



Safe and Supported Texas Schools

A Blueprint for Scaling and Sustaining
Student Support Services



H.E. BUTT
FOUNDATION

Wellness and safety create the foundation for strong, supportive, resilient school communities when psychological and physical safety are prioritized. Through proactive systems of care and support, schools can create environments where challenges are identified and addressed early and everyone has the opportunity to learn and thrive.

INTRODUCTION

Texas schools are navigating increasing expectations around safety, student wellbeing, and academic performance. While state and federal funding streams allow for investments in psychological safety, many districts struggle to align resources strategically, protect prevention funding, and make the case for sustained investment.

Psychological safety is not an add-on to school operations; it is foundational to academic success, workforce readiness, public safety, and economic resilience. When schools are safe and supportive, students attend, achieve, and graduate. Staff remain stable and effective. Communities benefit from stronger talent pipelines, reduced justice system involvement, and increased economic participation.

Whether you are a superintendent, CFO, School Board Member, or serve in a different leadership role in a district, you will get the most out of this resource if you break it into four primary areas for capacity building:

1. Making the Case (pages 7–25). The array of case documentation in this section will help build your own case for why upstream student supports are less expensive, lead to safer and healthier pathways for students, and help retain quality teachers.

2. Navigating Funding (pages 27–39) includes two worksheets designed to quickly ascertain program effectiveness and document the funding landscape for your district.

Step 1: The Needs Assessment tool (pages 34–35) provides guidance on bringing the right experts within the district to the table for ongoing assessment of the psychological needs within your district.

Steps 2 and 3: The Matrix of the Funding Landscape tool (pages 36–39) shows the required and allowable implementation funding sources for Tiers 1,2,3 safe and supported schools programs. This section gives voice to the many required activities that don't have specific funding sources and helps you name what's working and what needs change through a Plus/Delta evaluation process.

3. Strengthening District Partnerships (pages 41–53) are tools for your district to strengthen durable multi-sector partnerships. Phase 1: identify partnership sectors. Phase 2: use the examples and asset map tool to identify partners in each sector. Phase 3: identify the implementation processes to maximize partnerships.

4. Galvanizing Community Support (beginning on page 55) provides ready-made tools to mobilize community messengers. These templates and tear-outs are tailored to equip external voices to take your story to lawmakers and other important decision makers.

Together we can move prevention from permitted to protected—and equip leaders with the tools to make lasting, system-level change.



CONTENTS

Contributors 5

1. MAKING THE CASE 7

 Case Study: East Central ISD 8

 Backed by Research 10

 Workforce Overview 12

 School Safety is Public Safety 14

 Case Study: Public Safety & School Safety 16

 Backed by Research 18

 Don't Forget the Teachers 20

 Timeline of Return on Investment 24

2. NAVIGATING FUNDING 27

 Comprehensive Needs Assessment 30

 Funding Landscape Analysis 36

3. STRENGTHENING DISTRICT PARTNERSHIPS 41

 Partnership Framework 42

 Incentivizing Innovation 50

 Student Supports Framework 52

4. GALVANIZING COMMUNITY SUPPORT 55

 Gaining Support 56

 Local Impact Template 59

 Mobilizing Community Messengers 60

Appendix: Outline of Sentinel Reporting Requirements 65

CONTRIBUTORS

This blueprint was co-designed by philanthropists, educators, school leaders, community partners, policy advocates, law enforcement, and mental health professionals working across the full education landscape—ensuring all content was grounded in practice, informed by community, and built for scale.



Alex Bakkum, Chief Philanthropy Officer, Adam R. Scripps Foundation



Julee Broscoff, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Kerrville Independent School District



Allison Castle, President, Castle Communications



Jennifer Esterline, Senior Vice President of Major Gifts, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute



Rebecca Fowler, Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs, Mental Health America of Greater Houston



Lauren Geraghty, Chief Strategy Officer, Communities in Schools, San Antonio



Victoria Gomez, School-Based Program Manager, Bexar County



Jessie Higgins, Chief Mental Health Officer, City of San Antonio



JoAnna Lujan, Coordinator of Counselors, Harlandale Independent School District



Suzii Youngblood March, Policy Consultant, H. E. Butt Foundation



Tausha Nickleberry, Certified TIER Trainer and Consultant for Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), Education Service Center Region 20



Sarah Peña, Coordinator of Social and Emotional Development, East Central Independent School District



Perri Rosheger, Vice President of Community Engagement, H. E. Butt Foundation



Jesus (Jesse) Salame, Chief of Police, San Antonio Police Department



Patti Salzmänn, Deputy Superintendent, San Antonio Independent School District



Melissa True, Ed.D., Vice President of Education and Strategy, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute



Jessica Weaver, CEO, Communities In Schools of San Antonio

Shannon Hopkins, Project Facilitator, RootedGood
James May, Graphic Designer, Paradigm Design
© Copyright 2026 H. E. Butt Foundation



MAKING THE CASE

Safe and supportive environments strengthen learning, improve wellbeing, and create the conditions that help students and educators thrive.

In this section, we highlight four positive impacts supported by prevention:

1. Student Achievement
2. Student Behavior
3. Workforce Development and Retention
4. Community Safety

When students feel connected and supported, they attend school, graduate, and are better equipped to contribute to workforce needs. When schools deploy effective prevention strategies, violence is reduced, school climate is strengthened, and communities are safer. Schools that invest in supportive environments and strong relationships create lasting benefits for students, communities, and tax payers.

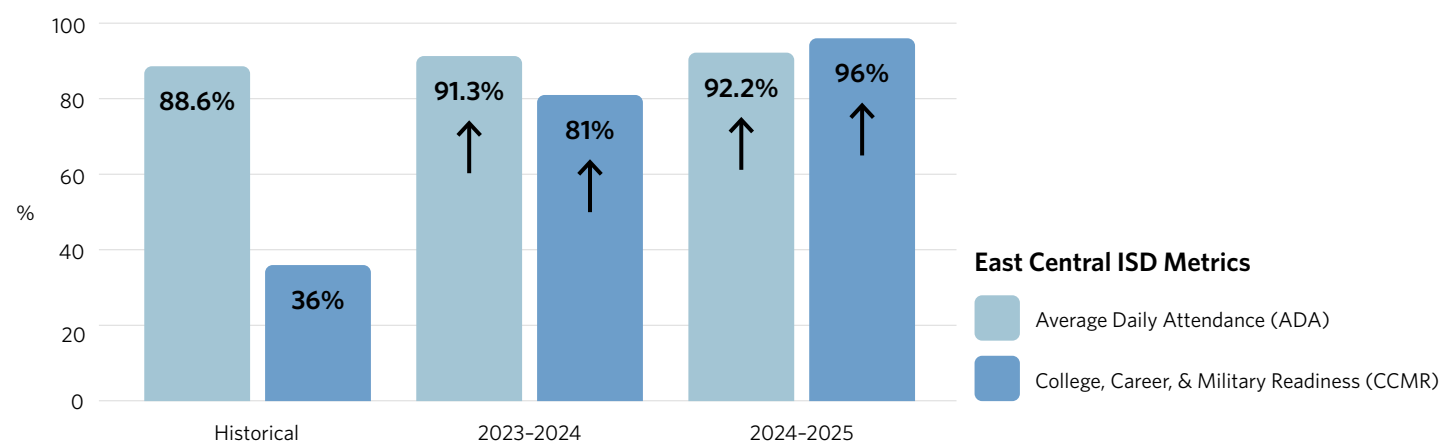
In an age of quick fixes and short-term results, upstream investments can be difficult to champion. Prevention requires patience and sustained commitment. The evidence is clear. When schools invest early, the long-term positive impacts are significant.



Case Study

EAST CENTRAL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

East Central ISD shows what happens when psychological safety becomes a strategic priority. Starting from a 36% College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) baseline in 2022-2023, the district implemented whole-child Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), restorative practices, site coordinators, targeted advising, and aligned funding streams. By 2025-2026, CCMR rates have reached 96-97%, nearly tripling in just three years, alongside increased attendance and significant reductions in discipline incidents. The district's performance pivot demonstrates how TEA Tier 1 prevention and comprehensive supports translate into graduation success, postsecondary readiness, and long-term economic mobility.



IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP AND COMPONENTS

*Indicates components of Integrated School Supports (ISS).

East Central ISD

THE BASELINE BEGINNING (2022-2023)

College Career Military Readiness (CCMR) Baseline: 36% of graduating seniors met readiness criteria.

Average Daily Attendance (ADA): 88.6% identified as a primary area for growth.

Funding & Staffing: Bexar County ARPA and Project AWARE funds awarded, services fully staffed Jan 2024.

YEAR 1: THE LAUNCH TOWARDS A WHOLE CHILD MODEL (2023-2024)

- *Counseling Programs:** District commits to 80/20 model; CCMR and Counseling collaboration on postsecondary readiness, Communities in Schools (CIS) Clinicians embedded (1 per 2 campuses, caseload 45).
- *Frameworks:** Comprehensive Case Management implemented for whole-child MTSS.
- *Reducing Juvenile Justice involvement:** Pecan Valley ES and RTC join UP Partnership Restorative Practices Academy training and program development.
- *Tiered Behavior Systems:** Classroom Management Plans implemented, include explicit teaching of expectations.
- *School Climate Focus:** ISP and middle school advisory implementations.

Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP): Identified need to reduce recidivism, rebranded as Restorative Transitional Center (RTC).

***CIS Site Coordinators:** providing Integrated School Supports (ISS) model at all ECISD schools.

YEAR 2: EXECUTION (2024-2025)

***Tiered Behavior Systems:** Framework and campus operating procedures reset, emphasis on Tier 1 connections strategies.

Recipient of National Postsecondary Readiness Institute (NPSI) Power of Hope Award for CCMR advising and accountability.

***Advising:** Graduation planning shifted to 8th grade, Harvard Individual Success Planning (ISP) cohort begins.

YEAR 3: REFINEMENT (2025-2026)

Data Note: Discipline incidents decrease 30% districtwide, 50% reduction at elementary.

