

# Holistic student support: better outcomes for all

A photograph of a young woman and a young man walking together outdoors, overlaid with a blue tint. The woman is on the left, smiling and looking towards the man. The man is on the right, wearing a backpack and looking towards the camera. Large, stylized, light blue letters "E" and "C" are overlaid on the bottom half of the image.

By Sarah Pettengell

# Instead of putting others in their place, put yourself in their place.

Amish Proverb



## About this book

*To create this book we have reviewed best available international research and listened to teachers, educators, psychologists and other experts as they try tackle the complex issue of how to support students to regulate their emotions, enhance motivation and stay in school.*

## Who is the book for?

This book is aimed at those preparing students in both primary and secondary school for future success. This includes but is not limited to teaching and non-teaching staff, senior school leaders, parents, policymakers as well as external support providers such as psychologists, occupational therapists, home care teams, police etc. It is only when we all work together to provide a net of support that we can prevent students slipping through the net.

## One size does not fit all

*Across the world, schools are doing their best to help students learn and develop into positive and productive members of society. But many young people in the school environment are grappling with persistent and complex issues that impact their wellbeing. The poor mental health and difficult behaviours that arise from dealing with these issues, often without any support, can affect not just the individuals in question, but whole school populations, leading to poorer student engagement, reduced academic achievement and low retention rates.*

We know that not all families are facing the same issues. For many, the COVID-19 pandemic has added pressure to those families who are already struggling, as evidenced by increased domestic abuse, addiction and mental health help-seeking rates. In the UK, for instance, over 420,000 pupils became eligible for free school meals since the first lockdown on 23 March 2020 (compared to 292,000 for the same period before the pandemic). This indicates a drastic increase in people who are struggling to make ends meet.

Yet many times we want to overlook the bigger picture of a person's life and try to measure them against a one-size-fits-all standard. But one size does not fit all, and some children, through no fault of their own, are impacted more than others. Study after study has shown that students from low socio-economic status backgrounds, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those with disabilities, those from complex family circumstances including living in homes with abusive, addicted or mentally unwell parents, are more likely to be struggling. They need support rather than punishment.

Being treated as a person first and foremost is the starting point for becoming an effective learner – more fundamental than literacy and numeracy skills.



## Schools can play a role in correcting disadvantage

*A child's experiences of adversity and trauma leaves them vulnerable to further harm from wider influences such as gangs or sexual predators, as well as increasing the risk that they will be educationally disadvantaged and face barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour, and mental health. This means the role schools can play and the potential positive impact they can have on young lives is particularly influential for this group.*

Similar to students with disabilities, students with "behavioural problems" face significant barriers to success in school, home, and community environments. This reinforces the need for a quality system of skill development and support for these students, and for educators and family members. Schools are a vital part of the wider safeguarding system for children.

### There's no one at school to talk to

Young people who have had a history of poor school achievement or whose behaviour has been treated with punitive measures such as expulsion often mention a lack of relationships with staff at school and not feeling supported as key issues in their treatment, saying things like "there's no one in school to talk to." But it doesn't have to be that way.

While developing strong relationships between staff and students takes a commitment of time that at first can feel like too big an ask, it must be remembered that it also takes time to put out the fires of challenging behaviour, punish students and manage suspensions. This book explores why positive support models are more effective in achieving results both academically and behaviourally, at the same time as working to reduce the number of exclusions in schools and avoiding the 'school to prison pipeline'.



# The cost benefit of early intervention rather than punishment

*According to the Youth Endowment Fund's 2021 Intervention to Prevent School Exclusion Toolkit Technical Report, a study into the cost of prevention rather than punishment showed that in one instance a whole-school anti-bullying program with socio-emotional learning for all pupils and restorative justice sessions to deal with bullying episodes cost £108 per pupil per year. Cost of in-school punitive treatment for the bullies cost £166 per pupil (an additional cost of £58 per pupil).*

Another study by Bagley and Pritchard (1998) showed that two schools with a full-time project social worker, full-time project teacher in a primary school and a half-time teacher in a secondary school significantly reduced truancy and exclusion as well as disruptive behaviour and bullying. The total cost of the programme equated to £411 per pupil per year. This intervention had a benefit-to-cost ratio of 2.5.

“Children who have been neglected or abused should receive special help to restore their self-respect.”

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

## Switching to a support model doesn't have to be overwhelming

Though this idea of switching a model of support over punishment may seem daunting to a school that is already overwhelmed with work, it can be simpler than at first imagined. Not everything needs to happen all at once. It can be added to over time and adjusted according to what is working well.

Support can be as straightforward as setting designated times to check in with students to see how they are going, and can grow as you learn how to tap into a wider network of external support to reduce the expectations on school staff and finding ways to create closer connections with families so the support is carried through across more areas of a student's life.

## Improving the school experience for everyone

Ongoing pastoral care builds trust and demonstrates to students that there are adults at school who are genuinely interested in them. When students feel heard, understood and supported they view school more positively and come to feel it is a place that they too belong. From this place of belonging it becomes easier for all students to thrive as individuals while still making the positive choices that make schools more effective places for all students to learn.

### Some questions to ask:

- ✓ *What support systems are in place to allow children to easily report concerns and access help?*
- ✓ *Are there any impediments in place that might stop a child from approaching an adult with concerns?*
- ✓ *What systems do we currently have in place to proactively identify children at risk or in crisis?*

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## Recognising the wider role schools play in our society

Schools play a much broader role than teaching academic information to children. They have an enormous potential to positively impact the lives of children so they might grow into self-reliant, responsible, caring and contributing members of society.

According to Dr. Brenda Suatner, Associate Superintendent, Fort McMurray Public School Division, "Schools play a supportive role to families and communities in helping students develop desirable personal characteristics and the ability to make ethical decisions. Schools also help students take increasing responsibility for their learning and behaviour, develop a sense of community belonging, and acquire an understanding of community values and how they relate to personal values."

# What type of school approach do you have?

## Approach #1:

### Everyone is the same

Approaching behaviour with the underlying idea that everyone is the same can lead to a reliance on blanket rules around what is and isn't acceptable behaviour within a school environment and harsh penalties for small breaches. This approach fits within a zero tolerance framework and often results in high levels of suspensions.

Responding to individuals as if everyone is starting from the same base level doesn't take into account personal, educational, developmental, social or other circumstances an individual student may be facing. These policies can be administered in different ways but are generally founded on the belief that harsh responses to challenging behaviours fosters a sense of equal discipline and consistency within the school community. It's aimed at sending a clear message to all members about what behaviour will and will not be tolerated, thus setting clear boundaries.

## Approach #2:

### Everyone has different challenges and needs

Using this approach means operating with a context of understanding that the larger picture of a person's life can affect their ability to engage with their schooling. In this model staff understand that there is often an underlying problem that a student needs to address in order to modify a challenging behaviour. Sometimes these problems are relatively easy to address. Sometimes they are more complicated. Taking this approach supports students, acknowledges their struggles at the same time as giving them tools to reflect on and accept responsibility for their actions. While this paradigm still allows large groups to be managed, it provides more flexibility and understanding that individuals within a group have different capacities, capabilities, contexts and needs.

## Approach #3:

### Schools and homes working together

The final approach is to take a more inclusive view of the crossover between behaviour at school and behaviour at home. It is about collaborating with families and trying to bring consistency into both environments. This approach addresses both learning and individual social wellbeing of students and often has the most impact on reducing challenging behaviours. In the UK, a study by McCluskey et al (2008) shows how tailored approaches conceptualise children's needs much more broadly and see barriers to children's learning as being about teaching, institutions, social circumstances and individual traits. By balancing academic concerns against life challenges, there is room to make allowances for life events that can affect children such as family bereavement, trauma and illness. Within the context of disadvantage and students who find themselves at risk of exclusion, this is a positive step towards a more holistic approach to students within a school context.

*Many schools operate with a combination of the three approaches. Some rules are fixed and some behaviours never tolerated, but the method of addressing transgressions takes into account the broader picture of a child's life.*



### **Taking the big picture view**

While schools rightly have a focus on achieving excellent academic outcomes, the students they teach are still growing into the adults they will become. The wider factors influencing their development need to be considered as part of the wide view of how best to help them succeed.

Taking a big picture view means standing back to consider the particular needs and situation of an individual child compared to the average and ideal. It means taking into consideration child's developmental needs, the parenting capacity of their caregiver and their wider family and environmental impacts.

