

FORT MILL SCHOOLS

SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT FOR REENTRY TO SCHOOL

This document is designed to provide information and linked resources to support social, emotional and behavioral (SE/B) needs for the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year and beyond. These are unprecedented times. We face the layered impact of school closures (e.g., loss of school-based relationships, routines, and learning); COVID-19 (e.g., on health, isolation, stress, and trauma); economic crisis (e.g., unemployment, impact on school budgets), and persistent racial inequities exacerbated by the pandemic and amplified by the nationwide mobilization for racial justice reflected in the Black Lives Matter movement.

One of the most important factors to keep in mind is that, while we are all experiencing the same events, the impact of these experiences will vary widely across individuals based on a myriad of factors including: past experiences and/or trauma, age, race, socio-economic circumstances, family and home supports, and the presence of medical conditions or other disabilities. This means that everyone will need some support, but not everyone will need the same level of support.

In preparing for school reentry, it is important not to prejudge or pathologize the emotional impact these events may have had on students ([Knoff, H., 2020](#)), but rather work to:

- a. create/sustain positive, relationship-driven school and classroom settings for all students;
- b. approach students from a strengths-based perspective;
- c. understand that students will exhibit different levels of social, emotional and behavioral variability, and that is normal and expected; and
- d. support students who present with social, emotional or behavioral challenges, but don't assume these challenges are due to events related to the pandemic.

Fort Mill Schools utilizes the [PREPaRE Crisis Response Model](#), which together with our Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for Social, Emotional and Behavioral (SE/B), provide a framework for meeting the varying social/emotional needs that will be present during school reentry and beyond.

OVERVIEW OF REENTRY SUPPORTS:

Prior to Students Returning:

- **Help returning staff members process their own reactions and potential anxieties so they will, in turn, be able to support students' successful SE/B transition back to school.** To achieve this: 1) establish dedicated space and time for staff to come together to reconnect and engage in collective healing (see classroom meeting script below, which may be adapted for use with faculty), 2) create opportunities for [quick individual staff check-ins with school leaders](#), and 3) ensure any new staff are paired with existing staff members to support their welcome into the community.

- **Provide staff resources (such as this document and accompanying video!) that will help them support social/emotional needs of their students at reentry and beyond.** Such resources supplement naturally occurring social support systems by providing guidance on how to support adaptive coping for themselves and the students they support (e.g., [Care for the Caregiver](#), [Stress Spectrum](#) and [Talking with Children about COVID-19](#)). Providing information on trauma-informed practices (e.g., [Understanding Trauma](#), [Trauma Informed Classrooms](#), [Healing Centered Engagement](#)) and social justice (e.g., [Common Beliefs Survey](#), [Teaching Tolerance](#), [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education](#)) are also timely in light of recent events.
- **Provide families clear information regarding the procedures and supports in place at school, as well as ways they can support their children at home.** This can be done through our usual channels of communication, as well as sharing additional resources that may be helpful in supporting the children at this time (e.g., [Helping Children Cope with COVID-19](#), [Supporting Learning During the Pandemic](#), [Building Positive Conditions for Learning at Home](#)). Additional resources focused on a myriad of topics are housed on the [FMS Behavioral Mental Health Information and Resources](#) page. Many staff members, such as school counselors and school psychologists, have also created staff webpages that contain resources for families.

As Students Return:

- **Recognize the importance of creating and sustaining a safe and supportive learning environment.** Besides cultivating [school connectedness](#) and re-learning traditional school routines and rules (e.g., [Getting Back to School after Disruptions](#)), part of this work involves practicing new routines related to safety procedures. When doing so, it is vital to normalize the procedures in a way that is not scary or flippant, but rather empowers staff and students to work collectively toward minimizing health risks and creating a supportive environment. Here are a few links that may be useful when working with younger students and those with disabilities: [Social Stories on COVID-19](#), [How to Teach a Child to Wear a Mask](#).
- **Provide students an opportunity to: 1) discuss the pandemic's past and present effects on their lives, 2) socially and emotionally reconnect with their peers and staff, and 3) (re-)establish academic routines and protocols.** One method for doing this involves facilitating a classroom meeting aligned with the PREPaRE crisis response model (see: [COVID-19 PREPaRE Classroom Meeting Script](#)). Teachers who would like assistance facilitating this classroom meeting should reach out to their administration, who in turn, can assign a PREPaRE trained staff member to assist.
- **Actively work toward developing strong [developmental relationships](#) with students.** While many of us may feel pressure to pivot our focus toward academic recovery, we need to remind ourselves academic growth is deeply connected to the connections we have with our students, and fostering those connections is even more vital this school year. The link above outlines developmental relationships and provides several suggested methods for establishing and maintaining strong relationships that are appropriate for on-campus and virtual students.

