Social and Emotional Learning

Toolkit and User Guide

21ST CCLC NTAC
National Technical Assistance Center

For out-of-school time and summer learning programs

Contents

Social and Emotional Learning Toolkit User Guide

The Social and Emotional Learning Toolkit consists of this user guide and the 22 tools described and included herein. The tools were developed for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) programs, but any out-of-school time (OST) program can use them.

How to Access the Tools

The tools are available on the 21st CCLC National Technical Assistance Center (NTAC) website in the Social and Emotional Learning Toolkit, which you can download as a zip file. The zip file includes (1) a PDF version of the user guide and toolkit and (2) a Microsoft Word version of each tool for easy customization.

Ways to Use the Tools

To support professional development:

- Read the tools to increase your understanding of a topic or strategy.
- Note ideas you'd like to put into practice or learn more about.
- Use the tools during staff training sessions as discussion starters or in small-group activities such as think-pair-share.

To help your program implement or improve a practice:

- Use the tools to assess and reflect on what you already know and do — and what you need to know and do — to implement or improve a practice.
- Use them during a planning or strategy session to inform decisions about how to adjust current practices or implement new ones.
- Share bite-size ideas from the tools in emails, text messages, or staff meetings to help program staff implement a new strategy or practice.
- Customize the tools to include information, examples, or guidance specific to your program.

To engage and inspire stakeholders:

- Share a tool (or ideas from a tool) with school-day staff, community leaders, partners, volunteers, families, or students to help them understand a program initiative or to inspire them to get involved.
- Share excerpts or ideas in your newsletter and in emails, social media posts, and other communications with stakeholders.

What's In This Guide

- The full set of tools and ways to use them
- Tips and strategies for supporting social and emotional learning and learning recovery in OST programs

Get Resources for Your Out-of-School Time Program

Check the 21st CCLC NTAC website for professional learning opportunities and resources on this and other topics. To stay updated as new content is added:

❑ Subscribe to our newsletter.   ❑ Follow us on social media.

How to Customize a Tool

You may customize the Microsoft Word version of any tool to meet your needs.

Tips for customizing tools:

- If you plan to print multiple copies for distribution, you may print the tool in black and white to avoid the cost of color printing.
- If you delete or replace any of the text or graphics, you may need to adjust the formatting or page breaks.
- If you add or revise content, please replace the text box at the end with the following statement:

   Note: Parts of this document are based on information in the Social and Emotional Learning Toolkit, a resource developed by the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) National Technical Assistance Center (NTAC). The toolkit is in the public domain and is available at 21stcclcntac.org.

> Keep reading to learn why and how to make social and emotional learning part of your OST program. Go to page 5 to see the tool titles and descriptions.

Social and Emotional Learning and Its Importance to Student Success

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines social and emotional learning (SEL) as "the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions."

> The CASEL framework identifies five core SEL competencies (skill domains):
>
> - Self-awareness
> - Self-management
> - Social awareness
> - Relationship skills
> - Responsible decision-making

Research shows that participating in SEL programs improves children's skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance. It also shows a connection between the development of social and emotional skills and lifetime outcomes in education, employment, criminal activity, substance use, and mental health. SEL also helps students develop important life skills such as communications, relationship building, and stress management. By modeling and teaching these skills to students, OST programs can help young people lay the foundation for success in school and beyond.

Tips for Out-of-School Time Programs

OST programs can use the following evidence-based practices to integrate effective SEL practices:

- Create a positive learning environment that supports SEL.
- Build adult social and emotional competencies.

- Partner with families and communities to create a network of supports for students.
- Target key behaviors and skills.
- Set reasonable goals.
- When selecting an SEL program or curriculum:
    o Use data to guide decision-making.
    o Include key stakeholders in the process.
    o Identify needs and goals.
    o Use selection tools and resources.
- Design SEL programs and activities that are S.A.F.E. (sequenced, active, focused, and explicit).
    o Purposeful design leads to skill development.
    o Children have opportunities to practice skills.
    o Time is devoted to developing one or more social and emotional skills.
    o The program plan defines and targets specific skills.
- Plan for effective implementation:
    o Use data to inform decision-making to ensure that the program suits your community's context and needs.
    o Promote ownership and buy-in by including stakeholders in the process and ensuring that the program aligns with student needs.
    o Provide sufficient staff support and training.
    o Dedicate sufficient time to implementing the program effectively. Integrate social and emotional skills into academic content.
    o Provide opportunities for students to practice skills on the playground, in the cafeteria, and in hallways and other community spaces.
    o Apply social and emotional skills in real time by incorporating them into daily interactions, routines, and teachable moments.

Here are 10 steps you can take to achieve high-quality SEL practices and activities in OST programs:

- **Assess organizational readiness.** Six indicators of organizational readiness are:
    o School-day and OST partnership
    o Understanding of SEL learning needs
    o Adequate time, space, and budget to implement SEL practices
    o Policies and procedures to guide SEL
    o Activity design that supports SEL
    o Competent staff who are trained and willing to implement SEL
- **Build your program team.** Include people with the energy, enthusiasm, and expertise to help you plan, implement, and assess SEL.
- **Conduct a needs assessment.** Include three types of data: community and school-level data such as statistics on risky youth behaviors, student-level data such as attendance and academic performance reports, and student voice data collected through student surveys and focus groups. Then map needs to potential school and community assets that can help you meet those needs.
- **Create SMART goals for SEL.** Goals provide a road map for the program. SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound.

- **Plan logistics.** Consider the time, space, materials, and budget needed to support staff training in SEL practices and SEL activities for students and families.
- **Set the SEL environment** by (a) promoting a positive program culture, climate, and relationships; (b) supporting positive behaviors, and (c) using practices and curricula specific to SEL (e.g., trauma-informed practice, mindfulness development, and positive youth development).
- **Intentionally design SEL activities.** Consider students' social and emotional needs when selecting:
  - Instructional strategies (e.g., explicit or embedded instruction, or both)
  - Activity types (e.g., academic, enrichment, recreation, college and career readiness, and family engagement)
  - Delivery methods (e.g., self-reflection, service learning, and project-based learning)
- **Recruit and prepare high-quality staff.** Make sure your staff hiring practices and professional learning plans align with your program's SEL goals.
- **Implement a continuous improvement process.** Even if an SEL approach is working well, changes in staffing and student needs may require you to adjust the approach or its implementation to ensure continued success.
- **Celebrate.** Taking the time to acknowledge everyone's efforts, share outcomes, and celebrate accomplishments is a good SEL practice. It reminds program staff and students that their hard work pays off — and it reminds stakeholders of the meaningful work your program does.

General Strategies

The U.S. Department of Education's [guide to supporting learning acceleration](#) suggests the following strategies for providing high-quality OST learning experiences to support students' social, emotional, and academic needs. These strategies are especially helpful for supporting learning recovery for students who've fallen behind and aren't meeting grade-level standards:

- **Align OST programs academically** with the school curriculum so OST educators can build on material and skills students are already learning.
- **Adapt instruction to individual and small group needs.** OST groups of more than 20 students per staff member are shown to be less effective.
- **Provide high-quality, engaging learning experiences** that provide academic support and access to enrichment activities that develop students' social and emotional well-being and leadership skills.

> **Learning Recovery:
> Acceleration vs. Remediation**
>
> [Learning acceleration](#) is a learning recovery strategy to get students on grade level by providing just-in-time foundational support connected to the grade-level content they're learning. [Research](#) shows that learning acceleration is an important strategy for advancing equity and that students who experienced acceleration struggled less and learned more than students who started at the same point but experienced **remediation** (repeating lessons or practicing skills they didn't master during previous grades) instead.

- **Target student recruitment and retention efforts** to ensure that students with the most need for additional support have adequate opportunity to participate in OST programs.
- **Assess program performance** regularly using disaggregated results to improve or adjust the program as needed.
- **Partner with community-based organizations and local intermediary organizations** to increase access to high-quality OST opportunities. Partnerships create opportunities for community engagement and may provide additional enrichment opportunities. Partnerships also expand the opportunity for students to interact with organization staff who may be more racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse.
- **Support students with disabilities** by providing services that can help accelerate learning. Students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Section 504 plans can provide OST program staff with helpful information about meeting individual student needs.

Want to Know More About Learning Recovery?

The 21st CCLC **NTAC Learning Recovery Toolkit** includes a **Learning Recovery Research and Practice Brief** that contains additional information about learning recovery and a bibliography with links to research and resources.

Tool Titles and Descriptions

The Social and Emotional Learning Toolkit includes the following tools. Use this annotated list to identify the tools you need.

- The list is organized into three categories: (1) Learn, (2) Plan and Implement, and (3) Assess and Reflect.
- Each tool described below is included in this document.
- If you want to use or distribute a tool "as is," you may print the pages for that tool.
- If you want to customize a tool, visit the 21st CCLC NTAC website and download the STEAM Toolkit zip file, which includes a Microsoft Word version of each tool.

Learn

Booklist: Teaching Students Who've Experienced Trauma — Use this booklist to inform and support educators working with children who've experienced traumatic events. Read them based on interest or use them "book club style" for staff learning.

Five Skill Domains of Social and Emotional Learning — Get a visual and descriptive introduction to the five skill domains of social and emotional learning.

Health and Wellness Research and Practice Brief — Get an overview of research and best practices related to student health and wellness, including healthy eating, physical activity, family engagement, and stress reduction in out-of-school time.

Learning Recovery Tip Sheet — This tip sheet provides strategies OST programs can use to support learning recovery for students who aren't meeting grade-level standards in literacy and other content areas.

Math Booklist for Staff and Students — Use this annotated list to select books to help staff and preK-12 students overcome math anxiety and build math interest and enthusiasm.

Practice Frameworks for Social and Emotional Learning — Get definitions of three practice frameworks for social and emotional learning: trauma-informed practice, mindfulness development, and positive youth development. Use the template to plan ways to use the frameworks in activity design.

Stages of Child and Adolescent Development Overview — Get an overview of the stages of physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development from birth to age 18.

Trauma-Informed Care: Key Terms — Get definitions and descriptions of key terms to help staff navigate SEL with students of trauma.

Plan and Implement

Concentric Circles Discussion Format — This structured format creates an equal setting for every student to share ideas, thoughts, and experiences with others. Use it to help students get to know one another and to engage in discussion on a selected topic.

Craft Activities for Managing Stress — These sample activities can be used with students or staff, individually or in groups. Modify to suit age group and amount of time available.

Delivery Methods for Social and Emotional Learning — Learn about nine instructional approaches for designing learning activities to support social and emotional growth along with academic growth.

Intentional Activity Design Planner — Use this planning template and example to intentionally design initial activity plans with SMART goals and student needs.

Mindfulness to Manage Anxiety — Review these techniques and teach them to students. Then help students implement the skills and assess which ones work best for them.

Student Health and Wellness Interest Inventory — Get student voice information about health and wellness activities that appeal to students.

Student Trauma Booklist — Use these books to help students process traumatic events and learn ways to express their feelings. Consider incorporating them in your literacy programming alongside activities such as journal writing or shared reading experiences.

Teaching Resilience Booklist — Use these resources to help students learn about common life challenges and to introduce healing strategies. Consider incorporating these in literacy programming with activities such as read-alouds, journal writing starters, role-play activities.

Assess and Reflect

Developing a Support Network for Program Staff — Find strategies to feel understood, valued, and supported at work. That helps everyone — including students — feel, think, and perform better.

Family Engagement and Support Strategies — Review and adapt the suggested strategies so you can plan to meet the needs of your students and their families.

Icebreaker Activities — Start the program day or a family activity with a fun group icebreaker. Laughter — and relationships — will happen!

Rubric for Assessing Social and Emotional Competencies — Use this rubric to help staff to assess their personal social and emotional competencies.

Staff and Program Health and Wellness Assessment — This two-part assessment gives staff members a way to privately assess personal practices and a way to express their voice about program supports for staff health and wellness.

Stress Reduction for Work-Life Balance — Review this tool to learn about ways to set healthy boundaries and let go of things you cannot control.

Booklist: Teaching Students Who've Experienced Trauma

What to do: Invite staff members to choose books to read individually or to use as shared reading, like a book club. These books can support any educator working with children who have experienced traumatic events such as abuse, neglect, or violence.

Why it matters: By describing a variety of traumatic situations and presenting research on treating trauma, these books can help adults understand the effects of trauma so they can support students dealing with adversity.

Tips and Reminders

- Building trusting relationships with students lays the groundwork for helping them overcome life challenges. Share something of yourself with students and learn what matters to them so they know you care about them.
- Reading research and case studies can help you learn about trauma-related behaviors and management strategies so you can support students. If you discover triggers that produce problematic behavior(s), take care to avoid them so you don't add to the trauma burden.
- If a child doesn't respond to the strategies you try, talk with your colleagues, site coordinator, or program director about trying other strategies or making a referral to professional care. You are not responsible for "treating" the students you work with.
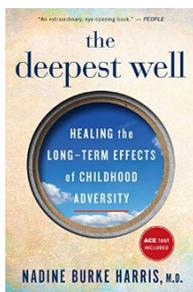
Harris, Nadine Burke. *The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity*. **Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018**

Dr. Harris takes readers on a personal journey to illustrate how adverse childhood experiences can lead to lifelong health problems for students. A pediatrician, she applies her experiences and research to outline health interventions and ideas for breaking the cycle of trauma.

