

WSCC Component: Social & Emotional Climate

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Social & Emotional Climate

Cafeteria

Clock

Mr. Baker noticed long lines in the cafeteria, so he reorganized the cafeteria in order to serve students more efficiently. Now, students can move through the lines with minimal wait time. They can socialize while they eat their meals, rather than feeling rushed to finish eating. Once they are seated, they have at least 10 minutes for eating breakfast and 20 minutes for eating lunch.

Mr. Baker promotes menu options during the morning announcements and on signs displayed around the school so everyone is informed about the nutritious choices. The school publishes a monthly menu and provides it online to all students, families, teachers, and administrators. Parents can view the menus in advance and help their children with food choices. Students invite their parents to join them for breakfast or lunch meals occasionally.

You can:

- Make your cafeteria a social center by implementing a staggered schedule for the different classes and setting up conveniently placed serving areas to minimize the time students spend in line.
- Encourage cafeteria staff to greet students with smiles and ask teachers and administrators to spend mealtimes with students.
- Use a variety of communication channels to publicize menus.

Learn More

- [School Meals](#)

Menu Board

Mr. Baker encourages participation in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. He puts policies and practices in place to create a friendly, welcoming environment for everyone, and ensures identity protection for student participants in the free meal programs. This action reduces stigma. Mr. Baker worked with Principal Paul to explore different options for providing breakfast to students, including Breakfast in the Classroom during the first 15 minutes of homeroom and

a Grab and Go meal just before school. This nutritional boost helps ensure that students are starting the school day ready to learn and better able to concentrate.

Mr. Baker comes up with creative, catchy titles and themes for the menu items. School staff and students can select a hot meal or move through the convenience line for a Grab and Go meal. The menu board for K-5 students shows today's hot meal, which includes baked chicken, brown rice, "power punch" broccoli, "x-ray vision" carrots, "rockin" wheat roll, and fruit. The Grab and Go meal features the "turkey gobbler," a turkey sandwich with lettuce and tomato and whole fruit. Beverages include water and low-fat or skim white or chocolate milk. The salad bar offers a wide selection of leafy greens, tomatoes, broccoli "trees," "cool as" cucumbers, and beans. The school encourages appropriate portions by providing cheeses and salad toppings in smaller containers accompanied by smaller utensils.

You can:

- Serve healthy, well-balanced meals and encourage participation in the school meal programs.
- Follow Smarter Lunchroom strategies to make foods more appealing to students.
- Use the USDA's School Breakfast Program toolkit to help you decide the most feasible way to provide breakfast to students.
- Survey students about their food likes and dislikes, and ask them to create fun names or themes for menu items.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Nutrition Services at Jefferson School.

Learn More

- [Food and Beverage Marketing](#)
- [Smarter Lunchrooms Movement](#)
- [School Breakfast Program \(SBP\)](#)
- [Breakfast in the Classroom Worksheet](#) [PDF – 93.89 KB]

Gymnasium

PE Standards Poster

Mr. Rodriguez follows the National Standards for K-12 Physical Education. He starts the Primary (Grades K-2) students off with the foundational skills, knowledge, and values they need. He teaches the Upper Elementary (Grades 3-5) students to apply those skills, knowledge, and values, and then reinforces them to his Middle (Grades 6-8) and High School (Grades 9-12) students to encourage his students to achieve physical activity throughout their lifetime. His goal is to develop physically literate, confident individuals who choose to be active every day.

Mr. Rodriguez posts daily challenges to achieve competency in a variety of motor skills. His challenges push the students to elevate their heart rates and build muscles through moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA). [Standard 1]

He knows his students are applying knowledge of movement and performance concepts as he watches them engage in cooperative learning when he assigns them to small group work. [Standard 2]

His students use class iPads to access information that enhances their learning as they adjust goals related to their personal physical fitness plans. [Standard 3]

Mr. Rodriguez is proud of the way his students exhibit behaviors that respect self and others, and he encourages cooperation and team-building. [Standard 4]

He knows he has met his goal of instilling the value of physical activity when he sees the enjoyment, self-expression, and social interaction exhibited by his students or listens to his students share about physical activities completed outside of the school day. [Standard 5]

You can:

- Develop a list of challenges with the purpose of engaging students in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.
- Use digital technology to give students access to tools and information about healthy lifestyles.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Physical Education at Jefferson School.

Learn More

- [National PE Standards](#)

- [National Standards](#)
- [Youth Physical Activity Guidelines Toolkit](#)

Climbing Wall

Physical education class is a place where students can learn new activities in a safe instructional environment. These skills are transferable across many different activities over a lifetime. Mr. Rodriguez wants all students to find a physical activity they like, so he introduces a variety of nontraditional physical activities.

He promotes the climbing wall because it builds teamwork, leadership, and social skills. Climbing activities are equally popular among males and females, and students can participate in climbing activities outside of school. At the climbing wall, they fine-tune balance and flexibility skills and find answers to the wall's physical and mental challenges. They gain strength and are better prepared for outdoor recreational activities.

Mr. Rodriguez teaches climbers to use harnesses so they climb safely. Climbers team up with partners, and Mr. Rodriguez explains the role of spotters and belayers for safe climbing. This activity also promotes communication skills and supporting others, real-world skills that transfer to many other activities.

The climbing wall has become so popular at Jefferson School that staff can be seen climbing along with students after school. The students and adults form partnerships as they spot each other, and teachers serve as role models. This led Mr. Rodriguez to recruit several parent volunteers to organize a weekend climbing trip for everyone who wanted to participate.

