

Overview of Mental Health and Well-Being at School

Mental Health Matters...

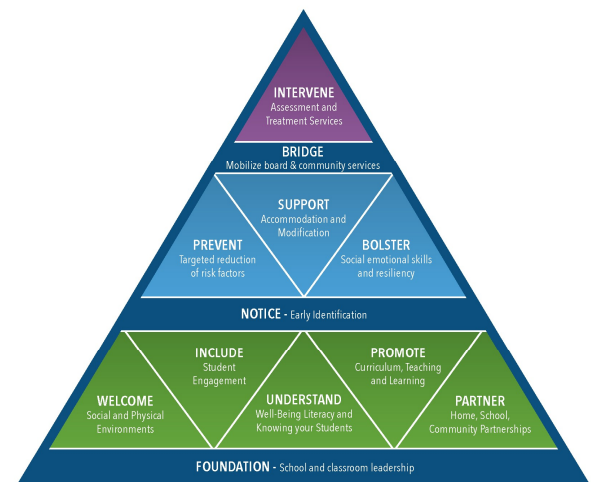
Developing positive mental health is foundational to student academic achievement, effective life skills, and overall well-being. At the core of mentally healthy classrooms are the principles of compassion, inclusion and engagement, encouragement and support, and effective instruction that facilitates success.

What Works? Research into Practice Monograph 58, Nov. 2014

The **Aligned and Integrated Model (AIM) for School Mental Health and Well-Being** brings together fundamental elements of *Foundations for a Healthy School*, within the framework of a multi-tiered system of support. Educators can **welcome, include, understand, promote, and partner** to enhance the well-being of ALL students. We can **prevent risk, offer support, and bolster protective factors** to build the well-being of students who are experiencing difficulty with their mental health. School and community mental health professionals can collaborate to **intervene** with the FEW students exhibiting significant mental health disorders.



Aligned and Integration Model (AIM) for
School Mental Health and Well-Being



Indications that a student is thriving:

Behavioural/Physical	Social-Emotional	Cognitive
<input type="checkbox"/> Makes friends easily / has at least one good friend	<input type="checkbox"/> Shows appropriate range of affect (i.e. sad when appropriate)	<input type="checkbox"/> Explores the environment with curiosity
<input type="checkbox"/> Separates from family readily	<input type="checkbox"/> Appears mostly happy and content	<input type="checkbox"/> Completes assigned tasks
<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoys healthy lunches	<input type="checkbox"/> Bounces back from failure or mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/> Engages in creative play
<input type="checkbox"/> Reaches out to help a peer in trouble	<input type="checkbox"/> Shows empathy to a peer	<input type="checkbox"/> Perseveres with challenging tasks
<input type="checkbox"/> Has lots of energy	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoys play with peers	<input type="checkbox"/> Is engaged in learning activities
<input type="checkbox"/> Participates enthusiastically in physical activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Overcomes initial hesitations or fears with new experiences	<input type="checkbox"/> Asks for and accepts help from teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> Can resolve conflicts with talking and compromise	<input type="checkbox"/> Seeks comfort from adult when appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> Makes plans and follows through
<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates developmentally appropriate self-control (impulse control)	<input type="checkbox"/> Is able to calm down and regulate emotional state when disrupted	<input type="checkbox"/> Is able to identify the source of a problem and think of ways to resolve it

Although most students are resilient and do not develop emotional distress, some will require additional support because of stressful circumstances, vulnerabilities, or experience of trauma. Educators are in a good position to notice when students are struggling, and to provide caring support in the classroom. Please refer to [Supporting Minds](#) for more specific information.

Creating Mentally Healthy School and Classroom Environments

The school environment has an important impact on a student's sense of belonging and overall mental health. There are many ways that educators can contribute to creating and sustaining a welcoming and inclusive school climate.

For example:

WELCOME (Social and Physical Environments)

- Greet and welcome students individually each day
- Build a caring adult program that ensures that every student has a designated adult ally to provide support
- Establish a school reception team to assist with welcoming new students, especially at key transition points
- Consider a peer mentorship program that pairs senior students with younger students
- Ensure full implementation of safe and accepting school protocols and procedures

INCLUDE (Student Engagement)

- Visibly celebrate diversity, and connote inclusion in interactions with students
- Provide instruction that meets the learning needs of students in differentiated ways
- Notice and support student leadership and kindness
- Support students with leadership activities that promote mental health awareness and help-seeking
- Be open when students approach you for help with problems and concerns

UNDERSTAND (Well-Being Literacy and Knowing your Students)

- Become familiar with the *Foundations for a Healthy School* and *Supporting Minds* documents
- Take time to reflect on your personal beliefs related to mental health and well-being
- Build your own mental health literacy so you know the signs of difficulty and how to help at school
- Know your students - take time to get to know their unique stories and strengths.
- Read the Ontario Student Records for each student, and review *Supporting Minds* for possible support strategies.

PROMOTE (Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning)

- Engage in your own well-being and personal resiliency practices
- Offer explicit instruction in social-emotional well-being skills, such as problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, etc.
- Offer explicit instruction in cognitive well-being skills, such as time management, study skills, stress reduction techniques, particularly during exams and for culminating assignments
- Post visual reminders that promote mental health and help-seeking
- Model and regularly build in time for mindfulness/contemplation, self-regulation, and stress reduction techniques.

PARTNER (Home, School, Community Partnerships)

- Provide a positive greeting to all parents/guardians when in the school building
- Connect with families regularly to discuss their child's progress at school
- Provide opportunities for ongoing dialogue with students and parents to support mental health and reduce stigma about mental illness.
- Know how to support students and families to access mental health services
- Provide translated information about mental health services in the community

School Mental Health ASSIST works alongside the Ontario Ministry of Education to support student mental health and well-being in Ontario schools.