### **Child's developmental needs**

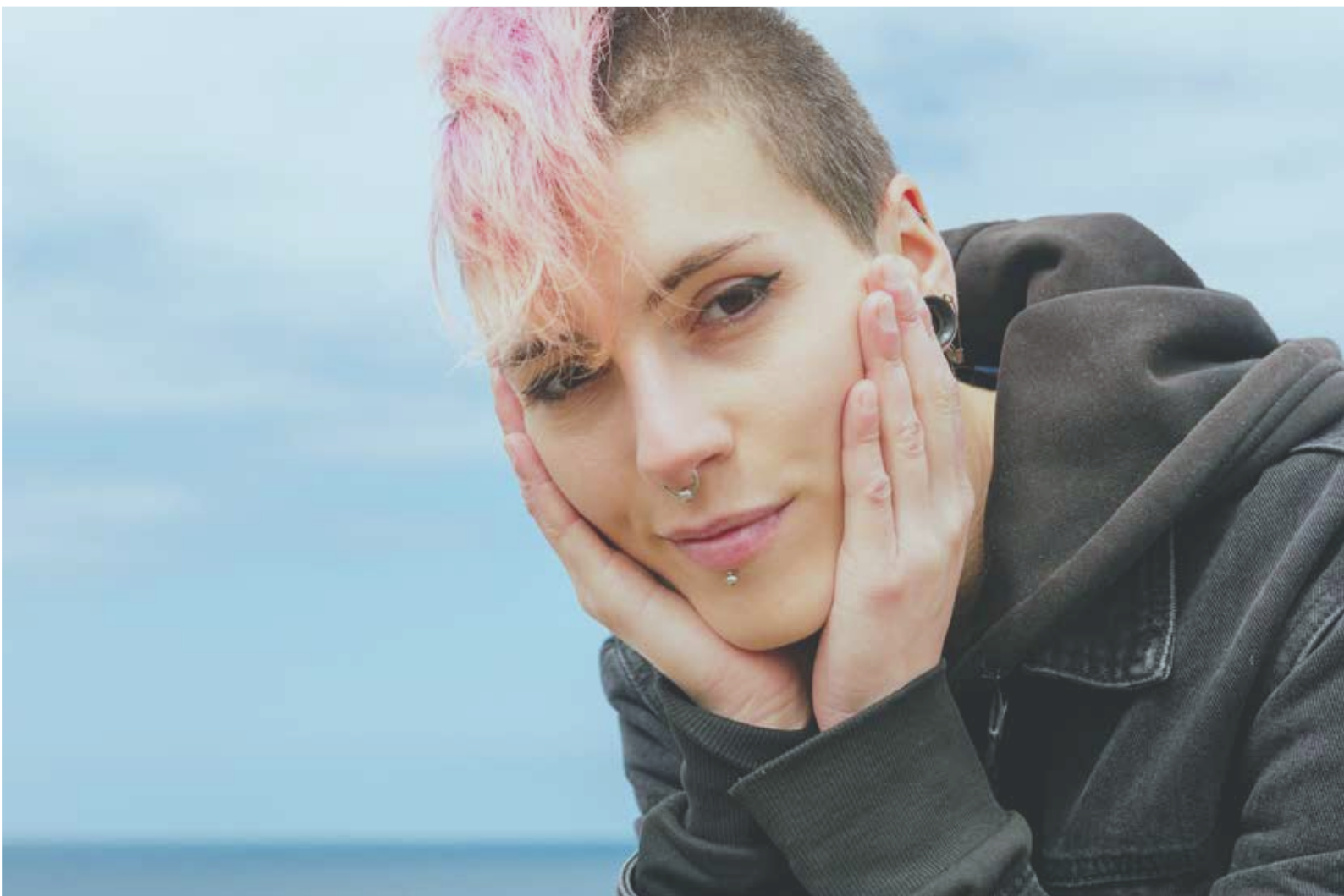
A child's developmental needs include: self care skills, social presentation, family and social relationships, identity, emotional and behavioural development, educational attainment, health.

### **Parenting capacity of caregiver**

The parenting capacity of a caregiver includes: basic care, ensuring safety, emotional warmth, stimulation, guidance and boundaries, stability.

### **Family and Environment**

The wider family and environmental factors affecting a child include: community resources, family's social integration, income, employment, housing, wider family, family history and functioning.





### Understanding the issues a student is facing

Like it or not, students do not come to school as equal blank slates, with minds open and capacity for self control equally distributed. There are many factors that influence a person's behaviour. Some of these are underlying issues, some are issues that occur at school, others are events occurring in the home, in peer groups or in communities. Understanding the context of behaviours is key to providing effective support.

There is no point getting tough as a first response without understanding the reasons driving the behaviour. Knowing, for instance, that the child who is laying with his head on the table, or being disruptive in class, may not have had breakfast, may have just endured a violent attack from a family member, or not slept at their home the night before, gives most people a different and more compassionate frame of reference for their actions.

Many young people enter school from less than ideal home circumstances that cannot help but have a negative impact on their capacity to concentrate, learn and behave. Being aware of the issues a student is facing in their broader life can help the school become a positive and mitigating factor on the negative events. The approach of understanding more of the life circumstances a student is facing means that if behaviour deteriorates the school will be in a better position to come up with an appropriate positive intervention.

### Some questions to ask:

- ✓ *How well do I know the issues my students are facing in their home?*
- ✓ *How well do I understand the cultural issues that influence a student's behaviour?*
- ✓ *How good a relationship do I have with the parents or caregivers of a student who has been acting out on a regular basis?*
- ✓ *What proactive steps am I taking to identify the underlying causes of a behavioural issue before it escalates?*
- ✓ *Are students engaging with the approaches I am taking or is it time to re-think strategies?*
- ✓ *Do I know who to contact if additional support or intervention is needed?*

“Being in an informed position where staff can be aware of negative influences starting or continuing to affect a pupil's life is key to building understanding and to identifying the most effective behaviour management approach.”

## Children have said that they need:

**vigilance:** to have adults notice when things are troubling them

**understanding and action:** to understand what is happening; to be heard and

**understood;** and to have that understanding acted upon

**stability:** to be able to develop an ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them

**respect:** to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not  
**information and engagement:** to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans

**explanation:** to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response

**support:** to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family

**advocacy:** to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views

**protection:** to be protected against all forms of abuse and discrimination and the right to special protection and help if a refugee.

*Source: Working together to safeguard children, HM Government, 2018 domestic and family violence*

“Every child deserves a champion – an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.”

Rita Pierson

# Becoming a trauma-informed school

## What is trauma?

*Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. People with traumatic experiences, often exhibit behaviours that lead to difficulties in the education system.*

## Why being trauma-informed helps the school community

When a person has a significant history of trauma, their response to these life events may interfere with them being able to achieve the desired outcomes created by a one-size-fits-all system. Without addressing trauma, we won't be able to effectively manage behaviour. So how do we address trauma? We address trauma using a multi-pronged, multi-agency public health approach that includes education and awareness, prevention and early identification, and effective trauma-specific assessment and treatment. In order to maximize the impact of these efforts, trauma, and its far-reaching implications, needs to be better understood.

We also need to look at practices that may be in place that contribute exacerbate trauma e.g. seclusion and restraints, harsh disciplinary practices in school systems, abrupt removals of children from abusing families, intimidating practices in the criminal justice system etc.



## Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

*There is a growing body of research identifying the harmful effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on a person's life. ACEs are significant stressful events occurring during childhood or adolescence and can be direct or indirect. Certain racial and ethnic minority groups are over-represented in dealing with the impact of four or more ACEs.*

### Examples of ACEs

- experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect
- witnessing violence in the home or community
- having a family member attempt or die by suicide

Also included under the category of ACEs are aspects of the child's environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding, such as growing up in a household with:

- substance use problems
- mental health problems
- instability due to parental separation or household members being in jail or prison

### More common than you think

ACEs are common. About 60% of people report experiencing at least one type of ACE, and nearly 1 in 6 report experiencing four or more types of ACEs. The research suggests that ACEs have a strong link with chronic diseases, social and emotional issues, with a higher ACE score correlating with worse outcomes on all fronts. For those who have four or more ACEs they are at an increased risk of negative health outcomes such as heart disease, respiratory disease, drug addiction and self-harm.

Some schools are beginning to use ACEs as a framework to understand their pupils. Knowing about any trauma a pupil has experienced or is experiencing can inform the support a school provides.

Toxic stress from ACEs can change brain development and affect such things as attention, decision-making, learning, and response to stress.



## Why understanding ACEs matters

Many times, students who act out at school with disruptive behaviours like talking back to teachers, interrupting lessons, swearing, theft, fighting, truancy, dress code violations, drinking alcohol or taking drugs while on school property – behaviours that commonly end in suspension or expulsion – have a history of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

### Some of the documented benefits of addressing ACEs instead of punishing students include:

- Healthier relationships
- Better performance in school
- Higher graduation rates
- Fewer mental health problems
- Less substance use
- Fewer behaviour problems and less violence
- Fewer arrests for violent crimes
- Less burden and cost from violence for everyone

**Be aware: Children missing from education, particularly persistently, can act as a vital warning sign that they may be experiencing abuse or neglect. Not being in school also leaves them at risk of child sexual abuse, gang involvement and criminal exploitation. It is important that if a child is missing from education the school is working to identify underlying reasons for absences and helping prevent the risk of them going missing in the future.**

## Other more obvious issues to look out for

ACEs and associated social determinants of health, such as living in under-resourced or racially segregated neighborhoods, frequently moving, and experiencing food insecurity, can cause toxic stress.

While ACEs can give us some context for the trauma backgrounds of children, many young people are facing complicated issues that need extra support and consideration. Other issues to be aware of when addressing the individual support needs of a student include whether they:

- have special educational needs (whether or not they have a plan around this) have an identified mental health need are a young carer
- frequently go missing from care or from home
- are at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual or criminal exploitation
- are at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- are misusing drugs or alcohol
- have returned home to their family from care
- are a privately fostered child
- are persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the school day.

“Children who have been neglected or abused should receive special help to restore their self-respect.”