You can:

- Collaborate with local facilities to include outdoor recreation and expand physical education options beyond traditional team sports.
- After teaching the basic skills in physical education class, collaborate with climbing groups to help plan after-school or weekend excursions to local recreation areas.

SMART Board

Mr. Rodriguez makes good use of the SMART board in the gymnasium. He posts the daily challenge on the board so students can engage in physical activity immediately upon entering the gymnasium, and then increase to moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA).

Students who select heart rate monitors from the equipment cart wear them to show their perceived exertion related to actual performance, and project their heart rates on the SMART board in real time. This encourages friendly competition among the students.

Mr. Rodriguez projects detailed lesson work and sometimes divides the class into small groups for students to engage in cooperative learning activities. In their small groups, the students use the SMART board after their physical activity to document progress. The students take turns prioritizing their heart rate beats per minute to determine their target and maximum heart rates.

They also access websites such as the American Heart Association to obtain information during their lesson. The SMART board's touch recognition features allow the students to use the different colored pens, as well as other objects or even their hands to write. This allows for accessibility for all Mr. Rodriguez's students and successfully integrates the technology skills students are learning at school.

You can:

- Use a SMART board to encourage instant activity, allow students to access tools and information that enhances their learning on the spot, and engage all students, regardless of their physical abilities.

Learn More

- [American Heart Association](#)

Grades K-2

Reward Box

Mr. Gupta keeps a box of small treasures in his classroom so he can reward students for accomplishments and good behavior. The box has stickers, novelty erasers, pencils, ribbons, booklets, and small games.

When he was a young boy, rewards were often candy and other sweets, but school practices have changed. He knows that rewarding students should not involve candy and other foods that can undermine healthy eating or reinforce unhealthy eating habits. He makes sure not to use food treats to reward his students or withhold food to punish them.

A wide variety of alternative rewards can provide positive reinforcement for accomplishments and good behavior. Mr. Gupta offers praises when he sees outstanding effort and lets those students pick the

activity for the afternoon physical activity break. Sometimes he rewards students with special classroom privileges or extra playtime. Students who complete a reading assignment earn a word-play activity sheet reward.

You can:

- Use non-food items and opportunities for physical activity to recognize students for their accomplishments and good behavior. For example, you can recognize students during the morning announcements, or display a recognition board in the school hallway to showcase achievements such as those made by students who participated in the 5K run or the walking challenge.
- Establish a reward box and ask parents to donate non-food rewards and school supplies for the reward box.

Learn More

- [Non-Food Rewards](#)
- [Tips for Teachers: Promoting Healthy Eating & Physical Activity in the Classroom](#) [PDF – 548 KB]

Activity Box

Mr. Gupta noticed some students preferred to sit and talk during recess, rather than run, jump, swing, or use playground equipment. He sought to energize them to help increase their physical activity.

Mr. Gupta asked parents and community merchants for donations to establish an activity box and stocked it with equipment that promotes movement. The brightly colored play items—such as juggling scarves—captured the interest of his students, even the sedentary ones who did not want to miss out on the fun. Now, all students select balls, jump ropes, and other sports equipment from the box before going to recess, and everyone plays actively on the playground.

Some of the activity box items, such as the beanbag toss, are suitable for outdoor or indoor physical activity breaks. At least twice a day, Mr. Gupta gets his students out of their chairs for 10-minute stretching and movement exercises. He pulls items out of the activity box and lets students play games such as Twister, a fun exercise that improves balance, strength, and motor skills. Once they return to their seats, they are better able to pay attention to the lessons and concentrate on their work.

You can:

- Fill a box with items to promote physical activity both inside and outside the classroom.
- Ask local merchants and parents to donate play items and sports equipment.
- Build anticipation and excitement by planning games before recess starts.
- Ensure all students are part of the activities and fun.

Learn More

- [Take a Break! Teacher Toolbox: Physical Activity Breaks in the Secondary Classroom](#) [PDF – 3.49 MB]

Volunteer Desk

Mr. Gupta's day includes many tasks for completion. Fortunately, parent helpers provide an extra set of hands in his classroom. They do many jobs—from lining up students for lunch to leading physical activity breaks with stretching and movement exercises. Parent helpers also help maintain the school vegetable gardens.

The volunteer desk is the base of operations for parents, family, and community volunteers. Mr. Gupta keeps a volunteer schedule so he always has help in the classroom. Children cluster around the volunteer during study time for extra help in reading or problem solving. Sometimes parents and other volunteers simply give special attention to children who have concerns and need someone to listen to them.

You can:

- Create a workstation for classroom volunteers.
- Ask volunteers to assist with tasks and follow up on their suggestions to make lessons more stimulating and invigorating.
- Recruit parents and other family members via online newsletters and e-mails, and check with senior centers and community organizations for people who want to share their talents and skills.

Learn More

- [Parent Engagement](#)

Grades 6-8

PA Speaker

The morning routine in Mr. Wu's class starts off with Principal Paul's announcements over the public address system. This morning, Principal Paul recognized students on the honor roll and leaders of a community service project. He congratulated the football team for its big win and promoted the healthy food choices on today's menu for the hot meal or Grab and Go lunches. Principal Paul saved his biggest announcement for the close: he announced Jefferson School would be participating in a challenge sponsored by the Kolbe Public Health Department to compete for recognition for excellence in nutrition and physical activity. In his announcement, he encouraged all staff, students, and their families to get involved in the school's Team Nutrition efforts.

Frequently Mr. Wu will reinforce Principal Paul's announcements and today he followed up with an opportunity for his students to enter a taste-testing challenge to select the grain of the month for the cafeteria's next menu campaign.

