



# Multi-Tiered Approaches to Preventing Bullying and Suicide: Promoting Digital Wellness and Supporting Schools

September 29, 2025



# Funding Sponsor

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Resource files and links will be shared in the chat

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# Taking a System's Approach to Mental Health

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Shai Fuxman



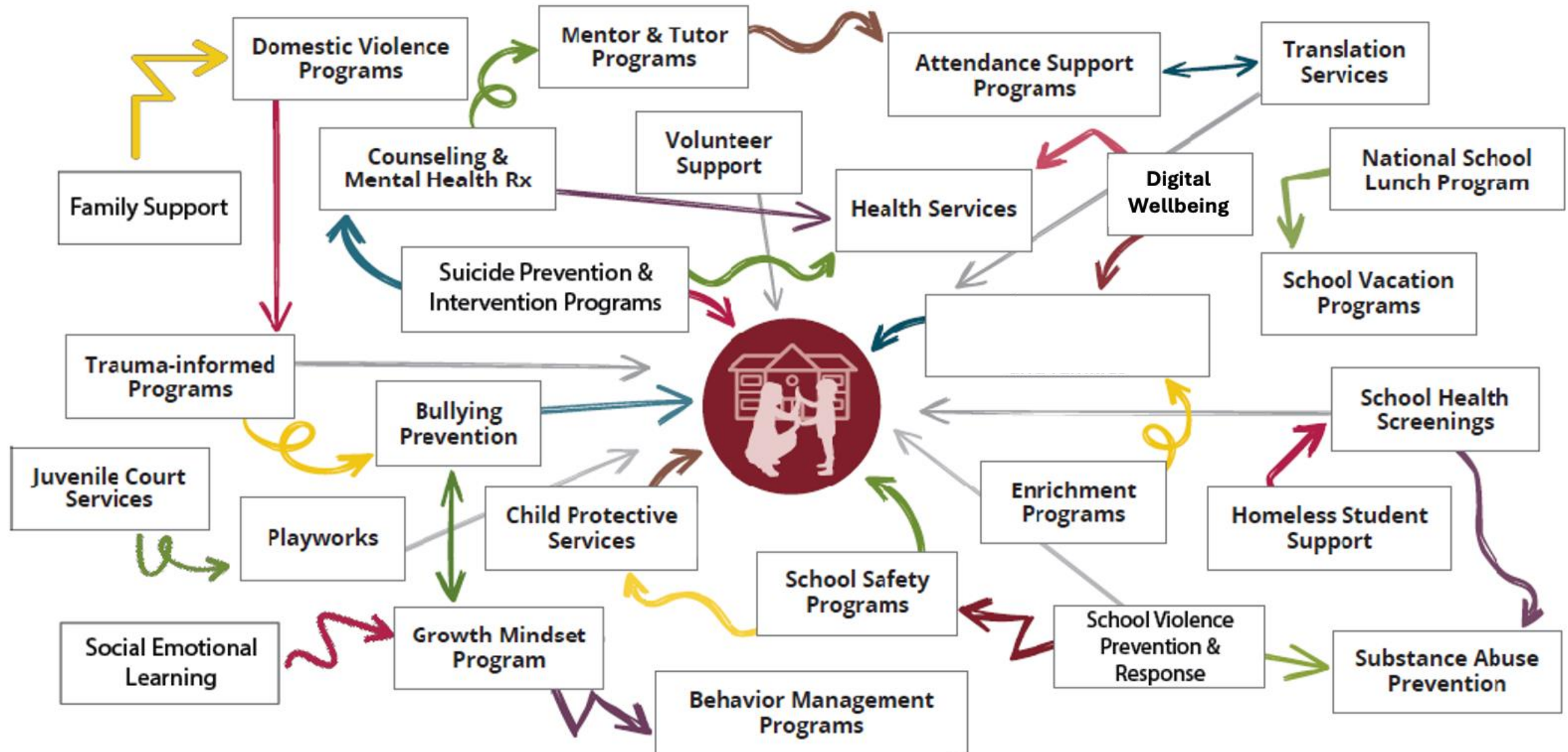
# Taking a System's Approach to Mental Health



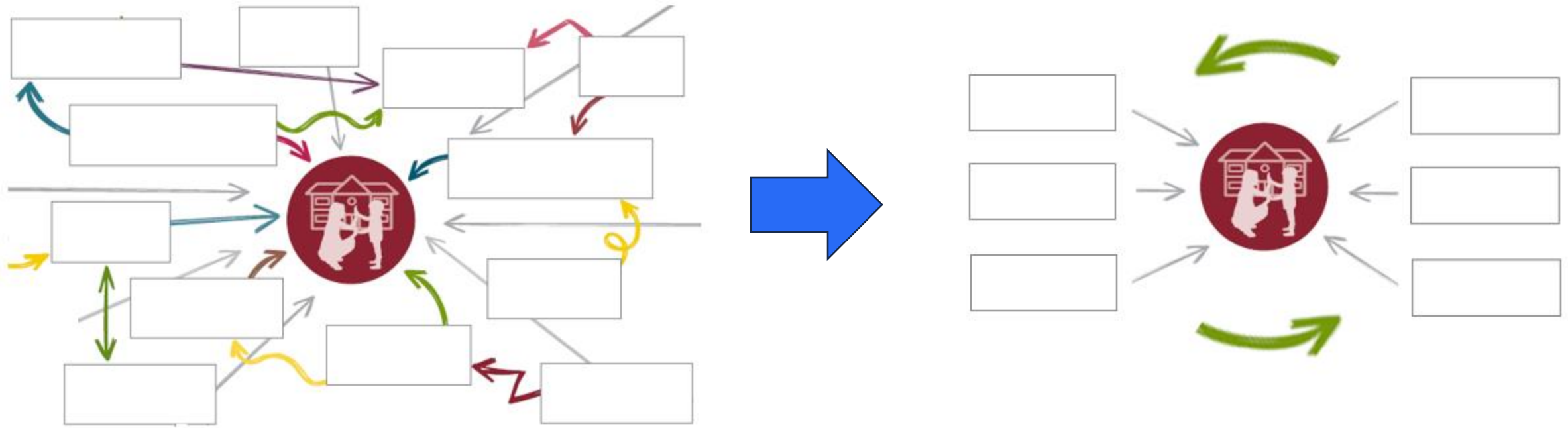
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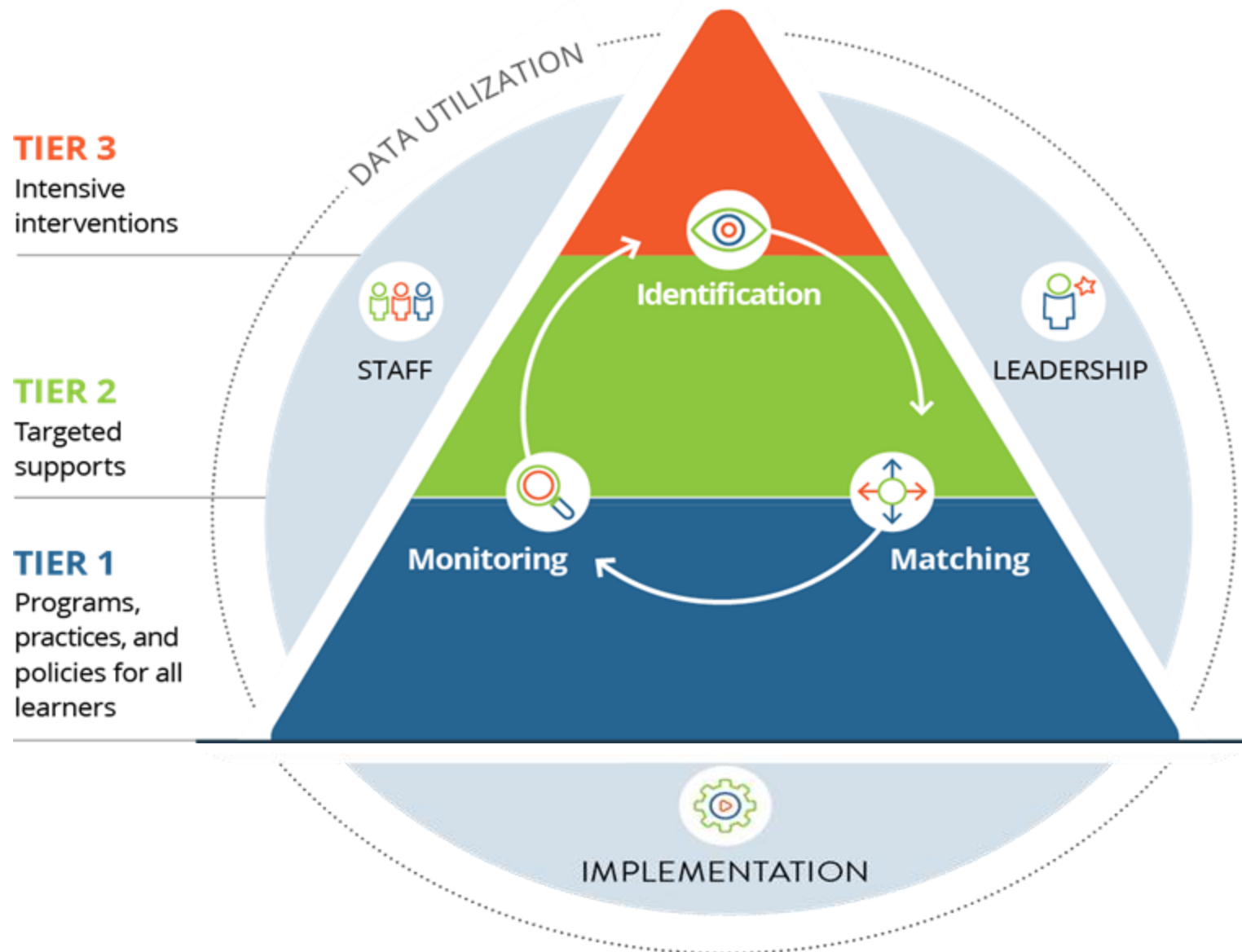
# Taking a System's Approach to Mental Health



