

National PBIS Leadership Forum | October 22 - 23, 2025 | Hilton Chicago



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5G – Connectedness & Hope: A Roadmap to Cultivating Belonging in Schoolwide Suicide Prevention

Presenters:

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- **Topic:** Mental Health/Social-Emotional-Behavioral Well-Being
- **Keywords:** Tier 1

The National PBIS Leadership Forum is a technical assistance activity of the Center on PBIS



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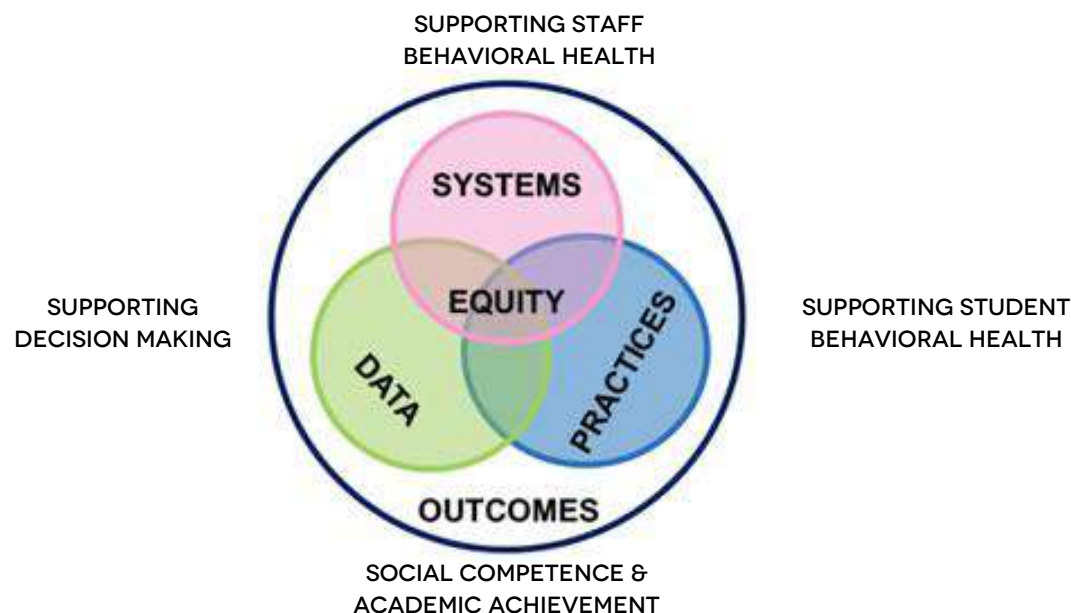
Positive Behavioral
Interventions & Supports

Learning Objectives

- 1. Understand the role of connectedness in suicide prevention*
- 2. Apply a multi-tiered framework for suicide prevention*
- 3. Identify strategies that normalize mental wellness, help-seeking, and suicide prevention*
- 4. Develop an actionable plan for enhancing connectedness in schools*



MTSS: System investment for a Continuous Improvement Framework



- *We Organize our resources and examine our strengths and needs*
- *We make sure students get help early*
- *We invest in what is likely to work for our students*
- *We invest in our staff so they can support ALL students*
- *We make sure we are implementing well as we review student outcomes*
- *We continuously adjust based on strengths and need and improve based on our stakeholder's input*



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MTSS is an Operating System for our School Initiatives

Outcomes

What organizational goal is supported by the initiative?

Systems

Which team is overseeing the initiative?

What PD & Coaching is being provided?

Practices

What continuum of evidence-based practices will be used?

Data

What is the baseline data?

How will we know if it is working?

Equity

Is the initiative culturally responsive and equitable?



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Why Schools?

- *Accessibility*
- *Early Intervention*
- *Consistent Support*
- *Collaboration*
- *Alignment with the public health prevention approach*



Understanding Suicide

Connectedness through key concepts



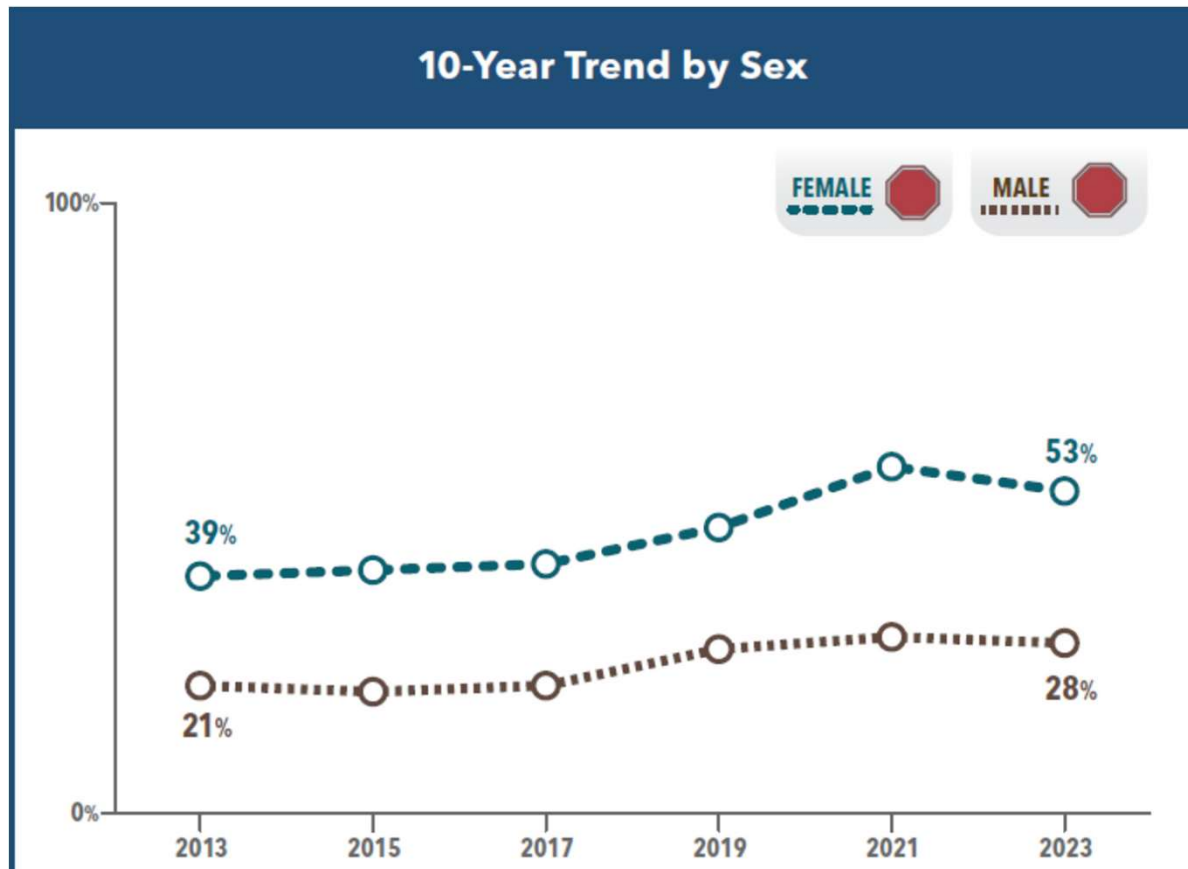
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Current Data and 10-Year Trends

(YRBS Past Year; High School Students)

