Establishing District-Wide Systems to Support the Mental Health Needs of Students and Educators during COVID-19

April 17, 2020
Organizations in Partnership
Overview of Today’s Webinar

1. Expert speakers share strategies for supporting SEL and mental health across an MTSS framework amidst the spread of COVID-19

2. Massachusetts district leaders describe systems that have enhanced their crisis response

3. Opportunities to hear from YOU

Resource inventory will be sent out after the event!
Our Focus

Parents & Caregivers

Educators

Students
How are Students Feeling?

Social Sentinel

U.S. Student Sentiment Analysis

U.S. Student Sentiment
These aggregations are converted into an index value where 100 is the historical average for that emotion. Scores above 100 represent more intensity for that emotion, and scores below 100 represent less.

- Happiness
- Harm
- Fear
- Anger

COVID-19 Outbreak | Pandemic | Coronavirus
Coronavirus: COVID-19 Is Now Officially A Pandemic, WHO Says
How are Teachers Feeling?

- Anxious
- Fearful
- Worried
- Overwhelmed
- Sad
MTSS for SEL & Mental Health

Source:
http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfss/mtss/blueprint.pdf
What are some systems your district has developed to support the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students, staff and families during the current school closures?
Today’s Speakers

Mariangely Solis Cervera, EdM
Technical Assistance Specialist, SEL & Mental Health Academy, Transforming Education

Heidi L. Kar, PhD, MHS
Violence & Trauma Team Lead, Education Development Center

Katherine Mague, PhD
Vice President, Behavioral Health Network, Consultant, Walker

Richard Fournier, EdM
Co-Director, SEL & Mental Health Academy, Transforming Education
Tier 1 Supports: Important Social Emotional Skills & Mindsets in Uncertain Times
Students and adults are experiencing uncertainty, which can lead to:

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Apathy
- Disorganization
- Lack of focus
- Loneliness
Locus of Control – Individual Level

- Identify own emotions
- Ask about emotions of other adults or students
- Provide opportunities for students to express their emotions with teacher and peers (and families)
- Model how to deal with those emotions with other adults and peers (and provide opportunities for students to model these with peers)
- Provide opportunities for meaningful, positive peer collaboration
- Gather information from students in one-to-one settings or small groups
There are things we cannot control, but here are some things we can manage:

- **Grading policies:**
  - What are they? Have you shared them with your staff and families? Are they punitive?

- **Teaching and Learning:**
  - Are expectations clear for staff, students, and families? Do all stakeholders have access to the tools and resources they need? How do you do know?

- **Communication policies:**
  - Has your team developed an organized way to communicate with students and families? Are you regularly updating families on your efforts?
What social emotional skills and mindsets should we consider prioritizing?

**Self Awareness & Management**
- Identifying emotions
- Stress management
- Mindfulness

**Relationships**
- Relationship building
- Joy in learning
- Empathy
Check Student Emotions

SOURCE: Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. http://ei.yale.edu/mood-meter-overview/
Stress Management Strategies and Approaches

- Help students identify their stressor using FireHOSE
- **Co-create ways to manage stress:**
  - If-Then statements
  - How I learn best
- **Discuss COVID-19 with students**
  - Have students submit their questions before a live conversation (to prevent panic)
  - Be developmentally appropriate
  - Encourage critical thinking skills when engaging in social media and the news
- For more tips, listen to **The 180: Turnaround for Children Podcast**
Mindfulness is a state of awareness and a practice that involves attending to the present moment and cultivating an attitude of curiosity, openness, and acceptance of one’s experience.

- Provide journaling prompts that promote self and social awareness (e.g., What have you learned about yourself in the last couple of weeks?) Consider choice!
- Encourage 5 minutes of mindfulness
- Model and guide students through breathing exercises
Relationship Building Strategies and Approaches

- Relationship mapping: Identify which students have strong connections with adults and plan for how to “see” every student

- Morning meetings
  - Roses and Thorns
  - “Take care of me” list

- Psychological distancing
  - Read aloud: Encourage students to reflect on the characters’ social and emotional skills, their mindsets
  - Write a letter to a friend who is worried about COVID-19

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Check In with Students and/or Adult Peers or Staff

Empathy Interviews

“Psychologists define empathy as the ability to understand and feel what someone else is feeling. You’ve probably heard someone say that they can “identify with” another person. When they say this, they likely mean that they understand that person’s experience and feel along with them – feel their pain or joy. That’s empathy.”

Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, 2019
Joy in Learning Strategies and Approaches

- Share with students how you are finding moments of joy during this challenging time
- “Rabbit hole questions”: Let students submit questions about a specific topic and record yourself (and others) responding to the question (Use TikTok)
- Create a student-developed ‘spirit week’ that is responsive to different socioeconomic status and cultures
- Give choice in learning
Explore alternative platforms to build relationships with adults, students, and families:

- Phone calls
- Computers, laptops, tablets for virtual learning, peer collaboration, emails
- Postcards/letters – writing, drawing
- Youtube videos, TikTok
“Every moment matters. Every interaction with a child has a reaction in that child. Even as we keep working to address the many social and cultural factors, we need to address to prevent negative experiences, we should be focused on proactive promotion of the positive. In particular, there's a need to promote that "through any door" kind way of being. So that wherever a child goes...to school...they're met with warm adults who purposely try to see and respond to them and meet their needs for care and guidance.”

Christina Bethell, Positive Childhood Experiences Researcher
Identifying Students Who Need Tier 2 and Tier 3 Supports
How to Know Which Students are Struggling?

- Someone who knows the student has to ask and ask often
  - As long as there is an existing relationship, it doesn’t matter whether it is a teacher, counselor, principal, teacher’s aide…

- Normalize reactions by sharing resources that show others are struggling or going through something similar (e.g., there are many resources across development levels that help to explain the COVID-19 situation)

- Some school staff may not be appropriate as connectors for students receiving Tier 2 & 3 supports—so don’t assume everyone can or should do it well.
- Mental health symptoms/conditions related to food
- Increased existing fears, anxieties, and worries as a result of pandemic
- Interrupted sleep, concentration, memory, attention, emotions due to changes to/lack of a routine
- Isolation related to changed social connections
- Exacerbated attentional and behavioral problems due to less structure
- More negative interactions at home for students with special needs, as parents are stretched with 24-hour support roles
- Challenging family dynamics
Indicated Supports (Tiers 2 & 3)

- Develop a plan for each student already identified as higher need for mental health supports
- Review all students to identify those who might have greater needs given the situation
- Find a way to track emotional state: Use emotion check-ins, encourage student to use chat function (in case they don’t want to say something aloud), consider assignments that encourage connectedness with someone from school or outside of the house
- Remember that students receiving Tier 2 and 3 services need MORE support now, not less
Indicated Supports (Tiers 2 & 3), continued

- Use connectors, choose staff carefully
- Provide wrap-around services, work as a community team
- Apply basic emotion, thought, and behavior regulation skills (embed videos, audio exercises in ppt lessons or assign homework in apps that strengthen these skills)
  - Mindfulness
  - Cognitive-behavioral approaches
  - Distress tolerance techniques

For all mental health and SEL needs, use your networks. Reach out to us if you could use support in implementing any of these...
App Resources for Students

- **Stop Breathe Think** (ages 5-10) Includes classroom toolkits and resources for educators
- **Positive Penguins** – Ages 7-11; Small cost
- **Breathe 2 Relax** – Ages 6+
- **SuperBetter** – Ages 13+, can also access through website
- **MindShift CBT** – Ages 13+, website has an anxiety plan for teenagers and several resources for educators
- **Sanvello** – Ages 13+, premium access during COVID-19 crisis. Can access tools through the website
- **PTSD Coach** – Ages 15+

*Free unless cost is specifically mentioned*
Tier 1

- Provide trainings in virtual technology
- Support teachers in how to create flexible learning environments

Tier 2

- Coordinate back-up staff in case regular staff need to take time off
- Offer support group of peers (virtual coffee break) to compare notes, share challenges and worries, as well as successes

Tier 3

- Communicate directly with staff re: taking time off from work and clear guidance regarding policies for doing so
- Carefully assign duties to ensure highly affected/anxious staff are NOT in contact with students
Tele-Medicine, Tele-Health, Tele-Therapy: An Introduction
Tele-Therapy Basics

- What is it?
- Is it new?
- Who provides telehealth?
Tele-Therapy Basics

- **Who pays for it?**
  - Medical insurance
  - Co-pays and co-insurance?