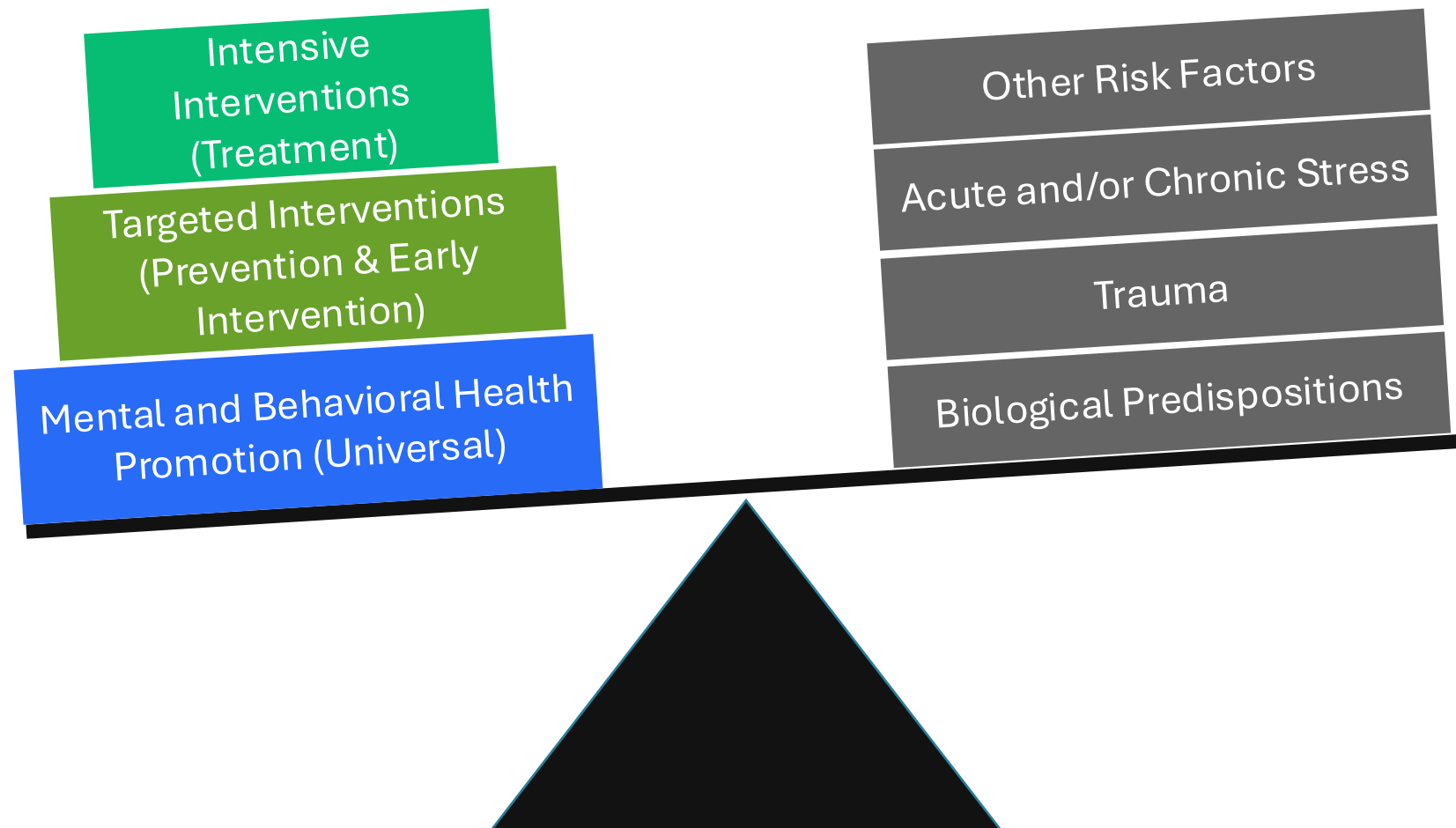
# Taking a System's Approach to Mental Health



# The Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Approach



# MTSS for Mental and Behavioral Health



# Tier 1

**Explicit Mental  
Health  
Instruction**

**School-wide and  
Classroom-based  
Practices**

**Integration of  
wellbeing skills  
into Academic  
Instruction**

**Universal  
Screeners**

## Tier 2

**Toolkit of  
Targeted  
Interventions**

**Small Group  
Support**

**Additional  
Classroom-  
Based Support**

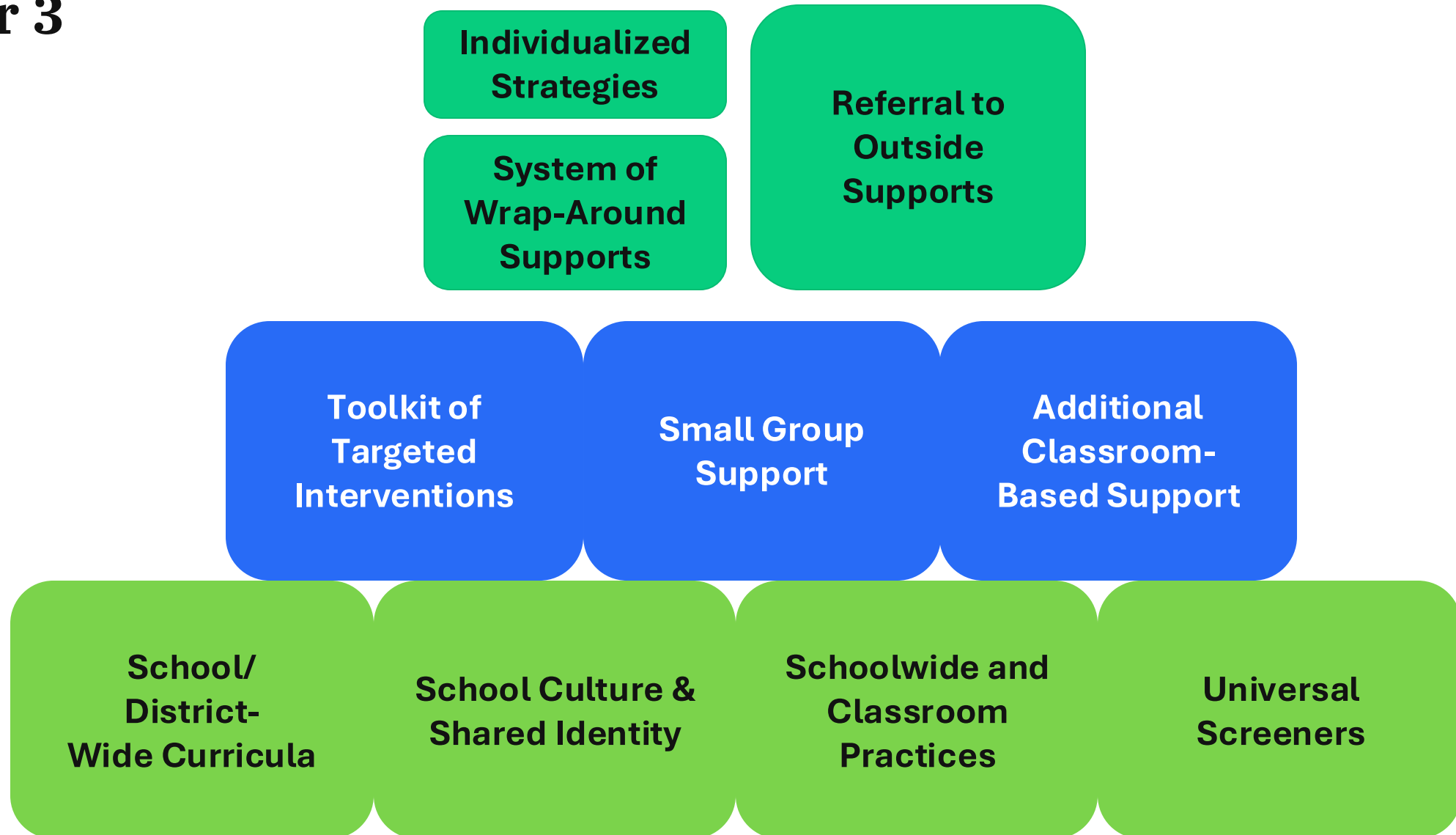
**School/  
District-  
Wide Curricula**