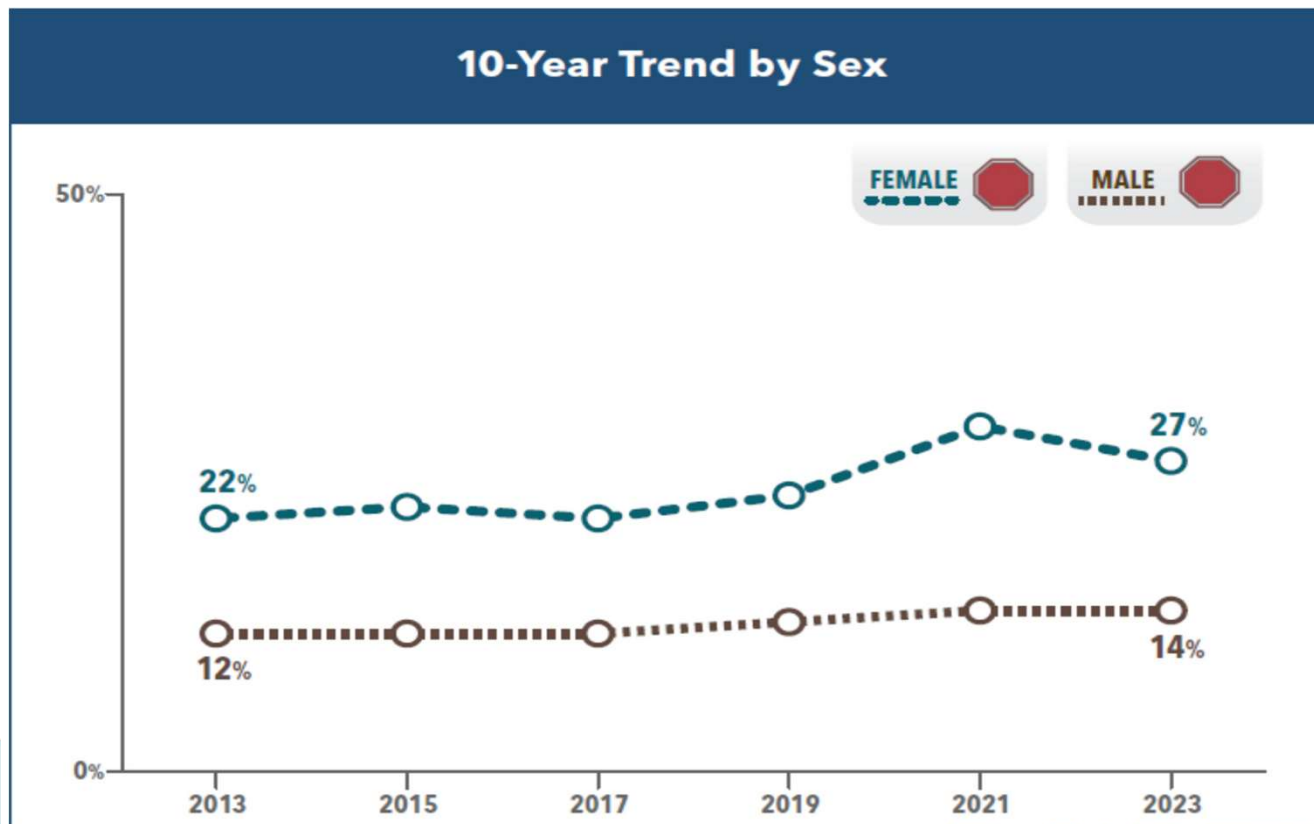
The Percentage of High School Students Who:*	2013 Total	2015 Total	2017 Total	2019 Total	2021 Total	2023 Total	Trend (All Years Available)
Experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness	30	30	31	37	42	40	
Experienced poor mental health†	–	–	–	–	29	29	–
Seriously considered attempting suicide	17	18	17	19	22	20	
Made a suicide plan	14	15	14	16	18	16	
Attempted suicide	8	9	7	9	10	9	
Were injured in a suicide attempt that had to be treated by a doctor or nurse	3	3	2	3	3	2	

Persistent Sadness or Hopelessness (YRBS Past Year; High School Students)



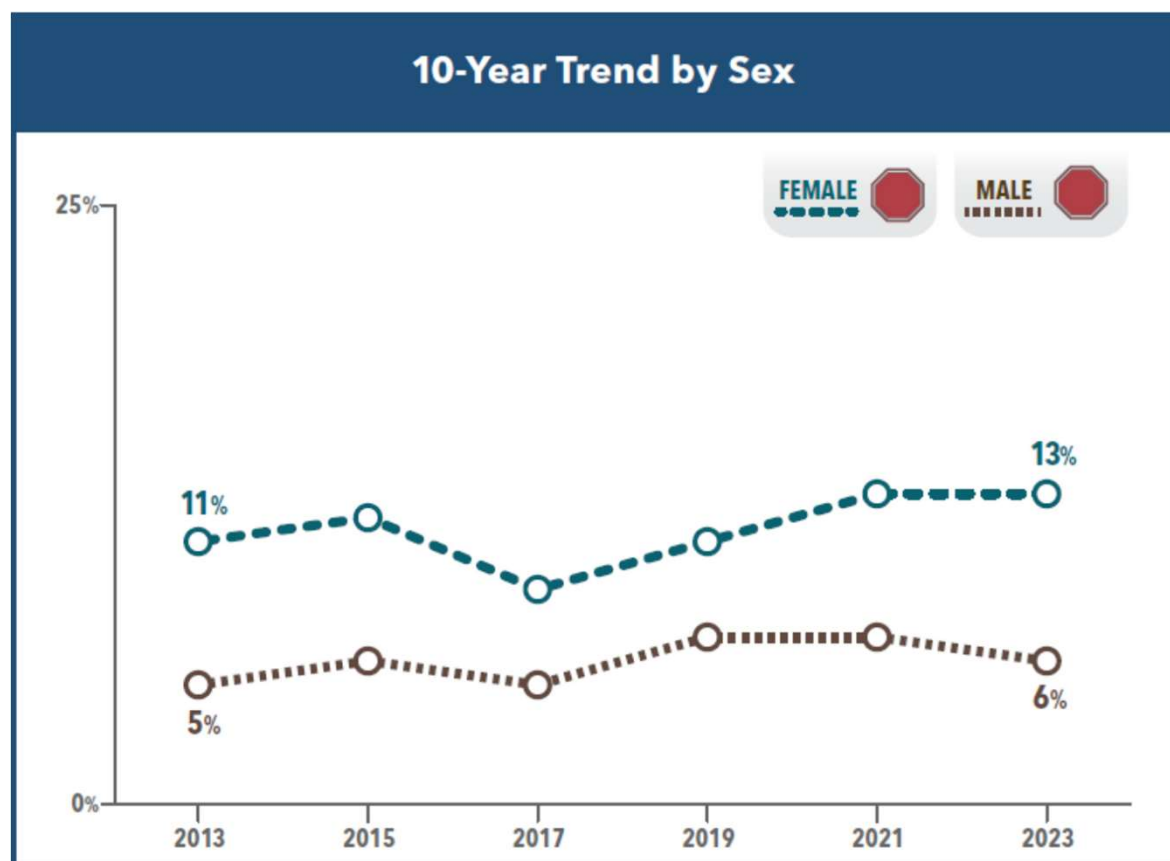
Seriously Considered Attempting Suicide

(YRBS Past Year; High School Students)

