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ISSUE BRIEF:

Improving Conditions for Learning for Youth Who Are Neglected or Delinquent

Second Edition

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Introduction

Learning is not just a cognitive process. Research shows that powerful social and emotional factors affect learning.[1] These factors include the teacher's relationship with the student, the student's relationship with other students, the teacher's and student's relationships with the student's family and staff, the overall climate of the learning environment, the cultural responsiveness of the learning environment, and the leadership and support provided to teachers and other staff to provide a caring and supportive environment. Others are individual and often involve emotional matters, such as the student's motivation; sense of self and ability to succeed, in life and academics; mental and physical wellness; and ability to manage emotions and relationships with others.

These factors influence students' abilities to attend to and direct their learning; students' engagement in learning activities; and teachers' ability to connect with, challenge, and support students. For example, it is hard for students to learn if they are angry at a teacher's sarcasm or worried about other students' aggression. Similarly, if students cannot handle the frustration of not succeeding the first time they try something or think they will be teased by people around them if they do not succeed, they may not persevere with academic tasks or take the risks necessary to learn. By providing students with support that addresses their social and emotional needs and building strong social and emotional conditions for learning, staff in neglected or delinquent (N or D) settings—and other schools—can help improve learning outcomes that cannot be addressed through academic remediation alone. Further, to reach students effectively, it is imperative that the support we provide and the conditions we build be gender, culturally, and linguistically responsive.

Social and emotional factors are particularly important for students served in N or D settings—who often come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds; are students of color; or have emotional, behavioral, and learning disabilities. Research suggests that it is hard to improve academic outcomes for these students without addressing social and emotional barriers to learning that they face. For example, research in low-performing schools in Chicago that "turned around" showed that the highest level of turnaround took place in schools that combined a strong academic focus with equally strong doses

of student support.[2] Similar research in schools, as well as research on National data sets, suggests that learning and academic performance improve when conditions for learning improve.[3] *Figure 1* demonstrates the dual impact of social support and academic press.

These factors are particularly important for children and youth in the juvenile justice (JJ) and child welfare (CW) systems. Children in the JJ system typically lag behind their peers in basic academic skills; have often experienced trauma, school pushout, learning disabilities, and mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders in much higher proportions than their peers;[4] and lack social-emotional skills and assistance required for dealing with the challenges they face.[5] Children in the CW system are more likely than their peers to have had multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). To help them advance academically, the following factors that create effective conditions for learning must be addressed in a culturally competent and youth-guided manner:

- **Safety.** Learners must be, and feel, safe. Safety involves emotional as well as physical safety—for example, being safe from sarcasm and ridicule.

- **Support.** Learners must feel connected to teachers and the learning setting, have access to appropriate support, perceive the support as caring, and know how to access the support.

- **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).** Learners need to learn to manage emotions and relationships positively and be surrounded by peers and adults who have social and emotional skills and related attitudes.

- **Engagement and Challenge.** Learners need to receive academic support and be actively engaged in endeavors that they perceive as relevant to their future and help them develop skills and capacities to reach positive goals.

These conditions are interdependent and reinforce each other.[6] For example, teachers who teach in a culturally responsive manner and have positive relationships with students will find it is easier to engage students and develop students' social and emotional skills. Similarly, SEL contributes to safe and challenging learning environments because it helps students own their learning while making it more likely that other students exhibit social and emotional skills. In this brief, we explore how these conditions apply to children and youth in or at risk of being placed in N or D programs. We also introduce approaches that may help schools and facilities increase the presence of these conditions and provide additional resources within each section for further exploration of research and practical applications. Finally, we discuss how to assess the social and emotional strengths of students and the conditions for learning both in N and D settings and other educational settings.

Figure 1: Biggest Reading Gains in Schools That Combine High Levels of Student Social Support and School Academic Press
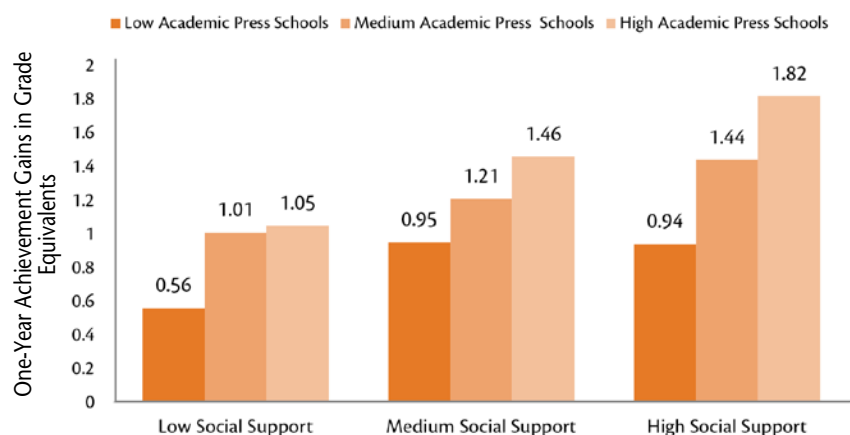
Source: Lee, V., Smith, J., Perry, T., & Smylie, M. A. (1999). *Social support, academic press, and student achievement: A view from the middle grades in Chicago.* Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research, Chicago Annenberg.

This brief is divided into four sections focusing on the conditions for learning described above. Each section defines the condition, cites relevant research, provides strategies to foster the condition, and offers resources to further one's knowledge and development of the condition. There are two primary audiences for this brief—public school systems and secure-care educational settings (e.g., schools within residential treatment, juvenile detention, juvenile corrections). Public school systems are where youth often receive services designed to keep them from penetrating CW and JJ systems. They are also where youth who do become system-involved transition back to upon reentering the community. Secure-care educational settings are where youth can thrive and make the most of their time while detained. It is not uncommon for youth in these settings to make tremendous gains in their academic achievement and attainment given the right conditions for learning. Collectively, educators in all types of settings are responsible for breaking or interrupting the school-to-prison pipeline for youth who are N or D and helping them reach their full potential.