**School Culture &  
Shared Identity**

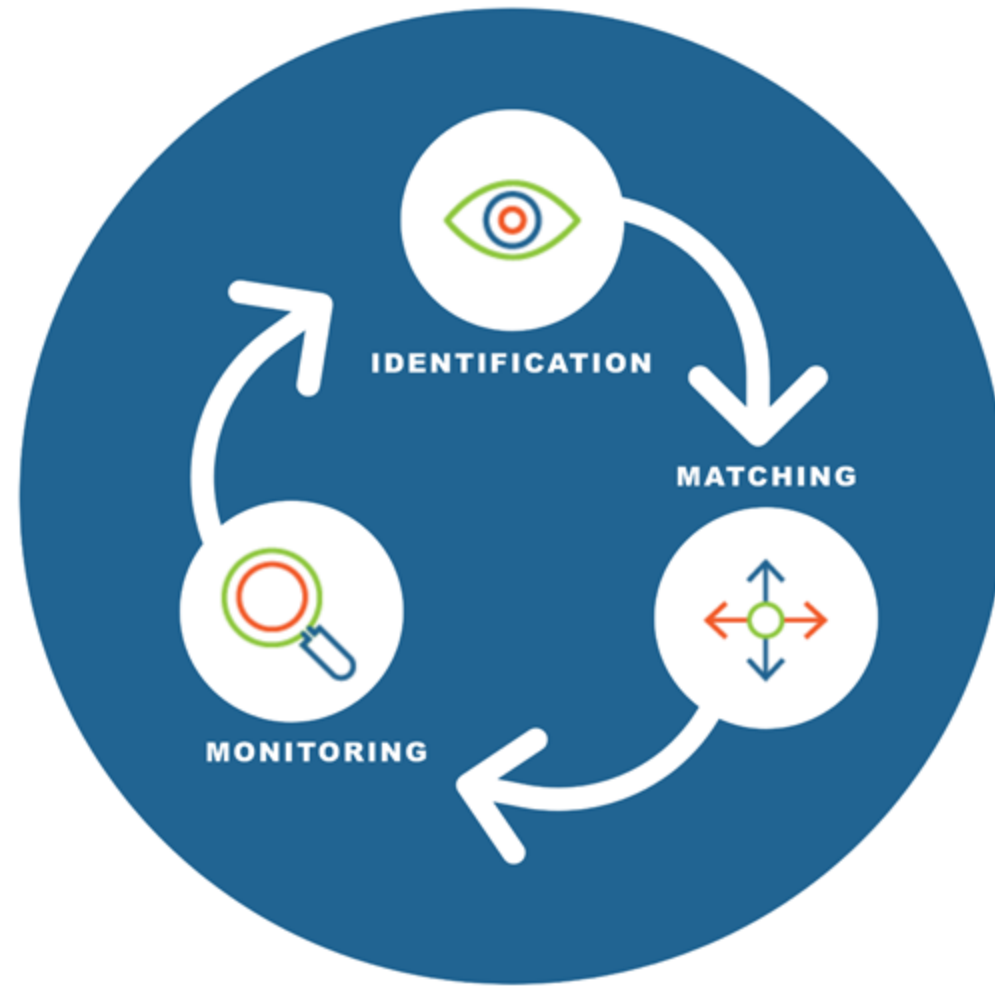
**Schoolwide and  
Classroom  
Practices**

**Universal  
Screeners**

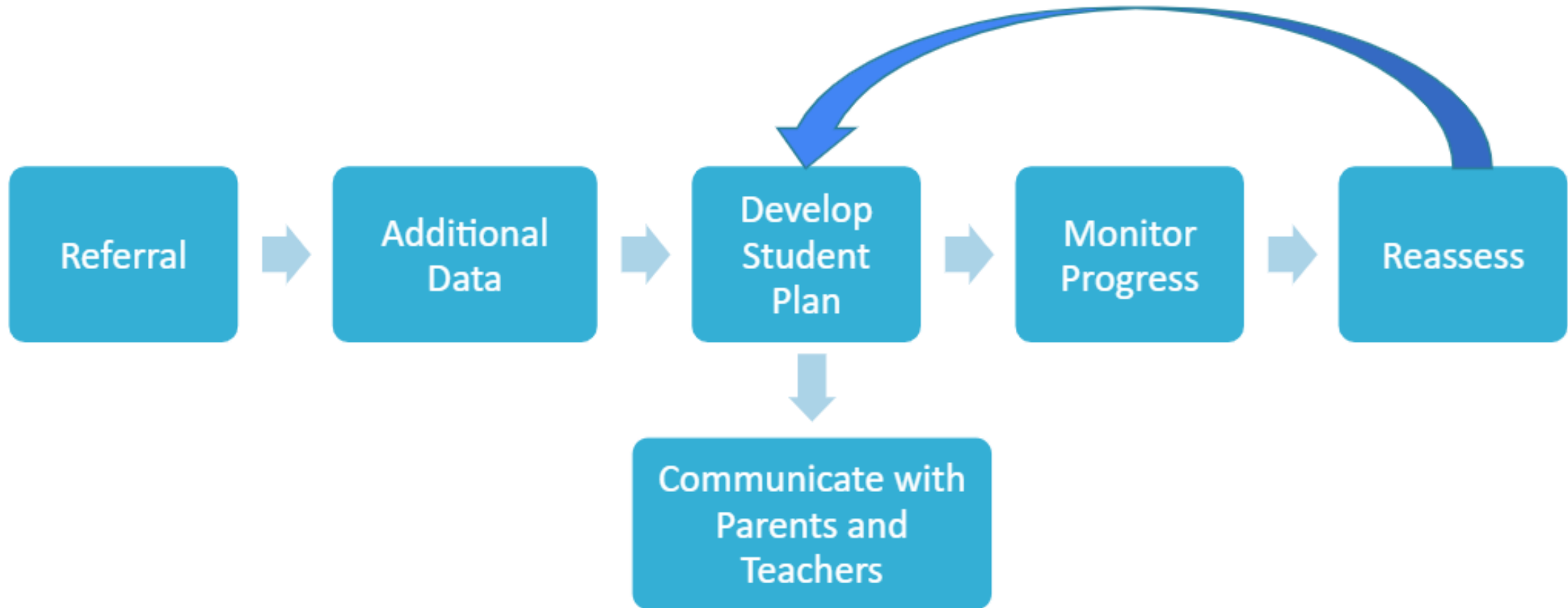
## Tier 3



# Identification, Matching and Monitoring



# Student Support Team Process



# Other Drivers of MTSS Effectiveness



## Leadership Vision & Commitment

### Leadership:

- States commitment to students' mental and behavioral health
- Articulate the district's MTSS vision and approach
- Creates and implements the needed policies and structures to enable MTSS to work
- Invests resources to make MTSS work



## Effective Implementation

### Programs and interventions are:

- Evidence-based
- Selected to meet students needs based on data and understanding of local context
- Aligned with district's priorities and vision
- Implemented and monitored for fidelity; with planned adaptations as needed

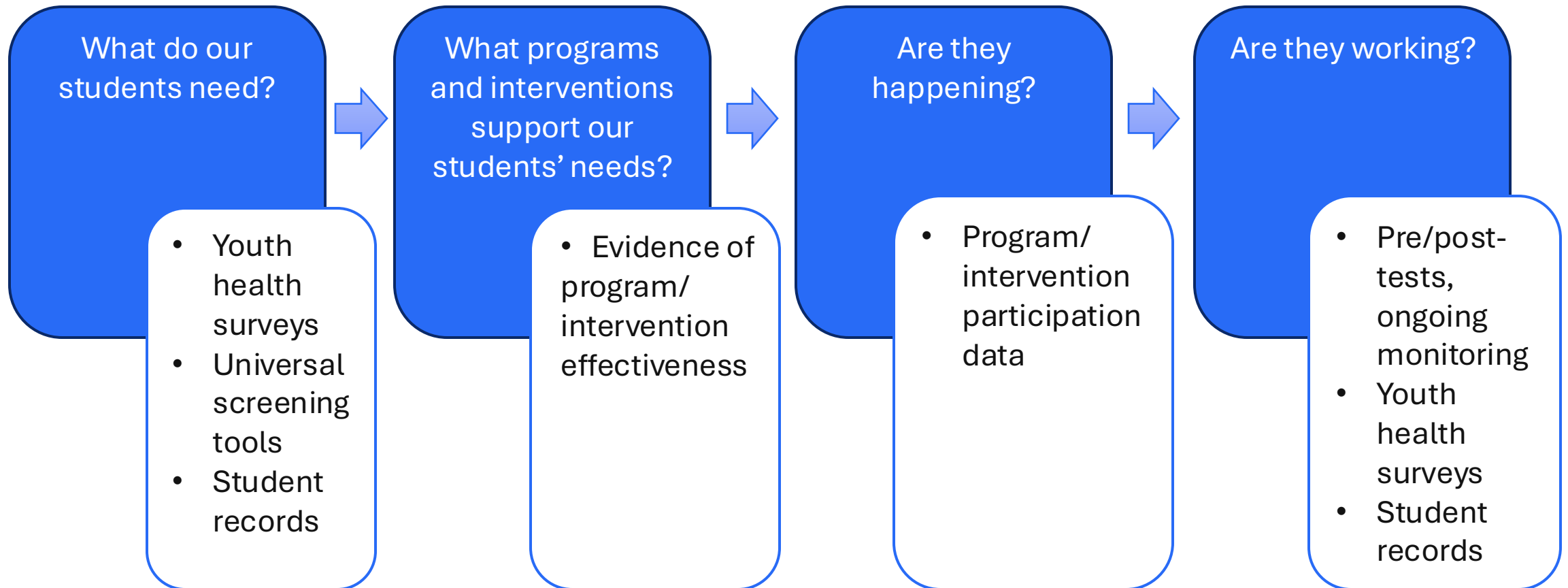


## Staff Competency


### Staff:

- Have the buy-in for a system's approach to student wellbeing
- Understand their role in a system's approach to student wellbeing
- Have the skills to play their role in the district's approach to student wellbeing
- Are trained and supported in an ongoing basis

# Data-Informed Decision Making



Shai Fuxman  
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A photograph of three young women in a casual setting. One woman on the right is holding a smartphone, and the other two are looking at it. The image is partially obscured by a white overlay on the left side where the text is located.

