USBE Prevention Webinar: Social Connections

2024-2025 USBE Prevention Webinar Series
January 15, 2025

Welcome

Please introduce yourself in the chat by sharing:

1. Your name

2. School/District

3. Role

4. One activity that you enjoy doing that helps you feel connected with your friends and/or family

Agenda

- **Overview of the protective factor: social connections**
  - Clarissa Stebbing, USBE Prevention Specialist
- **Promoting social connections and creating a sense of community at Lincoln Elementary in Granite School District**
  - Milton Collins, Principal at Lincoln Elementary School
- **Q & A**

Learning Intentions

- Understand how the protective factor *social connections* benefits students.

- Identify ways that social connections can be promoted within a school setting.

Defining Social Connections within the Protective Factor Framework

- Students have healthy, sustained relationships with peers and adults.

- Students' relationships promote a sense of trust, belonging, safety, and a sense that they matter.

- Students build and maintain the skills needed for quality relationships.

Benefits of Promoting Social Connections at School

Students with positive social connections at school, both with their teachers and peers:

- Tend to have increased school attendance, increased grades, are less likely to drop out of school, and are more likely to ask for help when needed.

- Are less likely to use tobacco, illicit drugs, or drink while underage.

- Are less prone to emotional problems, eating disorders, or suicidal thoughts or attempts.

Healthy social connections can help mitigate the negative impacts of trauma.

Schoolwide Implementation

- Examine data from the latest School Climate Survey and other data sources to determine what areas to address.

- Create a culture of school connectedness by developing a process and opportunities to ensure that each student has a connection with an adult in the school.

- Encourage opportunities for students to develop healthy relationships with adults and peers.

- Ensure Utah's prevention requirements such as the [Positive Behaviors Plan](#), [Suicide Prevention Program](#), and [Botvin LifeSkills Training](#) are being implemented.

Additional Schoolwide Implementation Strategies

- Provide equitable access to opportunities for students to connect. For example, providing bus transportation following after-school activities.

- Review policies through the lens of fostering school connectedness and make any changes as needed.

What other suggestions do you have for fostering social connections at school?

Utah State Board of Education

Considerations for Implementing Social Connections Schoolwide

- Does each student have a relationship with an adult in the school that they could go to for help if needed?
  - If not, which students should we intentionally be connecting with?

- What can I learn from our School Climate Survey, SHARP survey, and other data sources about how connected students feel with others in the school?

Utah State Board of Education

Classroom Implementation: Strategies for Facilitating Teacher Connections with Students

Establish-Maintain-Restore is a method that has been shown to cultivate positive teacher-student relationships.

- Establish:
- Maintain:
- Restore:

What other suggestions do you have for enhancing teacher-student connections?

Utah State Board of Education

Classroom Implementation: Strategies for Fostering Connections Between Students

- Set classroom expectations and foster a culture of kindness and friendship.

- Schedule time at the start of the school year for students to get to know each other through icebreaker activities/get-to-know-you games.

- Teach students social skills, including relationship-building, communication, and conflict resolution, and provide students with opportunities to practice.

Classroom Implementation: Additional Strategies for Fostering Connections Between Students

- Include opportunities for peer-to-peer connection during academic activities through cooperative problem-based learning, debates, simulation activities, student-led activities, and other group work.

- Encourage student participation in extracurricular activities.

- Consider referring students struggling to connect to a school counselor for assessment for possible Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions.

What other suggestions do you have for fostering social connections between students?

Considerations for Implementing Social Connections in the Classroom

- Which students might need additional support in developing and maintaining friendships? How can I support them?

- Which students might need additional support in developing social skills, and how can I support them?

- How can I show my students that I care about both their learning and about them as individuals?

Home Connections

- Share with parents the social skills students are learning and invite them to provide opportunities for their student to practice the skills at home.

- Encourage parents to talk to their student about their friendships and other relationships at school.

Utah State Board of Education

Principal Milton Collins

Promoting Social Connections and Building a Sense of Community

Questions?

Resources to Learn More

- [(PDF) Cultivating Positive Teacher-Student Relationships: Preliminary Evaluation of the Establish–Maintain–Restore (EMR) Method](#)

- [PBIS Forum 18: Practice Brief Cultivating Positive Student-Teacher Relationships](#)

- [Supporting and Responding to Students' Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Needs: Evidence-Based Practices for Educators](#)

- [23 Ways to Build and Sustain Classroom Relationships](#)

- [Making Connections With Greetings at the Door](#)

Next month: Resilience

February 19, 2025

12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

[Registration Link](https://tinyurl.com/USBEresilience)

https://tinyurl.com/USBEresilience

Utah State Board of Education

USBE Prevention Team

prevention@schools.utah.gov

schools.utah.gov/prevention/contactus