Funding: Toyota Driving Possibilities Grant embeds STEM opportunities, social services, and United Way Family Resource Center at Pecan Valley ES.

***Advising:** Middle school course planning at 5th grade.

Structural Change: Strategic master schedule shifts; Legacy MS advisory & Valor MS Leadership Lab (Aug 2025), Heritage MS advisory (Jan 2026).

Strategic Academics: Revamp of Advanced Academics placement (fall 2024), 2nd Teach pilot at Legacy MS (spring 2025).

Research Proves:

INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORTS (ISS) DRIVE LONG-TERM ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

A landmark longitudinal study from Harvard University examining the CIS/ISS (Communities In Schools / Integrated Student Support) model followed high-risk students over two decades to measure both academic and economic impact.

Researchers analyzed:

- Short-term outcomes: test scores, attendance, and discipline.
- Long-term outcomes: high school graduation, college enrollment, and adult earnings.

Key Findings

- ✓ Integrated student supports significantly improve test scores for high-risk students.
- ✓ Three years of support in middle school increases high school graduation rates, two-year college enrollment, and adult earnings.
- ✓ Improvements in attendance, discipline, and academic performance predict nearly 80% of the program’s long-term impact on graduation, college attendance, and earnings.

Economic Impact of School Supports

When students feel safe, supported, and connected, academic gains compound into workforce readiness and long-term earnings. Psychological safety in schools is a direct driver of economic mobility and community prosperity.

\$1,140

Annual earnings increase after three years of school supports compared to their peers.

\$7,100

Approximate additional federal tax revenue generated by each student.

>\$75,000

Lifetime earnings increase after three years of school supports compared to their peers.

\$2.36

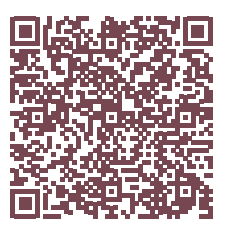
Returned in public tax revenue for every \$1 invested.

NEARLY 10X

the impact of reducing class size.



Integrated student supports don’t just improve school performance — they produce measurable economic returns for communities and taxpayers.



New Research Proves Personalized Student Supports Improves Academic Performance and Long-Term Earnings

Scan QR code to see report gse.harvard.edu

SAFE AND SUPPORTED SCHOOLS DRIVE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY

When districts invest in student mental health, the financial return appears in phases—attendance and discipline improve first, stabilizing Average Daily Attendance (ADA) revenue within the first year. Over time, those supports compound into stronger academic growth, improved staff retention, higher College, Career & Military Readiness (CCMR) indicators, and increased Outcomes Bonus funding through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) accountability system, all while increasing psychological safety in schools and the broader community.

HOW DOES THE STUDENT TO WORKFORCE PIPELINE WORK?

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

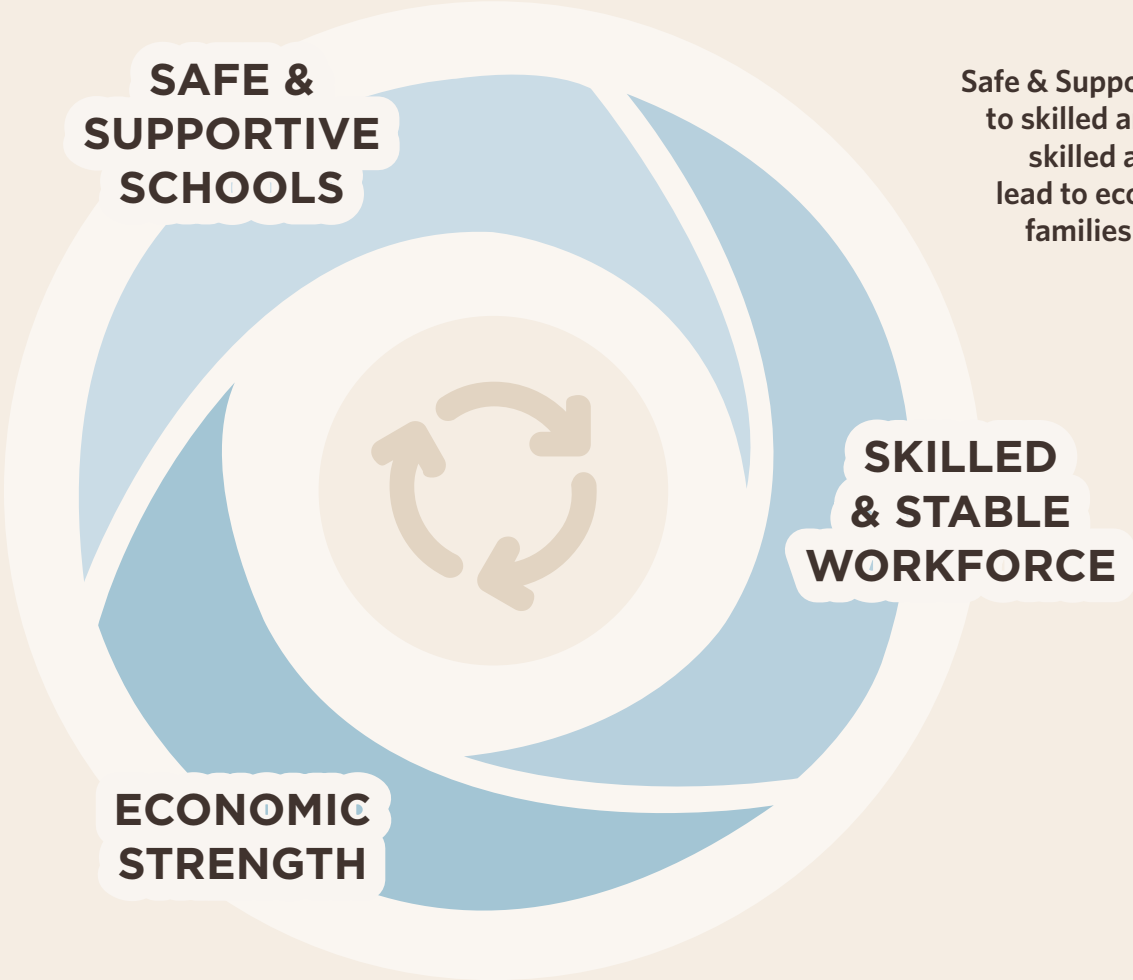
- Increased Student Engagement
- School Safety (Physical Safety)
- Positive Culture (Psychological Safety)
- Increased Enrollment and Attendance
- Dropout Prevention
- Increased Learning
- Increased Family Engagement
- Increased Tiered Student Support Services

COLLEGE, CAREER & MILITARY READINESS

- SAT/ACT/TS7
- Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery (AFSAB)
- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Industry-Based Certifications

WORKFORCE & HUMAN CAPITAL

- Workforce Studies
- Business/Workforce Partnerships
- Benefits All Community Members

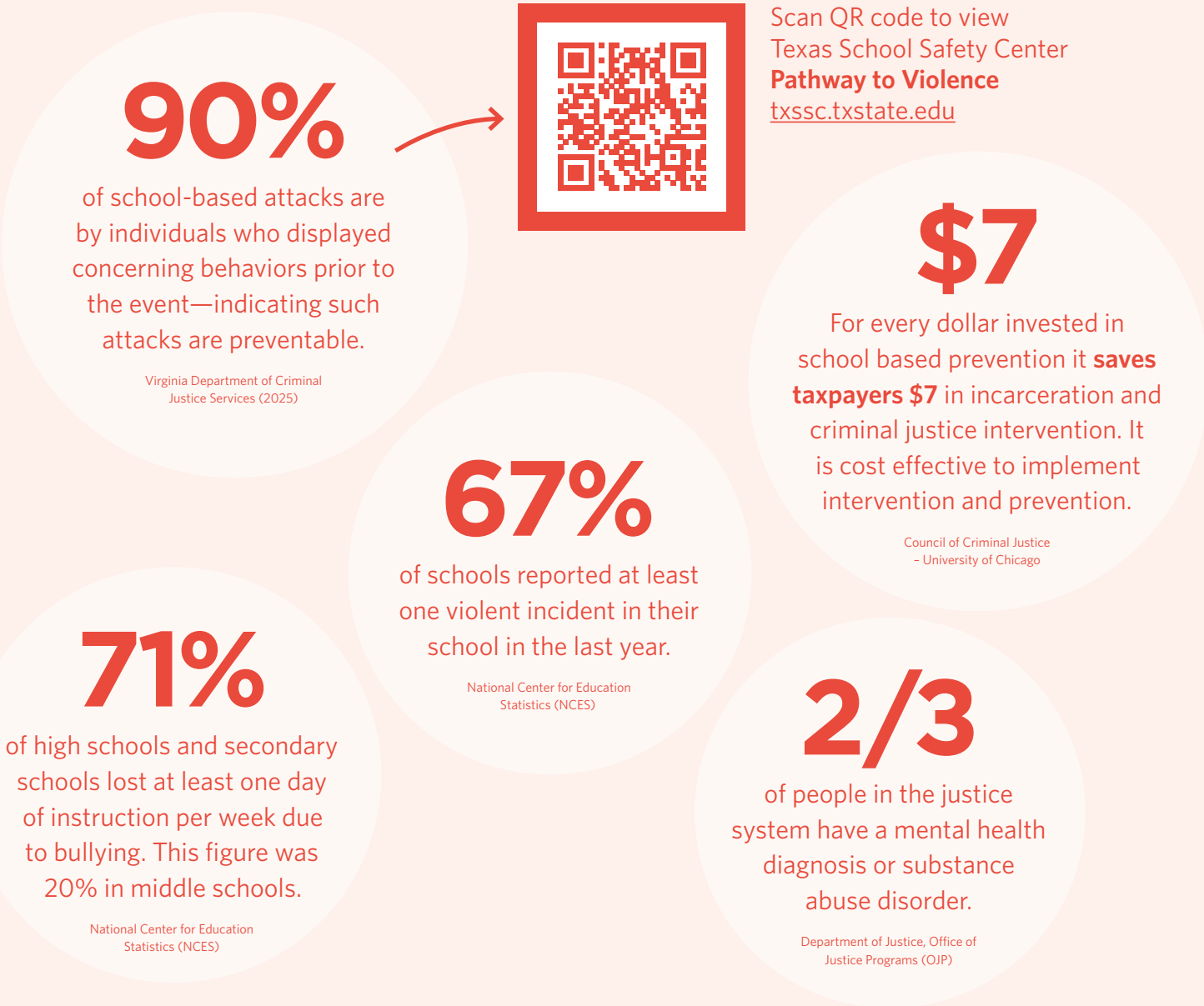


Safe & Supportive Schools lead to skilled and stable workers, skilled and stable workers lead to economic strength in families and communities.

