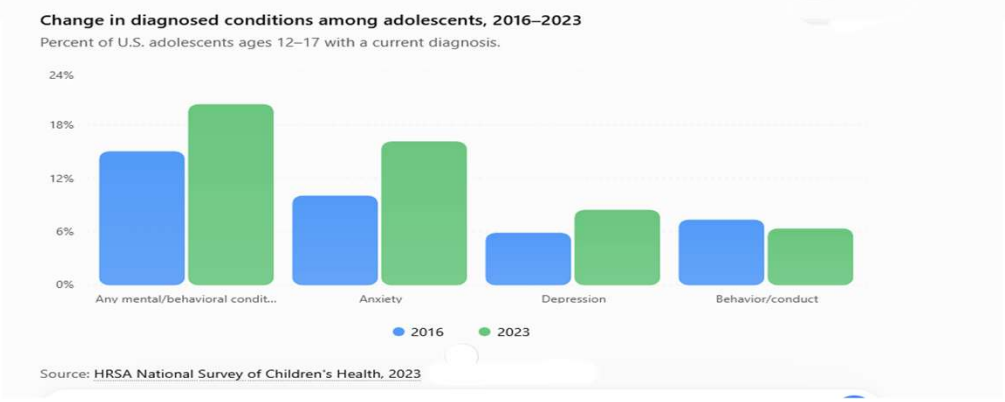
This finding is especially relevant to school-based mental health screening and MTSS implementation.

•16

Mental health Needs (USA)-substantial increase

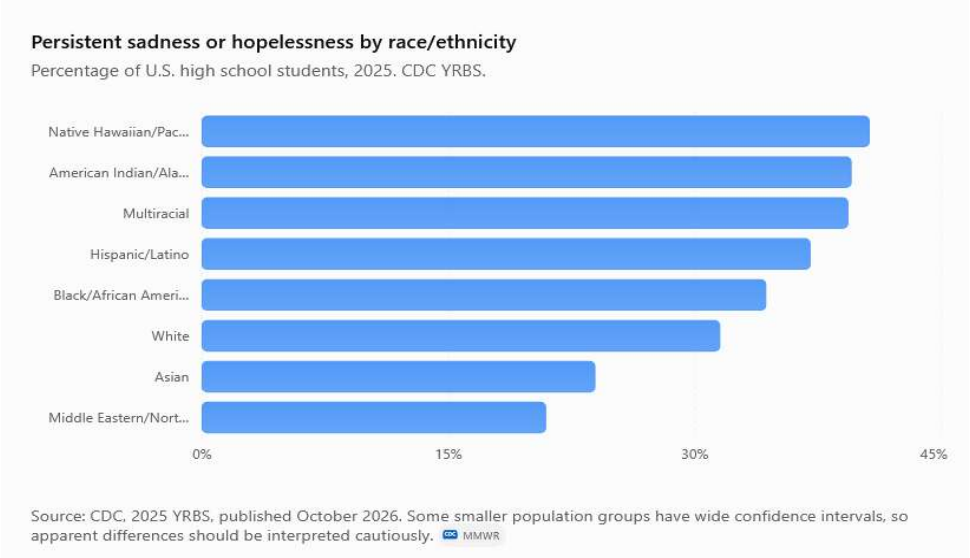
Long-term trends in adolescent mental health diagnoses

HRSA's National Survey of Children's Health provides evidence that diagnosed mental health conditions among adolescents ages 12–17 increased substantially between 2016 and 2023.



•17

Mental health Needs (USA)



•18

Mental health Needs (USA)

Access to counseling and therapy among students already experiencing persistent sadness or hopelessness

RACE	%
White	36.5
Black	15.4
Asian	15.7
Multi-racial	39.6

Unmet need for counselling for those reporting persistent sadness or hopelessness

RACE	%
Black	33.9
Asian	38.4

•19

Mental health Needs (USA)

Suicide risk among racial and ethnic minority students (CDC, 2023)

The CDC's 2023 YRBS provides detailed racial and ethnic comparisons for suicide risk.