- **Acknowledge that we will continue to live in the shadow and context of the pandemic over the coming months.** Be prepared, and prepare students, for what will occur in case a second wave of illness occurs that requires their classroom or school to temporarily close for a period of time due to a required deep cleaning or medical testing of students and staff. Continue to provide social and emotional support, as needed, while understanding that after the first few days of re-starting school, excessive or prolonged discussions about COVID-19 may increase some students' emotional response. Try to strike a balance between letting students express their concerns while getting them back into an academic routine.
- **Recognize that many of our students' SE/B skills will have regressed since they were last at school.** Give students some grace as they get settled back in and avoid assuming that "acting out" represents willful disobedience. Misbehavior may be a manifestation of [anxiety](#), trauma, a lack of skills needed to self-regulate, or simply a lack of stamina for the rigors of a full school day after the extended break. Linked to this issue, work toward implementation of [effective and positive school discipline practices](#).

ONGOING SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING FOLLOWING INITIAL REENTRY

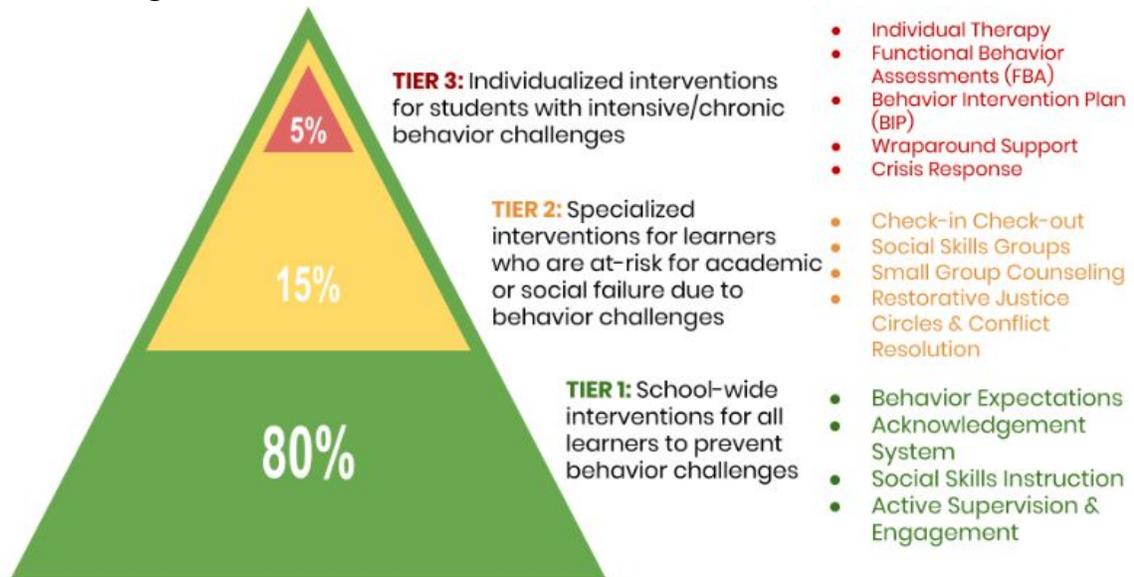
- **Following the initial reentry, it will be vital to remain focused on social emotional learning (SEL) in order to meet the needs of our school community.** Below are links to a sample of free SEL resources, including lessons and activities which may be integrated into in-person or virtual instruction.
 - 6 Minute Video for Staff: [5 Keys to Social Emotional Learning Success](#)
 - 2 Minute Intro Video for Students: [What is Social Emotional Learning \(SEL\)?](#)
 - [SEL Integration Approach for Classroom Educators](#)
 - [Sample Teaching Activities to Support SEL](#)
 - [SEL Reflection Prompts](#)
 - [Sanford Harmony Online](#) (curriculum kits also available in our elementary schools)
 - [Centervention - Free Social Emotional Learning Activities](#)
 - [Education.com - Social Emotional Printable Worksheets](#)
 - [SEL Game Guide](#)
 - [SEL Practices - Greater Good in Education \(UC Berkeley\)](#)
 - [SEL Video Lessons-6 Minute SEL](#) (video-individual reflection-discuss in group/pair)
 - [Integrating SEL into College- and Career-Readiness Standards](#)
 - [Teaching Tolerance](#)
 - [Let's Talk - Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students](#)
 - [Circle Scripts for Black Lives Matter](#)
 - [Strategies for Trauma Informed Distance Learning](#)
 - [Promoting SEL at Home \(Aperture Education\)](#)

