Objectives

- Understand foundational mental health concepts.

- Explore the link between student wellbeing and academic success.

- Learn evidence-based strategies to support student mental health.

- Reflect on self-care practices to maintain educator effectiveness.

Self-Reflection

- How do you currently prioritize your own wellbeing, and what **small change** could you make to **improve it**?

- What is one **intentional action** you can take on Monday to build **trust** with a student who may be struggling?

- What is one way you can **celebrate** a colleague on Monday for something they are doing to **promote wellbeing** and belonging?

What is Mental Health?

According to the World Health Organization -

"A state of **well-being** in which every individual realizes their own potential, **can cope** with the **normal stress** of life, can work **productively** and **fruitfully**, and is able to make a **contribution** to their community.

Emotional + Psychological + Social Well-Being

What is Mental Health? (NASP)

Mental health is a necessary component for the **promotion of students' developmental, social, and academic well-being**.

Mental health does not necessarily mean the **absence** of some form of mental illness, but rather having the **means and necessary skills to promote the ability to cope with challenges in life**.

If ignored, mental health problems can interfere with children's **learning**, **development**, **relationships**, and **physical health**.

(National Association of School Psychologist, 2017).

What Do We Mean by Wellbeing and Belonging?

Well-Being refers to having positive emotions (e.g., contentment, happiness), reduced negative emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety), satisfaction with life, fulfillment, and positive functioning. It encompasses emotional, psychological, and social health.

Belonging is the extent to which students, staff, and families feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported within the school community. A sense of belonging fosters connection and trust in the school environment.

Key Terms in Mental Health

Mental Health: A continuum that fluctuates.

Mental Illness: Diagnosable conditions (e.g., anxiety, depression).

Perception: How mental illness is viewed—accepted, misunderstood, or stigmatized.

Symptoms: How people talk about mental health issues and what is socially acceptable to share.

Support: Help provided by families and communities for those with mental illness.

Resources: Access to culturally aware treatment and care.

Stigma: Negative attitudes or discrimination tied to mental illness—public, institutional, or personal.

Understanding Possible Causes of Mental Illness (1 of 3)

Biological Factors:

- **Genetics**: Inherited traits that increase susceptibility.

- **Infections**: Certain illnesses affecting brain function.

- **Brain Abnormalities**: Structural or chemical differences.

- **Brain Injury**: Damage from trauma or accidents.

- **Prenatal Damage**: Issues during pregnancy or birth.

- **Other Factors**: Chronic illnesses, hormonal imbalances.

Understanding Possible Causes of Mental Illness (2 of 3)

Psychological Factors:

- **Trauma**: Emotional, physical, or sexual abuse; neglect.
- **Early Loss:** Significant losses, such as a parent.
- **Neglect**: Lack of care and support during key development periods.
- **Relationships**: Absence of healthy attachments and support systems.
- **Coping Skills:** Poor strategies for managing stress and emotions.

Understanding Possible Causes of Mental Illness (3 of 3)

Environmental Factors:

- **Life Changes**: Transitions like job or school changes.
- **Social Pressures:** Cultural expectations and societal stress.
- **Family History**: Substance abuse or mental illness within the family.
- **Economic Stress**: Poverty, homelessness, and financial insecurity.

Protective Factors for Mental Health (1 of 3)

Individual Factors:

- Absence of genetic predisposition.

- Access to proper prenatal care.

- Positive temperament and optimistic outlook.

- Good physical health and well-being.

Protective Factors for Mental Health (2 of 3)

Environmental Factors:

- Supportive and nurturing caregivers.

- Stable and harmonious family environment.

- Strong attachment to caregivers or mentors.

- Consistent and positive parenting practices.

- A strong sense of belonging within a community.

Protective Factors for Mental Health (3 of 3)
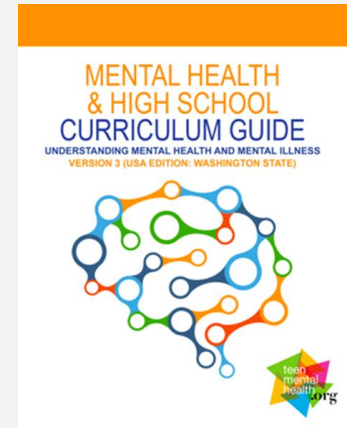
Socio-Economic Factors:

- Financial stability and security.

