

# Addressing the Adverse Impacts of COVID-19 on Children with Serious Emotional Disorders

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**SAMHSA**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
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# Disclaimer Slide

This webinar was developed [in part] under contract number HHSS283201200021I/HHS28342003T from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The views, policies and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.

# Presenters



# Participants will...



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- Understand the impact of distance learning on academic outcomes especially for students with pre-existing emotional disorders
- Explain the social-emotional impacts of distance learning especially for students with pre-existing emotional disorders
- Describe two trauma-informed, resilience-oriented strategies to address the impacts especially for students with pre-existing emotional disorders

# IMPACT STORY

# What do we know?

## General Data on Education & Learning During COVID-19

**92%** of children reported that their school was closed.

### Perceptions of learning



Only **8%** of children felt that they were learning as much as they were at school.



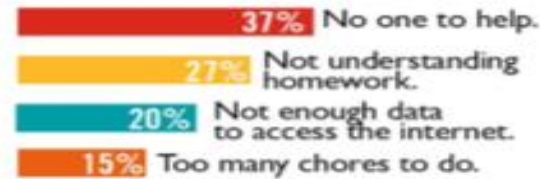
More than **8 in 10** children felt that they were learning little or nothing at all.

### Returning to school

**94%** of parents/caregivers and **95%** of children believe their child/they will return to school after the pandemic.

### Obstacles to learning & access to learning resources

**4 in 5** children reported obstacles to learning during school closures.



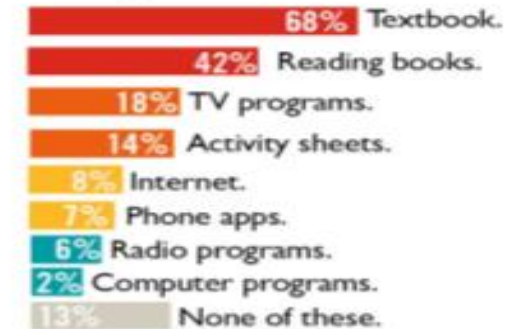
More children with a parent/caregiver with disabilities (**90%**) reported obstacles to learning.

**1 in 4** children did not have access to any learning materials at home.

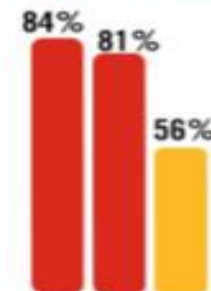
**1 in 4** parents/caregivers reported that they could not support their child's learning at all.

**67%** of parents/caregivers reported that their children had **no contact with their teachers at all.**

Children use the following learning materials at home:



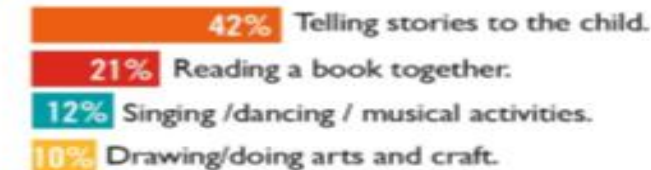
### Children's wellbeing during school closures



More children who were not going to school (**81%**) or whose schools were closed (**84%**) reported an increase in negative feelings, compared to just over half (**56%**) who are going to school in person.

### Early childhood care and development

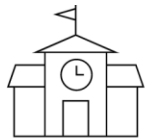
Parents/caregivers reported positive activities done together with the child:



**14%** of parents / caregivers did not report engaging in any activity with their child during the COVID-19 period.

# What do we know?

## 2020-21 School Year Enrollment Data



**5181** Schools

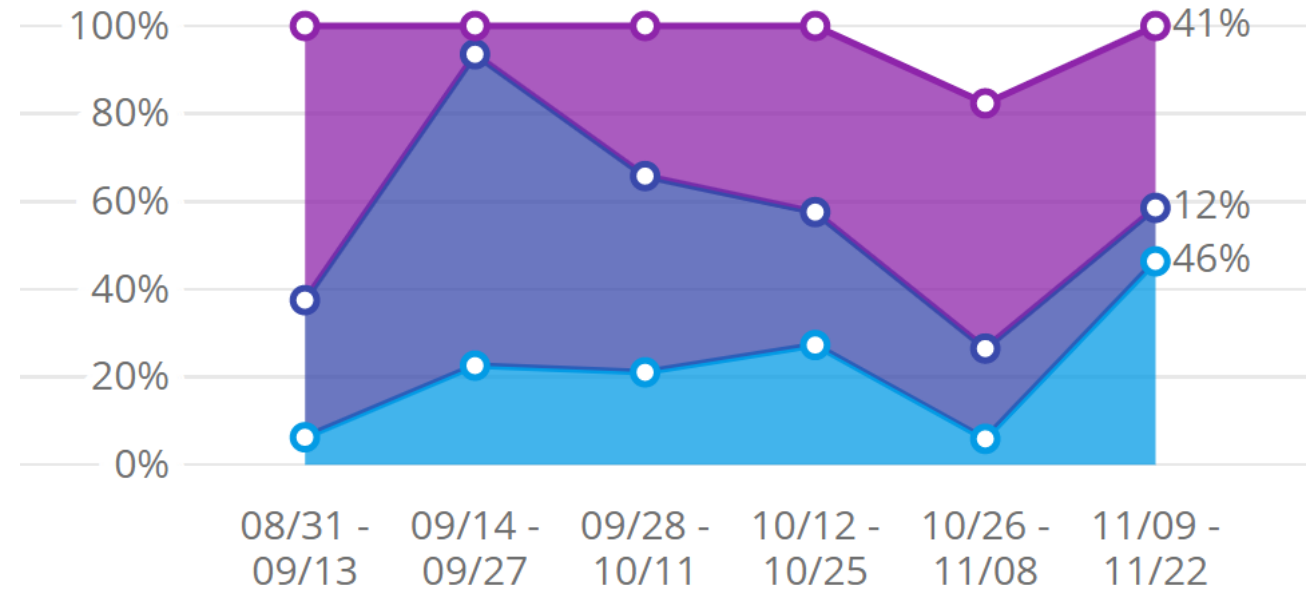


**4,028,141** In Person Students



**1,346,331** In Person Staff

### Learning Model



- Remote or online learning only
- Reduced capacity in-person or hybrid with ...
- Full capacity in-person

<https://covidschooldashboard.com/>

# What do we know?

No direct comparisons to past events or trends.



Without fully valid references for assessing the likely impacts of COVID- 19 on children.

- ✓ Online learning and teaching is only effective if students have consistent access and teachers have targeted training.
- ✓ Home schooling works for students who have intentional, personalized and sufficient resources.
- ✓ Reduced learning time has likely impeded student learning and development
- ✓ Chronic absenteeism requires appropriate support to children who are least prepared.
- ✓ Pandemic exacerbated well-documented opportunity gaps
- ✓ **Disagreement about how to determine individual student needs.**

**Source:** EPI analysis of National Assessment of Educational Progress microdata, 2015. Chart adapted from Figure A in García and Weiss 2018.



# Children with Significant Emotional Disabilities

Childhood SED is defined as the **presence of a diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder** that **resulted in functional impairment** which **substantially interferes with or limits the child's role or functioning in family, school, or community activities** (SAMHSA, 1993)

# How are these students served in the school setting?

**Determined by the extent to which their challenges interfere with theirs and others' ability to learn and perform.**



1. Special Education Programs
2. 504 Plans
3. General education students with behavior, safety and or emotional regulation plans

# Impact on Students with Significant Emotional and Mental Health Needs

## Learning Losses because....

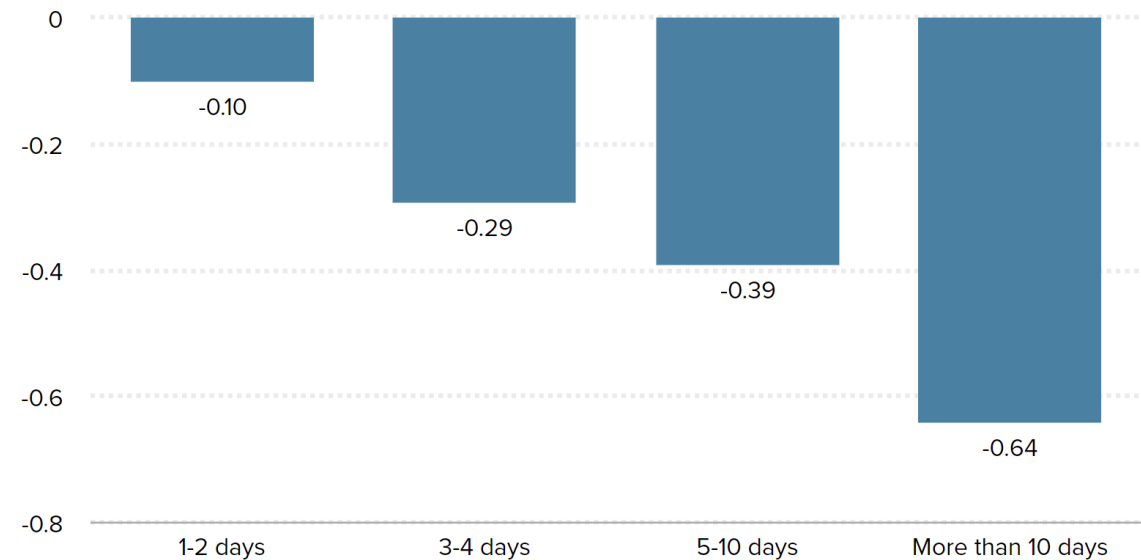
- *For many physical distancing while increasing anxiety and learning.*
- *Reduction in supports provided through school intervention plans.*
- *Inaccessibility to virtual learning*
  - *Lack of WIFI*
  - *Lack of Equipment*
  - *Lack of skills to effectively use the virtual setting.*
  - *Accommodations in place are unsuccessful.*
- *Lack of support in the home.*
- *Delays in students whose significant emotional needs emerge during distance learning.*
- *Distance learning instruction is less tailoring to individual student need.*

# Challenges Lead to Increased Disengagement

- Most standardized testing waived during 2019-2020 school year.
- Unsure about use this year.
- Chronic absenteeism in virtual learning settings.
- Decreased instructional time due to social distancing.