STUDENT SUPPORTS ARE KEY TO STUDENT SAFETY

SCHOOL SAFETY IS PUBLIC SAFETY

Texas has invested billions in school safety strategies—armed guards, infrastructure hardening, and intensive Tier 3 behavioral health services. These approaches are designed to respond to threats, not prevent them. In contrast, Tier 1 mental health supports are designed to intervene early. These supports are evidence-based, cost-effective, and scalable.



Safe and supported schools are the infrastructure of safe communities. When we invest in psychological and physical safety in schools, we reduce violence, strengthen long-term outcomes, and lower future criminal justice costs. School safety is not a siloed education issue—it is a public safety and economic imperative for Texas.

The **top two issues** reported by schools as most troubling for school safety:

-  **1.** Lack of alternate spaces for disruptive students
-  **2.** Limited funding

The **two biggest challenges** for schools tackling mental health and school safety:

-  **1.** Lack of funding
-  **2.** Lack of professionals

 A safe community thrives, is resilient, and is essential for the economic health and overall wellness for all Texans.

School safety is essential.

-  Increases academic success and degree attainment
-  Reduces arrests later in life
-  Reduces homelessness later in life

When schools invest early in supportive environments and strong relationships, the long-term returns are significant—for students, communities, and taxpayers alike.

PUBLIC SAFETY & SCHOOL SAFETY

This student was living with his grandmother due to a CPS case placement and had an intermittent relationship with his mother. He had recently changed schools and moved from his mom's apartment into a house with his grandmother.

In addition to this pattern of threatening behaviors, this student also demonstrated a deterioration in his mental health. He had stopped engaging in hobbies, was isolated from peers, was regularly experiencing hallucinations, anxiety attacks, insomnia, engaging in self-harm, and attempted suicide through serious means.

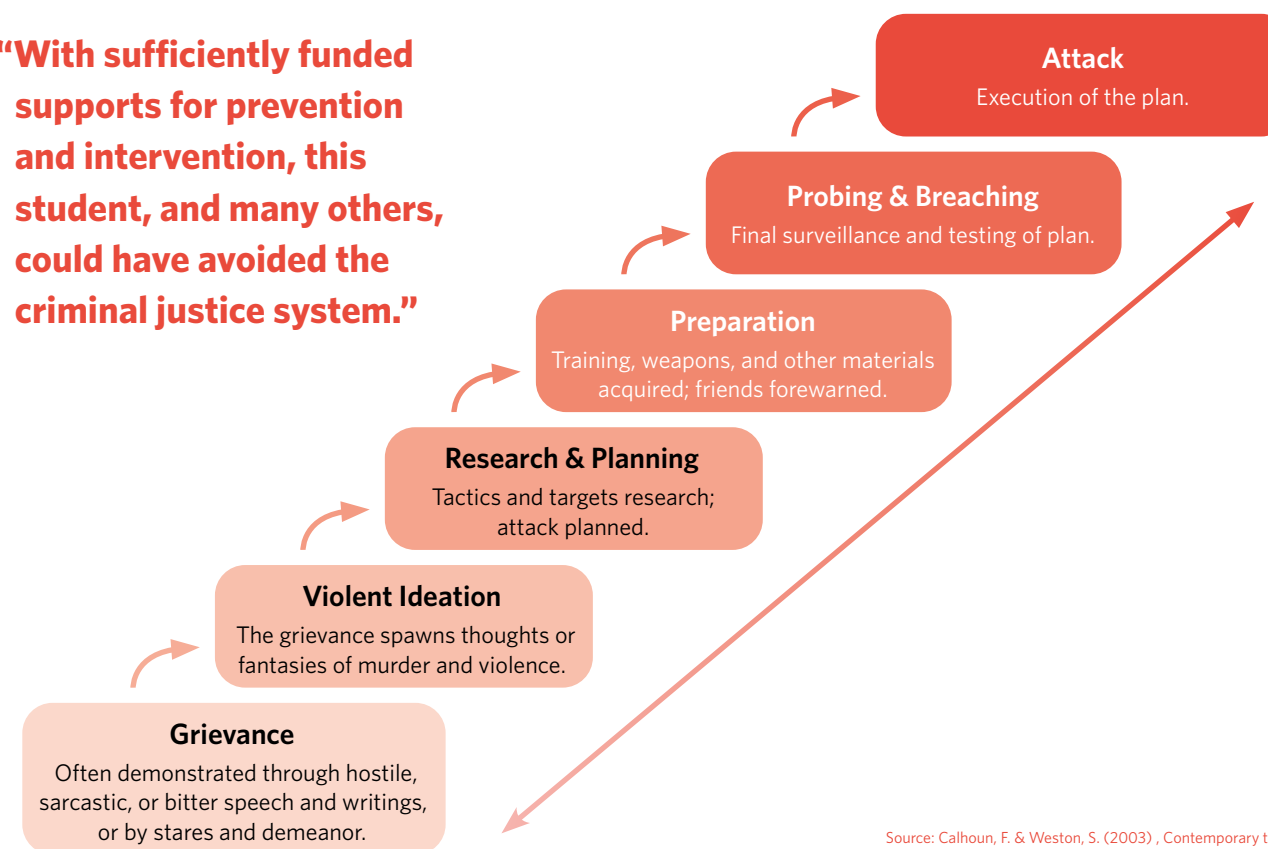
This student was newer to the school and district due to a recent move. The student had an open CPS case. This student's closest familial relationships (his mother and grandmother) were in disagreement about how he should be cared for. This student was estranged from peers and school staff due to behavioral issues and lacking social skills.

Bottom: Map of school for “planning and coordination” showing cameras and exits.

While this case is shocking, it is not unusual. It is, however, predictable and preventable. With sufficiently funded supports for prevention and intervention, this student, and many others, could have avoided the criminal justice system and been able to thrive.

PATHWAY TO VIOLENCE

“With sufficiently funded supports for prevention and intervention, this student, and many others, could have avoided the criminal justice system.”



Source: Calhoun, F. & Weston, S. (2003) , Contemporary threat management: a practical guide for identifying and assessing and managing individuals of violent intent. San Diego, CA: Specialized Training Services.

Texas DPS' Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention training program identifies 10 observable behaviors commonly observed in conducted and thwarted attacks. This case had all these observable behaviors.

OBSERVABLE BEHAVIORS

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| ✓ Expressed or implied intent to harm | ✓ Fixation |
| ✓ Deepening depression/despair | ✓ Unusual acquisition of weapons or weapons expertise |
| ✓ Changes in behavior | ✓ Novel violence/aggression |
| ✓ Preparatory behavior | ✓ Directly communicated threat |
| ✓ Interest in past attacks | ✓ End-of-life planning |

Research Shows:

EARLY INVESTMENT IN SCHOOL SAFETY DELIVERS THE HIGHEST PUBLIC RETURN

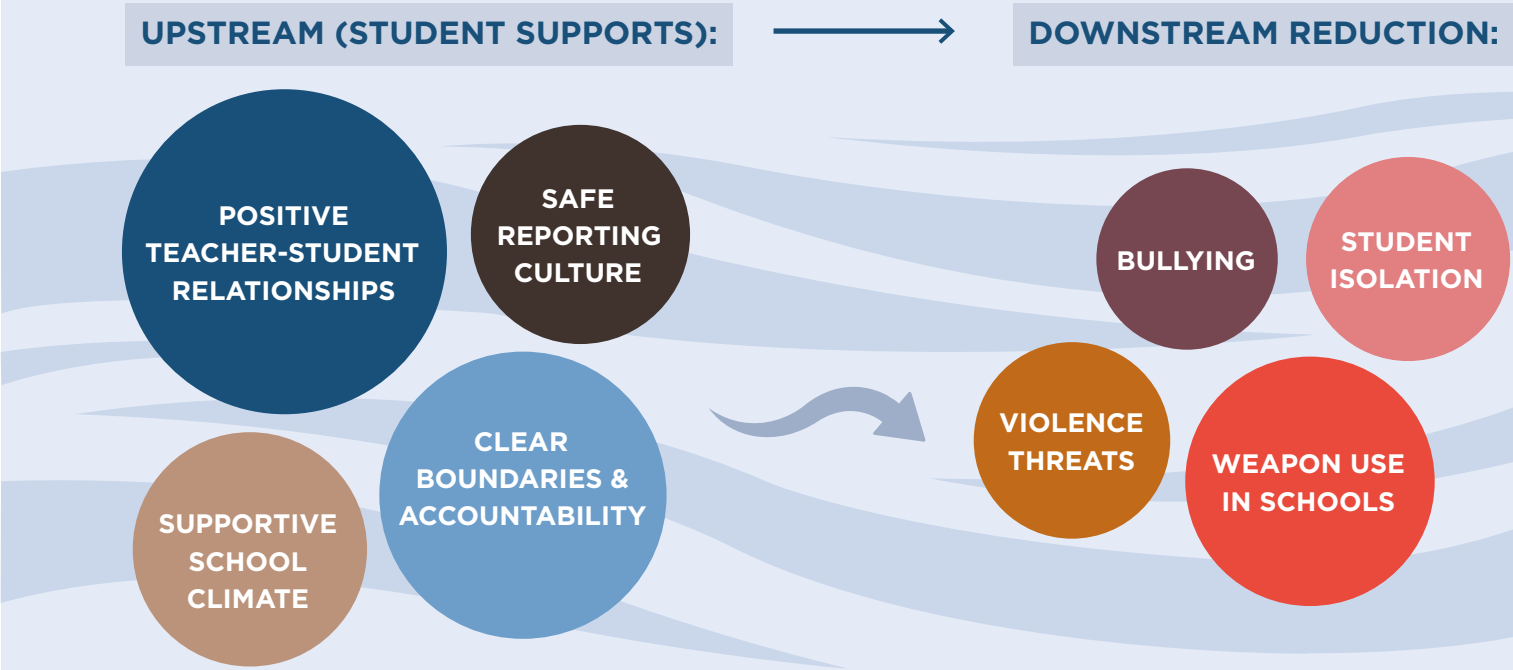
Research across economics, education, and public safety shows that early investment in supportive school environments produces long-term benefits for students, communities, and taxpayers.