- **What technology medium is used?**
  - Video and audio, live and interactive
  - COVID exceptions
Tele-Therapy Basics

- What technology platforms are used?
  - Skype for Business
  - Updox
  - VSee
  - Zoom for Healthcare
  - Doxy.me
  - Google G Suite Hangouts Meet

- Office for Civil Rights (OCR) allowable during COVID crisis
  - Apple FaceTime
  - Facebook Messenger video chat
  - Google Hangouts video, or
  - Skype

- Not allowable:
  - Facebook Live
  - Twitch
  - TikTok
What kind of services are offered via teletherapy?
- Individual and family psychotherapy
- Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI) levels of care
  - Intensive care coordination
  - In-home therapy
  - Therapeutic mentoring
  - In-home behavioral supports (Applied Behavioral Analysis-ABA)
  - Family support and training (family partner)
- Group therapy
- Medication management

How is this different than school counseling remote support?
Tele-health: What Families Need to Know

- Same privacy protections/reporting mandates apply
- Sessions likely shorter and more frequent than in-person
- Clients need a private space (ideally with headphones)
- Parent and therapist communicate in advance and throughout the treatment about parent role in the session
Tele-health: What Families Need to Know

- The modality may be creative or alternative in order to engage the child
- If possible, have art supplies, paper and pen or favorite stuffed animal available
- Generally speaking, children and teens respond well.
Challenges/Barriers

- Lack of technology
- Lack of private space
- Lack of focused attention for parent
- Difficulty engaging non-verbal children
- Shorter, more frequent session = more co-pay burden for families
Benefits

- Significantly improves access to care
- Eliminates transportation barriers
- More flexible scheduling options
- More comfortable surrounding for child/family
- Window into their homelife – opportunity for perspective and in-vivo intervention
How to Find Services/Make a Referral

https://massachusetts.networkofcare.org/mh/

Massachusetts Behavioral Health Access (MABHA)
administered by the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership (MBHP)
a Beacon Health Options Company

https://www.mabhaccess.com

https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists

https://www.413cares.org/
District Administrator Panel
Hear From Your Peers

Jariel Vergne, MSW
Wraparound Manager
New Bedford Public Schools

Yolanda Johnson, EdD
Executive Officer for Student Services,
Springfield Public Schools
Questions for Panelists

- In what ways have you begun supporting educators and schools in meeting the needs of all students (tiers 1-3) during this time? Specifically, what types of systems, policies, or strategies have you and your team put in place (or are thinking of putting in place) to address these needs?

- Identify one systems-level challenge that you have been able to (or have started to) overcome. What was the systems-level challenge and what was/is the strategy you’re using to combat this?
Questions? Something to add? Please contribute your thoughts and resources to the shared document linked here. Contact our partners and the editors will take a look at it! Educators seeking PDPs, contact your district rep and ask how!

https://sites.google.com/arlington.k12.ma.us/mentalhealthandwellbeing/
Resources from Our Partners

https://matoolsforschools.com/resources/covid-19-sel

edc.org/resources-covid-19-crisis
Contact: Shai Fuxman
sfuxman@edc.org

walkercares.org
Contact: Shannon Lee
slee@walkercares.org

transformingeducation.org
Contact: Richard Fournier
richard@transformingeducation.org
What’s Next?

Upcoming Events:

- **REPEAT OFFERING!** For District Leaders: Webinar on Setting Up Effective District-Wide Systems to Support Students’ and Educators’ Mental Health Needs during COVID-19 (**Friday, April 24**, 12:00-1:30 p.m.)

- Peer-Sharing Virtual Meetings (Interested? **Fill out this survey**)

Updates:

- Updated competitive grant opportunity from DESE: **Supporting Students’ Behavioral and Mental Health and Wellness** (due June 12, 2020). Massachusetts public school districts and collaboratives are eligible to apply for up to $110,000. (**See here for more information**)
Thank you! We want your feedback!

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/J5WNDR9