



Expanded School Mental Health in West Virginia

www.schoolmentalhealthwv.org

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Student Connectedness

Tool Kit #6

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A SCHOOL-WIDE FOUNDATION OF LEARNING SUPPORTS:

“Implement formal policies and practices to assess and strengthen student connectedness and protective factors.”

West Virginia Expanded School Mental Health Steering Team, 2011

Student connectedness refers to the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals. Student connectedness is associated with improved academic performance; reduced bullying, fighting, and absenteeism; and higher graduation rates.¹

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identifies six strategies² that teachers, administrators, other school staff, and parents can implement to increase the extent to which students feel connected to school:

- Create decision-making processes that facilitate student, family, and community engagement, academic achievement, and staff empowerment.
- Provide education and opportunities for families to be actively involved in their children’s academic and school life.
- Provide students with the academic, emotional, and social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school.
- Use effective classroom management and teaching methods to foster a positive learning environment.

- Provide professional development and support for teachers and other school staff to enable them to meet the diverse cognitive, emotional, and social needs of children and adolescents.
- Create trusting and caring relationships that promote open communication among administrators, teachers, staff, students, families, and communities.

Programs that build and strengthen assets - such as mentoring, after school programs, and service learning - contribute to increased positive feelings of connectedness. After-school programs are also successful in reducing problem behaviors (e.g., aggression, noncompliance, conduct problems) and drug use. See *The Impact of After School Programs*³ and *The ABCs of School Based Mentoring*⁴ for a review of the research and resources.

REFERENCES

¹Journal of School Health, September, 2004.

²<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/adolescenthealth/connectedness.htm>

³The Impact of After-School Programs that Promote Personal and Social Skills: <http://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/ASP-Full.pdf>

⁴The ABCs of School Based Mentoring: http://www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/32_publication.pdf

DEFINITION: “Expanded school mental health” refers to programs that build on core services typically provided by schools. It is a framework that:

- ◆ includes the full continuum of prevention, early intervention and treatment
- ◆ serves all students
- ◆ emphasizes shared responsibility between schools, mental health providers and other community partners

Student Connectedness

West Virginia Resources

- **West Virginia Statewide After-School Network:** for information about funding and development of after school programs:
<http://wvsan.ext.wvu.edu/>
- **Adolescent Health Initiative Regional Coordinators:**
<http://www.wvdhr.org/ahi/>

General Resources

- **Fostering School Connectedness, CDC/Adolescent Health:**
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/adolescenthealth/connectedness.htm>
- **Fact Sheets on Fostering School Connectedness**

For teachers:
http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/adolescenthealth/pdf/connectedness_teachers.pdf

For parents and families:
http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/adolescenthealth/pdf/connectedness_parents.pdf

For school administrators:
http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/adolescenthealth/pdf/connectedness_administrators.pdf
- **National Center for School Engagement: School Policies That Engage Students and Families:**
<http://www.schoolengagement.org/>
- **National Center for School Engagement—21 Ways to Engage Students:**
<http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/21WaysToEngageStudentsinSchool.pdf>

- **The Nebraska Department of Education's Safe and Drug Free Schools:** Review of the research and practical applications for assessing school readiness and asset building. See sections on Strength Based Approaches to Prevention and Schools Build Assets..
- **Sound Out—Promoting the Student Voice in School:** <http://www.soundout.org/>
- **Assessment Tools: Character Education Partnership:** <http://www.character.org/more-resources/assessment-tools/>
- **School as a Caring Community Profile Survey:**
<http://www2.cortland.edu/dotAsset/289182.pdf>
- **Search Institute:** several resources related to assessment and asset building for schools, communities, adults, sports, churches:
<http://www.search-institute.org/downloads>
- **Search Institute—Assets Survey for students:**
http://www.searchinstitutepress.org/free_downloads/Asset%20Checklist.pdf
- **Public/Private Ventures:** Information about mentoring, in-school programs and after school programs :<http://www.ppv.org/ppv/index.asp>

The purpose of this series of information briefs is to provide a common framework and recommendations to assist schools and community mental health providers to more effectively develop a comprehensive approach to school mental health that is consistent with current West Virginia Department of Education policies.



These recommendations and resources have been reviewed and approved by West Virginia's Expanded School Mental Health Steering Team. For more information contact info@schoolmentalhealthwv.org

For more information visit
www.schoolmentalhealthwv.org

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Leadership for The West Virginia School Mental Health Initiative is a shared commitment of



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