You can:

- Applaud your students for making the honor roll or achieving a success. Recognition helps build self-esteem.
- Encourage students to participate in health campaigns.
- Promote extracurricular activities, which can bolster support and involvement in school activities.
- Give students opportunities to taste-test new food options to find out what nutritious foods they like.

Learn More

- [Taste Testing! Find Out What Students Want!](#) [PDF – 151 KB]
- [Team Nutrition](#)

Community Poster

Mr. Wu posts notices of community events and encourages his students to participate. Service projects give students an opportunity to contribute time and effort to good causes, build leadership skills, and

help make them feel good about themselves. Also, they learn new practical skills and benefit from a range of social experiences.

Mr. Wu promotes projects where his students can be physically active, such as picking up litter in public parks or serving as coaching assistants at Boys and Girls Clubs. Mr. Wu knows actions speak louder than words, so Mr. Wu coordinated a class project to do home repairs for Habitat for Humanity. He and his students hauled lumber, painted walls, swept floors, and planted shrubs. He involved parents to gain more support for this large project.

You can:

- Connect students to civic organizations that match their interests. Health agencies sponsor fun runs and bike races, and food pantries collect canned goods.
- Serve as a role model by volunteering to do community projects and share your experiences with your students.
- Encourage students to volunteer for a school club's project as a way to promote team building and commitment to improving the community.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Family Engagement and Community Involvement at Jefferson School.

Teacher Workstation

Sometimes, Mr. Wu felt disorganized because his desk held stacks of papers. He changed his work habits and now uses a laptop computer at his workstation to complete most tasks, resulting in less paper and better organization. He takes roll, enters grades, fills out assessment forms, and completes lesson plans in an electronic format.

Mr. Wu encourages students and parents to visit the class Web page regularly, where he enters test dates and assignment due dates. He always puts health messages and the lunch menu on the Web page so students can share this information with their parents. He also suggests ways parents can support learning at home.

Mr. Wu communicates with parents via e-mail. If a conversation is more helpful, he will use his phone or have a person-to-person conference at school. Sometimes he sends written notes for parents home with his students. He wants to encourage parental involvement in students' learning so he uses the most appropriate means of communication and strives to be culturally sensitive in all his communications.

You can:

- Set up a workstation to handle administrative duties. Laptop and desktop computers and phones are essential for organizing tasks and communications.
- Find the most effective way to engage parents and work toward students' academic success by supporting learning at home.

Learn More

- [Family and Community Engagement](#)

Emergency Plans

Mr. Wu serves on Principal Paul's emergency management team. He coordinates the response for the middle school grades in the event of a fire or weather emergency and makes sure every teacher knows how to handle their students responsibly in such situations.

Last year when the National Weather Service issued a tornado warning, Mr. Wu led his students into designated interior shelter areas in a calm and orderly manner. Everyone was instructed to crouch low, head down, protecting the back of their heads with the arms. Once the storm subsided, he led his students back to his classroom. Many students needed reassuring that the danger had passed. He called on Nurse Okonjo and the school counselor, Ms. Kowalski, to assist him in calming students' fears.

At least once a year, Mr. Wu coordinates a practice drill for the whole school so students know what actions to take if another tornado comes into the area. He posted easy-to-read signs in hallways to direct everyone to interior shelter areas. Also, he organizes fire drills to practice evacuating the building quickly and safely. Mr. Wu talks to his students about all types of emergencies and shows how they can protect themselves from harm.

Last year, Mr. Wu took training classes to learn appropriate actions to take if he is involved with a volatile student. Mr. Wu learned techniques for diffusing an escalating situation and devised a plan to protect himself and others in a crisis situation.

You can:

- Work with the emergency management team at your school to practice action plans.
- Ask mental health professionals to offer training so teachers and counselors can help students feel safe and secure if an event occurs.

Learn More

- [Fire Drills at School](#)
- [Make a Plan](#)
- [Ready](#)

Grades 9-12

Posters

Ms. Dubois ensures she uses a variety of methods, from low-tech to high-tech, to encourage her high school students to make healthy choices. Her philosophy is to communicate health messages explicitly through one-on-one conversations with her students and in-class discussions, as well as through posters, magazines, and other visuals for her classroom. She makes sure to keep her messages evidence-based and current by reviewing research literature, media sources, and community events calendars. She selects subjects that are relevant and interesting to her students. After reviewing findings from the most recent CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Ms. Dubois has made sure to address e-cigarettes and texting and driving with her students.

In her many years of teaching, Ms. Dubois has seen that her students who are involved in after-school activities and develop healthy social support networks tend to be more resilient and successful in navigating adolescence than their peers who seem more isolated and uninvolved. She makes sure to promote a wide range of clubs and activities so that all of her students can find a place to belong and contribute. She also makes it known that her classroom is a safe space, meaning students can privately talk with her about concerns or issues they may have in a supportive and non-judgmental environment.

Promoting mental health is a topic frequently covered in Ms. Dubois' classroom. She does her best to connect students (and other teachers!) who may be struggling with appropriate supports, such as the school counselor. She tries to equip all of her students so they know what signs to be aware of and how to take appropriate action to help others. She also works to reduce the stigma at Jefferson School that may be associated with mental health issues.

You can:

- Use a variety of means to communicate with your students on a range of health and wellness topics.

- Use wall space in classrooms, common areas, and restrooms to promote relevant health topics. Remember to change out posters and other visuals frequently to keep students' interest.
- Create coordinated, school-wide communication campaigns.

