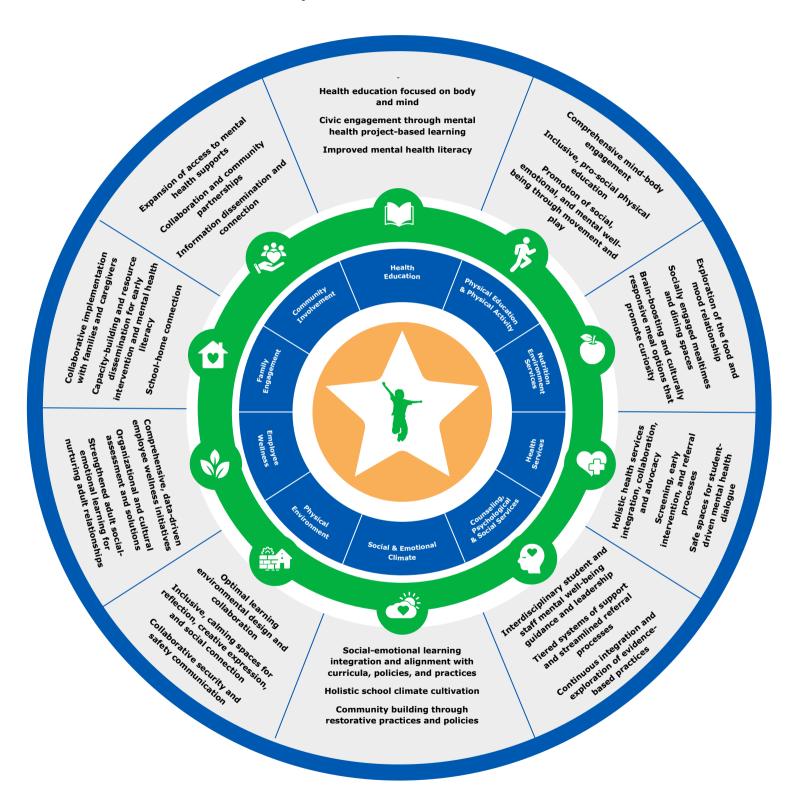# WSCC & Mental Health

Aligning the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Model with Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health

Strategy Guide & Reflection Tool

Aligning the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Model with Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health

Health Education
- Health education focused on body and mind
- Civic engagement through mental health project-based learning
- Improved mental health literacy

Physical Education & Physical Activity
- Comprehensive mind-body engagement
- Inclusive, pro-social physical education
- Promotion of social, emotional, and mental well-being through movement and play

Nutrition Environment Services
- Exploration of the food and mood relationship
- Socially engaged mealtimes and dining spaces
- Brain-boosting and culturally responsive meal options that promote curiosity

Health Services
- Holistic health services integration, collaboration, and advocacy
- Screening, early intervention, and referral processes
- Safe spaces for student-driven mental health dialogue

Counseling, Psychological & Social Services
- Interdisciplinary student and staff mental well-being guidance and leadership
- Tiered systems of support and streamlined referral processes
- Continuous integration and exploration of evidence-based practices

Social & Emotional Climate
- Social-emotional learning integration and alignment with curricula, policies, and practices
- Holistic school climate cultivation
- Community building through restorative practices and policies

Physical Environment
- Optimal learning environmental design and collaboration
- Inclusive, calming spaces for reflection, creative expression, and social connection
- Collaborative security and safety communication

Employee Wellness
- Comprehensive, data-driven employee wellness initiatives
- Organizational and cultural assessment and solutions
- Strengthened adult social-emotional learning for nurturing adult relationships

Family Engagement
- Collaborative implementation with families and caregivers
- Capacity-building and resource dissemination for early intervention and mental health literacy
- School-home connection

Community Involvement
- Expansion of access to mental health supports
- Collaboration and community partnerships
- Information dissemination and connection

Adapted from The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Model Lewallen et al. (2015)
References: https://chronicdisease.org/references/

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WSCC & Comprehensive School-Based
Mental Health Strategy Guide & Reflection

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Health Education

Health education can encompass mental, social, and emotional well-being by incorporating stress management, coping strategies, mental health literacy, collaborative problem-solving, and responsible decision-making into the curriculum. Additionally, mental health awareness can be fostered through peer leadership and service-learning projects.

- Infuse PreK-12 health education curriculum with mental health concepts
- Integrate and model stress management and mindfulness exercises
- Provide resources on mental health literacy
- Implement mental health-focused service learning projects to encourage student leadership and civic engagement
- Facilitate peer-to-peer dialogue aimed at reducing mental health stigma
- Equip health educators with training and professional development to recognize early signs of mental health concerns and facilitate appropriate referrals to support services

Physical Activity & Physical Education

Physical activity improves physical health and motor skills and reduces stress and anxiety. Physical education can also incorporate mindfulness, relaxation exercises, and activities that allow children to explore social settings, build relationships, and enhance their sense of belonging.

- Implement lessons that facilitate the mind-body connection
- Leverage mindfulness exercises and relaxation techniques for warm-ups or cool-downs to promote stress reduction
- Integrate opportunities for physical activity and free play throughout the day to support self-regulation and relationship-building
- Implement policies/strategies for accessible physical activity and play
- Equip physical education staff with training and professional development to recognize early signs of mental health concerns and facilitate appropriate referrals to support services

Nutrition Environment & Services

Mealtimes offer children a chance to develop and hone social awareness and relationship skills. Nutrition education and food access programs can also educate children about the link between food and mood, reduce food-related stigma, and enhance access to healthy food, positively impacting mental health.

