

Children's Mental Health Matters!

a Maryland public awareness campaign

Facts For Educators

Resilience: Promoting Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing

The Behavioral Health Administration, Child and Adolescent Resilience, Wellness and Prevention Committee has defined resilience as: "an innate capacity to rebound from adversity and change through a process of positive adaptation. For youth, resilience is a fluid, dynamic process that is influenced over time by life events, temperament, insight, skill sets, and the primary ability of caregivers and the social environment to nurture and provide them a sense of safety, competency, and secure attachments." Resilience is the ability to successfully navigate the inevitable stress, change, uncertainty and sorrows in life in a way that reinforces a sense of competency, and gratitude for others that have helped out along the way.

Everyday ways to promote resilience in schools

- Encourage alternative ways for parents to be actively engaged in their child's education
- Support the belief that all students are resilient, and have emerging skills to be nurtured
- Promote strategies that recognize the importance of social emotional learning
- Promote achievement in a broad array of settings to help foster intrinsic motivation
- Expand on successful efforts that continue to improve overall school climate

Further points to consider about resilience

Resilience is not a static concept, rather it can fluctuate over time, and across developmental stages and life domains and circumstances. This is true for individuals, families, communities, systems and organizations. People need to be resilient throughout their lives, and the ability of children to be competent and connected is often enhanced by how that is modeled and promoted by the adults in their lives.

Resilience is not only an ability to bounce back from trauma and adversity. It also includes everyday resilience. It is the capacity to be empathetic, grateful, and able to put things in perspective, which allows people to deal with the stress, challenges, and disappointments

of everyday life. It is that cumulative resilience that helps support an overall sense of wellbeing and self-efficacy, and allows people to weather more severe adversities when they occur.

Resilience in people takes different pathways and involves adapting to an ongoing change process. This includes reflecting on the benefits of one's belief system, while interacting and successfully negotiating with external societal, career, and familial demands and expectations. There is also the interplay between trauma and resilience that needs to be based on the understanding and promotion of protective factors in mitigating risk.

Family, cultural, and gender differences in functioning and worldview need to be understood and valued in how resilience is viewed, while also understanding what role societal norms and individual differences have in evaluating assumed outcomes for any member of a given group. An example of this is the belief that girls are not good in math and science and the unfortunate consequences that belief has for the world, and for individual girls who might end up doubting and/or not pursuing their own gifts.

There is much in the field of neuroscience that shows that the brain/mind is capable of lifelong growth, resilience, adaptation, and plasticity. For all adults who work

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with and/or raise children this is providing the scientific evidence that can support resilience based approaches that assumes a fundamental posit and belief that all children can flourish.

Schools are universal settings for children to develop a love for learning, curiosity, self-efficacy, coping skills, peer relationships, task completion, and critical thinking skills. The cross over between academic and emotional and social engagement allows schools unique opportunities to help nurture educated, well rounded and resilient youth. This commitment is best seen in districts where Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and a focus on efforts to enhance school climate are most integrated. However, it is also recognized that schools are asked to deliver much more than academic instruction to students, and that the demands for social and behavioral health services that children can bring into the classrooms often stretch fundamental purpose and resources. This in turn can impact on school climate and workforce development issues where the organizational concerns of retention and professional resilience of good school personnel needs ongoing support.

What Schools Can Do To Promote Resilience in Students, Staff, and Policies

- Promote fairness and consistency in ways students and staff can understand and respect
- Engage students to feel competent and valued before they become disconnected
- Recognize how trauma or life events can affect the ability of a student to learn and focus
- Encourage and support organizational and professional resilience
- Promote efforts to achieve academic excellence, and a lifelong love of learning
- Support universal, selected, and indicated prevention activities
- Expand on approaches that enhance the self-efficacy of both staff and students
- Increase activities that foster student and family engagement and partnerships
- Advocate for more behavioral health supports for classrooms
- Encourage ways to engage students through alternative and adaptive learning styles
- Seek to find a balance between standardized testing and the essentials of learning
- Promote a sense of coherence and shared purpose that values all school staff input
- Make community service hours meaningful for the student's sense of civic responsibility
- Have goals that link increased student engagement to

- reducing discipline referrals
- Find ways to have community promote the value of a good education
- Help students embrace learning as something that is fun, engaging, and creative
- Show appreciation of the value teachers have in the wellbeing of future generations

Resources

Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS)
<https://www.pbis.org>

School Services: Facts for Families - CMHM!
<https://www.childrensmentalhealthmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Combined-FRK-2018.pdf>
(Pages 9-10 of Family Resource Kit)

National Resilience Resource Center
<http://www.nationalresilienceresource.com>

Resiliency Institute, School Workshops
<http://www.resiliencyinstitute.com/schoolWorkshops/resilientSchools.php>

The Science of Resilience
Why some children can thrive despite adversity
Harvard Graduate School of Education
<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/15/03/science-resilience>

Resilience, School Connectedness and Achievement
California Department of Education
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/yd/tr/schoolconnectach.asp>

Center for Mental Health in Schools
University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu>

Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)
Review of Research on Educational Resilience
<https://eric.ed.gov/?>

WestEd
www.wested.org

Scientific Research Academic Publisher
<https://www.scirp.org>

This Fact Sheet was adapted from a longer set of documents, including a resilience poster, developed by the Maryland Behavioral Health Administration Child and Adolescent Resilience, Wellness and Prevention Committee. To download these or to learn more, please visit www.childrensmentalhealthmatters.org or contact Joan Smith at joan.smith@maryland.gov.

MHAMD ~ 443-901-1550 ~ www.mhamd.org

MCF ~ 410-730-8267 ~ www.mdcoalition.org

The Children's Mental Health Matters! Campaign is a collaboration of the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) and the Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) with support from the Maryland Department of Health - Behavioral Health Administration. The Campaign goal, with schools and community champions across the state, is to raise public awareness of the importance of children's mental health. For more information, please visit www.ChildrensMentalHealthMatters.org