- Safe and supportive physical environments.

- Access to timely and effective support services.

- Availability of resources that respect cultural identity.

- Opportunities to connect with and affirm cultural heritage.

Mental Health Literacy

- Understand how to obtain and maintain good mental health
- Understand and identify mental disorders and their treatments
- Decrease stigma
- Enhance help-seeking efficacy: know where to go; know when to go; know what to expect when you get there; know how to increase likelihood of "best available care"

Kutcher and Wei; 2014; Kutcher, Bagnell and Wei; 2015; Kutcher, Wei and Coniglio, 2016.

Inverted U & Stress

Stress is a **normal part** of life that can lead to improved performance.

Too much stress or little stress can lead to poor performance.
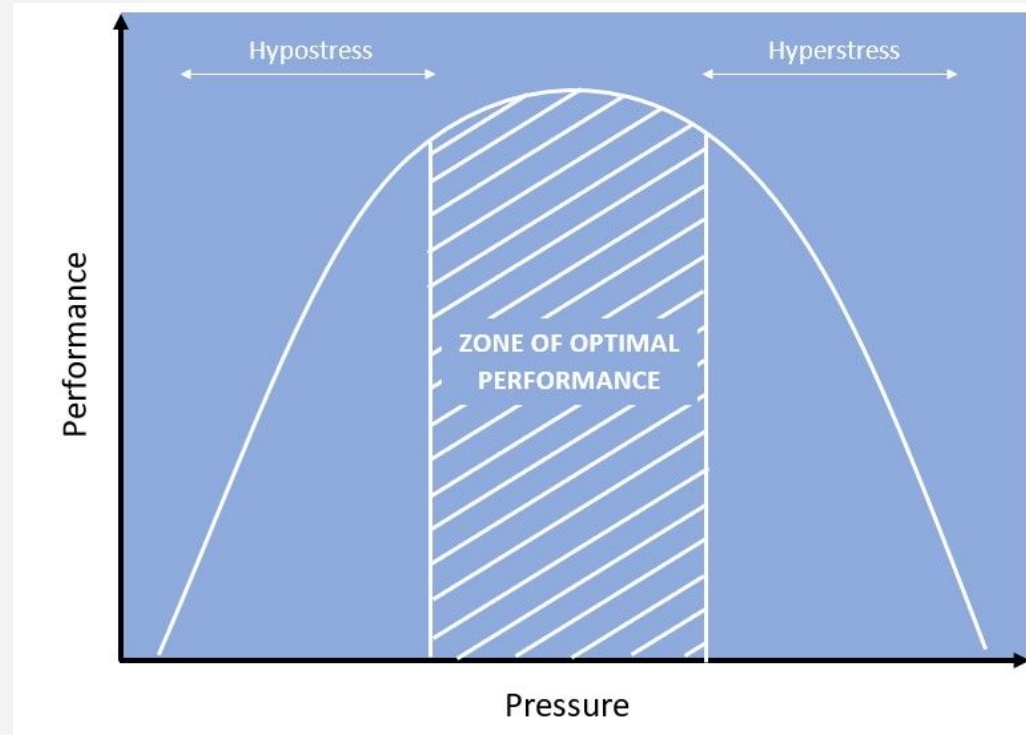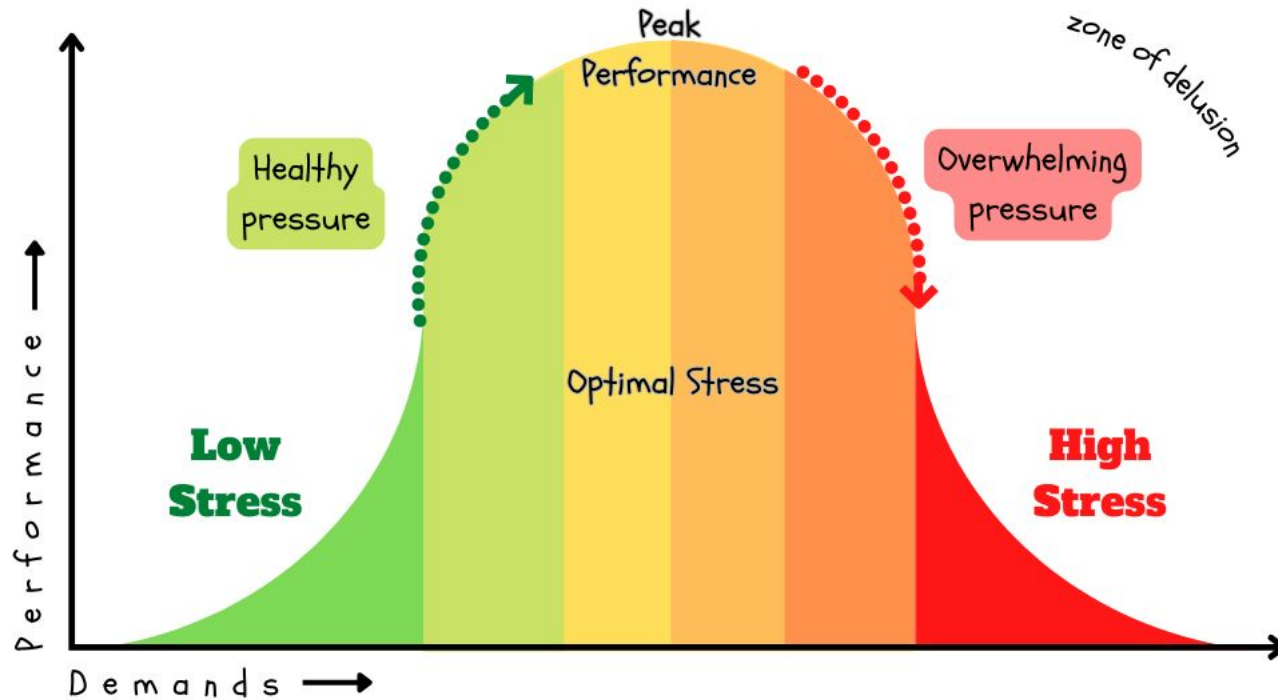
Inverted U & What This Could Look Like