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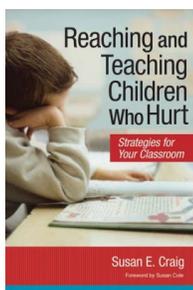
Craig, Susan E. *Reaching and Teaching Children Who Hurt: Strategies for Your Classroom*. **Brookes Publishing, 2008**

This guidebook for education professionals gives realistic scenarios and practical strategies for teaching vulnerable students who have experienced trauma. It highlights research that illustrates how abuse, neglect, violence, and other forms of trauma can impact academic achievement and social success.

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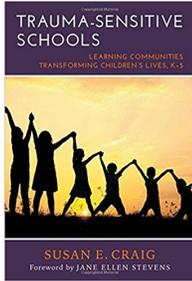
**Craig, Susan E.** *Trauma-Sensitive Schools: Learning Communities Transforming Children's Lives, K-5*. **Teachers College Press, 2015**

Looking for practical and creative strategies for managing disruptive student behavior and other symptoms of complex trauma? This book helps educators view poor academic performance and social progress through a trauma-sensitive lens.

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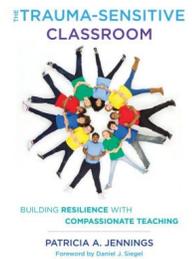
Jennings, Patricia A. *The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom: Building Resilience With Compassionate Teaching.* **W.W. Norton & Company, 2019**

Dr. Jennings shares a series of self-assessments and implementation strategies for educators to support students' healing, build their resilience, and foster compassion in the classroom. This book connects new findings in neuroscience with trends in psychology, sociology, education, and human development.

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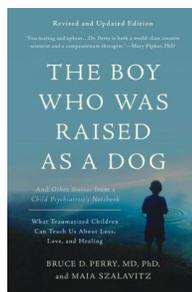
Perry, Bruce D., and Szalavitz, Maia. *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog and Other Stories From a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook. What Traumatized Children Can Teach Us About Loss, Love and Healing.* **Basic Books, 2007**

How does trauma affect a child's mind, and how can that mind recover? This book explains what happens to the brains of children exposed to toxic stress and traumatic events in their lives. The case stories illustrate the supports children need to gain strength and resilience.

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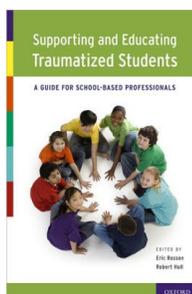
Rossen, Eric A., and Hull, Robert, editors. *Supporting and Educating Traumatized Students: A Guide for School-Based Professionals* **(second edition)***.* **Oxford University Press, 2020**

This resource provides educators who don't have clinical training with strategies for building supportive learning environments and positive social experiences for students impacted by trauma. Each chapter offers developmental and cultural considerations for addressing types of trauma and interventions. Included are recommendations for children's literature, internet resources, and classroom practices that help educators adopt new models for social and emotional learning.

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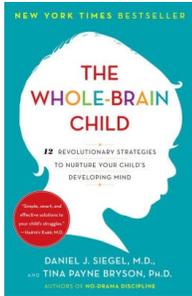
Siegel, Daniel J., and Bryson, Tina P. *The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind.* **Bantam Books, 2011**

This book explores the upstairs/downstairs concept of brain development and maturation. The "upstairs brain" (higher cognitive functions) does not fully develop until the mid-20s. The "downstairs brain" handles basic functions such as breathing and reacting to danger. This book examines age-appropriate strategies for explaining this concept to students and helping them form a better understanding of self, build stronger relationships, and succeed in school.

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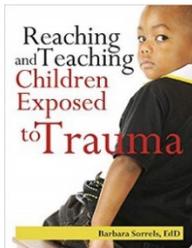
Sorrels, Barbara. *Reaching and Teaching Children Exposed to Trauma.* **Gryphon House, 2015**

Here, you will learn to identify behavior patterns that may reveal the effects of trauma on student development, how to forge positive changes in vulnerable children, and how to teach self-regulation, social skills, and relationship building. Practical strategies include insights into play-based curriculum, drama, coaching social skills, sensory-based experiences, and visual cues.

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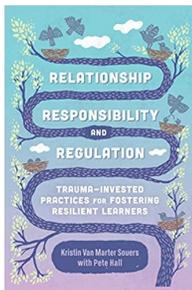
Souers, Kristin V. M., and Hall, Pete. *Relationship, Responsibility, and Regulation: Trauma-Invested Practices for Fostering Resilient Learners.* **ASCD Publishing, 2018**

Professionals recognize three new *Rs* of education: *relationship*, *responsibility*, and *regulation*. The authors give guidance for fostering a positive learning environment or "nest." The book uses real-world scenarios that illustrate how to create a culture of safety and support for all stakeholders in an educational setting.

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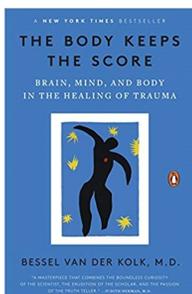
**Van der Kolk, Bessel.** *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma.* **Penguin Books, 2015**

Van der Kolk, a psychiatrist, uses practical case studies and scientific research to argue that trauma is an urgent public health issue. This book explores how trauma physically reshapes the body and brain, causing anxiety, rage, and inability to concentrate. Get insights into treatments such as neurofeedback, meditation, sports, drama, and yoga.

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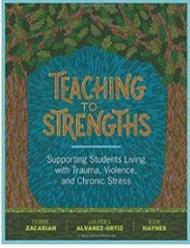
Zacarian, Debbie, Alvarez-Ortiz, Lourdes, and Haynes, Judie. *Teaching to Strengths: Supporting Students Living With Trauma, Violence, and Chronic Stress.* **ASCD Publishing, 2017**

Research data and credible case studies are the basis for this guide that helps instructors better understand student experiences, foster collaborative learning strategies, and develop family and community partnerships. The authors advocate for teaching students impacted by trauma from a strengths-based perspective.

[Select to find on Amazon](#)

This list was created by Colleen Lelli, Ed.D., Associate Professor, Cabrini University. Dr. Lelli directs the Barbara and John Jordan Center for Children of Trauma and Domestic Violence Education.

Concentric Circles Discussion Format

What to do: Read the directions for this structured discussion format, then prepare questions to pose. Once you've introduced the format, ask students to suggest questions or put students in charge of managing the activity.

Why it matters: Using a structure to help build relationships puts everyone on the same level. Students who are shy — or who believe they're different or not interesting — can participate equally. If staff members join the circle, too, you can strengthen relationships with students.

Preparation

Write 10 to 20 questions you'll pose to students.

Activity Directions

1. Divide students into two equal groups.
2. Direct students in the first group to stand in a small circle, facing out.
3. Direct students in the second group to form an outer circle around the first group, with each student facing one student in the inner circle. The students who are facing one another are partners.
4. Have partners introduce themselves or greet one another.
   - If the partners don't know one another, have them introduce themselves.
   - If the partners already know one another, have them greet each other with a handshake or high five.
5. Explain that you'll ask a question, and each partner will take a turn answering the question while the other person listens.
6. After a minute or two, direct students in the inner circle to take one step to the left, thereby placing themselves in front of a new partner.
7. Have the new partners introduce themselves or greet one another.
8. Pose the next question.
9. Repeat until you have asked all questions.

Tips

- Structure questions so they're related to each other in some way. For example:
  - Tell about your favorite activity.
  - Tell about something you enjoyed doing with your first friend.
  - Describe your earliest positive memory.
- Adjust the amount of time for giving answers by students' ages. Young students may have short answers, and older students may have more to say.
- With small groups, continue until everyone has had a chance to interact. With large groups, offer 10 to 20 questions.
- If you have an odd number of participants, either join a circle yourself or have one pair of students in the inner circle move together.
- After students know the activity format, invite a student to create and give the questions.

The only way to truly know someone is by being with them, by conversation.

— Eric Overby

Craft Activities for Managing Stress

What to do: Use these activities with students or staff, singly or in a group, modified to suit age. These activities provide opportunities to talk about stress, its impacts, and ways to manage feelings of anxiety, frustration, or anger.

Why it matters: Recognizing and naming feelings are first steps toward managing them if they become overwhelming. Students — and even some adults — need opportunities and support to learn and practice self-regulation skills.

Caution: Keep small balls and toys with small parts away from children younger than age 3, and keep deflated balloons away from children younger than age 8.

Design Your Own Stress Ball

Suggested Age Range: Pre-K through adult
Time: 5 minutes or more

Materials	
Balloons Play dough (store bought or homemade) *Optional* Permanent markers	*Some people experience emotional, physiological, and psychological benefits from using a stress ball. Stress balls can help to release tension, stimulate nerves, divert attention, and improve mood. They have been found helpful for students with sensory considerations such as autism or ADHD.* **Steps** • Work over a table to catch bits of play dough. • Half a 4-ounce can of play dough makes a stress ball the perfect size for little hands. Use more for adults. Homemade play dough also works well for this activity. • Roll the dough into small "snakes" measuring about 2 inches in length and insert into the balloon. The play dough will fall to the bottom, versus having to push it through the opening. Work in pairs to hold the balloon open for each other. • Push the excess air out of the balloon and tie off the end. Optional: Decorate with permanent markers.

Create Your Own Worry Stone

Suggested Age Range: Pre-K through adult
Time: 5 minutes or more

Materials	
Materials Paint brushes Acrylic paint Bowls (for paint) Stones (flat, smooth stones are best) *Optional* Clear paint or glue Dough or clay that is dryable (air-dryable is preferred)	*Worry stones, also known as palm stones, are usually oval shaped. These smooth stones are small enough to hold between the thumb and index finger. Gently moving the thumb back and forth over the surface of the stone while focusing on positive thoughts helps many people release physical tension and feel a sense of calm and renewed focus.* **Steps** • Cover the working area with newspaper or a tablecloth. • Wash stones to remove dirt. • Pour paint into bowls. • Use a paintbrush to apply paint to one side of the stone. Make a pattern or picture, if you'd like. • Wait for the first side to dry, then apply paint to the other side of the stone. Optional: Create a more colorfast, extra-smooth surface by applying clear paint or glue to both sides of the stone. Alternatively, you can create worry stones using dough or clay that can be dried. If using this method, take a small amount of clay and roll it into a ball. Form it into a flattened oval. Press your thumb into the oval to make a small indentation on one side.

Create Your Own Worry Doll

Suggested Age Range: Pre-K through adult
Time: 5 minutes or more

Materials	
Wooden clothespins (round or flat) Yarn (multiple colors) Scissors Markers (fine tip) Hot glue gun (regular glue will work if there's adequate dry time) ***Tip:*** If you have no yarn, use markers to color the doll bodies.	*Worry dolls are colorful, teeny-tiny dolls that students can customize. They are thought to have originated in Guatemala, where they were given to people who had trouble sleeping due to worries. Students can make more than one worry doll. The idea is to share one worry with each doll and let the doll worry for you so that you can sleep.* **Steps** • Cover the working area with newspaper or a tablecloth. • Select colors of yarn and begin wrapping the clothespin from the bottom up, stopping a little below the top to allow room for a face. Secure the yarn with glue. • Use markers to draw a face at the top of the clothespin. Optional: To add hair to the worry doll, add yarn to the top of the clothespin.

Zen Coloring Pages

Suggested Age Range: Pre-K through adult
Time: 5 minutes or more

Materials	
Coloring pages Markers or colored pencils *Optional* Soft, calming instrumental music	*Coloring has the potential to reduce anxiety, create focus, or bring about mindfulness for children and adults. Coloring books can be purchased, or you can search online for anti-stress coloring pages and print the ones you want.* **Steps** • Offer a variety of designs, from simple to complex. • Allow participants to choose their own design, and emphasize the joy in the process, not just the product. • Provide enough markers or colored pencils for all participants. • Allow participants to color at their own pace. Optional: Play soft music while participants color.

Hot Chocolate Breathing Technique

Suggested Age Range: Pre-K through adult
Time: 5 minutes or more

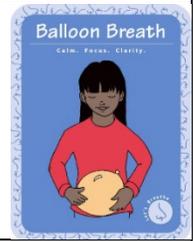| Materials	

Materials
Your imagination
or
Hot water
Hot chocolate mix
  (or tea, coffee, or
  another hot
  drink)
Spoons
Cups
 	
Optional
Whipped cream
Chocolate chips
Marshmallows
	Deep breathing also goes by the names of diaphragmatic breathing, abdominal breathing, and belly breathing. When you breathe deeply, the air coming in through your nose fully fills your lungs and the lower belly rises. Deep abdominal breathing encourages full oxygen exchange. The exchange can help slow the heartbeat and lower or stabilize blood pressure, which can help to create calming feelings.
	