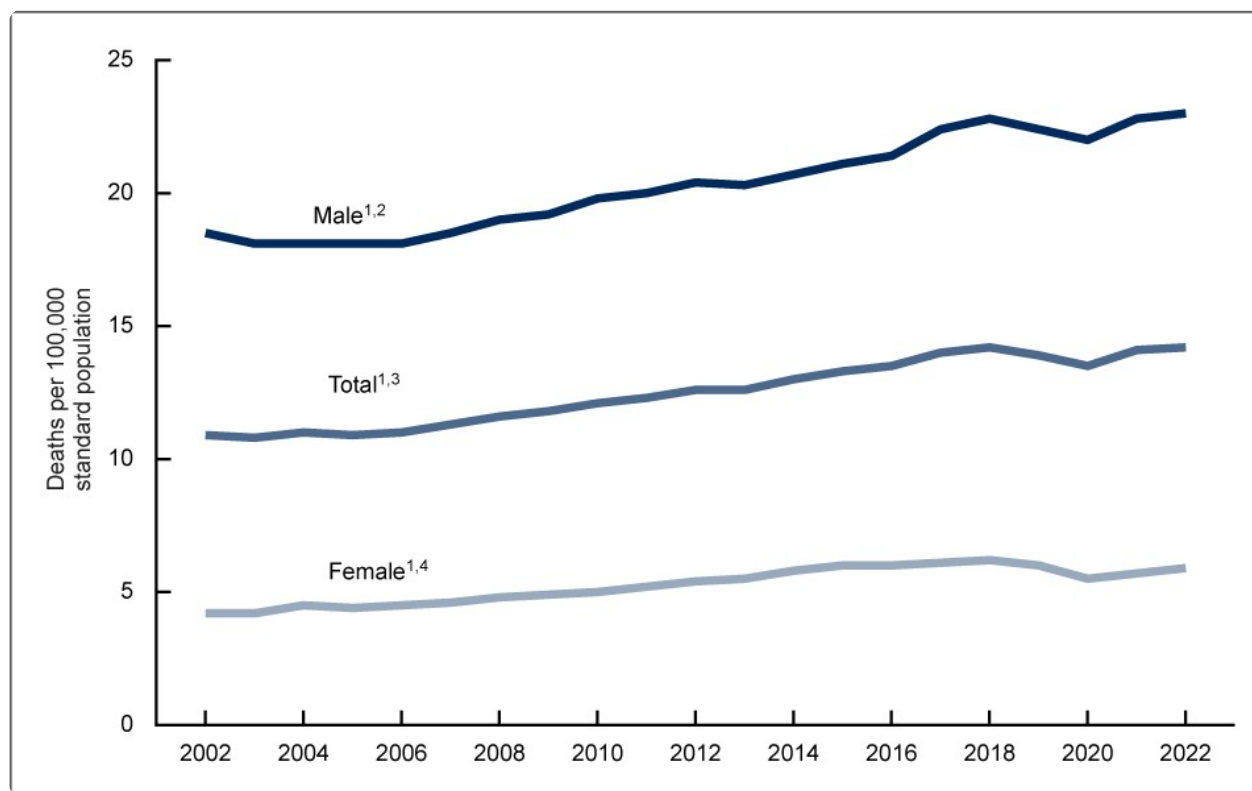


Attempted Suicide

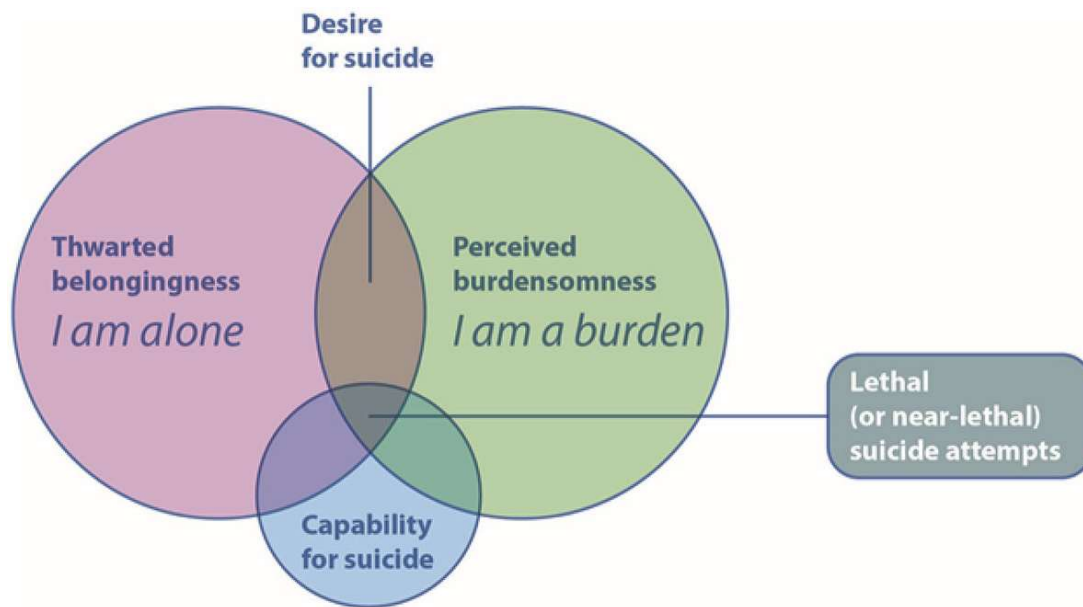
(YRBS Past Year; High School Students)



Age-Adjusted Suicide Rates 2002-2022



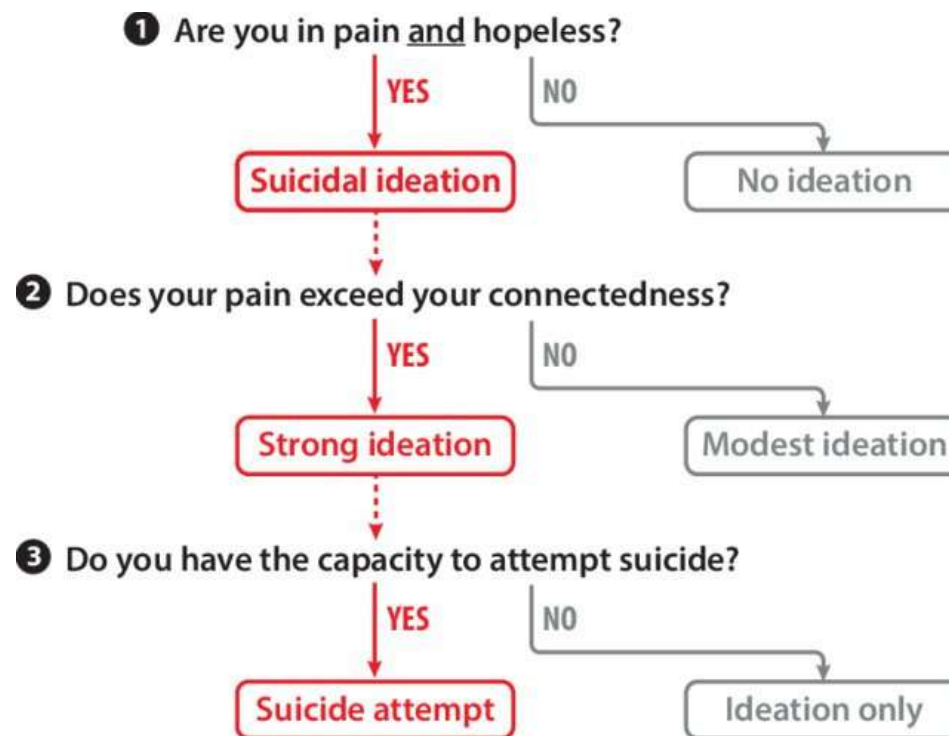
Interpersonal Theory of Suicide



- Historically, theories of suicide did not meaningfully differentiate between ideation and attempts
- New generation aims to address both the development of suicidal ideation and progression from ideation to a suicide attempt
- Pioneer of these theories was Thomas Joiner with the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide

Three-Step Theory: Ideation to Action

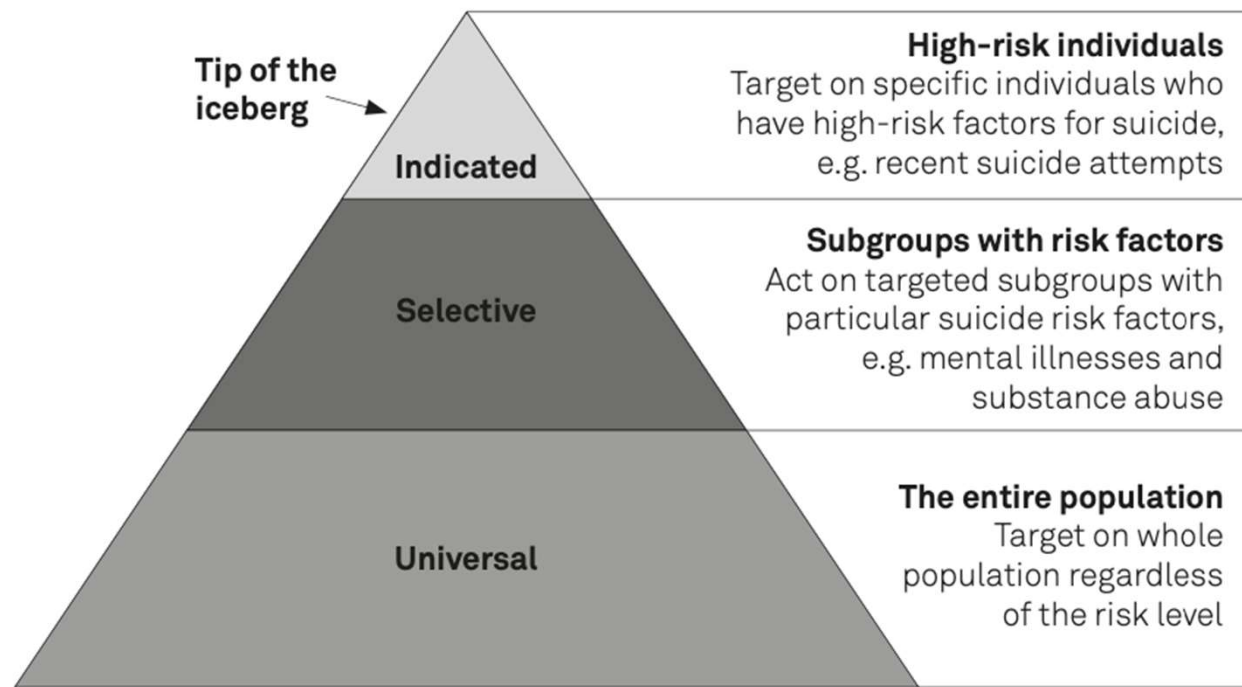
(Klonsky & May, 2015)



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Public Health Model to Suicide Prevention

(Yip & Tang, 2021)



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Steps in a Public Health Model

(Yip & Tang, 2021)

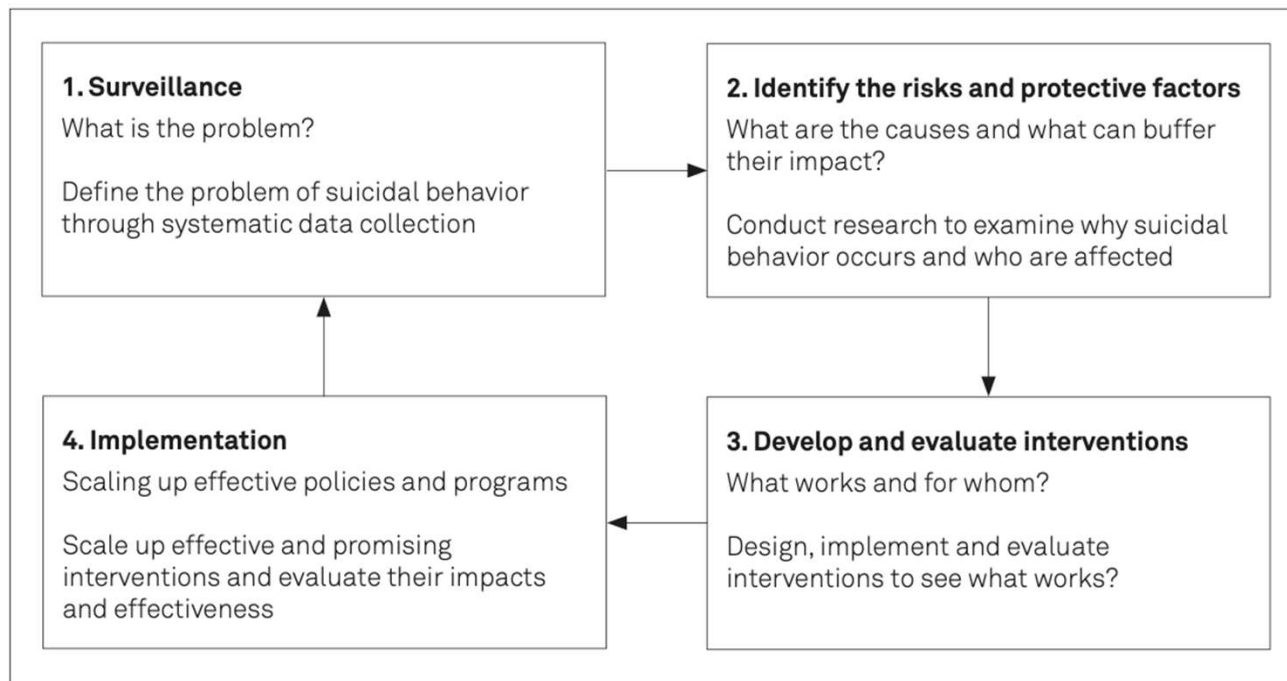


Figure 3.3 Steps in a public health model. Reprinted with permission from “Preventing Suicide: A Global Imperative,” by the World Health Organization, p. 13. © 2014 by the WHO.

Comprehensive Approach to Suicide Prevention (AFSP)



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Poll Everywhere: Myth or Fact

- Answers are anonymous
- You only have to join once to interact with the polls
- Answer formats:
 - Open-ended
 - Multiple Choice



- *Use your cell to respond*
- *You only have to join once to interact with the polls*



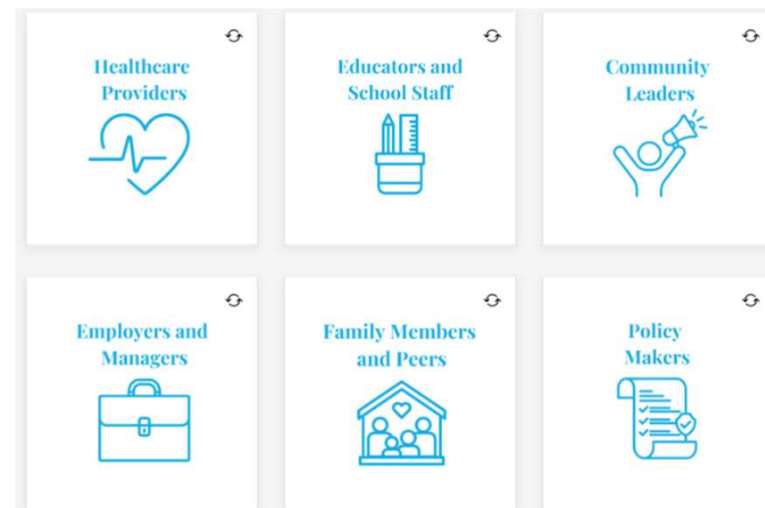
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Weaving the Tapestry: Suicide Prevention for All

- *Grounded in connectedness*
- *Includes stories of lived experience*
- *Engaging and interactive*
- *Balance of informational and skills-based content*

DEFINING CONNECTEDNESS	ILLUSTRATING CONNECTEDNESS	DEFINING SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS	ILLUSTRATING SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS
Imagine a high school where a comprehensive approach to mental health and suicide prevention shapes the entire school culture. Teachers receive training to spot signs of emotional distress and hold open conversations with empathy. Administrators conduct workshops for parents, providing them with tools to recognize and discuss mental health issues with their children. The school empowers student ambassadors with peer counseling skills, enabling them to offer support and connect their peers with safe adults in the school building, and uplift healthy conversations with their caregivers. Biannual community events bring students, parents, teachers, and administrators together to share stories of overcoming challenges, fostering an environment of openness and mutual support. Through these integrated efforts, the school sees reduced student isolation, more students seeking help, and increased academic engagement, showcasing the effectiveness of a unified approach to prevent suicide that fosters school connectedness.			
			

