

# Staff and Student Wellness Guide

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Creating Equitable School Systems: A Roadmap for  
Education Leaders — 2020-2021

*July 2020*



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## **Table of Contents**

Executive Summary .....	1
Checklist for Staff and Student Wellness .....	2
General Wellness Resources for Reopening .....	4
Staff and Student Wellness Communication Plan .....	5
Supporting Staff Wellness .....	8
Supporting Student Wellness .....	15
Enhancement of Social and Emotional Wellness in a Virtual Environment .....	17
Alignment with Supplemental Student Services .....	23

## Executive Summary

The final months of the 2019-2020 school year were an unparalleled time in our commonwealth and nation. The physical closures of schools across the country impacted the security, structures and routines of students and families everywhere. In addition, social and racial unrest has added another layer to the collective experiences of our educational staff, students, families, and communities. For educators, this time has highlighted the importance of ensuring students, families, and fellow staff feel a sense of psychological, emotional, and physical safety as schools re-open for the 2020-2021 school year.

Staff and student wellness will be a cornerstone of the reopening process and paramount to offering an equitable educational experience for all. The contents of the Staff and Student Wellness guide is designed to highlight five elements that should be considered as part of the school entity's overall school-level action planning:

- [Staff and Student Wellness Communication Plan](#)
- [Supporting Staff in a Tiered Model](#)
- [Supporting Students in a Tiered Model](#)
- [Enhancement of Social and Emotional Wellness in a Virtual Environment](#)
- [Alignment with Supplemental Student Services](#)

As school entities evaluate their needs related to staff and student wellness, the roadmap offers resources to consider when determining (a) effective methods of communication with stakeholders, (b) universal practices to address social and emotional needs and to create safe, welcoming and equitable learning environments, and (c) conditions for monitoring and supporting identified staff and students demonstrating needs related to social-emotional and psychological supports. As inequities are identified in educational systems, whether as a result of the pandemic-related closure or newly discovered through professional learning around equity and systemic oppression, the importance of ensuring psychological safety for staff and students in our educational communities cannot be understated.

In the development of the roadmap, it is recognized and respected that school entities are at different stages of planning and implementation related to social-emotional learning, positive behavior interventions and supports, and multi-tiered systems of support. Therefore, this roadmap was designed to support staff and student wellness regardless of where school entities are in the planning or implementation phases of other initiatives. Key considerations, questions to consider, and resources have been presented to assist all school entities with the creation of equitable, trauma-informed plans that address the emotional wellness and safety of their students, families, and staff.

## Checklist for Staff and Student Wellness

### Develop a Staff and Student Wellness Communication Plan

- Develop a family engagement communication plan that includes informing caregivers of updated expectations for students returning to a traditional school setting, a [virtual education](#), a hybrid approach, and/or utilizing transportation systems (as applicable).
- Develop a communication plan with staff that includes transparent, frequent updates. Communication with staff should be planned in a manner that promotes feelings of being up to date on decision making and planning and allows them to be aware of upcoming communication with families.
- Identify and review processes for [students](#), [families](#) and [staff](#) to access health and wellness support services (i.e. social worker, school-based mental health, family resource center, school nurse, Student Assistance Program, McKinney-Vento liaison).
- Create school entity and/or building-based [information sheet\(s\)](#) to advise personnel of guidelines, reopening procedures, and associated health and wellness protocols to reduce potential misinformation from unofficial sources and ensure consistent messaging.
- Consult with mental health professionals (i.e. school psychologist, social worker, school counselor) to determine available [self-care supports](#) for staff and develop daily check-in procedures to communicate their wellbeing and identify additional resources that are available.
- Create a plan with a focus on wellness and communicate that plan to all [stakeholders](#).

### Social and Emotional Wellness and Support for Staff

- Review what resources are available to support universal supports systems for all staff, and what resources are available for staff that need additional supports.
- Assess staff social and emotional wellness [needs](#).
- Contact school entity's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or health insurance providers to inform staff of available resources.
- Schedule [educator-only days](#).
- Plan [professional development](#).
- Determine how to triage staff based on support [need](#) (i.e. academic mentoring, emotional/loss needs).
- Plan and implement [self-care strategies for staff](#).

## Social and Emotional Wellness and Support for Students

- Review pre-COVID-19 systematic, academic, and behavioral data for students, families, and the school building. Analyze quantitative data for Child Find, Suspension, Expulsion, Drop Out, and Student Assistance Program (SAP) referrals.
- Contact SAP liaisons or [regional coordinators](#) to coordinate resources and process for SAP referrals.
- Develop procedures for health screenings and safety protocols that are focused on relationships within the school's culture.
- Identify what teams are in place to assist with the process of creating an [equitable, safe environment](#).
- Identify, plan, connect, and encourage existing staff to continue supporting students who have identified staff as their primary emotional support relationship for in-person and [virtual instruction](#).
- Determine how to triage [student needs](#) based on data.
- Create a plan for identifying staff to maintain student connections and check-ins based on naturally occurring or previously existing staff-student relationships.
- Determine what teams are already in place and can assist with student engagement, development of student-staff connections, and tiering of students into [hierarchy of need](#).