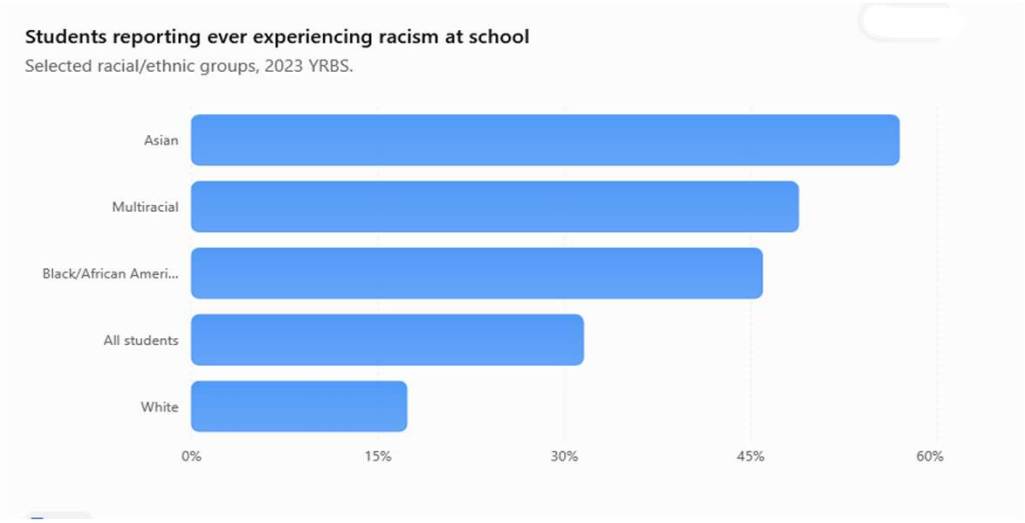
Student population	Seriously considered suicide	Attempted suicide
American Indian/Alaska Native	24.5%	11.5%
Asian	14.4%	8.0%
Black/African American	19.6%	10.3%
Hispanic/Latino	18.2%	10.8%
White	22.1%	8.3%
Multiracial	21.6%	11.4%
All students	20.4%	9.5%

MMWR

An important observation is that Black and Hispanic students reported lower rates of seriously considering suicide than White students, yet higher rates of suicide attempts. This illustrates why examining only depressive symptoms or suicidal ideation may miss important differences in risk.

•20

Mental health Needs (USA)



•21

CDC Reports worth reviewing

Reports worth reviewing

Here are three particularly useful original federal reports:

CDC (2026): Unmet Need for Mental Health Services ↗
Most recent national evidence on racial/ethnic disparities in counseling and unmet need among high school students.

CDC (2024): Mental Health and Suicide Risk Among High School Students ↗
Detailed 2023 statistics by racial and ethnic group, including protective factors.

CDC (2024): Experiences of Racism in School and Mental Health ↗
National evidence connecting reported experiences of racism with mental health, suicide risk, and school environments.

•22

Implications for MTSS, screening, and school climate

- **Mental health needs remain substantial.** Even with recent improvements, approximately one in three high school students reports persistent sadness or hopelessness.
- **Universal screening can identify students** whose needs are otherwise overlooked. Diagnosed disorders represent only part of the population experiencing difficulties.
- **Implementation safeguards.** Establish response protocols for suicide-risk indicators, train staff, document referral pathways, and assess whether services are accessible across languages and communities
- **Screening must connect to intervention.** Identifying risk without adequate follow-up, referral pathways, and progress monitoring is insufficient. Schools need a continuum of universal prevention, targeted interventions, and individualized services.

•23

Implications for MTSS, screening, and school climate

- **Universal screening with equitable follow-up.** Use validated, culturally appropriate measures and ensure positive screens lead to timely review, supportive conversations, referral, and progress monitoring.
- **Disaggregated data review.** Examine screening rates, referrals, service receipt, waiting times, intervention participation, and outcomes by student group
- **School climate and belonging.** Assess perceived safety, belonging, discrimination, and respectful treatment; use findings to guide Tier I prevention and schoolwide improvement.
- .