	Steps
	• Mix a cup of hot chocolate by combining hot water and hot chocolate mix *or* imagine you are holding a cup of hot chocolate. (Tea, coffee, or another hot drink can be substituted.) Young children might even enjoy the exercise of "preparing" their imaginary hot drink.
	• Close your eyes and feel or imagine the warm drink in your hands.
	• Bring the drink close, or pretend, and take a big deep breath through your nose to smell the beverage.
	• Breathe out slowly through your mouth as if you are gently blowing on the drink to cool it.
	• Repeat this multiple times, as if taking in the smell and blowing out to cool the drink.
	• Take a sip of the hot chocolate or imagine yourself taking a sip.
	• Think to yourself: Is it cool enough to drink? Can I feel the warmth of the hot chocolate in my mouth? Can I feel it moving through my chest and down into my stomach?
	• You can repeat these steps as many times as you like.
	
	Find breathing techniques and other ideas at these sources:
	https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/breathing-exercises-to-help-calm-young-children
	https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/relax-breathing.html

Balloon Breathing Technique

Suggested Age Range: Pre-K through adult
Time: 5 minutes or more

Materials	
Your imagination	*This simple activity needs no materials. By focusing on their breathing, students may find themselves calming quickly.*
	Steps - Close your eyes and imagine a balloon in your belly. Give the balloon a color or a design that changes as it inflates and imagine how it feels. - Take in a slow breath and "fill up" the balloon. Count to 4 or 5 as you breathe in, then exhale slowly and calmly. - Repeat several times, breathing in to fill up the balloon all the way, then slowly letting out the air. Adapted from https://www.elsanetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Relaxation-using-controlled-breathing.pdf

To help staff and students understand and manage the effects of trauma and stress, see these tools: **Booklist: Teaching Students Who've Experienced Trauma** and **Student Trauma Book List**.

Delivery Methods for Social and Emotional Learning

What to do: Individually or with other staff members, read the definitions and examples of the instructional delivery methods described below. Record your ideas about ways you might use each method to address student needs and program goals.

Why it matters: Giving students agency and support when learning helps them build confidence, management skills, collaboration and communication skills, metacognition, and more.

Delivery Method	Definition	Social and Emotional Skill Domain(s)	Example(s)	How might you use this method to support targeted social and emotional learning skills?
Project-based learning	This student-directed approach has students engage in collaborative, open-ended projects around areas of interest or need.	• Self-awareness • Self-management • Social awareness • Relationship management	Have students select a topic, develop a driving question, design and complete a project to demonstrate their learning, and present their work to an interested audience.	
Cooperative learning	Students of various ability levels work in groups and take responsibility for their own and one another's learning.	• Social awareness • Relationship management	Put students in heterogeneous or homogenous groups to work on specific content or a challenge. For example, set up an "escape room" challenge in which students must work together to find a solution.	
Youth-directed learning	Students take learning initiative as they determine needs, set goals, and identify learning resources.	• Self-management • Responsible decision-making	Encourage students to choose learning modes or content. Recognize their efforts to take responsibility for their own learning.	

Delivery Method	Definition	Social and Emotional Skill Domain(s)	Example(s)	How might you use this method to support targeted social and emotional learning skills?
Discussion	Students engage in one-on-one or group conversations with adults or other students.	• Social awareness • Relationship management	Set up structured debates, use talking sticks, or implement techniques such as pair-shares. If students bring up news about a celebrity who struggles with alcohol or drug use, use this "teachable moment" to discuss prevention.	
Self-reflection or self-assessment	Students think about who they are, what they want, what they've learned, what they need, and so forth.	• Self-awareness • Responsible decision-making	Have students keep journals. Set up conversations about creating goals and solving problems.	
Service learning	Experiential opportunities that link learning to service, volunteering, or work.	• Social awareness	Engage students in identifying a community need, figuring out how to address it, and taking appropriate action.	
Conferencing	A purposeful, one-on-one conversation between a staff member and a student.	• Self-management	Meet with students individually to discuss personal goals, progress, and challenges in managing social and emotional issues that may affect relationships and academic learning.	

Delivery Method	Definition	Social and Emotional Skill Domain(s)	Example(s)	How might you use this method to support targeted social and emotional learning skills?
Nonlinguistic representations	Objects, signs, or nonverbal strategies that encourage and remind students to make responsible decisions.	• Responsible decision-making	Use symbols, visual images, hand gestures, and other nonverbal cues to help students follow directions or focus on a task. Keep a "warm and fuzzy jar" and add a pom-pom every time a student demonstrates kindness and respect. When the jar is full, students choose a special celebration, game, or snack.	
Think-alouds or self-talk	The act of making your thought process "visible" to others as you solve a problem, learn a new concept, or respond to a difficult situation.	• Self-management	Model thought processes such as problem solving and self-coaching by talking aloud as you identify a challenge (such as how to study for a test) and decide on a response (such as studying with a friend or writing and responding to your own test questions).	

Developing a Support Network for Program Staff

> **What to do:** Use these tips to help create a community of trust and mutual respect, where program leaders and staff members can clearly communicate needs, listen to and understand each other, and respond.
>
> **Why it matters:** Feeling understood, valued, and supported at work helps everyone feel, think, and perform better, so you navigate difficult moments with less stress and more success. An in-house community of care impacts student performance, too.

Tips for Developing a Support Network

Communicate

Building a support network starts with open, honest communication. Use "I feel" statements to clearly express that these sentiments are unique to you.

For example: "I feel overwhelmed by my workload."

"I'm not sure how to help my students."

Provide Examples

Give specific examples to support your statements. By describing the situation clearly, you make it more likely that others will be able to help.

For example: "I'd like another facilitator to give me feedback on my lesson plans because I'm not sure how to make my activities more engaging."

"I can't finish all my work during program hours. For example, last week, I spent 3 hours on the weekend working on lesson plans. That's personal time I want to spend with my family."

Listen

Use active listening skills to understand other people's needs. You may find that you have things in common or can provide mutual support. Active listening skills include asking questions, reflecting on the speaker's statements, and summarizing to check your understanding. Listening shows respect and care and makes you a better coworker.

For example: "Can you tell me more about why you're struggling to balance work with your personal life?"

"If I'm understanding you correctly, you'd like to have a co-teacher to help you plan lessons and manage student behavior in out-of-school time. Is that right?"

Timing Matters

Pick the right time to approach program leaders or peers to discuss challenging topics. You may want to talk in a private place or meet outside regular program hours.

For example: "Can we talk about some of my concerns for 15 minutes after our program ends?"

"When is a good time to discuss building self-care practices into staff training?"

Family Engagement and Support Strategies

What to do: Review the suggested strategies, add to or modify them, and choose some to enhance your program's family activities. In the Our Plan column, suggest ways to put the strategy into action. Because staff, students, and families come and go over time, family relationship-building should be an ongoing priority.

Why it matters: Family engagement benefits students' well-being and helps the program staff understand and address student and family needs.

Strategy	Our Plan
Help family members develop their skills and talents.	
Provide information on adult literacy, GED, and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in the community.	*Example: Partner with the local library to promote and support its weekly ESL classes.*
Conduct a job skills or resume-writing event for parents.	*Example: Our computer teacher will present technology classes once a week in March. Vivian will stay to provide child care.*
Conduct parenting classes or health and wellness activities.	
Provide ways to engage family members in fun and educational activities with their children.	
Plan and implement several family events each year.	
Explain the importance of family engagement by sharing research on how it improves youths' academic and life outcomes.	
Engage families in projects and special events.	
Find innovative and engaging ways to get to know your program families.	
Bring program youths into designing and providing different engagement opportunities.	

Strategy	Our Plan
Invite family members to participate in running the out-of-school time program.	
Invite parents to become members of the advisory committee.	
Create a family handbook that clearly welcomes families and offers them ways to get involved.	
Work with families to include their input when creating culturally relevant program materials.	
Connect families with schools and with community resources.	
Set up a "hub" at the program site where families can share ideas and resources, network, seek support, and problem solve with other families or staff. Partner with groups or organizations as appropriate.	
Go off-site. Visit families at places of worship, popular meeting spots, and their homes.	
Complete and distribute the "Family Health and Wellness Resources" tool.	
Other:	

Five Skill Domains of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Self-Awareness
The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a growth mind-set.

Self-Management
The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals, including the ability to organize time and tasks.

Relationship Skills
The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

Social Awareness
The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

Responsible Decision Making
The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The ability to identify, analyze, and solve problems. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.

What Is Social and Emotional Learning?

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines social and emotional learning as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. It's generally accepted that the five skill domains can serve as a framework for developing positive healthy habits and skills in children and adults across all learning environments.

The definition and skill domains in this tool were developed by CASEL. For more information about CASEL's work in social and emotional learning in preschool through grade 12, visit https://casel.org.

Health and Wellness Research and Practice Brief

What to do: Read these highlights from research and practice, then mine them for things you can apply in your program.

Why it matters: Knowing what research says about health and wellness can help you inform stakeholders about the importance of changing daily practices. Research-based information can also point to ways to improve your program's support for health and wellness among students, families, and staff members and provide information that can help you find new program partners or apply for funds to start or sustain a health and wellness initiative.

Now more than ever, parents rely on out-of-school time programs, like Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) sites, as partners to support the healthy development of their children.

In 2014, 75 percent of parents believed that afterschool programs provided children with opportunities to be physically active and 63 percent believed that afterschool programs provided healthy beverages, snacks, or meals. In 2020, these numbers had increased: 85 percent of parents believed programs provided opportunities for physical activity, and 68 percent believed programs provided healthy beverages, snacks, or meals. These supports were especially valued by parents of color and low-income families (Afterschool Alliance, 2022).

Percentages of parents who felt factors were extremely important, by income:

Factor	Low-Income Families	High-Income Families
Physical activity	54%	52%
Snacks or meals	48%	36%

Percentages of parents who felt factors were extremely important, by race/ethnicity:

Factor	Black	Latino	White
Physical activity	55%	58%	51%
Snacks or meals	46%	44%	38%

Afterschool programs also offer children opportunities to interact with their peers, develop positive relationships, make new friends, and practice important skills related to social and emotional learning (Durlak and Weissberg, 2013). In 2022, six in 10 parents expressed more worry about their child's emotional well-being than before the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, 58 percent of parents reported that opportunities for children to build life skills are extremely important, and this was an even greater priority for Black (67 percent), Hispanic (64 percent), and low-income (63 percent) families. Moreover, 82 percent of parents overall believed out-of-school time programs provide the opportunity to learn social and emotional life skills, such as the ability to communicate and work in teams (82 percent), build confidence (81 percent), learn responsible decision making (79 percent), and build positive relationships with caring adults and mentors (77 percent). Three in every four parents (75 percent) believed that afterschool programs reduce the likelihood that youths will engage in drug abuse and other risky behaviors, and 85 percent

believed program participation reduces children's unproductive screentime (Afterschool Alliance, 2022).

Importance of Health and Wellness in Afterschool

Healthy, active children learn better, have fewer behavioral problems, and perform better academically (Healthy Out-of-School Time Coalition, 2018). Healthy eating and physical activity are associated with increased life expectancy, better quality of life, and lowered risk for many chronic diseases (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2011). Unfortunately, most children in the United States do not get the nutritious food and physical activity they need every day. Fewer than one in four children between the ages of 6 and 17 participate in the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity every day (CDC, 2022a), and more than seven in 10 youths ages 5-18 consume more than the recommended amounts of added sugar, saturated fat, and sodium.

Nutrition

A healthy diet, along with regular physical activity, reduces the risk for the top three causes of death in the U.S.: heart disease, cancer, and stroke (CDC, 2011). Current dietary guidelines for Americans indicate that a healthy, nutritious diet includes vegetables of all types, fruits, whole grains, dairy, protein, oils, and limited added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium (U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). The average daily intake of fruits and vegetables in children and adolescents is well below recommended amounts, and 72-80 percent of youths eat more than the daily recommended amount of added sugar. Between 78 and 88 percent of youths consume more than the recommended amount of saturated fat, and 77-97 percent of youths consume more than the recommended amount of sodium.

Sleep Has Power

People often take sleep for granted and imagine that they can "catch up" on lost sleep when needed. However, science is finding that sleep is one of the most important activities humans engage in. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), "Getting enough quality sleep at the right times can help protect your mental health, physical health, quality of life, and safety" (NHLBI, 2022b).

Getting the right amount of sleep matters for everyone, but sleep deficiency can be especially harmful for children, who need sleep to properly grow and develop their bodies and brains. Children and teens who don't get enough sleep have behaviors that adults may misunderstand — behaviors like mood swings, anger and poor impulse control, sadness or depression, or lack of motivation. They may have problems paying attention, get lower grades in school, get stressed easily, and engage in risky behaviors.