Learn More

- [Talk About Mental Health](#)
- [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System \(YRBSS\)](#)

Learning Pods

The structure of the learning pod in Ms. Dubois' classroom promotes discussion. Thus, the Student Government Association (SGA) often meets here after school for their meetings; students from all grades can be involved to varying degrees. The student government also has a member who is a liaison to the School Health Team. The liaison, Christine Brighton, provides the student perspective when the team discusses school health policy or practice changes. Christine has worked with the School Health Team to promote health equity in the school and community by coordinating open discussions for students and community members about the topic. Recently, Principal Paul asked the School Health Team and the SGA to help plan and promote a personal safety and emergency preparedness initiative he wanted to conduct at Jefferson School. This initiative included reviewing and communicating plans for lock-down and active shooter situations with all relevant individuals and agencies.

Throughout the year, the Jefferson School SGA and School Health Team have been able to collaborate on a number of initiatives that promote the social and physical well-being of students and staff. They have organized events like guest lecturers from a local college, light-hearted kickball games, chess tournaments, and talent shows. The SGA members also make a point to pair up with new students to help show them around during their first few days. All of these initiatives make Jefferson School a more welcoming and fun place to be. School leadership is thoughtful about making sure there are clubs, activities, and opportunities for students with a variety of interests and abilities.

You can:

- Look for ways to promote student involvement in decision making by including student representatives on teams and committees typically comprised solely of staff members.
- Assess the events, clubs, and activities offered to students to determine if there are social and wellness activities that will appeal to everyone.

- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Health Equity at Jefferson School.

Creative Thinking Area

Ms. Dubois does her best to recognize and accommodate the different learning styles of her students. Some students who prefer a quieter environment do their individual work in the creative thinking area. She has also been able to use this space for a student who needed special accommodations to help with regulating emotions and behavior. The student knew she was always free to move over to this area as soon as she began feeling frustrated or anxious in an effort to self-regulate and calm down before the situation escalated. Ms. Dubois has found some students are better able to focus if they use the exercise ball from her creative thinking area in place of their desk chairs. This has been an easy way for Ms. Dubois to also incorporate an opportunity for physical activity into her class.

Peer tutoring sessions before school also use the creative thinking area. Peer tutoring helps create a positive school climate by promoting pro-social behavior. By encouraging students to participate in volunteer opportunities, Jefferson School leadership believes they are giving students lifelong lessons. Ms. Dubois has seen that while tutoring can often benefit the recipient academically, she also believes the tutors benefit by reinforcing their own learning as well as gaining a sense of accomplishment from volunteering their time.

You can:

- Foster a positive psychosocial school climate in a variety of ways.
- Promote policies, practices, and attitudes that demonstrate appreciation of individual diversity and respect for all families' cultural beliefs and practices.
- Encourage students to engage in volunteer opportunities such as tutoring, classroom chores, service learning, and teacher assistance.

Staff Lounge

District Employee Wellness Program

A few years ago, the district developed an Employee Wellness Program to encourage school practices that promote staff health and attendance. The wellness program is part of employment benefits that include health insurance and retirement benefits.

Health promotion activities, such as annual health fairs, ergonomic assessments, education with an emphasis on prevention, safety training, health care screenings, flu shots, and nursing assessments for minor injuries and non-work-related illnesses, promote employees' total wellness. In addition, the District Employee Wellness Program coordinator encourages each school to develop its own School Health Team and Staff Wellness Work Groups. A School Health Team is a group of individuals representing different segments of the community who advise a school on aspects of the school health program. A Staff Wellness Work Group, made up primarily of school employees who work in conjunction with the School Health Team, focus their efforts specifically on increasing health knowledge and behaviors among staff members.

The Staff Wellness Work Group makes recommendations to implement or improve policies and programs based on assessments and surveys. A satisfaction survey distributed to Jefferson School staff showed they wanted access to fitness equipment, fresh and healthy foods in vending machines, and incentives for participating in wellness activities. Based on the findings, the Staff Wellness Work Group developed recommendations to continue to improve the wellness culture and environment at Jefferson School. The team also made recommendations about staff wellness educational offerings on stress reduction, compassion fatigue, smoking cessation, healthy eating, and mindfulness.

Principal Paul has seen that if teachers are chronically absent or suffer from burnout, the need for substitute teachers increases. This can disrupt classroom activities and student learning. That is why he believes promoting teachers' health is an investment in students' learning. He also recognizes that skillful teaching is not easy and makes a point to provide his teachers with relevant training, coaching, and professional development opportunities.

To build a greater sense of community, Jefferson School serves healthy options at staff recognition breakfasts and lunches, rather than providing donuts or pizza. The district's Employee Wellness Program supports walking meetings and standing desks for staff. Teachers are encouraged to be active at lunch and use substitute teachers to attend professional development opportunities, such as conferences and workshops.

This year, the district plans to apply for state and national awards through recognition programs such as the National Healthy Schools Award. Recognition for their efforts will help the district recruit and retain quality staff members as well as demonstrate its accomplishments to community members and parents.

You can:

- Work with your school administration, staff wellness work group, and school staff to support, develop, or improve the wellness program in your district.
- Rely on publicly available resources, such as the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Health Promotion for Staff website, when developing your Employee Wellness Program.
- Conduct assessments and satisfaction surveys among staff to determine interests.