•24

Disparities

- Minorities have less access to mental health services and are less likely to receive needed care.
- Minorities in treatment often receive a poorer quality of mental health care.
- Minorities are underrepresented in mental health research.
- These findings support evaluating whether screening, referral, and intervention procedures are equitable across racial and ethnic groups,
- Ensure that assessment tools demonstrate appropriate validity and measurement fairness.
- Assessment tool offers a means to examine equities

•25

SAMHSA 2025 National Survey on drug use and health

Most common mental health disorders for our teens:

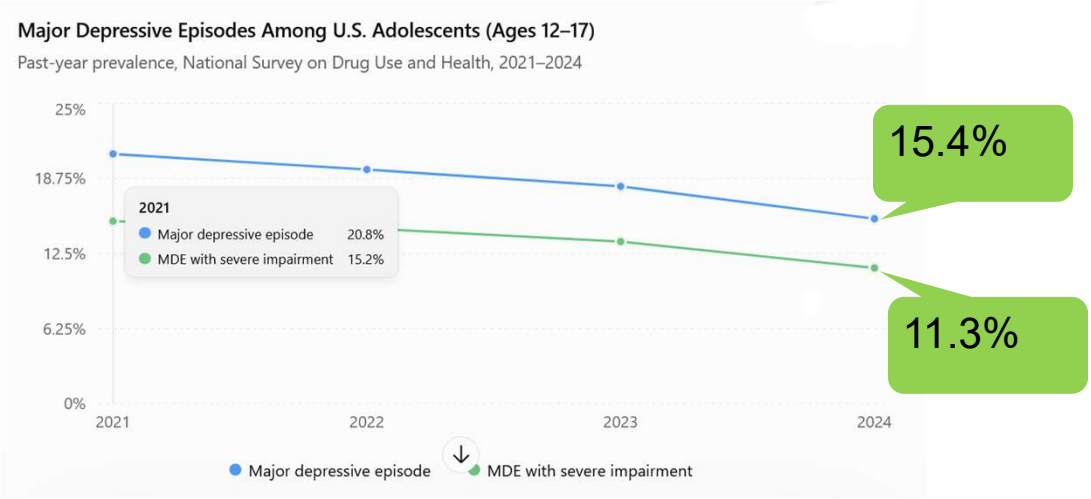
ANXIETY

- **18%** moderate or severe anxiety.
- **10.6%** had moderate symptoms.
- **7.4 %** had severe symptoms.
- **23.6 %** had mild symptoms.
- **58.4** had no or minimal symptoms

https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-development/mental-health/adolescent-mental-health-basics/common-disorders/index.html

•26

National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2021–2024



•27

Where do kids turn to when suffering?

- Often drugs or alcohol are a coping mechanism.
- 29% of adolescents who recently started using alcohol did so after a major depressive episode.
- same was found for drug use too.
- Seeking comfort in non-healthy relationships and behaviors (gangs, bulling, etc.)