# Applying Multi-Tiered Systems of Support to Digital Wellness

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Shari Kessel Schneider

## ***‘It’s Life or Death’: The Mental Health Crisis Among U.S. Teens***

*New York Times, May 2, 2022*

## **Social media is driving teen mental health crisis, surgeon general warns**

*NBC News, May 23, 2023*

## **Schools across the U.S. restrict cellphones amid growing behavior, mental health, academic concerns**

*CBS News, September 2, 2024*

## **Why Cellphone Bans Aren’t the Cure for Student Anxiety**

*CBS News, September 2, 2024*

We can’t solve a complex problem with a simple solution

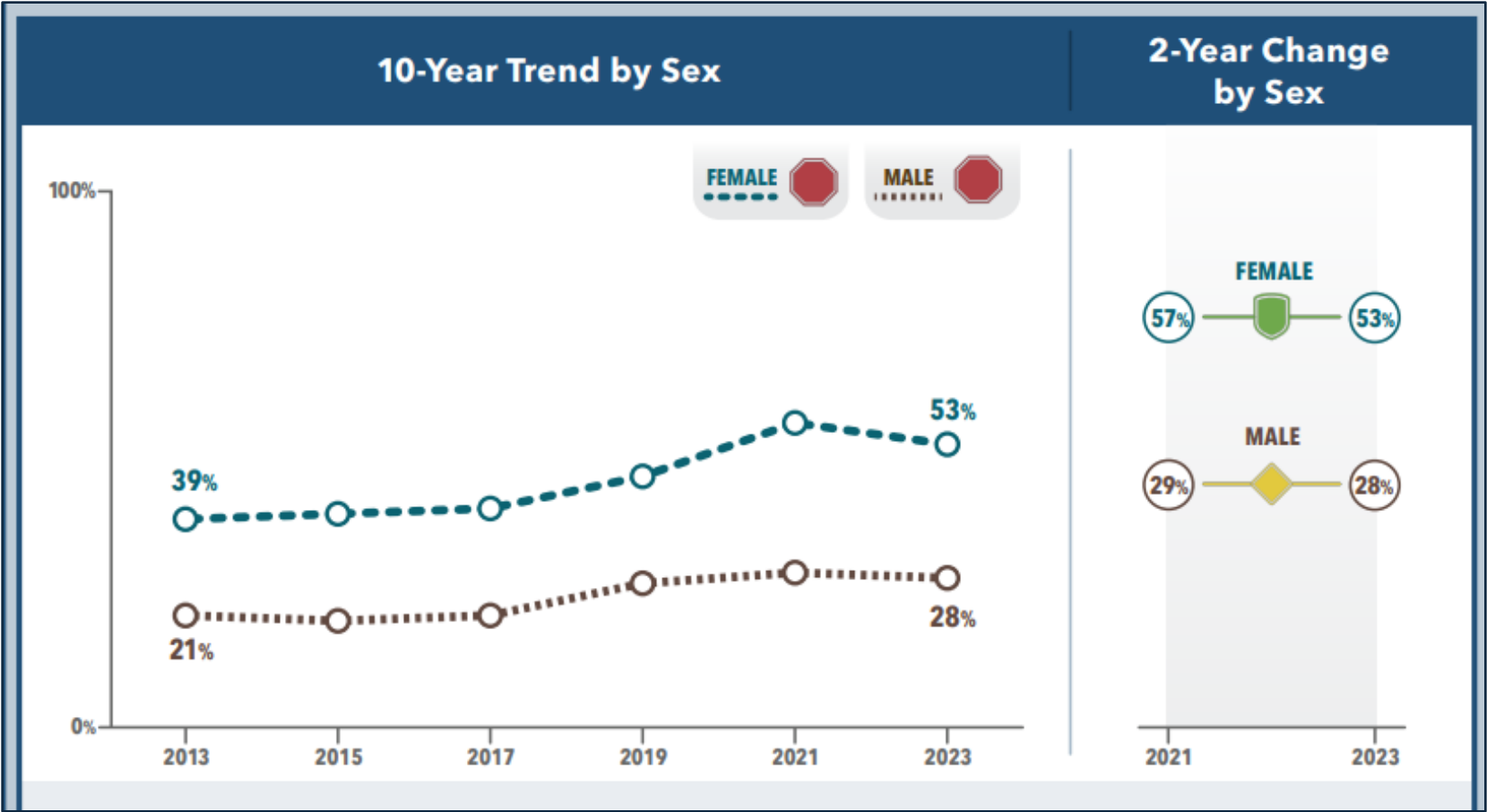
*Education Week, August 22, 2024*

## **Students face new cellphone restrictions in 17 states as school year begins**

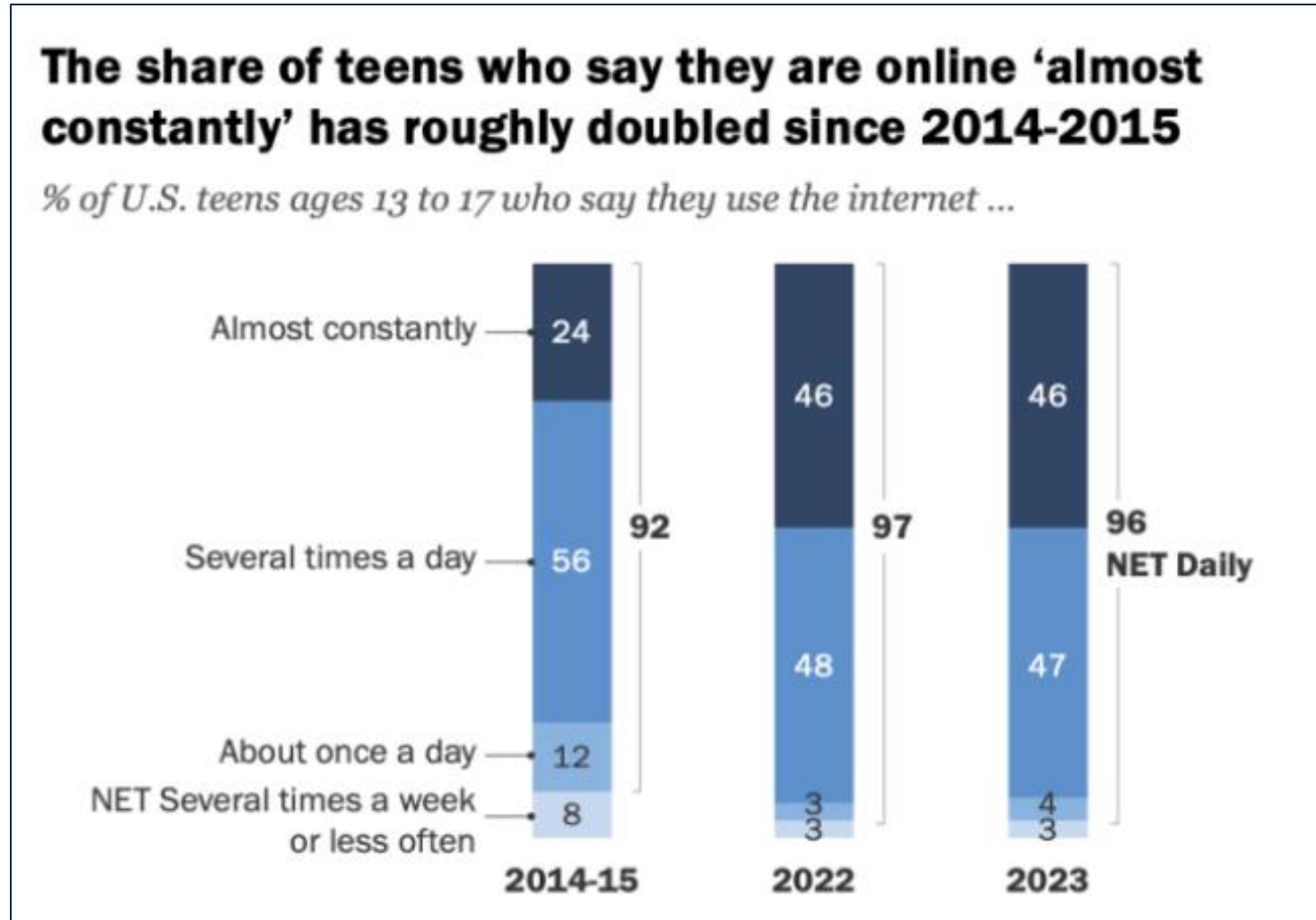
*Associated Press, August 21, 2025*

# National Trends in Mental Health

## Persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness during the past year, 2013-2023 YRBS



# National Trends in Online Behavior



Survey of U.S. teens conducted Sept.26-Oct.23, 2023. “Teens, Social Media and Technology 2023”. Pew Research Center.

# What does research say about the link between social media and mental health?\*

- There are associations with benefits and harms:
  - Benefits: connection, self-expression, creativity, support, promoting help-seeking
  - Harms: anxiety, depression, poor sleep, cyberbullying, negative social comparison, lower school performance, poor body image, disordered eating
- Conflicting findings may be due to:
  - Measures of social media use (e.g., time, quality of interactions, addiction)
  - Study populations
  - Many other contributing factors
- Lacking evidence on directionality

***Everyone Says Social Media Is Bad for Teens. Proving It Is Another Thing.***

Parents, scientists and the surgeon general are worried. But there isn't even a shared definition of what social media is.

*New York Times, June 2023*

\*Summarized from research literature, media, and subject matter experts



What comes to mind  
when you think of  
**digital wellness?**

“Digital wellness is a positive state of mental, physical, and social-emotional health pursued through intentional, authentic, and balanced engagement with technology and interactive media.”