## Alignment of Supplemental Student Services

- Identify the supplemental programs present at the school and facilitate communication with these programs and school entity administrators.
- Identify key contact personnel for each supplemental program. When identifying key personnel, the needs of the family should be considered (e.g. language preference, ability to access technology).
- Identify existing school teams that can coordinate with extended day and extended year programming to enhance the social emotional learning of students enrolled in the program.
- Ensure coordinators of supplemental programs also receive the information caregivers are receiving to facilitate communication and family engagement.
- Identify childcare providers and provide communication and outreach.

## General Wellness Resources for Reopening

### [Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Roadmap for Reopening School \(CASEL\)](#)

Roadmap from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) to support the return to school with equity-focused SEL strategies centered on relationships and built on the existing strengths of a school community.

### [Center for Schools and Communities](#)

Through knowledgeable staff, collaborative partnerships and a commitment to improving educational systems, Center for Schools and Communities is a leader in [bullying prevention](#), [social and emotional learning](#), [school safety and violence prevention](#), youth development, [afterschool learning](#), [child abuse prevention and neglect](#), [parent and family support services](#), and [child injury prevention](#).

### [Center for Promoting of Social & Emotional Learning](#)

CPSEL can help schools, LEAs and organizations achieve a specific goal, address a unique problem or develop an action plan. Consulting services can be provided on a small scale or over multiple years to support leadership teams and build staff capacity to carry SEL work forward and realize lasting change.

### [Guidance on Culturally Responsive-Sustaining School Reopenings: Centering Equity to Humanize the Process of Coming Back Together](#)

This document provides a set of suggestions and topics to think about for humanizing the school reopening process. This document explores questions as to how we might engage in culturally responsive-sustaining school reopenings, leveraging elegant ideas that borne from the educational equity community.

### [Facing History and Ourselves](#)

Mission: Uses lessons from history to challenge teachers and their students to stand up to bigotry and hate. Free resources, including [lesson plans](#), to support teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic are also provided.

### [Pennsylvania School Reopening Task Force Report](#)

This report represents a compilation of insights and considerations from Pennsylvania state organizations including: the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA), Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA), Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA), Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO), Pennsylvania Association of Intermediate Units (PAIU), PA Principals Association, Pennsylvania Association of Career & Technical Administrators (PACTA) and Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools (PARSS). Information on social and emotional wellness are highlighted on pages 43-44.

## Staff and Student Wellness Communication Plan

Developing a communication plan that is rooted in transparency, collaboration, and voice can help develop a team focus for schools and improve family, staff, and community engagement.

### Key Considerations

- ✓ Communicate school entity expectations through notification letters with translation to meet the needs of families.
  - Documents translated in home languages
  - Bilingual staff on site to be able to communicate effectively with caregivers and students
- ✓ Messages should be clear, concise and understandable.
- ✓ Avoiding jargon and abbreviations can help increase the emotional and relationship connection of your message.
- ✓ Engaging family and community stakeholders to develop and deliver school entity's messaging can increase buy-in, improve family/community relationships, and promote values of transparency and collaboration.
- ✓ Prepare handouts and school website updates for caregivers and school personnel regarding guidelines, reopening procedures, and associated health and wellness protocols to reinforce consistent messaging when reopening occurs. Provide automated phone calls and text notifications for updates, as needed.
- ✓ Consider how you will communicate with students, families and partners who are attending Career and Technical Centers (CTC). When different protocols exist between the CTC and the Local Educational Agencies, develop clear processes and a system of communication that helps families and students understand procedures for each setting.
- ✓ Determine how you will plan for and communicate a focus on wellness throughout the reopening and during the school year. Considerations include:
  - Publicize what makes the coming year special and communicate often and with optimism about the back to school plan and return to school.
  - Plan several kick-off or welcoming events that comply with safety and health guidelines from the PA Department of Health and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Continue to celebrate successes as the year progresses.
  - Plan welcoming events for teachers, staff, families, students, and community members (including volunteers and partner organizations) which are meant to be celebratory and relationship building.

### Questions to Consider

- ? Does your school entity have a social media presence where communications can be shared?
- ? Is it possible to share a message from the superintendent and other school leaders to increase visibility of leaders, improve relationships, and increase connections between



## Communication

home and school?

- ? How will school and school entity staff communicate effectively and stay connected with families of diverse backgrounds?
- ? How can you engage family and community stakeholders in the development and dissemination of the message?
- ? What family/community partnerships exist to assist with the delivery and development of school entity messages?
- ? What community health and wellness or crisis providers are typically available in the school setting?
- ? What handouts/guidance for staff and families can be prepared prior to the return to school? Some considerations include:
  - o [Home Learning Environment](#) -Providing information on how families can support a positive learning environment in the home.
  - o [Mandated Reporting](#) – Families should receive reminders about regulations for mandated reporting, which may include what is seen during on-line lessons.
  - o Student Access to Academic Support Program – If your school entity is providing additional tutoring or learning supports, make parents aware of it with easy next steps to access or apply for them.
  - o [Student Assistance Program](#) – provide information on who families can contact if they have concerns regarding their youth or how to refer to the Student Assistance Program.
  - o Resources to address negative stigma around COVID-19 and racial bias.
  - o All online communication materials should ideally have the capability of being translated and frequently updated by the school entity and referred to by staff.
- ? How will you communicate with learners, caregivers and partners about new developments and resources?