•28

The COVID pandemic and lessons for Mental Health

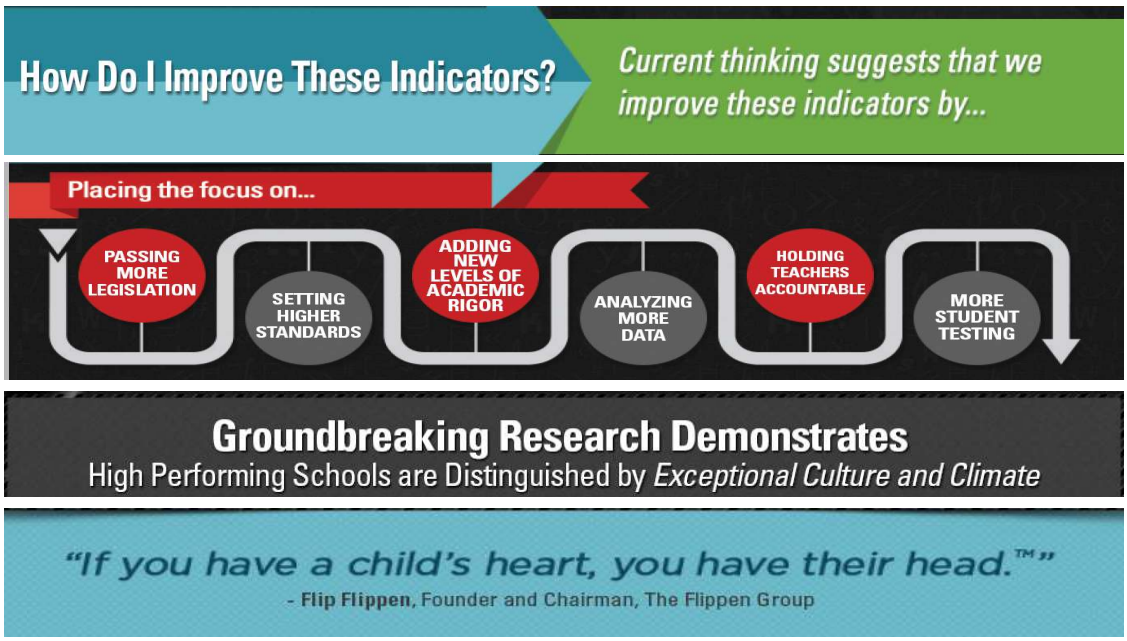
- COVID virus appears. Its status and progress is documented with continuous testing of the general population
- Initial screening data lead to "interventions" for all:
  - Masks for everyone/everywhere
  - Closures of business and schools
  - Distance with each other
- Interventions for those infected
  - Stay home, monitor fever, vaccinations are developed.
  - Hospitalizations for some
- CDC documents mental health pandemic. The 1 in 5 statistic is still there
- **RtI/MTSS frameworks are introduced**
- Tier I interventions are promoted
  - SEL curricula and interventions for ALL are growing and promoted.
  - SEL promotes mental wellness but research suggests that 30-40 % of young people have experienced or currently are impacted by negative mental health issues
  - **Who are they? and what are they experience?**

•29



•Adopted from flippen group

•30



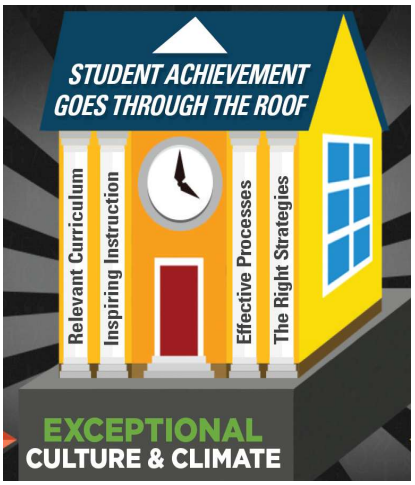
•31

…..When we create a School Climate…..

- Supported by the building leader
- Programs implemented with fidelity by caring faculty

LEAD TO:

- Student acquisition of prosocial behaviors
- Decrease in student discipline referrals
- Increase in academic performance



•32

SPEAKING ABOUT SCHOOL CLIMATE

- A positive school climate is related to many positive student outcomes.
  - –Higher academic performance
  - –Better mental health, less bulling
- Improving school climate can be used as a preventative approach to:
  - – reduce disruptive behavior and improve attendance, achievement,
  - – and student and parent satisfaction with school.
- Many assessment tools and interventions have therefore been developed to help school in the climate improve process.

•33

School Climate

- There is no consensus on the definition or dimensions of school climate.
  - –The essence of a school that leads a child, a teacher, staff member and administrator to look forward to being there each school day.
- Four major domains surface in literature:
  - –safety,
  - –teaching and learning (*academic climate*),
  - –relationships (*community climate*),
  - –the environment.[4]

•34

Safety

IT IS A GENERAL NEED FOR ALL OF US TO FEEL SAFE.