- *EVERYONE has a role*



Weaving the Tapestry: Suicide Prevention for All

Crafting Connectedness

Outcomes:

1. Identify key components of suicide prevention
2. Analyze the impact of stigma on mental health
3. Apply concepts of connectedness to community settings
4. Evaluate the use of language in discussing mental health

The Finishing Touch

Outcomes:

1. Apply the A.S.K. framework to guide conversations and ensure safety when suicide risk is present.
2. Recognize and respond to warning signs through interactive practice scenarios.
3. Describe how to use a safety plan to support someone in crisis.
4. Explain the role of resilience in suicide prevention and how it can be strengthened.
5. Identify trusted resources that support safety, recovery, and continued learning.

The Art of Helping

Outcomes:

1. Identify core qualities of effective helpers
2. Explain the role of protective factors in suicide prevention
3. Interpret suicide risk using the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide
4. Recognize warning signs as invitations for support
5. Describe the A.S.K. framework for supportive conversations

Connecting Through Conversation

When supporting someone in distress, it helps to have a simple, clear approach to guide the conversation. That's where A-S-K comes in: **Ask directly and genuinely, Seek more information, and Know what to do next.** Each step builds connection, increases safety, and ensures that no one has to navigate their struggles alone.



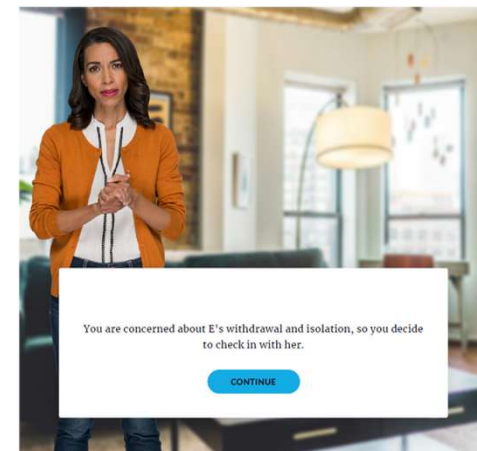
Ask Directly and Genuinely



Seek More Information



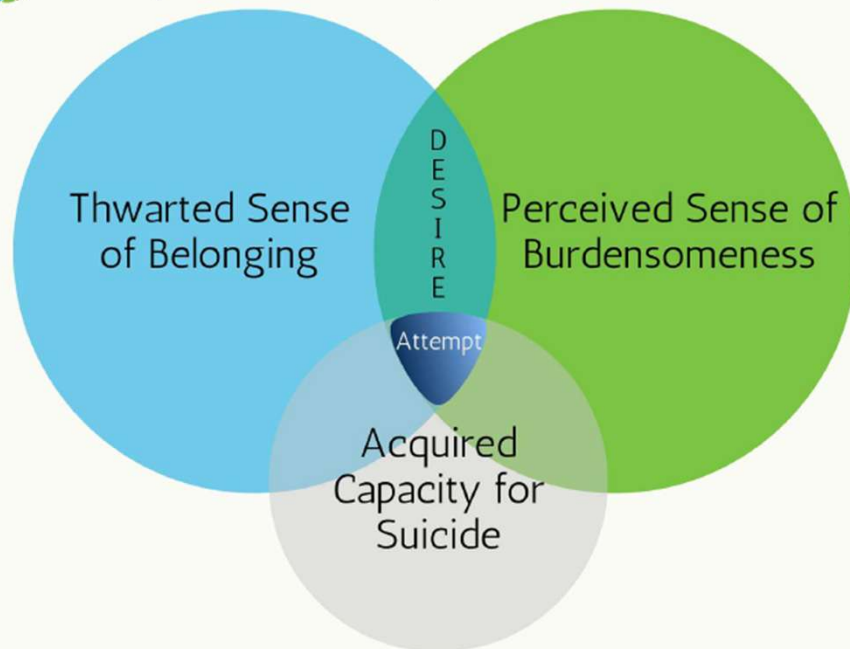
Know What To Do Next



Weaving the Tapestry: Suicide Prevention for All



Interpersonal Theory of Suicide Behavior



Adapted from: Van Orden KA, Witte TK, Cukrowicz KC, Braithwaite SR, Selby EA, Joiner TE Jr. The interpersonal theory of suicide. Psychol Rev. 2010 Apr;117(2):575-600. doi: 10.1037/a0018697. PMID: 20438238; PMCID: PMC3130348.

Invitations for Support

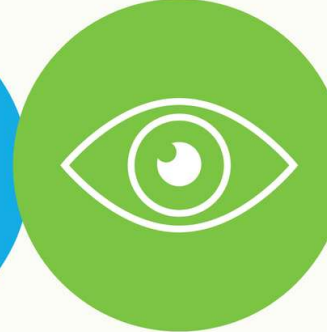
Sense

Feelings



See

Behaviors



Hear

Communication



"Four out of five individuals considering suicide give some sign of their intentions, either verbally or behaviorally"
The Jed Foundation.

"Something to look out for when concerned that a person may be suicidal is a change in behavior or the presence of entirely new behaviors. This is of sharpest concern if the new or changed behavior is related to a painful event, loss, or change. Most people who take their lives exhibit one or more warning signs, either through what they say or what they do."