# Risk Factors and Protective factors

**Risk factors** are characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that are associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes. According to a recent report

from the U.S. Surgeon General they can also be defined as “anything that increases the probability that a person will suffer harm.”

## Risk Factors

### Individual and Family

Families experiencing caregiving challenges related to children with special needs (for example, disabilities, mental health issues, chronic physical illnesses)

Children and youth who don't feel close to their parents/caregivers and feel like they can't talk to them about their feelings

Youth who start dating early or engaging in sexual activity early

Children and youth with few or no friends or with friends who engage in aggressive or delinquent behaviour

Families with caregivers who have a limited understanding of children's needs or development

Families with caregivers who were abused or neglected as children

Families with young caregivers or single parents

Families with low income

Families with adults with low levels of education

Families experiencing high levels of parenting stress or economic stress

Families with caregivers who use spanking and other forms of corporal punishment for discipline

Families with inconsistent discipline and/or low levels of parental monitoring and supervision

Families that are isolated from and not connected to other people (extended family, friends, neighbours)

Families with high conflict and negative communication styles

Families with attitudes accepting of or justifying violence or aggression

### Community Risk Factors

Communities with high rates of violence and crime

Communities with high rates of poverty and limited educational and economic opportunities

Communities with high unemployment rates

Communities with easy access to drugs and alcohol

Communities where neighbours don't know or look out for each other and there is low community involvement among residents

Communities with few community activities for young people

Communities with unstable housing and where residents move frequently

Communities where families frequently experience food insecurity

Communities with high levels of social and environmental disorder

**Protective factors** are characteristics associated with reducing the likelihood of negative outcomes. They are positive, countering effects that work to reduce a risk factor's impact. For example, poverty is often seen as a risk factor, but the presence of supportive, involved parents

may mediate the negative influence of poverty to lessen a youth's chance of becoming delinquent.

The impact of trauma can be significantly lessened if protective factors are in place and the right interventions are introduced in a timely manner.

## Protective Factors

### Individual and Family Protective Factors

Families who create safe, stable, and nurturing relationships, meaning, children have a consistent family life where they are safe, taken care of, and supported
Children who have positive friendships and peer networks
Children who do well in school
Children who have caring adults outside the family who serve as mentors/role models
Families where caregivers can meet basic needs of food, shelter, and health services for children
Families where caregivers have college degrees or higher
Families where caregivers have steady employment
Families with strong social support networks and positive relationships with the people around them
Families where caregivers engage in parental monitoring, supervision, and consistent enforcement of rules
Families where caregivers/adults work through conflicts peacefully
Families where caregivers help children work through problems
Families that engage in fun, positive activities together
Families that encourage the importance of school for children

### Community Protective Factors

Communities where families have access to economic and financial help
Communities where families have access to medical care and mental health services
Communities with access to safe, stable housing
Communities where families have access to nurturing and safe childcare
Communities where families have access to high-quality preschool
Communities where families have access to safe, engaging after school programs and activities
Communities where adults have work opportunities with family-friendly policies
Communities with strong partnerships between the community and business, health care, government, and other sectors
Communities where residents feel connected to each other and are involved in the community
Communities where violence is not tolerated or accepted

“The secret in education lies in respecting the student.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Keeping students in school

*Regular school attendance is a predictor of academic success. Frequent absences for any reason are linked to negative school outcomes, including lower test scores and higher dropout rates, which can have lifelong effects on employment and earning potential. Rates of chronic school absence tend to be higher among students who live in poverty, those with special health care needs or disabilities, youth of colour, English Learners, homeless students, and children in foster care.*

Many schools also use suspension as a first rather than last resort tool. For instance, according to a 2013 report on School Suspensions by the Australian Acting Commissioner for children, many Indigenous children, particularly boys aged 10 to 17 years, are receiving lengthy suspensions from schools throughout Australia.

In the UK, the literature has consistently identified that certain vulnerabilities, increase a child's risk of exclusion. These include: social, emotional and mental health needs, poverty, low attainment, being from certain minority ethnic groups, being bullied, poor relationships with teachers, life trauma and challenges in their home lives. The fact that those already most disadvantaged are most at risk means this issue needs urgent attention.





## School suspensions: a history

In the 1970s, keeping students out of school as a punishment was relatively rare. Fewer than four percent of students were suspended in 1973, according to an analysis of Education Department data by the Southern Poverty Law Center. At the time, even this number seemed too high, prompting the Children's Defence Fund (CDF) to publish a defining report in 1975 called *School Suspensions: Are They Helping Children?*

In the report they found that suspensions "harm the children involved and jeopardize their prospects for securing a decent education... They have become a crutch enabling school people to avoid the tougher issues of ineffective and inflexible school programs; poor communications with students, parents, and community; and a lack of understanding about and commitment to serving children from many different backgrounds and with many different needs in our public schools."

More than 40 years later, with volumes of research across the world to support this initial report, suspension rates have reached alarmingly high levels. During the 2013-2014 school year, for instance, U.S. public schools suspended 2.8 million students, or about 6 percent of its student population (that's about 10 percent more than 2000 numbers and more than double the suspension rates of the 1970s). In the UK, suspensions, rose from 410,800 in 2017/18 to 438,300 in 2019. This is equivalent to around 2,307 children a day being suspended from England's state schools.

### Why have suspension rates grown?

One of the main reasons schools use to explain increase in suspension rates is lack of budget, lack of staff and lack of time it takes to deal with behavioural issues in a more focused way. But Daniel Losen, Director of the Center for Civil Rights Remedies at CRP, reviewed spending in reactive, punitive strategy schools with high suspension rates against low suspension schools who prioritised support and relationship building and found, "schools in the low suspension group spent less on average per student than high suspension schools."

Another reason for the growth of school suspension rates is cultural. While school suspensions were only ever considered as a last resort for the most serious behavioural transgressions, from the 1990's onward growing concern about crime and violence in schools, led to "zero tolerance" and more suspension-focused responses. During this time many schools, especially in America, adopted their own version of the "broken windows" theory of policing: cracking down on small offenses in order to discourage more serious crimes.

### Why do people get suspended?

Most students are suspended from school because they have failed to internalise or meet the behavioural norms of the school or classroom. While difficult behaviour can be especially challenging in the context of a large group of students, many times impaired or delayed socio-emotional development is the root cause of this failure. This is the reason males have higher rates of suspensions: their socio-emotional development occurs more slowly than females.

The increase in suspensions has also correlated with harsher measures being taken for offenses that previously had been treated less severely — talking back to teachers, skipping class, not turning up to school or being otherwise disobedient or disruptive. Many discretionary suspensions are for offenses, like "insubordination" or "willful defiance," which can mean a student has simply challenged the authority of a teacher or school administrator

As opposed to the bad behaviour = bad kid model, it is worthwhile exploring whether the person in question has the capacity to understand or meet the norms expected in the school and classroom, or if there are underlying cognitive, cultural, emotional or other impairments, getting in the way.

### **Is suspension better for schools?**

There is a common misconception that while school suspensions may negatively impact those being suspended, they have a positive benefit on other students and staff. However, research shows that in schools that make frequent use of suspensions, students and staff experience a lower sense of security, a less positive school climate and poorer academic results.

### **Adding disadvantage to disadvantage**

In the broader context, the use of suspension runs counter to the educational philosophy of inclusion and equity in educational opportunity, especially given that the students most disadvantaged by suspension are those already disadvantaged by trauma, poverty and racism. Many schools use discipline, control and punishment before understanding the core issues driving behaviour. When you consider many children who are excluded from school may have poor attachment to unreliable parents, be battling impulsivity issues and carry a sense of shame and failure from a history of low academic achievement, being told they don't belong to a school group can be a severe blow.



Not only that, study after study has shown suspension simply does not work to improve school conduct and change undesirable behaviour. It can also set students up for lifelong negative impacts. One of the most worrying of these is the correlation between being expelled from school and ending up in prison, something which has been called the 'school to prison pipeline'.

### The long term impacts

When an individual's schooling is cut short through expulsion, they not only lose opportunities for learning, but the opportunity of connection to a wider prosocial community group. But the impacts extend beyond the individual. There are very real economic costs to society when a person is expelled from school. Costs in health, social welfare, crime prevention and lower tax revenue as these young people struggle to find work without adequate education, to name a few. Reducing expulsion rates not only benefits students themselves, but also their families, schools and the broader community.

### Lack of appropriate modelling makes "good" behaviour harder

Many students at risk of expulsion due to "bad" behaviour may be growing up in homes with caregivers who have poor attitudes to school (which often springs from their parents' own negative schooling experiences, especially in populations where racist attitudes or cultural insensitivity in the past have primed them to expect to be treated badly by schools). Parents, who may themselves be traumatised, may also display favourable attitudes to antisocial behaviour, swearing and drugs and exhibit ineffective conflict resolution strategies. Having a code of conduct at home that is very different to the one expected at school makes it easy for students slip up to their familiar accepted norm.

### Why doesn't suspension work?

For a start, many children who are suspended already have a history of below grade level academic achievement. Time spent not learning while on suspension compounds academic underachievement. These children are often disengaged from, or actively dislike, school, so time away from school can also be seen as a reward rather than a punishment. Often these children are being excluded for challenging behaviours which are then not addressed, so the behaviour continues and after multiple exclusions they are then permanently excluded.