ACCESSING SUPPORT WHEN SE/B CONCERNS PERSIST

After implementing the above supports during the initial reentry period, concerns about a student's SE/B functioning or skill development should be addressed through the district's **Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**. Several components exist within the MTSS system that together provide a framework for a well-rounded program that supports social, emotional and behavioral development:

1. Creating safe and supportive schools
2. Engaging staff and students in SEL
3. Responding to concerns about social/emotional or behavioral skill development
4. Responding to individuals in crisis, or to crisis events

The above components may be conceptualized based on tiers within the MTSS framework. The first two are foundational and focused on most intensely in Tier 1. The third and fourth outline supports typically provided through Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions when concerns exist about a particular student, or following a crisis event.



- Fort Mill School District MTSS intervention process:
 - o [Elementary School MTSS Flowchart](#)
 - o [Middle/High School MTSS Flowchart](#)
- For most students, the universal interventions discussed above will be enough to help them successfully cope. However, others will require layered support. It is important to identify which students have more significant or persistent SE/B needs that require more individualized supports; as well as the history, root causes, and intensities of these needs:
 - o Initially, provide particular attention to individuals with needs/vulnerabilities that were known prior to the school closure. Added to that group, focus on students who have developed similar needs/vulnerabilities while sheltering-in-place. One way of identifying the potential need for support is the [COVID-19 Returning to School Risk Matrix](#), which takes both factors into account. For those familiar with the NASP PREP_aRE model, this will be recognized as primary triage.
 - o Plan for provision of SE/B support to students who are attending school virtually. The needs of these students are likely to be harder to identify than those who are physically attending school so it will be important to be extra vigilant regarding how that population of students is fairing.

- o The following resource developed by FMS' school psychologists may be helpful in developing interventions: [Quick Links to Social Emotional/Behavioral Interventions](#). In addition, see [Intervention Central](#) and the [Evidence Based Intervention Network](#).
- o Remind all staff of “warning signals” that suggest the need to refer for more intensive support, and even immediate crisis support, provided through our continuum of in-school and community-based services.
 - [Anxiety - Helping Handout for School and Home](#)
 - [Depression - Helping Handout for Home](#)
 - [Facts about Suicide](#)
- o Provide students, especially adolescents, information they need to recognize when they or a peer may need additional support due to SE/B needs (e.g., [Warning Signs](#), [Mental Health Resources for Adolescents](#), [Suicide Prevention Resources for Teens](#)). Ensure all students know how to “self-refer” themselves or a peer for support. This is built into the classroom meeting described above.
- o Have a data-management system to track and monitor those who are receiving more intensive services and supports. This could be achieved using established intervention or special services monitoring procedures, or by establishing a database similar to the one our crisis teams utilize during a crisis response (e.g., [Response Tracking Sheet - COVID-19](#))

Together, the information and resources provided in this document and accompanying video provide a framework for supporting social/emotional needs for a successful reentry to the school environment. Many of the resources are also relevant in supporting ongoing SEL for our students. If you have questions about how these suggestions may be implemented in your school or classroom, feel free to contact Dr. Karen Monahan, Coordinator of Psychological Services, at monahank@fortmillschools.org.

For additional information and resources, please see:

- [CASEL SEL Roadmap for Reopening Schools](#)
- [CASEL Cares Initiative - COVID-19 SEL Resources](#)
- [NAMI South Carolina - Mental Health Considerations When Reopening Schools](#)
- [NAMI SC Resource Guide - Northern Region](#)
- [National Association of School Psychologists COVID-19 Resource Center](#)
- [National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments](#)
 - [School Climate Improvement](#)
 - [Trauma Sensitive Schools](#)
- [School Reentry Considerations Supporting Student Social and Emotional Learning and Mental and Behavioral Health Amidst COVID-19](#) (joint guidance from ASCA and NASP)

“In this moment of great uncertainty, it is imperative that we model grace and compassion as we all adjust to this new reality. That’s going to be imperative not just for the next month, but for the next year.”

—Dr. Kyla Johnson-Trammell, Superintendent, Oakland Unified School District