## Resources

### [Coronavirus Equity Considerations](#)

This document, developed by the NAACP, provides key considerations and resources to assist with ensuring communication and planning has an equity focus and meets the needs of all stakeholders.

### [Culturally Responsive–Sustaining Family Engagement in the time of COVID-19, and Remote Learning and Always](#)

This document developed by the NYU Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools provides a concise list of recommendations and effective practices for engaging families with a culturally responsive and sustaining lens. These suggested practices highlight engagement during the time of COVID-19, engaging families while remote learning, and practices in general family-school partnerships.

### [High-Quality CTE: Planning for a COVID-19 Impacted School Year](#)

This document is a guide for helping CTE stakeholders identify key considerations, strategic questions, and emerging best practices to shape future planning. This guide is organized

## Communication

around the Association for Career and Technical Education's (ACTE) quality of CTE program of student framework. Additional guidance on equity has been highlighted in a supplemental [Access and Equity](#) brief.

### **Pennsylvania Equity and Inclusion Toolkit**

The Pennsylvania Equity and Inclusion Toolkit was designed to assist all school entities in their efforts to prevent and address bias and discrimination. This Toolkit provides relevant, evidence-based resources and information for school leaders and administrators to ensure that all students feel safe, respected, and welcomed in classrooms across the Commonwealth. This Toolkit has three focus areas – prevention, response, and recovery – aimed at helping educators address and eliminate bias, discrimination, and harassment and promote equity and inclusion in schools.

## Supporting Staff Wellness

Deliberate planning that addresses staff wellness and enhances staff's ability to engage in productive practices to benefit system, family, and student wellbeing. Anchoring the planning in the values of collaboration, mutuality, cultural sensitivity, and empowerment enhances the overall climate of the school entity.

### Safety and Social Preparedness Before Teachers and Students Return

#### Key Considerations

- ✓ A **needs assessment** for staff and students can provide data for planning. Determine the goal of the needs' assessment, reduce redundancy by keeping the assessment short, and collect only what is necessary by your team. Consider this assessment to assist with tiering of students/staff based on levels of need and include asking if students/families/staff experienced the following:
  - Witnessed serious illness/death of family member(s)
  - Witnessed emergency/life-saving events related to COVID-19 or other violence/trauma events during closure
  - Had family members or close friends die during closure
  - Experienced traumatic physical or emotional injury, medical trauma, or racial trauma
  - Had been emotionally or socially impacted by national racial unrest
  - Had been impacted by experiencing limited or disrupted access to basic needs (e.g. food, shelter, clothing, medical care).
  - Have self-identified as feeling especially anxious about returning to work
- ✓ Staff members may have experienced uncertainty, stress, or loss due to COVID-19 or racial unrest, and this will affect people differently. A **tiered plan** for wellness and mental health can support staff adjustment and prepare them to better support students when they return to school. The plan should include wellness strategies designed for all staff, as well as supports targeted to staff who may be experiencing elevated levels of stress or who self-report traumatic experiences. School entity Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or health insurance-supported programs may be provided to staff with the highest degree of need.
- ✓ Schedule time for educator-only days to process and communicate the social, emotional, and traumatic impacts of pandemic and other national issues; this can assist in preparing the staff for the return to school. Provide a scheduled, structured time of healing and focus upon helping to prepare staff for student return by allowing them to process their emotions in a healthy manner and increase their emotional capacity for student needs.
- ✓ Communicate a focus on staff and student wellness, emphasizing and prioritizing a social-emotional learning connection through delivery of targeted strategies.

#### Questions to Consider

- ? Do you have staff who are highly emotional or reactive to changes or challenges during every-day functioning?

## Staff Wellness

- ? How will you support the healing process related to the pandemic and racial inequities during your staff development time and throughout the year?
- ? How will you monitor staff wellness needs throughout the year and identify those who would benefit from additional support?
- ? What role will absence data, observations, formal and informal check-ins, and self or peer referral systems play?
- ? Have you reopened facilities to serve any students during the summer? If yes, what are the early lessons learned regarding student social and emotional health needs that could be applied to development of future staff and student supports?

## Resources

### [High-Quality CTE: Planning for a COVID-19 Impacted School Year](#)

This document is a guide for helping CTE stakeholders identify key considerations, guiding questions, and emerging best practices to shape future planning. This guide is organized around the Association for Career and Technical Education's (ACTE's) quality of CTE program of student framework. Additional guidance on staffing has been highlighted in a supplemental [Prepared and Effective Program Staff](#) brief.

### [Mid-Atlantic Equity Center – Criteria for an Equitable School – Equity Audit Tool](#)

This tool helps school leaders assess whether or not the school provides the processes and information which create a positive learning environment so students and staff can perform at their highest level.