The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

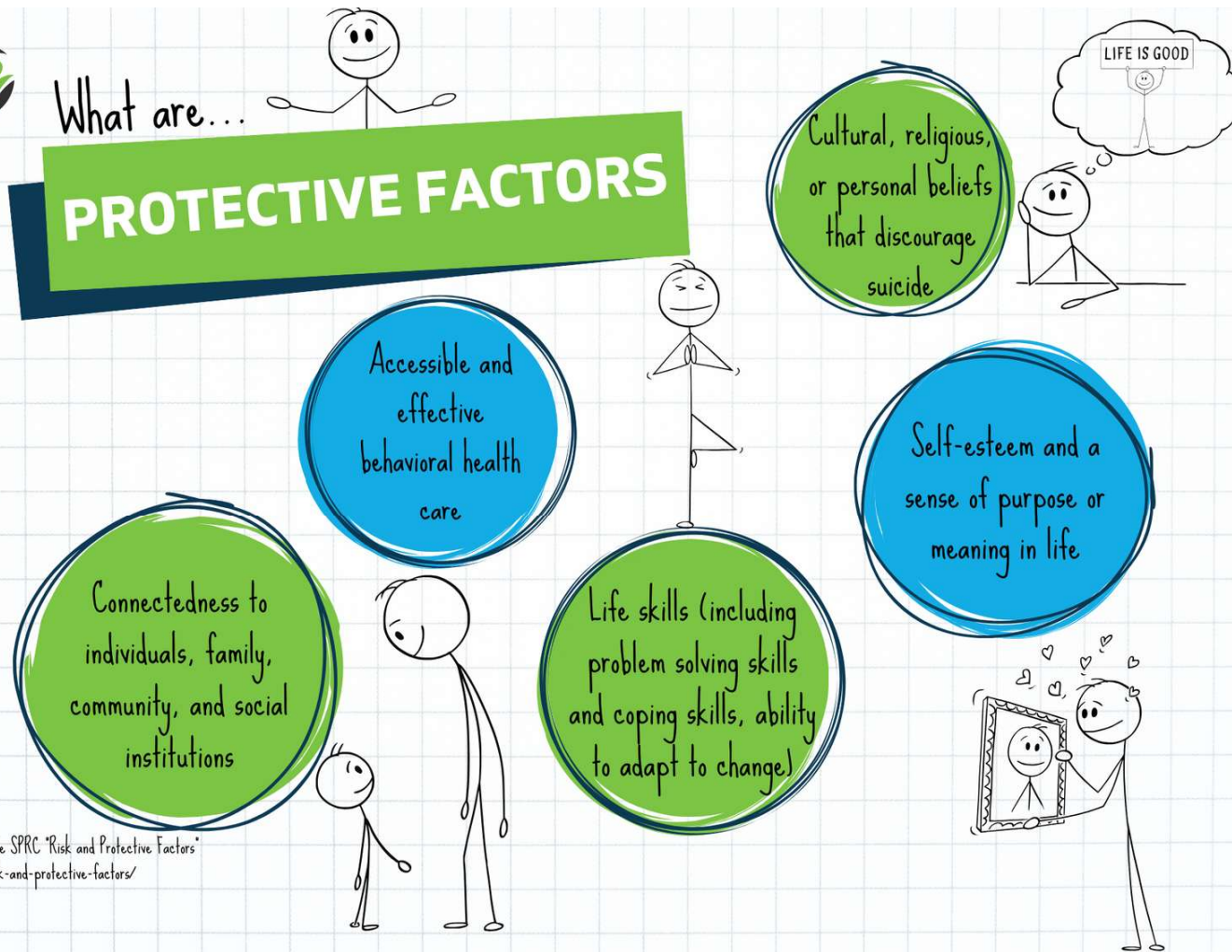


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What are...

PROTECTIVE FACTORS



Adapted from the SPRC "Risk and Protective Factors"
www.sprc.org/risk-and-protective-factors/

Overview of Connectedness

Connectedness is an emotional experience, evoked by, but independent of, the presence of others.

- *Relationship + Systems*



Importance and Outcomes

When youth feel connected to their school, they are **less likely** to experience:

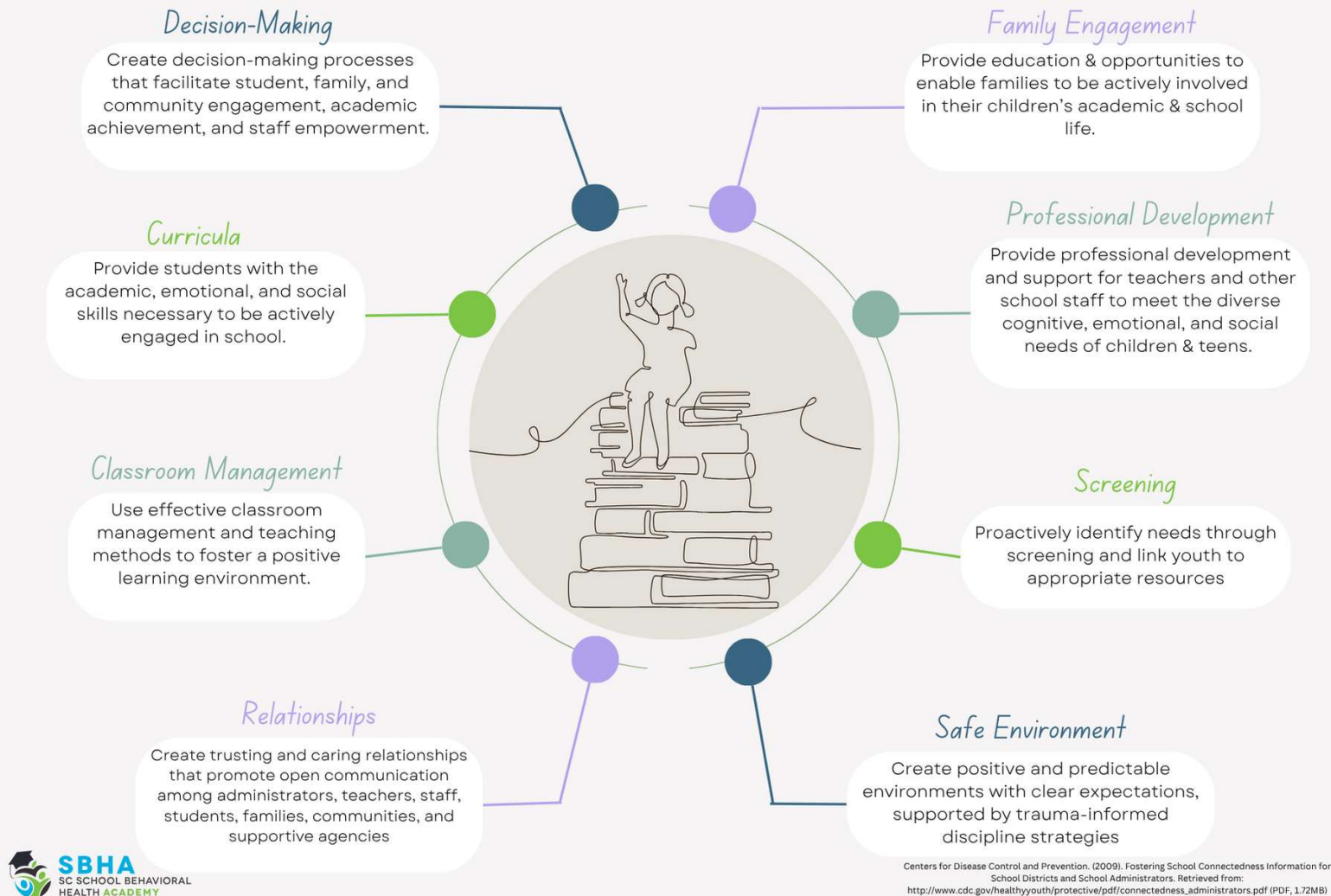
- Poor mental health.
- Sexual health risks.
- Substance use.
- Violence.

And **more likely** to:

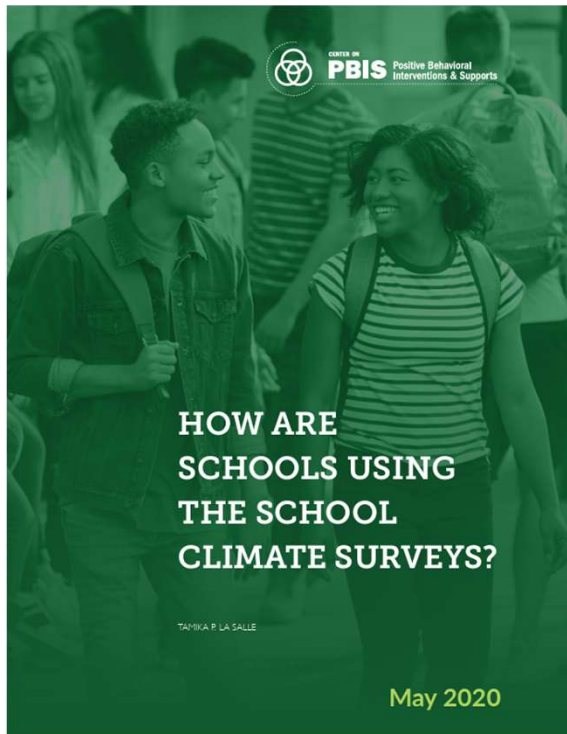
- Engage in positive health behaviors (physical activity and healthy eating).
- Have higher grades and test scores, have better school attendance, and graduate high school.

Furthermore, school connectedness at age 11 was protective against childhood adversity when predicting internalizing and externalizing problems at age 14. That is, students with a history of adversity who felt more connected to school were less likely to exhibit internalizing and externalizing symptoms than those who felt less connected to school.

