Cutten School District

School Climate Handbook

2024-2025

Cutten-Ridgewood School Climate Handbook

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Section 1: Why School Climate Matters

Introduction

Cutten School District Vision and Mission Statement

Building a better world… one student at a time.

The Cutten School District, in partnership with our community, provides students with the academic and social skills necessary to become contributing members of a global community. We accomplish our mission by creating a joyful, student-centered, and consistent learning environment rich in the arts and sciences, where everyone knows they are respected members of the Cutten-Ridgewood family.

School Climate Team Vision

Promoting the social-emotional well-being of Cutten-Ridgewood students and staff.

Purpose of this Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to collect and present best practices toward creating a positive school climate. This is accomplished through a combination of Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS), Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), restorative practices, character development, mindfulness, and much more. This handbook will explicitly outline for new staff our philosophy and approach to support the whole child, while also offering a reminder to our entire school community of all that we strive to be. Additionally, through the application of the many practices included in this handbook, we also create a positive environment for staff.

Cutten School Climate Team Goals

1. Build a positive school climate
2. Develop clear and effective positive behavior supports schoolwide
3. Support social-emotional learning and skill development

School Climate and Culture

What is School Climate?

School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. In essence, how a school "feels." School climate is based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures.

A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes:
- Norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe.
- People who are engaged and feel respected.
- Students, families and educators who work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision.
- Educators who model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning.
- Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment

What is School Culture?

School culture is often used interchangeably with school climate; however, "school climate" refers to the individual experiences and feelings that students, teachers, and staff have about the school, while "school culture" typically refers to the long-term physical and social environment, as well as the values or beliefs of the school shared across individuals and time (National School Climate Center, FAQ's About School Climate, n.d.). Another way to differentiate the two terms is by categorizing climate as the "attitude or mood" of the school and the culture as the "personality or values" of the school. Climate is perception-based, while culture is grounded in shared values and beliefs (Gruenert, 2008). In this sense, climate is how people feel in the school, and culture is a deeper sense of how people act in the school.

Section 2: Cultivating a Positive School Climate

Expectations

PBIS - **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports**

Schoolwide Expectations ([Behavior Matrix/ Expectations](#))

      Safe, Respectful, Responsible <u>and</u> Kind: By having a common language, each member of our school community can understand and communicate behavior expectations and reinforce positive behaviors. Studies have shown that a ratio of 5 positive statements to every 1 corrective statement helps to increase desired behaviors and build positive relationships.

<u>Specific Practices and Supports include:</u>

Clearly defined Behavior Expectations:
- Teaching of Behavior Expectations
- Behavior Indicators (what the behavioral expectations look like in a individual school-wide setting, event, or classroom routine)
- Classroom Procedures

System of Acknowledging Appropriate Behavior
- Positive Paws
- Bucket Fillers
- Positive Office Referral
- Monthly Awards Acknowledging Positive Behaviors

System for Correcting Inappropriate Behavior
- Strategies for Correcting: Positive prompting and reminders
- Behavior Tracking Forms/Referrals

Addressing Continuing Behavior Concerns (beyond Tier 1)
- Parent Contact/Involvement

Tier 2 interventions:
- Check-In/Check-Out (CICO)
- School Social Work: 1:1 and/or small group support
- Student Success Team (SST) meeting
- Behavior Contracts/Agreements

Tier 3 interventions:
- Community referrals (e.g. mental health agencies, Bridges to Success, Two Feathers, etc)
- Intensive, targeted 1:1 or very small group support

What is MTSS?

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) refers to a systemic, prevention-focused framework for addressing student needs through the integration and continuous improvement of systems and services.

A well-designed MTSS includes:
- *Multiple tiers of integrated support for academics and behavior.*
- *Screening to determine which students could benefit from additional supports.*
- *Progress monitoring of evidence-based strategies.*
- *Data-driven decision-making (National Association of School Psychologists).*