### Scales to consider during COVID-19 needs assessment:

Name	Areas included
<a href="#">COVID-19 adolescent symptom and psychological experience questionnaire</a>  <a href="#">COVID-19 adolescent symptom and psychological experience questionnaire PARENT</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General experience related to COVID-19 and social distancing</li> <li>• Emotional experience related to COVID-19 and social distancing</li> <li>• Cognitive experience related to COVID-19 and social distancing</li> <li>• Social experience related to COVID-19 and social distancing</li> </ul>
<a href="#">COVID-19 exposure and family impact survey</a>  <a href="#">COVID-19 exposure and family impact survey: Spanish</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID-19 Family Exposure</li> <li>• COVID-19 Family Impact</li> </ul>
<a href="#">CoRonavIruS Health Impact Survey (CRISIS): youth self-report</a>  <a href="#">CoRonavIruS Health Impact Survey (CRISIS): parent/caregiver</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coronavirus/COVID-19 health/exposure status</li> <li>• Life changes due to coronavirus/COVID-19 crisis</li> <li>• Daily behaviors during COVID-19</li> <li>• Emotions/worries during COVID-19</li> <li>• Media use (e.g., mobile devices, media, etc.) during COVID-19</li> </ul>

Name	Areas included
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Substance use (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, other drugs) during COVID-19</li> </ul>
<a href="#">NIH Environmental Influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO): child self-report</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Self-Report Versions (primary and alternative)</li> </ul>
<a href="#">NIH Environmental Influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO) child parent-report</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID-19 Infection</li> <li>• Impacts of the COVID-19 Outbreak on You Child Parent-Report Version</li> <li>• COVID-19 Infection</li> <li>• Impacts of the COVID-19 Outbreak on the Child Enrolled in ECHO</li> </ul>

## Professional Development

### Key Considerations

- ✓ Determine professional development needs through surveys. Base trainings on ~80% of educational staff needs.
- ✓ Provide specialized professional development for administrators, nurses, mental health professionals, SAP team members, and crisis teams in responding to COVID-19, equity/social justice, trauma, and mental health triage.
- ✓ Provide guidance and resources to address negative stigma around COVID-19 and racial bias.
- ✓ Utilize administrative staff to create a resource map of school entity personnel with backgrounds in trauma, mental health, equity/social justice, and self-care.
- ✓ Consider professional development in supporting mental health of staff and students in a virtual setting if your school entity’s re-opening plan involves virtual options.
- ✓ Provide training and resources on [secondary stress and self-care](#).
- ✓ Professional development and guidance to school staff on self-care and responses to stress, loss and trauma can help staff understand their own emotional responses during this pandemic; these sessions are anticipated to increase staff engagement in peer support and self-care, and help them identify when additional support may be needed. This guidance should be linked to the school’s tiered plans for supporting staff and student wellness.

### Questions to Consider

- ? What professional development can your school entity provide?

## Staff Wellness

- ? What professional development can your Intermediate Unit, community partners, or local health network provide?
- ? What online resources are available and can be used to supplement/enhance school entity professional development?
- ? What staff do you have internally who can assist with professional development to increase usage of staff capacity?
- ? How will you determine the professional development needs of staff?
- ? How will you disseminate resources and make these resources readily available to address negative stigma?
- ? Does the professional development being provided to all staff address the potential trauma of staff and students?
- ? If professional development related to trauma or trauma-informed approaches is provided for staff, does it differentiate trauma and traumatic experiences?
- ? Is professional development culturally sensitive?

## Resources

### [Bullying Prevention and Social Emotional Learning \(SEL\): What Can I do Now?](#)

Online webinar provides an overview of best practices in social emotional learning and bullying prevention.

### [Guidance on Culturally Responsive-Sustaining School Openings](#)

This document covers many topics that should be considered by administrators and educators planning for return to school plan.

### [Mid-Atlantic Equity Center – Criteria for an Equitable School – Equity Audit Tool](#)

This tool helps school leaders assess whether or not the school provides the processes and information which create a positive learning environment so students and staff can perform at their highest level.

### [Second Step On-Demand Webinars](#)

On-demand webinars on remote learning resources, and educator focus on administrative processes, counseling, and teaching.

## Monitoring and Triaging At-risk and Vulnerable Staff within a Tiered Model

### Key Considerations

- ✓ Administrators have had additional stress placed on them during school closures and plans to re-open. Practicing self-compassion and utilizing a support system can assist administrators with increasing their emotional and physical capacity to support staff, students, and families.

## Staff Wellness

- ✓ Consider a tiered approach to staff needs to prioritize staff capacity for mentoring and administrative support. For each tier, consider what staff support can be planned and provided (e.g. increased peer-mentoring, administrative coaching, EAP). Considerations for tiering include support based on natural supports based on naturally occurring relationships, such as mentoring, team building, and school entity supports:
  - **No additional support**, individuals are responding to natural and school entity supports.
  - **Moderate level of support**, additional support is needed for virtual/adapted teaching and moderate level of secondary stress or trauma responses are present.
  - **High level of support**, significant support is needed for virtual/adapted teaching and high levels of secondary stress or trauma responses
  - **Urgent Needs**, anxiety/depression or trauma responses require immediate referral and intervention
  
- ✓ Creation of an equitable, safe school climate is as important for staff as it is for students. Engaging staff to identify barriers to staff wellness can improve school climate and aide in development of wellness practices.
  
- ✓ Review standard practices in the school and determine what practices may need to be reorganized, providing a universal support to all staff. Some considerations include:
  - Availability of a wellness space
  - Prioritization of self-care norms and messaging in the school
  - Modeling wellness strategies/routines during staff meetings
  - Using community connections to support

## Questions to Consider

- ? How will you monitor staff wellness needs throughout the year to identify those who would benefit from additional support?
  
- ? What role will absence data, observations, formal and informal check-ins, and self or peer referral systems play?
  