Learn More

- [School Health Guidelines \(read Guideline 8\)](#)
- [Health Promotion for Staff](#)

Celebration Board

Principal Paul supported School Health Team members interested in creating a Staff Wellness Work Group. The work group decided a Wellness Celebration Board was a simple and visible way to begin making changes on the Jefferson School campus. The board highlights staff that are involved in wellness activities and encourages others to join in. The board content changes frequently.

Currently, the board displays winners of a staff wellness competition. Visual icons represent categories, such as healthy eating, physical activity, stress reduction, and community engagement. Participating staff who earn the most points in each category receive a blue ribbon. This has created friendly competition for bragging rights. Each quarter, everyone who earned points can redeem them for prizes including kitchen tools, movie and sporting event tickets, gift cards, and cash. The award system has increased morale and reduced absenteeism.

At other points throughout the year, the board served to:

- Thank staff that has contributed to employee wellness through actions such as organizing fitness events, hosting healthy potluck lunches, serving on the Staff Wellness Work Group, or working with community partners to enhance health and wellness at the school.
- Recognize staff that has been "caught" creatively incorporating healthy behaviors into their routines and class activities.
- Feature a "wellness employee of the month" from those who participate in the staff wellness activities. The board highlights some of the individual's personal health goals,

healthy behaviors, and a quote describing how wellness activities positively affected their health. This information encourages others to participate in wellness activities and recognize that everyone has different wellness goals and interests. This was a great way for the staff to get to know each other better.

Ever since staff wellness activities began, there has been a lot more interaction and laughter in the lounge! Principal Paul is pleased that they have needed fewer substitute teachers, which has benefited the students.

You can:

- Find ways to reward your staff for participating in local wellness activities that promote healthy behaviors and community engagement.
- Make sure incentives are appealing by gathering staff opinions through surveys or informal polls.
- Celebrate accomplishments publicly via a celebration board, school newsletters, or various prizes.
- Remind staff through wellness program activities and publications that by taking care of themselves, they can be more physically, mentally, and emotionally available for their students.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Family Engagement and Community Involvement at Jefferson School.

Fitness Equipment

Moving around is a great way for staff to take a break from their daily schedules and to participate in wellness activities. There is an "active" area of the lounge for easy and sociable quick "movement breaks." Staff can use yoga mats, weights, and fitness balls to stretch and flex their muscles in the middle of their workdays. They can also check out loaner "wearables" to help them track their fitness both at home and work. Staff has raved about fitness challenges where they keep track of who moved the most during the week.

An employee wellness survey found that staff wanted to be able to use treadmills and exercise bikes at school. The Staff Wellness Work Group reached out to a fitness trainer, who allowed them to try out different exercise equipment at a local gym and helped them decide which equipment would work best

for their needs. The school bought a few treadmills and exercise bikes for staff to use in the gym; a schedule in the lounge lists when the gym equipment is available for staff use.

The survey also found that staff was interested in working with a fitness trainer. The fitness trainer came to the school to help staff develop custom fitness plans. The wellness work group secured a gym membership discount for staff interested in more exercise equipment, classes, and an indoor pool.

Jefferson School staff also participates in wellness activities as a group. After school, there is a walking club and a dance class where staff can exercise together.

You can:

- Set up areas in the school for employees to use low-cost fitness equipment, such as stretching mats, fitness balls, and a TV with exercise DVDs.
- Encourage physical activity and build a sense of community around wellness activities by:
 - connecting staff with local gyms and fitness trainers;
 - creating a walking club;
 - providing wearable step counters;
 - coordinating fitness challenges and friendly competitions.

Learn More

- [School Employee Well-Being](#)

Relaxation Area

Some dedicated staff members at Jefferson School were at risk of burnout because they were not taking time to relax and recharge. Before the staff lounge makeover, it was supposed to be a place for employees to unwind. However, many staff members did not actually like to go in the lounge because they found it to be a stressful environment.

In the makeover, the Staff Wellness Work Group removed a TV that was on constantly (at a volume that seemed too loud to some!). Now there is less tension in the lounge about channel preferences and fewer stressful conversations about news coverage. The staff seems to be talking to each other more. The work group was able to repurpose the TV and make better use of it. They put it on a cart in a gym storage closet with some exercise DVDs. Now, individuals and groups of staff members work out before and after school with the videos.

There are different ways to get refreshed and recharged—sometimes by sitting quietly, by stretching muscles, and by connecting with others. To allow for all of these, a room divider now separates the active parts of the room from the relaxation areas. In the relaxation area, there is soft lighting and comfortable seating.

Mr. Gupta likes to sit on the couch and practice belly breathing using an app on his tablet. He has learned that deep breathing is a healthy way to release stress. It also gives him a sense of calm and concentration when he returns to the classroom.

Other staff plugs their mobile phones and other devices into the charging station. They use headphones to relax with music and podcasts.

You can:

- Encourage a healthy emotional climate in the lounge by removing TVs, sharing free apps on stress management techniques, and providing an area for staff to refresh themselves in a quiet atmosphere, free from bothersome background noises.

Learn More

- [Breathe2Relax - iOS](#)
- [Breathe2Relax - Android](#)

Playground

Supervisor Guidance

Ms. Antonelli supervises playground activity to ensure safety and the proper use of equipment. Signs with picture messages show age limits and simple rules at the separate play areas. She and other recess supervisors keep young, smaller students away from the play areas meant for older, bigger students.

Ms. Antonelli and her staff and volunteers keep all students in sight at all times.

Many factors determine the appropriate ratio of supervisors to students, including age of students, mental and physical abilities of students, and configuration of the playground. The Supervisor Guidance outlines job responsibilities. In addition to having this Guidance, Ms. Antonelli and other recess supervisors have completed training on effective recess supervision techniques, injury prevention strategies, and developmentally appropriate play.