MTSS Structure

Adapted from: pbis.org/school/mtss
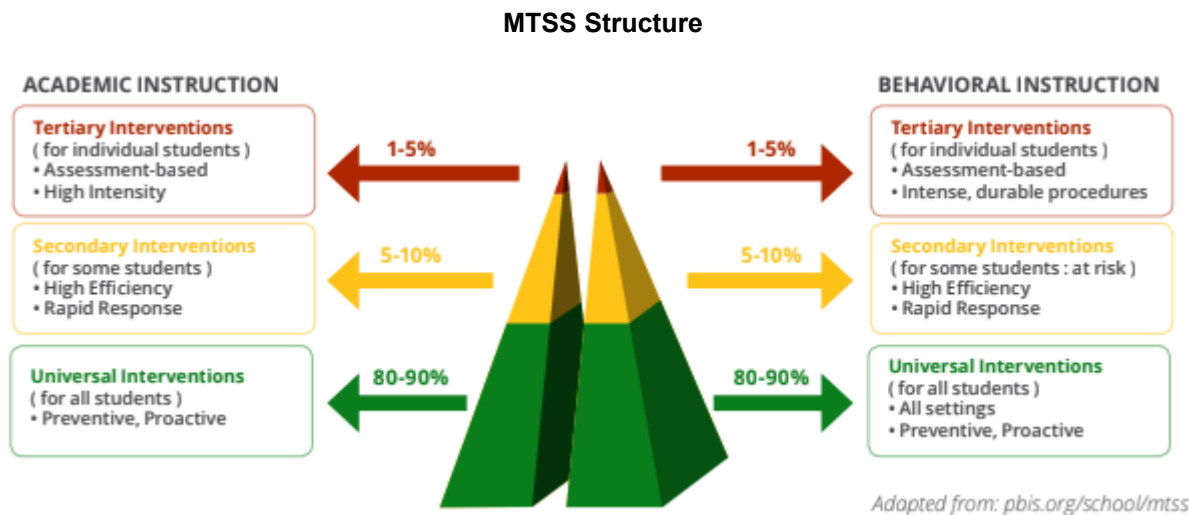
MTSS Tier 1

Supports at Tier 1 represent a universal approach to ensure that all students experience a safe, supportive
environment and receive high-quality core academic instruction and prevention-focused systems that promote positive behavior. Tier 1 supports the healthy development, resiliency, and well-being of all students (CASEL). Tier 1 activities may include:

- **Classroom Incentives** - Examples: marble jar, points, or a fluffy jar.
- **Morning Meetings/Circles** - Builds community and social skills.
- **Growth Mindset** - Learning philosophy that focuses on the power of mistakes and the power of "yet." Making a mistake is a learning opportunity and it shows that students are engaged and trying!
- **Bucket Fillers** - School wide recognition system at Ridgewood. Students who exemplify the Tiger values of safe, respectful, responsible, and kind are recognized individually.
- **Positive Paws-** District-wide incentive system. Individuals earn a ticket for being safe, respectful, responsible, and kind.
- **Cutten School Recognitions-** Students are presented monthly with certificates recognizing ACE's (attitude, cooperation, and effort), Art, Academic Excellence, Citizenship. Monthly award for Class with highest attendance

- **SEL Curriculum-** Second Step- a social emotional learning curriculum to teach social skills. Focuses on emotional regulation, empathy, and self awareness, Mind Up- a mindfulness and brain science curriculum available district wide.
- **Assemblies** - Promote school spirit and recognize students for their hard work and growth.

MTSS Tier 2

At Tier 2, schools provide targeted, evidence-based academic and behavioral supports to students for whom Tier 1 supports are insufficient. These supports may include classroom-based interventions or small group interventions facilitated by teachers, support staff, or community partners.

- **Check-In/Check-Out (CICO)**- students have morning and end of day check ins with a staff member, focusing on meeting specific goals
- **Small Mindfulness/Social Skill/Relationships Skill Building Groups**
- **Individual Check Ins**
- **Home - School Communication**
- **Structured Break System**
- **TIP- Targeted Intervention Program**
- **Student Success Teams (SST)** - A team of teachers, social workers, administrators, and special education teachers meet to brainstorm strategies to best support a child's academic and social emotional development