Safety

Like everyone else, learners need to feel safe. Safety encompasses freedom from *physical* harm (such as peer violence and substance abuse) and threats of physical harm as well as freedom from *emotional* harm (such as teasing, racial and gendered micro-aggressions, and relational bullying). Safety involves both actual and perceived levels of risk. Individuals in a safe school environment are able to share a sense of mutual trust and respect. In addition, a safe school environment fulfills students' core psychological needs, including the need to belong, be autonomous, and be physically secure. Research shows that when basic psychological needs such as these are fulfilled, students are more apt to align with and commit to the school community's norms and rules.[7] Similarly, evidence also indicates that *unsafe* school environments are associated with higher levels of negative risk-taking behavior and disengagement from school.[8]

Many factors undermine safety and the perception of safety. They include poor relationships among racial and ethnic groups; gang rivalry between and among students; and reactive and punitive approaches on the part of institutional staff. Unfortunately, at times these poor relationships and reactive approaches lead to physical violence between youth and among youth and

staff. Additional factors that often undermine safety include the lack of positive behavioral supports and culturally responsive approaches as well as untreated, undertreated, or poorly treated mental health and substance abuse disorders, such as depression or posttraumatic stress disorder.

Addressing students' mental health needs is particularly important for schools that work with children and youth who are N or D.[9] In the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being II (NSCAW II), a longitudinal study of children who have had contact with the CW system, 52 percent of youth surveyed were identified as at risk for a behavioral/emotional problem as measured by scoring in the clinical range on any one of a number of standardized instruments. When considering their risk for a behavioral/emotional or substance abuse problem, the percentage rose to 55.5 percent.[10] For youth in the JJ system, estimates of the percentage of youth who met the diagnostic criteria for at least one or more mental health disorders range from 66 to 70 percent.[11]

Further, research reveals that large percentages of children and youth in the CW and JJ systems have been exposed to ACEs[12]—negative childhood experiences that include (1) abuse (emotional, physical, or sexual), (2) neglect (emotional or physical), and (3) family/household adversities (e.g., hunger; death of a close family member; household violence, crime, substance abuse, or mental illness; parental separation or divorce). The more ACEs experienced, the higher the likelihood of poor health and well-being outcomes.[13] When further exploring NSCAW II data for the service needs of children and youth in the CW system, researchers found that 98 percent of children surveyed had experienced one or more ACEs; of that number, 51 percent had experienced four or more ACEs.[14] A review of ACEs among youth in Florida's JJ system found that 97 percent of youth in their care within a 5-year period had experienced one or more ACEs; of that number, 84 percent had experienced four or more ACEs. Further, females reported a higher number of ACEs than males.[15]

The parallels between ACEs and childhood traumatic events are strong.[16] Reflecting on the high prevalence of ACEs and mental health needs among children and youth in N and D settings drives home the importance of providing an emotionally safe and gender and culturally responsive educational environment.

Multiple strategies (e.g., enriching universal sports, mental health screening) can be the first steps toward increasing levels of safety in settings that serves youth who are N or D and other settings where many students are at risk. N and D facilities also need to ensure the transfer of accurate personal and academic records (at entry and exit) that provide a comprehensive view of a student's history and needs; appropriate student placement/separation that takes into consideration physical size, gender, and gang affiliation; the application of positive behavioral approaches;[17] and reducing—and ideally preventing—the use of punitive measures, including restraints and seclusion.

Mental Health Screening

Many children and youth have unidentified and unaddressed mental health needs. This may be more likely for children and youth in N or D facilities, who, as a result of high mobility, irregular school attendance, exposure to trauma, and often fragmented medical and mental health care, may arrive at N or D settings with unidentified mental health needs.[18] This is particularly the case for youth of color, because research suggests that they have had less access to mental health screening, assessment, and intervention. Further, as recently shown when examining the disposition outcomes of youth in the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement, African-American youth are less likely than their White counterparts to be referred to treatment centers and more likely to be referred to JJ settings.[19] Youths' mental health needs are often exacerbated by substance use, which may be a form of self-medication. Fortunately, there are a number of different resources available to assist educational, treatment, JJ, and other child-serving

"The vast majority of justice-involved youth have a diagnosable mental illness or substance use disorder, with many youth meeting criteria for both. To improve outcomes for these youth and their families, juvenile justice and other relevant systems must collaborate and apply the best available research and practice to policies and programs."
National Center on Mental Health and Juvenile Justice[22]

systems in screening and supporting children and youth who have been exposed to trauma and who may have unmet mental health needs. The National Resource Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention[20] and the Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Collaborative for Change[21] are two important allies for administrators in N and D settings. Both organizations provide training and TA to States, tribes, and communities seeking to strengthen their support of children and youth with mental health needs. For more information, please see the "Additional Resources on Safety" table that begins on page 7.

Accurate Records Transfer and Intake Screening

Administrators can prioritize efforts and create policies to ensure that records transferred to and from their facility at student entry and exit are as accurate and complete as possible. To address specific needs with the proper services (thus contributing to the student's sense of personal security) and minimize disruption of service delivery during transition, facilities should receive records that include at least the following information:

- Records of full academic data (e.g., assessment results, transcripts, report cards)

- Math and reading levels

- Records of psychoeducational evaluations and receipt of special education services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, placements made, and accommodations received

- Mental health history (including substance abuse, trauma, and suicide risk)

- Records of risk and needs assessments administered to youth whom come into contact with the JJ system, including demographic information

Student records should be combined with intake screening and ongoing assessment to create comprehensive and up-to-date profiles for students entering facilities. For all youth entering a facility, it is imperative that mental health, substance abuse, trauma, and suicide risk screening take place and that education records be requested immediately upon their arrival. For youth who are receiving special education services, ongoing assessment should occur right away, because their needs and placement options will likely have changed when transferred to the new facility. Risk and needs assessment should be administered at least every

6 months or more frequently following a major life event (e.g., new offense, loss of a parent).[23] Because students typically leave facilities with little or no notice, it is important that records be updated frequently so that the documentation they bring to their next placement is accurate. It is also critically important that students and their families/guardians receive copies of, and understand, the records. Assessments should be culturally and linguistically competent (i.e., account for students' cultural and linguistic background, be normed on similar populations, be offered in students' preferred language, and use a variety of assessments to assess areas of development) and identify both strengths and needs. (See the "Assessing the Needs of Students and Schools" section for more information on assessments.)

In addition to using information from student records and intake screenings to inform decisions about the proper provision of services (e.g., mental health services, mentoring, suicide prevention programs), it is important to share with a student's teachers and classroom aides, as appropriate, any nonacademic information that may facilitate teaching and learning. Such information might focus on specific student strengths or needs. For example, information strengths may include the student's learning styles, areas he or she excels, and a parent, guardian, or mentor who may be actively involved in his or her life. Information on needs might include whether the student has any cognitive disabilities that affect his or her ability to process information, any accommodations that the student may have found helpful, whether the student recently experienced a traumatic event, or whether the student is affiliated with a specific gang that may have a prominent presence—or rivalry—in the facility. The more that is learned about the students' strengths and needs, the more effective a teacher can be in reaching, connecting, and engaging his or her students.