Getting enough sleep improves learning. It helps us focus and pay attention, make decisions, remember things, manage our emotions and behavior, and have better physical and emotional reactions.

How much sleep is enough? Here are general guidelines (NHLBI, 2022a):

- Newborns 4 to 12 months: 12 to 16 hours a day
- Children 1 to 2 years old: 11 to 14 hours a day
- Children 3 to 5 years old: 10 to 13 hours a day
- Children 6 to 12 years old: 9 to 12 hours a day
- Teens 13 to 18 years old: 8 to 10 hours a day
- Adults 18 years and older: 7 to 8 hours a day

Poor nutrition in children is linked to obesity, which in turn is associated with heart disease, diabetes, asthma, depression, and stigmatization (Hartline-Grafton and Hassink, 2021). In the United States from 2017 to 2020, CDC estimates found that 19.7 percent of children and adolescents were obese, and the percentages were higher among Black and Hispanic children than in non-Hispanic white and Asian children. More adolescents from poor families were obese than adolescents from families not living in poverty (CDC, 2021a). Obesity in children is associated with the immediate physical health risks of high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, and low tolerance of blood sugar changes. Children with obesity are at increased risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes beginning in adolescence, and are more likely to experience psychological consequences, including depression and anxiety, as well as bullying, discrimination, and low self-esteem (CDC, 2011; Hartline-Grafton and Hassink, 2021).

A study in *JAMA Pediatrics* (Murray et al., 2022) found that children — both boys and girls — as young as 9 or 10 years old can suffer eating disorders. Researchers learned that about 5 percent of children suffered from binge eating behavior, and another 2.5 percent were trying to avoid gaining weight through self-induced vomiting. The study stressed that eating disorders affect all children, irrespective of age, race, or gender.

In 2020, approximately 12 million children (17.5 percent of all children) lived in food-insecure households. Black and Latino children were more than twice as likely to face food insecurity as non-Hispanic white children, and the COVID-19 pandemic increased food insecurity among rural and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities (Feeding America, 2022). Food

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Family Engagement Matters

Family engagement in schools and out-of-school time programs can promote positive health behaviors among children and adolescents. For example, students who feel supported by their parents and caregivers are less likely to experience emotional distress, practice unhealthy eating behaviors, consider or attempt suicide, or disengage from school and learning (Resnick, Harris et al., 1993). School and community efforts that promote health among students have been proven to be more successful when families are involved. When family members volunteer at their children's school, the likelihood of their children initiating smoking decreases, and the likelihood of their children meeting the guidelines for physical activity increases (Ornelas, Perreira et al., 2007). School and youth program interventions that include a family engagement component have been shown to increase positive health behaviors such as improving children's fruit and vegetable consumption and their school-related physical activity (Hawkins, Catalano et al., 1999).

To increase family engagement in health and wellness, schools and programs must make a positive connection with families, provide a variety of health and wellness activities, and schedule frequent opportunities to fully engage families in planned wellness activities. Supporting and engaging families can be done in a variety of ways. Offering parent education classes (e.g., importance of lifelong physical activity, talking with children about health-related risks and behaviors, monitoring children's screentime activities), holding health-related events in the community (e.g., cooking classes, family fun runs, mobile vaccine clinics), and providing information to families on important health screenings for children (e.g., eye exams, hearing tests) are just a few examples (CDC, 2012).

insecurity, even at a marginal level, is especially detrimental to children's health, development, and well-being (CDC, 2011; Hartline-Grafton and Hassink, 2021).

Quite a few children's health issues have been linked to food insecurity. Beyond the obvious, such as poor health status, lower health-related quality of life, lower physical functioning, poor dietary quality, and less physical activity, other health issues include more frequent colds and stomachaches, asthma, lower bone density (among boys), tooth decay, developmental risk, behavioral and socioemotional problems (e.g., hyperactivity), mental health problems (e.g., depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation), and poor educational performance and academic outcomes (U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020).

Out-of-school time programs that teach and apply nutrition standards can improve children's diet quality and food security, which may further support physical and mental health and learning. Federal nutrition programs such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) provide funding for afterschool snacks and meals, and school-aged children consume more fruits, vegetables, milk, and key nutrients like calcium, vitamin A, and folate on days they eat afterschool meals than on days they do not (Hartline-Grafton and Hassink, 2021). A healthy school nutrition environment offers students nutritious and appealing foods and beverages, consistent and accurate communication about good nutrition, and ways to learn and practice healthy eating throughout the time they spend in programming (CDC, 2022b).

Physical Activity

Regular physical activity can play a major role in preventing chronic disease, improving physical fitness, reducing depression and anxiety, and promoting positive mental health. A healthy balance between a nutritious diet and physical activity is necessary to maintain a healthy body weight and prevent or reduce obesity. Substantial evidence indicates that physical activity can help improve concentration, attention, classroom behavior, and academic achievement (CDC, 2013). Given these important benefits, the CDC and Institute of Medicine emphasize out-of-school time programs, as well as physical activity clubs and intramural and extramural sports, as part of a comprehensive approach to increasing student physical education and physical activity (CDC, 2022b). Out-of-school time programs can provide opportunities for children and adolescents to increase daily physical activity, practice skills learned in school physical education programs, and try new activities in a safe environment (Springboard to Active Schools, 2022).

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services indicate that children and adolescents ages 6 through 17 need 60 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018). This activity does not need to be a formally organized exercise program; activity may include walking to and from school, free play, organized games or sports, or structured programs. Recent estimates show that less than one quarter of youths participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day (CDC, 2022a).

In 2011, the National AfterSchool Association (NAA) adopted healthy eating and physical activity (HEPA) standards for out-of-school time programs. These standards provide helpful benchmarks for snack content and quality, staff training, HEPA-related curricula, social support, program support, and environmental support. Developed by the Healthy Out-of-School Time (HOST)

Coalition, the standards were extensively updated in 2018 by the HOST coalition with the National Recreation and Park Association and the Afterschool Alliance. The NAA HEPA standards recommend that physical activity should make up at least 10 percent of overall program time, and at least 50 percent of the activity time should be moderate or vigorous (HOST Coalition, 2018). High-quality physical activity programming offers developmentally appropriate and inclusive physical activities, games, and sports that provide youths with the knowledge and skills needed to enjoy staying physically active throughout their lives (National AfterSchool Association, 2018).

Stress and Social, Emotional, and Mental Health

Health and wellness encompass more than physical health, supported through good nutrition and sufficient physical activity. Supports for social, emotional, and mental health are also essential to children's well-being, and to the development and continuation of healthy habits. Children who struggle with obesity are more likely to also struggle with depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, and emotional distress can lead to poor dietary choices and reduced activity (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2009). Youths with poor nutrition and low activity levels need to feel comfortable trying and participating in new activities and lifestyle changes, and afterschool programs can provide caring adults and places where young people feel safe to try new activities. In these environments, students can learn to make healthy decisions in all areas of their lives, form positive relationships with peers, set goals for themselves, and feel empowered to take charge of their futures (Afterschool Alliance, 2018a).

Nearly half of U.S. children have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE). African American and Hispanic children are more likely to experience at least one ACE than non-Hispanic white and Asian children, and the most likely to experience two or more ACEs (Afterschool Alliance, 2018b). A Kaiser Permanente study has linked ACEs to increased risk of substance abuse, depression, and heart disease in adulthood (Felitti et al., 1998). Protective factors that lower the likelihood of these outcomes include children's abilities to manage emotions, maintain healthy relationships, experience and show empathy, and develop healthy habits (Afterschool Alliance, 2018a). High-quality afterschool programming can help students to build these protective factors. Regular participation in such programming has been shown to improve student self-confidence, self-awareness, and positive social behaviors (Durlak, et al., 2010).

Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing impacts of structural racism have placed communities, families, and children under prolonged stress (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2022). While some level of stress is unavoidable and can even help to produce growth, extended periods of stress can overwhelm the body's ability to respond in a healthy way. When stress levels become toxic, they can impair brain growth and development and weaken the body, leading to problems with learning, behavior, and long-term health (Afterschool Alliance, 2020). In October 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children's Hospital Association together declared a National State of Emergency in Children's Mental Health. Physical activity helps to decrease anxiety and emotional stress, and out-of-school time programs can implement additional approaches to reducing stress. Participation in evidence-based programs that take a social and emotional learning (SEL) approach is linked to reduced emotional distress and improved behavior, academic performance, self-perception, and attitudes toward school, teachers, and others (Taylor et al., 2017). In 2020, members of the 50 Statewide Afterschool Networks identified five key elements afterschool

programs can offer to help buffer the effects of toxic stress: (1) supportive adult and peer relationships, (2) social-emotional learning, (3) safety and belonging, (4) youth voice and choice, and (5) promoting physical health (Afterschool Alliance, 2020).

Academic Benefits and Conclusions

Student academic achievement benefits appear in studies conducted by the CDC Healthy Schools project. When asked to report on their grades and their health and wellness behaviors in 2019, high school students demonstrated that the following healthy habits can contribute to better outcomes (CDC, 2022b):

- Eat the following every day: breakfast, fruit or fruit juice, and vegetables. Don't count french fries as vegetables and don't drink soda every day.
- Engage in physical activity for 60 minutes a day and play on at least one sports team. Don't sit in front of a TV or computer screen for more than three hours a day.
- Start using alcohol at a later age and consume it lightly and infrequently. Don't use tobacco or other potentially addictive substances.
- Get eight or more hours of sleep every night and visit a dentist regularly.

When families, schools, and out-of-school time programs partner to help students learn and practice healthy behaviors, the payoffs are better health, higher academic grades, and greater stress resilience. It's important to deliver clear, consistent messages to young people, encourage the development of positive health and academic behaviors, encourage valuing health and wellness practices, assist families with getting necessary preventive care, and improve access to resources and support networks (Youth.gov, n.d.).

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Icebreaker Activities

What to do: Start building relationships with students at the beginning of every program term by using icebreakers that help students get to know you and one another.

Why it matters: Young people may be uncomfortable about meeting new adults and peers. Making short, fun activities part of the program routine can help everyone relax and refocus for what comes next. Pleasant interactions with others help to build confidence, connections, and communication skills — all of which are important to academic and social success.

"Find Someone Who …" Bingo

Create Bingo cards that include a different experience in each box (such as "has a sibling," "has been to the ocean," and "has eaten chocolate ice cream"). Players find someone different to fit each description, then ask the person's name and write it in the box. Including program staff with students in this activity can help everyone relax.

Two Truths and a Lie

Give every student an index card and ask them to write down two truths and one lie about themselves. This activity works best among students who don't know each other well, so put them in pairs with that in mind. Students take turns sharing the three statements and having their partner guess which are true and which is a lie. To follow up, you can ask students to share more about their truths.

Name Game

Start by having students stand in a circle. Have a student begin by saying their name accompanied by an adjective, animal, or gesture. Then, all the other students must repeat it exactly as the student did. As you move around the circle, students must repeat the current student's name followed by all of the previous students' names. Once everyone has had a turn, ask for a volunteer to share everyone's introduction, starting with their own. Students will laugh and have fun while learning one another's names.

Snowball Fight

Have students write at least two facts about themselves on a piece of paper. Next, ask everyone to gather in a circle. Tell students to crumple up their sheets of paper and throw them in a pile in the middle of the circle. Then, each student should pick up a new paper and take turns reading them out loud. When someone recognizes their facts, they should raise their hand and share more about what they wrote.

House of Cards

Place students in small groups and have them discuss their likes and dislikes. Then, give them a stack of index cards and have them write something they have in common on each card. Have the group build a tower as the cards are completed. Challenge groups to see who can find the most things they have in common to build the tallest tower.

The Question Web

As students stand in a circle, have one student take a ball of yarn and hold the end while throwing the ball to another student. The thrower should ask the catcher a question about themselves. The catcher should answer the question and continue the process by holding the yarn strand, throwing the ball to another student, and asking a question. As the activity progresses, the yarn will create a web that represents the uniqueness of the students and what they each contribute to the group.

This or That

Read out "this or that" statements and have students go to one side of the room or the other depending on which they prefer. Examples of questions include "Would you rather live in the country or the city?" and "Would you rather be indoors or outdoors?" This will help students learn more about each other and see what they have in common.

We've Got Talent

Standing in a circle, have students take turns introducing themselves and showing off a special skill or talent. Some examples might include performing a dance move, saying something in another language, or snapping their fingers. If students prefer, they may also say their talent, such as drawing or playing a sport.

Interview Game

Have students pair up and interview each other to learn interesting facts. You may choose to give them questions to select from (for example, "What is your favorite food?" or "What is your favorite thing to do in your free time?"). Then, have students introduce their partners to the whole group.