## The more frequently students miss school, the worse their performance

Performance disadvantage experienced by eighth graders who missed school relative to students with perfect attendance in the last month, by number of days missed (standard deviations)

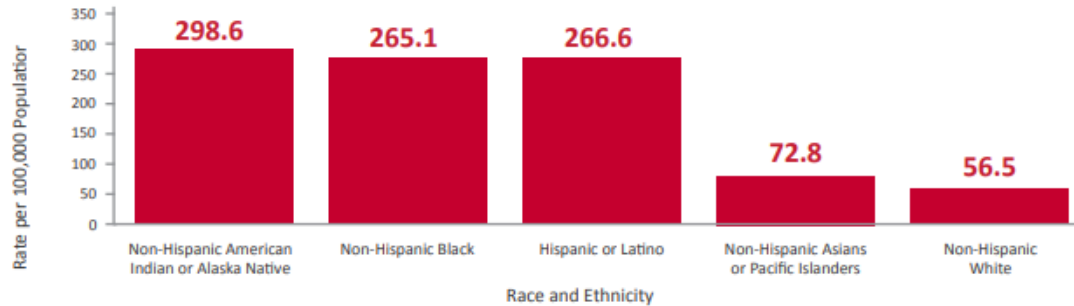


**Source:** EPI analysis of National Assessment of Educational Progress microdata, 2015. Chart adapted from Figure A in García and Weiss 2018.

# Addressing the Challenges at all Levels

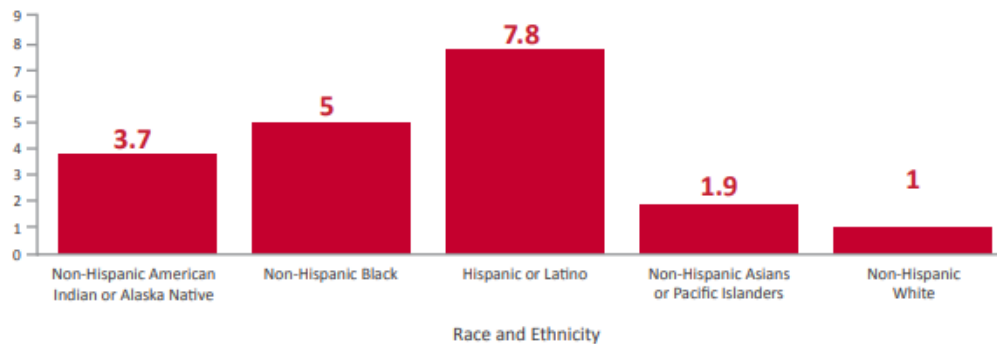


Age-adjusted COVID-19-associated hospitalization rates by race and ethnicity, COVID-NET, March 1<sup>st</sup>–July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020



Source: COVIDView, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention<sup>73</sup>

Hospitalization ratios of 0-17 year olds by race and ethnicity March 1<sup>st</sup>–July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020

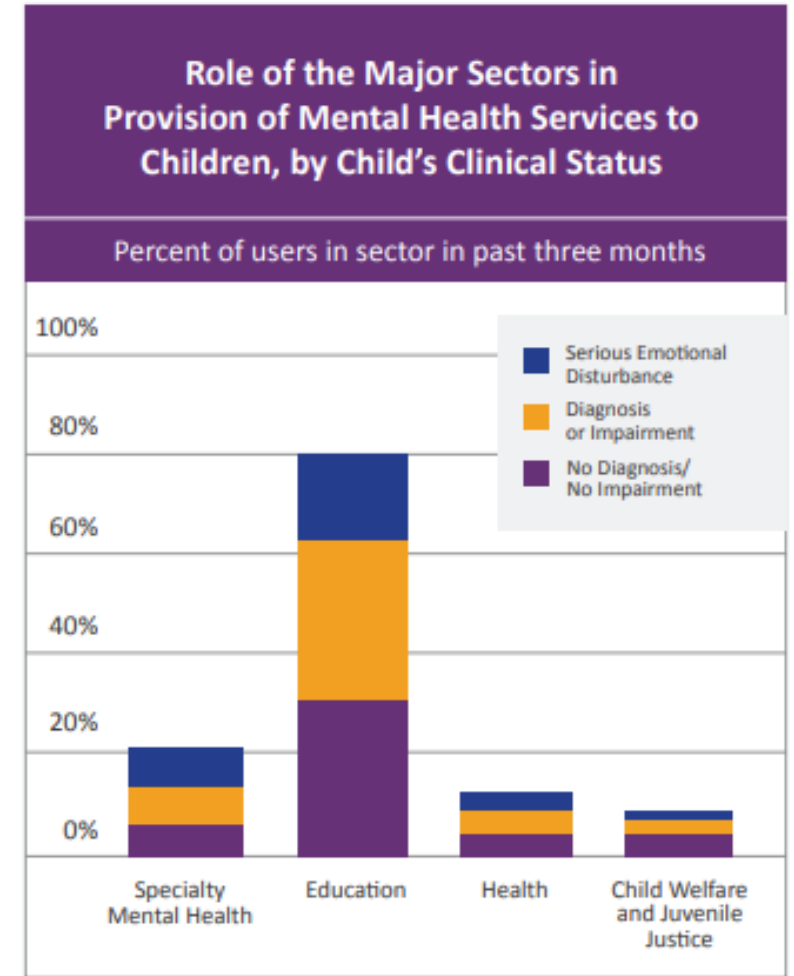


Source: COVIDView, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention<sup>74</sup>