In addition, suspension means significant time spent unsupervised outside the school environment, which allows young people greater opportunity to associate with antisocial peers and others such as gangs, drug dealers and sexual predators.

Furthermore, suspended students can become labelled as 'problem kids'. This can lead to them becoming alienated or detached from the school community, where they develop an outsider mentality that they internalise as part of their identity, and which may lead them to engage in criminal behaviours that can become an entrenched lifestyle. School attendance and the feeling of belonging to mainstream society is a potential protective factor against heading down this path.

“Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace.”

Confucius

# The school to prison pipeline

## A direct correlation between suspension and prison

*Report after report shows that children who are expelled from school have an increased likelihood of involvement with the youth justice system. This is why suspensions are often described as the key component of the school-to-prison pipeline.*

According to research in the Australia's Royal Children's Hospital recent report on school suspension, within 12 months of being suspended from their schools, students are 50% more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour and 70% more likely to engage in violent behaviour.

A 2018 study, published in the peer-reviewed journal *Youth & Society*, concluded that after 12 years had passed, students who were suspended were less likely to have graduated from high school or college and more likely to have been arrested or on probation. (The study controlled for 60 variables including socio-economic status and delinquency to compare suspended students to their otherwise similar peers, ruling out most other factors that might have explained the differences.)

Other reports have shown students who are suspended or expelled are more likely than their peers to have academic problems, drop out of school, and enter the juvenile justice system. And this problem does not affect all students equally.

### Some UK statistics

418,658 exclusions happen every year on average. The most common reason for this is persistent disruptive behaviour. Black and Caribbean students, and those who are eligible for free school meals, are four times more likely to be excluded. The Institute of Public Policy (2017) estimate that out of the 85,975 people in UK prisons, 54,164 were excluded when at school.

Dropouts resulting from suspensions in California alone, have been estimated to cost approximately \$2.7 billion over the lifetime of a single 10th grade cohort. Costs are due in part to lost wages and tax revenue, increased crime, and higher health care expenses.

## 11 Million Days Lost: Race, Discipline and Safety at US Public Schools

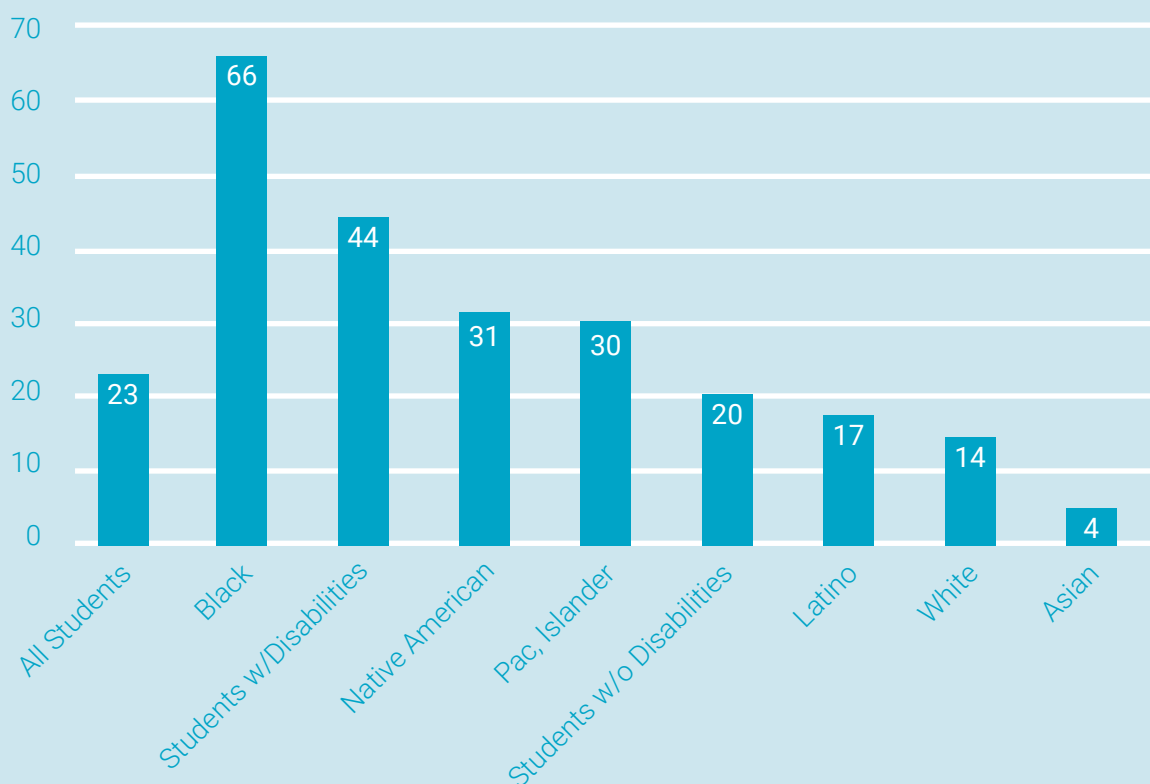
All the data in this section comes from the 2015-16 academic year by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Based on a sample size of nearly 50,000,000 students from 96,000 schools, and include nearly every public school in the United States.

In the US, out-of-school suspensions have increased about 10 percent since 2000. They have more than doubled since the 1970s. And it's hardly racially balanced. Black students are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled than white students, according to the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights.

In the 2015-16 school year, U.S. public school students lost more than 11 million days of instruction due to suspensions. That's roughly 66 million hours of missed instruction or more than 63,000 school years of lost learning. Suspensions and expulsions disproportionately affect children of colour (particularly African American/black and American Indian/Alaska Native students), those with disabilities, and LGBTQ youth.

The time lost was not distributed evenly.





**Days of Lost Instruction per 100 Students by Race and Disability in 2015-16**

Black students lost 66 days of instruction compared to just 14 days for White students i.e. nearly 5 times the amount of instruction as Whites and nearly 17 times the amount lost by Asian American students who at 4 days per 100, lost the lowest amount of instruction of any of the racial/ethnic groups. Similarly profound disparities were observed between students with and without disabilities. The former lost 44 days of instruction, which was more than double the loss experienced by their non-disabled peers (20 days per 100).

Several studies have looked at the relationship between race, behaviour, and suspension, and none of them have proven that black students misbehave at higher rates. Studies have shown, however, that white students are more likely to be disciplined for provable, documentable offenses – smoking, vandalism, and obscene language – while black students were more likely to be disciplined for more subjective reasons, such as disrespect.

#### **Increase in police in schools create worse outcomes for students**

A report by the Justice Policy Institute found that, even adjusting for a school district's poverty level, schools with officers had five times as many arrests for "disorderly conduct" as schools without them. About 92,000 students were arrested in school during the 2011-2012 school year, according to US Department of Education statistics. Most of those are low-level violations.

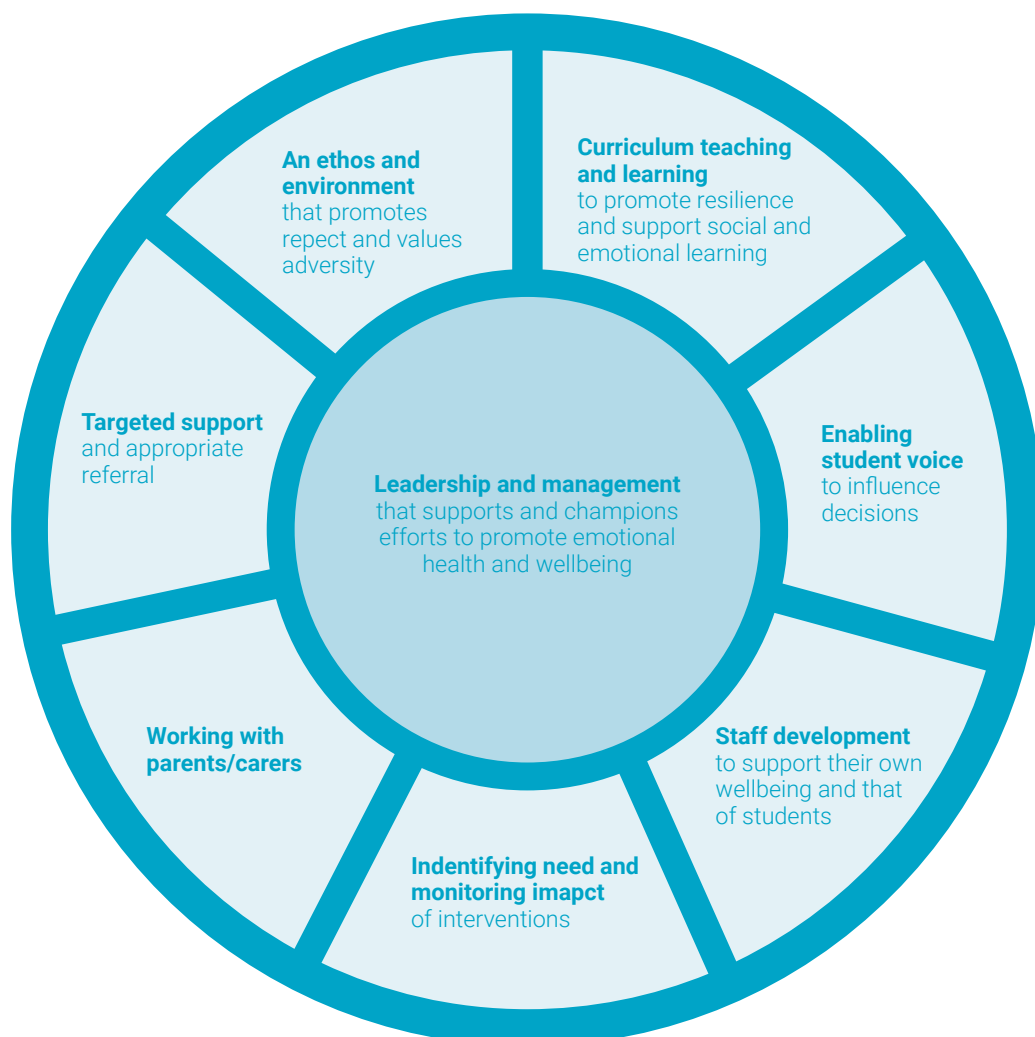
A wide spectrum of policy-makers and children's advocates, including many conservatives, have expressed concerns with how adding more police to schools will impact educational outcomes and endanger the civil rights of children, by criminalizing a wide range of adolescent behaviours.