YERKES-DODSON LAW

The Yerkes-Dodson Law suggests there's an optimal level of arousal for peak performance - not too much, not too little. While higher arousal benefits simple tasks, moderate arousal benefits complex tasks.

Optimal arousal for optimal performance

Simple tasks
Difficult tasks

Performance — Good / Poor

Arousal — Low / High
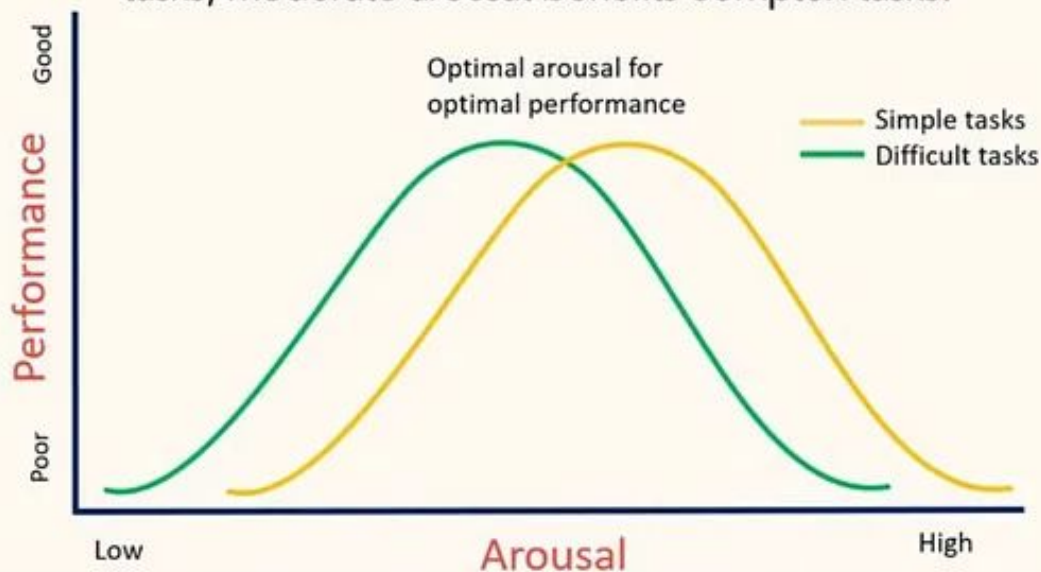
Why Should We Care?

Before the pandemic, the CDC tracked that from 2009 and 2019, high school students' reports of persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness increased from **26.1% to 36.7%.**

And nearly **1 in 5 children** had a mental, emotional, or behavioral disorder, but only **20%** of them received care from a mental health provider.