Ms. Antonelli uses a checklist to inspect play equipment and playground structures regularly for possible damage and calls the school maintenance supervisor for repairs. Together with maintenance workers, Ms. Antonelli and others keep the playground free of litter and hazards.

Ms. Antonelli sets out equipment in activity zones so that students have some planned activities to choose from if they cannot decide what they would like to play. The activity zones are set up around the painted grid markings, such as four square or geometric shapes, on the playground hard surface area.

Recess supervisors actively move around the play area to observe, monitor, coach, and reinforce positive behaviors. They also engage in the activities with children to encourage their participation and follow a schoolwide recess schedule that ensures a safe number of students on the playground at all times. The recess supervisors help students apply sunscreen, with parental permission. Students must wear weather-appropriate clothes and clothes without drawstrings on the playground. Students have easy access to water fountains so they can stay hydrated during playtime.

You can:

- Create a safe environment by posting playground safety rules and following supervisor guidance.
- Share playground safety rules with parents and ask them to volunteer for games and other play activities.
- Make sure all supervising staff and volunteers receive training on safety and supervision techniques.
- Repair any equipment with broken, loose, projecting, or missing parts.

Learn More

- [Playgrounds](#)
- [Recess](#)

Adaptive Swing

Ms. Antonelli noticed a pair of adaptive swings in an equipment catalog for use by students with physical disabilities. She knew several Jefferson School students would benefit from these swings with harnesses and high backs. Ms. Antonelli applied for and received a grant to purchase the adaptive swings and

other accessible playground equipment. Then, she organized a community campaign to raise funds to install ramps for easy access to the play area.

After much fund-raising and planning, the playground is now an area where students of different abilities have valuable interaction with one another. The swings allow students with physical disabilities to play with their able-bodied peers. Students who use wheelchairs can play with sand by using hand-operated digger tools; they can strengthen their arms in an arcade of pull-up bars. A sensory panel provides engagement for visually challenged children. Ms. Antonelli discovered ways to modify games so students with limited movement could participate, including turning a long jump rope for jumping children or throwing and catching objects.

You can:

- Organize a campaign to install adaptive equipment to ensure all children can have fun together.
- Raise funds to purchase equipment and cover installation costs.
- Install wheelchair-friendly ramps and flooring, and incorporate features, such as raised sand tables and adaptive swings, both suitable for children in wheelchairs or with restricted mobility.

Walking Trail

Jefferson School installed a walking track along the perimeter of the playground as another option for physical activity. Students and staff who participate in the school's walking challenge or wear pedometers want to accumulate a lot of steps every day. Others choose the walking track as a way to energize and socialize. Walking makes the lungs and heart stronger, thus building endurance. The walking path helps spread children across the entire play area and makes use of all the space on the playground.

Ms. Antonelli encourages students with physical and developmental disabilities to be part of the physical and social activities as much as they are able. Some students who use wheelchairs can strengthen their arm muscles by moving around the walking trail. This mobility gives them a sense of independence, and they can socialize while joining their jogging or walking friends.

You can:

- Encourage walking by building a walking trail or marking a walking route within the fenced playground.

Learn More

- [Staff Involvement](#)

Rules List

Ms. Antonelli greets students with a wave and a smile when they enter the playground area. For many, the playground is their favorite place!

In addition to a big welcome sign, Ms. Antonelli positioned a sign with rules about safety and appropriate behavior. The sign includes picture messages for students who are too young to read. She explains to students how these rules prevent injuries and why courteous behavior is important. She and other recess supervisors enforce rules of conduct with consistency and they respond to bullying and other harmful behaviors with fair, appropriate consequences.

Ms. Antonelli created a rules list to inform parent volunteers and school staff about the rules. She developed strategies to positively reinforce or reward students who follow rules. Student recess leaders rotate each month to help Ms. Antonelli identify students who are engaging in safe play and including others in their games.

Also, Ms. Antonelli gave guidance about handling misbehaviors such as name calling, teasing, hitting, bullying, or other forms of strife. She suggested ways to keep playground disagreements from escalating into conflicts.

You can:

- Create a rules list to create awareness about safety and appropriate behavior.
- Encourage supervisors to set a goal of having four positive interactions for every corrective interaction.
- Assign student leaders to promote student involvement.
- Find ways for students to play in harmony so they can work cooperatively when they return to the classroom.

Learn More

- [National Program for Playground Safety](#)
- [Conflict Resolution at School & on the Playground](#)

- [Violence Prevention: Bullying Research](#)

Buddy Bench

Ms. Antonelli realized some students had difficulty socializing with others. Perhaps they felt shy or awkward, or they had language barriers. At her request, the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) installed a Buddy Bench, a seating area where students could take rest breaks, regroup, and talk or play with others. In a short time, this gathering spot fostered new friendships among students. When playgroups needed extra people to round out teams, they looked to the Buddy Bench to find someone ready to play.

Ms. Antonelli promotes a positive, respectful social climate on the playground. She finds ways to engage everyone in positive peer groups. Students who use wheelchairs like the supportive interaction at the Buddy Bench. They are part of the activity going on around them. Ms. Antonelli and her staff, volunteers, and student recess leaders adapt or devise games so all students can participate to the best of their abilities.

You can:

- Install a Buddy Bench or other gathering place to help students socialize and connect with each other.
- Be creative and invent games and activities so students with different abilities and disabilities can interact with others.
- Encourage all students to set personal goals and focus on their abilities, not their limitations or disabilities.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services at Jefferson School.

