



*Ensuring that ALL  
Students Are Engaged,  
Safe, and Feel Supported*

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# What Do Students Bring to School?



# ACE = Adverse Childhood Experience

- ▶ Research has shown that there are eight (8) ACEs that have a strong correlation to adult health:
  1. Substance abuse in the home
  2. Parental separation or divorce
  3. Mental illness in the home
  4. Witnessing domestic violence
  5. Suicidal household member
  6. Death of a parent or loved one
  7. Parental incarceration
  8. Experience of abuse or neglect

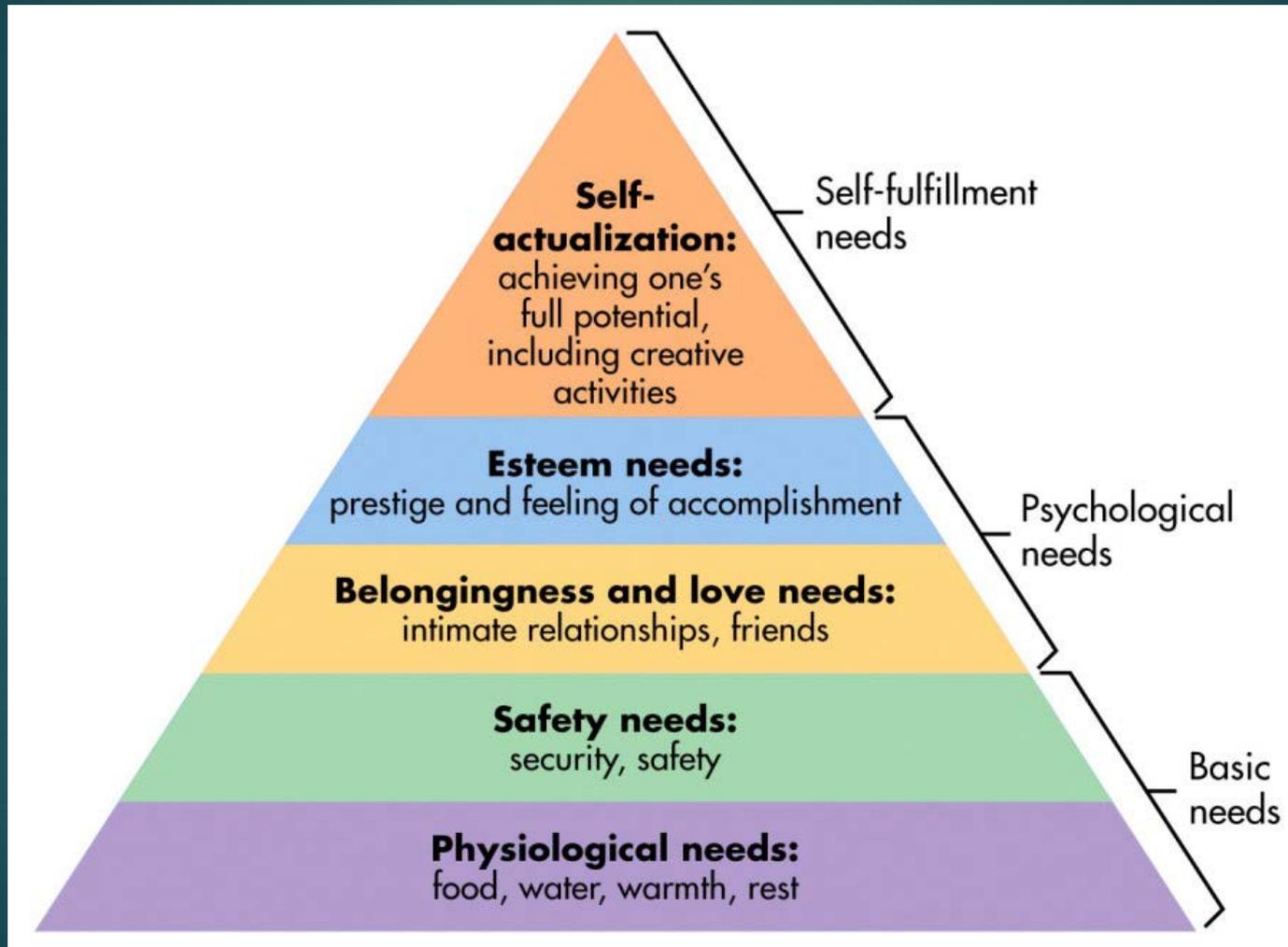
# How Prevalent are ACEs?