- ? What mental health and wellness resources currently exist in the school or community that could be included in a tiered staff support plan? Who are the natural leaders of these initiatives and can you empower and support them in helping to implement the plan?

## Resources

### [Care for your Coronavirus Anxiety Toolkit](#)

Resources and tools for anxiety and mental health, including strategies and access to mental health experts.

### [Guidance on Culturally Responsive-Sustaining School Openings](#)

This document covers many topics that should be considered by administrators and educators planning for return to school plan. Particularly relevant to staff wellness are the sections on Healing Practices and Professional Development.

### [Managing Your Anxiety Around COVID – Tips for You and Your School: RULER](#)

## Staff Wellness

This resource page provided by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence and RULER offers information for educators about COVID-related anxiety and includes links to a webinar and hand-out that provide strategies to manage anxiety.

### Self-Care

#### Key Considerations

- ✓ Recognize that administrators have been experiencing differing levels of stress during the closure due to existing job duties, possible exposure or impact to the COVID-19 virus, and racial unrest. This awareness is critical to engaging in self-care during the return to school. Some administrator focused considerations may include:
  - Scheduling intentional check-ins with other administrators to process barriers and celebrate successes can enhance feelings of wellness; this may also better enable administrators to support staff, students, and families.
  - Identification of administrator support system that can involve administrators outside the school entity. Using networking opportunities already present or contacting local Intermediate Units to support this networking can be beneficial.
- ✓ Solicit staff feedback when developing wellness practices and support systems in the school. Be aware that the plan is fluid and will change based on health recommendations and school entity requirements for health and safety.
- ✓ Examine existing practices, routines, and available spaces in the school with the priority focused on wellness.
- ✓ Engage in proactive conversations and planning with union representatives to maximize efforts for wellness and reduce communication barriers.

#### Questions to Consider

- ? How can school entity's encourage feedback and check-ins with staff that support the feeling of emotional safety?
- ? How can meetings/classrooms/routines be prioritized to maximize wellness?
- ? Where and when can meditation or mindfulness be practiced daily?
- ? How is self-care and self-awareness integrated into our teaching?
- ? What system level practices can be amended to increase the feelings of safety?
- ? How can schools prioritize wellness and self-care by integrating wellness routines and practices?

#### Resources

##### [Compassion Resilience Toolkit for School Leaders and Staff](#)

This toolkit focuses on maintaining a focus of wellness for students, families, and colleagues to improve outcomes for staff and families.



## Staff Wellness

### [Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self Care Packet](#)

This packet by the National Center for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments provides information for educators about secondary trauma stress, risk factors and warning signs. It includes checklists and planning tools for individual staff self-care, as well as template for a School Self-Care Plan.

### [Teacher Wellness Articles](#)

This page on the Edutopia site offers articles on COVID and self-care strategies for teachers.

## Supporting Student Wellness

As school entities develop plans for the 2020-21 school year, plans supporting student wellness will be a critical component to promoting feelings of safety and support academic growth. Development of a safe, supportive environment with a focus on relationships is vital to supporting students as they return to school.

### Creating an equitable, inclusive and safe environment

#### Key Considerations

- ✓ Recognize that the students and families may have had traumatic experiences prior to the pandemic. This can include prior family displacement, loss, and/or violence exposure. For students who are [homeless, refugees, or from migrant families](#), understanding their past experiences is critical to connecting with families.
- ✓ Provide an attractive, well-designed, structured school experience beginning the first day of school.
- ✓ Provide substantive orientations and support for newcomers (e.g., teachers, staff, families, students and volunteers). After the first week, check-in with new teachers, families and students to identify and correct problems that arise early in the entry process.
- ✓ Provide positive supervision and safety monitoring. If a student or staff member fails to comply with safety guidelines, redirect with care, and emphasize social emotional learning practices.
- ✓ Provide brief whole-school or whole-class lessons on how traumatic stress impacts our brains to help normalize and reduce shame, as well provide a rationale for integrating wellness activities into class and school routines.
- ✓ Provide time, spaces, and places for embedding self-care activities for both students and staff.
- ✓ Respond to problems that arise in real time and frame them as teachable moments.
- ✓ Provide structured routines to address safety, collaboration, and behavioral expectations. Consider the following to assist with students returning to school as these considerations will benefit all students, but particularly benefit students who have experienced trauma:
  - Predictable, structured routines
  - Clear, consistent, positive behavioral expectations
  - Review, teach, and reinforce behavioral expectations
  - Model appropriate language
  - Explicit instruction and reinforcement of social emotional skills (e.g. relationship, conflict resolution, social problem solving, coping)
  - Continuum of procedures for encouraging positive behaviors.

## Questions to Consider

- ? How can school routines be structured to support both physical and emotional/social safety?
- ? What teams exist in the school that can focus on enhancing school climate and ensuring an equitable, safe return to school?
- ? How can you include family and youth voices in the enhancement of your school climate?
- ? What community/family partners exist to support development of an equitable, safe environment?
- ? How will you develop and communicate procedures for teaching expected behaviors?  
Consider asking:
  - o What do I want my school/classroom to look like?
  - o How do I want students to treat adults in the building?
  - o How do I want students to treat each other?
  - o What type of information or values do I want to communicate to students about functioning in society today?
  - o How can you adjust instruction and practices during the day to help students develop the skills they need?
- ? How can you align teaching and reinforcement of behaviors with school mission and vision?