# Macro-Level Factors: Policy & Environment



# Meso-Level Factors: Systems and Structures



Source: Burns et al. "Children's Mental Health Service Use across Service Sectors."<sup>51</sup>



# Must Haves to Ensure Free & Appropriate Education

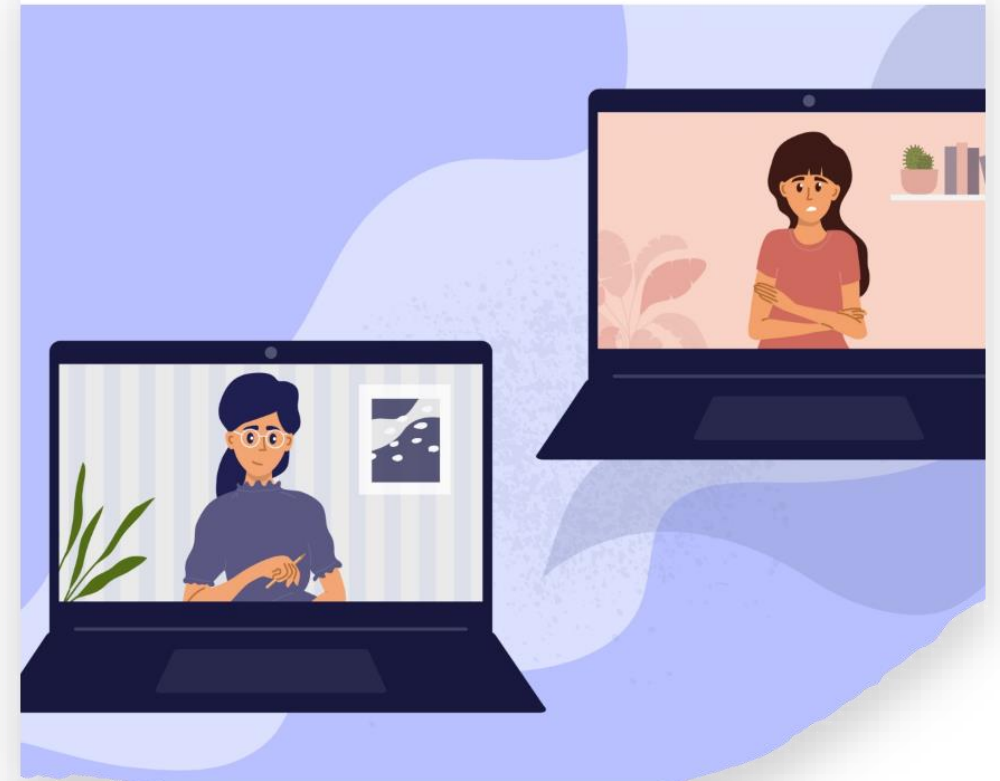
<b>Access</b>	<i>Q: Are we ensuring that accessibility is guaranteed to the procurement of materials and technologies enabling students with disabilities to access curricula with assistive technology?</i>	<b>Responsibility of:</b>  <b>School-level administrators &amp; teachers,</b>  <b>State, district &amp; school policymakers &amp; administrators</b>
<b>Capacity</b>	<i>Q: Do we have personnel and guidelines in place to ensure that students' IEPs and 504 plans are appropriately reviewed, revised, and updated in partnership with parents &amp; guardians as scheduled during the year?</i>	
<b>Opportunity</b>	<i>Q: Are our general education, special education, assistive tech. and educ. Tech staff prepared to collaborate to ensure that every learner with a disability continues to learn and make progress in the least restrict environment?</i>	
<b>Outcome</b>	<i>Q: How are data being collected to determine if the outcomes for students with IEPs an 504 plans are proportionate to those without?</i>	

# Meso-Level Responses

## Telehealth in Schools and Communities

59% of youth and 62% of families rated telehealth as more effective than in-person services.

[https://ibcc.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/impact\\_of\\_the\\_covid-19\\_pandemic\\_on\\_children\\_youth\\_and\\_families.pdf](https://ibcc.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/impact_of_the_covid-19_pandemic_on_children_youth_and_families.pdf)



# Micro-Level – Quarantine...Social Isolation...

- *Child Abuse and Neglect*
- *Family Losses and Separations*
- *Sleep Disturbances*
- *Exposure to Unhealthy Coping Behaviors and Environments*
- *Homeless Children*



# Micro-Level Responses

- *Build supportive environments for youth*
- *Involve all stakeholders—mental health experts, school personnel, parents, students, medical personnel.*
- *Provide opportunities to express their emotions*
- *Help youth remain connected in safe ways.*