- ▶ About half (50%) of our students have experienced one or more ACEs.
- ▶ About 1 in 4 students (25%) have experiences 2 or more ACEs.
- ▶ 1 in 16 students have experienced 4 or more ACES.

# Why Should We Care?

- ▶ Trauma is toxic to the brain, as well as the body.
- ▶ In response to trauma, students will engage in *flight, fight, or freeze* modes.
- ▶ **If our students are not in learning mode, they simply will not learn.**
- ▶ Trauma is definitely not a learning mode.

# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



# Mentally healthy children are more successful in school and life

- ▶ Good mental health is critical to children's success in school.
- ▶ Research demonstrates that students who receive social-emotional and mental health support achieve better academically.
- ▶ School climate, classroom behavior, on-task learning, and student's sense of connectedness and well-being all improve as well.
- ▶ Mental health is not just the absence of mental illness, but also encompasses social, emotional, and behavioral health and the ability to cope with life's challenges.
- ▶ Left unmet, mental health problems are linked to negative outcomes such as behavior problems, dropping out, and delinquency.

# Statistics



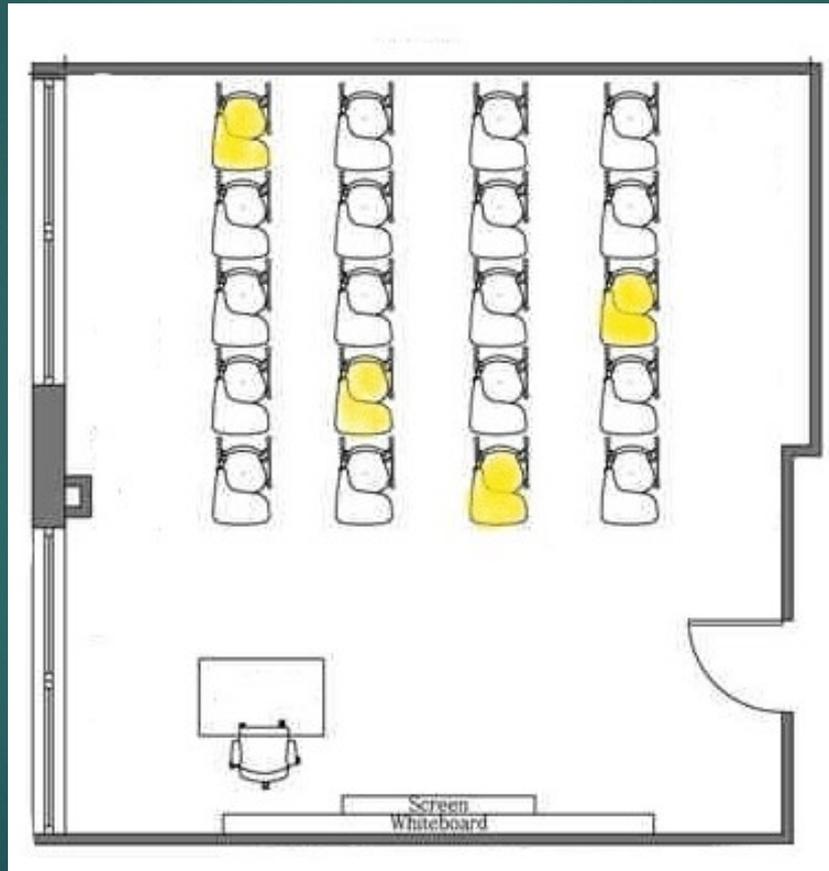
- ▶ Majority of mental health issues present before age 18.
- ▶ Delay between onset of symptoms and intervention can be several years.
- ▶ Approximately 50% of students age 14 and older with a mental illness drop out of school.
- ▶ 70% of youth in local and state juvenile justice systems have a mental illness.
- ▶ Suicide is the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death in youth ages 10-24.