MTSS Tier 3

Tier 3 provides highly intensive and individualized academic and behavioral supports to students for whom Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports are insufficient. The evidence-based supports in Tier 3 are layered and align with the supports that students are receiving at Tiers 1 and 2. These supports may be provided by teachers, support staff, or community partners (http://www.rtinetwork.org/).
- Community Referrals
- Academic referral
- Mental Health referrals
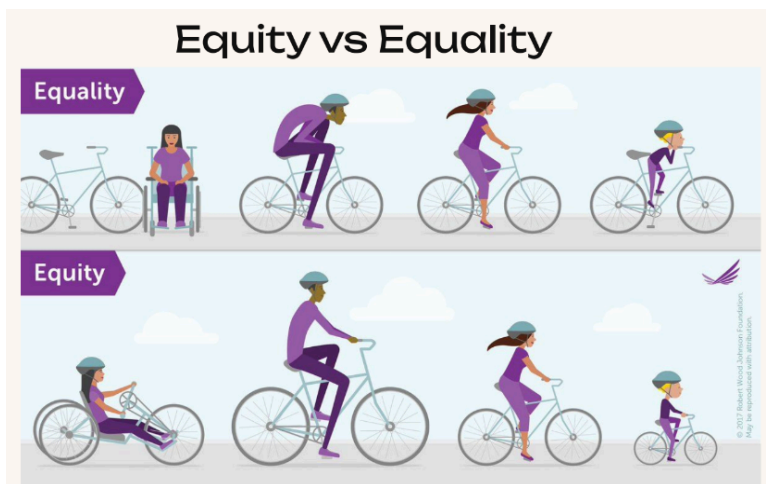
Ridgewood and Cutten School Behavior Matrix/Expectations   *Self control is our goal!*

	We Are Safe	We Are Respectful & Kind	We Are Responsible
Everywhere, Always	· Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself · Stay in your assigned area · Wear appropriate clothing and footwear	· Be kind · Take turns · Use good manners · Listen with attention · Use appropriate voice level · Remove hats and hoods indoors	· Be honest and fair · Accept consequences · Follow directions quickly · Leave gum and candy at home · Use cell phones and electronics only after school or when assigned
Classroom	· Use materials appropriately	· Take care of school property	· Be on time · Stay on task · Keep your area tidy
Playground	· Listen to adults · Follow game rules · Use equipment properly	· Include everyone · Show sportsmanship	· Put away equipment · Put trash in trash can · Line up quickly
Lunch	· Face forward · Walk to and from your lunch spot	· Keep your food to yourself · Ask permission appropriately	· Eat what you take · Keep your area clean
Assemblies	· Face forward	· Clap when appropriate	· Ask questions only when prompted to do so
Hallways	· Face forward · Walk at all times · Stay in line with your group	· Walk quietly	· Wait patiently
Bathroom	· Wash and dry your hands · Report problems to an adult immediately · Use the bathroom for its intended use	· Respect privacy	· Flush toilet · Use paper appropriately · Conserve water; keep soap and water in the sink · Return quickly to class
Bus & Bus Stop	· Wait on the sidewalk and stay out of the street · Stay still while the bus is pulling up, and board after the door is fully open · Sit, seat to seat, back to back while the bus is moving	· Respect private property at bus stops · Select a seat quickly and quietly	· Hold onto your belongings · When safe, leave promptly
Arrival & Dismissal	· Follow parking lot safety rules · Walk your wheels on school grounds · At dismissal, check with the teacher before leaving the class group.	· Leave the classroom promptly at the end of the day	· Arrive no earlier than 8:00, wait at the designated area or go directly to the breakfast room · At dismissal, pack your belongings quickly
Library	· Always walk in the library · Keep hands and feet to self · Use chairs, tables, book sticks and computers appropriately	· Enter the library quietly · Return books to proper places · Push chair in · Take care of library property · Clean-up your space before leaving	· Return Books on Time · Use kind words · Use a 0-1 voice · Handle books with care · Be Patient while waiting your turn
Music	· Use instruments appropriately and at a safe volume. · Be aware of others and give them space.	· Listen to others when they are speaking/singing/playing. · Encourage your classmates. · Value other students' creativity. · Clean up your materials after class.	· Give your best effort in all activities. · Follow directions quickly. · Use instruments as directed.

CUTTEN SCHOOL PLAYGROUND RULES

"THE TWO WHISTLE RULE"
Escort students out to the playground and release them to play when you see at least two adults on the playground, ready to supervise. If only two adults are present, notify the principal.

THESE AREAS ARE OFF LIMITS DURING RECESS AND PLAY BREAKS:
● Hallways, safety rails, and areas between and behind buildings
● Restrooms by the multipurpose room
● Places supervisors cannot clearly see students
● Walking track/road

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT
● No standing, sitting or walking on top of the overhead climbing bars
● When twirling, students must have at least one hand holding onto the bar
● No tag or chasing games in the wood chip area
● Wood chips stay on the ground
● No balls allowed in wood chip area

WALKERS
● Walking slips go to the supervisor watching Zone 1
● Students walk the tiger paws on the blacktop, maintaining a steady pace
● No socializing or "tailgating"
● If a problem occurs, the supervisor can choose to not honor the walk and notes this on the slip. The walker is told this and returns the walking slip to the classroom teacher. If a student argues with the supervisor, they will need to have a conference with their teacher and the principal.
● Walkers retrieve their walking slips at the end of recess and present them to their teacher.