## How it works: the solutions

Preventing damaging school exclusions relies on building stronger relationships between students, school staff, parents and the wider community. It means helping students develop tools to manage their behaviour, and helping connect them, and where necessary, their families, to the support they need so they are more capable of coming to school ready to face the day ahead of them. Research shows the stronger connection students have with staff, caregivers and external support providers, and the earlier the intervention takes place, the better the result.

In this diagram from Public Health England (2015) 'Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing: A whole school and college approach' they focus on:

- Leadership and management at the centre of things
- An ethos and environment that promotes respect and values adversity
- A curriculum of teaching that promotes social and emotional learning
- Ensuring children's voices are heard
- Supporting staff and student wellbeing
- Identifying needs and monitoring the impact of interventions
- Working with carers/ parents
- Referring students and families to appropriate support services



## Building a model of support

The saying goes, that if you give a man a fish you feed him for a meal; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. The purpose of creating a supporting school environment is to equip students with the tools they need to take greater responsibility for their own behaviour and academic success.

## Developing a genuine connection with students

Good supportive relationships and the feeling that people care is key to the success of any program. Creating real connection also means staff are in a position to identify children who may benefit from early help and head off trouble before it grows more difficult to deal with. When staff know children well it also makes it easier to support social workers, children's social care and other agencies following any referral.

## Building greater self sufficiency

Providing support isn't about doing the work for the student. It is providing them with scaffolding and help so they might develop better strategies for themselves. This includes not just offering tools to empower students to take care of their own needs, but also to reflect on their own journey so they might more readily identify what is working well for them.

## Helping students focus on the positive

We are hard-wired to focus on the negative, so sometimes we need a push to be able to focus on the positives. Research has shown we need five positive interactions to make up for every one negative. Providing rewards to students and using systems to encourage and praise steps in the right direction is proven to work more effectively than punishing negative behaviour.

## Spread the web of support

Drawing on resources beyond schools such as parents, other helping professionals and wider social communities can provide diversity of approaches that allows students to become more fully engaged and supported in their school journey. Where a student is receiving support from multiple other adults, effective communication between schools and support providers, especially parents, gives the best chance of knowing the complex nature of a problem and the type of support that will give the best chance of success.

## Simplicity and consistency

Strategies for support don't have to be complicated. Some of the things that work best can be behaviour-related praise, positive peer interactions and strengthened parenting.

## Use targeted approaches to meet the needs of individuals

Universal behaviour systems cannot meet the need of every student. For pupils with more challenging behaviour, the approach should be adapted to individual needs. Teachers should be trained in specific strategies if supporting pupils with high behaviour needs.



## A model of positive behavioural support

*Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) was initially developed as an approach to help people with disabilities, but has evolved as a system of school-wide support. This approach is heavily researched and proven as an effective method for behaviour change. It is underpinned by the philosophy that human beings thrive in predictable spaces where expectations are clear, new skills are taught, and positive behaviours are richly reinforced.*

PBS is a person-centred framework for providing support in situations where there is a risk of challenging behaviour. The use of the word “challenging” to describe behaviour is deliberate because it challenges everyone who supports the person to understand why something is happening and to work together to find a solution.

**Challenging behaviour is understood to happen as part of an interaction between three components:**

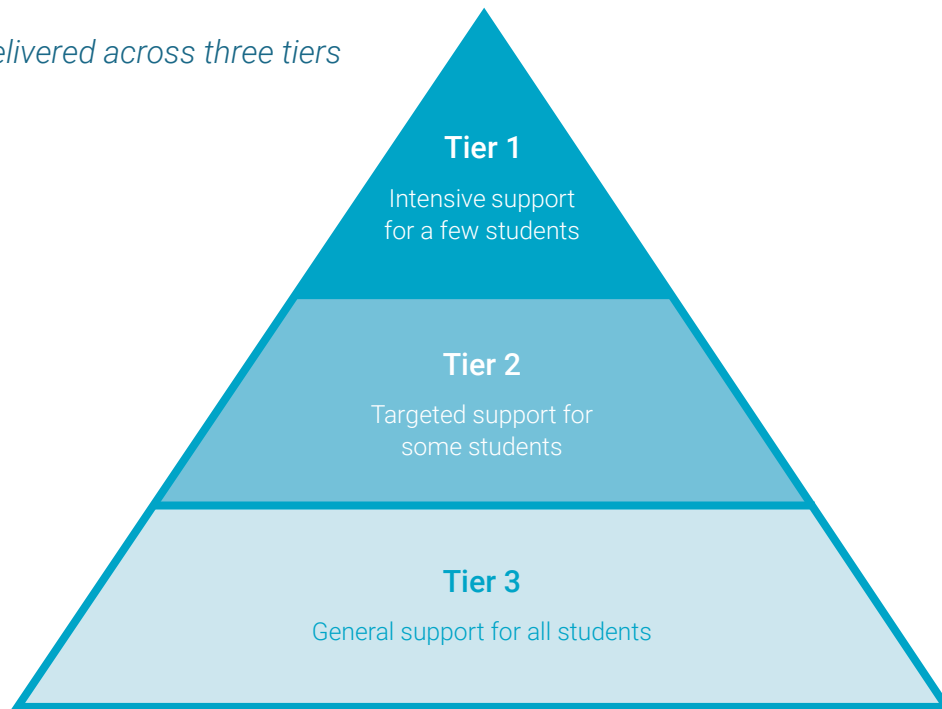
- 1 an individual, their current & past experiences and what they have learned
- 2 the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of other people in their lives
- 3 the environments, communities and cultures they live in (Hastings et al, 2013).

“Research has shown positive behaviour support is highly effective in preventing and addressing challenging behaviours in the classroom. It reduces stress, clears up much-needed time for teaching, improves overall student behaviours and creates better classroom cultures.”



# The Positive Behavioural Support Pyramid

| PBS is delivered across three tiers



## Tier 1:

### **General support for all students**

The foundation level of the PBS pyramid includes things like:

- general social skill instruction
- explicit conversations on what is and is not acceptable behaviour
- discipline techniques that are positive and proactive
- teaching and modelling of behaviour expectations
- active supervision with lots of positive reinforcement
- firm, fair consequences for misbehaviour
- clear understanding of how to raise issues that come up for them

Up to 90% of all students respond appropriately to the school-wide discipline system

## Tier 2:

### **Targeted support for some students**

Some students may require additional support to understand and meet established behavioural expectations. Tier two support includes things like:

- classroom and small-group strategy sessions
- more intensive social skill instruction
- self-management programs and supports such as reminders/ checklists
- designated adult mentors with opportunities to regularly connect
- increased academic support and follow up
- connection with external supports if required