When districts invest in psychological safety through strong school climate, coordinated student supports, and stable adult relationships, they strengthen the conditions that drive lifelong success.

Researchers have demonstrated that preventative investments in children produce significantly higher public returns than reactive interventions later in life.



SCHOOLS ARE THE LARGEST UNIVERSAL INFRASTRUCTURE FOR EARLY PREVENTION



RESEARCHERS ANALYZED:

- The impact of social and emotional skill development on life outcomes.
- The long-term economic returns of early childhood and youth interventions.
- Comparative costs of prevention versus remediation in education, health, and criminal justice systems.

KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ Early investments in supportive environments generate the highest return on public investment across the life course.
- ✓ Strengthening social and emotional skills improves long-term outcomes in education, employment, health, and civic participation.
- ✓ Prevention reduces reliance on costly downstream systems including criminal justice, healthcare, and social services.

SOCIETAL IMPACT

When schools prioritize psychological safety, the benefits extend beyond individual students. Communities experience:

- Higher graduation and workforce participation
- Improved physical and mental health outcomes
- Reduced justice-system involvement
- Increased lifetime earnings and tax contributions

Psychological safety in schools is therefore not only an education strategy—it is a long-term public safety and economic strategy.

A growing body of research demonstrates that non-academic life skills contribute to academic and life success (Cipriano et al., 2023; Durlak et al., 2011; Mahoney et al., 2019).



DON'T FORGET THE TEACHERS

Protecting educator wellbeing strengthens the workforce pipeline and reduces long-term public safety risks—because safe schools begin with supported adults.

Today's teachers are no longer only instructors. They are often the first to respond to student distress, behavioral escalation, and emerging mental health concerns. They are expected to recognize warning signs, de-escalate conflict,

support trauma-affected students, and guide families toward help—frequently with preparation that extends little beyond basic training.

Mental Health First Aid is a starting point, but it is not enough. Teachers need stronger preparation in crisis response, clearly defined referral pathways, and coordinated campus systems that ensure they are not carrying the emotional and behavioral load alone.

Persistent student misbehavior and teacher burnout correlate.

75%

of Texas teachers considered leaving their position last year

50%

Nearly half of teachers report feeling burned out often or always

Replacing a single teacher can cost school districts more than

\$12–25K

Teachers need stronger preparation in crisis response, clearly defined referral pathways, and coordinated campus systems that ensure they are not carrying the emotional and behavioral load alone.



WHEN TEACHERS LEAVE, THE SYSTEM LOSES MORE THAN PEOPLE

When educators exit, districts lose:

- Experience
- Mentorship capacity
- Institutional knowledge
- Relational stability for students

But districts also lose **significant financial investments**.

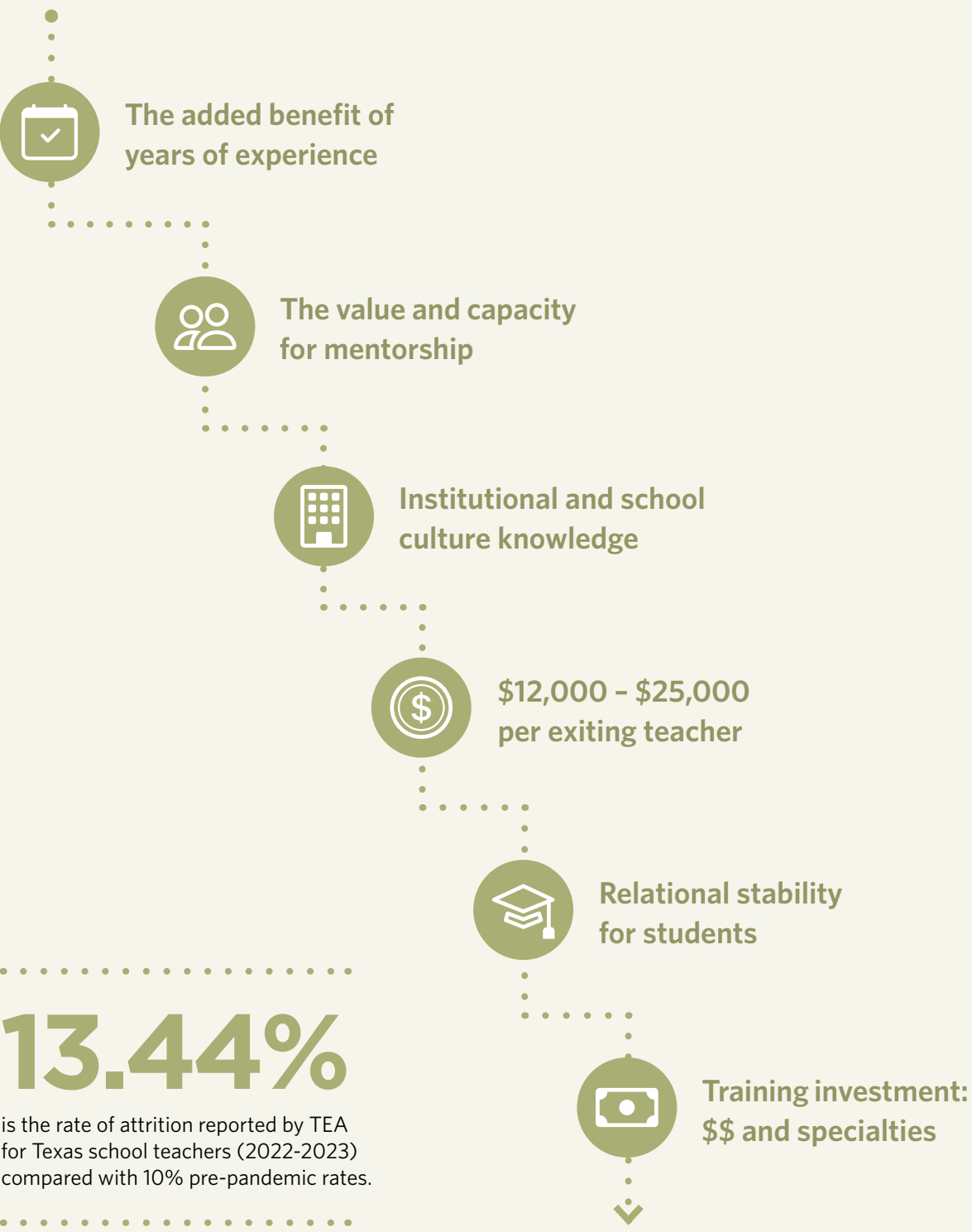
When turnover accelerates, millions of dollars in training investments effectively walk out the door — dollars that could otherwise strengthen classroom supports, expand counseling partnerships, or build prevention systems.

High turnover creates a compounding effect:

- Recruitment costs rise
- Class sizes increase
- Remaining staff absorb more behavioral and instructional pressure
- Student stability decreases

Students experience inconsistency at precisely the moment they need stability most.

WHEN TEACHERS LEAVE... SCHOOLS LOSE:



WHY STUDENT BEHAVIORAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS MATTER FOR TEACHER RETENTION

Teachers are now frontline responders in a growing youth mental health crisis. Without coordinated systems in place, they absorb:

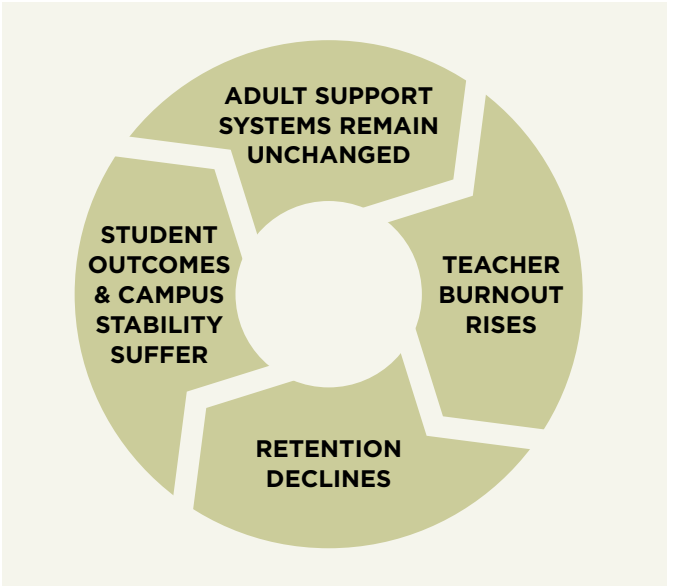
- Behavioral escalations
- Trauma-related reactions
- Crisis disclosures
- Parent coordination
- Documentation and referral navigation

When these expectations are layered onto full instructional responsibilities, the result is predictable: emotional fatigue, reduced efficacy, and increased intent to leave.

Educator wellbeing and student behavioral health are not separate issues — they are structurally connected.

If student mental health needs increase while adult support systems remain unchanged, teacher burnout rises. If teacher burnout rises, retention declines. If retention declines, student outcomes and campus stability suffer.

This is the pipeline feedback loop.



A STRATEGIC INVESTMENT, NOT AN ADDED INITIATIVE

When districts invest in structured supports such as:

- Manageable workloads
- Coordinated prevention and response systems
- Clear referral pathways
- Embedded mental health professionals
- Advanced crisis-response and trauma-informed training
- Leadership training that protects staff psychological safety

Teachers report greater confidence and stability. Classrooms experience fewer disruptions. Students receive consistent support. Communities benefit from safer, more predictable school environments.