OTHER RULES
● Food is to be eaten behind dotted white lines, and garbage should be thrown away before students play.
● All games are "open" to those who wish to play.
● Toys from home do not belong on the playground. Exceptions are: basketballs, footballs, soccer balls, tennis balls, and rubber bouncy balls. If a student brings a ball from home, it is treated as though it were a school ball - nobody can be excluded from play.
● To keep kids active, only Fridays are card game (Pokemon, playing cards, etc.) days. No trading or selling!
● No football games are allowed. Students may play kickback, passback, flies up, or keep away with a football.
● All "keep away" and "flies up" games and Frisbee games belong on the grass fields.
● It's okay to kick footballs and soccer balls, but not rubber bouncy balls. All kicking games take place on the fields.
● Only wiffle bats and wiffle or tennis balls are allowed for baseball games. The supervisor must carry the bat to and from the classroom and the field. Only one bat may be present in a game. Players remain behind the fence until they are at bat.
● Restrict play to the blacktop area if playing fields are too wet.
● At the end of recess, all students freeze at the sound of the whistle. A whistle is blown again, and the students line up and go to class. 6th graders are allowed to walk directly back to class.
● Return all balls to the container at the end of recess.

Ridgewood School
Playground Rules
SAFETY FIRST

Duty Stations:
1. Fields and ball wall
2. Basketball courts and "climbing rock" equipment area
3. Mid-equipment area
4. <u>Restrooms</u> and north end of the equipment area

"The Two Whistle Rule"
Escort your children out to the playground and release them to play when you see at least two people on the playground, ready to supervise.

Play in these areas:
• Field close to the pavement – if dry
• Basketball and volleyball paved area
• Playground equipment area

These areas are off limits during recess and play breaks:
• The area immediately behind the bus garage
• The commons   • Area along and between buildings
• The woods and trees   • All places out of adults' view
• The large dirt piles (Dinosaur Hill)   • Paved area adjacent to rooms 1, 2 and 3

Playground balls may be used on the blacktop areas and fields, but not in the playground equipment area.

NO Balls may be kicked on the blacktop.

Playground Equipment
• Slides – feet first, one child at a time, slide <u>down</u>
• May jump off playground equipment only as tall as the waist, no jumping off the climbing "rock"
• No standing on top of the overhead ladders
• There is space for three twirlers on each bar
• No jumping off the outside of the dome structure

Snacks and Lunch
Food is eaten by the classroom doors, on the wooden playground perimeter bench, or at the picnic tables. Do your best to eat what you take.
Children remain seated while eating.
It's OK to pick up straw wrappers and other trash, even if it's not our own!
No gum, please, on our campus. If it arrives as a party favor, or is part of a lesson, send it home to be chewed.
☞ **Recycle, compost, and clean up <u>ALL</u> garbage and food before going out to play.**

Treasures from Home
If a child brings a ball from home, it is shared at recess with all who wish to play. Any other toys or treasures brought from home for sharing stay in the classroom. **All trading cards and electronic items including gaming devices, cell phones (or in backpack, if phone must come to school), MP3 players, and other music devices stay at home.**

Section 3: Student Supports

What is Mental Health?

Mental Health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual:

- realizes their own potential
- can cope with the normal stressors of life
- can work productively and fruitfully
- is able to make a contribution to their community

What is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?

According to CASEL, "Social and emotional learning is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions."

CASEL has created the following framework of competencies for SEL:

- SELF-AWARENESS- Ability to understand one's own
emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior (learning to identify and express feelings, resiliency, mindfulness, growth mindset)
- SELF- MANAGEMENT- Ability to manage one's own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situation and to achieve goals (self-regulation, learning healthy coping skills, resiliency, dealing with disappointment)
- RELATIONSHIP SKILLS- Ability to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings (share and take turns, listening skills and appropriate response, friendship skills, respecting other's personal space, empathy, learning how our feelings / choices can impact others)
- RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING- Ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across situations

- SOCIAL AWARENESS- Ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from different backgrounds (learning to accept other perspectives, empathy, respect, recognizing facial and body cues of others).

