

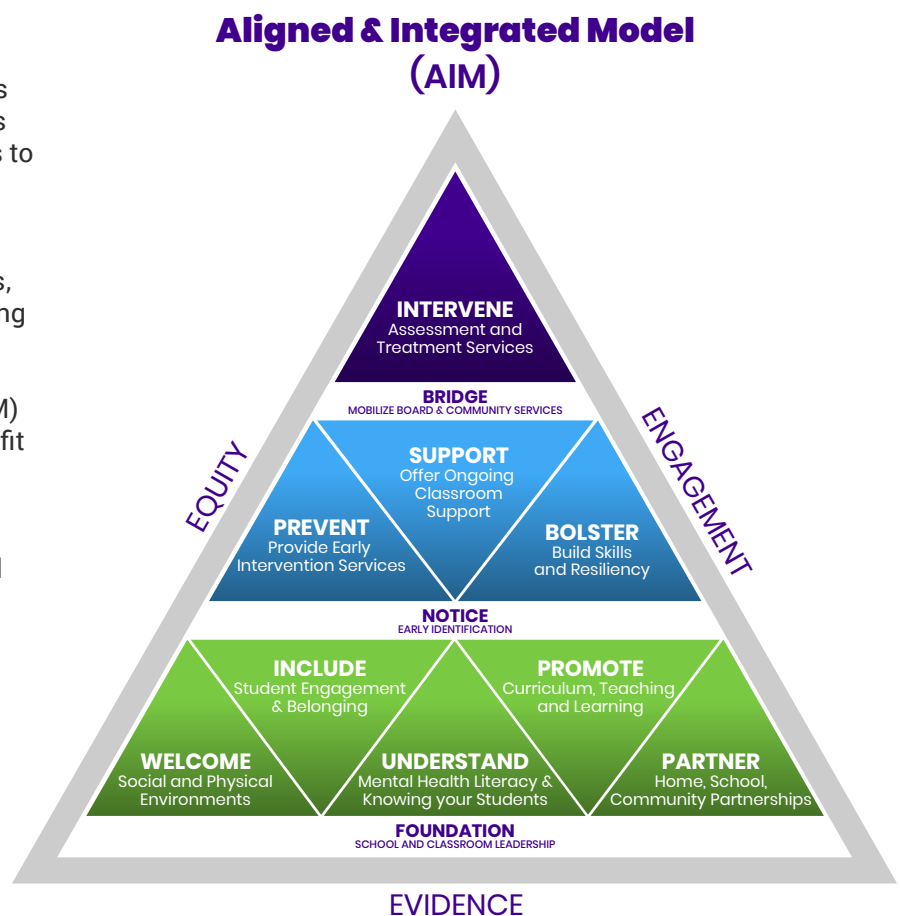
A Tip Sheet for Staff to Support Positive Mental Health for All Students

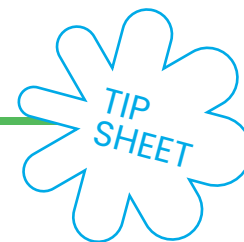
School is an important place in promoting positive mental health, and helping to build student skills and resiliency. Positive day-to-day interactions at school – staff with students, staff with staff, and students with students – contribute to a sense of well-being and connectedness to school.

All staff help create a welcoming, safe, caring and inclusive learning environment. As we welcome students back to school, there are opportunities for staff to leverage their relationships to promote student well-being.

School staff continue to be the eyes, ears, and heart of school communities, and play an important role in supporting student mental health.

The **aligned and integrated model (AIM)** helps to explain that all students benefit from good mental health promotion (**Tier 1, green section**). Some students need a bit more support and early intervention (**Tier 2, blue section**). And a few students need more intensive clinical care (**Tier 3, purple section**).