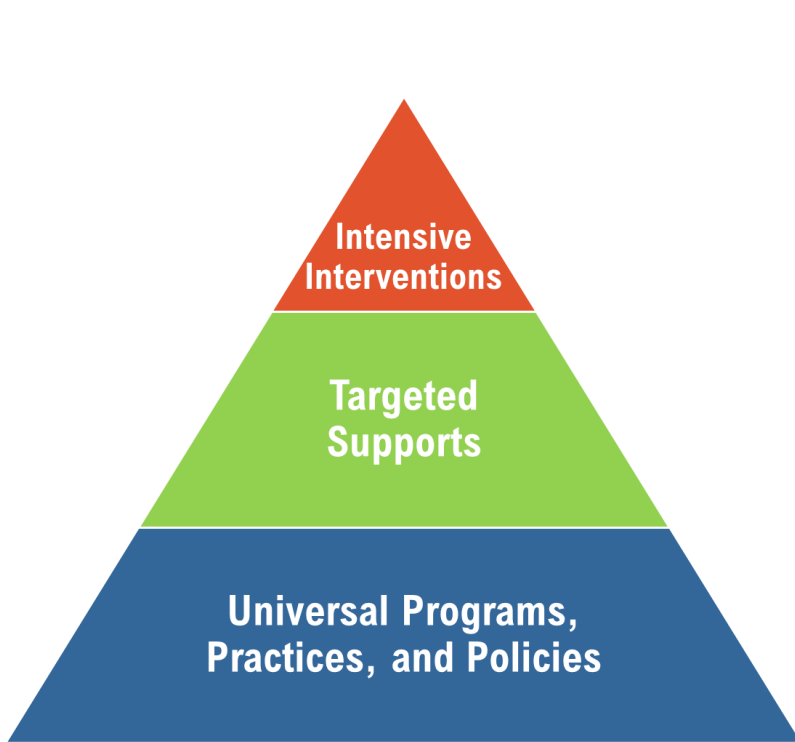


Source: Children's Hospital Boston Digital Wellness Lab  
[About Us - The Digital Wellness Lab](#)

## Why Apply the MTSS Framework to Digital Wellness?

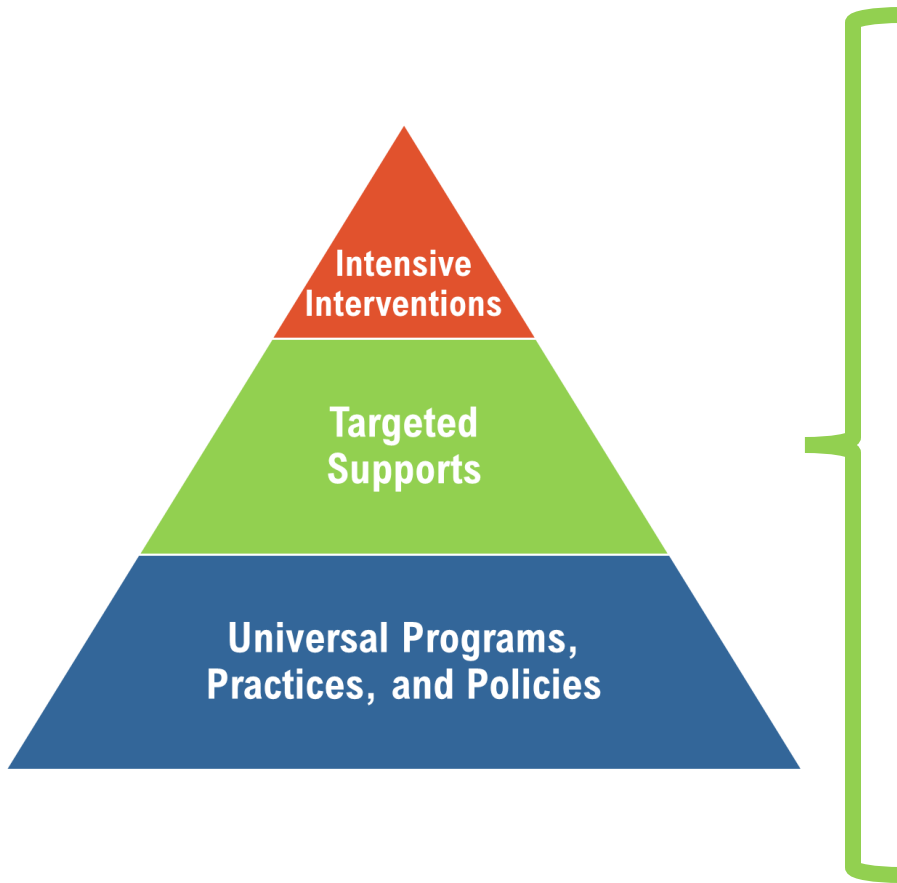
- It is critical to address the varying levels of needs and provide appropriate supports for all students.
- Promoting digital wellness requires a systemic, integrated approach.
- MTSS is data-driven.
- MTSS provides a framework for identifying gaps and prioritizing strategies.
- There is evidence of the effectiveness of the MTSS approach in other areas.

# Tier 1: Digital Wellness Programs, Practices, and Policies for All Learners



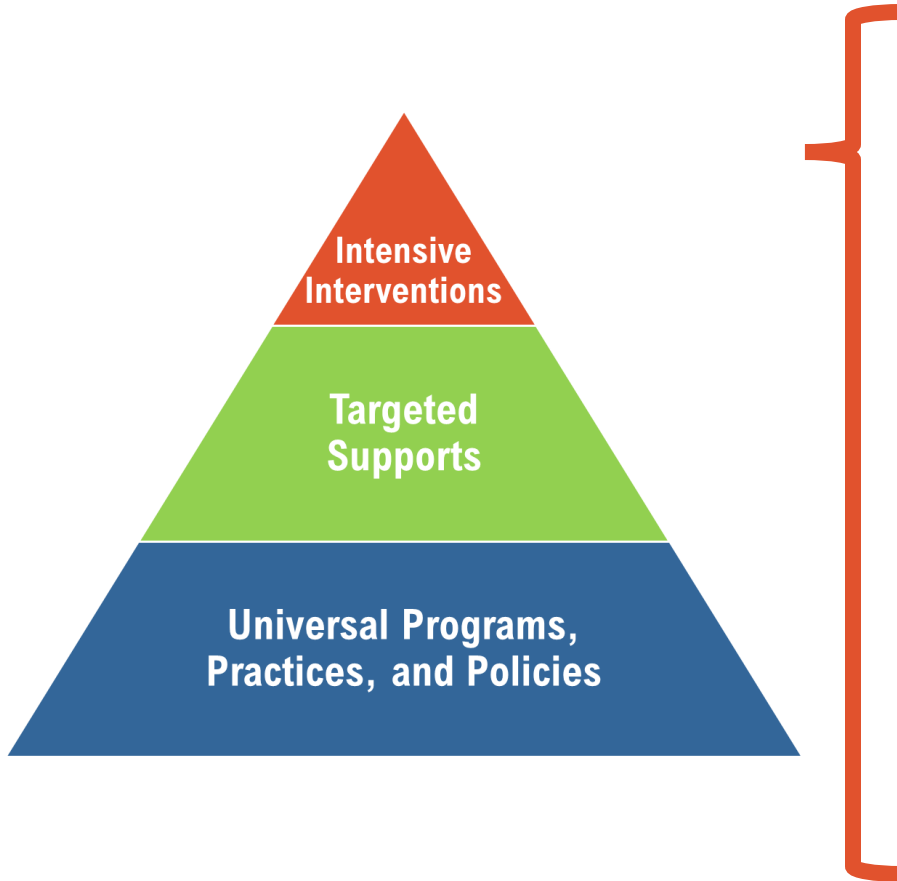
- Classroom educational efforts
- Schoolwide educational efforts
- School climate initiatives
- School policies
- Staff training/professional development
- Parent engagement and parent-school collaborations
- School-community collaborations

# Tier 2: Digital Wellness Targeted Supports



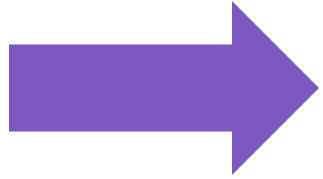
- Small group supports for students:
  - Needing additional support with social/communication skills
  - Struggling with mental health (that may be exacerbated by online activities)
  - Consider peer education/mentoring small group approaches

# Tier 3: Digital Wellness Intensive Interventions

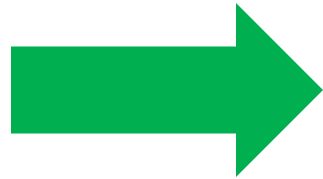


- One-on-one counseling supports for students with:
  - Problematic or addictive digital media use
  - Involvement in cyberbullying
  - Mental health challenges
- Referrals to community resources for intensive supports

# Getting Started



Establish a **Digital Wellness Task Force** (or charge an existing group) to determine priorities and strategies, educate the school community, gain buy-in, and represent all voices (educators, students, parents/caregivers)



Conduct an **inventory and assessment** of existing digital wellness efforts; prioritize efforts to fill gaps and improve current practices



Begin to think about how you might determine students' **levels of need** and ways you may match them with the appropriate **supports**

Shari Kessel Schneider  
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# Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention for Schools (MTSP)

A Multi-Tiered Approach to Youth Suicide Prevention

Education Development Center



# Overview of MTSP



# Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention for Schools (MTSP)

**School suicide prevention is most effective when it brings together a variety of prevention strategies to prevent student distress, support for young people who are struggling, and care for the school community after a loss.**