Academic Integration. SEL competencies are critical for successful engagement and execution in all learning. It is important to make these connections explicit to encourage educators to foster student SEL competencies that support academics. Examples include:

- Restorative Practices/ Morning Meetings
- Growth Mindset
- Bucket Fillers/Positive Paws
- Second Step
- Mind Up

- Supporting SEL skill building and mental health
- ArtSEL
- Social Work: individual check ins, small social skills groups, community referrals

Restorative Practices

At Cutten School District, we understand that young people make mistakes, and that it is the school's role to support their social emotional growth as well as their academic growth. When our young people make mistakes, our goal is to create opportunities for them to learn from their mistakes, take accountability for their actions, and to make it right. We are committed to engaging in the kind of discipline that is rooted in learning and teaches appropriate conduct consistent with school values

Restorative practices are processes that proactively build healthy relationships and a sense of community to prevent and address conflict and wrongdoing. Restorative practices are increasingly being applied in individual schools and school districts to address youth behavior, rule violations, and to improve school climate and culture. Restorative practices can improve relationships between students, between students and educators, and even between educators, whose behavior often serves as a role model for students

Restorative practices focus on resolving conflict, repairing harm, and healing relationships.These practices assume that all students are worthy and deserving (a fundamental equity assumption), that behavior is learned, and that a specific incident is an extension of some other issue needing resolution. Students practice agency and engage in a form of self-governance as part of their shared identity in the community.

In addition to building an equitable and productive community, these practices help students acquire valuable social and emotional skills. Students practice listening with empathy; constructively communicating needs; problem-solving; honoring and embracing differences in opinion, perspective, and experience; and taking responsibility for personal feelings and actions to repair harm. With regular engagement in ongoing dialogue and reflection, students also build leadership, facilitation, and critical thinking skills IIRP

What is the goal of Restorative Practices in Schools?

Restorative Questions I -   *Questions for responding to challenging behavior:*

What happened?

What were you thinking of at the time?

What have you thought about since?

Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?

What do you think you need to do to make things right?

Restorative Questions II -   *Questions for helping those harmed by others' actions:*

What did you think when you realized what had happened?

What impact has this incident had on you and others?

What has been the hardest thing for you?

What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

Trauma Informed Practice

Schools play a significant role in supporting the health and well-being of children and youth, including those affected by traumatic experiences. Students learn best when they feel safe, connected and regulated. In a trauma-informed school, all aspects of the educational environment, from engagement with students and families to procedures and policies, are grounded in an understanding of trauma and its impacts and are designed to promote empathy and resilience for all. Cutten School District strives to meet each student individually where they are in order to better support their socio-emotional development, remove barriers to learning, have more equitable access to education, and to foster their full potential.

According to a study by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and Kaiser, nearly nearly six out of 10 children have experienced trauma. Trauma results from exposure to an incident or series of events that are emotionally disturbing, life-threatening, or perceived as life-threatening, with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual well-being. "Trauma creates an escalated nervous system that can activate the fight, flight, or freeze response at any time, often without warning. This can cause kids to become quickly dysregulated which impacts their ability to manage their emotions and behaviors."

Students who experience Adverse Childhood Experiences such as violence, exposure to drug use, and chronic housing instability can be either hyperactive—unable to contain the anxious energy—or hypoactive—unable to muster the energy to engage, this can often appear as a student being "checked-out" or not paying attention. Trauma impacts a child's brain and cognitive processes, making critical thinking and problem solving more difficult and emotional outbursts more likely. We understand it is vital to create a positive school climate and that relationships with students are vital to their development and sense of safety and trust. We also understand that when child experience behavioral challenges that there is likely an underlining challenge or skill deficit that they are dealing with and that we, as educators, should also teach socio-emotional and behavioral strategies in addition to academics. Adversity does not just happen to children, it happens inside of their brains and bodies.

STRESS & EARLY BRAIN GROWTH
Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

What are ACEs?

ACEs are serious childhood traumas -- a list is shown below -- that result in toxic stress that can harm a child's brain. This toxic stress may prevent a child from learning, from playing in a healthy way with other children, and can result in long-term health problems.

Adverse Childhood Experiences can include:

1. Emotional abuse
2. Physical abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Emotional neglect
5. Physical neglect
6. Mother treated violently
7. Household substance abuse
8. Household mental illness
9. Parental separation or divorce
10. Incarcerated household member
11. Bullying (by another child or adult)
12. Witnessing violence outside the home
13. Witness a brother or sister being abused
14. Racism, sexism, or any other form of discrimination
15. Being homeless
16. Natural disasters and war

Exposure to childhood ACEs can increase the risk of:

· Adolescent pregnancy
· Alcoholism and alcohol abuse
· Depression
· Illicit drug use
· Heart disease
· Liver disease
· Multiple sexual partners
· Intimate partner violence
· Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
· Smoking
· Suicide attempts
· Unintended pregnancies

How do ACEs affect health?