Blobs and Lines

Prompt students to either line up in a particular order (such as by birthday or in alphabetical order by first name) or gather in "blobs" based on something they have in common (such as same favorite season or same favorite food). This activity will keep students moving and talking while finding commonalities.

Intentional Activity Design Planner

What to do: Use this template as a starting point to design skill-building activities that align with program goals and student interests. See the example on this page for a way to embed social and emotional learning in a recreational activity. Use the blank templates on the next page for your program.

Why it matters: To provide opportunities for students to learn and practice important skills, you need to be intentional about creating activities. Using a planning tool automates the information-gathering process to help you plan efficiently.

Example

Need (Program SMART Goal)	Want (Student Voice)	Social and Emotional Learning Domain(s)	Instructional Strategy (Explicit or Embedded)	Activity	Intentional Design	Activity SMART Goal	Delivery Method(s)	21st Century Skill(s)
Disciplinary referrals will decrease by 10 percent, as measured by behavioral reports, by the end of the program year.	Students want sports activities.	Self-management Relationship skills	Embedded	Martial arts and mixed sports	Students engage in the practice of tae kwon do and other sports to achieve fitness and focus while also using self-discipline and socialization skills to positively manage conflict and anger.	By the end of the year, 80 percent of students who regularly participate in martial arts and other sports will receive zero disciplinary referrals due to fighting, as measured by referral submissions.	Think-alouds Explicit instruction Self-talk	Communication: Students will have opportunities to practice communicating their feelings and talking through conflict.

Need (Program SMART Goal)	Want (Student Voice)	Social and Emotional Learning Domain(s)	Instructional Strategy (Explicit or Embedded)	Activity	Intentional Design	Activity SMART Goal	Delivery Method(s)	21st Century Skill(s)

Need (Program SMART Goal)	Want (Student Voice)	Social and Emotional Learning Domain(s)	Instructional Strategy (Explicit or Embedded)	Activity	Intentional Design	Activity SMART Goal	Delivery Method(s)	21st Century Skill(s)

Learning Recovery Tip Sheet

What to do: Review this tip sheet and the U.S. Department of Education's guide on learning acceleration for strategies to help you provide quality out-of-school time (OST) learning experiences. See the **Learning Recovery Toolkit** on the 21st CCLC NTAC website for practical tools to support students' academic and social-emotional learning recovery in OST settings.

Why it matters: These strategies are especially helpful for supporting learning recovery for students who've fallen behind and aren't meeting grade-level standards.

To Support Learning Recovery in Your OST Program…
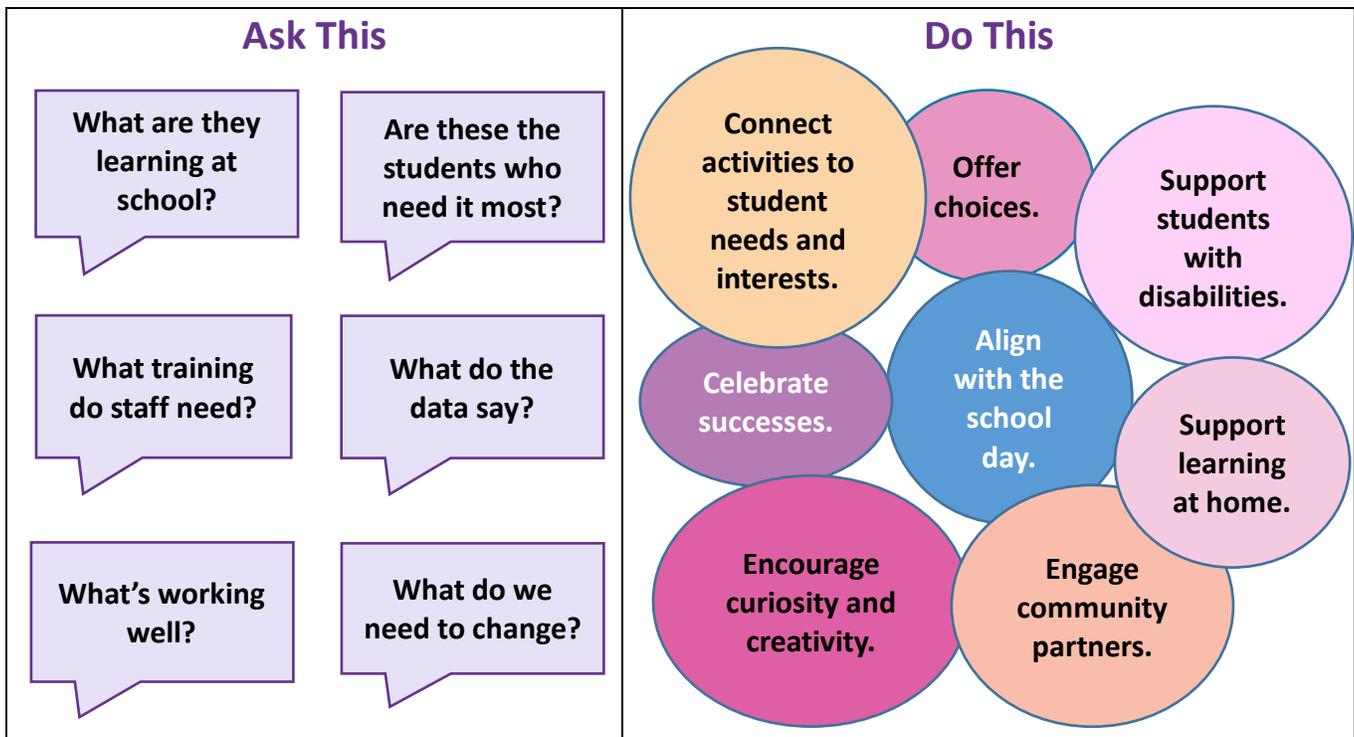
Ask This

- What are they learning at school?
- Are these the students who need it most?
- What training do staff need?
- What do the data say?
- What's working well?
- What do we need to change?

Do This

- Connect activities to student needs and interests.
- Offer choices.
- Support students with disabilities.
- Celebrate successes.
- Align with the school day.
- Support learning at home.
- Encourage curiosity and creativity.
- Engage community partners.

Learning Recovery: Acceleration vs. Remediation

Learning acceleration is a learning recovery strategy to get students on grade level by providing just-in-time foundational support connected to the grade-level content they're learning. Research shows that learning acceleration is an important strategy for advancing equity and that students who experienced acceleration struggled less and learned more than students who started at the same point but experienced **remediation** (repeating lessons or practicing skills they didn't master during previous grades) instead.

Check the 21st CCLC NTAC website for professional learning opportunities, tools, and resources on learning and learning recovery — including the **Learning Recovery Research and Practice Brief**.

Use the space below to record your ideas, insights, and questions about ways to support students' academic and social-emotional recovery.

Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.

— Robert Collier

Math Booklist for Staff and Students

What to do: Choose books for students or staff to support math learning and reduce math anxiety.

Why it matters: Books can spark new ideas and conversations. They can also reinforce positive messages like "Math is interesting" and "Mistakes are learning opportunities." Reducing anxiety and encouraging a growth mindset can help students persevere with math and help staff members feel more prepared to lead math activities.

Tips and Reminders

- Just because a book has a reading level or target audience that's at a lower grade level doesn't mean your students won't enjoy it or learn from it. People of all ages can access and enjoy picture books, and they make great conversation starters.
- If you find a book you really like, look for other books by the same author.
- This list is just a starting point!
    o Check with librarians and math teachers to get their recommendations.
    o You can also search online for booklists related to math and math anxiety.
    o See what's available in your school or local library.

Picture Books to Build Math Interest and Enthusiasm

Bean Thirteen by Matt McElligot — Ralph and Flora try to get rid of the unlucky thirteenth bean, but it keeps coming back! This story is a fun way to explore remainders and division. *Grades K-3.*

Counting on Katherine: How Katherine Johnson Saved Apollo 13 by Helaine Becker — This true story of Katherine Johnson, an African American mathematician who worked for NASA during the space race, was featured in the film *Hidden Figures*. *Grades 1-2.*

Fractions in Disguise: A Math Adventure by Edward Einhorn — A valuable fraction goes missing. Knowing it's likely to be disguised, George Cornelius Factor invents a tool (the Reducer) to strip away disguises, reducing the fraction and revealing its true form. *Grades 2-5.*

G Is for Googol: A Math Alphabet Book by David M. Schwartz — This book presents interesting math concepts for every letter of the alphabet. It's also a painless way to build math vocabulary. *Grades 4-8.*

How Much Is a Million? by David M. Schwartz and Steven Kellogg — This book is one in a series that uses stories and imagination to teach important math concepts like quantifying large numbers, grasping basic financial concepts, and understanding why and how people use standard measurements. *Grades K-3.*

I'm Trying to Love Math by Bethany Barton — This book shows cool and amazing uses of math, whether you're making music, baking cookies, or blasting off into outer space. *Grades pre-K-3.*

Nothing Stopped Sophie: The Story of Unshakable Mathematician Sophie Germain by Cheryl Bardoe — Sophie's parents took away her candles so she wouldn't stay up late doing math. But one day she would develop a formula that laid the groundwork for modern architecture. *Grades pre-K-3.*

The Art of Clean Up: Life Made Neat and Tidy by Ursus Wehrli — Bright photographs surprise and delight by showing everyday objects (like a bowl of alphabet soup, sunbathers, a spruce branch, and stars) sorted by color, shape, or size. *Grades 1-6.*

Uno's Garden by Graeme Base — This book takes you on an adventure where you search for certain plants and animals in the forest where Uno lives. To complete the adventure, you have to complete skills, puzzles, and multiplication questions. *Grades pre-K-2.*

Picture Books to Help With Math Anxiety

Everything You Need to Ace Math in One Big Fat Notebook: The Complete Middle School Study Guide edited by Ouida Newton — This book presents strategies for dealing with math anxiety along with easy-to-understand explanations of math concepts like fractions, decimals, ratios, percentages, probability, geometry, and more. *Grades 6-9.*

I Am Peace by Susan Verde — This book addresses general moments of anxiety and ways to calm down and be in the moment. Includes mindfulness exercises. *Grades pre-K-3.*

The Dot by Peter Reynolds — How do you overcome the fear of "I can't draw"? By starting with a simple dot and seeing where it takes you. This book has a powerful message about overcoming fear of any kind. *Grades K-4.*

The Monster Who Did My Math by Danny Schnitzlein — A boy with math anxiety faces homework that involves multiplication when a monster appears in his room and offers easy answers. The consequences, however, aren't so great. *Grades pre-K-3.*

When Sophie Thinks She Can't by Molly Bang — When Sophie feels frustrated because she can't solve a math puzzle, her teacher helps her find a different approach. "I can't do it" becomes "I can't do it — yet." *Grades pre-K-2.*

Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.

– Albert Einstein

Books That Show Math as Interesting, Relevant, Amazing, and "Doable"

Mammoth Math: Everything You Need to Know About Numbers by David Macauley — In this illustrated book, mammoths help readers understand key math principles. Written with reluctant math students in mind, each chapter covers a different branch of math. *Grades 2-6.*

Math Doesn't Suck and other books by Danica McKellar — This book covers fractions, decimals, and more. All of the author's math books aim to entertain, encourage, and explain. *Grades 4-7.*
Tip: Her website shows her books by age group (including adults): https://mckellarmath.com/.

The I Hate Mathematics! Book and other books by Marilyn Burns — This illustrated book shares math tips, tricks, and tidbits in a lively way. *Grades 4-adult.*
Tip: Check your library or check online for other books by this author for various age groups.

This Book Thinks You're a Math Genius by Mike Goldsmith — This fill-in book uses entertaining activities to introduce key math concepts in a highly visual way. It helps children think like mathematicians by inviting them to experiment and investigate for themselves. Covers geometry, space and volume, statistics, numbers and number patterns, codes and ciphers, and the concept of infinity. *Grades 2-8.*

Unbuilding by David Macauley — This is a fictional account of selling the Empire State Building and dismantling it to move it to the new owner's country. The book features drawings of and discussion about the math and engineering involved in building. *Grades 5-7.*

Practice Frameworks for Social and Emotional Learning

What to do: Learn about three practice frameworks to support social and emotional learning: trauma-informed practice, mindfulness development, and positive youth development. Review the definitions and examples below with your team. Then brainstorm ways to implement each framework into activities. Record your ideas in the space provided on the next page.

Why it matters: These frameworks offer lenses that can help you see ways to meet student needs and develop their social and emotional skills.