Appropriate Youth Placement/Separation

Although it is common practice among facilities to separate youth of differing physical size to help avoid safety issues, decisions about youth placement should also take into consideration gang affiliation, gender issues, and the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth. It is important that staff and faculty learn about and be able to identify local gang signs; if present in large numbers, members of competing gangs may need to be separated. Separation on the basis of gender is also a vital first step in creating a safe, secure,

gender-responsive, and trauma-informed environment for girls, many of whom have experienced rape, molestation, and other sexual and physical abuse at much higher rates than their male counterparts. In fact, girls are more than twice as likely to have endured physical abuse and more than four times as likely to have endured prior sexual abuse.[24] Attempts at suicide are also higher among girls (who are more likely to internalize negative feelings and to resort to self-harm or substance abuse) than among boys.[25] Another critical consideration when making placement decisions are the needs of LGBT youth who are at greater risk of abuse while in secure care settings. How to adequately house, protect, serve, and support the LGBT population in N or D settings has recently received a great deal of attention. Fortunately, a recently released publication, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in the Juvenile Justice System, provides guidance on how to ensure the safety and well-being of LGBT youth while in care.[26]

Use of Restraints and Seclusion

Because youth who are N or D may be survivors of past trauma (particularly females), the use of punitive control measures such as restraints significantly takes away from students' experiences of safety and may even traumatize or re-traumatize them. Use of these measures should be minimized as much as possible. Several National organizations have banded together and waged campaigns to end the use of restraints and seclusion in our Nation's schools, residential placements, treatment centers, and juvenile and adult detention and correctional facilities. *Stop Hurting Kids* is the campaign that is focused on stopping such practices in schools, and *Stop Solitary for Kids* is the campaign focused on reaching juvenile and adult detention and correctional facilities. Details about these campaigns and other tools to reduce the use of restraints and seclusion can be found in the Use of Restraints and Seclusion section of the "Additional Resources for Safety" table on page 7.

Mental Health America (MHA) has set forth position statements about the need to reduce, if not end, the use of restraints and isolation. In their call to action for children with emotional disorders in the justice system, MHA "advocates for avoiding the use of restraints or shackles (including transport from a community setting or during court appearances) except where necessary to prevent seriously threatened harm or flight and only after less restrictive alternatives have been deemed ineffective."[27] In their statement on mental health treatment

In 2003, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) was passed into law. However, it was not until 2012 that the final rule came into effect. PREA provides additional guidance for making youth placement decisions. Thus, in addition to gang affiliation, gender issues, and the needs of LGBT youth described above, PREA provides the following juvenile facility standards:

Screening for Risk of Sexual Victimization and Abusiveness – Juvenile Facilities

§ 115.341 Obtaining information from residents

(a) Within 72 hours of the resident's arrival at the facility and periodically throughout a resident's confinement, the agency shall obtain and use information about each resident's personal history and behavior to reduce the risk of sexual abuse by or upon a resident

(b) Such assessments shall be conducted using an objective screening instrument.

(c) At a minimum, the agency shall attempt to ascertain information about:

   (1) Prior sexual victimization or abusiveness;

   (2) Any gender nonconforming appearance or manner or identification as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex, and whether the resident may therefore be vulnerable to sexual abuse;

   (3) Current charges and offense history;

   (4) Age;

   (5) Level of emotional and cognitive development;

   (6) Physical size and stature;

   (7) Mental illness or mental disabilities;

   (8) Intellectual or developmental disabilities;

   (9) Physical disabilities

   (10) The resident's own perceptions of vulnerability; and

   (11) Any other specific information about individual residents that may indicate heightened needs for supervision, additional safety precautions, or separation from certain other residents.

(d) This information shall be ascertained through conversations with the resident during the intake process and medical and mental health screenings; during classification assessments; and by reviewing court records, case files, facility behavioral records, and other relevant documentation from the resident's files.

(e) The agency shall implement appropriate controls on the dissemination within the facility of responses to questions asked pursuant to this standard in order to ensure that sensitive information is not exploited to the resident's detriment by staff or other residents.

In the following subsection of the law, juvenile justice agencies are instructed to use the information gathered above "… to make housing, bed, program, education, and work assignments for residents with the goal of keeping all residents safe and free from sexual abuse."

More information, resources, guidance on the types of facilities to which PREA applies, and training and TA can be found at the National PREA Resource Center:

http://www.prearesourcecenter.org/training-technical-assistance/prea-101/juvenile-facility-standards

in correctional facilities, MHA states, "The right to the least restrictive environment and the least intrusive response to an apparent need for mental health services. Correctional facilities should train staff to use behavior management techniques that minimize the use of intrusive, restrictive, and punitive control measures. MHA supports elimination of seclusion and restraints in therapeutic facilities. It is particularly important to maintain facilities other than seclusion for the protection of vulnerable prisoners, including those with serious mental health conditions. When restraint must be used to prevent injury to self or others, there should be stringent procedural safeguards, limitations on time, periodic reviews, and documentation. Generally, these techniques should be used only in response to extreme threats to life or safety and after other less restrictive control techniques have been tried and failed."[28] States such as Colorado, Nebraska, and North Carolina are enacting legislation to limit if not end the use of solitary confinement for youth.[29]

Early Warning Systems

Another vital facet of safety for children and youth who are N or D is keeping them in school. In a recent report published by *Measure of America of the Social Science Research Council,* the authors focused on disconnected youth whom they defined as individuals between the ages of 16 and 24 who were not in school and not working. The report, entitled *One in Seven: Ranking Youth Disconnection in the 25 Largest Metro Areas,* shares the extent of the problem, describes contributing factors, and offers strategies for addressing youth disconnection. One of the strategies suggested is the use of Early Warning Systems. As the authors state:

"Everyone who drops out was once in school. Keeping them there is easier and more cost-effective than luring back those who have slipped from the educational system's grasp. By the eighth grade, the red flags that a child will drop out of high school are already clear: repeating a grade, failing more than one class, and frequent absence from school. Such children require early identification, programs to address problems they may be having at home and at school, testing and treatment for learning or behavioral difficulties, and action plans for keeping them on track. They need engaging teachers and a relevant curriculum, one that includes but goes well beyond the basic to provide the critical thinking and people skills that the workplace increasingly requires. Children need reasons to go to school: enjoyable classes, ways to succeed, and a sense that there is a connection between their coursework and their post-school lives." (p. 28)[30]

Support

Support includes the availability of help to meet the student's social, emotional, behavioral, and academic needs. Support also refers to the student's sense of connection and attachment to the adults in the facility and of being cared about and treated well and respectfully (also taking into account

Additional Resources on Safety

Mental Health Screening

- The National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice (NCMHJJ)—This website contains a wealth of information and publications addressing strategies for serving youth with mental health needs who come into contact with the JJ system. Among the topics covered are collaboration between mental health and JJ systems, shared funding, screening and assessment, diversion, treatment, and trauma-informed care.