Up to 10% of students will require Tier 2 support

## Tier 3:

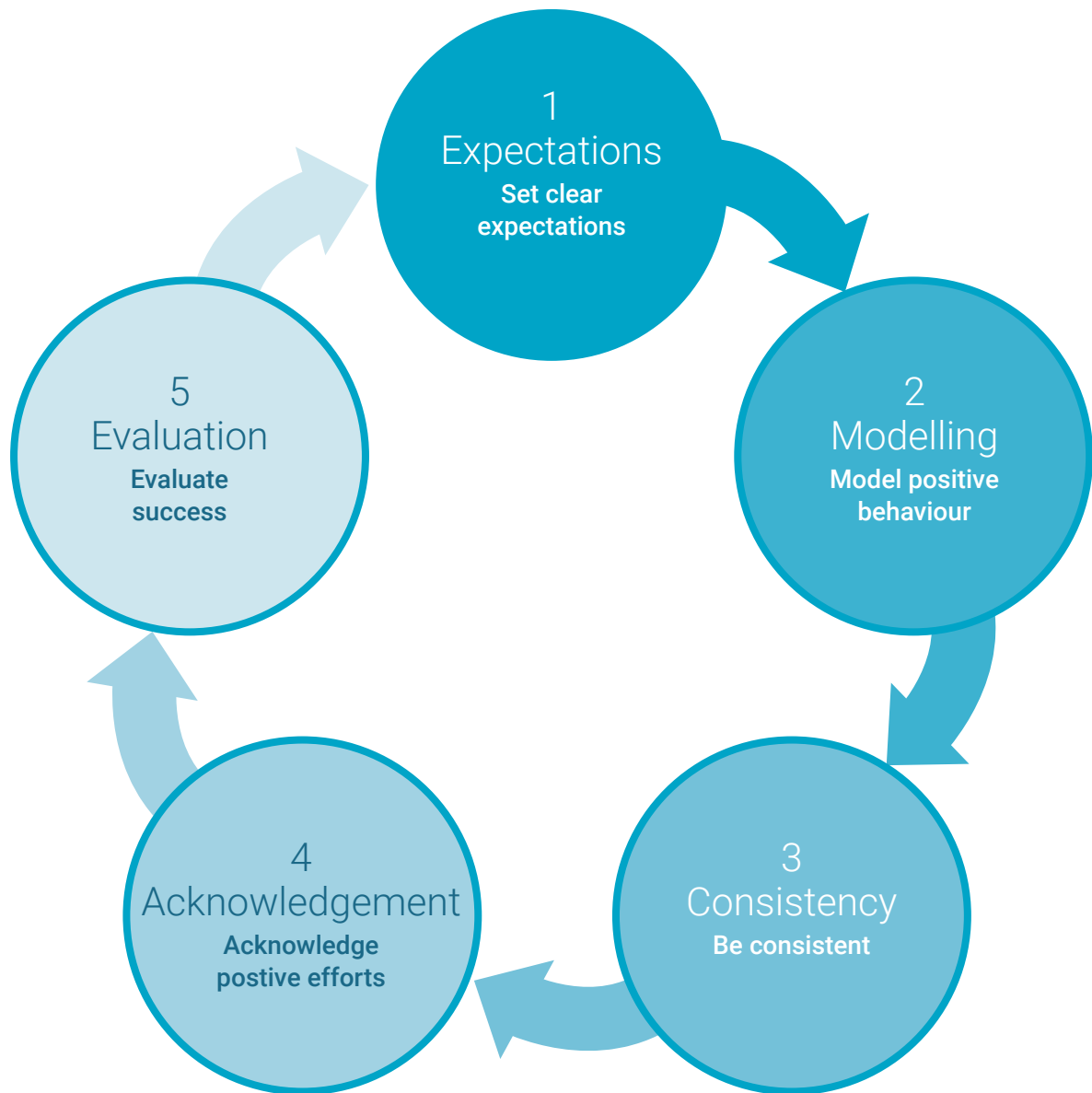
### **Intensive support for a few students**

Some students are dealing with multiple complex problems, long trauma histories or underlying issues that makes it more difficult for them to meet behavioural expectations. This group may require additional supports including:

- functional behavioural assessments
- mental health assessments and regular check-ins
- ongoing parent collaboration
- support from multiple additional service providers
- wider community or cultural-specific support
- intensive social skill instruction
- practical reminders
- adult mentors

Up to 5% of students will require Tier 1 support

# 5 steps to success



**1** **Expectations**  
Set clear and explicit expectations with easy to understand targets.

**2** **Modelling**  
Staff model positive behaviours, showing what pro-social behaviour looks and feels like (PBS is not just for students).

**3** **Consistency**  
Clear boundaries and consistent responses give children a clear understanding of actions and consequences

**4** **Acknowledgement**  
Positively acknowledge attempts and small wins as students progress toward achieving target behaviours

**5** **Evaluation**  
Evaluate the merit of each strategy regularly to ensure that it is working and adjust as needed based on feedback of students

# Effective discipline

*Effective discipline is based on learning, so consequences to misbehaviour should be selected on the basis of "What we need to teach the student?" rather than "How do we punish the student?" While punishment may result in temporary compliance with school rules, it frequently does so at the cost of increased hostility, resentment, alienation, and even revenge on the student's part (Alberta Learning, 1999). Ideally, consequences will include an instructional component that can be measured over time to ensure their effectiveness.*

## Discipline in action

Any form of suspension should be based on the student's best educational interests, conducted in a manner that teaches the student more appropriate behaviours, supported by empirical research, and used as a last resort. These are some suggestions for alternatives to suspension from Alberta's Safe and Caring Schools Initiative.

<b>Phone call home</b> Used in conjunction with most consequences to ensure that parents are informed and involved
<b>Formal interview with student</b> A scheduled private meeting to discuss issues, with notes taken. This may involve initiating counseling
<b>Relocation</b> Student temporarily assigned to a supervised location
<b>Formal removal</b> Removal from the classroom to another supervised area, with readmittance based on specific written conditions and a specified time frame
<b>Community program</b> Involvement of the student in an appropriate community service program
<b>Assignment of restitution</b> Yard clean up; graffiti removal; damaged property painted, repaired, or replaced, and so forth, for any property damaged resulting from student behaviour
<b>Interview with parents</b> Interviews should occur at many stages to ensure two-way communication; written notes may be important to document effectiveness of strategies used; possible strategies can be shared with parents and caregivers
<b>Directed counseling</b> Student is required to learn anger/behaviour management strategies and to develop a behaviour plan with a designated person or behaviour support team
<b>Student contract</b> Signed agreement regarding behaviour, work habits, attendance, or other areas needing remediation, with strategies and ongoing evaluation included.
<b>Removal of privileges</b> Student is ineligible for extracurricular groups, field trips, and so forth until behaviour shows consistent improvement.
<b>In-school suspension</b> Student does all required work in a supervised area away from other students.
<b>Suspension from school</b> Temporary removal of student from course, program, classroom, school bus, or school property for a specified period not exceeding 10 days; parents are notified, and a meeting is held to conduct functional assessment; terms for appropriate behaviour and/or contract developed upon readmittance.
<b>Expulsion to an alternative program</b> Student loses privilege of attending school but is required to participate in another program provided by the school district, subject to terms of re-enrollment agreed upon by the student, parents, and school district.

## Using broad education approaches to help identify unsafe environments

*When a child has grown up being told not to talk about things going on in their home, breaking through that messaging and getting them to come forward to get the support they need can be difficult. This is especially difficult if they are not aware that the way they are being treated at home is not acceptable.*

Taking a broad approach to safeguarding issues means that a generalised educational program that explicitly states acceptable and unacceptable behaviours can allow vulnerable children to recognise if they are in an unsafe environment. This is important because growing up in an abusive home can mean that behaviours that are negatively impacting on the wellbeing of the child may become normalised.

It is also important because it demonstrates to young people that it is okay to talk about things that feel shameful and that they may have thought was only happening to them. Most schools are required to teach broad concepts that support the development of physical and emotional health in young people.

### **Some topics which can be covered in this learning include:**

- What domestic abuse looks like, including coercive control, financial abuse etc. to build on the more common understanding that it is all about hitting
- What sexual abuse looks like including statistics on how common it is, how it is usually something that happens inside a person's home etc.
- What bullying looks like both offline and on.
- How people might convince you to do things you aren't comfortable with and what you can do to protect yourself
- Respectful relationships and consent
- People who can help you outside of your family home

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

Leo Buscaglia



## Let children know how to raise a red flag

*Having a system in place for children to confidently report bullying, abuse, neglect and other concerns is the first step in providing the support they need. The system should be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible.*

Clarity about what happens when worrying information comes to light supports both staff and students.

### The whole school should be clear on:

- how allegations of abuse will be recorded, investigated and dealt with
- how victims and perpetrators will be supported

## Building trust

Having trust in teachers across the issues of safety, conflict and fun is a key part of providing effective support. But building trust can be complicated when somebody has a history of being let down by authority figures.

If student wellbeing is of primary importance, it is sometimes necessary for schools to look at the balance of power and authority within school structures and to explore ways to find a better power balance between teachers and students.

### To build trust you might consider:

- Communicating with students in a less confrontational way that is the way they more commonly use with their friends e.g. via text messaging rather than face-to-face
- Giving students a way of safely reporting troubling incidents without exposing themselves
- Making communication discreet rather than exposing students to potential ridicule from their peers if they are identified as someone seeking help



## Consistency of approach across the school

*Consistency and coherence is vital when it comes to behaviour policies. This means that once a new behaviour strategy or approach is introduced, time and training must be taken embedding it across the entire school.*

The most effective preventative approaches are those implemented at the level of the whole school. Numerous programs and innovative practices are already being used by many schools to maintain their students' engagement and address challenging behaviour.

## Becoming trauma-informed

A trauma-informed school realizes the widespread impact of trauma. It recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in students, families and staff and responds by integrating trauma awareness into policies, procedures, and practices.