Framework	Trauma-Informed Practice	Mindfulness Development	Positive Youth Development
Definition	This practice framework reflects an understanding of the impacts of trauma on child development and ways to minimize the effects; it includes a commitment to avoid causing additional trauma. Causes of trauma include child abuse or neglect and living in a household with violence, mental illness, addiction, death, or physical illness. You may not be aware of a child's specific trauma and its triggers, but you can adopt a trauma-informed approach by addressing the following factors in your program design: • Safety • Trustworthiness and transparency • Peer support • Collaboration and mutuality • Empowerment, voice, and choice • Cultural, historical, and gender issues	This practice framework helps to increase a person's ability to focus on the present moment rather than past or future events. This focus prevents unhelpful thoughts and feelings from taking over. Mindfulness development shows promise as a strategy for improving executive function skills, such as the ability to monitor and regulate one's focus. Mindfulness is a skill, and it takes practice to develop.	This practice framework supports positive outcomes by fostering the "5 C's" that underlie social and emotional learning: • **Competence:** Help students build a positive view of their actions. • **Confidence:** Provide chances for students to feel a sense of success. • **Connection:** Help students build connections with one another, program staff, their families, and the community. • **Character:** Enable students to respect social and cultural norms and to develop internal standards of behavior. • **Caring:** Help students develop empathy and compassion.

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Framework	Trauma-Informed Practice	Mindfulness Development	Positive Youth Development
Example	Andreas notices that one student, Jamal, flinches each time the buzzer signals a transition between activities. Andreas tries different signals until he finds that turning the light off for three seconds, then turning it back on, seems to work for everyone without startling Jamal.	Kendra and Evan are working together on an art project. They have only 30 minutes left. "Oh no," Kendra says, "time is running out. How will we finish on time?" Evan reminds her of something their art teacher said: "Having a time limit can make us even more creative! Let's stay focused on creating the shapes and colors we want."	K'lyra creates caring rituals by greeting every second-grader by name and giving a special handshake that the student selected or created. K'lyra also encourages students to learn each other's names and handshakes.
How will you integrate this framework into your program?			

Rubric for Assessing Social and Emotional Competencies

What to do: Use this rubric to assess your own social and emotional learning competencies. For each statement, circle the response that best describes your level of agreement. Once you've responded to each statement, you'll tally your responses and determine targets and next steps for increasing your competencies.

Why it matters: This assessment can increase self-awareness and support your personal and professional growth.

Self-Assessment					
Domain: Social Awareness					
I understand and appreciate individual and group differences.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I consider myself culturally competent.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
My students' physical and emotional safety is my top priority.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
It's easy for me to understand others' perspectives.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I have strong morals and ethics.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
Domain: Self-Management					
I'm able to manage my emotions and feelings in healthy ways.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I remain calm when addressing student misbehavior.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I'm able to effectively manage stress.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I regularly set and achieve goals.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I always think before I act.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
Domain: Self-Awareness					
I know my social and emotional strengths.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I know my social and emotional weaknesses.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
It's easy for me to tell people what I think or how I feel.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I know how my emotions impact my behavior.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure

Self-Assessment					
I feel confident in my abilities.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
Domain: Relationship Management					
I'm proficient at building positive relationships with students.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I work well on a team.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I engage in respectful communication with others.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I'm a good listener.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I feel comfortable asking for help when needed.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
Domain: Responsible Decision Making					
I make good decisions.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I take responsibility for my decisions.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I consider the consequences, both for myself and others, when making decisions.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I'm proficient at problem solving.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I'm able to negotiate and compromise.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
Readiness to Integrate Social and Emotional Learning					
I know and understand the five domains of social and emotional learning.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I feel prepared to integrate social and emotional learning.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I feel prepared to model social and emotional learning skills with students.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I know how to integrate social and emotional learning into program activities.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
I know how to integrate social and emotional learning into my interactions with students.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure

Tally and record your responses below. Circle the two domains or areas with the highest total of "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree" and "Unsure" responses.

Tally					
Domain/Area	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**	**Unsure**
Social Awareness					

Tally					
Domain/Area	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure
Self-Management					
Self-Awareness					
Relationship Management					
Responsible Decision Making					
Readiness to Integrate Social and Emotional Learning					

Write two targets for improving your social and emotional learning competencies in the first column below. In the second column, list ways to increase your competency in each of these areas. You might wish to discuss available learning opportunities with your program leader before you finalize your next steps.

Targets for Increasing Social and Emotional Learning Competencies	
Domains/Areas for Improvement	Next Steps

Staff and Program Health and Wellness Assessment

What to do: Ask staff members to use the first two pages to reflect privately on personal and professional health and wellness factors, considering what works well, what could be improved, and which factors an individual can control. Then ask staff to complete and turn in the last page to improve program performance. Devote a staff meeting to discussing ways to ease job-related issues.

Why it matters: Group reflection can help you make positive changes that create a better working environment and give staff members opportunities to improve self-care.

Directions: For your personal reflection only, complete the items on this page and the following page. Consider what you might do on your own to improve your health and wellness. ***When you're done, go to page 3 to help us improve our program's practices.***

What does "health and wellness" mean to you?

- ☐ Not having sickness or pain.
- ☐ Having enough mental and physical energy.
- ☐ Feeling confident socially and emotionally.
- ☐ Having an overall sense of well-being.
- ☐ What else? _____

What can you do to improve your health and wellness?

- ☐ Eat healthy meals and snacks.
- ☐ Get regular exercise.
- ☐ Spend time in nature.
- ☐ Schedule time for things I enjoy.
- ☐ Schedule more time for sleep and rest.
- ☐ Schedule family or social time.
- ☐ Make sure, every day and every week, there is at least one activity I look forward to.
- ☐ Mark something off my to-do list that I've been dreading (either by doing it, deciding not to do it, or saying "no" to a pending commitment).
- ☐ Make an appointment with a doctor, dentist, or mental health professional.
- ☐ Read a book or take a class on health and wellness.
- ☐ What else? _____

How do you think your job is affecting your health and wellness?

- ☐ I want to go to work most days.
- ☐ I feel safe at work.
- ☐ I think the work I do has value.
- ☐ I have the knowledge, skills, and resources I need to do my job.
- ☐ I'm able to be myself at work, and to use my ideas and abilities on the job.
- ☐ I feel valued and supported by program leaders.
- ☐ I have a sense of belonging, like I'm part of a team.
- ☐ I feel comfortable talking with a program leader or colleague if I need help or feel frustrated.
- ☐ Program leaders provide constructive feedback and care about my professional growth.
- ☐ Program leaders care about work-life balance.
- ☐ What else? _____

When you take time to replenish your spirit,
it allows you to serve from the overflow.
You cannot serve from an empty vessel.

—Eleanor Brown

Please share your ideas on ways our program can support health and wellness at work. Just fill out this section and give it to your program leader or drop it in the response box. Your voice matters!

Date: _____

Your name and contact info (optional): _____

Directions: Check any health and wellness supports that interest you. Then circle your top three.

Work Environment

- ☐ Let's talk about ways to improve staff members' physical safety and security at work.
- ☐ Let's try some new ideas for working as a team and for sharing leadership among staff members.
- ☐ We need clear guidance on how to handle conflicts or disagreements among staff.
- ☐ I think we need more focus on work-life balance (e.g., agreeing not to make calls about work during off hours unless it's an emergency, creating planning time during work hours so we don't need to take work home, establishing a schedule to take short breaks during work hours).
- ☐ I'd like to reduce feelings of uncertainty by getting constructive feedback about how I'm doing at my job.
- ☐ I'd like to know about opportunities for professional growth.
- ☐ I'd like to know more about the following program policy: _____
- ☐ I'd like training or coaching on the following topic(s): _____
- ☐ Here's a resource that would help me do my job: _____
- ☐ I have an idea for improvement that I'd like to discuss: _____
- ☐ What else? _____

Perks

- ☐ Let's find and provide information on local health and wellness resources, like free or low-cost dental clinics, blood pressure checks, exercise classes, and counseling.
- ☐ Let's have an idea exchange on ways to organize to reduce stress.
- ☐ I'd like a staff healthy recipe exchange.
- ☐ Offer a workshop for staff on self-care, mindfulness practices, and work-life balance.
- ☐ I'd like to join a walking group or find an exercise buddy.
- ☐ What else? _____

Stages of Child and Adolescent Development Overview

What to do: Use this tool to get a quick overview of typical milestones and areas of physical, social and emotional, and cognitive development in young people over time.

Why it matters: Becoming familiar with changes across stages of life can help you plan appropriate environments and activities, watch for areas of concern to discuss with school-day partners and families, and help every student succeed.

Nurturing individuality and building strong, authentic relationships are goals as you strive to fully understand each student. Here are some other factors that come into play as children grow and develop:

Personality

Is the student …

Responsible?

Adventuresome?

Confident?

Persuasive?

Imaginative?

Outgoing?

Temperament

Does the student …

Need predictability?

Move a lot?

Distract easily?

Respond cautiously?

Adapt easily?

React intensely?

Have a long attention span?

Always seem happy? Sad?

Respond slowly or quickly?

| Infancy
0-3 years | Early Childhood
3-4 years | 4-6 years | Middle Childhood
6-9 years | Late Childhood/
Early Adolescence
9-12 years | Middle
Adolescence
12-15 years | Late Adolescence
15-18 years |

Area of Development: Physical
Bodily growth ◆ Healthy habits ◆ Use of materials and equipment

Area of Development: Social and Emotional
Regulate/control emotions ◆ Form secure relationships ◆ Recognize, express, and manage feelings
Have empathy for feelings of others ◆ Self-express ◆ Interact with others ◆ Honor others' opinions

Area of Development: Cognitive
Construction of thought processes ◆ Problem-solving ◆ Decision-making

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Stress Reduction for Work-Life Balance

What to do: List areas of frustration in your life — for example, situations where you experience conflict or feel powerless to act. Then use the information in this guide to decide what is and isn't in your sphere of influence and what types of boundaries you may need to set (or reset) to manage frustrations and their root causes. Mark statements that stand out as you review the five boundary types (see the first table) and the list of things you can and can't control (see the second table). Use the last page of this guide to write a script for a discussion with the person(s) involved — or with yourself!

Why it matters: Boundaries are emotional and physical guidelines, norms, or limits that define what's appropriate, safe, and permissible behavior for yourself and others. When others don't know about and respect individual and shared boundaries, stress can affect everyone's health and well-being. Likewise, when you understand what you can and can't control, you can let go of issues that cause frustration and focus on areas where you can have an impact.

My Frustrations

Use this space to list areas of frustration:

My Sphere of Influence

What I can control

Boundaries

What I can't control
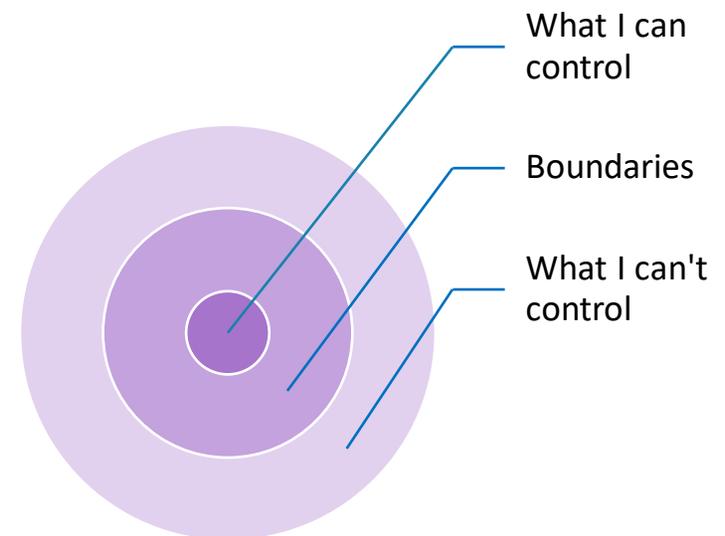
Five Types of Boundaries

	What They Are	Scenario	What to Say	How to Do It
Physical Boundaries	Physical boundaries protect your personal space and physical needs.	A student you've been working with for several month gives you a hug without asking. When you say, "That's enough," the student squeezes you tighter. Limited staffing has kept you engaged in several activities without a break. When you finally get a couple of minutes to yourself, the site coordinator asks you to delay your break to help with yet another activity.	"I'd appreciate it if you'd ask me first." "I'd be happy to continue to help, but I desperately need a break. I need to get some fresh air."	***Do*** use confident body language: face the person, make eye contact, and use a steady tone of voice at an appropriate volume. ***Do*** clearly explain what you want in easy-to-understand language. ***Do*** suggest holding a group meeting to share perspectives and discuss ways to better manage time. ***Don't*** assume other people can understand your needs or desires through nonverbal communication. ***Don't*** assume that all people have the same boundaries.
Emotional Boundaries	Emotional boundaries separate your personal feelings from another's feelings. This boundary requires a strong sense of self.	You've been working with your co-instructor for years. Lately, the two of you have often disagreed about what to prioritize during a program activity. Your co-instructor makes the final decision without you. You're upset that you weren't consulted, although the activity went well.	"I appreciate your taking the lead on the decision. But moving forward, can we discuss these things ahead of time so I can better understand your reasoning?"	***Do*** be honest and respectful. It's OK to be firm, but your message will be better received if you deliver it professionally. ***Don't*** ignore your emotional needs: They may eventually come out in inappropriate ways, such as yelling, put-downs, or the silent treatment.