## Resources

### [Committee for Children](#)

Provides on-demand, teacher-led lessons, videos and free resources for educators, students and families. Topics include SEL, Second Step middle school remote learning advisory guide, lessons and activities.

### [Getting Back to School after Disruptions: Resources for Making your School Year Safer, More Predictable and More Positive](#)

Six strategies for school teams to ensure a safe, predictable, and positive school year. These strategies are beneficial for all students if the school has been closed, as well as for individual students returning from extended time away from school.

### [Midwest PBIS Network: Mental Health Integration](#)

Interconnected System Framework is a structure and process to integrate Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports and School Mental Health within school systems.

### [Pennsylvania Career Ready Skill \(PA CRS\)](#)

Social emotional learning progressions that support the development of student competence. The PA CRS are grouped in to three domains: 1) self-awareness and self-management, 2) establishing and maintaining relationships, and 3) social problem solving.

### [Pennsylvania Equity and Inclusion Toolkit](#)

## Student Wellness

The Pennsylvania Equity and Inclusion Toolkit is designed to assist all school entities in their efforts to prevent and address bias and discrimination. The Toolkit was designed to provide relevant, evidence-based resources and information for school leaders and administrators to ensure that all students feel safe, respected, and welcomed in classrooms across the commonwealth. This Toolkit has three focus areas – prevention, response, and recovery – aimed at helping educators address and eliminate bias, discrimination, and harassment and promote equity and inclusion in schools.

### [Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network \(PaTTAN\): Behavior Initiative](#)

Compilation of videos, resources, and contact information for behavior support through PaTTAN.

### [Returning to School During and After a Crisis: A Guide to Supporting States, Districts, Schools, Educators, and Students through a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Framework during the 2020-2021 School Year](#)

This guide describes the use of a multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) framework to support students, families, and educators during the transitions back to school during and following the global pandemic in a manner that prioritizes their health and safety, social and emotional needs, and behavioral and academic growth.

### [Responding to COVID-19: Simple Strategies Anyone Can Use to Foster an Emotionally Safe School Environment](#)

This report from the Collaboration for School and Child Health from the University of Connecticut provides simple strategies with high potential for integration within existing school initiatives.

### [Teaching Tolerance](#)

Teaching Tolerance provides free resources to educators—teachers, administrators, counselors and other practitioners—who work with children from kindergarten through high school. Educators use the materials to supplement the curriculum, to inform their practices, and to create civil and inclusive school communities where children are respected, valued and welcome participants.

## **Enhancement of Social and Emotional Wellness in a Virtual Environment**

### **Key Considerations**

- ✓ Recognize that family members, students and staff have experienced differing levels of stress during the closure due to the pandemic and racial unrest.
- ✓ Recognize that during the school closures and the implementation of continuity of education plans students have had varying degrees of access to technology.
- ✓ Recognize that students have most likely spent more time on digital devices than prior to the pandemic and at a younger age.
- ✓ Recognize that not all students participated in social and emotional activities when they were provided by teachers. For example, class meetings may have provided

## Student Wellness

opportunities to share feelings, frustrations, concerns and/or positive stories about their “stay-at-home” experience.

- ✓ Recognize that family support in the use of technology ranges from implementing Internet safety strategies and encouraging positive digital citizenship to unmonitored use of technology.
- ✓ Recognize that not all teachers, who worked diligently to convert in person classroom learning to remote learning, have a background or professional development in social and emotional/trauma-informed practices and Internet safety and digital citizenship.

## Questions to Consider

- ? Does the school entity include social and emotional learning and trauma-informed approaches in their comprehensive plans?
- ? If programming is present, will the existing social emotional learning and trauma-informed approaches be implemented in the virtual environment?
  - For example, if a curriculum or program approach is utilized, have the program developers provided guidance on how to implement online?
- ? If no social emotional learning is provided through program or curriculum planning, how will the school entity plan for emotional safety of students who are in the virtual setting?
- ? How many staff members have received professional development in trauma-informed approaches and social and emotional learning?
- ? Does the school entity have a caregiver handbook for remote learning, which includes topics such as guidelines for appropriate online behavior and how to report concerns?
- ? How many staff members, students and family members have received training in Internet safety and digital citizenship?
- ? Do staff members view Internet safety and digital citizenship as part of social emotional learning and trauma-informed practices?
- ? What do social emotional learning and Trauma-informed approaches look like in a remote learning environment?
  - For example, good digital citizenship includes treating others with respect in the virtual environment.

## Resources

### [Common Sense Resources for Educators During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

This online resource includes free tips and tools to support school closures and transitions to online and at-home learning.

### [Essential Digital Citizenship Lesson for the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

This online resource includes topics such as “Supporting the Transition to Virtual Learning” and lesson plans from the Common Sense Education K-12 Digital Citizenship Curriculum.

### [Feeling Safe and Supported While Learning at Home: Trauma-Sensitive Practices During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Webinar focused on identification of increased risks that students who have a history of trauma are facing during the pandemic, as well as a focus on what families and students needs and ways to support them during distance learning.

### [Preventing Cyberbullying: Ten Tips for Educators](#)

Tips compiled by the cyberbullying research center.