# Statistics

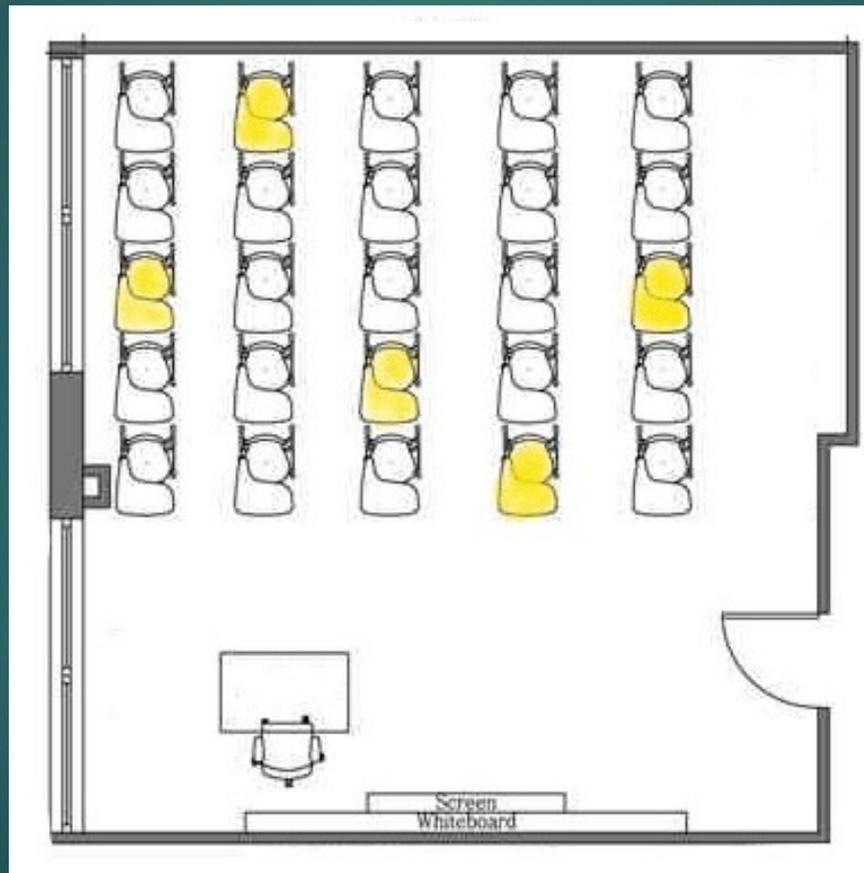


- ▶ 1 in 5 children and adolescents experience a mental health problem during their school years.

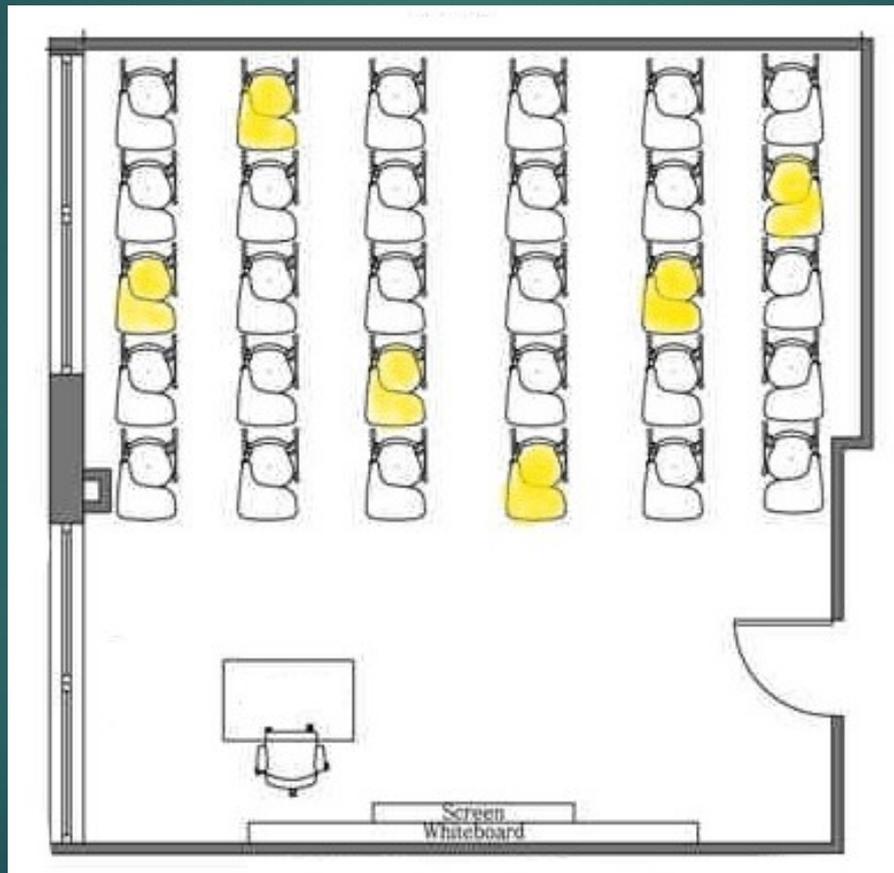
*In a class of 20 children... 4 children.*