If we want safe schools, resilient communities, and a strong educator workforce pipeline, we must protect the adults who make those outcomes possible.

If retention declines, student outcomes and campus stability suffer, impacting physical and psychological safety.

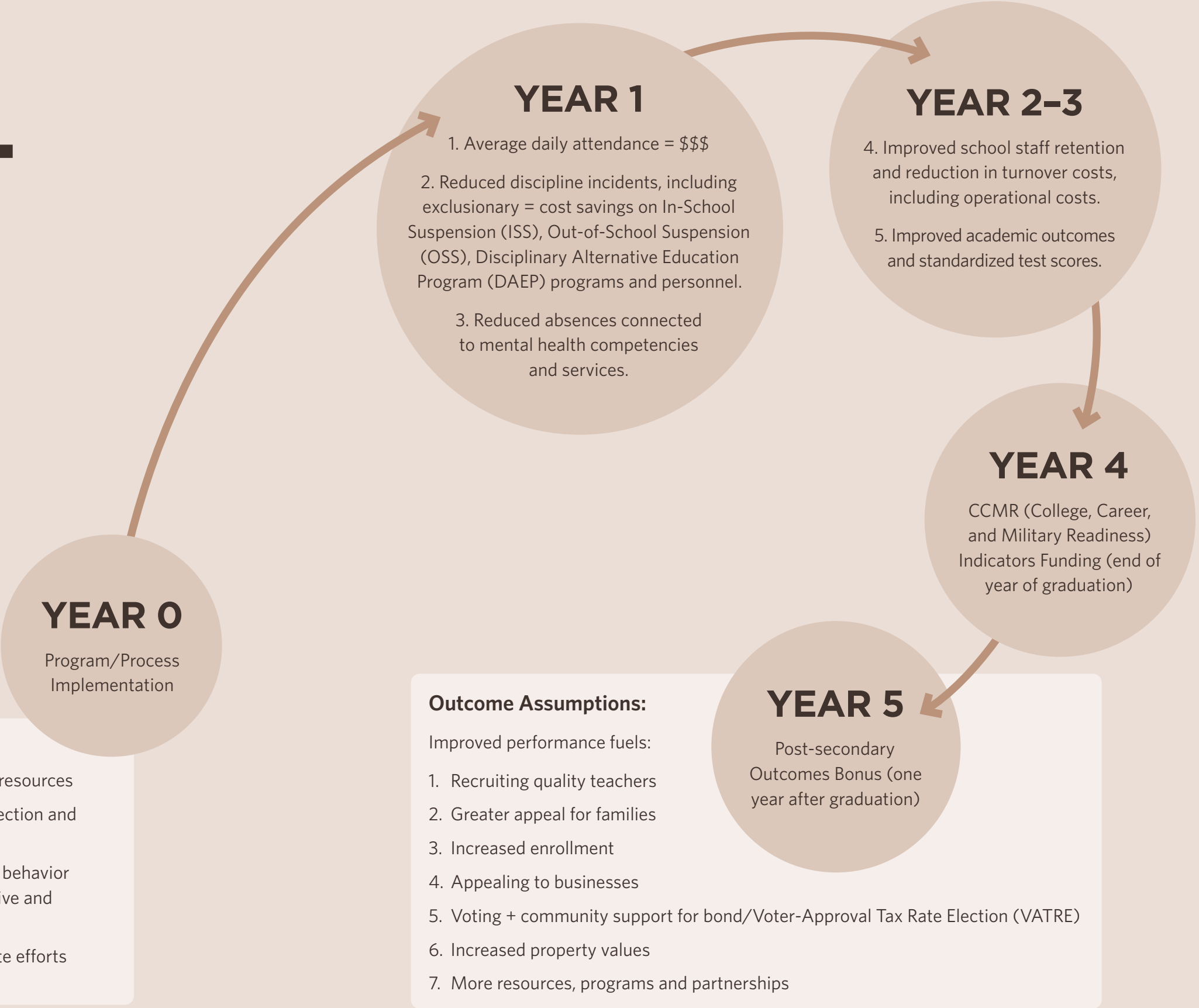
TIMELINE OF RETURN ON INVESTMENT

WHEN DISTRICTS INVEST IN STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH, THE FINANCIAL RETURN APPEARS IN PHASES OVER TIME.

Recognizing it takes infrastructure and capacity to gain a return on investment, districts need a number of resources in place to see the return on investment of student support services: evidence-based interventions like Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), trained staff, community partners, master scheduling, data collection and reporting, discipline and behavior policies, active Tier 1 school climate efforts, and adequate funding.

Input Assumptions:

- ISS Tiered model of support
- MTSS
- Evidence-based interventions
- Trained staff
- Adequate funding
- Master schedule accounting for staff and student training
- Community partners and resources
- Mechanisms for data collection and analysis
- Changes to discipline and behavior policies to decrease punitive and increase restorative
- Active Tier 1 school climate efforts



NAVIGATING FUNDING

FOR SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS

Many of the resources needed to strengthen psychological safety already exist within current funding frameworks. Federal, state, local, and philanthropic investments can enhance safe and supported schools when they are intentionally aligned with district priorities.

This section provides practical worksheets and tools designed to help district leaders map their current funding landscape. By identifying how resources are already being used—and where allowable funds may be underutilized—leaders can better align funding to support Safe and Supportive School Programs and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

The goal is simple: help districts see the full picture of their funding so they can make strategic adjustments that strengthen prevention and sustain safe and supportive schools.

NAVIGATING FUNDING

FOR SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS

District leaders are making complex funding decisions every day. Safety, staffing, academics, compliance, facilities — all competing for the same limited resources. Even when funds are allowable for psychological safety, they are often absorbed by urgent and immediate demands.

This section is not about adding something new. It is about helping you see the **full funding picture**—and make the small shifts that **have the highest potential for unlocking additional dollars**.

The opportunity already exists. School Safety Allotment (SSA) funds may be used for:

- Licensed counselors and social workers
- Mental health personnel and support staff
- Behavioral health programming, including suicide prevention and intervention

Yet in 2023:

ONLY 13% of districts used SSA funds for psychological safety.

JUST 1.39% of total SSA funding supported prevention.

This is not a compliance gap — it is an alignment challenge.

The frameworks are mandated. The allowable uses are defined. What is often missing is a clear view of how dollars are currently flowing and how modest shifts could protect prevention efforts without destabilizing other priorities.

Even small adjustments matter:

Dedicating 5% of SSA funding equals approximately

\$3.66

per student.

A predictable allotment of

\$100,000

per district (about \$21 per student statewide) could stabilize core supports.

The tools that follow — a needs assessment and funding landscape worksheets — are designed to make this work manageable. They will help you:

- Map what you are already spending
- Identify allowable but underutilized funds
- Clarify tradeoffs
- Align resources with required frameworks

You are not starting from zero. You are refining and protecting what already exists. This is not about spending more everywhere. It is about spending smarter — and sustaining what works.

Permitted under current law:

Already Allowed to Fund:

- ☒ Counselors
- ☒ Mental health staff
- ☒ Behavioral health programming

Prevention pays in phases:



COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

FOR SAFE AND SUPPORTED SCHOOLS

There are many activities you are already engaging in that, when aggregated, will provide a solid picture of your district’s strengths and areas for improvement around a safe and supported climate.

The definition of A Positive District Culture as stated in the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Effective Schools Framework suggests campus systems support positive school culture through explicit behavioral expectations, school-wide culture routines, proactive responsive student support systems, and involved families and communities.

An essential step in creating a path for new funding streams is a Student and Staff Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

UNDERSTANDING AND MAXIMIZING RESOURCES

There are three evaluation steps you can take to better understand and maximize your current programming and funding landscape.



STEP 1

Mapping district resource needs to support psychological safety

Directions:

Analyze data points to inform decision-making about allocating funding, programs, personnel, and partnerships needed to support current student and staff psychological safety needs. Summarize general trends within the tool on page 35.

District-Wide Student Demographics:

Analyze trends and potential district needs evident from general demographic data for specific student subpopulations, including all racial/ethnic groups, students identified as at-risk of not graduating, and students who receive specialized program support such as Special Education or English-language learners. Use your district’s [Texas Academic Performance Report \(TAPR\)](#) and data from existing district student data management systems.

DATA REFERENCES:

- [Texas Academic Performance Report \(TAPR\)](#)
- District student data management systems
- College, Career and Military Readiness (CCMR) district performance data
- District and campus climate surveys
- Texas Education Agency (TEA) Discipline Data Dashboard
- Sentinel: See outline in Appendix, pp. 63-64
- Title IV Safe and Drug Free Disciplinary Report
- In-district student information systems
- Guidance and counseling data



See Mapping District Resource Needs table on page 35

Academic Performance Trends:

Analyze current, high-level academic performance trends to align and prioritize your improvement efforts across academic and nonacademic student supports. The goal of school improvement efforts is improving academic performance. Strong, safe, supported schools help achieve that goal. Use your district’s [Texas Academic Performance Report \(TAPR\)](#), including academic and College, Career and Military Readiness (CCMR) district performance data across grade levels and demographics to inform priority areas of student and staff support that move the district further toward academic improvement goals.

District and Campus Climate Surveys:

District and campus climate surveys provide valuable information about community perceptions from staff, students, and families to inform needs that can be addressed through school culture and climate improvement efforts. Climate surveys are tailored to district needs and can collect a wide range of data useful for supporting student and staff psychological safety through district and campus commitments, including addressing bullying, workplace, and nonacademic support needs. Use your district’s climate survey data to analyze needs and trends, as perceived by your school community.

Safe and Supported School Program (SSSP)/Crisis Response Team Data:

Texas school districts report data to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) through the Sentinel platform as required by SSSP. This assessment tool can be found in the Appendix (see pp. 63-64). Analyze your district’s overall SSSP implementation and summarize any needs/trends that inform your prioritization of student and staff nonacademic supports.