### [Promoting Positive Learning Climates Online and at Home](#)

This resource list was developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education: Office for Safe Schools to support educators' and parents' efforts to maintain a positive learning climate while students are physically separated from their teachers and classmates due to the COVID-19 school closures. The resource list is organized by the three elements of a positive learning climate - safety, support, and social & emotional learning - that have been shown to contribute to welcoming schools and support positive youth development.

### [Responding to Cyberbullying: Top Ten Tips for Educators](#)

Tips compiled by cyberbullying research center.

### [Teaching “Digital Citizenship” K-12](#)

This online resource includes lesson plans on topics such as “Finding Balance in a Digital World” and “Who Are You Online?”

## **Monitoring and Triaging At-risk and Vulnerable Students within a Tiered Model**

### **Key Considerations**

- ✓ Development of resource, referrals, and easily accessible [informational materials](#) for families, students and staff prior to identifying the need for support.
- ✓ Identification of staff who can assist with triaging students during first week of school.
- ✓ Visuals for where to seek support to address secondary support systems (i.e. medium, high, and urgent levels of need).
- ✓ Consider a tiered approach to student needs to prioritize staff capacity for prevention, connection and intervention. For each tier, consider what staff support can be planned for and provided (e.g. mentoring, student check-in, family check-in, SAP referral). Considerations for tiering include support based on natural supports (i.e. relationships, mentoring, social and emotional programming, and school entity supports):
  - Universal
    - No additional support
  - Moderate level of support
    - Moderate levels of academic and emotional/behavioral support are needed
    - Supports may include: check-in groups, mentoring, identification of safe spaces, SAP referrals
  - High level of support
    - Students with specific needs, which may include students with disabilities, and English Language Learners.

## Student Wellness

- Urgent Needs
  - Students in critical distress who require crisis or immediate triage
- ✓ Providing universal supports based on supportive relationships; social and emotional wellness; and emotional, behavioral, and physical safety can assist with re-establishing school routines and reduce stress responses in many students. Considerations for universal practices during school re-entry include:
  - Emphasis on relationship-building and social, emotional and academic supports.
    - Offer kick-off events to build excitement about the coming school year and foster relationships/connections.
    - Implement intentional strategies to support the development of positive relationships.
    - Establish supportive norms and engage students in envisioning what these norms look like in practice.
    - Identify and advertise available academic, social, and emotional supports for students and families.
  - Re-establish feelings of physical and emotional safety
    - Have set routines and reinforce with visual cues.
    - Provide open, developmentally appropriate communication about plans and the school to keep students safe.
    - Help families and students connect and re-establish social and peer support.
    - Model a positive and optimistic approach to required safety routine.
    - Recognize signs of stress and trauma and teach coping and emotional regulation skills.
  - Intentional SEL content in first week
    - Teach normal stress responses and the impact on people and relationships.
    - Teach explicit self-awareness, emotional regulation, and self-care strategies.
    - Encourage staff to [integrate social and emotional learning with instruction](#) in a routine and sustainable way.

## Questions to Consider

- ? What teams are already in place in the school setting to assist with tiering of students?
- ? Who in the school setting has strong relationships with students at each level: medium level, high level, and urgent level of need?
- ? What processes or natural supports are already in place to support students in each tier: medium, high, and urgent levels of need?

## Resources

### [Cyberbullying Research Institute](#)

The Cyberbullying Research Institute is dedicated to providing up-to-date information about the nature, extent, causes and consequences of cyberbullying among adolescents. This site provides online resources on topics such as: Coronavirus, Online Learning, Social Isolation, and Cyberbullying: How To Support Our Students; and online cyberbullying resources for parents, educators and youth.

### **[For Educators: COVID Check-In Survey](#)**

Developed by the Making Caring Common Project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, this survey provides a model for educators to use to check in with their students. Provided as a google form, the survey can be used as developed or educators can add questions to address the needs of their school communities.

### **[Pennsylvania Equity and Inclusion Toolkit](#)**

The Pennsylvania Equity and Inclusion Toolkit is designed to assist all school entities in their efforts to prevent and address bias and discrimination. The Toolkit provides relevant, evidence-based resources and information for school leaders and administrators to ensure that all students feel safe, respected, and welcomed in classrooms across the commonwealth. This Toolkit has three focus areas – prevention, response, and recovery – aimed at helping educators address and eliminate bias, discrimination, and harassment and promote equity and inclusion in schools.

### **[Pennsylvania Parent Guide to Special Education for School Age Children](#)**

This guide for caregivers of children receiving special education in Pennsylvania outlines how a child's need for special education is determined, how a child's educational program is developed, the responsibilities and protections guaranteed to parents and children, and the resources available to parents of a child with disabilities. This parent guide has been updated to reflect the July 2008 Chapter 14 regulations.

### **[Psychological First Aid \(PFA\) for Schools, Teachers, and Students During the World-Wide Pandemic](#)**

Developed by the North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response, this document introduces Psychological First Aid for Schools. By providing sample questions for each step (Listen Protect Connect Model and Teach), it provides a brief overview for considerations during the pandemic and return to school.

### **[Returning to School After COVID-19: A Mental Health Toolkit for Schools](#)**

Toolkit developed to address needs during stay at home and return to school. Toolkit is focused on mental health and includes resources for crisis intervention and suicide risk.

### **[School Mental Health Quality Guide: Screening](#)**

Provides considerations, action steps, and planning guide for schools engaged in universal screening.