*In a class of 25 children... 5 children.*



*In a class of 30 children... 6 children.*



# Student mental health concerns may include:

- ▶ Stress
- ▶ Anxiety- excessive worry, perseveration, panic symptoms
- ▶ Bullying and social stressors
- ▶ Family problems- financial hardship, divorce, parental substance abuse
- ▶ Depression- lack of motivation, poor focus and attention, lethargy
- ▶ Alcohol and substance abuse- self medicating behavior
- ▶ Serious mental health problems are on the rise including:
  - Self injurious behavior- cutting
  - Suicidal ideation and suicide attempt

# Unmet mental health needs

- ▶ Up to 60% of students with mental health problems do not receive treatment they need.
- ▶ May be due to lack of access to services or stigma related to mental illness.
- ▶ Of those who do get help, two thirds get help only in school.
- ▶ Students need greater access to services....

# Flight, Fight, or Freeze

Flight	Fight	Freeze
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Withdrawing</li><li>• Fleeing the classroom</li><li>• Skipping class</li><li>• Daydreaming</li><li>• Seeming to sleep</li><li>• Avoiding others</li><li>• Hiding or wandering</li><li>• Becoming disengaged</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acting out</li><li>• Behaving aggressively</li><li>• Acting silly</li><li>• Exhibiting defiance</li><li>• Being hyperactive</li><li>• Arguing</li><li>• Screaming/yelling</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exhibiting numbness</li><li>• Refusing to answer</li><li>• Refusing to get needs met</li><li>• Giving a blank look</li><li>• Feeling unable to move or act</li></ul>

# Mental Health Focus

## Building Resiliency

- ▶ Think Positive
  - Model positive attitudes and positive emotions
  - Use a “can do” problem solving approach
- ▶ Express love and gratitude
  - Praise more than criticism
- ▶ Express yourself
  - Assist kids to become aware of emotions, label emotions and cope
- ▶ Get fit
  - Healthy eating habits, regular exercise, and adequate sleep
- ▶ Foster competency
  - Foster individual talents, encourage friends and encourage children to remain socially connected

# How teachers can support mental health:

## Build protective factors

- ▶ Sense of belonging:
  - ▶ Welcome students when they arrive.
  - ▶ Greet them by name in the hallway.
  - ▶ Build trust with students and families.
  - ▶ Communicate with parents.
  - ▶ Let students know they are valued members of the school community and help them get involved in school activities.

# Beware of Tornadoes



- ▶ Tornado is an effort to manage the intensity of one's situation.
- ▶ Taking the focus away from the self and discomfort of the current circumstances.
- ▶ Tornado is a "learned strategy for avoiding the truth".
- ▶ "Escape mechanism"

# How teachers can support mental health:

## Build protective factors

- ▶ Adapting to change:
  - ▶ Provide structure within the learning environment.
  - ▶ Establish classroom routines.
  - ▶ Help students adjust when changes are necessary.
  - ▶ Communicate upcoming changes to help prepare children, allow them to be part of the process.
  - ▶ Reassure students and help them cope by focusing on what has not changed and their competencies.
  - ▶ Invite parents to communicate changes going on at home.

# How teachers can support mental health:

## Build protective factors

- ▶ Recognition:
  - ▶ Provide positive feedback.
  - ▶ Recognize children's mentally healthy behaviors (praise a student who exhibits self control when angry, raises a hand instead of calling out, shows compassion for a peer).

# How teachers can support mental health:

## Build protective factors

- ▶ Making a difference:
  - ▶ Provide students opportunities to make a difference.
  - ▶ Create opportunities to engage in prosocial behaviors to build self-esteem, foster connectedness, and reinforce personal responsibility.

# How teachers can support mental health:

## Build protective factors

- ▶ Resiliency and accomplishment:
  - ▶ Take on role of “encourager” and someone who acknowledges the significance of defeat but does not allow it to result in a sense of personal failure.
  - ▶ Encourage children to see the big picture and refocus on an ability to try again or find alternative means to accomplish the goal.
  - ▶ Reassure students of his or her own worth.
  - ▶ Teach children to believe that accomplishment comes through their own actions (self efficacy, self-determination).

