Universal Supports Following a Crisis: Guidance for Teachers

PURPOSE

This tool provides teachers with guidance on the considerations and action steps required to be responsive to the needs of students and families after a crisis. It is intended to support collaborative efforts with leadership and student support staff.

DIRECTIONS:

Use this tool to provide proactive and responsive classroom supports to students and families (virtual or in-person) after a crisis. The content in this tool can be leveraged for individual planning and/or during grade-level/department meetings among teaching staff.

Shared Leadership and Ownership

Collective commitment and responsibility for a whole child vision, grounded in equity

- Leverage grade level meetings to coordinate more targeted re-entry plans for students who are in most need (use of Tier 2 meetings may need to shift and meet with more frequency)
- Share individual classroom support strategies with other teaching staff in supporting students
- Prioritize becoming knowledgeable about how historical context has impacted marginalized groups
- Collaborate to keep track of students who are not participating in alternative or in-person education and communicate this list to leadership and student support staff with regularity
- Collaborate with student support staff on how to support students within the classroom
- Collaborate to maintain ongoing communication about student concerns with student support staff
- Collaborate to maintain ongoing communication with student caregivers/families
- Collaborate to identify students in most need and refer them immediately to student support staff
- Determine how colleagues will support each other personally and professionally

Developmental Relationships

Relationships defined by trust, reciprocity, challenging growth, and balance of power

- Schedule 1:1 check-in with students weekly, allowing students to share what they are thinking and/or feeling based on individual comfort
- At the onset of re-opening of school, temporarily increase icebreakers and relationship-building activities
- Connect with families, reassure support will be provided, and determine any ongoing unmet needs
- Collaborate with administration and student support staff to engage parents who are challenging to reach
- Be mindful to not blame students for not showing up for virtual sessions, as there may be reasons for their absence related to a family context beyond their control
- Provide caregivers with ongoing communication about how a student is functioning in school
- Seek opportunities to connect with other staff for non-work-related activities
- Validate student feelings and acknowledge their strengths

Supportive Environments

Physically, emotionally and identity safe, inclusive, and co-regulating spaces

- Reinforce and revise routines and procedures that will contribute to maintaining a sense of emotional safety in a virtual or in-person setting as aligned to schoolwide procedures
- Communicate using a calm tone and smile
- Consider adjustments in norms that will be mindful and respectful of students' emotional needs
- Allow students to give input into adjustments that would be the most helpful
- In both virtual and in-person settings, recommend and provide activities that allow students to self-regulate and manage their emotional needs (e.g., calm video, physical breaks, art, deep breathing)
- Ensure all students are knowledgeable about the visual and physical changes made to the classroom; for example, there could be a change in the daily schedule or seating arrangement
- Create space and time for individual reflection of how the recent collective trauma (e.g., COVID-19, racial violence) has impacted them
- Create or implement a flexible way of grading and submission of completed work
- Ensure students are aware of who can support them and how to access that support, both virtually and in-person
- Be available to answer student questions
- Provide choice of academic and non-academic activities where possible

Skill and Mindset Building

Integrated development of the Building Blocks for Learning

- Ensure you are sharing information about the traumatic event(s) as directed by school administrators
- Be knowledgeable about the school's crisis plan and how to refer students and families in need of support
- Ensure students' families are aware of the school's crisis plan and how to seek support
- Keep track of how you are coping and what your personal needs are and communicate them to leadership
- Access mental health resources and support when necessary
- Ensure students are sharing factual information about the event during class instruction and with each other
- Talk with students about possible ways this collective trauma (e.g., COVID-19, racial unrest) may have impacted them physically and emotionally
- Collaborate with student support staff to teach students coping strategies and have them practice trying them out
- Model the use of those coping strategies and let students select and practice strategies that resonate with them
- Share the coping strategies taught to students with their families