# Impact of Trauma & Toxic Stress – Daily Challenges for Students with Significant Disabilities

Academic Performance	Social Emotional Development	Behavior
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Low Academic Performance</li><li>• Decrease in reading ability</li><li>• Higher rate of absenteeism</li><li>• More suspensions</li><li>• Increased drop out</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poor control of emotions- dysregulation</li><li>• Negatively impact peer relationships</li><li>• Alters way of responding to social cues</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intense reactions</li><li>• Impulsive behaviors</li><li>• Fighting</li><li>• Shutting down</li></ul>

# Additional Challenges for Students with Significant Disabilities

## Typical Challenges:

- Difficulty with uncertainty
- Following instructions
- Understanding the complexity of situations such as the pandemic.
- Doing their work independently



## COVID-19 Related Challenges:

- Separated for small group & one-on-one assistance
- Lack of positive role models for academic and behavioral skills.
- Decreased opportunity to learn social and emotional skills
- Decreased professional educational and mental health support
- Decrease or suspension of special services
- Heightened distress



## Results

- Revert to negative behaviors
- Increased negative behaviors
- Increased conflict with parents.
- Increased anxiety & self harm
- Decreased ability to communicate.

# Additional Social-Emotional Impacts of COVID-19

- Young Children -- Difficulty communicating with people outside of their family, increased anxiety and depression.
- Impact due to quarantine and separation from parents – Additional burden of being separate from a parent in isolation—**all trusted support gone.**
- School and College going students— Absence of structure found in the classroom.
- Impact on children and adolescents having special needs, especially serious emotional disorders – **No direct support and guidance for their work which increases frustration and acting out.**
- Underprivileged Children- WiFi less available—less communication , support and actual instruction.



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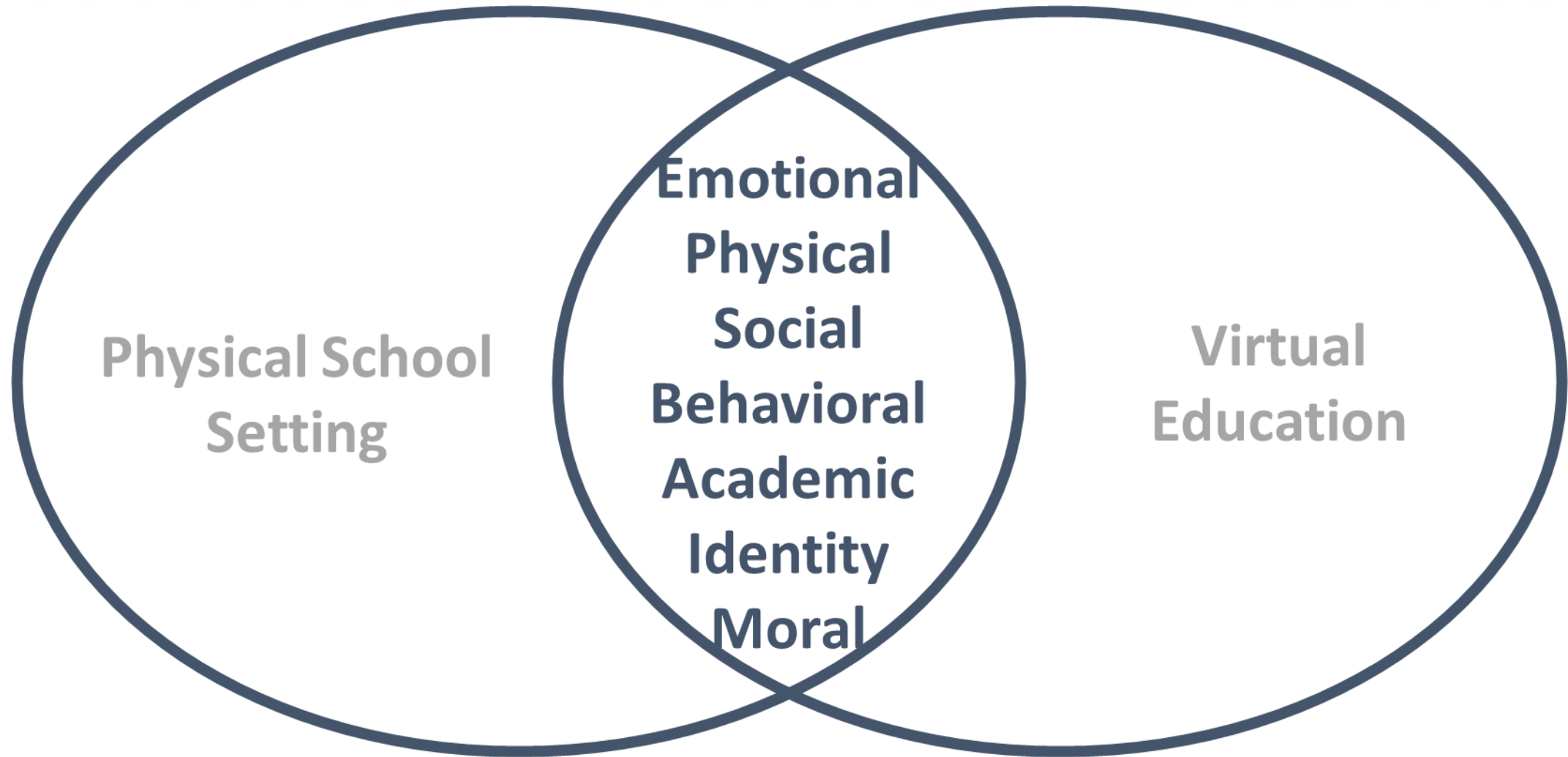
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7444649/>

