TeachME Professional Development

Creating Policies to Support Healthy Schools

Executive Summary

1. While initiatives focused on improving aspects of students' well-being in schools are gaining momentum, such efforts are often implemented in silos, without recognition of their interconnections.

A. True
B. False

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2. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model has developed a framework illustrating the interconnected nature of 10 elements of a healthy school environment, which include each of the following EXCEPT:

A. Health education, physical education and activity, and nutrition environment and services
B. Health services, counseling, psychological, and social services, social and emotional climate, and physical environment
C. Employee wellness, family engagement, and community engagement
D. Cultural awareness, diversity training, and trauma-informed services

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Recommendations and Next Steps

3. Overarching recommendations for promoting healthier schools include identifying the linkages between mental health and/or school climate and other aspects of healthy schools, recognizing that students, educators, and policymakers discuss mental health and school climate differently, tailor messaging appropriately, and:

A. Developing practical solutions or changes for promoting a healthy school climate that can be realistically attained
B. Building coalitions across healthy school domains
C. Promoting inclusive decision-making to address cross-cutting topics that support well being
D. Including design considerations that recognize health and health equity aims as critical to achieving academic success, social and emotional well-being, and civic connectivity

Introduction

4. In response to various high-profile school shootings in the 1990s, and increasing rates of youth suicide in the 2010s, policymakers identified bullying as a key factor, and more recently, a landmark study demonstrated significant issues related to:

A. Exclusionary discipline and discipline disparities
B. Stress and anxiety
C. Lack of resilience among young people
D. Interpersonal and social conflict

5. Recent school discipline and anti-bullying policies explicitly recognize the critical role other factors of student well-being, such as nutrition and physical activity, play in a student's propensity to engage in bullying or other behaviors.

A. True
B. False

Analytic Approach

6. In a study that analyzed the perspectives of state policymakers, educators, and students regarding integrating the key elements of a healthy school environment, the research team prioritized each of the following questions EXCEPT:

A. What do you think are the most important elements of a healthy school?
B. What are the critical resources needed to enable the elevation of healthy school environments?
C. What elements of healthy schools do you think are most pressing/need the most attention right now?
D. If you could make one change in your school/enact one policy/introduce one piece of legislation aimed at promoting healthy schools in your state/district, what would it be/include?

Results-Snapshot of Topics Discussed By Stakeholders

7. While student stakeholders' concerns focused on school climate and culture, and emotional and mental health, one of the topics discussed least frequently was school safety and security.

A. True

B. False

Emotional and Mental Health

8. State-level policymakers raised concerns about students and families struggling with addiction, students who have experienced or are experiencing ongoing trauma, and worrisome trends that seem to link increases in certain mental health issues with increases in:

A. Social stress
B. Isolation
C. The use of technology and social media
D. Family distress

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9. Policymakers clearly communicated the perception that effective communicative and problem-solving skills are fundamental to preparing students to learn, pursue college and careers, and ultimately grow into successful adults.

A. True
B. False

School Climate

10. Three specific aspects of school climate that were identified as being critical to healthy schools include relationships between students and caring adults, school leadership, and:

A. Teacher wellness
B. Clear and appropriate discipline procedures
C. A focus on student achievement
D. Parental involvement

Educator Perspectives

11. Educators frequently discussed school climate and culture and identified these as a top priority.

A. True
B. False

Mental Health

12. A particular concern of educators was trauma and its effects on students, and many mentioned students experiencing trauma due to living in poverty, experiencing homelessness, or:

A. Experiencing or witnessing abuse or violence
B. Exposure to crises
C. Worrying about deportation
D. Accidental injury or serious injury

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13. Educators identified strengthened social-emotional skills (SEL) as one of the most pressing needs, and described significant challenges to addressing this need because the heavy focus on test scores, academics, and accountability measures depletes resources that could be spent on SEL.

A. True
B. False

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14. A variety of limited resources create obstacles to addressing social-emotional skills in school according to educators, and of these resources, educators most frequently mentioned the:

A. Lack of financial resources
B. Lack of accountability measures
C. Lack of training
D. Lack of time

School Climate

15. Educators reported that teamwork and collaboration among staff are integral to a healthy school, as are opportunities to model these skills for students.

A. True
B. False

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16. Relationships in the context of healthy schools were frequently discussed by educators, and they linked positive relationships to a school's ability to meet students' needs, particularly between:

A. Teachers and students
B. Students and peer groups
C. School administrators and school staff
D. School staff and parents

Student Perspectives

17. Students reported that peer relationships are extremely important, noting that these relationships affect their emotional, mental, and physical health, and they identified such relationships as a priority for creating healthy schools.

A. True
B. False

Emotional and Mental Health

18. The strength of a teacher-student relationship and awareness of emotional and mental health, as well as the rigors of a particular learning environment, could make the difference in whether a student felt stressed and anxious or:

A. Challenged and supported
B. Connected and important
C. Accepted and appreciated
D. Respected and guided

19. Students acknowledged that more of their peers increasingly struggled with stress, anxiety, and depression, and that they also experienced vulnerability when trying to navigate emotional and mental health issues with peers.

A. True
B. False

School Climate and Culture

20. While caring administrators and teachers clearly made a difference in students' perceptions of their school's climate and culture, students reported that their school's structure either hindered or fostered a positive school climate, and the most commonly identified obstacle of getting to know their peers was:

A. Established cliques

B. Academic tracking practices
C. Isolated social structures
D. Socioeconomic differences

Broader School Health Policies

21. Policymakers suggested that the educational system should prioritize helping students develop social-emotional skills because they are skills and can be very challenging for students to hone without adequate support.

A. True
B. False

Discussion

22. Which of the following is an accurate statement about the perspectives of policymakers, educators, and students related to students' emotional and mental health needs?

A. Students and teachers expressed a desire to have a culture of health established in their schools rather than relying on health professionals to regulate their emotional and mental well being
B. Stakeholders emphasized violence, abuse, and trauma, and discussed specific examples of how these issues are experienced by students in their communities and the need for school staff to receive training to address these issues
C. Educators and students articulated various ways that physical, emotional and mental health intersects with more traditional school health topics
D. Students focused primarily on stress and anxiety related to academic pressure, and on stigma associated with seeking mental health support