Exclusionary Discipline Data:

Exclusionary discipline is an important metric that provides a general direction for ongoing improvement efforts in discipline and school culture and climate. Maximizing instructional time by reducing student exclusion for disciplinary reasons is a strategy that accelerates learning. Consider ways to address student behavior by providing early interventions to address root causes that impact psychological safety. Analyze existing exclusionary discipline data sources for general trends that inform nonacademic student supports, such as social skills and self-management instruction that address behaviors early for better student outcomes. Data sources include:

- [TEA’s Discipline Data Dashboard](#) provides exclusionary discipline data by region, district, and campus. Use this tool to analyze trends and needs evidenced by action reason codes and frequency and percent of exclusionary discipline by type and location to inform ongoing improvement efforts for equitable policies and disciplinary practices.
- Title IV Safe and Drug Free Disciplinary Report provides disciplinary data by demographic group, including Special Education disciplinary data, to inform needs.

Chronic Absenteeism:

Analyze trends over time to inform student support needs that reduce chronic absenteeism and improve overall student attendance for maximum instruction time. This data can be found in the TAPR report and in-district student information management systems.

Guidance and Counseling Data:

- Guidance Counseling is Tier 1 instruction. As counselors provide guidance to all students, they gather feedback and qualitative data to support student needs. Summarize Tier 1 student needs and trends here:
- Internal and external counseling referral data.
- Counselor time study data (to inform staffing needs)
- Collecting data through MOU agreements from your community partners that inform understanding of needs.



STEP 2

Map existing programs and resources to the various funding sources, including School Safety Mandates (the School Safety Allotment permits psychological safety).

We recognize the current funding levels mean districts have to prioritize physical safety. As you meet your priority mandates, this funding source can be an ideal source for psychological safety implementation.



STEP 3

Assess and evaluate current programs, resources, and supports

One excellent framework is the **Plus/Delta Program Evaluation** to examine existing programming and resources that are currently funded or not funded. This assessment will help determine what’s working, what needs change, and the types of change you will want to consider.

Plus/Delta Program Evaluation Process:

1. List the resources (programs, personnel, and/or partnerships) funded by your district to support psychological safety of students and staff on the Funding Landscape Framework according to funding source. (p. 36-39)
2. Document the MTSS Tier and data sources that support each resource as evidence of their effectiveness.
3. Collaborate with your team to discuss the effectiveness of each resource in its current state and document What Works? (+) and Changes Needed? (Δ).
4. Make notes about the types of change needed to improve effectiveness of the psychological safety resources you currently fund. Consider repurposing funding for programs that demonstrate less effectiveness or no longer meet community needs.
5. Use this information to determine the best way to deploy funding resources to most effectively meet your school community’s current psychological needs.

See table on pages 36-39



READING BETWEEN THE LINES

Under tight budgets, school leaders are often forced into difficult tradeoffs, weighing investments in academic instruction against mental health supports, effectively balancing the need for student achievement with the need for psychological safety. Yet investments in student support services are what make both possible, creating the conditions for students and teachers to succeed.

STEP 1

MAPPING DISTRICT RESOURCE NEEDS TO SUPPORT PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Purpose:

Bring together existing data sources to inform planning and decision-making for allocation of resources that support student and staff psychological safety.

Directions:

Summarize trends from *existing* data sources and note *missing* data sources for future data collection as district needs and programs change.

District Goal Alignment and Support:

Identify *existing* district/campus goals impacted by current psychological safety resources, services, and support. Also consider any *missing* goals that may be needed to address current psychological safety needs of students and staff moving forward.

Who Is My Needs Assessment Team?

Districts already map out resource needs as part of ongoing comprehensive needs assessment processes for district and campus improvement planning. We recommend analyzing psychological safety needs as a part of these ongoing processes with a collaborative needs assessment team, which should include school district personnel with knowledge and expertise in:

- District student demographics
- General academic performance trends
- District climate survey feedback from students, staff, and families

- SSSP and Crisis Response Team data
 - Exclusionary discipline trends
 - Chronic absenteeism and attendance trends
 - Guidance and counseling data
 - MOUs, external funders, and community partnerships
- Consider embedding ongoing assessment of psychological needs into existing district and campus improvement processes by leveraging existing teams and committees within your needs assessment process, such as district or campus improvement committees, School Health Advisory Council (SHAC), parent and student advisory teams, and more. Educators who typically serve on needs assessment teams, depending on district size and organization, include leaders or administrators from these areas:

- Superintendent and assistant superintendents
- Accountability or PEIMS
- Academic officers or Curriculum
- District Counseling, MTSS, or Behavior
- District Student Services
- District or campus behavior coordinators
- School Safety officers/administrators
- Crisis Response Teams
- Human Resources
- Finance

STEP 1: PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY DATA ANALYSIS



Scan QR code to download and fill out this form on your computer.

	Previous Year Trends	Most Recent Data	How we want to address the need with: (one or more)
	Summarize trends that capture <i>historical</i> student and staff needs.	Summarize trends that capture <i>current</i> student and staff needs.	▪ Programs ▪ Personnel ▪ Partnerships
Student Demographic (Subpopulation Needs) Data Source: TAPR			
General Academic Performance Data Source: TAPR			
District Climate Survey (Student, Family, and Staff)			
Safe and Supportive Schools Program and Crisis Response Team Data Data Source: Sentinel See Appendix			
Exclusionary Discipline Data Sources: TEA Discipline Data Dashboard, Title IV Discipline Report, In-District Discipline Data Systems			
Chronic Absenteeism Data Source: TAPR and In-District Data Systems			
Guidance and Counseling Data Sources: Tier 1 Guidance Trends/Needs; Internal and External Counseling Referral Data			
MOU/Partnerships Data Sharing Source: Data Shared with External Partners/Funders			

STEP 2

FUNDING LANDSCAPE: TEXAS LEGISLATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY FRAMEWORK (REQUIRED AND ALLOWABLE)

The following statutory directives primarily represent legislative language found within Chapter 37 (Discipline; Law and Order) and Chapter 38 (Health and Safety) of the Texas Education Code related to investments in personnel, programs, and partnerships to build safe and supportive school environments.

“A systemic and coordinated multi-tiered support system that addresses school climate, the social and emotional domain, and behavioral and mental health.”

— Section 37.115 (b)(3), Discipline; Law And Order, Texas Education Code



Scan QR code to download and fill out this form on your computer.

STEP 2: FUNDING LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS				
Required	Permissible	Designated Legislative Funding	District Funding Source List funding source and amount.	MTSS Tier Data Collected?
One armed security officer per campus (TEC §37.081) .		\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
School-Based Peace Officer Active Shooter Training, Mental Health and Crisis Intervention (TEC §37.0812(a))		\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available. Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Threat Assessment And Safe And Supportive School Program And Team (TEC §37.115)		\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Student Return to Regular Classroom (TEC §37.023)		\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO

STEP 3: PLUS / DELTA see p. 33	
+ Plus What Works?	Δ Delta What Needs to Change?

STEP 2: FUNDING LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS				
Required	Permissible	Designated Legislative Funding	District Funding Source List funding source and amount.	MTSS Tier Data Collected?
	One School Counselor per Campus, 80/20 rule (TEC §33.005, §33.006)	\$0	Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Trauma-Informed Training + Practices (TEC §38.036)		\$0	Suggested: External Partnership (training) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Early mental health prevention and intervention (TEC § 38.351(c))		\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Building skills related to managing emotions, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and responsible decision-making (TEC § 38.351(c))		\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Substance abuse prevention and intervention (TEC § 38.351(c))		\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Grief-informed and trauma-informed practices (TEC § 38.351(c))		\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Positive school climates (TEC § 38.351(c))		\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO

STEP 3: PLUS / DELTA see p. 33	
+ Plus What Works?	Δ Delta What Needs to Change?

STEP 2: FUNDING LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS				
Required	Permissible	Designated Legislative Funding	District Funding Source List funding source and amount.	MTSS Tier Data Collected?
Positive behavior interventions and supports (TEC § 38.351(c))		\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Positive youth development (TEC § 38.351(c))		\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Safe, supportive, and positive school climate (TEC § 38.351 (c))		\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention (TEC § 38.351 (c))		\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Suicide Prevention training (TEC §38.351(e),(g))	*Elementary Schools may opt out of required trainings if funding and/or programming is unavailable	\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Article III	Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHAT) (TEC §38.2545)	\$0		☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Coordinated Health Program – Mental Health (TEC §38.013(2))		\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO

STEP 3: PLUS / DELTA see p. 33	
+ Plus What Works?	Δ Delta What Needs to Change?

STEP 2: FUNDING LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS				
Required	Permissible	Designated Legislative Funding	District Funding Source List funding source and amount.	MTSS Tier Data Collected?
Fentanyl Abuse Prevention And Drug Poisoning Awareness Education (TEC §38.040)		Opioid Abatement Account, Rider 69, SB 1(89R), Texas Opioid Prevention for Students	Suggested: External Partnership Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Addressing Sexual Abuse And Other Maltreatment Of Children (TEC §38.0041)		\$0		☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
	Nonphysician Mental Health Professional (TEC §8.152)	\$0	Local Mental Health Authorities/Local Behavioral Health Authorities, Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), Article II	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
	Nonphysician Mental Health Professional (TEC §38.0101)	\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Private Grant or Partnership Agreement Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
	School-Based Health Centers (TEC §38.051)	\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Private Grant or Partnership Agreement Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
	Community Mental Health Services through Local Mental Health Authority or Private Provider (TEC §38.0591)	\$0	Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Private Grant or Partnership Agreement Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO
Mental Health First Aid Training (TEC § 22.904)			Suggested: School Safety Allotment, if available Likely: Title I, Title IV, State Compensatory Education (SCE) Other:	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ YES ☐ NO

STEP 3: PLUS / DELTA see p. 33	
+ Plus What Works?	Δ Delta What Needs to Change?



STRENGTHENING DISTRICT PARTNERSHIPS

Strengthening psychological safety in schools rarely depends on a single funding source. The most successful districts braid together public funding, cross-sector partnerships, and catalytic philanthropic investment to build and sustain safe and supported schools.