# Resulting Increase in Academic Difficulties

- ❖ **Began the 2020-21 School year with...**
  - 66% percent of typical learning gains in reading
  - 44% of typical learning gains in math.
- ❖ **Decline will have been at vastly different rate based on individual student experiences with an increased impact on students with disabilities.**
- ❖ **Achievement Gap will continue to** widen based on the amount and quality of the support and engagement at home.
- ❖ **Special Education students in need of intensive support cannot receive that in the virtual environment.** Many IEPs for students who need individual support have been suspended or just not met.

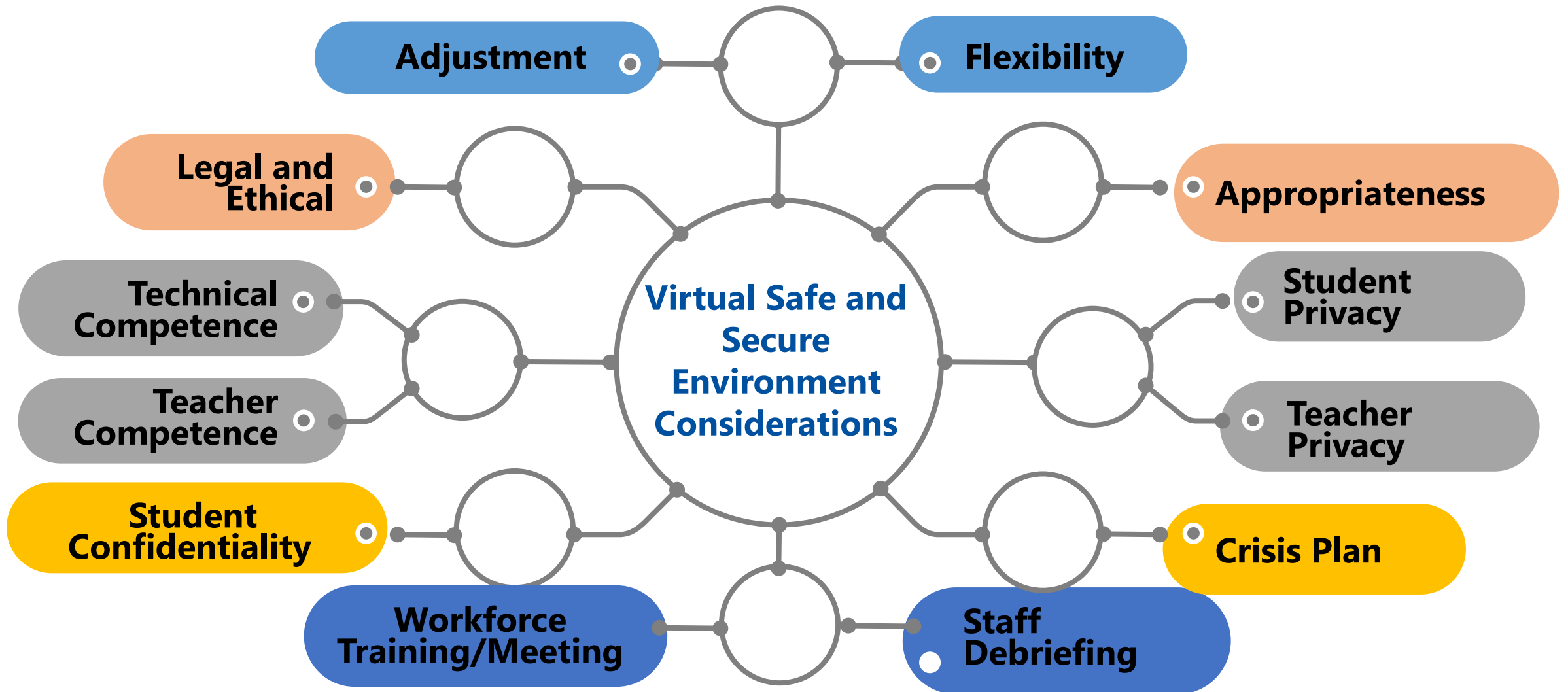


# Ensure Safety in All Environment for Students with Emotional Disabilities

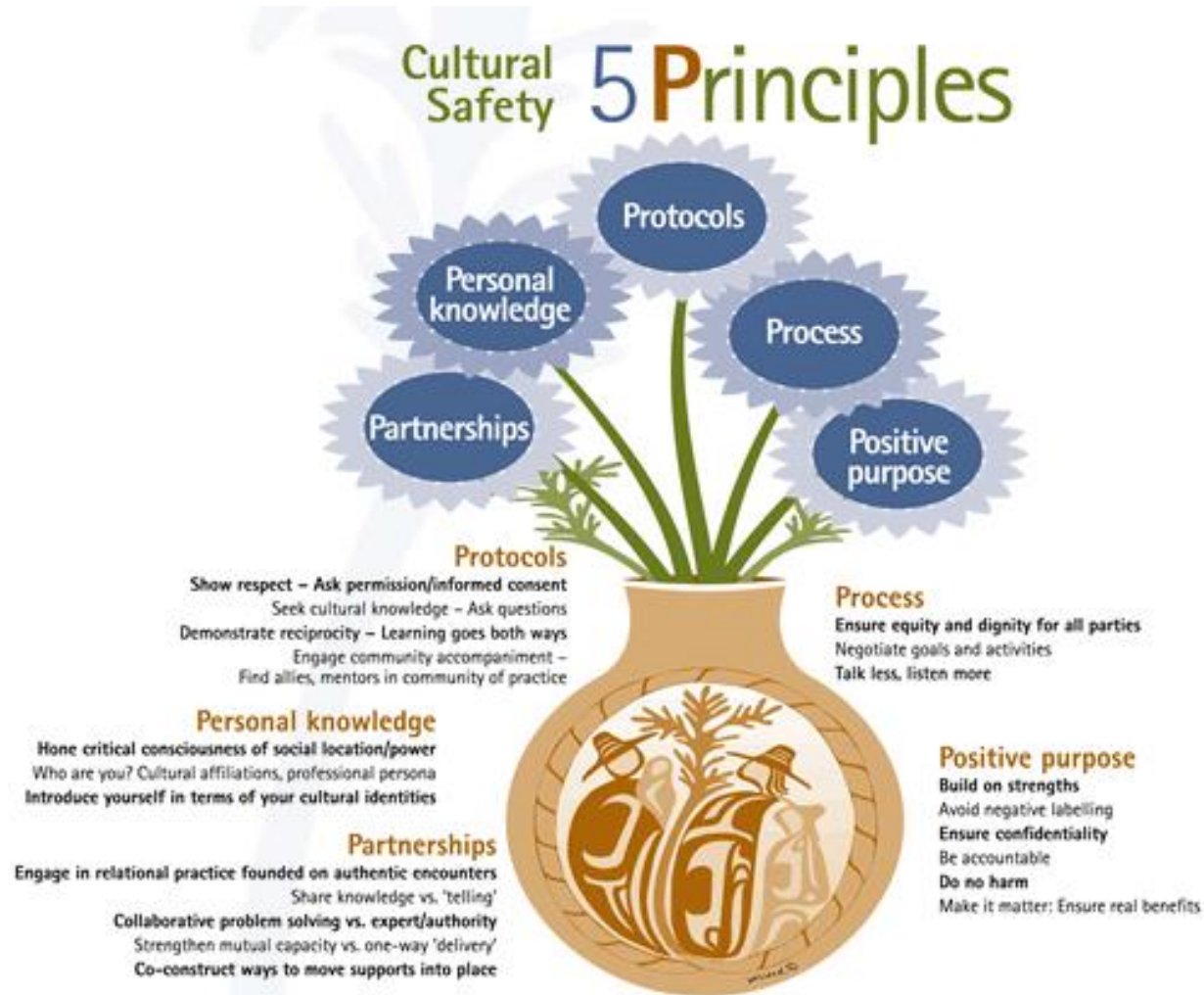


*What does this look like?*

# Virtual Safe and Secure Environment For Students with Significant Emotional Disabilities and Staff



# Cultural Safety—Practice this Virtually



<http://www.ecdip.org/culturalsafety/>

# Addressing Academic Deficits



Teacher teams determine what is essential based on standards and benchmarks, plans such as IEPs and current individual capacity:

- ✓ **Flash Back:** *Where were the priorities during closure virtual learning?  
What does the data say about **this student's performance?***
- ✓ **Flash Forward:** *What are we most concerned about?*