- Preventing Suicide Among Justice-Involved Youth: Newly Developed Tools, Recommendations, and Research—This Web page has resources from the Youth in Contact with the Juvenile Justice System Task Force of the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention. The page contains an executive summary and resources related to the task force's goals, tailored to juvenile court judges and staff, juvenile detention and secure-care staff, and juvenile probation staff. The task force endeavors to raise public awareness and provide public education on the risks of juvenile suicide; review the research on suicidal ideation and behavior among justice-involved youth; provide information on suicide prevention and programming; and encouraging mental health and JJ system collaboration.

- Shield of Care: A System-Focused Approach to Protecting Juvenile Justice Youth from Suicide—Developed by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and partners, this free, evidence-informed curriculum teaches JJ staff how to prevent suicide in facility environments.

- Suicide Prevention in Juvenile Correctional Facilities—This two-part webinar series from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) guides JJ administrators and staff in creating and implementing suicide prevention policies within juvenile detention facilities.

- SPRC Customized Information Series—These information sheets help professionals (e.g., high school teachers, law enforcement professionals) recognize and respond to individuals who may be at risk for suicide.

- Position Statement 51: Children with Emotional Disorders in the Juvenile Justice System—This statement from MHA stresses the importance of diversion when appropriate and the need for screening, treatment, and protection from harm when detained or confined.

- Position Statement 56: Mental Health Treatment in Correctional Facilities—This statement from MHA outlines the rights of individuals with mental health needs who are detained or confined in adult jails, prisons, or other correctional facilities to receive treatment. These rights also apply to juveniles being served in these settings.

- Screening and Assessment: Identifying Mental Health Needs for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System—This presentation by NCMHJJ shows the prevalence of youth in the JJ system who have co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders, highlights the importance and outcomes of screening, references screening and assessment tools, and provides steps to developing a mental health screening program.

- Blueprint for Change: A Comprehensive Model for the Identification and Treatment of Youth With Mental Health Needs in Contact With the Juvenile Justice System—This model guide is a conceptual and practical framework for JJ and mental health systems to use when developing strategies, policies, and services aimed at improving mental health services for youth involved in the JJ system.

- About Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)—This page on the CDC website provides resources on ACEs.

Accurate Records Transfer and Intake Screening

- Understanding FERPA: Sharing Education Records of Children in the Juvenile Justice System—This document from the Juvenile Law Center provides guidance on the sharing of education records with JJ agency stakeholders.

- Information Sharing Tool Kit: Improving Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System through Responsible Information Sharing—This interactive website, supported by Models for Change, was developed to assist local jurisdictions in implementing information and data sharing initiatives in support of JJ reform efforts.

Use of Restraints and Seclusion

- The Alliance to Prevent Restraint, Aversive Interventions, and Seclusion—The alliance identifies laws, regulations, and loopholes that permit the use of aversive interventions, non-emergency restraints, and seclusion. Its website provides a parent guide and other information and materials on aversive procedures, seclusion, and non-emergency restraint.

- Stop Hurting Kids Campaign—The goal of this national advocacy campaign is to end restraint and secured abuse in schools. The website describes the campaign and partner organizations; provides information about restraint and seclusion in schools; shares ways individuals can take action to stop the use of restraint and seclusion; contains resources for learning more about the background and general information on restraint and seclusion, best practices and strategies to end their use, and legislation and policy information.

- A Roadmap to Seclusion and Restraint Free Mental Health Services—This training emphasizes the importance of creating cultural change within organizations to impact seclusion and restraint reduction. It outlines best practices in the use of trauma-informed care and other aspects to support resiliency and recovery of individuals with mental illnesses while avoiding seclusion and restraint practices that can harm rather than help.

- Stop Solitary for Kids—The goal of this campaign is to end solitary confinement of youth in juvenile detention and adult facilities in the United States. This site contains information about the campaign, partners, and detrimental effects of solitary confinement; ways to take action; resources including standards, articles and reports, policies, and legislation; and news stories about solitary confinement.

- Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA) Toolkit: Reducing the Use of Isolation—This CJCA toolkit is designed to assist its members and the field in reducing the use of isolation in juvenile facilities.

- OJJDP Policy Guidance: Girls and the Juvenile Justice System—This policy statement states the need to develop a system that reduces reliance on secure placement, increases gender and cultural responsiveness, provides trauma-informed care, and is developmentally appropriate. The policy outlines issues facing girls in the system, pledges OJJDP's commitment, and contains a call to action for States, tribes, and communities.

General Resources for Safety in Schools and Secure-Care Settings

- A Practitioner's Guide to Implementing Early Warning Systems—This resource from Education Northwest offers a rationale for developing an early warning system, provides guidance on establishing and training a team to use the system, explains how to identify indicators of student difficulty, suggests ways to design and use reports generated from the system, and proposes methods for determining system efficacy.

- Safeguarding Our Children: An Action Guide—Prepared for ED and the Department of Justice (DOJ), this guide helps schools develop and implement a comprehensive violence prevention and response plan that can be customized to fit each school's strengths.

- The National PREA Resource Center—This center provides training and TA focused on sexual safety in confinement and helps local jurisdictions with implementation of the National PREA Standards. The center's website contains the standards, articles, and other resources that relate to effective PREA implementation.

their cultural and linguistic needs). Optimizing the experience of support requires creating caring connections with adults who can offer encouragement and nurturing and are significantly involved in the life of the student—even one high-quality supportive relationship with an adult early in high school, particularly for students of color, has been shown to have powerful effects.[31]

When high expectations are emphasized in conjunction with support, the result, typically, is an increase in academic achievement; this seems to be especially true for students of color or who are at risk of academic failure.[32] For example, adolescent perceptions of connections with teachers have been shown to predict academic growth in mathematics,[33] and teacher nurturance has been found to help prevent poor academic performance and problematic social behavior.[34] Similarly, in another study, teachers with high-quality relationships with students had 31 percent fewer discipline problems, rule violations, and related issues over a year's time than teachers who did not.[35]

A series of fact sheets developed by CDC provides parents and family members, teachers and other school staff, and school districts and school administrators with guidance for fostering school connectedness. Their guidance is centered on the following six main strategies:

- "Create decisionmaking 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 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—promote culturally responsive teaching and classroom environments.

- 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" (p. 9).

