



Schools and Covid-19: Planning Guide for Social and Emotional Supports for School Re-Opening and Beyond

*New Orleans Trauma-Informed Schools Learning Collaborative
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Acknowledging and responding to the stress and trauma experienced by students and teachers

Rationale

“Studies have shown that traumatic experiences in childhood can diminish concentration, memory, and the organizational and language abilities children need to succeed in school. For some children, this can lead to problems with academic performance, inappropriate behavior in the classroom, and difficulty forming relationships. Learning about the impacts of trauma can help keep educators from misunderstanding the reasons underlying some children’s difficulties with learning, behavior and relationships.” - Trauma & Learning Policy Initiative

LDOE Strong Start Alignment: Guide to Supporting Well-Being of Students and Staff

- Acknowledge and address the unique end and start of school
- Respond to student behavior with appropriate support: Train administrators and teachers on impact of trauma on students

Planning Considerations

- What activities, if any, did you do to close out last year with students? Staff?
- What activities are you planning to open this year with students? Staff?
- Understanding trauma within your school community.
 - Covid-19 impacts in terms of community loss?
 - Other losses that may be amplified in current context (e.g., teachers leaving school, etc.)?
 - How will you understand student perspectives?
 - How will you understand staff perspectives?
- What mindset shifts would be required by you and/or your school leadership team to acknowledge student and teacher experiences of stress and trauma?
- What, if any, training have you already had in trauma-informed approaches?
- What community partnerships exist to support trauma-informed training?
- What in-house expertise exists to support trauma-informed training?

	Recommended Strategies & Activities	Supporting Resources	Community Resources
Student-Focused	Talk to students about COVID19	Guidance from The CDC and The Child Mind Institute NCTSN Online Training in Psychological First Aid Talking to Children about Covid-19	Jill West (jill.west@ochsner.org) Section Head, Child Psychology, Ochsner Children’s Hospital
	Integrate current events into lesson planning	Anti-racist Education Toolkit Teaching Tolerance Classroom Resources	Overcoming Racism
	Create safe and respectful spaces for discussion and reflection	Community Building Circles Trauma Informed School Strategies	New Orleans Youth Alliance Lauren Trout, Restorative Justice Consultant
Staff-Focused	Provide foundational education/training in trauma for staff	Helping Traumatized Children Learn Trauma-Responsive Educational Practices Online Course (*free until Sept. 2020) How Kids Learn Resilience	New Orleans Trauma-Informed Learning Collaborative Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies Youth Empowerment Project
	Communicate clear plan for health safety that is responsive to the disproportionate impacts of COVID19 on staff and families	Covid-19 Teacher Impacts and Recommended School Responses Report Being an Equity Champion During a Crisis: Part II	Louisiana Department of Education Beloved Community
	Provide ongoing opportunities to practice using a trauma-lens	Create Trauma-Informed Individualized Education Plans Trauma-Informed School Strategies	Special Education Leadership Fellowship Consultation People's Institute for Survival & Beyond

Fostering emotional and behavioral regulation in students and teachers

Rationale

In a recent survey of New Orleans public school students, 49% of Black students indicated that they do not feel successful in regulating their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations at school ([Wiexler et al., 2020](#)), which could lead to trouble learning in the classroom. Teachers who struggle with emotional regulation report higher rates of student behavior problems like being disruptive in class or not paying attention than teachers with stronger emotional regulation skills.

LDOE Strong Start Alignment: Guide to Supporting Well-Being of Students and Staff

- Acknowledge and address the unique end and start of school: Address the social and emotional well-being of school staff.
- Respond to student behavior with appropriate support: Train administrators and teachers on trauma informed practices, culturally responsive teaching, de-escalation strategies, and other strategies to support students.

Planning Considerations

- How do current employee benefits support access to mental health services? What implicit or explicit norms/policies influence teacher access to mental health services?
- What school-based mental health services are available to students and how do they access them?
- Prior to the pandemic, how did your school support student and teacher wellness? What worked, what didn't?
- During the pandemic, how did your school support student and teacher wellness? What worked, what didn't?
- How is student and staff voice incorporated into planning and implementation of wellness strategies?
- What mindset shifts would be required by you and/or your school leadership team to incorporate student and staff voice?
- What training, if any, have you already had in regulation skill-building or self-care?
- What community partnerships exist to support student and staff wellness?
- What in-house expertise exists to support student and staff wellness?

