



Exploring Mental Health Education and Initiatives in Schools and Districts

The first step in evaluating your mental health education program is to identify and prioritize your goals and objectives. What are your objectives? How can you align your goals with the standards? What are the outcomes that you are hoping for and how will you measure these?

General Discussion-Current Practices	Yes	No	Partial	Unsure/Questions/Concerns
Do you have a list of major programs and initiatives currently implemented?				
Are programs and initiatives categorized based on target outcomes, population served, and/or focus?				
Are criteria (e.g. state mandate) used for determining which programs and initiatives will be evaluated?				
Does a plan exist for professional development for all staff and faculty around suicide prevention?				
Do you choose programs and initiatives that strongly align with your goals, reach large populations, and/or provide resources?				



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The following areas for discussion will help teams reflect on current practices and identify areas for improvement. This will help you to develop a comprehensive strategy for undertaking the evaluation itself, including designing evaluation protocols, setting timelines, building your staff capacity, and more. What are your goals? How can you get stakeholder buy-in? When and how do you plan to use the results of your evaluation?

General Discussion-Current Practices	Yes	No	Partial	Unsure/Questions/Concerns
Can you identify mental health “champions” in your schools/district that have taken on a leadership role and promote school- or district-wide positive climate and culture?				
Does a plan exist for professional development for all staff and faculty around general mental health and wellness of students and staff?				
Does a plan exist for professional development for all staff and faculty around trauma and resiliency, trauma informed approaches to interventions?				
Does a plan exist for professional development for all staff and faculty around suicide prevention?				
Does a plan exist for professional development for all staff and faculty around substance use?				



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General Discussion-Current Practices	Yes	No	Partial	Unsure/Questions/Concerns
Does your district strive to actively engage school-community partnerships that promote mental health and wellness among students, families, and staff?				
Does your school/district integrate mental health and wellness strategies across a multi-tiered system of supports, beginning at Tier 1?				
Do the strategies being implemented include consistency in language and skill development from one grade to the next, and from building to building?				
Does your school/district utilize a social-emotional learning (SEL) framework?				
Do all faculty and staff learn and practice SEL skills in an effort to model what is being taught to students?				
Does your school/district have a mental health assessment/evaluation process in which non-clinical/counseling staff are trained?				



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General Discussion-Current Practices	Yes	No	Partial	Unsure/Questions/Concerns
Do you collect and utilize data related to the mental health and wellness of students, such as student self-referrals to the school counseling center, suicide risk assessments, hospitalizations for behavioral health, disciplinary referrals for issues, such as vaping and skipping school?				
Do your school/district policies reflect Restorative Practices wherever possible?				
Do your school/district policies and practices reflect the utilization of a trauma-informed approach to support students, families, and staff?				
Has your school/district developed a plan for complying with the mental health education requirement in the K-12 Health curriculum?				
Do you engage relevant stakeholders and promote stakeholder buy-in to help support planning and evaluation of school/district programs and initiatives?				
Does your school/district have a plan for raising awareness about mental health among parents and caregivers?				



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The following areas for discussion will help teams reflect on the district’s general approach to mental health instruction.

Our Approach to Mental Health Education	Yes	No	Partial	Unsure/Questions/Concerns
Is your Mental Health curriculum consistent across the district so all students entering MS are taught the same knowledge, language, and skills at the elementary level, and all students entering HS were taught the same knowledge, language, and skills in MS?				
Is mental health instruction conducted in the classroom setting?				
Are assemblies or large group instruction used to focus on positive topics such as goal-setting, promoting whole student wellness, character development, etc.?				
Does your school/district integrate mental health instruction across various disciplines to promote the concept of wellness and reduce stigma?				
Is your school/district mental health curriculum culturally diverse, inclusive, and sensitive? Does it reflect the needs of special populations, such as LGBTQ+ youth, BIPOC, immigrants and refugees, and special needs students?				



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Our Approach to Mental Health Education	Yes	No	Partial	Unsure/Questions/Concerns
Is your school/district mental health curriculum trauma-informed and does it promote student resiliency?				
Is your mental health curriculum regularly reviewed to ensure updated information and relevant resources are used and shared?				
Are there set goals for the program evaluation process?				
What is the timeline for completing the evaluation, including checkpoints for collecting formative results?				
Are the coping strategies being taught strengths-based and person-centered? Each student should have the ability to develop strategies that are unique to them and aligned with their personal strengths, interests, and comfort level.				
Does your school/district mental health curriculum include the development of social-emotional learning core competencies?				



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Our Approach to Mental Health Education	Yes	No	Partial	Unsure/Questions/Concerns
Does your school/district mental health curriculum teach and support mental health as a continuum (not just the presence/absence of illness) and as an important part of overall health, related to physical health and risky behaviors, including substance use?				
Does your school/district provide opportunities to align curriculum content with professional development and parent education so the entire school community receives the same information and is using the same language?				



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If your school/district is using one or more mental health education programs and/or social-emotional learning programs, complete the table below. If not, proceed to page 10 which provides an opportunity to evaluate specific strategies that you may be implementing in individual classrooms, specific buildings, or across the district.

	Yes	No	Partial	Notes/Comments
Is this program being implemented for all grades for which it was developed, and for all students at those grade levels (Universal)?				
Does this program align with the mental health education framework as outlined in Mental Health Education Literacy in Schools: Linking to a Continuum of Well-Being (pp. 13-24)?				
Do the health and physical education teachers feel confident in their ability to implement this program?				
Are there barriers to successfully implementing this program?				



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The following table will help teams identify specific strategies being used at the district, building and classroom level, and identify potential opportunities for enhancing current strategies and improve consistency.

Strategies	Yes	No	NOTES To what extent do we do this? Is it effective? Are there barriers?
Host wellness event (fair, day, week, etc.)			
Invite community partners to facilitate awareness/education activities			
Plan awareness/education activities that include individuals with lived experience			
Post mental health awareness resources throughout buildings			
Promote mental health awareness information and resources on social media			
Share mental health awareness resources and information on website			
Teach/practice mindfulness with staff			
Teach/practice mindfulness with students			
Teach/practice other relaxation strategies with staff			
Teach/practice other relaxation strategies with students			



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Strategies	Yes	No	NOTES: To what extent do we do this? Is it effective? Are there barriers?
Teach/practice sensory/self-regulation strategies			
Provide extra-curricular opportunities for diverse interests and across all grade levels			
Host parent information nights focused on mental health and wellness topics			
Engage students as “ambassadors” for mental health through clubs or committees			
Coordinate opportunities for older students to serve as leaders/mentors for younger students			
Promote community building during lunchtime			
Build connections with daily meetings			