As the authors suggest, these strategies are mediated or influenced by several factors, including receipt of adult support, membership in a positive peer group commitment to education on behalf of teachers and students, and presence of a healthy and safe school environment.[36] Each fact sheet contains actions specific groups (e.g., parents and families, teachers, school districts and school administrators) can take to address the six strategies necessary for fostering school connectedness. The ultimate goals of fostering school connectedness are keeping kids in school and engaged in their learning. For more information, please the "Additional Resources for Support" section.

Often as a result of the many adversities they have faced in their young lives, some youth in N or D facilities may be wary, skeptical, or mistrustful of the individuals who are there to serve them. These perceptions may affect students' ability to learn from the adults whom they encounter. Providing caring support for these youth may be even more crucial than for other adolescents, yet is less accessible. In addition, N or D settings must thoughtfully address the potential risks that may arise from grouping together youth who have exhibited challenging behaviors. The hope is that through making careful youth placement decisions negative influences can be minimized and positive impacts can be maximized.[37] The development of caring relationships between staff and students will go a long way to helping mitigate any possible risks.

The issue is not only hiring caring staff but also creating the capacity to care.[38] Capacity building involves training and support.[39] Staff training should involve the entire staff—not just the education staff—and be reinforced by coaching, supervision, and programs such as positive behavioral interventions and support. Focused training and support can enhance staff:

- Expectations for student success;

"School connectedness is the belief held by students that the adults and peers in their school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. Students who feel connected to school are more likely to have a number of positive health and academic outcomes."[9]

- Ability to identify student strengths;
- Ability to use trauma-informed approaches and to provide trauma-informed care;
- Understanding of effects of learning disabilities and emotional and behavioral disorders on student behavior;
- Understanding of their ability to use positive behavioral approaches;
- Gender responsiveness;
- Support of LGBTQ youth;
- Cultural and linguistic competency; and
- Culturally responsive instruction.

At the same time, training and support can reduce deficit-oriented approaches to students, and reactive and punitive approaches to students that create or escalate problem behavior. Finally, professional development opportunities for teachers and other school staff should also have a combined emphasis on content, pedagogy, and relationships.[40]

One of the ways that supportive relationships between students and staff members in facilities may be enhanced is through a structured mentoring process. Research shows that successful mentoring programs match mentors and mentees, support the mentoring process, and are at least 1 year.[41] When implementing a mentoring program at a facility, program planners should also consider including mentoring in the aftercare plan developed for youth preparing for release.

For students with mental health or other special education needs, support involves addressing needs in an effective and caring manner. Effective approaches tend to be strengths-based, individualized, youth-driven, and culturally and linguistically appropriate and competent. They often combine cognitive and behavioral components with the development of positive relationships between the student and those providing the intervention. For all youth, particularly females, support must address the impact of trauma and abuse. Resources for addressing these needs in N and D settings and providing trauma-informed care include the NDTAC and The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) websites, which have information on building awareness of student needs, increasing coordination and collaboration, engaging families and communities, establishing safe and supportive learning environments, and teaching and learning.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

SEL is a process through which children and adults learn to understand and manage their emotions and relationships. This includes developing (or

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Additional Resources for Support

School Connectedness

- School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth—This CDC publication defines school connectedness and discusses the strategies and conditions necessary for fostering school connectedness.

- Information for School Districts and School Administrators: Fostering School Connectedness: Improving Student Health and Academic Achievement— Part of the series of fact sheets from the CDC on school connectedness, this publication provides guidance for school districts and school administrators.

- Information for Teachers and Other School Staff: Fostering School Connectedness: Improving Student Health and Academic Achievement— The second in the series of fact sheets from the CDC on school connectedness provides guidance for teachers and other school staff.

- Information for Parents and Families: Helping Your Child Feel Connected to School—The third in the series of fact sheets from the CDC on school connectedness provides guidance for parents and families.

- Wingspread Declaration: A National Strategy for Improving School Connectedness—This declaration aims to form the basis for creating environments where all students are engaged and feel part of the educational experience.

- School Connectedness: Improving Students' Lives—This report, prepared by the Military Child Initiative at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, distills research and advice on how to promote connectedness.

- Deviant Peer Influences in Intervention and Public Policy for Youth—This report from the Society for Research in Child Development examines the impact that peers who are delinquent have on one another and discusses related policy options for programs serving youth in placement.

Mentoring

- NDTAC's Mentoring Toolkit: Resources for Developing Programs for Incarcerated Youth—This toolkit provides a complete list of considerations for developing a mentoring program.

- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Resources on Mentoring—This website gives an overview of OJJDP's programs and funding, research and evaluation, and training and TA.

Trauma-Informed Care and Instruction

- NCTSN—This website has information on the types of trauma children experience (e.g., physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; community violence) and treatments that work; training materials; and materials for particular audiences (e.g., how educators can identify and respond to signs that a child might have experienced trauma).

- Trauma-Informed Organizational Capacity Scale—This tool from AIR enables organizations and systems to assess their current ability to provide trauma-informed care, pinpoint areas needing improvement, and track their progress.

- Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States—This report from the Institutes of Medicine and National Research Council defines commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of minors, estimates the extent of the problem in the U.S., and provides strategies for combating the problem.

- SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach—This publication from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) introduces a concept of trauma and offers a framework for how an organization, system, and service sector can become trauma-informed.

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and School Discipline

- Supporting Student Achievement through Sound Behavior Management Practices in Schools and Juvenile Justice Facilities: A Spotlight on PBIS—This NDTAC publication establishes the connection between student behavior problems and academic achievement. It also explores the benefits of instituting PBIS into N and D settings.

- PBIS: Office of Special Education Programs TA Center—Through the TA Center on PBIS, ED seeks to define, develop, implement, and evaluate a multi-tiered approach that improves the capacity of States, districts, and schools to establish, scale up, and sustain the PBIS framework. Emphasis is given to the impact of implementing PBIS on the social, emotional, and academic outcomes for students with disabilities.

- Joint "Dear Colleague" Letter from ED and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) on Student Discipline—The Departments issued this guidance to help public elementary and secondary schools meet their obligations under Federal law to administer student discipline without discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

- ED Guidance to Schools on Ensuring Equity and Providing Behavioral Supports to Students with Disabilities—This guidance package includes a Dear Colleague Letter on the Inclusion of Behavioral Supports in Individualized Education Programs; Supporting and Responding to Behavior: Evidence-Based Classroom Strategies for Teachers; Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: Implementation Blueprint and Self-Assessment; and a blog.

- Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support—The Interconnected Systems Framework described in this monograph represents a proposed and developing interconnection of PBIS and school mental health systems to improve educational outcomes for all children and youth, especially those with or at risk of developing mental health disorders.

Gender Responsiveness

- Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected—This report from the African-American Policy Forum and Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies examines the consequences of disproportionately punitive school discipline policies on girls of color and provides recommendations for addressing the issue.

- The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story—This report by the Human Rights Project for Girls, Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequity, and Ms. Foundation for Women explores the CW and sexual abuse to prison pipeline and gives recommendations for identifying and treating trauma of girls in the CW system.

- How to Improve School Experiences for LGBT Youth—The LGBT section of the Youth.gov website provides statistics on the percentages of students who have been bullied, harassed, and assaulted and their impact on school attendance and completion. The site contains information on how to improve school experiences for LGBT youth and includes a school climate survey, policies, supportive adults in schools, and supportive organizations and clubs.

- OJJDP Policy Guidance: Girls and the Juvenile Justice System—This guidance document provides information about the issues concerning girls and the JJ system and what States, tribes, or local communities, in cooperation with OJJDP, can do to improve the responses to girls and young women in—or at risk of entering—the system.

Cultural and Linguistic Competence (CLC)

- Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development National Center for Cultural Competence—This website contains valuable resources to help child-serving systems increase CLC through self-assessments, distance learning experiences, and resources and publications.

- CLC—This page from the National Center for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE) website contains research, products, videos, websites, tools, policy/guidance, and training information related to CLC.

- National Education Association (NEA)—Why Cultural Competence?—This page from the NEA website describes the rationale and importance of cultural competence and provides links for additional information.

enhancing) the ability to demonstrate caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, value and address diversity, and handle challenging situations effectively. SEL creates a foundation for academic achievement, maintenance of good physical and mental health, parenting, citizenship, and productive employment. SEL helps create a positive school environment. If there are positive conditions for learning, and the capacity for SEL is built, the result is greater capacity and engagement on the part of students, less problematic behavior, and better academic results.

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The development of SEL competencies is important for child and adolescent development, and these competencies form the basis of a student's ability to respond to "academic frustrations, inappropriate adult behavior, and antisocial peer behavior."[42] SEL contributes to successful academic outcomes, safe environments, and the ability of children and youth to make successful transitions.

Research

Multiple systemic research reviews suggest the importance of SEL to academic achievement.[43] For example, a recent meta-analysis of 213 school-based universal SEL programs showed that students improved socially, emotionally, and academically, demonstrating fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, and an 11 percent gain in achievement.[44] The findings are consistent with an earlier meta-analysis of the connection between SEL programs and student achievement.[45]

Analyses of the impact of effective SEL interventions on academics show that that they affect school-related attitudes, behavior, and performance.[46]

Improved attitudes include:

- A stronger sense of community (bonding),
- More academic motivation and higher aspirations, and
- More positive outlook toward school.

Resulting *behavioral improvements* include:

- Understanding the consequences of behavior,
- Coping effectively with school stressors,
- More classroom participation,
- Greater effort to achieve,
- Fewer hostile negotiations at school,
- Fewer suspensions, and
- Increased engagement.

Resulting *performance improvements* include:

- Increased grades and achievement,
- Increases in being on track to graduate, and
- Fewer dropouts.

SEL is equally important in reducing problem behavior. For example, in addition to the reduction in conduct and internalizing problems in the aforementioned meta-analysis of 213 programs, an earlier meta-analysis of 165 studies of school-based prevention found that self-control or social competency programming that employed cognitive-behavioral and behavioral instructional methods consistently was effective in reducing the dropout rate, non-attendance, conduct problems, and substance use.[47] SEL is of particular relevance in improving outcomes for children and youth in N or D programs and settings. These young people often have poor social communication skills and lack proper anger management and conflict resolution capacities.[48] Studies by Dodge and Lochman have shown that aggressive youth often have a distorted perception of aggression in that they over-perceive aggression in peers and under-perceive their own aggressive behaviors.[49] Other experts have suggested that many youth view violence as a functional and commonplace solution for solving problems.[50] Not surprisingly, a relationship exists between SEL and safety. For example, an examination of SEL and safety scores for all Chicago high schools found a strong correlation between safety and SEL scales.[51]

Surveys of employers also suggest the importance of SEL in the workplace. Eight of the 16 competencies that the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills deemed as skills necessary for high school graduates or individuals entering the workforce relate to SEL: self-esteem, sociability, integrity/honesty, problem-solving, self-management, responsibility, listening, and decisionmaking.[52]

If we want to help vulnerable children and youth, including those who are in N or D settings, thrive and overcome the psychosocial challenges they face, we must address underlying trauma and pay special attention to the development of social skills and conflict resolution techniques. By teaching students about problem-solving, decisionmaking, and resisting negative social pressures in a youth-guided, culturally responsive manner, educators can help students combat psychosocial obstacles to learning. One strategy used to teach students to resist negative social pressures is social resistance training, which helps youth avoid alcohol, tobacco, and more dangerous drugs by emphasizing the development of social persuasion techniques that enable youth to avoid risky behaviors by turning the social situation around in their favor.[53] Teaching social persuasion techniques involves the modeling and rehearsing of proper refusal techniques. An example of a program intervention is LifeSkills Training. Likewise, in the area of conflict resolution, it is important to start changing youths' paradigm of violence. Effective conflict resolution and problem-solving strategies help youth realize that violence begets more violence. Successful conflict resolution programs have lowered the level of violence in schools, juvenile facilities, and communities at large.[54] The National Institute of Justice's Crimesolutions.gov has more information, programs, and resources on conflict resolution and interpersonal skills.

Although teaching specific social skills is important, it is equally important to teach general SEL skills, including:

- **Self-awareness.** Recognizing one's emotions, values, strengths, and limitations.
- **Self-management.** Managing emotions and behaviors to achieve one's goals.
- **Social awareness.** Showing understanding and empathy for others.
- **Relationship skills.** Forming positive relationships, working in teams, and dealing effectively with conflict.
- **Responsible decisionmaking.** Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior.[55]

The most effective educational strategies address these psychosocial issues with a multi-tiered and multipronged approach that teaches and models skills, provides opportunities to practice the skills and coaching on how the skills are

being implemented, and creates opportunities to practice, adapt, and generalize these skills in natural settings. Service learning, for example, is an effective method of experiential learning for youth who are neglected or delinquent that places the student in an active role in his or her community. Service learning projects may involve such activities as creating books for children or cards for the elderly or participating in community service projects, and engaging in action research projects that address social problems that are important to youth. However, to be valuable, a service learning program must meet five characteristics:

- It is meaningful to both students and adults.