**Effective school-based suicide prevention includes** a multi-tiered, systems-wide approach with 6 key components.




# 6 Key Suicide Prevention Components for School Systems

1 

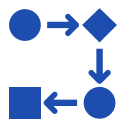
Engaging Key School Community Members

2 

Developing Community Partnerships

3 

Written Policies & Protocols for Helping Students Who are At Risk for Suicide

4 

Written Policies & Protocols for After a Death by Suicide

5 

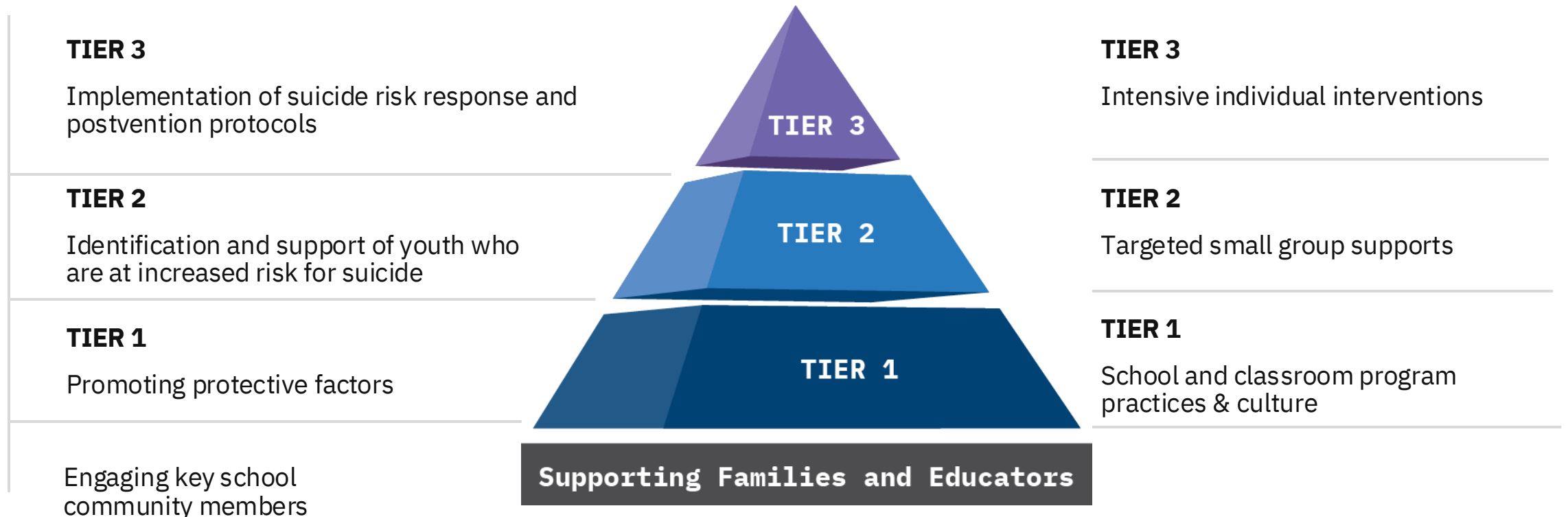
Identification & Support of Students Who are At Increased Risk for Suicide

6 

Promoting Protective Factors

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

## SCHOOL TIERS



# Goals, Outcomes, Deliverables

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Equip knowledge, skills, & capacity to prevent youth suicide

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Enable the development of comprehensive, system-wide approaches to suicide prevention

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Identify and address unique community needs in school suicide prevention

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Form or strengthen relationships with diverse community suicide prevention partners

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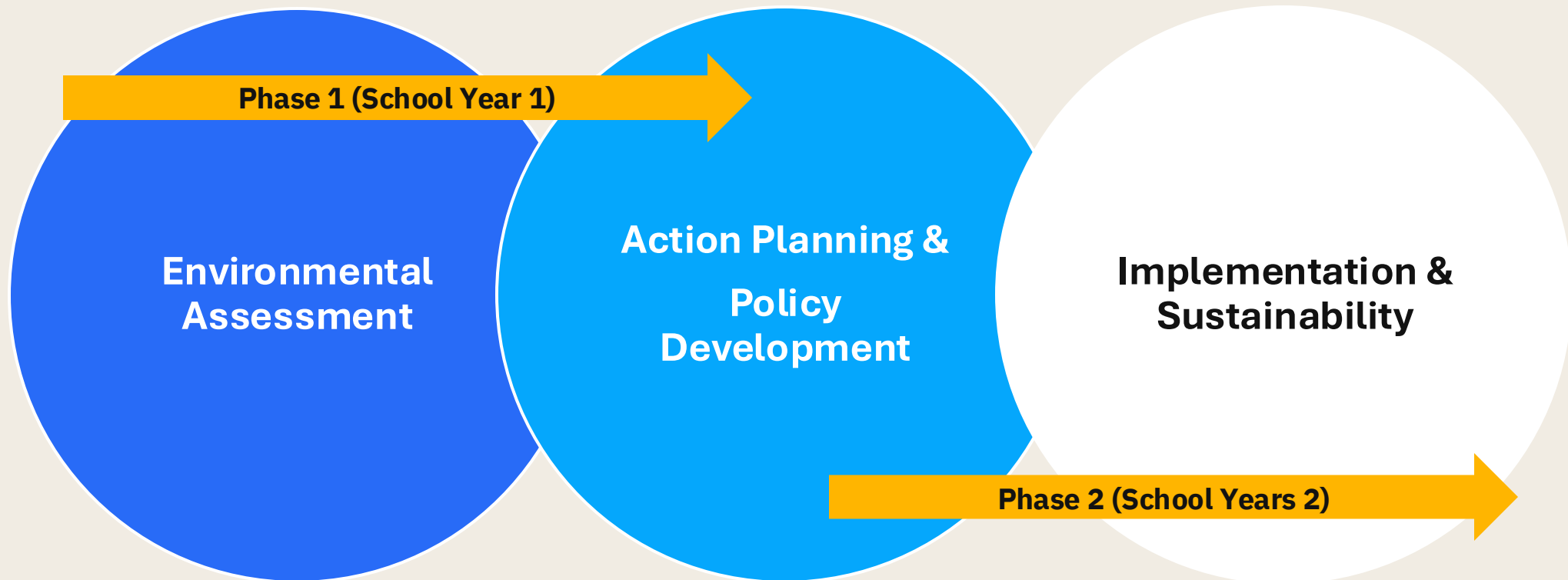
Increase connectedness with other districts and schools

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- ✓ **Plan & Vision**
- ✓ **Environmental Assessment Data**
- ✓ **Documented Protocols**
- ✓ **Resources and Trainings**
- ✓ **Community Partnerships**
- ✓ **Communication Materials and Strategy**

# How it Works: Systems Change in Schools

## 2 Phases Focused on Planning, Implementation, & Sustainability



# How it Works: Systems Change in Schools

## Technical Assistance (TA) Focused on Planning, Implementation, & Sustainability

### District Team

- Superintendents/ Assistant Supt.
- School Leaders & Directors
- Social Workers
- Clinicians
- Teachers
- Support Staff
- Students
- Families
- Board Members

### Learning Events

- Kickoff Event
- 8 community workshops focused on suicide prevention components
- Acquire knowledge and skills around suicide prevention in schools
- Engage in strategic planning, implementation, policy making
- Build supportive relationships

### Coaching & Facilitation

- Site Visits
- Monthly 1-1 Calls
- Analyze & apply assessment data
- Strategic planning guidance
- Ongoing technical assistance for each team
- Aligning school efforts with state guidance & priorities
- Facilitating community linkages
- Building sustainable capacity

# MTSP Environmental Assessment



# MTSP Environmental Assessment

## Purpose of the MTSP Environmental Assessment (MTSP Assessment):

- Provide school teams with information on context, resources, and evidence-informed practices that support the 6 key components of suicide prevention
- Guide school teams in assessing what they already have in place related to suicide prevention, mental health promotion, and life skills development
- Help school teams to identify both strengths and areas for growth
- Allow school teams to show progress in suicide prevention



# School Suicide Prevention Assessment

## Organizational Change Structure

**School teams rank their current stage of change for each individual assessment item. Each ranking indicates...**

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>1. Unaware</b>            | Our school system is not currently aware that there is a need to address this consideration.  |
| <b>2. No Current Efforts</b> | Our school system is aware that there is a need to address this consideration, but we have not taken steps to create change(s) related to this area.                                  |
| <b>3. Planning</b>           | Our school system is aware that there is a need to address this consideration, and we are laying out plans for how to create change(s) related to this area.                          |
| <b>4. Implementing</b>       | Our school system has begun taking new steps/implementing efforts to create change(s) related to this area. School systems will usually spend the least amount of time in this stage. |
| <b>5. Sustaining</b>         | Our school system has already created change(s) related to this area and we have put in place processes to ensure these change(s) are monitored and continued.                        |

# MTSP Assessment

[go.edc.org/MTSP-Assessment](https://go.edc.org/MTSP-Assessment)

