Module #7: Safety Review Tool

Directions

- If you are working with a group, take some time to discuss each area of safety and the listed strategies. Here are some questions to guide your discussion:

  1. Which of these strategies are you using at the universal level in your classroom or school?
  2. Which do you need to strengthen or implement?
  3. Are there other strategies that you are already using that you can share with your colleagues and add to this list?
  4. Which strategies do you think address more than one area of safety?

- If you are working alone, jot down your answers to be shared with your team at a later time.

- Next, assess one area of the school such as classrooms, front office, hallways, or entrance and exit points in relationship to the five areas of safety using these two implementation tools from Module #6.

  1. Use the *Review Tool for School Policies, Protocols, Procedures and Documents* to consider each aspect of the specific environment you have chosen.
  2. Apply the *School-Wide Strategies: Stop, Start, Continue, Change* procedure to identify what you will stop, start, continue, and change.

- This process can be repeated for different areas of the school, as well as for the same area to measure change and identify new goals.

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Area #1: Physical Safety

Description

All students' basic physiological needs are met.

Strategies

- Alter classroom lighting, when needed.
- Allow for movement in the classroom.
- Avoid power struggles.
- Include sensory activities.
- Take into account students' different backgrounds and understandings.
- Allow access to the bathroom, when needed.
- Provide recess daily.
- Allow water and other replenishing items in the classroom.
- Diminish extraneous noises.
- Be sensitive to students' differences in noise toleration.
- Use calming, classical music to keep the lower and mid-brain calm.
- Include kinesthetic, auditory, and visual components in all lessons and activities.
- Provide a safe place for a distressed student.

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Area #2: Emotional Safety

Description

Positive and negative feelings are shared in an atmosphere of trust with no repercussions. Students feel that their input matters and is accounted for. Adults seek positive relationships with students. Students feel valued and supported. They have the confidence to think, cope with challenges, be successful and happy, feel worthy and deserving, assert needs and wants, achieve values, and enjoy the fruits of their efforts.

Strategies

- Set and maintain clear boundaries.
- Practice equity, not necessarily equality.
- Acknowledge complaints.
- Practice active listening.
- Provide honest feedback.
- Identify specific cause and effect relationships between events.
- Welcome students back into the classroom after a behavioral issue has been resolved.
- Verbalize thinking/processing related to decision making and completing activities.
- Always empower students.
- Take opportunities to get to know families better.
- Recognize and honor real successes.
- Make positive connections through positive comments to parents.
- Provide a way for students to know they will be heard, even if you are busy.
- Don't take things personally or make them personal.
- Emphasize instruction.
- Allow for self-talk.
- Show conviction in every student's potential.
- Deal with mistakes as opportunities to learn and grow.
- Emphasize student strengths.
- Do not humiliate or shame a student by using ridicule or belittling remarks.

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Area #3
Academic Safety

Description

The environment stimulates and encourages students who are accepted for what they can do and provided with what they uniquely need to learn and grow. Students demonstrate their thinking without a response of ridicule. They are encouraged to go beyond the one right answer. Students are engaged emotionally, intellectually and socially. The environment is designed to support higher-level thinking. Students enjoy learning.

Strategies

- Decrease the amount of talking in a lesson.
- Teach and use cross-midline activities.
- Identify student and teacher learning styles.
- Teach self-advocacy.
- Use humor, not sarcasm, in the classroom.
- Maintain high expectations.
- Practice patience.
- Access support within the school for a student who is struggling.
- Practice active listening during learning activities.
- Practice unconditional acceptance independent of academic performance.
- Match instruction/activities to student readiness.
- Emphasize instruction.
- Give praise for effort on challenging work.
- Create assignments that are learning tools.
- Create learning goals with students.
- Let students know classroom expectations and daily lesson expectations.
- Provide structure to academic activities.
- Always empower students in their academic work.
- Base activities on student readiness and skills.
- Change up activities – input/processing/input/processing.
- Give input and choices about activities.
- Use rubrics to explain expectations on assignments.

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Area #4
Social Safety

Description

Staff and students are self-aware of feelings and practice the skills of self-control and delayed gratification. Students are self-motivated and demonstrate empathy toward their classmates. They socialize effectively and are willing to commit to goals.

Strategies

- Teach skills of self-restraint.
- Provide students with opportunities to practice kindness.
- Use a calm tone of voice when talking with students.
- Begin with activities designed to get to know the students.
- Teach self-advocacy skills.
- Allow for stress-reducing activities (e.g., time for deep breathing).
- Practice patience.
- Collaborate with community resources.
- Provide recess daily.
- Emphasize student strengths.
- Provide social skills training.
- Provide experiences with diversity.
- Allow students to express opinions or different thoughts from the teachers.
- Establish an anti-bullying program.
- Acknowledge and address bullying in the classroom.
- Provide anti-bullying training.

Area #5
Behavioral Safety

Description

Discipline is the action of teaching or training, not punishing. Discipline involves using strategies like relationship building and success orientation. Power dynamics are more positive and cooperative, than authoritarian and disempowering. Practices are restorative, not punitive. Relationships are not power-based.

Strategies

- Teach self-regulation skills.
- Utilize school-wide, positive behavior programs.
- Hold students responsible for behavior by creating relevant consequences.
- Complete behavior plans and (when needed) more detailed Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) and Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs) to address specific challenging behaviors.
- Address irrational beliefs through cognitive behavior strategies.
- Establish an anti-bullying program.
- Utilize positive, non-verbal cues to remind students of behaviors they are working on, such as touching a student's desk to remind a student to refocus on a task.
- Welcome students back after behavior incidents.
- Specifically describe the appropriate behavior you want students to practice.
- Create rules that make sense.
- Be consistent in implementing classroom and individual behavior plans.
- Model the behavior that you want from students ("Practice what you preach").
- Decrease the amount of talking during a behavioral incident.
- Embed daily routines in classroom activities.
- Provide students with positive feedback regarding effort to change behavior and consistently adopting a more acceptable behavior.
- Teach the "hidden rules" in school and the classroom.
- Choose not to use exclusionary discipline as a consequence.

Adapted from Jane Bluestein's book <u>Creating Emotionally Safe Schools: A Guide for Educators and Parents</u> published by Health Communications, Inc. in Deerfield Beach, Florida (2001).