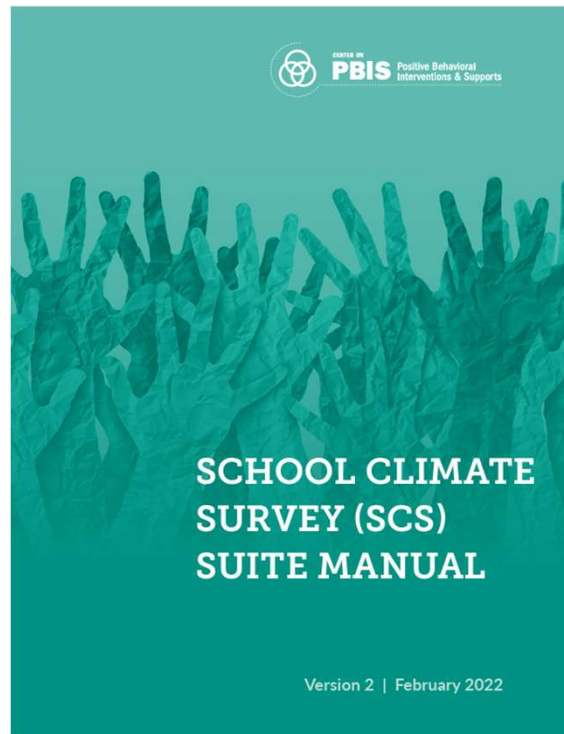
School Connectedness



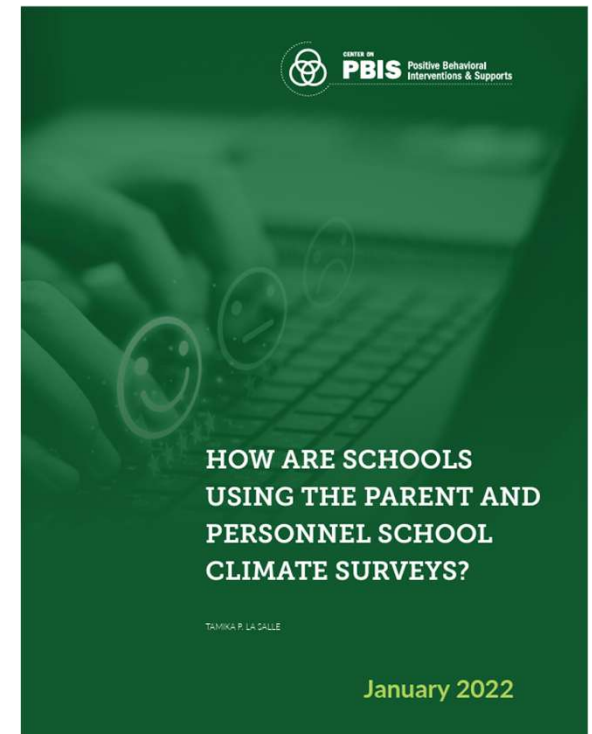
What are *YOU* doing to Promote Connectedness?



La Salle, T.P. (2020). How are schools using the school climate surveys? Eugene, OR: University of Oregon



Center on PBIS. (January 2022). School Climate Survey (SCS) Suite Manual. University of Oregon. www.pbis.org.



La Salle, T. P. (January, 2022). How are Schools Using the Parent and Personnel School Climate Surveys? Center on PBIS, University of Oregon. www.pbis.org.





Modeling Connectedness

- *Relationship Centered Support*
- *Clear is Kind: Well defined expectations and outcomes*
- *Accessible Resources Driven by Community*



LEARN & EARN



"All Hands on Deck"

Length: 5 Hours

Upon completion of this course learners will: ●



"Core MTSS Practices"

Length: 8 Hours

Upon completion of this course learners will: ●



"Building the Foundation with Tier 1"

Length: 8 Hours

Upon completion of this course learners will: ●



"Bridging Supports with Tier 2"

Length: 8 Hours

Upon completion of this course learners will: ●



"Growing Your Tier 3 Supports"

Length: 8 Hours

Upon completion of this course learners will: ●



"The Opioid and Fentanyl Epidemic"

Length: 3 Hours

Upon completion of this course learners will: ●



"Elevating Family Partnerships"

Length: 3 Hours

Upon completion of this course learners will: ●

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Connectedness in High Leverage Practices

The System



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MTSS paves the pathway for Connectedness

MTSS/ISF inherently promotes protective factors

- Written protocols for helping students at risk for suicide
- Written protocols for response after a death by suicide
- Identification of youth at risk of suicide
- Promoting protective factors
- Ensuring stakeholders are engaged (training and protocol)
- Community partnerships





Individualized student Interventions and Support
Reintegration and Re-Entry
Growth and Healing
Crisis
Response

Tier 3

Mentoring Programs
Data-Informed (gated) Screening/Assessment
Psychoeducational Interventions (small group)
Targeted PD for Specialized Staff

Tier 2

Policy/Procedure
Universal Screening
Mental Health Literacy PD
Universal Curricular Suicide Education
Youth Voice/Peer Support
Suicide Awareness PD

Tier 1



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Tier 1: Where Connectedness is Crafted



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Compassionate Considerations:



PREVENTION

BRIEF CHECKLIST

REVIEW THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS TO ASSESS READINESS
THIS IS NOT A COMPREHENSIVE LIST BUT RATHER A TOOL TO BEGIN, OR EXPAND ON, PREVENTION CONVERSATIONS

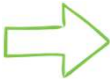
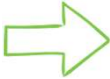
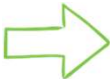
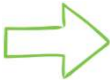
01	DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE AN UP-TO-DATE CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN?	YES ☐	NO ☐
02	DOES YOUR SCHOOL HAVE AN IDENTIFIED MULTI-DISCIPLINARY CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM? (SCHOOL PSYCH, SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER, SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER, SCHOOL NURSE, ADMIN, LICENSED MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER, SRO, PARENT VOICE)	YES ☐	NO ☐
03	ARE TEAM ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES CLEARLY DEFINED AND REFLECTIVE OF BEST-PRACTICES?	YES ☐	NO ☐
04	DOES THE CRISIS PLAN HAVE WRITTEN PROTOCOLS ON HOW TO MANAGE CRISIS/SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR? (KEY CONSIDERATION: DO PROTOCOLS INCLUDE SUICIDE SPECIFIC SCREENING/ASSESSMENT/SAFETY PLANNING)	YES ☐	NO ☐
05	DOES THE CRISIS PLAN HAVE A WRITTEN PROTOCOL FOR RESPONDING TO AN ATTEMPT ON CAMPUS?	YES ☐	NO ☐
06	DOES THE CRISIS PLAN HAVE A WRITTEN PROTOCOL FOR RESPONDING TO AN ATTEMPT OFF CAMPUS?	YES ☐	NO ☐
07	DO CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM MEMBERS RECIEVE ADDITIONAL TRAINING SPECIFIC TO PROTOCOLS, CRISIS DEESCALATION, AND ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES?	YES ☐	NO ☐
08	DO ALL SCHOOL PERSONNEL RECIEVE MENTAL HEALTH/SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING?	YES ☐	NO ☐
09	ARE COPIES OF THE SCHOOL CRISIS PLAN READILY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL SCHOOL PERSONNEL?	YES ☐	NO ☐
10	DO ALL SCHOOL PERSONNEL UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS FOR CONNECTING A STUDENT TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES IN THE SCHOOL IF THEY HAVE CONCERNS FOR THEIR SAFETY OR WELL-BEING?	YES ☐	NO ☐
11	DO ALL STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS FOR CONNECTING A THEMSELVES OR A PEER TO MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES IN THE SCHOOL IF THEY HAVE CONCERNS FOR THEIR SAFETY OR WELL-BEING?	YES ☐	NO ☐





Tier 1 Suicide Prevention

*Tier 1 suicide prevention represents the universal foundation of a school's comprehensive approach. It focuses on building environments where every student feels **seen, valued, and supported**...before crisis occurs.*

Key Features: Prevention for		Reaches every student, staff, and family through proactive systems, not just those identified as “at risk.”
All Cultural and Climate Focus		Embeds connection, inclusion, and belonging in daily routines, language, and schoolwide practices.
Skill Development		Equips all students and staff with emotional literacy, help-seeking skills, and shared language around wellness.
Intentional Integration		Aligns with core academic and behavioral supports, ensuring connectedness is both relational and systemic.
Protective by Design		Cultivates safety, trust, and engagement that buffer against hopelessness and isolation.