A survey of U.S. public sector workers found that <u>K-12 public school educators were the **most likely profession** to report higher levels of anxiety, stress and burnout –</u>
<u>and **55%** are ready to leave the profession early</u>.

Research Shows That Student Wellbeing And Belonging Leads To

- Improved academic achievement

- Increased attendance and engagement

- Decreased discipline issues

- Decreased drop out rates

- Improved student behavior

- Increased school connectedness

(Hansen, A. R., Branson, K., Duey, S., Pulskamp, A., Rigles, B., Toll, R., Mingola, N., & Riggs, N. R. (2022). Understanding and cultivating a positive school climate. Produced for the Colorado Department of Education, School Climate Transformation Grant.)

Why Should Schools Care?

Impact on Academic Achievement: Students' mental health significantly influences their ability to succeed academically, making it essential for educators and policymakers to address.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs: A meta-analysis of 270,000 students in grades K-12 showed that SEL programs improved grades and standardized test scores by 11 percentile points compared to non-participants (Durlak et al., 2011).

Long-Term Benefits: Prosocial skills in kindergarten are strong predictors of future success:
- ○ 50% more likely to graduate on time.
- ○ 100% more likely to earn a college degree (Jones et al., 2015).

The Relationship Between Mental Health and Academic Achievement

WHat is CDE Doing?

What is the Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging?

The landscape of wellbeing and belonging in schools emphasizes creating environments where all students feel safe, supported, and valued. Schools play a critical role in fostering these outcomes through policies, practices, and initiatives.

Key Initiatives Integrated into This Landscape:
- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)**: Teaching skills to manage emotions and build relationships.
- **Trauma-Informed Practices**: Addressing the impact of trauma on learning and behavior.
- **PBIS**: Promoting positive behavior with proactive strategies.
- **MTSS**: Providing tailored supports for individual student needs.
- **Mental Health Services**: Expanding access to school-based resources.
- **DEI Initiatives**: Creating inclusive, respectful environments.

The Five Features of Wellbeing and Belonging

These five features represent the foundational and INTERCONNECTED components of all efforts that seek to improve health, safety, and engagement in Colorado schools.

School Environment

The **physical, emotional, psychological, and social** context of a school.

Relationships

All interpersonal connections in the school community that when strong, creates trust, buffers stress, & elevates the potential of each individual to thrive in the school environment.

Health + Wellbeing

The physical, social, emotional, and mental health of the **whole person**, that when optimized through **education and access to care**, leads to improved quality of life and outcomes.

Social Emotional + Behavioral Competencies

The **knowledge, skills, attitudes and actions** that **promote positive human development** and interaction.

Engaging Learning Practices

The beliefs, expectations, and actions that **encourage and equitably support all individuals** in their life-long learning journeys.

Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging

School Environment

Health + Wellbeing

Relationships

Social Emotional + Behavioral Competencies

Engaging Learning Practices

Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging Website

What Concretely is CDE Doing? (1 of 4)

School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has secured a $1.6 million annual grant from the U.S. Department of Education to enhance mental health services in schools. This funding is aimed at increasing the number of school-based mental health professionals to provide critical support to students across the state.

Grants for Staffing:

CDE oversees grants like Project AWARE, Counseling Corp, and the School Health Professional Grant Program (SHPG) to enhance staffing and mental health services in schools. These initiatives strengthen schools' ability to address student wellness and mental health needs effectively.

What Concretely is CDE Doing? (2 of 4)

Recruitment and Retention:

CDE is tackling the shortage of school-based mental health professionals as part of a broader initiative to improve educator recruitment and retention across Colorado. Strategies include financial incentives, such as grants and stipends, and pathways for mental health professionals to transition into school-based roles, ensuring schools can effectively support students.

Graduate Program and Licensure Support

CDE partners with institutions of higher education to ensure rigorous training standards for school psychology programs. Through the School Psychology Interstate Compact, CDE simplifies licensure reciprocity for out-of-state professionals while maintaining high standards, supporting a qualified workforce dedicated to student mental health.

Professional Development and Training:

CDE provides ongoing professional development opportunities for educators and mental health staff. Programs like Classroom WISE offer evidence-based training to support the mental health of students in the classroom.