	What They Are	Scenario	What to Say	How to Do It
Work Boundaries	These boundaries include the physical, emotional, and mental limits you create between your personal life and professional commitments.	During your second week in your afterschool role, the program lead asks you to take over another activity located at the elementary school site. You're hesitant to say "yes" because you have no background in the topic, nor do you have experience working with younger students.	"I'm not comfortable doing that task. I don't know enough to do this well."	***Do*** share your expertise and knowledge to improve program quality. ***Do*** suggest ways to share the load with others. ***Do*** look for resources and technologies that can make work go more smoothly.
		You're at home and your site coordinator calls you about an email they just sent you. In the email, the site coordinator asks that you respond at your earliest convenience.	"I'll do that as soon as I get to the program tomorrow."	***Don't*** take on responsibilities that are outside your area of knowledge or scope of practice. ***Don't*** commit to unnecessary tasks that increase your stress or anxiety. ***Don't*** habitually devote nonwork hours to job responsibilities. Work is just one part of life.
Mental Boundaries	Mental boundaries are limits involving thoughts, values, and opinions. These boundaries also help you distinguish your emotions from someone else's.	Your activity isn't going as planned. The students have lost focus and are no longer engaged in the task. As you feel your patience wearing thin, the activity instructor across the hall asks to combine her class with yours so she can take a break.	"Let's meet halfway. How about we each take a 10-minute break and then work together?" Think to yourself: *This is just one activity. I can try again tomorrow.*	***Do*** plan ahead. Think about what you want to say, and how to say it, before starting a difficult discussion. ***Do*** consider other peoples' needs.
				Don't skip chances to compromise. Give-and-take is part of any healthy relationship.

	What They Are	Scenario	What to Say	How to Do It
Time Boundaries	Time boundaries establish how you manage your time for things such as relationships, family, work, and so on.	To increase family engagement and a sense of community, the program director strongly encourages all staff to attend the boys basketball game on Saturday. This isn't part of your employment agreement, and you already have plans for Saturday. You've worked long days for five months straight. You hide your irritability at work. Many nights, you dream about your students' hardships. On a planned day off, your site coordinator asks you to come in because the afterschool program is short staffed.	"That sounds exciting, but I'm not available." "Unfortunately, I'm not available. Is there another way I can help?"	***Do*** reserve your evenings or time off for personal and family time. Shut down your laptop or computer. ***Do*** communicate with your superior(s) about your availability. ***Don't*** ignore your personal needs when you work with or serve others. ***Don't*** work for extended periods without breaks.

What You Can and Can't Control

Here are examples of things you can and can't control. At work, what you can and can't control depends partly on your role in the out-of-school time. For example, a frontline staff member may not have control over program policies, but a program director does.

Sphere of Influence	What I CAN'T Control	What I CAN Control
Students	Thoughts Past educational experiences Behaviors History of trauma Growth patterns Developmental or learning impairments Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)	My relationships and rapport with students Responses to student behaviors De-escalation techniques My expectations for student learning Student group agreements Positive environment My behavior
Family and Peers	Students' home lives Economic status Family dynamics Friend groups Religious or societal beliefs Parent responses/reactions	Family engagement activities Communication with families Family empowerment and partnerships Building rapport between families and the program Boundaries Ground rules and social norms
Program and School	All decisions about program policies/procedures School-day curriculum Discipline policies School-day culture School district policies Out-of-school time staffing shortages	Communication with program leaders How I implement program activities Time allocated to work and program responsibilities Program culture and climate Promoting social skills and self-regulation Communication with school-day staff
Community	Presence and activities of community and social service organizations Social safety net	Forming community partnerships My presence in the community Engagement with support networks
Laws	Federal and State requirements, rules, laws, and guidelines	Compliance with regulations Voting or advocating for certain policies

Use this space to list actions you'll take to reduce stress and improve your work-life balance:

Use this space to write a script for a discussion you need to have with someone to follow through on your planned actions:

For example, if you're frequently asked to work extra hours because your program is understaffed, you might want to speak with your supervisor about possible solutions, like partnering with a nearby college or university to create opportunities for their education majors to get work experience in your program.

Student Health and Wellness Interest Inventory

What to do: Use this interest inventory at the start of a school year or program session to find out what types of activities appeal to students. Use it as is or modify it to fit your situation. Then, refer to the data when you design activities.

Why it matters: Giving students voice and choice builds buy-in and helps to motivate regular attendance.

You're in charge of selecting activities for our afterschool program! Think about what activities you'd like to try and **circle up to three interests in each category**.

Student Name: _____   Date: _____

Nutrition

Shopping	Gardening
Vitamins and Minerals	Cooking
Foods From Around the World	Reading Food Labels
Where Foods Come From	
Other: _____	

Physical Activity

Football	Basketball
Baseball/Softball	Soccer
Volleyball	Ultimate Frisbee
Track and Field	Swimming
Martial Arts	Yoga
Dance	The Human Body
Tumbling/Gymnastics	Hiking/Walking
Bicycling	Active Games
Other: _____	

Stress Reduction

Meditation/Mindfulness

Muscle Relaxation

Drawing/Painting

Practicing Kindness

Other: _____

Music

Nature

Writing/Journaling

Talking About Stress and Feelings

Student Trauma Booklist

What to do: Choose books for students to read individually or consider incorporating them into your literacy programming alongside activities such as journal writing, shared reading experiences, or general guidance for students who need support during a traumatic situation.

Why it matters: Books can spark new ideas and conversations. These books address a variety of traumatic situations, and some highlight characters who can serve as fictional models for students who need support in expressing or processing emotions.

Tips and Reminders

- Just because a book has a reading level or target audience that's at a lower grade level doesn't mean your students won't enjoy it or learn from it.
- If you find a book you really like, look for other books by the same author.
- This list is just a starting point!
    - Check with librarians and counselors to get their recommendations.
    - See what's available in your school or local library.

Child Abuse
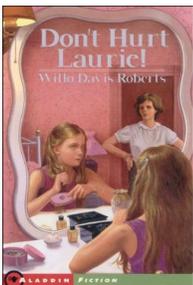
Roberts, Willo D. *Don't Hurt Laurie.* **Aladdin Fiction,1988**

Laurie has a big and horrible secret. She is being physically abused by her mother. This story takes the reader on Laurie's journey as she takes action to escape and voice her experience to ultimately find safety. *Upper Elementary-Middle*

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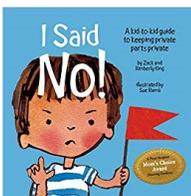
King, Kimberly, and Zachary King. *I Said No! A Kid-to-Kid Guide to Keeping Private Parts Private.* **Boulden Publishing, 2016**

This story is written from a child's point of view and helps kids set healthy boundaries for their bodies. Approaching this sensitive subject can be a challenge for parents, counselors, and educators. Use this tool to make it a lot easier. *Pre-K-Elementary*

Select to find on Amazon

Child Witness of Violence or Trauma
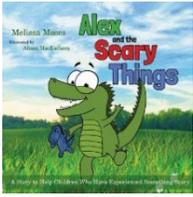
Moses, Melissa. *Alex and the Scary Things.* **Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2015**

This storybook takes a gentle approach to helping children who have experienced trauma deal with their emotions and learn coping strategies. It takes readers on a journey with a young child named Alex and the different ways he copes with scary things in his life. *Pre-K-Elementary*

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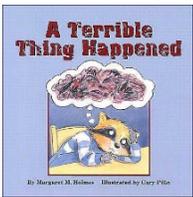
Holmes, Margaret. *A Terrible Thing Happened*. **Magination Press, 2000**

This book shares ideas that can help parents, caregivers, and educators support traumatized students. It may be relevant for children who have known human atrocities or natural disasters. Readers can also find a list of other sources that focus on specific events. *Pre-K-Elementary*

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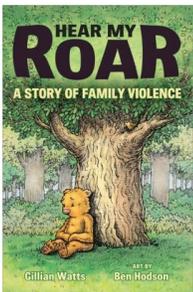
Watts, Gillian. *Hear My Roar: A Story of Family Violence.* **Annick Press, 2009**

Orsa Bear notices that Papa is always angry and continuously yelling at him and Mama around the house. This story provides an easy-to-read graphic narrative to gently approach talking with children about family violence and the potential role of substance abuse in this arena. It is adapted from the first edition written by Dr. Ty Hochban, a child developmental psychologist and researcher in the field of family violence. This book provides support to parents, teachers, and caregivers looking to address this subject. *Kindergarten-Elementary*

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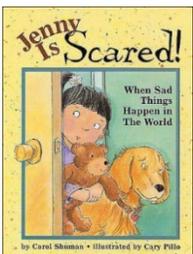
Shuman, Carol. *Jenny Is Scared! When Sad Things Happen in the World.* **Magination Press, 2003**

What could be happening if Mom and Dad haven't left the TV all day and don't even seem to want Jenny and her brother in the room? It seems like it might be something scary. This story provides adults with tools to help children process the types of world events that may spark fear. *Pre-K-Elementary*

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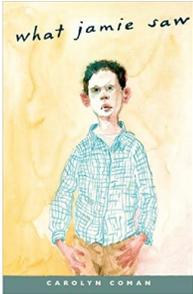
Coman, Carolyn. *What Jamie Saw*. namelos, 2012

Many students witness violence perpetrated against loved ones on a regular basis. The impact on healthy student development can be very damaging. Follow Jaime in this dramatic story of how a nine-year-old boy watches his mother attempt to keep her family out of harm's way. Without her stability, he could never process his own emotions surrounding these events. *Elementary-Middle*

Select to find on Amazon

Death
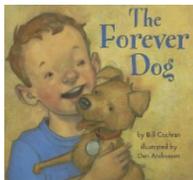
Cochran, Bill. *The Forever Dog*. HarperCollins, 2007

Mike and his dog Corky do everything together. Eventually, though, Mike is faced with accepting Corky's death. This story gives young readers relatable and lovable characters to share the experience of loss. *Pre-K-Early Elementary*

Select to find on Amazon

Benjamin, Ali. *The Thing About Jellyfish*. Little Brown Books, 2017

Grief can drive a vivid imagination. When Suzy faces the accidental drowning of her best friend, she turns to a wild theory about a rare jellyfish sting as the cause. Her determination to find answers through world travels demonstrates how eager Suzy's mind is to avoid the pain of loss. *Upper Elementary-Middle*

Select to find on Amazon

Divorce

Blume, Judy. *It's Not the End of the World.* Atheneum Books, 2014

Karen doesn't feel like a regular sixth-grader now that her parents are getting a divorce. But she's not going to take it lying down! A clever plan should be enough to get her parents to patch things up. In this navigation of adolescent angst, Judy Blume gives young readers who are experiencing divorce a heroine to make them feel less alone, and a realization that you don't need the fairy tale to have a happy ending. *Upper Elementary-Middle*

Select to find on Amazon

Masurel, Claire. *Two Homes*. Candlewick, 2003

Some things are different: at Mommy's house Alex has a soft chair, at Daddy's it's a rocker. Some things are the same: his very own room and so much love. Young Alex's story shows readers that when parents divorce, you don't just lose things, you gain things, too. *Pre-K-Early Elementary*

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Feelings
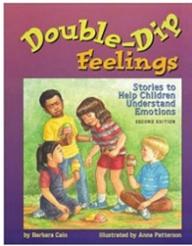
Cain, Barbara. *Double-Dip Feelings: Stories to Help Children Understand Emotions.* **Magination Press, 2001.**

This book is part of a series in which stories illustrate common situations, such as the uncomfortable experience of ambivalence, or having two conflicting feelings at the same time. Events like the first day of school can stir up feelings of both pride and fear; the arrival of a new brother or sister can trigger both joy and sadness. These vignettes will help a young child recognize and understand the phenomenon of mixed feelings. *Pre-K-Elementary*

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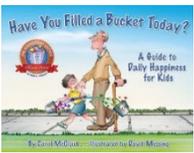
McCloud, Carol. *Have You Filled a Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids.* **Bucket Fillers, 2015**

This book uses the simple metaphor of an empty bucket to help children understand interpersonal dynamics, especially when it comes to giving, taking, and sharing. The author helps young readers see how filling another's bucket, or spreading kindness, can be the most rewarding experience. *Elementary*

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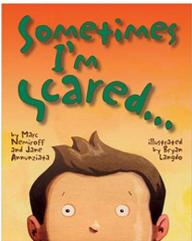
Annunziata, Jane. *Sometimes I'm Scared.* **Magination Press, 2009**

Fears can seem really big when you're a kid! Being afraid of many things is normal. This book presents a straightforward, step-wise approach for children to conquer their fears. *Elementary*

Select to find on Amazon

Dismondy, Maria. *Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun: Having the Courage To Be Who You Are.* **Cardinal Rule Press, 2008**