## Section 1: Engaging School Community Members

### Staff Awareness & Support

|        |  | Stages of Change                                   |   |  |  |  | Discussion Notes: |
|--------|--|--|---|--|--|--|-------------------|
|        |  | 1. Precontemplation<br>Unaware of a need to change | 2. Contemplation<br>Aware of need to change, but not yet ready to invest in change    | 3. Preparation<br>Aware of need to change and laying out plans to make change  | 4. Action<br>Actively taking steps to create change  | 5. Maintenance<br>Ongoing efforts to sustain change  |                   |
| Item # | Key Considerations   | Unaware  | No Current Efforts  | Planning   | Implementing   | Sustaining   |                   |
| 1a     | School districts regularly communicate with all staff on social and emotional learning (SEL), mental health promotion, and suicide prevention. | Unaware  | Minimal to no communication with staff on SEL, mental health, and suicide prevention. | School districts are planning steps to communicate with staff on SEL, mental health, and suicide prevention.                         | School districts are actively sharing new communication with staff on SEL, mental health, and suicide prevention.              | School districts are maintaining ongoing staff communication on SEL, mental health, and suicide prevention.                                    |                   |
|        | Self-Ranking (Type X in chosen column)   |  |   |  |  |  |                   |
| 1b     | School staff are aware and supportive of SEL, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention.   | Unaware  | Minimal to no staff awareness and support.  | School districts are planning steps to develop staff awareness and support for SEL, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention. | School districts are actively developing staff awareness and support for SEL, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention. | School districts are maintaining school staff awareness and support for SEL, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention.                  |                   |
|        | Self-Ranking: (Type X in chosen column)  |  |   |  |  |  |                   |
| 1c     | School staff are aware of the connections between SEL, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention.  | Unaware  | Minimal to no staff awareness.  | School districts are planning steps to strengthen staff awareness across departments.  | School districts are actively developing staff awareness across departments.   | School districts are maintaining awareness of the connections between SEL, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention across departments. |                   |
|        | Self-Ranking (Type X in chosen column)   |  |   |  |  |  |                   |
| 1d     | School staff understand their unique roles in suicide prevention.  | Unaware  | Minimal to no staff understanding.  | School districts are planning steps to strengthen staff understanding of their roles in suicide prevention.                          | School districts are actively providing new staff education on their roles in suicide prevention.                              | School districts are maintaining staff education on their roles in suicide prevention.   |                   |
|        | Self-Ranking: (Type X in chosen column)  |  |   |  |  |  |                   |
| 1e     | School staff are actively engaged in existing SEL, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention efforts.                                    | Unaware  | Minimal to no staff engagement.   | School districts are planning steps to strengthen staff engagement.  | School districts are actively engaging staff in new SEL, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention efforts.              | School districts are maintaining staff engagement in SEL, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention efforts.                             |                   |
|        | Self-Ranking (Type X in chosen column)   |  |   |  |  |  |                   |

# MTSP Assessment Companion Guide

[go.edc.org/MTSP-Assessment-Guide](https://go.edc.org/MTSP-Assessment-Guide)



## Multi-Tiered Suicide Prevention (MTSP) for Schools Environmental Assessment

COMPANION GUIDE



[solutions.edc.org](https://solutions.edc.org)

[SOLUTIONS.EDC.ORG](https://SOLUTIONS.EDC.ORG)

## Section 1: Engaging Key School Community Members

### Overview

Every member of a school community—teachers, administrators, parents/guardians, counselors, and others—has a role to play in school suicide prevention. Schools are best positioned to provide these efforts in suicide prevention when the whole community is engaged. In addition to any trainings around identifying and supporting youth who are at risk for suicide, these stakeholders require a clear understanding of school suicide prevention protocols and resources.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

### Guiding Questions and Context

#### 1A. COMMUNICATING WITH STAFF ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL), MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION, AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

As you rank item 1a, ask your team to answer the following questions:

- Is your school district communicating with staff on SEL, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention?
- Is your school district using a variety of communication methods to promote SEL, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention?
- Is your school district providing opportunities for staff to ask questions or give feedback on SEL, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention?
- **Why or why not?**

Schools can incorporate SEL, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention into their ongoing efforts to communicate, train, and meet with staff. There is no requirement for a minimum level of communication format or frequency, but recurring reminders, trainings, and meetings focused on SEL, mental health promotion, and suicide prevention demonstrate your school's commitment to suicide prevention and keep the topic fresh in staff minds. Any time you are investing in new or existing suicide prevention programming, strategies, or activities, information on efforts should be shared with all staff.

#### 1B. SCHOOL DISTRICT STAFF AWARENESS OF SEL, MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION, AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

As you rank item 1b, answer the following questions:

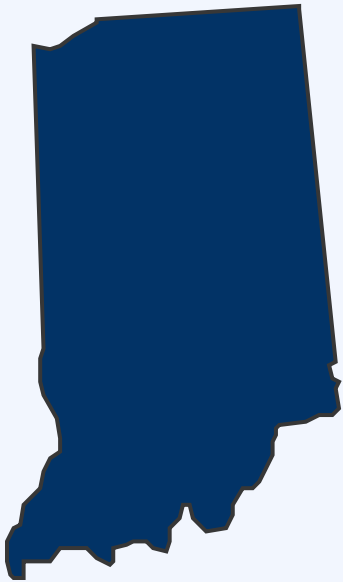
- Would the average staff member say your school district is committed to promoting student wellness?

# Past & Current Projects



# Where is MTSP being implemented?

## Indiana



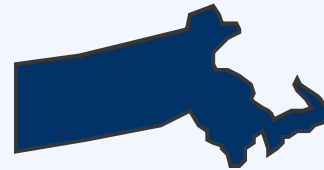
19 School  
Districts across 2  
Cohorts

## Connecticut



5 School Districts

## Massachusetts



8 School Districts

## South Carolina

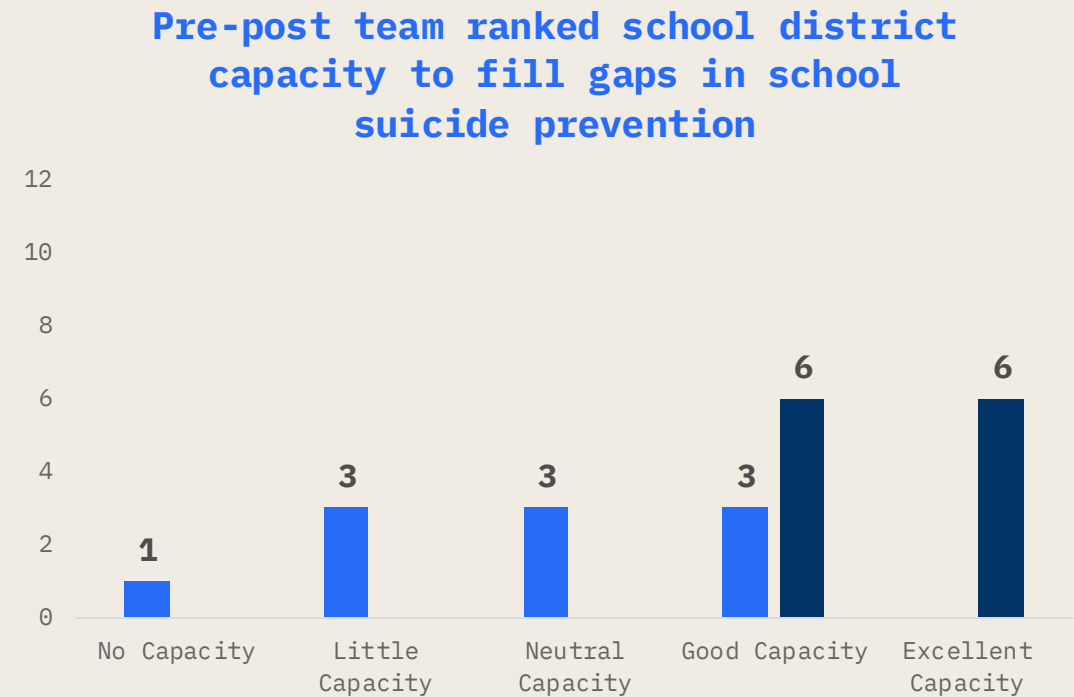
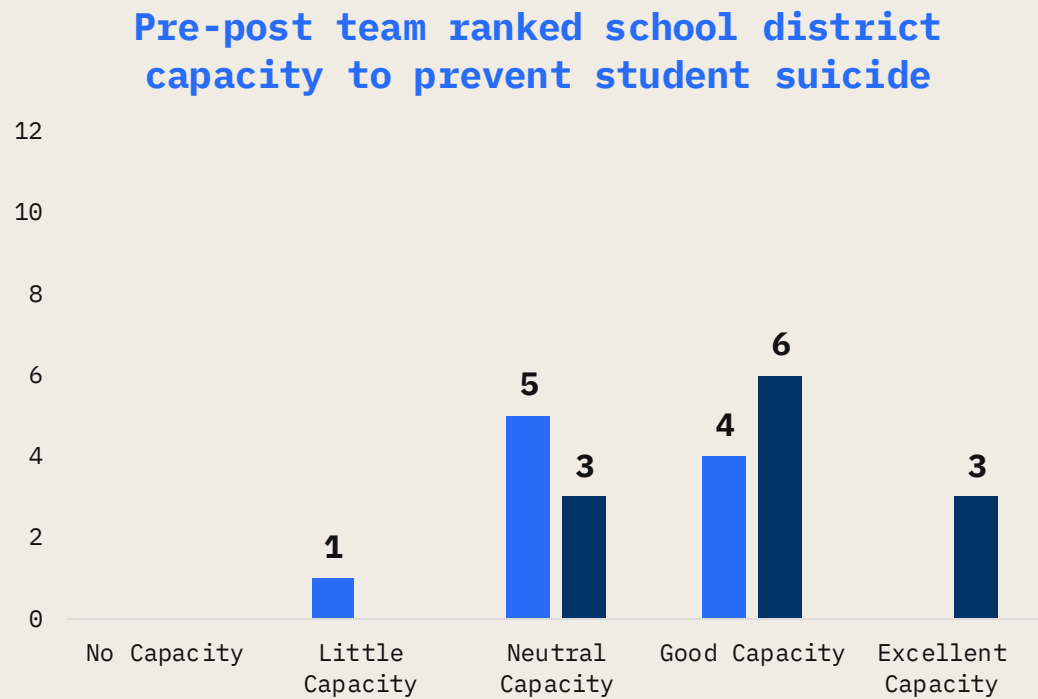