	Recommended Strategies & Activities	Supporting Resources	Community Resources
Student-Focused	Promote healthy habits, establish consistent routines, and maintain clear communication	Addressing Our Needs Guide Digital Citizenship & Media Balance Classroom Sensory Strategies Trauma-Informed Teaching Strategies A Trauma-Informed Approach to Teaching Through the Corona Virus	New Orleans Trauma-Informed Learning Collaborative online Safe and Supportive Classrooms PD (coming soon)
	Enhance student learning by revisiting familiar content, delivering instruction in "bite-sized" segments, and taking brain breaks	Teaching Through a Pandemic Understanding cognitive load to better engage students Brain Breaks	
	Offer opportunities for movement and mindfulness breaks throughout the day (*not tied to reward system)	Movement & Learning CDC's Recess Recommendations & Resources GoNoodle	Project Peaceful Warriors Up2Us Sports
Staff-Focused	Provide professional development in mindfulness, self-care and trauma stewardship	Self-Care for Educators Secondary Traumatic Stress & Educators Secondary Traumatic Stress Informed Organization Assessment (STSI-OA) Tool	New Orleans Trauma-Informed Learning Collaborative online Organizational Approaches to Supporting Staff PD (coming soon) In the Works, LLC Project Fleur-de-Lis
	Promote staff self-care practices inside and outside the work environment, with a focus on equity.	Supporting Healthy Mindsets & Behaviors Apps like Headspace (free for teachers) and Shine Happy Teacher Revolution What It Means to Be Equity Champions During Crisis: Part I Check in on Your Black Employees, Now	Institute for Women & Ethnic Studies After Class BE NOLA The Ohm Well NOLA Mindfulness Beloved Community
	Train all staff on culturally responsive de-escalation and communication strategies	Active Listening and solution-focused communication strategies	Center for Restorative Approaches

Using a Developmental Relationships Framework to Support Healthy Relationships

Rationale

“Relationships are essential to young people’s growth, learning and thriving - including for those young people who face serious challenges in their lives and the world around them. ... Developmental relationships help young people discover who they are; develop abilities to shape their own lives and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them.” (Search Institute, 2017)

LDOE Strong Start Alignment: Guide to Supporting Well-Being of Students and Staff

- Prioritize positive, intentional relationships: Facilitate meaningful interactions to develop sustaining, strong relationships within the classroom and throughout the school.

Planning Considerations

- Prior to the pandemic, how did your school cultivate adult-student relationships? Adult-adult relationships? What worked, what didn’t?
- During the pandemic, how did your school cultivate adult-student relationships? Adult-adult relationships? What worked, what didn’t?
- During the pandemic, how did the leadership communicate to staff expectations around their roles in reaching students and families as well as the limits of their responsibilities?
- How is staff/teacher voice incorporated into planning and implementation of relationship building strategies? Is school climate regularly assessed?
- How will the leadership allow relationships to take priority when school reopens?
- What, if any, trainings have you already had in strategies for adult-student relationships?
- What community partnerships exist to support relationship building?
- What in-house expertise exists to support relationship building?

	Recommended Strategies & Activities	Supporting Resources	Community Resources
Student-Focused	Provide adult mentors	Developmental Relationships Staff-Student Relationship Mapping	Silverback Society , Project Butterfly , Girls on the Run , Daughters Beyond Incarceration
	Facilitate community building activities (i.e. morning meeting, collaborative problem-solving practices, story circles)	Morning Meeting Overview Teaching Restorative Practices Through Community Circles	Center for Restorative Approaches
	Provide opportunities for structured and unstructured play time	Neuroscience and Learning Through Play Exploring the Benefits of Art in Elementary Education With Feeling: Emotional Intelligence Through the Arts	KIDsmART PlayWorks Louisiana
Staff-Focused	Create peer to peer community building opportunities/rituals	Guide for Holding Virtual Community Circles Using Circles to Guide Decision Making	Center for Restorative Approaches Project Fleur-de-Lis
	Encourage ongoing teacher reflection and goal setting around relationships	Relationships First “Relationships Check” Tool	New Orleans Trauma-Informed Learning Collaborative online Teacher-Student Relationship PD
	Promote the use of technology to support parent-teacher communication practices while setting realistic expectations & boundaries	Apps to Support Parent Communication Seesaw & Class Dojo Why Leaders Have a Duty of Care to Set Digital Boundaries	