# Know the signs

- ▶ Changes in habits- appetite, sleep, physical appearance.
- ▶ Withdrawal- isolating themselves
- ▶ Decreased social and academic functioning- drop in grades, difficulty interacting with peers.
- ▶ Erratic or changed behavioral expression, including flat affect- excessive crying, anger, disproportionate response.
- ▶ Increased physical complaints- headache, stomach issues, fatigue.
- ▶ Substance use.

# Myth: People with mental health problems are *violent*

- ▶ Most people with mental illness are not violent and only 3-5% of violent acts can be attributed to individuals with mental illness.
- ▶ In fact, people with severe mental illness are more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population.
- ▶ Individuals with serious mental illness need treatment and protection from violence more than suspicion and stigma.
- ▶ Stigma prevents access to treatment and utilization of available resources.

# Impact of Trauma and Violence on Mental Health

- ▶ Delays in all domains of development
- ▶ Higher drop out rates
- ▶ Reduced ability to organize, problem-solve, and process information
- ▶ Higher suspension and discipline rates
- ▶ Negative impact on concentration and memory

# Impact of Violence on Mental Health

## ▶ Talking Points for Teachers:

### ▶ Schools are safe places

- Doors are locked, emergency drills for safety.

### ▶ Be observant and let an adult know

- If you see/hear something that makes you uncomfortable, nervous or frightened.

### ▶ Difference between reporting and tattling/gossiping

- Seek out a trusted adult.
- Direct or anonymous reporting.

### ▶ Don't provide access to the building

- Follow school protocols (i.e. report strangers on campus, no access to strangers or unauthorized adults or students).

### ▶ Access support for emotional needs

- Seek mental health support for friends or peers.

# Warning Signs

## Possible Predictors of Student Violence

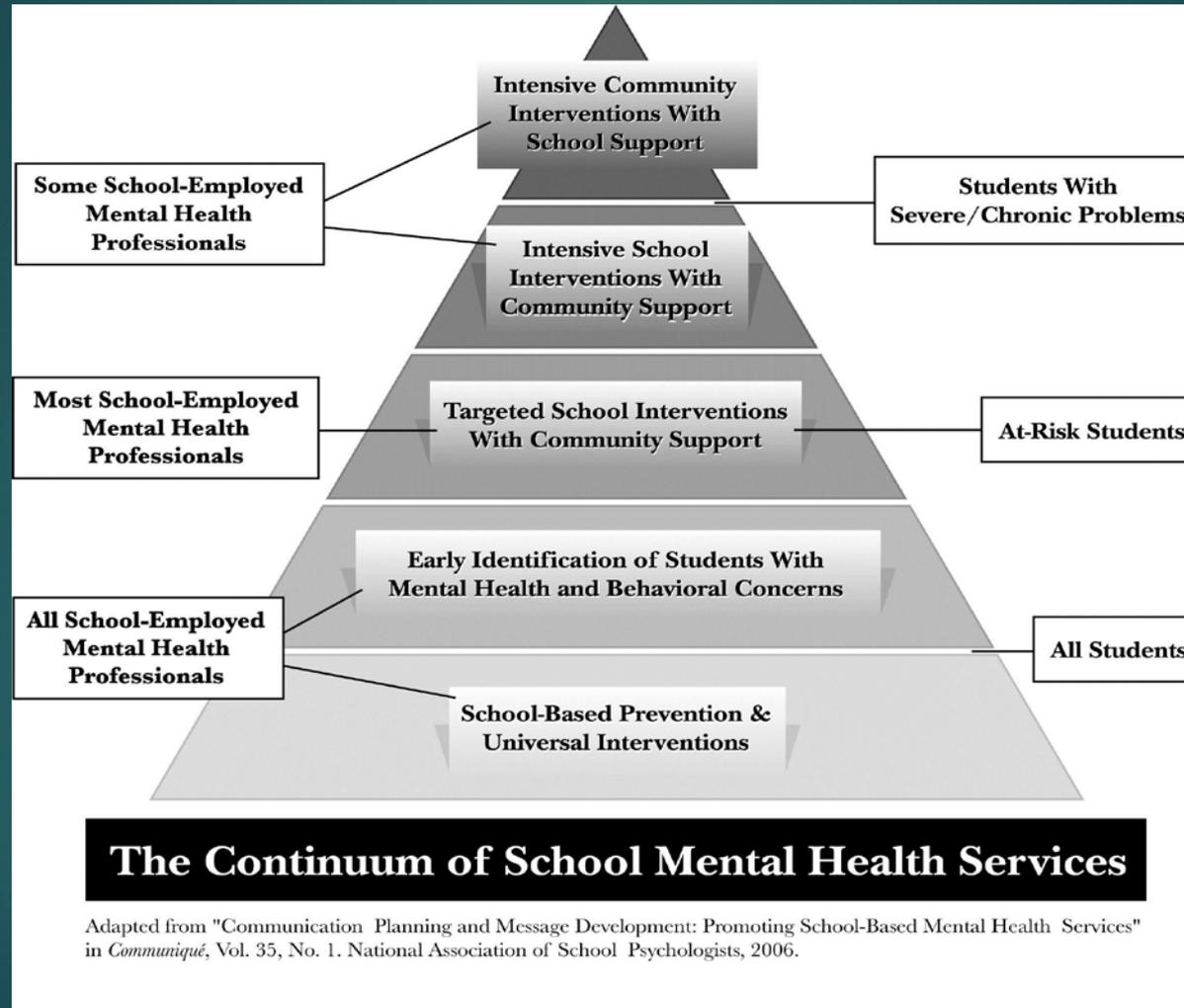
May include, but not limited to:

- ▶ Distorted perceptions of death (i.e., reunion with family)
- ▶ Extreme or disproportionate responses to common situations
- ▶ Evidence of a viable and catastrophic plan to solve problems
- ▶ Fascination with sensational violence
- ▶ Lack of empathy, and dehumanization of others
- ▶ Perfectionistic and/or rigid tendencies and expectations
- ▶ Perceptions of victimization, alienation and/or persecution

# Key Take Aways

- ▶ Observe children's emotional state
  - Take notice of any changes in affect, behavior, and physical appearance.
- ▶ Maintain a normal routine
  - Promote physical and mental health by remaining consistent in classroom routines.
- ▶ Model
  - Demonstrate skills you want students to develop.
  - Show children how to be resilient by modeling the skill.
- ▶ Ask questions
  - Check in with your students, get to know them, make a connection.
- ▶ Listen non-judgmentally
  - Pay attention and be an active listener
  - Take notice of the chatter in the classroom and hallways.
- ▶ Keep conversations developmentally appropriate.
- ▶ Refer to appropriate professional help

# Continuum of Mental Health Services



# 18-19 Mental Health Goals

- ▶ Provide a team based approach to facilitate effective coordination of mental health services and interventions.
- ▶ Provide relevant and ongoing professional development on mental health and crisis intervention (threat assessment) for all staff.
- ▶ Enhance the health curriculum to integrate social emotional skills and recognize the signs of mental health conditions.
- ▶ Engage families and community providers as meaningful partners in providing mental health supports and generalizing strategies and practices into the community and home.
- ▶ Implement school wide frameworks for creating and maintaining a positive school climate while decreasing the stigma related to mental health.
- ▶ Develop and implement a guidance plan that enhances the social emotional skills of each student through the development of personalized education and career plans.



# 18-19 Mental Health Roadmap

- ▶ Parent University focus on Mental Health- October 24th
- ▶ Monthly faculty meetings at each building
  - ▶ 15 minutes devoted to mental health topics
  - ▶ Faculty directed- submit questions, topics for further understanding
- ▶ Mental and Physical Health and Wellness Fair- May 2019
- ▶ Mental Health First Aid Training- students, school staff, parents
  - ▶ 8 hour certification course
- ▶ Monthly Mental Health and Wellness Themes and Activities
  - ▶ September- "The Power of Connection" (Suicide Awareness)
  - ▶ October- "Bullying Stops Here" (Bullying Prevention Month)
  - ▶ November- "Unlock Potential"
  - ▶ December – "Empathetic Schools" (Coming Together to Support Each Other)

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  - November: "Unlock Potential: Knowing who I am!"
  - December: "Empathetic Schools" (Coming Together to Support Each Other)
  - January: "New Year, New Start (Goal Setting)
  - February: "Healthy Relationships" (Power of Relationships)
  - March: "Healthy Choices"
  - April: "Embracing Differences" (Aligns with It's OK to Be Not OK)
  - May: Children's Mental Health Awareness Month
  - June: "Remaining Resilient"

# Mental Health Resources

- ▶ New York State Office of Mental Health  
<https://omh.ny.gov/omhweb/childservice/>
- ▶ National Association of School Psychologists <http://www.nasponline.org>