Technical Assistance:

CDE provides resources to help schools address student mental health needs, including the **Guide to School-Based Mental Health Services and Professionals in Colorado,** which outlines the roles of mental health professionals, and the **SB23-004 Guidance Document** on employing these professionals in line with state requirements.

- Guide to School-Based Mental Health Services and Professionals in Colorado (PDF)
- Employment of DORAl Mental Health Professionals in School Guidance Document (SB23-004)

Mental Health Resource Bank: A centralized repository of resources for educators and families.

Social Media Toolkit: Raising awareness about mental health and available supports.

Inclusion Practices: Promoting inclusive environments for all students.

Diversity Support: Initiatives to enhance representation and equity in schools.

Equity Toolkit: Providing tools for schools to embed equitable practices into mental health programming.

What Can Educators Do?

The Role of Schools in Mental Health

- Promote the mental health and well-being of students through **education**, **prevention**, and **early intervention** efforts.

- Provide **safe** and **supportive environments** that connect students to caring adults and encourage positive peer relationships.

- **Link** students and families to mental and behavioral health services when needed.

What Educators Should Know

- The <u>warning signs</u> for mental health problems.

- How to promote <u>mental health and substance use prevention</u> in schools and on campuses.

- Whom to turn to, such as the school counselor, school psychologist, or school social worker, if you have questions or concerns about a student's behavior.

- How to access <u>crisis support and other mental health services</u>.

<u>SAMHSA Mental Health</u>

What Educators Should Look For

- **Prolonged sadness or withdrawal** lasting over two weeks.

- **Self-harm or suicidal behaviors** or plans.

- **Sudden panic attacks** with physical symptoms like a racing heart.

- **Frequent aggression** or desire to harm others.

- **Out-of-control behaviors** posing danger to self or others.

- **Disordered eating**, such as extreme dieting or purging.

- **Intense fears or worries** disrupting daily life.

- **Extreme difficulty concentrating or hyperactivity** causing safety or classroom issues.

- **Repeated substance use.**

- **Severe mood swings** affecting relationships.

- **Drastic behavioral or personality changes.**

[SAMHSA Mental Health](#)

What Educators Can Do

- Learn more about mental health by taking a mental health awareness training
- Promote social and emotional competency and build resilience
- Help ensure a positive, safe school environment
- Teach and reinforce positive behaviors and decision-making
- Encourage helping others
- Encourage good physical health
- Help ensure access to school-based mental health supports

SAMHSA Mental Health

The Importance of Educator Wellbeing

Educators' mental health directly impacts student outcomes. Taking care of yourself is essential because you cannot pour from an empty cup.

Self-Care Tips for Educators:

- **Set boundaries** and make rest a priority.

- **Practice mindfulness** or relaxation techniques to manage stress.

- **Connect with peers** and build a support network.

By prioritizing your own wellbeing, you create a stronger foundation to support your students effectively.

What Strategies Work?

Six Evidence-Based Strategies to Support Mental Health and Well-Being in Schools

Increase Students' Mental Health Literacy

Promote Mindfulness

Promote Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Learning

Enhance Connectedness Among Students, Staff, and Families

Provide Psychosocial Skills Training and Cognitive Behavioral Interventions

Support Staff Well-Being

Establish Consistent Routines

Providing structure and predictability creates a stable and supportive environment for both students and staff. Predictable routines help reduce anxiety, improve focus, and foster a sense of safety and belonging within the school community.

- **Start with Morning Meetings**: Set a positive tone, review schedules, and check in with students.

- **Use Visual Schedules**: Provide clear daily plans to support all students, especially those with executive functioning challenges.

- **Give Transition Warnings**: Use consistent cues or countdowns to prepare for changes.

- **End with Reflection**: Practice gratitude journaling or group discussions to promote closure.

Rhythmic Activities

Breathe in

Integrate Holistic Physical and Emotional Wellness

- **Promote Healthy Eating**: Educate students on nutrition and provide access to nutritious meals.

- **Encourage Regular Exercise**: Include daily physical activities like stretches, recess, or sports.

- **Emphasize Sleep Hygiene**: Teach the importance of consistent sleep routines and reducing screen time.

- **Provide Outdoor Activities**: Offer nature walks, outdoor classrooms, or gardening to reduce stress.

- **Share Stress Management Tools**: Use guided relaxation exercises or stress-relief workshops.