- **Physical Safety** is the degree to which violence, aggression, and physical bullying are present. What strategies are used by the school to eliminate violence (e.g., security guards and metal detectors).
- **Identity Safety:** how does a school promotes positive relationships and opportunities to learn where students feel they are welcomed, supported and valued as a member of the learning community.
- **Emotional Safety** includes available school-based mental-health services (e.g. counseling services, caring and supportive staff), an absence of verbal bullying, and positive attitudes about individual differences.
- **Order and discipline:** how often students break the school's rules, and how misbehavior is handled. Schools with a positive climate have low rates of delinquency and clearly communicated rules that students consider to be implemented fairly and consistently.

•35

Academic climate-Teaching and Learning

- **Leadership** refers to the role of the principal and administration.
  - how well do they communicate their vision for the school and how supportive and accessible they are.
- **Teaching and learning** refers to instructional practices
  - curriculum selection; evaluation methods,
  - how teachers communicate their expectations and give feedback to students. These practices influence student motivation and engagement in the classroom, which in turn affect academic performance.
- **Professional development** refers to teacher's access to training programs they find relevant and helpful, and that are in line with the needs of the school.

•36

Community

- **Relationships** refers the quality and consistency of relationships among students, between teachers and students and between the adults (Principal, staff).
- **Connectedness** refers to students' feelings of attachment and belonging towards the school.
- **Respect for diversity** refers to treating members of any ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation equally as well as cultivating awareness and appreciation for other cultures in classrooms.
- **Community partnership** refers to the involvement of parents and other community members in school life. It involves good communication between parents and school staff, high attendance of school events, the development of mentoring programs, and other initiatives that build relationships between students and the larger community.

•37

Institutional environment

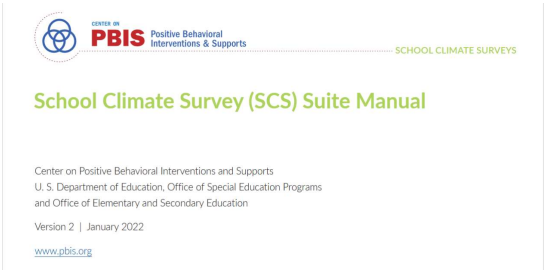
The physical layout, size, material resources of a school, maintenance, etc.

- **Environmental adequacy** refers to the physical characteristics of the school, such as cleanliness, lighting and temperature, and sound control, which all affect teaching and learning.
- **Structural organization** is the physical layout of the school itself (size, classroom size, number of unsupervised areas). It also includes organizational aspects, such as start and end times, and whether students are grouped based on ability. These characteristics can influence both feelings of safety and academic performance.
- **Availability of resources** refers to how much access students and teachers have to equipment, materials, and supplies that improve teaching (e.g., technology, tools, books).

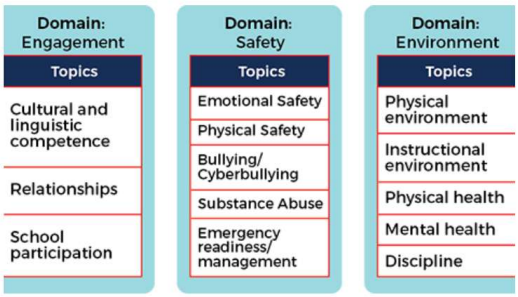
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School Climate Resources

Center on PBIS



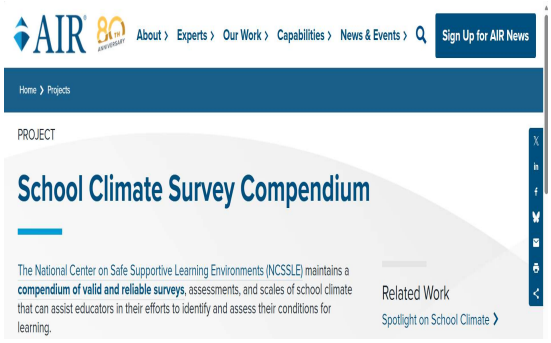
National Center for Educational Statistics