- It addresses actual community needs.

- It is coordinated in collaboration with school and community, which in the case of secure neglected or delinquent settings could include the institution.

- It is integrated into each student's academic curriculum.

- It allocates a specific time for the student to reflect on the experience both individually and collectively.

When youth who have encountered challenges in their lives engage in service learning, they can reap a number of benefits, including a more positive self-image, reduced stress and feelings of helplessness, self-respect and responsibility, and a sense of reclamation.[56]

Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) Practices and SEL

BARJ philosophies, models, and programs align well with the tenants of SEL. Used largely in juvenile and criminal justice settings, it focuses on repairing the harm one has caused to his or her community. BARJ brings together the young person, the victim(s) of the offense, and the community in deciding upon an appropriate response to the infraction. The process allows for juvenile accountability and victim recovery, and it empowers the community to work collectively to support its young people and to address delinquency.[57] Recognizing the ability of BARJ to help youth develop self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decisionmaking, some school districts have also begun to implement BARJ practices.[58]

Cognitive and Behavioral Approaches and SEL

Children and youth who face more intense SEL challenges may require more intensive approaches if they are to change negative thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors. An effective approach in this case may be cognitive-behavioral therapy/treatment (CBT), a problem-focused approach that helps youth identify and change the beliefs, thoughts, and patterns of behavior that contribute to their problems. CBT combines two very effective kinds of psychotherapy—*cognitive therapy* and *behavioral therapy.* Cognitive therapy concentrates on thoughts, assumptions, and beliefs. It helps people recognize and change faulty or maladaptive thinking patterns. Behavioral therapy concentrates on changing behaviors and environments that maintain problematic behaviors. Two CBT approaches that have received an Effective rating in OJJDP's Model Program Guide have received national attention. The Functional Family Therapy and Multisystemic Therapy are CBT approaches both of which combine cognitive and behavioral approaches. These programs are typically facilitated by clinicians. Successful programs that focus on school failure have implemented CBT to specifically root out negative thoughts and "reinforce positive behavior by using CBT strategies delivered by teachers, mentors, tutors, peers, and school staff."[59] CBT techniques can be applied at various levels: at an individualized level (e.g., personalized interaction with a teacher); at a classroom level (see The Incredible Years); at a schoolwide level (see School Transitional Environment Program); and at the community level (see Movimiento Ascendencia [Upward Movement]).[60] Several databases (e.g., OJJDP Model Programs Guide, CrimeSolutions.gov) for identifying evidence-based programs, policies, and interventions related to SEL and other topics can be found in the "Additional Resources for SEL" table on the following page. To maximize the success of these interventions it is important that they be done in a manner that is culturally competent, family driven, and youth guided.

Supporting the Enhancement of Educators' and other School Staff Members' SEL Skills

In addition to focusing on the SEL of their students, schools and N and D settings must also focus on the social and emotional learning and skills of their teachers and other school staff. A recent article examined three ways in which educators' SEL skills are critical to their work with children. First and foremost, an educator's SEL skills are central to the quality of the relationship he or she builds with his or her students. Secondly, at all times, as their students are watching, educators are modeling their SEL skills. Thus, we as educators must practice what we preach by being self-aware, managing our emotions, demonstrating empathy for others, working as part of a team, and making responsible decisions. Third and finally, educators' SEL skills have a direct impact on the ways in which their classrooms are organized and managed. The article suggests providing SEL interventions for teachers and all of other school staff as well as incorporating SEL into the schoolwide culture to provide educators with the tools they need to build their SEL skills and to manage daily stressors.[61]

Engagement and Challenge

Engagement involves energizing a student's interest in the educational process. It has academic, behavioral, cognitive, and psychological dimensions, which are enhanced when the other conditions for learning are present.[62] Engagement is enhanced when learning is culturally responsive and builds upon student strengths, addresses the student's interests, and is perceived by the student as being relevant to his or her future. Culturally competent approaches that address individual learning needs and provide an appropriate balance between challenge and support can enhance engagement.[63]

Challenge involves setting and promoting high expectations for all students, connecting the curriculum to the larger picture and the outside world, fighting boredom, and encouraging students' intellectual curiosity.[64] For students to be engaged and challenged in their academic setting, they must "experience a climate of high expectations for achievement (and related school behavior) that is shared and reinforced by other students, their friends, their teachers, and their family."[62] Students must be challenged with high expectations, must be personally motivated, must feel that school is connected to larger life goals, and must be given tangible academic opportunities.

Challenge should be of special interest in N and D settings because best practices as well as expectations in N and D education now stress the importance of providing youth who are N or D with a rigorous and challenging learning environment, in which the curriculum:

- Builds and builds upon street strengths and social and emotional competencies;

Additional Resources for SEL

- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)—CASEL is the nation's leading organization advancing the development of academic, social, and emotional competence for all students. This website contains definitions of SEL, policy recommendations, research, publications, and an extensive online resource library.

- National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE)—NCSSLE provides training, TA, and resources to help administrators (including grantees funded under the Safe and Supportive Schools program and Project Prevent program), institutions of higher education, teachers, support staff at schools, communities and families, and students and seeks to improve schools' conditions for learning through measurement and program implementation, so that all students can realize academic success in safe and supportive environments.

- Social and Emotional Learning—This AIR Web page includes research and tools for assessing SEL during and after school.

- OJJDP Model Programs Guide—This guide contains information about evidence-based JJ and youth prevention, intervention, and reentry programs. It is a resource for practitioners and communities about what works, what is promising, and what does not work in JJ, delinquency prevention, and child protection and safety.

- Crimesolutions.gov—This National Institute of Justice site uses research to rate the effectiveness of programs and practices in achieving criminal justice-related outcomes in order to inform practitioners and policymakers about what works, what doesn't, and what's promising in criminal justice, JJ, and crime victim services.

- What Works Clearing House—The goal of the clearinghouse is to be a resource for informed education decisionmaking. To reach this goal, it identifies studies that provide credible and reliable evidence of the effectiveness of a given practice, program, or policy and disseminates summary information and free reports on the website.

- National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP)—NREPP helps people learn about and select evidence-based programs and practices. NREPP is one way that SAMHSA is working to improve access to information on evaluated interventions and to reduce the lag time between creation of scientific knowledge and its practical application in the field.

- OJJDP: Guide for Implementing the Balanced and Restorative Justice Model—This comprehensive guide measures the impact of the BARJ model.

- Center for Justice and Reconciliation—This website contains the definition of restorative justice (RJ), applications of RJ both within and outside of the justice system, information on how to start an RJ program, and a resource library.