Many of the resources needed to strengthen prevention already exist within current funding frameworks. What often makes the difference is alignment—bringing together partners, dollars, and strategies around shared outcomes for students, educators, and communities.

This section highlights three pathways districts are using to expand their capacity for prevention:

- Strategic partnerships that extend district capacity
- Philanthropic investment that accelerates innovation
- Proven investment models that demonstrate scalable impact

Together, these approaches help districts move from fragmented efforts to coordinated systems that protect prevention and sustain long-term results.

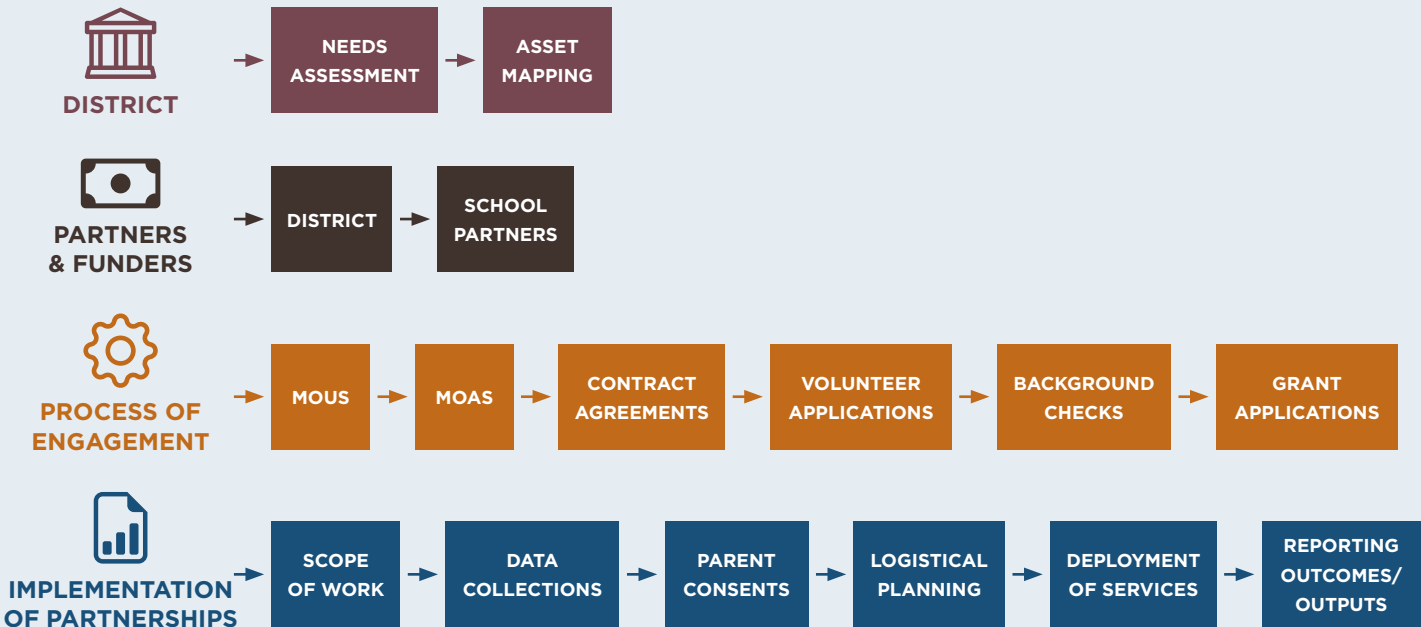
PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK

No school system can meet the complex needs of students alone. Strong partnerships expand a district’s capacity to address academic, behavioral, and mental health needs while strengthening psychological safety for students and staff. When built intentionally, cross-sector collaborations accelerate outcomes and create sustainable impact. The phased process below outlines the essential steps districts can take to assess needs, align partners and funders, formalize agreements, and implement services effectively.

PHASE 1:

Partnership Processes

Building partnerships within school systems requires multi-level implementation steps, and more time and workload capacity from district and school staff.



PHASE 2:

Identifying Potential Partnership Hubs

Schools operate within an interconnected system of local and state government, health and behavioral health providers, funders, businesses, faith communities, and service organizations. Mapping these relationships helps districts identify opportunities for coordination, leverage existing assets, and build a comprehensive support network around students and staff.



Example

PHASE 3:

Example Resource Mapping

The table below provides an example of how one district mapped its cross-sector partners to support psychological safety and student success. Use the blank worksheet to identify and organize the government, community, health, business, and education partners available in your own region.

Local Government	Law Enforcement	Behavioral Health	Health Systems	State Government	Businesses
City Government	San Antonio Police Department	San Antonio Behavioral Health Hospital	University Health	Texas Education Agency	HEB Grocery
County Government	Bexar County Sheriff's Office	Clarity Child Guidance Center	CentroMed		Local Banks
STRAC (South Texas Regional Advisory Council)	Southwest Texas Fusion Center	Laurel Ridge Treatment Center	Methodist Health Care System		USAA
Alamo Area Council of Governments	Department of Public Safety	Center for Health Care Center	Christus Health System		Valero
Juvenile Justice	Department of Homeland Security				
Department of Family Protective Services	Emergency Operation Center				



Higher Education	Education Service Center	Community Organization	Faith Based Organizations	Funders
UT San Antonio	Region 20	Communities in Schools	Catholic Charities	Foundations
Our Lady of the Lake University		Child Safe	School Connect	Corporate
St. Mary's University		Family Services		Grant funding
Incarnate Word University		United Way		District foundations
Alamo Colleges		Rise Recovery		State funding
Texas A&M University San Antonio		San Antonio Council Alcohol and Drug Awareness		
		Children's Bereavement Center		
		Children's Shelter		
		SA Food Bank		
		Haven for Hope		

PHASE 3:

Example Resource Mapping

Use the blank worksheet to identify and organize the government, community, health, business, and education partners available to support psychological safety and student success in your region.

Local Government	Law Enforcement	Behavioral Health	Health Systems	State Government	Businesses



Higher Education	Education Service Center	Community Organization	Faith Based Organizations	Funders



Scan QR code to download and fill out this form on your computer.

PROVEN INVESTMENT MODELS FOR PARTNERSHIP

Effective partnerships can begin in different ways. Sometimes a district identifies a need and reaches outward to build the right network of support; other times, an external partner approaches a district with resources and opportunity aligned to shared goals. The following examples illustrate how both pathways can strengthen psychological safety, expand student supports, and advance long-term academic and workforce outcomes.

HARLANDALE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT: ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIP: SCHOOL-BASED COUNSELING/THERAPY

Recognizing the growing mental health needs of students, staff, and families, Harlandale ISD took proactive steps to expand access to school-based counseling and therapy services.

With support from Communities in Schools (CIS), the district was introduced to the South San ISD Care Zone and the San Antonio Mobile Mental Wellness Collaborative (SAMMWC) model. Seeing its potential, Harlandale ISD replicated and adapted the model to create the Harlandale Care Center — a centralized, in-house counseling hub built through strategic community partnerships. The Care Center brings together multiple providers to deliver comprehensive services directly on campus. Partners include Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (program

coordination, education, and training), Rise Recovery (substance abuse prevention and recovery), Family Service Association (child and family counseling), Clarity Child Guidance Center (therapy services), CIS school-based therapists, the Children’s Bereavement Center of South Texas (grief support), and The Center for Health Care Services (case management, social skills, and anger management support). The district also established an in-house therapist to support HR and staff wellbeing. By convening trusted community providers within a coordinated school-based framework, Harlandale ISD created an accessible, multi-layered mental health system that strengthens psychological safety for students, staff, and families alike.



EAST CENTRAL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT: CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP EXPANDS STEM & STUDENT SUPPORTS

East Central ISD demonstrates how external partners can play a catalytic role in advancing district priorities.

Toyota approached the district with an opportunity to enhance its STEM curriculum through a competitive grant initiative. East Central ISD was selected and awarded the grant, with Texas A&M University–San Antonio serving as the grant manager to ensure strategic implementation and sustainability. The partnership extended beyond curriculum enhancement. To strengthen wraparound

supports for students and families, additional collaborators were engaged, including a Family Resource Center in partnership with United Way and DePelchin Children’s Services. Together, these partners expanded academic opportunity while reinforcing the broader systems of support that enable student success. This example illustrates how corporate and higher education partnerships, when aligned with district strategy, can simultaneously advance academic innovation and strengthen community-based supports.

Scan QR code to see asset mapping framework resource: ies.ed.gov





Opportunities for Funding

INCENTIVIZING INNOVATION

Philanthropy can be an important partner when a district is seeking innovative proofs of concept around new practices that support shared goals and social outcomes.

As districts shift resources and strategies to upstream integrated student supports that create physical and psychological safety, consider the following ways to build capacity for the work ahead:



1

Generate interest in early catalytic funding for implementing available Tier 1 supports along MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports). Find a philanthropic cheerleader who can convene local funders interested in building cradle to career pipelines, safe and supported schools, youth mental health supports, and mental wellbeing.



2

Consider low to no interest loans and/or grant opportunities to help build the infrastructure within the district to unlock school performance funds already available through attendance and CCMR funding draw downs. (See East Center ISD case study on pp. 8-9 and ROI details on pp. 24-25.)



3

Building on programs where you have already demonstrated success, find a philanthropy partnership to provide matching dollars to incentivize your district to draw down the School Safety Allotment for approved uses for psychological safety. This will provide insight for policy makers as they consider future funding decisions.



4

Consider a qualified third-party backbone organization that has the expertise to provide infrastructure and technical assistance, coaching support, data gathering, and evaluation expertise.