### 6 key principles of a trauma-informed approach

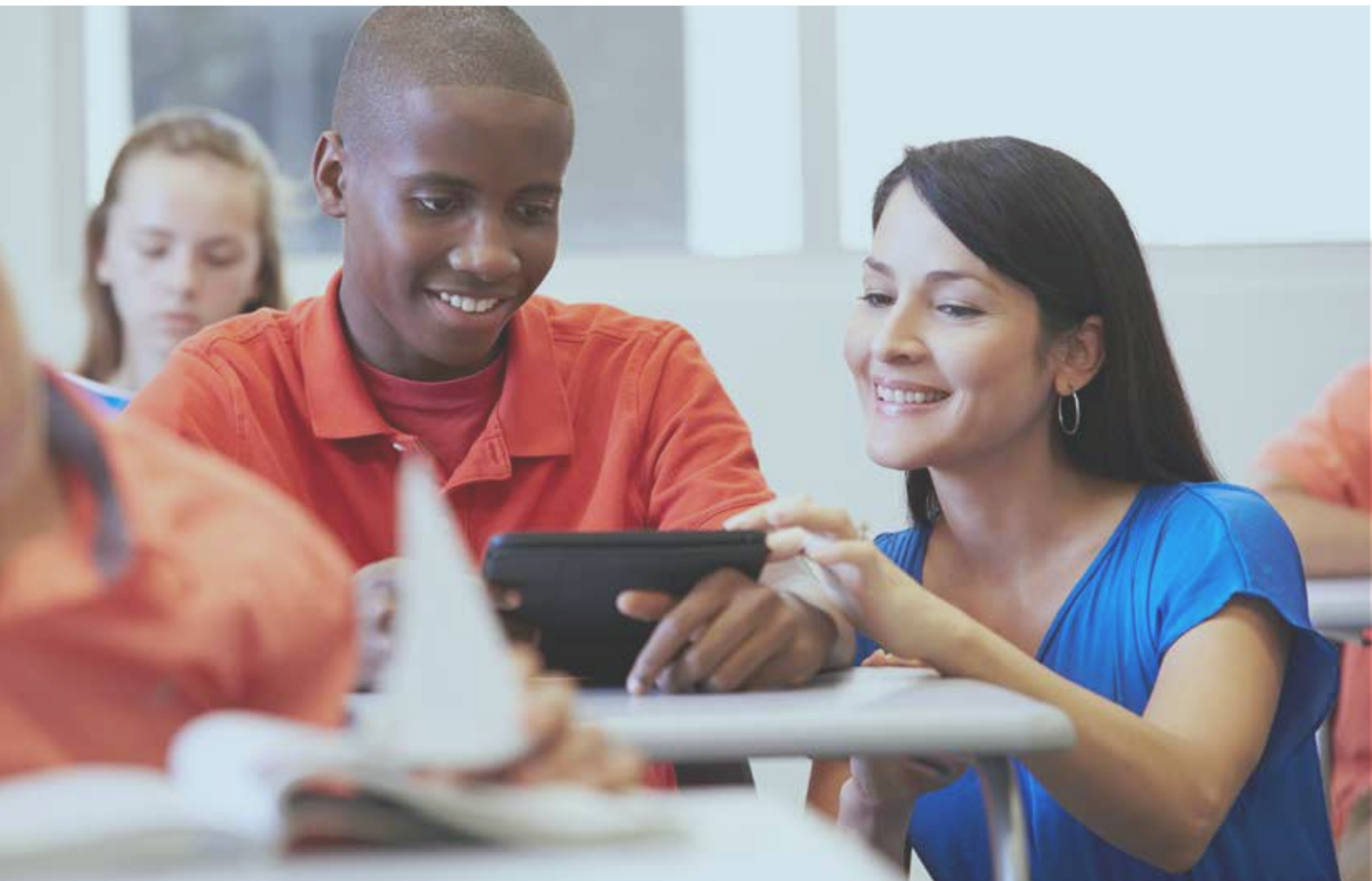
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- 1 **Safety** - staff and students feel physically and psychologically safe
- 2 **Trustworthiness and transparency** - organizational operations and decisions are transparent. Building trust between, staff, students, families and other support organisations is a focus
- 3 **Peer support** - peer support isn't about support between people who are the same age. It is about building relationships between people who have the same type of lived experience so people might know they are not alone.
- 4 **Collaboration and mutuality** - when someone has been abused, they have often been subject to a power-over or coercive dynamic that has left them feeling disempowered and helpless to change. Levelling power structures and building broad relationships builds trust and confidence.
- 5 **Empowerment, voice and choice** - student's strengths and positive experiences are a focus and understood as essential for developing resilience in individuals, families, schools and communities. There are concrete steps in place to balance of power and promoting self-advocacy skills in people who have typically not been given a voice. Students are empowered through shared decision-making and goal-setting. Connecting to external support organisations so they perform as facilitators rather than controllers of recovery helps take the pressure off staff in this area.
- 6 **Cultural, historical and gender issues** - challenging unconscious biases based on race, ethnicity, gender, age sexual orientation etc. is complex, but it begins with education. Expanding to include traditional cultural connections and tapping into the wisdom and healing of the ethnic communities to which students belong produces great results.

## Creating schools that are trauma-informed

### Questions to consider

- ✓ *How will we manage safety and confidentiality?*
- ✓ *In what ways do you recognize the pervasiveness of trauma?*
- ✓ *How does your school promote wellbeing and recovery from trauma?*
- ✓ *What trauma-informed staff and unconscious bias training do you provide?*
- ✓ *What support will you provide to staff with people who have experienced trauma?*
- ✓ *How can you build relationships and access funding so that trauma survivors/people can connect with the services and peer supports they need to turn their behaviour and lives around?*
- ✓ *How do people with lived experience have the opportunity to provide feedback to you on the effectiveness of interventions so you can continually improve processes for better engagement and services?*
- ✓ *How do staff members keep people informed of rules, tasks, activities, and schedules, while being mindful that people who are traumatised may have a difficulty processing information?*
- ✓ *How is transparency and trust among staff and students promoted?*
- ✓ *What strategies are used to reduce the sense of power differentials among staff and students?*
- ✓ *How do you support students to identify strategies that contribute to feeling calm and empowered?*



# ACEs questionnaire

## Finding Your ACE Score

During your first 18 years of life:

- 1 **Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often...** Yes  No   
Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? **or**  
Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?  
If yes enter 1
- 
- 2 **Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often...** Yes  No   
Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? **or**  
Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?  
If yes enter 1
- 
- 3 **Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever...** Yes  No   
Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? **or**  
Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?  
If yes enter 1
- 
- 4 **Did you often or very often feel that...** Yes  No   
No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? **or**  
Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?  
If yes enter 1
- 
- 5 **Did you often or very often feel that...** Yes  No   
You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? **or**  
Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?  
If yes enter 1
- 
- 6 **Were your parents ever separated or divorced?** Yes  No   
If yes enter 1
- 
- 7 **Was your mother or stepmother:** Yes  No   
Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? **or**  
Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? **or**  
Ever repeatedly hit at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?  
If yes enter 1
- 
- 8 **Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?** Yes  No   
If yes enter 1
- 
- 9 **Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?** Yes  No   
If yes enter 1
- 
- 10 **Did a household member go to prison?** Yes  No   
If yes enter 1

Now add up your "Yes" answers:  
This is your ACE Score.



## Potential paths for recovery

*Just because something traumatic has happened in someone's life doesn't mean it impacts each person equally. There is the event and then the experience of the event. For instance, one child removed from a traumatic home may breathe a sigh of relief, while another may feel they have been abandoned or that they are worthless. How the individual labels, assigns meaning to, and is disrupted physically and psychologically by an event, will contribute to whether or not it is experienced as traumatic.*

Because there is scope to change the meaning someone assigns to an event, helping students reflect on what events that have happened in their lives mean, and changing the self-talk they use to describe these events, can have a real impact on lessening the impact of their experiences, giving them a better chance to meet behavioural expectations set by the school.

## Building a web of support

According to Knitzner (1993), the factors that limit positive outcomes for students with behaviour problems included the following:

- unavailability of appropriate support services in schools
- lack of collaborative planning among child-serving agencies
- lack of intervention coordination across the child/ youth's home, school, and community environments

Schools and their staff do not operate in isolation in supporting children. They are part of a wider safeguarding system including parents and caregivers, specialist support providers and the wider community. When it works well, this web of support wraps around children to minimise their risks and help them to reach their full potential.



## A whole family approach

A child who is acting out at school is often being impacted by troubles being faced in their homes. To provide the kind of support that is needed often means delivering services directly to parents or carers. This is especially important in cases of neglect, where small improvements, such as packing a school lunch or taking a child to an appointment, can make a large difference to the wellbeing of the child.

## Building relationships with parents and caregivers

Building relationships with reluctant parents may mean putting in special effort if these caregivers have had damaging, unsatisfactory or limited experiences of schooling themselves, or do not speak English, or who are managing their own mental health issues that makes providing support to their children difficult. But the effort is worth it.

Increased engagement by parents in their child's education and mental health outcomes has been linked with greater engagement and lower exclusions for young people. Strong parent engagement also provides a better understanding of family context so schools can target interventions. For this reason, building strong relationships with caregivers needs to be a primary concern for schools.

For those parents who are struggling with their own major issues such as addiction, unemployment, insecure housing, living with domestic abuse etc., this is also an opportunity for them to tap into a support network of their own that they may previously not have accessed, and to help them manage their problems as well. Providing opportunities for teachers, parents and external support services like social workers, psychologists etc. to come together to discuss a child's needs and to work together to address issues like trauma and attachment can make a real difference to student's behaviour.

## Bringing the team together

If children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

This at first can seem overwhelming, but there are systems, like those at [www.ecins.com](http://www.ecins.com), that are already created to solve this exact problem and make this kind of collaboration work. Becoming part of a wider network also allows the right people to provide support rather than expecting school staff to take on the entire burden themselves. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

## Getting on the same page

Fragmented support services create inefficiencies and risks children and their families getting lost in the system. For a system of support to operate well together, each team of support needs to share information with each other so issues can be more quickly identified, action taken sooner and risks reduced. Coming together as a team means conducting a thorough assessment at the beginning and recording the impact of any services delivered to the child and family, followed up by regular reviews of the help being delivered.