- Implementing Restorative Justice: A Guide for Schools—This resource from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority is one in a series of guides designed to assist in the statewide promotion of BARJ, a philosophy of justice that can guide the work of individuals who deal with juvenile offenders, their victims, and the communities in which they live.

- Focuses on "comprehension and complex, meaningful problem-solving tasks" in all subject areas, so that youth enhance their cognitive skills;

- Consists of skills than can be easily applied to real-life situations;

- Emphasizes team-based approaches (e.g., cooperative learning, tutoring among peers, "team problem-solving activities");

- Highlights "metacognition"—a student's perception of their strengths and weaknesses; and

- Employs materials in all subject areas that are based on "life and social skills competencies."[65]

Many authors have pointed to the necessity of cultural responsiveness[66] fostering a "creative, exciting" learning environment that is tailored to students' interests.[67] Student learning can be enhanced by personalization, culturally responsive instruction, active learning, experiential learning, identifying and building upon student knowledge and interests, service learning, access to rigorous learning opportunities, and the creative use of technology to scaffold learning and to promote higher-order thinking.[62] To create an enriching learning environment, many organizational features should be present: (1) strong academic leadership, (2) a safe school environment, (3) cultural and linguistic competence, (4) adequate space and equipment, (5) a variety of print and nonprint instructional materials, (6) technology, (7) library services, (8) measurable performance outcomes, and (9) instructional support services.[68]

It is also crucial that their school-to-work linkages exist and that a strong emphasis be placed on vocational training. Studies have shown an inverse correlation between vocational and employability skills and recidivism among youth members.[67] As an example of one such program that links school to work, the Smyrna Beach Employability Skill Training teaches students applicable job skills by having them participate in a school-based business that is set up to mirror an actual place of employment. Students engage in the production, promotion, and sales of their products and in return they receive a paycheck.[69]

Assessing the Needs of Students and Schools

Needs should be assessed at both the individual and institutional levels. Individual assessments will help you develop interventions for individual students and to monitor their progress. Schoolwide assessment will help you identify the array of schoolwide, group, and individual strategies you may need to develop and will help you monitor schoolwide progress.

Individual Assessments

Individual assessments have traditionally employed deficit-oriented instruments. During the past decades, there has been movement toward employing strengths-based assessments. One of the most researched measures is the Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS).[70] The BERS is

a 52-item scale normed on a racially and ethnically representative national sample of 2,176 children without disabilities and 861 children with emotional and behavioral disorders, ages 5–18. It is completed by adults familiar with the youth and measures emotional and behavioral strengths for five empirically derived factors: interpersonal strengths (e.g., accepts "no" for an answer), family involvement (e.g., participates in family activities), intrapersonal strengths (e.g., demonstrates self-confidence), school functioning (e.g., completes school tasks on time), and affective strengths (e.g., accepts a hug). Fortunately, there is a wealth of other measures from which administrators and educators can choose. AIR has created the *Are You Ready to Assess Social and Emotional Development* toolkit, which includes an informational brief, a decision tree for deciding if and when to assess, and a tools index.[71] Further, AIR has also created a tool for in-school and afterschool staff to reflect upon their goals for incorporating SEL both independently and then collectively, *The In-School and Afterschool Social and Emotional Learning Connection: A Planning Tool.*

Schoolwide Assessments

Schoolwide assessments collect information on how students experience the school climate. A number of reputable school climate assessments exist. Effective surveys should have valid and reliable items and scales. They can be administered on a schoolwide basis or to a sample of students, and their data can be disaggregated to see how subgroups of students are experiencing the school environment. To maximize the honesty of student responses, it is important that student confidentiality be ensured.

NCSSLE has a School Climate Measurement Web page. Surveys are administered annually in elementary and high schools throughout the country. This type of data could be used when developing State N or D report cards. The data from the survey are also reported back to schools, in an aggregated and disaggregated manner, for continuous improvement by school improvement teams, who review the scores to identify needs and successes. Links to ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) developed by ED can also be found on the NCSSLE website. The EDSCLS administration platform, including a suite of school climate surveys for middle and high school students, instructional staff, noninstructional staff, and parents/guardians, can be downloaded for free.

Conclusion

To create a positive and culturally and linguistically competent learning environment for all students that promotes positive educational outcomes, it is important to assess and enhance the four social and emotional conditions for learning. Students must feel both physically and emotionally **safe** from harm. They must feel that the adults in their lives care about them and are there to **support** them. Students also have to be equipped with the **social and emotional skills** to deal with their behaviors and actions in nonviolent, mature, and reasoned ways. Finally, it is important that all students feel **engaged and challenged** in their learning environment, with high expectations set for all. Only when the four conditions for learning are addressed can a comprehensive plan for student learning be truly effective. Moreover, creating such a plan requires buy-in from key stakeholders—students, teachers, administrators, counselors, parents, and members of the community. A successful plan also requires a long-term commitment by teachers, facility staff, administrators, and policymakers. With such a plan, every child can be given the opportunity to learn in the best learning environment possible—an environment that is supported strongly by effective conditions for learning.

Additional Resources for Engagement and Challenge

- Making the Juvenile Justice–Workforce System Connection for Re-Entering Young Offenders—This publication stresses the importance of developing employability skills to reduce recidivism rates for youth who are neglected or delinquent.

- Positive Youth Development—This section of the Youth.Gov website contains a wealth of information on Positive Youth Development (PYD) definitions, agencies involved in fostering PYD, publications, resources, TA, and more.

- Positive Youth Justice: Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development—This guide, published by the Coalition for Juvenile Justice, applies the principles of PYD, learning by doing and attaching by belonging, to youth justice interventions whereby youth become connected and engaged in their local communities.

- Engaging Schools, Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn—This book, which can be read online, was prepared by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences Board on Children, Youth and Families. It summarizes the best research on engagement and motivation.

- Creating Culturally Responsive Schools—This article describes approaches supported by the research that educators can employ to promote culturally responsive education.

- Center for Implementing Technology in Education—This website supports leadership at State education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) to integrate instructional technology for all students to achieve high educational standards.

- TechMatrix—A powerful tool for finding assistive and learning technology products for students who have special needs.

- Center on Response to Intervention—Response to Intervention can help teachers maximize student achievement through early identification of learning or behavioral difficulties, provision of appropriate evidence-based interventions, and the monitoring of student progress based on achievement and other performance data.

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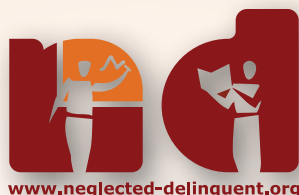
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