Counselor's Office

Bulletin Board

Ms. Kowalski knows students deal with a lot of stress that can sometimes be overwhelming. She wanted to reinforce the positivity in the world, so she created a bulletin board to accentuate the good things at the school and in the community. Also, she used the bulletin board to emphasize growth mindsets that students need to develop coping skills and resiliency.

She encouraged students to add their own uplifting thoughts and drawings to the bulletin board, and she posted growth mindset messages and pictures. Some students created messages and drawings through classroom guidance lessons.

In a short while, the bulletin board gained a lot of attention because students liked the positive messages. Every month, Ms. Kowalski selects a theme for the bulletin board and highlights particularly relevant messages.

You can:

- Affirm the positive at your school and community by setting up a Wall of Positivity bulletin board and incorporating growth mindsets.
- Establish a supportive learning environment and help students understand the skills they need to develop coping skills and resiliency.

Learn More

- [Protective Factors](#)
- [School Climate](#)

Computer

In several classroom guidance lessons, students revealed incidents of cyberbullying. Ms. Kowalski developed a student survey to find out the pervasiveness of cyberbullying and then decided to create an intervention based on the results.

She organized a “Caught in the Web” Internet safety event that featured a panel of experts: a mental health provider, a representative from the Kolbe police department, and an information technology professional.

The after-school event was open to the public and heavily promoted to attract students and their families. Serving as moderator, Ms. Kowalski guided the panel discussion to focus on how students can navigate safely and handle bullying on the Internet. Parents posed questions about setting up controls on their home computers. They asked about law enforcement support and emerging threats to computer security. The mental health provider offered guidance on building self-esteem and avoiding unfavorable social interaction on the Web.

Following the panel discussion, Ms. Kowalski gathered up extra leaflets and brochures from members of the panel and put together packets to send home with students for parents who did not attend the after-school event. She also developed a classroom guidance lesson on cyberbullying and delivered a presentation during a PTA meeting so more parents could find solutions for cyberbullying.

You can:

- Coordinate a "Caught in the Web" Internet safety event for your school and community by working with parent support organizations, the local mental health association, and police department. A panel of experts may include computer security professionals, social media communications specialists, mental health counselors, and law enforcement personnel.

Learn More

- [Prevent Cyberbullying](#)

Door Sign

Ms. Kowalski found out students sometimes felt uncomfortable when they entered the Counselor's Office because of fear that others would think they were in trouble or had serious issues. She requested a less noticeable location for her office. Now students have a certain level of privacy because they do not have to pass in front of teachers and other students when they come to meet with the counselor.

Ms. Kowalski provides a quiet, comfortable environment and ensures uninterrupted conversations by hanging a sign on the window of her door: "Counseling in Progress — Please Do Not Disturb."

You can:

- Select a location for the Counselor's Office that affords a level of privacy. The space should be large enough so parents or small groups of students can gather.
- Create a relaxing setting so participants feel at ease.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Counseling, Psychological and Social Services at Jefferson School.

Diversity Poster

Over the past few years, Jefferson School's student and staff populations have become more diverse. By analyzing school data, Ms. Kowalski identified this trend and incorporated lessons on tolerance throughout the counseling program.

One of her actions was to place posters in her office and around the school showing diversity and tolerance. The posters' themes relate to accepting and building relationships with people who are from varied cultures, religions, and ethnic backgrounds. She knows adolescent students may have concerns about body image, so she displays posters that encourage acceptance of all body types and genders.

In addition to her use of posters, she communicates inclusion when she engages with students in counseling sessions, in classroom guidance lessons, and throughout the comprehensive school counseling program.

You can:

- Build a social environment that is supportive of diverse student and staff populations by championing respect, inclusion, acceptance, and understanding.
- Promote these attributes throughout the school counseling program, school wide campaigns, and day-to-day actions.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Health Equity at Jefferson School.

Learn More

- [Body Smarts](#)

Principal's Office

Awards & Art

Principal Paul values the artistic talent and creativity of his students and proudly displays their artwork in his office. He started a monthly art contest to encourage originality in design, and winning entries are placed in his office and around the school building. Students feel good about their achievements and frequently invite family members to the school to see their prize-winning art on prominent display.

Principal Paul is also proud of the awards Jefferson School has received because of its accomplishments. Over the years, students and staff developed valuable partnerships in the community, such as collaborations with the 4-H Club and shared use of the gymnasium and playground. These efforts have brought recognition to the school. The Jefferson School Health Fair received an award from the Kolbe Public Health Department. Principal Paul was recognized as the state's "Principal of the Year" for his efforts to improve the school.

You can:

- Recognize achievements by showcasing projects and accomplishments.
- Sponsor art shows, science fairs, and sports tournaments.
- Develop partnerships with organizations such as Junior Achievement, Kiwanis Club, and Rotary Club.
- Host award ceremonies to promote stellar efforts; however, words of praise are just as meaningful. Administrators, teachers, and staff can show by words and actions the value they place on individual effort and creativity.

Clock

When the clock shows 8 a.m., Principal Paul starts the day with announcements. He runs a smooth operation by keeping classes and breaks on an efficient schedule. Before school, many students participate in the School Meal Breakfast Program. Students are encouraged to go to the cafeteria for breakfast or a snack before classes start or participate in Grab and Go options. Principal Paul ensures students have at least 20 minutes to eat breakfast. He schedules at least one hour of physical activity every day for students and makes sure there is time for physical activity outside of PE class.