Through stress. Frequent or prolonged exposure to ACEs can create toxic stress which can damage the developing brain of a child and affect overall health.

Reduces the ability to respond, learn, or figure things out, which can result in problems in school.
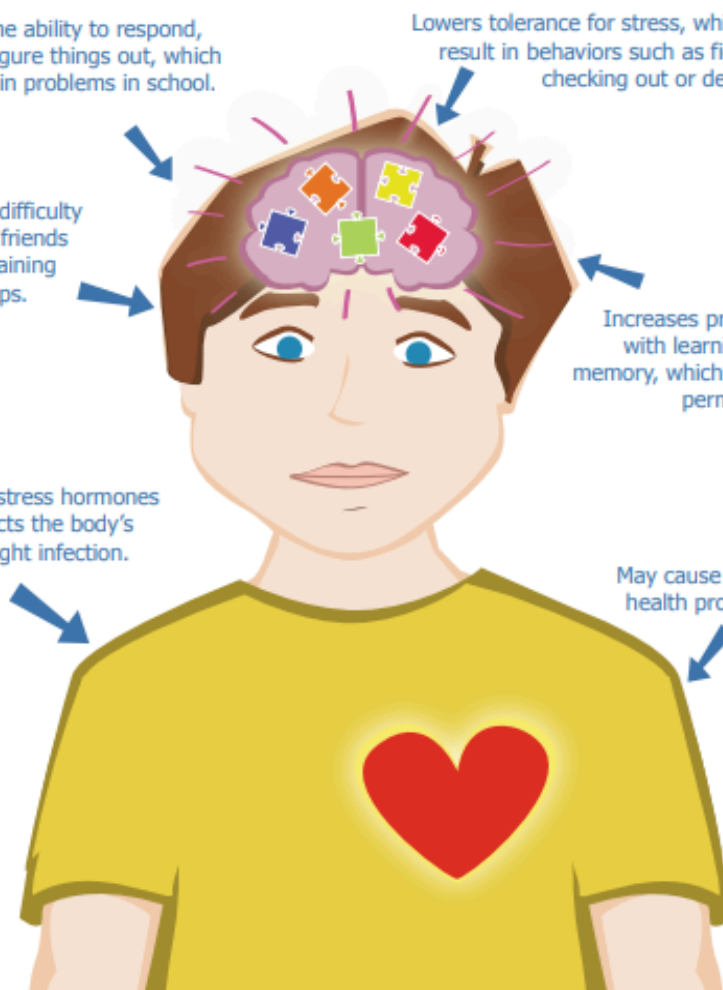
Lowers tolerance for stress, which can result in behaviors such as fighting, checking out or defiance.

Increases difficulty in making friends and maintaining relationships.

Increases problems with learning and memory, which can be permanent.

Increases stress hormones which affects the body's ability to fight infection.

May cause lasting health problems.

A Survival Mode Response to toxic stress increases a child's heart rate, blood pressure, breathing and muscle tension. Their thinking brain is knocked off-line. Self-protection is their priority. In other words:
"I can't hear you! I can't respond to you! I am just trying to be safe!"

Section 4: Glossary and Resources

Mental health and well-being is foundational to social and emotional adjustment and competence. Trauma and other adverse childhood experiences (ACES) can negatively affect mental health as well as academic, social, and emotional development.

Whole child is a coordinated approach to education and public health that works to ensure that each child will be "healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged." We know from our work in the CSI that, thanks in part to ESSA, many states are organizing to reflect a whole child approach, as well as equity and cultural responsiveness, in their educational systems.

Workforce readiness, college and career readiness, and 21st-century skills are closely aligned with SEL, because social and emotional skills (such as self-management, communication, goal setting, collaboration, and responsible decision-making) are all critical skills for success in college and career.

School climate and culture refer to the quality as well as norms and values of the school environment. School climate and culture are associated with student and teacher social and emotional well-being.

Character education and development is a process designed to promote citizenship, civic principles and values, and ethical behavior. It aligns with social and emotional development.

Multi Tiered systems of support (MTSS) (formerly called response to intervention, or RTI) recognizes that academic and behavioral functioning are intertwined. MTSS is a systemic approach designed to identify and coordinate evidence-based interventions. MTSS can include positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). SEL programs and approaches are often seen as an important component of universal approaches within MTSS, because they are designed to promote positive academic and behavioral outcomes in all students.