Holistic wellness practices foster overall student health and resilience.

Fostering a Safe and Supportive Environment

- **Promote Inclusivity**: Celebrate diversity and ensure all students feel valued and respected.

- **Establish Clear Expectations**: Set consistent rules and behavior expectations to foster trust and safety.

- **Encourage Positive Relationships**: Build strong connections between students, staff, and families.

- **Provide Emotional Support**: Offer spaces and opportunities for students to share their feelings.

- **Address Bullying Promptly**: Implement proactive measures and interventions to prevent and address bullying.

Promote Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Learning

- **Provide Ready-to-Use SEL Activities**: Offer pre-designed lesson plans and activities like emotion charts, role-playing, and teamwork exercises.

- **Incorporate SEL into Core Subjects**: Guide teachers to embed SEL into lessons, such as analyzing emotions in literature or teamwork in group projects.

- **Support Professional Development**: Host workshops or courses on SEL strategies to help educators address students' social-emotional needs.

- **Create a Resource Hub**: Offer curated tools like videos, apps, and SEL frameworks for easy access.

- **Model SEL Practices**: Encourage teachers to demonstrate self-awareness, empathy, and positive communication in the classroom.

CASEL Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

- <u>Self-Awareness</u> focuses on identifying and recognizing emotions; accurate self-perception; strengths, needs, and values; and self-efficacy.

- <u>Self-Management</u> includes impulse control and stress management; self-motivation and discipline; goal setting; and organizational skills.

- <u>Social Awareness</u> addresses perspective taking; empathy; difference recognition; and respect for others.

- <u>Relationship Skills</u> encompasses communication; social engagement and relationship building; working cooperatively; negotiation; refusal; conflict management; and help seeking.

- <u>Responsible Decision Making</u> includes problem identification and situation analysis; problem solving; evaluation and reflection; and personal, social, and ethical responsibility.

Enhance Connectedness and Inclusion

- **Organize Mentorship Programs**: Pair students with staff or older peers for guidance and support.

- **Develop School-Wide Initiatives**: Implement programs like "buddy benches" or lunch groups to foster inclusivity.

- **Facilitate Family Nights**: Host events to strengthen relationships between school staff and families.

- **Use Informal Check-Ins**: Regularly connect with students to build trust and support.

- **Leverage Family Resources**: Provide tools like the [Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP) Conference](#) to promote family-school collaboration.

Engaging Families as Partners

- **Maintain Open Communication**: Use culturally and linguistically responsive practices for consistent two-way communication with families.

- **Gather Feedback**: Learn about family strengths and their support needs.

- **Set Expectations**: Align staff roles and responsibilities to effectively support families.

- **Collaborate with Community Leaders**: Work with local leaders to strengthen family engagement.

- **Connect Families to Resources**: Provide access to tools and services that meet families' needs.

Support Staff Well-Being

- **Take Care of Yourself**: Support your physical, emotional, and mental well-being by focusing on balanced self-care.

- **Reach Out for Support**: Connect with friends, family, or colleagues to share and process emotions.

- **Role Model Healthy Coping**: Demonstrate positive ways to manage stress for both students and peers.

- **Respect Personal Boundaries**: Limit after-hours work-related communication and responsibilities.

- **Access Support Services**: Use Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) or other available resources to address challenges.

- **Create Supportive Spaces**: Establish wellness areas or quiet zones for staff to recharge.

Coping Strategies

- **Limit News Consumption**: Avoid excessive exposure to distressing news to manage stress levels.

- **Prioritize Good Sleep**: Ensure consistent and quality rest to support overall well-being.

- **Maintain Routines**: Establish daily habits to create stability during uncertain times.

- **Avoid Major Decisions**: Postpone significant life changes when feeling overwhelmed.

- **Get Outside**: Spend time in nature or care for pets to reduce stress and improve mood.

- **Ask for Help**: Recognize when support is needed and reach out for assistance.

SAMHSA Mental Health

Celebrate Successes and Show Gratitude

Recognizing and celebrating individual and collective achievements fosters morale and strengthens a positive school culture.

- **Host Recognition Events**: Organize assemblies or ceremonies to honor the accomplishments of students, staff, or teams.

- **Create a Gratitude Wall or Bulletin Board**: Provide a shared space for staff and students to post notes of appreciation and recognition.

- **Send Personalized Acknowledgments**: Share notes, emails, or shout-outs to highlight specific contributions or milestones.