**Embed skills in need of remediation in instruction:** phonics in reading comprehension, three branches of government, the scientific method, common denominators into whatever is being covered at the time.

# Addressing Emotional Difficulties During Learning

- ***Prioritize coping and calming skills- Use deep breathing throughout the day.***
- ***Maintain routines and build new routines.***
- ***Personalized check-ins : verbal, written, visual and audio***  
***(Face Time, Marco Polo, Video Chat Apps, Direct Messaging)***
- ***Remain in close touch with parents/guardians.***
- ***Encourage communication***  
***use social stories & comic strip conversations***
- ***Teach Social and Emotional Skills in Online Sessions &***  
***Support during activities such as chess or other online learning games.***
- ***Break learning into small chunks to support understanding***



# Incorporate Trauma-Informed Resilience-Oriented Practices into Online Work for Students with Emotional Disabilities



# Trauma-Informed Resilience-Oriented Interventions and Practices

## Build Protective Factors:

Behaviors, characteristics and qualities inherent in some personalities that will assist in recovery after exposure to a traumatic event

- Environment
- A reliable support system (friends, family)
- Good self care, such as sleeping at least 8 hours a night
- Eating nutritious foods
- Exercise
- Practicing good boundaries
- Using positive coping mechanisms vs. negative coping mechanisms