Tier 1- Prioritize wellness, welcoming and belonging for all students

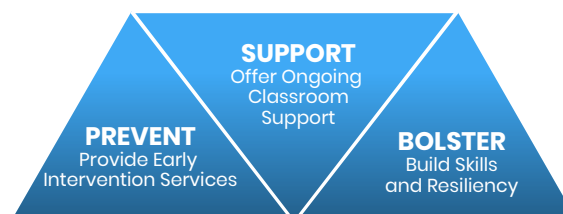
Connectedness is the sense of being cared for, being valued, and belonging. It is a powerful protective factor in mental health, and is central to creating mentally healthy schools. School staff can connect with students by expressing care and creating a welcoming environment. All students benefit from:



- a calm school environment
- a warm welcome
- a genuine smile
- a connection to a caring adult, every day
- a chance to learn
- a safe place to risk
- someone who notices when something is wrong
- someone who reaches out when they notice
- someone who listens, supports access to services
- someone who believes in them, and instills hope

Tier 2 - Notice and support students needing extra help

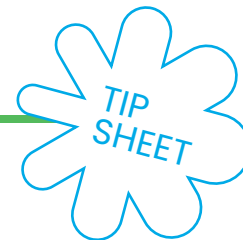
If you are concerned for a student, consider if there is a change in the way they have been thinking, feeling or acting. School staff can support students by acknowledging, bridging and connecting.



ACKNOWLEDGE that there are times when everyone feels upset.

- Notice when a student:
 - » says negative things about themselves or blames themselves for things beyond their control
 - » Has reactions or feelings that seem bigger than the situation
 - » Seems very unhappy, worried, guilty, fearful, irritable, sad, or angry
 - » Feels helpless, hopeless, lonely or rejected
 - » is alone often
 - » Voices physical complaints
 - » Feels tired more than usual





- Start a conversation. Listen with kindness and empathy, with a flexible, non-judgmental mindset:
 - » “I have noticed you seem to be feeling upset a lot these days. Would you like to talk about it?”
 - » “This is new for all of us and it’s hard, scary, exciting...”
 - » “We are finding our way, we all have questions and we are in this together.”
- Validate. Acknowledge the student’s experience, point of view, thoughts, emotions or behaviours:
 - » “I can understand why you would want to/wouldn’t want to_____ because_____.”
 - » “No wonder you’re sad because...”
 - » “I get why you believe...because...”

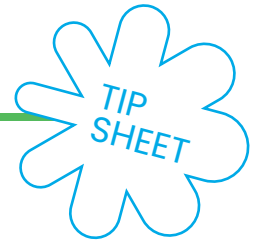
BRIDGE the student’s emotions and behaviours with their experiences, and remind them of coping skills that can help during the return to school process.

- Reassure: by using calming words, body language and tone:
 - » “We will figure it out.”
 - » “I hear you.”
 - » “I believe in you.”
- Link the student’s current experience to coping strategies they may have found effective in the past:
 - » “What have you done before when you felt this way?”
 - » “Who do you usually talk to when you feel this way?”
- Ask how you can help:
 - » “How can I help you?”
 - » “Let’s try to find _____ to talk to.”
 - » “I know of someone in the school who could help you get through this.”
 - » “Let’s see if we can figure this out.”

CONNECT students who need more support with resources, school mental health professionals or other helpers.

As a key player in the circle of support, you can connect students to resources in the school (e.g., teacher, administrator) or inform the student’s supports when you notice changes. Please refer to your school’s service pathway.





Tier 3 – Help students and families to access mental health supports and services

If you have a concern about a student, or are worried about a change you see in the student’s behaviour or demeanor, it is never a mistake to ask for help or seek guidance. Connect with your school team or school administrator to share your concerns.

If a student is in distress (e.g. the student has expressed thoughts of harming themselves or others), the student should always be supervised by an adult. Follow your board’s crisis protocols.

In case of emergency with a student, call 9-1-1. The student should always be supervised by an adult.



Practice Self-Care

It is essential for all staff to take care of themselves, not just for your own well-being, but also for those you care about and support. Your self-care will help improve your energy, focus, ability to cope with challenges and overall life experience.

[> Click to read Personal Resiliency Tips](#)