- **Celebrate Milestones Together**: Mark key events, such as the end of a term or project completion, with inclusive activities.

- **Incorporate Gratitude Practices**: Use tools like gratitude journals or meeting reflections to encourage personal and shared appreciation.

Self-Reflection

- How do you currently prioritize your own wellbeing, and what **small change** could you make to **improve it**?

- What is one **intentional action** you can take on Monday to build **trust** with a student who may be struggling?

- What is one way you can **celebrate** a colleague on Monday for something they are doing to **promote wellbeing** and belonging?

What You Can Do on Monday:

Build Trusting Relationships

- Create a safe space where students feel comfortable sharing concerns and seeking help.

Embed Self-Care into Your Routine

- Prioritize your well-being with daily self-care practices to maintain balance and resilience.

Teach SEL and Coping Strategies

- Help students build emotional awareness and effective coping skills through lessons and activities.

Create a Sense of Belonging

- Encourage inclusivity and peer support to ensure all students feel valued and welcomed.

Model Healthy Relationships

- Demonstrate effective communication, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation.

Collaborate with Families and Professionals

- Partner with families and staff to develop supportive plans for students.

Resources and Tools

Colorado Educator Support

Dedicated to supporting Colorado's educational workforce. Proudly affiliated with the University of Colorado Anschutz Department of Psychiatry. [Colorado Educator Support](#)

- Well-being Support Services
- Online Self-Paced Program
- Educator Workshops
- Blog

For Elementary School Students

Books:

- *The Feelings Book* by Todd Parr: Introduces young children to a range of emotions in a simple and engaging way.

Videos:

- Sesame Street's *Big Feelings* series: Discusses emotions and coping strategies in an accessible way for young children.

- *Inside Out*: A helpful movie for teaching children about emotions and processing them.

Interactive Online Resources:

- PBS Kids' *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* website: Features games and activities centered around emotional literacy.

- *Stand Up to Stress!*: A free coloring and activity book teaching kids about stress and anxiety.

Activities:

- *Stress Catcher*: Printable "fortune teller" offering strategies for managing stress.

- *Get Excited About the Brain!*: A coloring and activity book featuring facts about the brain and mental health.

For Middle School Students

Books:

- *The Anxiety Workbook for Teens* by Lisa M. Schab: Offers exercises for managing anxiety.
- *The Survival Guide for Kids with Autism Spectrum Disorders* by Elizabeth Verdick and Elizabeth Reeve, M.D.: Provides tips for navigating social situations and managing emotions.

Videos:

- Ted-Ed's *Teen Mental Health* series: Animated videos discussing aspects of mental health.
- *Wellcast*: Videos offering advice on topics like anger, friendships, and loneliness.

Interactive Online Resources:

- *Teen Depression Kahoot! Quiz*: An interactive way to engage students in learning about mental health.

For High School Students

Books:

- *The Depression Workbook: A Guide for Living with Depression and Manic Depression* by Mary Ellen Copeland.

- *The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook* by Edmund J. Bourne.

Videos:

- *It's Real: College Students and Mental Health*: A documentary-style film exploring mental health experiences in college.

- *The Teen Brain: 7 Things to Know*: A video about the growth and adaptation of the teen brain.

Interactive Online Resources:

- *Teen Mental Health First Aid*: Teaches students how to recognize mental health challenges in peers.

- *BPO:XP – Be Present Ohio*: Suicide prevention program from Nationwide Children's Hospital.

Resources:

- *Preventing Suicide: The Role of High School Mental Health Providers*: Guidance for high school professionals.

- *Strategies for Supporting Students: Behavior Regulation*, *Emotion Regulation*, *Executive Functioning*, *Social Skills*.

Educator Resources

Books:

- *Addressing Educator Burnout and Demoralization: Actions for Administrators*.
- *Structural Supports to Promote Teacher Well-Being* (EdResearch For Recovery).

Videos:

- *A Simple Tool to Help Teachers Regulate Their Emotions* (Edutopia).

Interactive Online Resources:

- *Change to Chill*: Videos, activities, and tools for managing stress.
- *Calming Strategies*: Tools for maintaining a manageable stress level.

Guides:

- *Psychological First Aid (PFA) for Students and Teachers*: Steps to listen, protect, and connect.
- *De-Escalating a Distressed Student*: Strategies for educators to help distressed students.