Creating a Climate of Connection

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that schools use the following strategies to increase students' feelings of connectedness to school.

- Create decision-making processes that facilitate student, family and community engagement, academic achievement and staff empowerment.
- Provide education and opportunities to enable families to be actively involved in their children's academic and school life.
- Provide students with the academic, emotional and social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school.
- Use effective classroom management and teaching methods to foster a positive learning environment.
- Provide professional development and support for teachers and other school staff to enable them to meet the diverse cognitive, emotional and social needs of children and adolescents.
- Create trusting and caring relationships that promote open communication among administrators, teachers, staff, students, families and communities.



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Creating a Climate of Connection: Policy

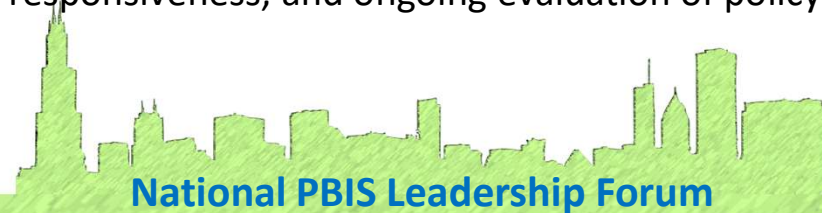


Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention

The Model School District Policy on Suicide Prevention provides a thorough plan for school districts to implement suicide prevention policies in their community.

 American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

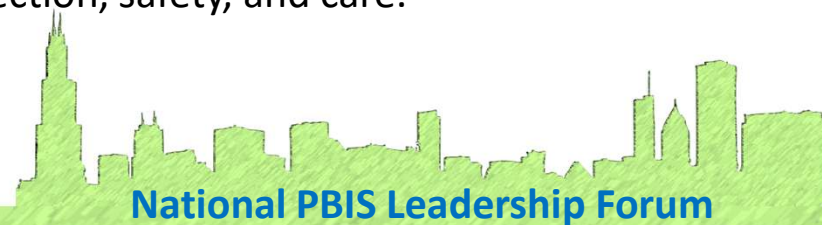
- **Clear leadership & coordination:** District- and school-level leads oversee consistent implementation and communication.
- **Comprehensive staff training:** All personnel receive annual awareness and response training with clear referral pathways.
- **Early identification & referral protocols:** Written procedures guide timely response, parent notification, and connection to care.
- **Partnerships & continuity of care:** Strong coordination with community mental health and crisis services.
- **Lethal means safety & postvention planning:** Includes guidance on means restriction and supports recovery after a crisis.
- **Equity, privacy, and review:** Ensures confidentiality, cultural responsiveness, and ongoing evaluation of policy impact.



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Life Skills Integration

- Embeds social-emotional learning within **daily instruction** and **interactions**.
- Builds **self-awareness**, **empathy**, and **emotion regulation** across the community.
- Strengthens **help-seeking**, **problem-solving**, and **conflict resolution** skills.
- Aligns competencies with **schoolwide expectations** and **MTSS practices**.
- Creates **consistent language** and **modeling** for connection, safety, and care.



Mental Health Literacy and Prevention Awareness Training



“All Hands on Deck”

Length: 5 Hours

Upon completion of this course learners will:

1. Understand the background and purpose of the SC SBHA
2. Analyze the current state of youth mental health
3. Define and describe mental health and mental illness, including types of mental health challenges and the impact of stigma
4. Recognize risk and protective factors and their impact on youth
5. Explain Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and its role in supporting school behavioral health
6. Identify the importance of strong relationships and apply relationship-building strategies

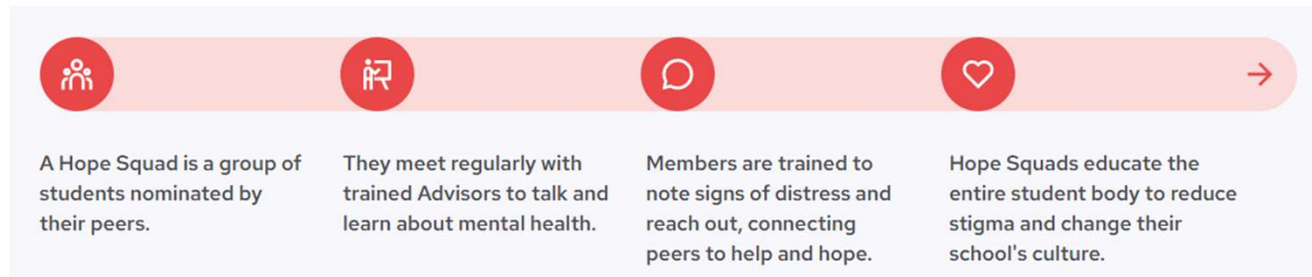


- Promotes shared understanding of mental health, wellness, and protective factors.
- Normalizes help-seeking and compassionate response for all members of the school community.
- Builds staff and student confidence to recognize and refer concerns early.
- Integrates awareness campaigns, PD, and student-led initiatives into Tier 1 systems.
- Ensures consistent, stigma-free messaging across classrooms, teams, and families.



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Student-led and Peer-driven Initiatives



- Empower student voice in shaping mental health culture and messaging.
- Establish peer ambassador or helper programs that promote connection and help-seeking.
- Integrate student leadership into awareness campaigns, assemblies, and events.
- Foster peer-to-peer learning around empathy, inclusion, and support strategies.
- Ensure adult allies coach, guide, and sustain student initiatives within Tier 1 systems.

PBIS to Promote Inclusion

- Embeds equitable, relationship-centered practices into everyday systems.  Positive greetings at the door for ALL students
- Reinforces belonging and safety through clear, inclusive expectations.  Post, teach, and model behavioral expectations (Be Kind)
- Uses data to identify and reduce disproportionality in discipline and access.  Post, teach, and model behavioral expectations (Be Kind)
- Celebrates student strengths and diverse identities through recognition systems.  Positive office referrals and spotlight boards highlighting growth, kindness, or effort.
- Creates a shared language of care, respect, and community across all settings.  Restorative, trauma-informed dialogue stems: “What happened?”, “Who was affected?”, “What can we do to make it right?”

From Awareness to Action



Prevention: Pair and Group Share

What are you already doing?
Where do you see opportunity for growth?
What's your next step?



Resources and Continuing Ed

CRISIS TEXT LINE |

Text **HELLO** to **741741**
Free, 24/7, Confidential

988

SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**



The Jed Foundation



Alliance of Hope
for suicide loss survivors



Please Complete this Session's Evaluation

10/23

5G – Connectedness & Hope: A Roadmap to Cultivating Belonging in Schoolwide Suicide Prevention

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Click "Take Survey" under the session description.

2. QR Code

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3. Online

Click on the link located next to the downloadable session materials posted online at:

www.pbis.org/conference-and-presentations/pbis-leadership-forum

4. Direct Link

Click the link provided in the email reminder you receive after your session ends.



After you submit each session evaluation, click the link to enter the **gift card raffle!**

Evaluations are **anonymous!** We send reminder emails to all participants.

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