### **[School Reentry Considerations: Supporting Student Social and Emotional Learning and Mental and Behavioral Health Amidst COVID-19](#)**

Joint guidance provided by the National Association of School Psychologists and the American School Counselor Association to assist schools in supporting the emotional, social, and mental health of students returning to school.

### **[State Personnel Development Grant: Middle School Success: The Path to Graduation \(P2G\)](#)**

P2G provides an opportunity for local educational agencies to effectively support students with emotional disturbance, who are more likely to drop out of school in comparison to their peers, by engaging in comprehensive systems-change efforts. P2G provides intensive, ongoing professional development and coaching using evidenced-based instructional and adult learning practices that will build the capacity of schools to address the academic and behavioral needs of



## Student Wellness

middle school students with disabilities. *Check & Connect* is an intervention embedded in P2G to benefit students who show warning signs of disengagement with school and who are at risk of dropping out. At the core of *Check & Connect* is a trusting relationship between the student and a caring, trained mentor who both advocates for and challenges the student to engage in live or virtual education. For more information on P2G, contact Jacki Lyster ([jlyster@pattan.net](mailto:jlyster@pattan.net)) or Tracy Ficca ([tficca@pattan.net](mailto:tficca@pattan.net)).

### **For Questions Related to [Special Education](#)**

Within Pennsylvania, call the Special Education ConsultLine: 1-800- 879-2301. A special education adviser can answer or direct your concerns to someone who can help you. Outside of Pennsylvania use the main number for the Bureau of Special Education (717) 783-6913 or send an email directly to the Bureau at [ra-pdespecial@pa.gov](mailto:ra-pdespecial@pa.gov).

## Alignment with Supplemental Student Services

Supplemental student services include services that provide students with additional academic, emotional, social, or learning supports that are provided outside of the regular school day. Considerations are also provided for coordination with supplemental services provided during the school day through federal programming, extended day, extended year, and child-care services. Coordinating services with all programs a student may be engaged in will increase a feeling of safety and support for students and families.

### Key Considerations

- ✓ Consider how the school entity can coordinate between school day, extended day, and extended year programming and identification of essential personnel to ensure staffing.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the makeup and background of their students to reduce the interruption in the educational lives of the students.
- ✓ Encourage students to take the lead in sharing their feelings and show appreciation for students' efforts.
- ✓ Communicate with the current coordinators of different programs that the school entity has and align students' needs to programming.
- ✓ LEA staff should develop positive relationships with the students and parents.
- ✓ Encourage your school entity to facilitate the process to [maintain communication](#) in a manner and language families can understand.
- ✓ Recognize that supplemental program staff may be utilized as liaisons between the parents and the school/agency; programs can also assist if needed.
- ✓ Recognize that supplemental programs are familiar to students and families and have partnerships with community resources that can address the basic needs of the family.
- ✓ Consider how the school entity [liaison for the homeless](#) can support student connections.
- ✓ For many working families, childcare for school aged children is a critical support. School-age childcare is provided in varying ways throughout the Commonwealth. Coordinating and communicating decisions regarding school policy, access, and calendar of operations with childcare providers operating within school buildings is critical to supporting families of children who cannot be home unsupervised.

### Questions to Consider

- ? Is the school entity aware of the supplemental programs, requirements and services provided in their buildings?
- ? Can the school entity align the school day learning with the supplemental programs?

## Supplemental Services

- ? Has the school entity taken ownership of their supplemental programs?
- ? If the school entity has students who are [refugees](#), [migrants](#) and/or [immigrants](#) how might the teachers consider adapting their curriculum?
- ? Does the school entity understand the supplemental v. supplanting issues involving the delivery of services from the programs?
- ? Are the students comfortable learning in different scenarios such as virtual, blended?
- ? If the school entity is administering a social emotional learning program, are the learning materials culturally sensitive?
- ? Is the school entity prepared to make the necessary accommodations to ensure the students succeed?
- ? How are funded after-school programs and/or migrant education programming utilizing their funding to maximize parent coordination and social emotional learning?
- ? How will school entity staff communicate effectively and stay connected with caregivers?
  - a. Documents translated into home languages
  - b. Bilingual staff on site to communicate effectively with parents and students
- ? How will school entity communicate effectively with community childcare centers?

## Resources

### [Answers to Federal Program FAQs](#)

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions for federal programs and guidance documents for program change options for the 2020-2021 school year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic from the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

### [List of Child Care Providers By County](#)

Listing of information on this site is provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services regarding childcare and is updated monthly. This list can be exported and filtered by school districts for ease of identifying providers in your community.

### [Education Leading to Employment and Career Training \(ELECT\) FAQs](#)

The guidance at the following link addresses ELECT operations during school closures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Please note that this guidance may be updated and revised based upon any additional direction provided by the U.S. Department of Education (USED).

### [PA-MEP Padlet](#)

The PA-MEP has collected a large number of resources for Migrant staff in the PA-MEP COVID-19 Resources Padlet. The resources are organized in columns and cover basic information for students and families on the virus, professional development for staff, teaching resources in various topics, etc. The Padlet is updated frequently and staff is encouraged to visit to take advantage of the new resources.

### [Y4Y – US Department of Education](#)

The focus of Y4Y is on learning and professional development for out of school time programs.