3 School Districts

# MTSP for Schools Environmental Assessment Data

## Previous Pre-Post Data

Pre-Post Test Question Results – School District Capacity:



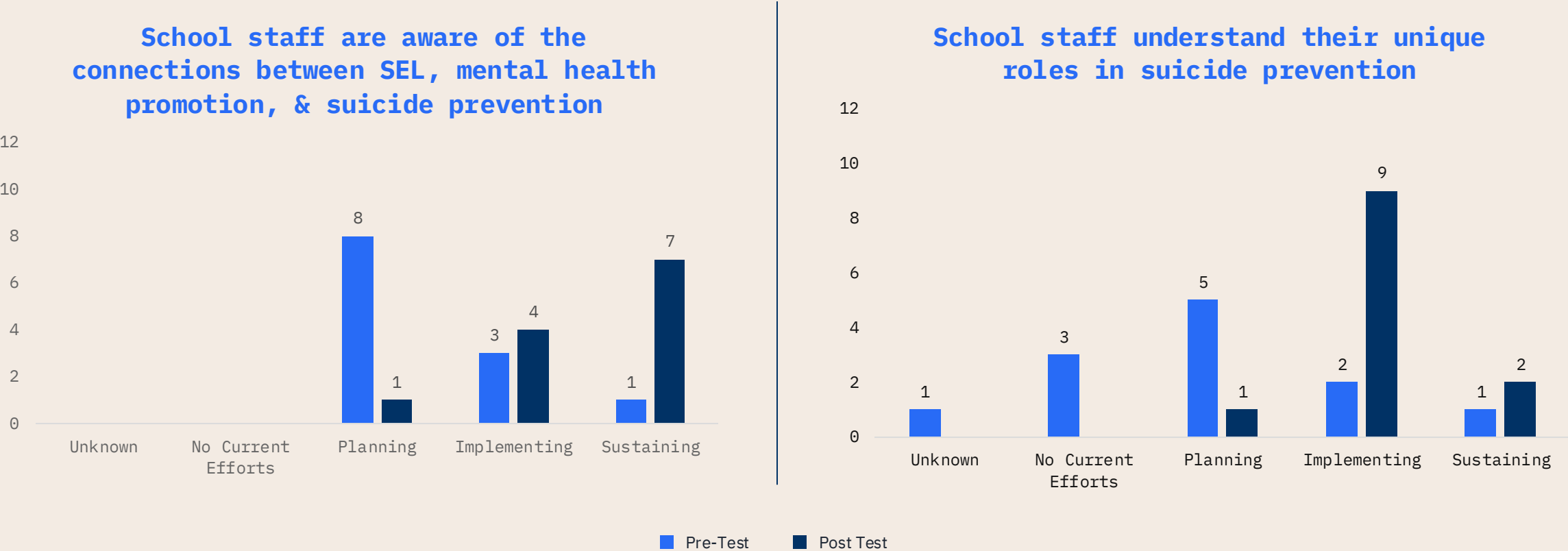
■ Pre-Test ■ Post-Test

*10 school teams completed pre-test questions.*

# MTSP for Schools Environmental Assessment Data

## Previous Pre-Post Data

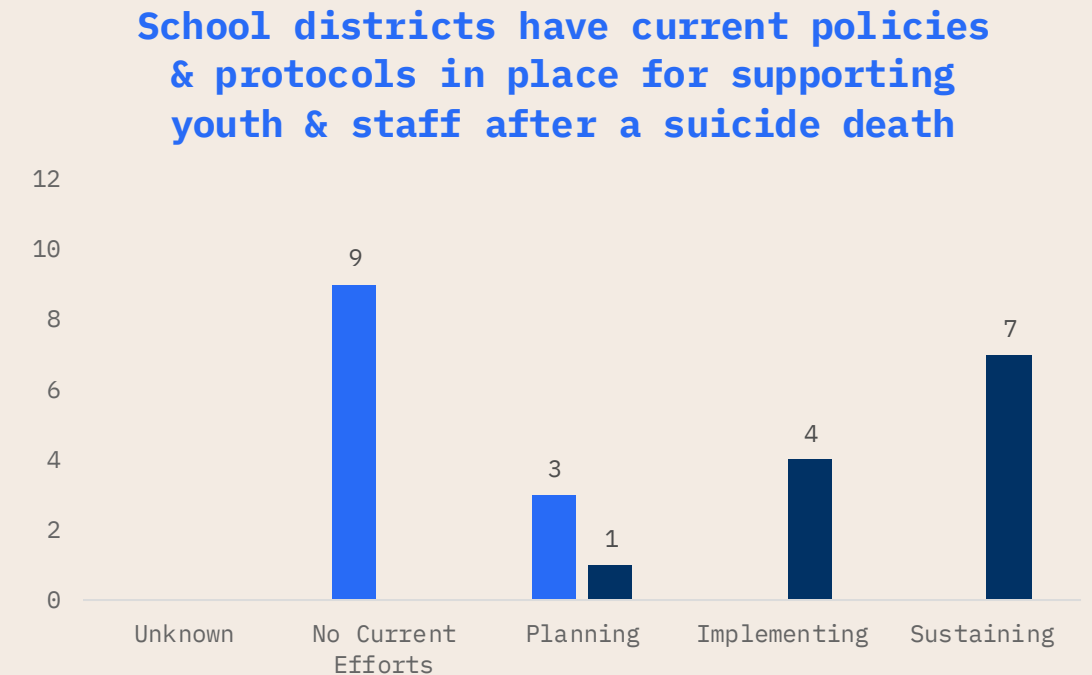
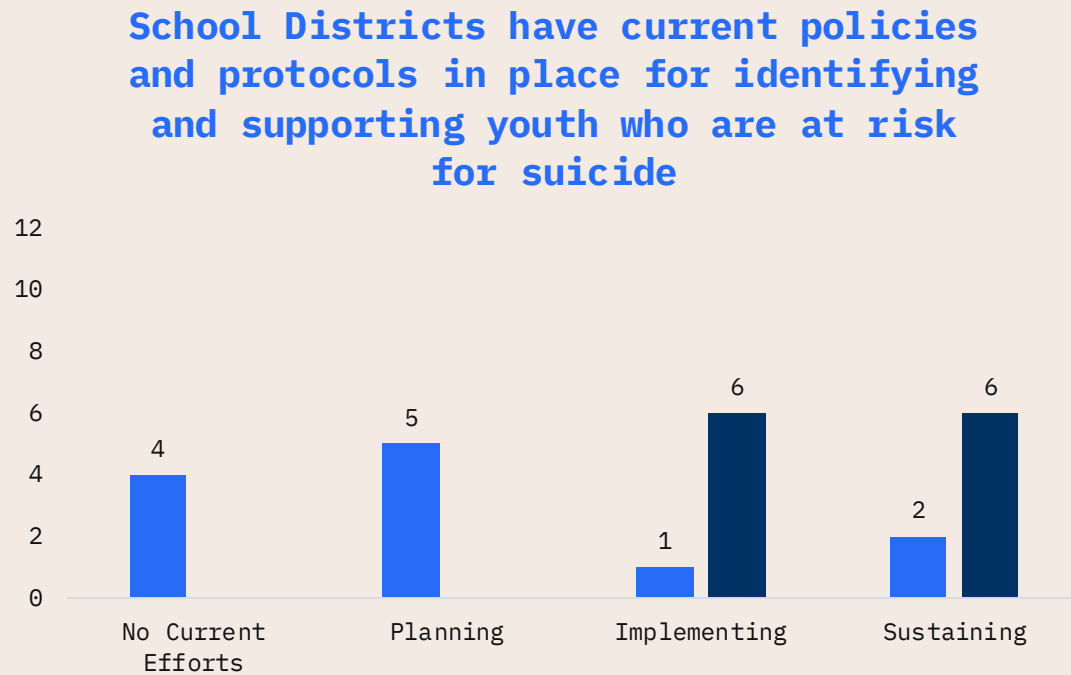
Pre-Post Test Question Results – Staff Roles:



# MTSP for Schools Environmental Assessment Data

## Previous Pre-Post Data

Pre-Post Test Question Results – Policies and Protocols:



■ Pre-Test ■ Post-Test

# Previous Cohort Quotes

“The most significant lesson learned over the past two years and gains made over the past year is the culture shift that has taken place within our district. Specifically, we have made the topic of Suicide Prevention less intimidating to talk about openly.”

“The most valuable part of this initiative was the comprehensive process. Being able to do an assessment of where you were, set goals and establish an action plan, having the... assistive resources to carry out the action plan, and doing a post assessment and sustainability plan was invaluable.”

“We feel that the impact of COVID on the mental health of our students would have been much worse if we had not had... this programming [MTSP] in place. There is no doubt in the minds of our team that these efforts have saved lives.”

“Because of [MTSP], we have the capability to partner with our students, staff, families, and our larger community using best-practice tools and strategies in order to implement proactive measures to promote suicide risk awareness, to foster programs/curriculum/training that will promote protective factors and encourage willingness to respond to situations in a proactive manner.”

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Shawna Hite-Jones  
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# Questions



Please enter your questions in the Q/A section at the bottom of your screen

# Thank you!

1

Please fill out our brief evaluation:



3

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