You can:

- Structure your school day around an efficient schedule.
- Keep in mind recommended guidelines for physical activity, meals, and social breaks between classes.

Learn More

- [School Breakfast Program](#)

Gym Bag & Shoes

Principal Paul joins students and other staff in the after-school running club. The exercise keeps him fit and relieves stress. He likes the friendly interaction and competition as runners prepare for the upcoming 5K event. If the students beat him in the race, he has agreed to wear bright yellow shorts to work the next day!

Principal Paul knew that some staff members did not take time to exercise. He encouraged them to join the running club too, but some did not like to run. He conducted a staff survey to determine interests

and realized aerobics and yoga were popular. Principal Paul coordinated with the local fitness club, which provided fitness instructors for a free 10-week session of classes in the school gymnasium. He knows people will stick with the exercise programs they like best.

You can:

- Promote employee wellness by offering different opportunities for exercise.
- Contact a local fitness club and negotiate for discounted memberships.
- Encourage staff members to support each other and engage in friendly competition.
- Check out the School Health Team's discussion about recommendations to improve Physical Education at Jefferson School.

Open Door

One morning, Principal Paul did not have any meetings or pressing deadlines scheduled. He spent the time standing in his office doorway and talking to students and staff as they walked by. Since then, he has expanded his open door policy. He discusses concerns in an informal manner and offers guidance. Of course, students come around to tell jokes and share good news too. They know he will applaud their achievements and support them through the ups and downs of life.

Word has spread to parents and community leaders, and Principal Paul has gained a reputation for being a good listener and the go-to person for answers. He is now planning to have a “non-office” afternoon each week so he can go visit classes and meet more students.

You can:

- Create a positive social and emotional climate at your school by promoting communication and interaction. Staff, parents, and community leaders can produce better results when they have the support of administrators who listen to their concerns and work with them to find solutions.

Conference Room

Conference Room Conversation 5: Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services

Mrs. Ahmed: Good morning, everyone. The School Health Team completed the *School Health Index* (SHI) module on School Counseling, Psychological and Social Services. The team identified strengths and weaknesses in Jefferson School's counseling, psychological, and social services based on the results of

the module score card, and then they developed an action plan to recommend improvements. Nurse Okonjo and Ms. Kowalski, would you share with the group the team's findings and recommendations?

Nurse Okonjo: Thank you, Mrs. Ahmed. The *School Health Index* has been very useful. Two years ago, Ms. Kowalski and I noticed some of our students had difficulty adjusting to Jefferson School, in terms of transitioning to the next grade level and making friends. After completing the SHI module, our score card results brought our attention to this area for improvement, and we developed an action plan to address socialization issues.

Mrs. Chen: What were some of the items in your action plan to improve the situation?

Nurse Okonjo: One item we implemented was to set up a buddy system. We connected students to older classmates who could answer questions and help them find their way as they transitioned into a higher grade.

Mr. Rodriguez: Another item in the action plan was to install a Buddy Bench on the playground. Students can go to this seat and socialize with others. It helps them form new friendships. We followed the guidance in the Social and Emotional School Climate component of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model as we worked through implementing these improvements.

Nurse Okonjo: Ms. Kowalski and I are pleased with the changes we made last year in social services. We are sure that when we reassess next year, we will see improved scores on our SHI score card.

Mrs. Chen: Did this year's score card show other areas for improvement?

Nurse Okonjo: Yes, our health and safety promotion and referral systems received medium scores on the score card. Some students feel emotionally upset and out of control. The SHI score card helped us realize the need for more in-depth counseling services for these students. In our action plan, we set out to establish an efficient, effective process for connecting students with counseling services at the school and in the community.

Ms. O'Ryan: School counselors like Ms. Kowalski are able to help students through tough times. They can teach coping skills and provide tools, such as anger management techniques. And, they can help students deal with life's highs and lows through individual and small group counseling and through classroom guidance lessons delivered to all students. Many students struggle with issues not related to academics. In some cases, students are dealing with violence, family illness, serious diseases, or even tragedies. These issues may be the underlying reasons for disruptive behavior or poor academic performance.

Nurse Okonjo: Plus, students can check in with me when they feel stressed or anxious, particularly if they have a health crisis.

Mr. Anderson: Do you or Ms. Kowalski make referrals to mental health professionals in the community?

Nurse Okonjo: First we try to match the student with the right professional within the School-Based Health Center. However, sometimes we determine a student should seek counseling outside of school. In that case, we contact the parents, and then we provide information about a social service agency that can help them find appropriate mental health care.

Mrs. Chen: How do you address fighting among students or other forms of violence at school?

Nurse Okonjo: The SHI helped us recognize the importance of being able to identify, track, and refer students who show signs of aggression or who bully other students. Bullying or harassment may lead to other violent acts, so Jefferson School is stepping up its anti-bullying campaign, but a lot of work remains. We also need to identify the victims of bullying. These students could be harming themselves or contemplating suicide, and need referral to the appropriate agency for help.

Principal Paul: Our next professional development day will offer a workshop on recognizing the signs of mental health concerns. The entire school staff needs to know the warning signs and symptoms of those who may need outside help and could be in danger of hurting themselves or others. We are enriching our workshop by using guidance found in the Health Services, Community Involvement, and Counseling, Psychological, and Social Services components of the WSCC model.

Our new processes will help us connect students to counseling and other assistance programs in the community. By staying focused on the well-being of our students, we continue to build and sustain a healthy school environment at Jefferson School.

If you want to learn more about the *School Health Index*, visit the [Healthy Schools website](#). For training, visit the [Professional Development & Training page](#).