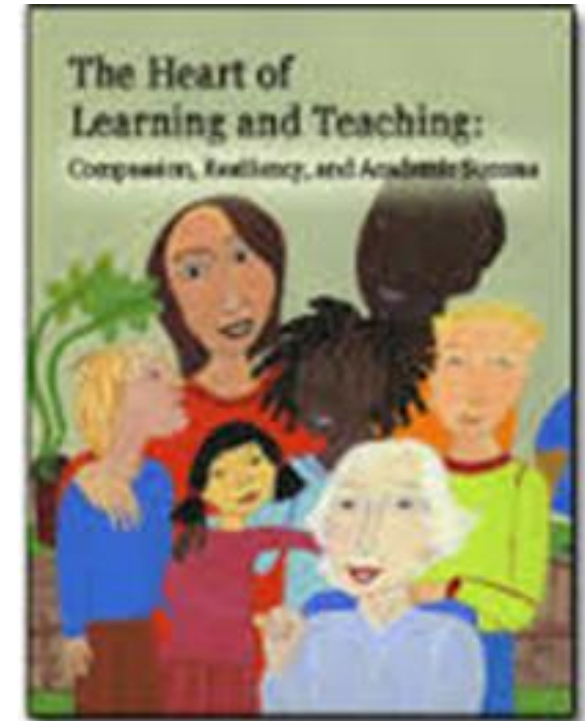


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# Trauma-Informed Resilience-Oriented Interventions and Practices

## Interaction:

1. *Always Empower, Never Disempower*
2. *Provide unconditional positive regard*
3. *Maintain high expectations*
4. *Check Assumptions, Observe, and Question*
5. *Be a Relationship Coach*
6. *Provide Guided Opportunities for Helpful Participation*

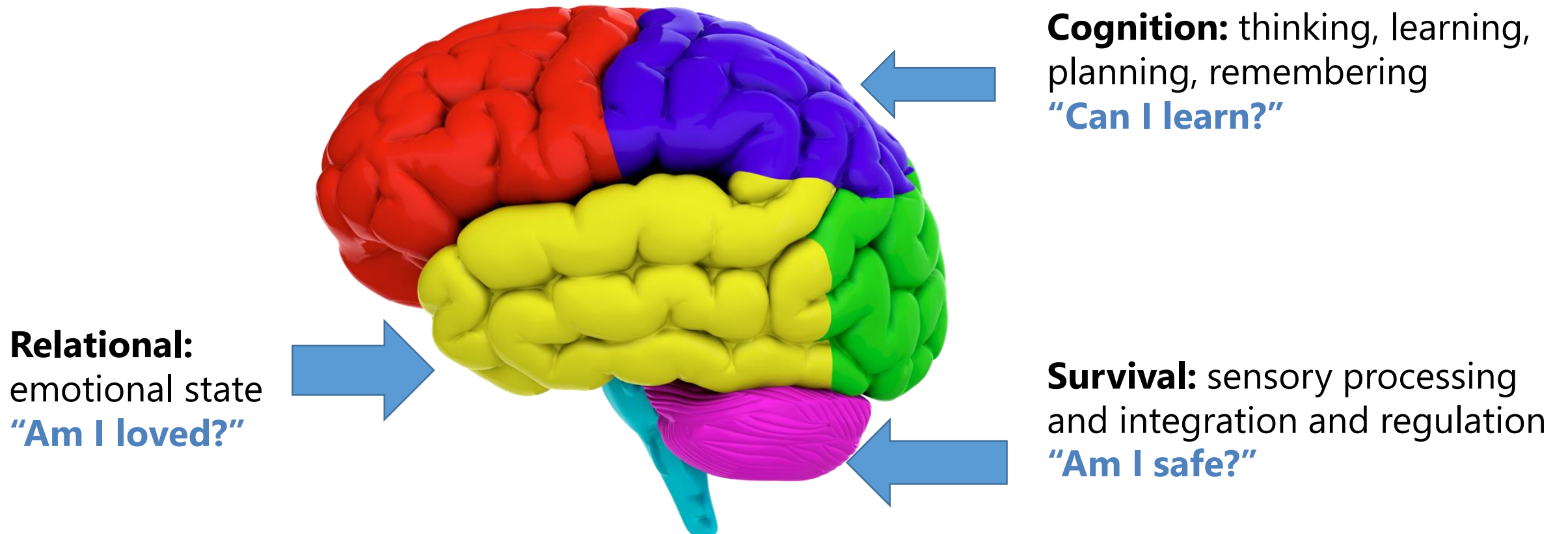


<https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/health-safety/mental-social-behavioral-health/compassionate-schools-learning-and/heart-learning-compassion-resiliency-and-academic-success>



# Trauma-Informed Resilience-Oriented Interventions and Practices

## Teach, Model and Support Regulate, Relate and Reason:



<http://www.truenorthexpeditions.com.au/blog/bruce-perrys-three-rs-regulate-relate-reason>

# Resources

Colorado Department of Education. *Remote Learning Resources for SEL, Mental Health and Behavior*. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/selremotelearningresources>

Council for Exceptional Children & eLuma online therapy. *Best Practices for Educating Online*. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Xu2bRgZvfQwwQOoXWSx8B00WP7wQLQO3/view>

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# Questions & Discussion

**Thank You!**