## Who does what?

Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Education staff, however, are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

## Regular engagement is key

The business of improving outcomes is a shared task. Regular attendance and consistent engagement are key ingredients by which improved outcomes will be achieved. Support and encouragement from people who work in schools, from parents and carers and from other members of communities, are essential for this to occur.

## Keeping on the lookout for indicators

Just as you would be alarmed by a significant decline in school performance, there are other indicators to look out for that may be a sign of larger problems. If you have noticed increased absences from school, changes in friendships, increase in relationships with older individuals or groups, signs of self-harm or injury, drastic change in appearance or mood, even unexplained high value possessions that could be gifts from criminal networks, it is worthwhile checking in with a student.

## Sharing information with people outside of school

In recent years there has been some confusion about whether data protection legislation means it is illegal to collect and share personal information with other organisations. But information sharing between schools and external support providers is not only legal, it is often essential to the safety and wellbeing of students, and in ensuring the right help is provided by the right person.

Information sharing legislation is not there to put a blanket ban on information sharing, rather to provide a framework to ensure that personal information is shared appropriately. In the case of children in need, or at risk of significant harm, safety trumps information sharing concerns. Each school should have clear processes and agreements in place around information sharing within schools, between schools, and with other organisations.

The same applies when a child leaves one school to go to another. Data collected on the child should be transferred along with their academic records as soon as possible so there is support in place when the child arrives at their new school.

## Collaboration Basics

### Begin with outcomes in mind

Successful outcomes begin by getting clear on what change you want to see. From there all the people involved in support of the young person co-creates a plan, agreeing on a course of action and assigning tasks to the most appropriate person and setting timelines.

Data on the effectiveness of the behaviour supports and the consequences provided must be gathered and analysed. Without an analysis, it is more difficult to identify common problems and to select appropriate intervention strategies. Tracking individual student behaviour patterns over time is a good way to identify students in need of additional assistance before their problems increase.



# Gathering feedback

## | *Mood/ thought diaries and journals*

Providing students with a way to reflect on their feelings and behaviours, especially when they are trialling out a new approach is a valuable way to gain feedback and strengthen results. Why is this? Many negative behaviours occur as a result of emotional responses that happen due to thinking errors (Myles & Shafran, 2015)

### The types of thinking errors that can be discovered through the use of diaries include:

- **overgeneralizing** - applying the outcome of one specific event to many others in your life.
- **minimizing and maximizing** - thinking things are worse than they are and underplaying strengths while focusing on weaknesses.
- **emotional reasoning** - judging situations according to feelings
- **selective abstraction** - focusing on individual things that have gone wrong while ignoring all that has gone well.

### They can also be used to:

- prioritize problems, fears, and concerns
- track symptoms so students can recognize triggers and learn ways to better control their responses
- deliver positive self-talk and identify negative thoughts and behaviours

### How mood/thought diaries can help with reflection

- Mood/thought diaries often direct students to focus on events they found upsetting and drill down into the details of what happened. They ask questions like:
  - When did it happen?
  - What was the situation?
  - What were you doing?
  - Where were you?
  - Who were you with?
  - What emotion did you experience?
  - What thoughts were running through your mind during or immediately after the situation e.g. I'm not good at this, everyone is laughing at me, nobody likes me

They then ask students to rate emotions and responses so they can see if the next time they are in the same situation there has been a shift in the intensity of their response.

### Helping students replace negative thoughts actions with positive ones

Another excellent approach is to ask students to come up with a list of positive substitutions they might use the next time they are faced with similar triggers e.g. I will phone my friend, I will excuse myself to go to the bathroom, I will read a book to calm down.

They can find alternatives for negative thoughts, replacing a thought like, "I am worthless" to "I can do this." They can be helped to remember nice things people have said about them over the years and to write these down to reassure them when they get stuck in a negative head space.


























## Using measurement and scale to bring the emotion down

Mood/ thought journals ask things like: How much did you believe that thought? Give it a score between 0 and 100, where 0 is not at all, and 100 is completely.

They help students reflect on the evidence for the thinking that is causing them to be upset so students might see that their thinking may not be logical, asking questions like: where is the evidence for that upsetting thought? How did you come to that conclusion? What percentage is the strength of that belief and why? If the upsetting thought is true, will it matter years from now? What alternative thoughts might you have about the event to replace your original one?

Monday	  	+ Good things today
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	- Good things today
Tuesday	  	+ Good things today
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	- Good things today
Wednesday	  	+ Good things today
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	- Good things today
Thursday	  	+ Good things today
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	- Good things today
Friday	  	+ Good things today
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	- Good things today
Saturday	  	+ Good things today
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	- Good things today
Sunday	  	+ Good things today
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	- Good things today

## Getting on the same page

Effective group communication about a student needing support needs to include:

- a summary of problems
- a summary of suggested improvements
- a decision about who is doing what and when

## Monitoring outcomes makes programs more targeted and successful

Every action you take to support a student needs to be aimed toward delivering an outcome. Outcomes can be broad, such as building trust and rapport or making sure students are aware of support services available to them, or targeted, as in putting a plan of daily reminders in place to help a student remember items for school or appointments they need to attend. The decision about who is best placed to deliver the required support is part of the collaborative process of decision making with a network of support services.

## Regular reviews

All plans should include tangible actions that can be easily monitored and reviewed to analyse whether sufficient progress has been made to meet the child's needs. Plans, therefore, often need to include clear, measurable expectations and desired outcomes not just for the child, but for the parents. This includes measuring their psychological wellbeing and helping children to reflect on the difference interventions are making in their lives so the most effective tools can be used.

### Questions to ask in a review

**In a review, there are four basic questions:**

- ✓ *What has worked, or is working, and why?*
- ✓ *What hasn't worked or isn't working, and why?*
- ✓ *What could have been done differently?*
- ✓ *What adjustments and changes are required now?*

# Tools for collaboration

## Listen first, act quickly, monitor results

Responding appropriately to a student begins with listening to them, their caregivers and other agencies who are supporting them. Without structuring listening into your system you are at risk of failing to act on signs of abuse and neglect. Once you have a clearer understanding, you need to take action to provide or connect the student to support. All interventions need to be assessed and monitored to ensure they are producing desired outcomes.

## Record keeping and duty of care

There is more pressure on schools than ever before to keep accurate records of all concerns, discussions and decisions made, as well as the reasons particular choices were made. This includes a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern, effectiveness of actions and outcomes.

### **Schools are at risk of failure of duty of care if they cannot show accurate documentation their process of:**

- listening to the views of the child
- measuring effectiveness of interventions
- actions taken if situation did not improve
- acting on the early signs of abuse and neglect
- information sharing process with the right people within and between agencies
- quickly responding to urgent situations
- oversight over staff to make sure effective action is being taken

## Risk assessment

Having a clear picture of the risks a child is facing and the potential areas of their lives that leave them vulnerable to harm means actions can be taken at a pace to match danger. The higher the risk, the faster the interventions need to occur. Ideally, risk assessments need to be conducted for the family as a whole because young people may not be aware of all the issues their carers are facing.

## Timelines and quick actions

There are often strict timeframes on reports when it comes to safeguarding issues on children. All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, should be recorded in writing. Information should be kept confidential and stored securely. Having a system where interactions and outcomes are recorded as you go and reports can be printed off without a lot of extra hunting for actions taken, reports from external providers means this administrative burden is made much easier.

## Share information safely

When a problem has been identified, staff should be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess, and respond to risks. Safe sharing of information is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse and neglect, and in promoting children's welfare, including their educational outcomes.

## External monitoring to drive continuous improvement

Having an independent pair of eyes to provide oversight on your approach adds a layer of protection to both you and the young people in your care. Knowing that someone is going to be overseeing your process helps you set up your systems as clearly as possible, which is also helpful to ensuring you deliver interventions with tangible results. This process also promotes reflection and drive continuous improvement.

## We don't have the resources for that

*But what about the extra time this approach takes? Schools are already burdened with a heavy workload. While you may agree philosophically with the concepts of providing children with support, it makes sense that you are worried about your capacity to do this work in addition to everything else you are doing.*

That's why we have deep dived into the best practices of student support and developed a complete system to make the process of rolling these kinds of beneficial changes much easier than you think. Our systems support you in supporting your students, allowing you to speak via text messaging discretely and regularly, building trust, gaining a clearer picture and logging all your interactions on-the-fly, making reporting and transparency easier than ever. They also allow you to gain valuable feedback from students about what is working, and contain all the functionality you need to work collaboratively with families and external supports while still keeping sensitive information private.

Our systems are designed with busy and overworked teaching staff in mind and they cut down an enormous amount of time and structural planning to shift you to a more holistic support model. To find out more about how we can help your school make a change for the better today contact: [enquiries@ecins.com](mailto:enquiries@ecins.com)

## Book a demonstration today

Don't take our word for it. Let us show you what ECINS can do. Book a demonstration today at [enquiries@ecins.com](mailto:enquiries@ecins.com)

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Empowering Communities with  
Integrated Network Systems

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