Professional Development:

- *Continuing Education for Professionals Concerned with Trauma*: Training opportunities for staff.

Family Resources

Books:

- *Children and Mental Health: Is This Just a Stage?*: Information on assessing behavior, seeking help, and treatment options.

Interactive Online Resources:

- *Talk. They Hear You.*: Guidance for parents and educators.

- *Language Matters*: Factsheet about the importance of mental health language.

Activities:

- *Get Excited About Mental Health Research!*: A coloring and activity book introducing kids to mental health research.

Resources:

- *Co-Regulation: Birth to Young Adulthood*: Guidelines for caregivers on effective co-regulation.

- *Self-Regulation*: Strategies to help families improve self-regulation practices.

National Trauma-Focused Intern Training (T-FIT)

The **National Trauma-Focused Intern Training (T-FIT) for Counseling, Psychology, Social
Work, and Other School Mental Health Trainees** is a 9-module video series designed for school-based clinical trainees that is divided into two separate courses:

      1) **Foundations of Trauma-Informed School Mental Health** and
      2) **Trauma-Informed School Approaches, Classroom, and Counseling Supports**.

The series is available as an online certificate program.

Register for the Course
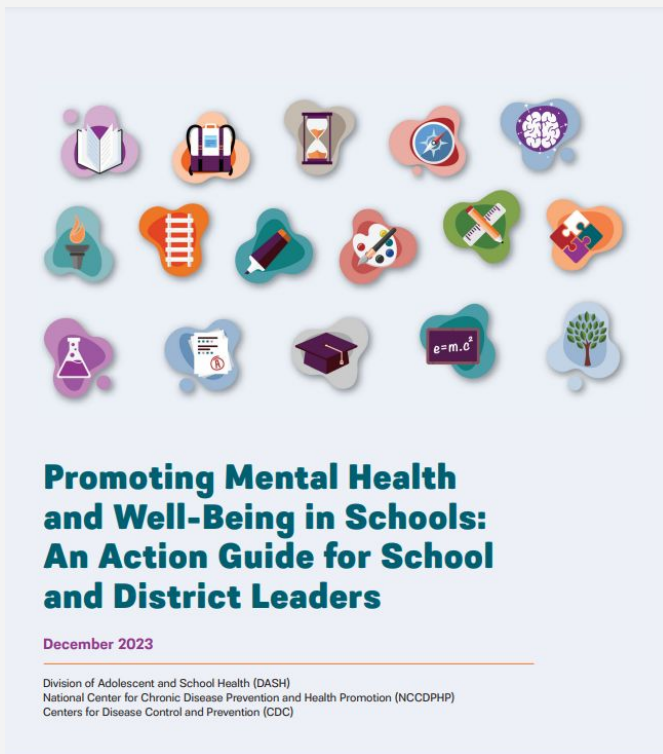
FREE Mental Health Training for Educators!

Well-Being **I**nformation and **S**trategies for **E**ducators

Classroom WISE is a FREE 3-part training package that assists K-12 educators and school staff in supporting the mental health of students in the classroom. Developed by the Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC) Network in partnership with the National Center for School Mental Health, this package offers evidence-based strategies and skills to engage and support students experiencing adversity and distress.

Classroom WISE Website
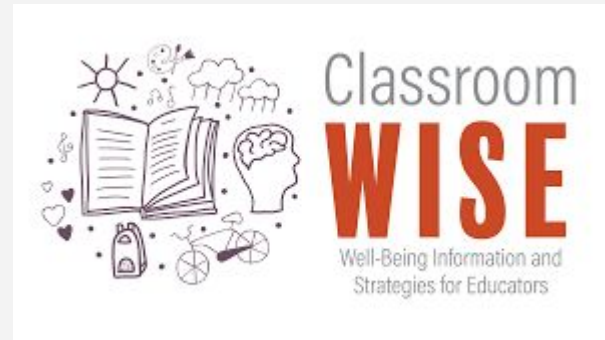
Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being in Schools: An Action Guide for School and District Leaders

Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP)

The Exceptional Student Services Unit at CDE plans conferences throughout the year that are family-centered and designed to offer support, information, and education to parents and professionals who are Colorado residents. Click above on What, Why, Who, Where, or When, or click on the questions to the right in the navigation panel for more in-depth information.

[Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP) Website](#)

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THANK YOU!

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