- Implement lessons that explore the relationship between food and mood
- Offer a variety of nutrient-dense foods that support brain health
- Create a positive and inviting cafeteria environment that facilitates social connection at mealtimes, mindful eating, and curiosity to explore new foods
- Establish programs that address food insecurity (e.g., food pantry, backpack program) or explore food science (e.g., farm/garden to table)
- Equip nutrition services staff with training and professional development to recognize early signs of mental health concerns and facilitate appropriate referrals to support services

Health Services

The collaboration between physical and mental health services promotes a holistic approach to well-being. School nurses, for example, contribute to school safety, identify and address mental health concerns through screening and assessment, and recommend effective strategies for coordinated care and tiered support systems.

- Integrate mental health screenings into routine health assessments
- Establish protocols for managing crises and emergencies with a focus on mental health considerations
- Offer confidential spaces within health services for students to discuss mental health challenges with a trusted, nurturing adult
- Organize mental health awareness campaigns focused on reducing mental health stigma, mental health care, and promoting school safety
- Equip health services staff with training and professional development to recognize early signs of mental health concerns and facilitate appropriate referrals to support services

Counseling, Psychological & Social Services

School counselors, psychologists, and social workers directly contribute to students' social, emotional, and mental well-being through tiered support systems. They offer guidance on evidence-based school mental health practices and foster collaboration across sectors and with community-based providers.

- Provide comprehensive Tier 1, 2 and 3 interventions and supports
- Create referral processes, with robust resource and support guides, that can be used by staff, families, and community stakeholders
- Explore social aspects of mental health in counseling sessions or in workshops to promote positive relationships and prevent social isolation
- Establish an early intervention system, including regular student check-ins
- Equip counseling, psychological, and social services staff with ongoing training and professional development around evidence-based practices, mental health first aid, trauma-informed practices, etc.

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Social-Emotional Climate

Cultivating a positive school climate with social-emotional learning (SEL) programs helps students develop vital competencies for self-identity, interpersonal relationships, and emotional management. SEL efforts also promote a safe and supportive environment through anti-bullying measures, restorative practices, and heightened social awareness.

- Integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) into the core curriculum
- Model and integrate mindfulness activities, stress reduction techniques, and partner/group-based learning throughout the school day
- Create a safe and supportive learning environment by establishing dedicated spaces for reflection, play, or creative expression
- Implement restorative justice practices to address conflicts within the school community and build community
- Establish peer support programs, including peer leadership/ mentoring, to strengthen social connection and reduce loneliness and isolation

Physical Environment

Safe and supportive learning environments are essential for child development and fostering a sense of belonging. The physical environment significantly impacts mental health, contributes to a positive atmosphere for learning, and enhances student achievement.

- Collaborate with mental health professionals and building staff to assess the physical environment and identify opportunities to create a calming atmosphere that supports positive mental health
- Incorporate natural elements/ green spaces, adjustable lighting, and sensory-friendly spaces in classrooms, hallways, and shared spaces
- Develop policies/ practices that address bullying and harassment
- Create flexible and adaptable learning environments that accommodate diverse learning styles and promote engagement
- Establish a two-way communication plan for safety and security

Employee Wellness

Employee wellness is central to cultivating nurturing adult relationships, a cornerstone of lifelong health. Prioritizing it bolsters adult-child connections, aids educators in self-care, and boosts school connectedness, ultimately improving student outcomes.

- Assess the organizational culture and climate and address organizational challenges that contribute to stress in school staff
- Identify data to drive the creation of and improvements to comprehensive staff emotional well-being policies and initiatives
- Collaborate with mental health professionals to offer on-site counseling services or workshops
- Support staff in strengthening adult social-emotional learning competencies
- Provide resources, professional development, and space in the school day for self-care practices, physical activity, and reflection

Family Engagement

Involving families and caregivers fosters a supportive network for children and adolescents, enhancing the synergy between school and home. Engaging them can raise awareness of mental health signs, offer guidance for optimal support, and incorporate their perspectives into school-based programs and policies.

- Invite families to partner on a full comprehensive school mental health system from planning to implementation to evaluation
- Conduct family and caregiver-centered workshops on recognizing signs of mental health concerns, fostering awareness, and early intervention
- Establish open lines of communication between school staff and families
- Provide resources and information on mental health literacy, and local mental health services available to families
- Organize family support groups that focus on mental health topics, providing a space for parents to connect, share experiences, and learn from one another.

Community Involvement

Community partnerships and collaboration expand the array of services accessible to students and staff. Schools can engage in community awareness campaigns, facilitate access to local mental health resources, and disseminate information on community services that bolster mental health.

- Develop MOUs with community mental health providers to increase access to supports
- Collaborate with local mental health organizations to bring community experts into the school setting for workshops, presentations, and resources on mental health
- Collaborate with community partners on the creation of a resource directory of local mental health services and organizations
- Establish a community advisory board focused on mental health
- Partner with local businesses and organizations to sponsor mental health initiatives

Reflection Tool: Aligning the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Model with Comprehensive School-Based Mental Health

Use this tool to reflect on current strategies in place in your community and identify areas of opportunity to address gaps or strengthen existing initiatives.

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Physical Activity & Physical Education

Nutrition Environment & Services

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