What if the class bully needs your help? What will you do? Readers can appreciate the feeling of having a boy like Ralph draw attention to anything that makes you a little different. But lucky for Ralph, Lucy doesn't hold it against him when he needs her. This story celebrates individuality and its importance in making good choices. *Pre-K-Elementary*

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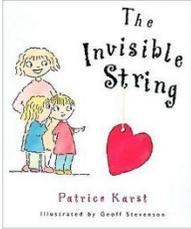
Karst, Patrice. *The Invisible String.* **Devorss & Co, 2000**

This book helps students cope with fears of loneliness and separation, whether there's a loved one far away or a parent in the next room. It teaches children how to visualize an invisible string still connecting them to the person they miss. This is particularly good for students who have caregivers in the military or who are facing other situations where a loved one is not visible on a regular basis. *Pre-K-Elementary*

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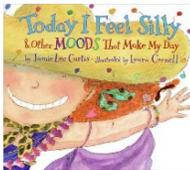
Curtis, Jaime L. *Today I Feel Silly: And Other Moods That Make My Day.* **HarperCollins, 2007.**

This delightful, colorful book walks very young children through a whole host of human emotions, celebrating each along the way. Adults and children alike will be charmed by the central character's vivacious nature. *Pre-K-Elementary*

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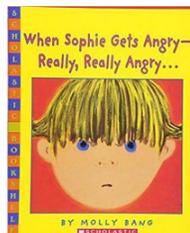
Bang, Molly. *When Sophie Gets Angry — Really, Really Angry ….* **Scholastic, 2004**

Sophie explores the causes of and solutions to anger. While in the middle of an angry spell, Sophie runs out into the woods, where she climbs a tree to calm down, and is soon ready to come home to her loving family. This book teaches students the power in taking a moment to reflect and self-regulate emotional responses to stress. *Pre-K-Elementary*

Select to find on Amazon

Foster Care
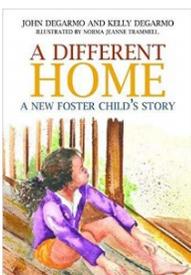
DeGarmo, John, and Kelly DeGarmo. *A Different Home: A New Foster Child's Story.* **Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2014**

After being placed in foster care, Jessie has understandable anxiety and questions. It takes time to get comfortable in her new surroundings because everything, even what they eat for breakfast, is different. This story will resonate with children in foster care with its thoughtful dialogue, and will offer them patience with themselves while they adjust. *Pre-K-Elementary*

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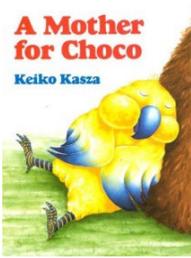
Kasza, Keiko. *A Mother for Choco.* **Puffin Books, 1996**

Choco knows he would like a mom and guesses she will look like him, but none of the animals he encounters fit, least of all Mrs. Bear. The funny part is, Mrs. Bear *acts* very much like a mom, and brings Choco home to meet her other children: a piglet, a hippo, and an alligator. Choco and his young readers learn that families are about sharing love, not about sharing looks. *Pre-K-Early Elementary*

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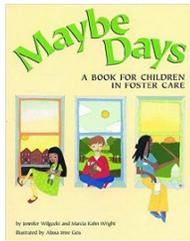
Wilgocki, Jennifer. *Maybe Days: A Book for Children in Foster Care.* **APA, 2002**

Will I ever see my parents again? Will I get to stay with my brothers and sisters? Children in foster care hear the word "maybe" very often. This book is a great resource for children entering foster care. The feelings they may be having are directly addressed, and they get an explanation of who the new adults in their lives are going to be and what they are there for. *Pre-K-Early Elementary*

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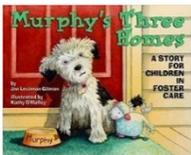
Gilman, Jan L. *Murphy's Three Homes: A Story for Children in Foster Care.* **Magination Press, 2008**

This book offers a sweet life parallel to children who have experienced multiple foster homes. Even though Murphy the puppy started out feeling lucky, that feeling dwindled as he moved among homes and shelters. But once he is placed in a caring foster home, Murphy finally feels comfortable and valued. *Pre-K-Early Elementary*

Select to find on Amazon

Teaching Resilience Booklist

What to do: Choose books for students to read individually or consider incorporating them into your literacy programming alongside activities such as journal writing, shared reading experiences, or general guidance to support students during common life challenges.

Why it matters: Books can spark new ideas and conversations about challenges that are hard to discuss. Some of these books present characters who can serve as fictional models for students who need support expressing or processing emotions and experiences to build resilience.

Tips and Reminders

- Just because a book has a reading level or target audience that's at a lower grade level than your students doesn't mean they won't enjoy it or learn from it.
- If you find a book you really like, look for other books by the same author.
- This list is just a starting point!
  - Check with librarians and counselors to get their recommendations.
  - See what's available in your school or local library.
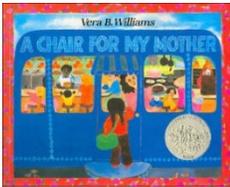
Williams, Vera B., *A Chair for My Mother*. **Greenwillow Books, 1982**

This story teaches empathy and responsible decision making. Three generations of hard-working women who live together experience the hardship of a house fire. Young Rosa sees the value in doing for her mother and grandmother, and begins a campaign to scrape together their savings to afford the comfortable chair they all deserve to share. *Kindergarten-Elementary*

Select to find on Amazon

**Santat, Dan.** *After the Fall: How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again*. **Roaring Brook Press, 2017**

In a humorous spin on the classic nursery rhyme, Humpty Dumpty is re-introduced as a birdwatcher who becomes paralyzed with fear after his legendary fall. Humpty lets his fears change his life, showing the reader that getting up isn't always easy. This story teaches children about courage and the ability to face fears head on. *Pre-K-Elementary*

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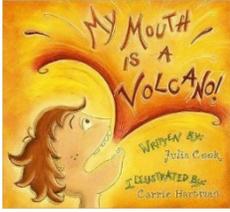
**Cook, Julia.** *My Mouth Is a Volcano!* **National Center for Youth Issues, 2005**

Told in a colorful metaphor, this story is about a boy who can't shake a habit of interrupting. Thoughts bubble up like lava, and Louis *erupts* like a volcano while someone else is talking. A great resource for teachers, counselors, and parents, this book demonstrates how to be respectful listeners and wait for a turn to speak. *Pre-K-Elementary*
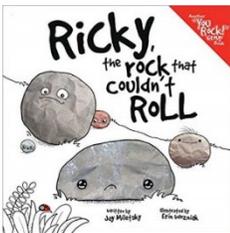
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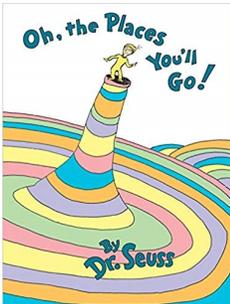
Seuss, Dr. *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* **Random House, 1990**

This book tops many lists as inspiration for new beginnings, no matter your age. The colorful illustrations, simple rhymes and salient sentiments guide the reader to their *own* gifts as their source for achievement. *Pre-K-Elementary*

Select to find on Amazon

Miletsky, Jay. *Ricky, the Rock That Couldn't Roll.* **New Paige Press, 2018**

This book begins a series of stories designed to empower young children. The "You Rock Group" members form their friendship as little pebbles, learning life lessons as they grow up together. This volume focuses on outer differences — in this case one flat-bottomed boulder — and how friends "roll" in spite of it. *Pre-K-Elementary*

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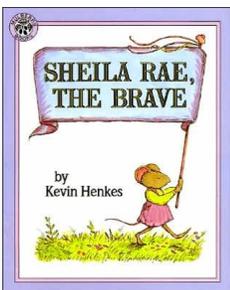
Henkes, Kevin. *Sheila Rae, the Brave.* **HarperCollins, 1987**

This story tells about Sheila Rae and her fearless attitude when doing new things. Just as she begins to go from confident to cocky, she finds herself lost while walking a new path home. Luckily, not far behind was her little sister, whom she had teased for not being brave enough to walk the new path. This book teaches students about the balance between courage and caution in the decision-making process. *Pre-K-Elementary*

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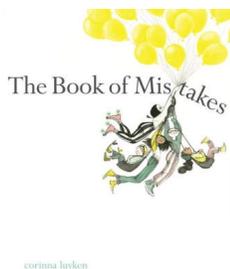
Luyken, Corinne. *The Book of Mistakes.* **Dial Books, 2017**

Presented in the fine tradition of picture books like *Snowy Day*, this book tells a story through great art and few words. The artist centers her work around seemingly accidental splotches and spots, demonstrating creatively how something that seems like a mistake can be made beautiful. *Pre-K-Elementary*

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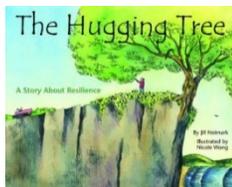
Neimark, Jill. *The Hugging Tree: A Story About Resilience*. Magination Press, 2015

This story explores the resilience of a little tree growing alone on a cliff. It holds fast through thunderstorms and the cold of winter. With the help of a young boy, the tree grows to provide shelter for others. Readers recognize the value of community, and the potential that we all have to persevere even in times of struggle and difficulty. *Kindergarten-Elementary*

Select to find on Amazon

Spires, Ashley. *The Most Magnificent Thing*. Kids Can Press, 2014

Told with language and imagery to express deep emotions, this story tells of a young girl who has an idea to make the most *magnificent* thing. After many attempts and feelings of failure at what she thought would be "easy peasy," her frustration grows into surrender. Her canine companion convinces her to take a break and regroup, and she eventually embraces the process as much as the outcome. Innovative thinking and STEM values abound in this charming journey. *Pre-K-Elementary*

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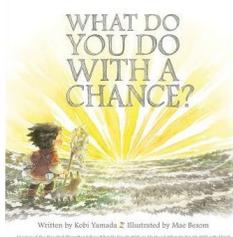
Yamada, Kobi. *What Do You Do With a Chance?* Compendium, 2018

This book is part of a series designed to inspire students to go for their dreams and desires. Other titles include *What Do You Do With an Idea?* and *What Do You Do With a Problem?* Poetically told, a young boy repeatedly squanders his opportunities to take chances but discovers a wondrous world once he screws up his courage. *Kindergarten-Elementary*

Select to find on Amazon

This list was created by Colleen Lelli, Ed.D., Associate Professor, Cabrini University. Dr. Lelli directs the Barbara and John Jordan Center for Children of Trauma and Domestic Violence Education.

Trauma-Informed Care: Key Terms

What to do: Use this list of terms to help staff understand trauma and its impact on children.

Why it matters: Using consistent language across student services can ensure a unified approach to addressing what may be very difficult experiences for students.

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE): A stressful or traumatic event, including abuse or neglect, that occurs before a child reaches the age of 18. Other examples include witnessing domestic violence at home or growing up with family members who have substance use disorders. ACEs are strongly correlated with the development of many health problems over time, including those associated with substance misuse. See a useful graphic to share with stakeholders at the Harvard Center on the Developing Child website: https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/aces-and-toxic-stress-frequently-asked-questions/.

Complex Trauma: The experience of facing multiple adversities over the course of a lifetime.

Fixed Mindset: The belief that one's intelligence and abilities cannot change. The position that a person is or isn't good at something based on inherent nature.

Grit: Courage and resolve; strength of character. The ability to persevere and show passion for long-term goals.

Growth Mindset: The belief that one's intelligence and abilities can change and develop. The ability to perceive a challenge as an opportunity to learn, rather than an obstacle to overcome.

Positive Stress: A normal and essential part of healthy development, characterized by brief increases in heart rate and mild elevations in hormone levels. Examples of positive stress include the first day of school or receiving an immunization shot.

Resilience: The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.

Stress: A physical and emotional response to a stimulus, of which there are different types. The brain triggers an alarm response to situations perceived as possible threats and the body reacts by releasing hormones. Stress can look different depending on the individual; however, physical symptoms of stress can include headaches, back or chest pain, heart palpitations, sleep problems, or upset stomach. Emotional symptoms can include sadness, anger, irritability, anxiety, or lack of focus.

Tolerable Stress: The response to severe, long-lasting events like the loss of a loved one or natural disaster. The body's biological systems (brain, organs, and hormones) are activated to a greater degree. If the time is limited and a child is protected by relationships with supportive adults, the brain and other organs recover from what might otherwise be damaging effects.

Toxic Stress: Prolonged activation of the stress response system, likely from strong, frequent, or long-lasting difficult events or traumas, like physical or emotional abuse, exposure to violence, caregiver substance abuse, or acrimonious divorce. There will be little support from the caregiver

during these instances. Toxic stress can disrupt brain building and other organ systems, and can increase the risk for stress-related disease and intellectual impairment throughout adult years.

Trauma: An event or events that involve actual or threatened death or serious injury to a child or others, or a threat to the psychological or physical integrity of a child or others. The emotional, psychological, and physiological impacts of experiences of danger, violence, significant loss, or life-threatening events produce trauma.