•39

School Climate Resources





•40

Assessing School Climate through i-ALS

DOMAINS

- Safety
- Student Belonging & Connectedness
- Teaching & Learning Environment
- Respect, Inclusion & Equity

i-ALS
Integrated Assessment Learning Solutions

•41

Domain 1. Safety



- Physical
- Emotional
- Responsiveness to bulling
- Consistent enforcement of School rules
- Student awareness of available help
- Early intervention and conflict prevention
- Safety reporting and student confidence in reporting concerns
- Staff preparedness for safety emergencies
- Communication of behavioral expectations
- Overall safety of the learning environment

•42

Safety Questions in i-ALS (Student form)

- I feel safe while I am at school.
- Students at this school treat one another respectfully.
- Adults stop bullying when they see it.
- I know who to talk to if I feel unsafe.
- Students are treated fairly when school rules are enforced.
- I feel safe traveling to and from school.
- Adults at my school help students resolve conflicts before they become serious.
- I feel safe reporting bullying, threats, or other unsafe behavior to an adult at school.
- I know what to do if there is an emergency at school.
- School rules and expectations for student behavior are clearly explained to me.



•43

Domain 2. Student Belonging & Connectedness



Assesses teachers' perceptions of:

- students' sense of belonging,
- interpersonal relationships,
- emotional connectedness,
- opportunities for meaningful participation in the school community.
- proactive adult outreach, and
- access to supportive relationships

•44

Student Belonging & Connectedness
Questions in i-ALS (Student form)

- I feel like I belong at this school.
- There is at least one adult at school who cares about me.
- Students include me in activities.
- Teachers listen to students' ideas.
- I am proud to be a student at this school.
- I enjoy coming to school.
- Adults at my school value what students have to say.
- I have opportunities to share my opinions about decisions that affect students at my school.
- Adults at my school make an effort to include students who feel left out or alone.
- I feel comfortable talking to an adult at school when I have a personal or social problem.



•45

Domain 3. Teaching & Learning Environment



Assesses teachers' perceptions of:

- instructional quality,
- academic expectations,
- learning supports,
- classroom environments,
- practices that promote student engagement and academic success.

•46

Teaching & Learning Environment
Questions in i-ALS (Student form)

- Teachers help me learn.
- Adults expect me to do my best.
- I receive help when I need it.
- Students are encouraged to work hard.
- My teachers believe I can succeed.
- Most classrooms are good places to learn.
- My teachers use different ways of teaching to help students learn.
- My teachers give me helpful feedback about how I can improve my schoolwork.
- My teachers use my schoolwork and test results to help me improve my learning.
- I have opportunities to set goals for my learning and track my progress.



•47

Domain 4. Respect, Inclusion & Equity



Assesses perceptions of:

- fairness,
- respect for diversity,
- inclusive practices,
- equitable opportunities and supports for all students.
- active responses to discrimination,
- disability inclusion,
- cultural and linguistic responsiveness,
- equitable access to individualized supports.

•48

Respect, Inclusion & Equity
Questions in i-ALS (Student form)

- Students from different backgrounds are respected.
- Adults treat students fairly.
- Students are treated with respect regardless of who they are.
- I can be myself at school.
- Students help one another.
- Everyone has opportunities to participate in school activities.
- Adults at my school take action when students are treated unfairly because of their differences.
- Students with disabilities are included in school activities and treated with respect.
- My school respects students from different cultural and language backgrounds.
- All students have fair opportunities to receive academic, social, and emotional support when they need it.

•49

Domain 4. Respect, Inclusion & Equity



Assesses perceptions of:

- fairness,
- respect for diversity,
- inclusive practices,
- equitable opportunities and supports for all students.
- active responses to discrimination,
- disability inclusion,
- cultural and linguistic responsiveness,
- equitable access to individualized supports.

•50

SCHOOL CLIMATE

- A must include data point and conversation item in MTSS
- Measure it frequently. Major or minor events might alter opinions
- SEL curricula and interventions might or not change perceptions
- Look at aggregate data across periods filtered by…
  - Building
  - Grade level
  - Individual student level.

NEXT!!! ---MTSS and UNIVERSAL SCREENING

•51