Sample Trauma-Informed Weekly Schedule (5th Grade)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 - 8:20	Staff Opening Circle Consistent weekly ritual to share updates, connect as a team and process thoughts & emotions	Staff Prep Time			
8:30 - 8:40	Arrival To foster a welcoming, therapeutic environment, leaders are posted at each entrance to greet children daily as they arrive. Teachers greet each child as they walk in the door; one option is to create a repertoire of touchless greetings with input from students during morning community circles. As the year progresses and physical distancing requirements evolve, different students can rotate through the job of greeter, and guest greeters from the school and community could also be enlisted.				
8:40 - 9:04	Breakfast & Morning Community Circle Initial few weeks of circle or morning meeting are designed to establish community and learn circle culture				
9:05 - 9:50	English Language Arts Consider integration of Social-Emotional Learning Skills (i.e. Provide vocabulary words for feelings, provide authentic feedback and ask questions that help students reflect on their own strengths and interests, routinely ask students to talk about the kinds of stories, poems, or books they like to read and why so that students can begin to see the ways in which other students have similar or different preferences and learn from each other about why other types of reading materials may be fun to read). Take one or two brain breaks during the instructional period.				
9:55 - 10:40	P.E.	Unstructured Play (tag, hide and seek, art expression, etc.)	P.E.	Unstructured Play (tag, hide and seek, art expression, etc.)	P.E.
10:45 - 11:30	MTSS /Extension Block	MTSS /Extension Block	MTSS /Extension Block	MTSS /Extension Block	MTSS /Extension Block
11:35 - 11:55	Lunch Lunch provides an excellent opportunity to build relationships, teachers rotate through and occasionally eat lunch with students, either individually or in small groups. School leaders invite students, either individually or in small groups to eat with them in their office or outside. Students are encouraged to engage with one another and adults.				
11:55 - 12:10	Recess Recess is given to all students and is not a privilege that is earned or can be taken away. Recess is another excellent relationship-building opportunity, and teachers and leaders actively engage with students in games and activities. Leaders ensure there is enough play equipment to offer a variety of activities (balls, jump ropes, etc.) and adults teach children games they can play. See this resource from Playworks for suggestions.				
12:15 - 1:00	Math Consider ways to integrate SEL into Math curriculum (i.e. CASEL Examples). Take one or two brain breaks during the instructional period.				
1:05 - 1:50	Art	Yoga	Art	Music	Drama
1:55 - 2:40	Social Studies /Science/ STEM Consider opportunities for SEL integration during Social Studies (i.e. use historical events to discuss how historical figures persevered through hard times to turn their lives around or reach a goal, lead students in a discussion of how to use their awareness of emotions as a guide to decision making and discuss how historical figures harnessed their feelings to work for the common good) and Science (i.e. lessons about the stress response and the brain using resources like Dan Siegel's Hand Model or this Educator Toolkit). Take one or two brain breaks during the instructional period.				
2:45 - 3:15	Snack/Supper & Closing Circle				
3:15 - 3:30	Dismissal				
3:30 - 4:00	Staff Prep Time				Staff Closing Circle

Trauma-Informed Approaches Action Planning Tool

STEP 1. IDENTIFY POSSIBLE PRIORITIES

Identify needs that emerged	Brainstorm possible priority actions based on identified needs

STEP 2. IDENTIFY PRIORITY FOR ACTION

The Leadership Team begins action planning by determining which of these priorities should be addressed first. Even though all priorities may seem critical, it is important to be realistic and choose one or two action steps to start the work. In selecting initial priorities, the Leadership Team should consider which ones seem most pressing and achievable in the short term. The goal is to leverage the greatest amount of improvement for students while ensuring that the staff will feel the satisfaction that comes from seeing short-term, concrete results.

Priority Action:

STEP 3. FINALIZE TRAUMA-INFORMED ACTION PLAN

Use the Flexible Framework Questions to develop an action plan that takes into account all important elements of school operations and identifies strengths and barriers that may influence the achievement of goals.

Overall Goal:

Flexible Framework Questions

What role does school/network/district leadership play in implementation?
 What professional development and ongoing coaching will be necessary for implementation?
 What academic and nonacademic classroom strategies will be necessary to support implementation?
 What school wide policies, procedures, and protocols will be necessary to support implementation?
 What school-based services/resources are necessary to support implementation?
 What community partnerships are necessary to support implementation?
 How will collaboration with families shape and support implementation?

Planning

Action Steps	Timeline	School-based Lead & Key Partners	Available & Needed Resources	Measures of Success