STUDENT SUPPORTS FRAMEWORK

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

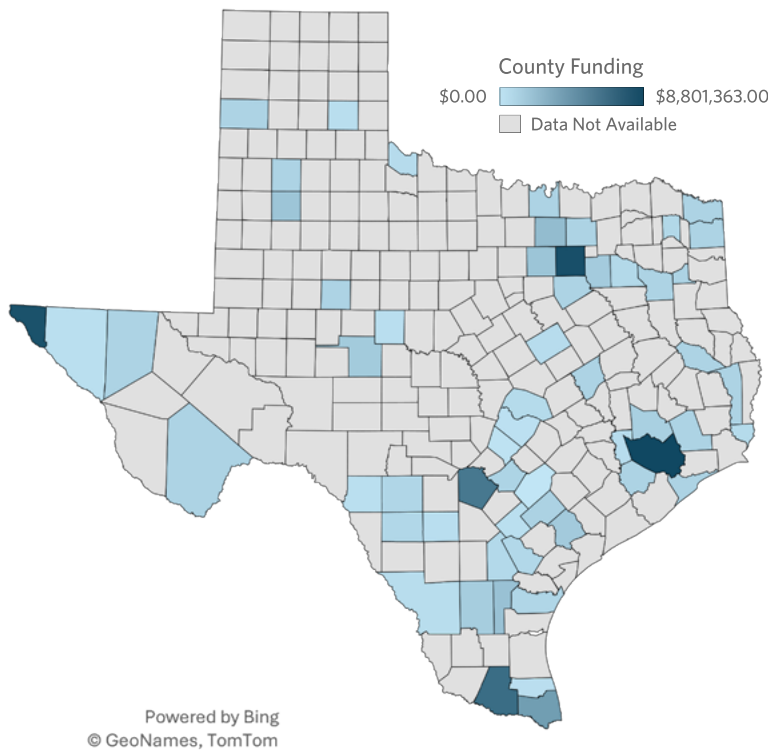
Stronger Connections demonstrates what statewide implementation can look like.

Backed by a \$94 million federal investment, the Stronger Connections Grant has transformed student supports across 99 school systems in Texas. This initiative did more than provide temporary funding; it established a robust Student Support Framework (SSF)—a comprehensive model that prioritizes “pre-academics” as the essential foundation for student readiness.

Designed by the Texas Center for Student Supports (TCSS) in partnership with the Texas

Education Agency (TEA), the SSF was built with direct input from students, educators, and community leaders. The framework integrates into existing Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), providing a data-driven approach needed to enhance school interventions and holistic supports for students.

Implementation of the SSF was led by the state’s 20 regional Education Service Centers (ESCs), providing the technical assistance and coaching vital for long-term success. The results are clear: the capacity has been built. We now possess a state-vetted framework and an expansive network of personnel with deep implementation expertise.



Over this two-year grant cycle, participating school systems saw significant gains in many areas to include support coordination, campus climate & culture, and overall student readiness.

Stronger Connections has answered a critical policy question: How do we scale a model that yields better outcomes for students and school systems? The answer is sustained investment in the SSF.

We are not asking to invent a new model—we are asking to sustain one that is already working. Budget analysis reveals that the core components of the SSF—prevention systems, behavioral coordination, and counseling—are already state requirements.

Texas does not need to reinvent the wheel. The infrastructure is trained, the systems are experienced, and the framework is proven. With designated funding, Texas can stabilize this model statewide, ensuring every student has the foundation they need to succeed.

\$94M federal investment

Statewide pilot implement a Student Support Framework as a foundation for student readiness

99 school systems participated

A scaled pilot across Texas—
not a single-district success story

MTSS is State Supported

Stronger Connections funded implementation of an existing TEA-provided framework

Stronger Connections proves that Texas does not need to invent a new system. The system exists. The trained network exists. The framework is provided. With sustained funding, this model can be stabilized and expanded statewide.



GALVANIZING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Sustaining safe and supportive schools requires more than strong programs—it requires strong community support. When families, educators, community leaders, and local partners understand the impact of psychological safety in schools, they become powerful advocates for the systems and resources students need to succeed.

This section provides tools to help school leaders and partners communicate clearly about why safe and supportive schools matter. By sharing data, local stories, and community impact, districts can build broader understanding and mobilize trusted messengers who can help strengthen support for prevention-focused school systems.



Galvanizing Community Support

GAINING SUPPORT FOR SAFE AND SUPPORTED SCHOOLS

So often, we avoid engaging with our elected officials because we lack the insights on the allowable and unallowable activities that are appropriate for anyone tied formally to a public school.

The definition of lobbying is influencing an elected official on legislation. There are many activities that fall under advocacy and education that would not be considered lobbying.

Why it matters:

Schools and are trusted messengers. You see the gaps, hear the stories, and hold the data. Advocacy helps move from direct service to systems change.

ADVOCACY VERSUS LOBBYING

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is using your voice to influence change and includes:

- Educating the public or policymakers
- Sharing stories and data
- Submitting public comments
- Building coalitions
- Engaging with agencies and legislators

Advocacy is broad, powerful, and fully legal.

What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is a specific type of advocacy focused on legislation and includes:

- Asking a legislator to vote for or against a bill
- Encouraging the public to contact legislators about a bill
- Supporting or opposing specific legislation

Ideas on getting the message of safe and supported schools into the right hands:

With your own data, complete the template on page 59.

Use this template to support future policy and funding decisions. The template provides a framework for expressing gratitude, educating, and making your requests known. →



1 IN 5

children experience
a mental health issue

38%

of Texas children and youth
had a mental illness in the
past year

Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

22%

of Texas youth seriously
considered suicide during
the past year

Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention (CDC)

GALVANIZING COMMUNITY SUPPORT: Local Impact Template

Start with Appreciation

We appreciate the leadership of our Texas Law Makers in strengthening school safety and addressing the growing youth mental health crisis, including expanded P.E. time, the campus cell phone ban, and mental health training requirements. Through increased programs, parental involvement, and trained personnel, our schools are better equipped to support both physical and psychological safety. These actions have helped improve student focus, relationships, and overall school climate in our district.

Move to Education

In alignment with Chapter 37.115 and the state's requirement to create a safe and supportive school climate through a systemic and coordinated multi-tiered support system that addresses the social and emotional domain and behavioral and mental health, our district has:

- ☐ Conducted a
(e.g., climate survey / needs assessment)
- ☐ Established
(e.g., referral pathways / MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) framework / threat assessment team)
- ☐ Implemented
(e.g., peer mentorship / restorative practices / mental health first aid training)

As a result, we are seeing:

- (e.g., a bully-free campus initiative taking hold)
- (e.g., healthier peer relationships)
- (e.g., stronger student self-regulation)
- (e.g., reduced disciplinary incidents by %)
- Attendance has increased from to (if you have it)
- Discipline referrals have decreased from to (if you have it)

Make Your Request

Many of these programs were launched using federal or temporary funds.

With just **\$3.66 more per student**, we could:

- (e.g., expand Tier 1 prevention districtwide)
- (e.g., increase campus-based counseling access)
- (e.g., strengthen early identification and referral systems)

Dedicated funding would allow us to sustain and scale what is already working—ensuring prevention is not just permitted, but protected.

MOBILIZING COMMUNITY MESSENGERS

Sustainable funding for psychological safety requires more than a strong plan—it requires strong voices.

Parents, business leaders, clergy, public safety officials, and healthcare providers all see the impact of student well-being in different ways. When these voices speak, they lend credibility and support positive movement toward the community impact you want to achieve.

ENGAGING KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Start with who you know: identify existing key partnerships that already exist—those who can speak to the importance of Safe and Supported Schools.
- Engage with civic organizations, local business groups, neighboring congregations, law enforcement, etc.
- Schedule individual and group engagement opportunities such as a campus tour or round table.
- Identify opportunities for campus spokespeople to share insights on relevant topics.

Occasionally, you may run into a stakeholder who presents resistance to psychological safety efforts on a school campus. It’s important to reinforce a consistent message:

- Parental consent always.
- Physical Safety and Psychological Safety interventions are not therapy but rather a mitigation strategy against threats and crisis.
- This work is following state law and we want to do it well.

The following tear-out cards provide simple talking points each group can use to advocate for safe and supported schools. ➡

PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

Why This Matters to Families
Safe and supportive schools help our children focus, build confidence, and form healthy relationships. When schools invest in psychological safety, we see fewer disciplinary disruptions, stronger attendance, and students who feel connected.

If/Then
If schools invest in prevention and mental health supports, then students are more likely to attend regularly, graduate, and thrive beyond high school.

Why SSA Funding Matters
Dedicated funding ensures schools can sustain prevention programs, counselors, and early intervention supports—not just react to crises.

Local Story Prompt
“In our family/community, we have seen the difference when”

CLERGY & FAITH LEADERS

Why This Matters to Faith Communities
Research shows 50–70% of adults turn to clergy first when facing mental health challenges. Churches and faith communities provide essential support—but schools are critical partners in prevention and early identification.

If/Then
If schools strengthen psychological safety and early intervention systems, then youth receive support sooner—reducing crisis, isolation, and long-term harm.

Why SSA Funding Matters
Dedicated funding ensures schools can partner with families and faith communities to support the whole child.

Local Story Prompt
“In our congregation, we have seen”

PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS

Why This Matters to Health Systems
Trained teachers are important eyes and ears in our communities who can see patterns and changes in behavior and academics in our youth—they are critical partners in identifying issues early, increasing access to care, and reducing untreated behavioral health conditions.

If/Then
If schools provide robust training, supports, and early referrals, then we can intervene sooner and reduce the need for crisis interventions, ultimately seeing better long-term health outcomes.

Why SSA Funding Matters
Sustained funding strengthens referral pathways, care coordination, and early intervention – improving population health.

Local Story Prompt
“In our practice, we see
and (if relevant) partner with schools”

BUSINESS LEADERS

Why This Matters to Business
A well-adjusted youth population is the foundation of a skilled, productive, and resilient workforce. Schools shape academic knowledge and emotional strength, teamwork, communication, and career readiness.

If/Then
If schools invest in psychological safety and Tier 1 supports, then businesses benefit from employees who manage stress effectively, work well in teams, communicate clearly, resolve conflicts constructively, and maintain steady employment.

Why SSA Funding Matters
Investing in prevention today strengthens the local talent pipeline and long-term economic growth.

Local Story Prompt
“In our industry, we see the need for”

PUBLIC SAFETY LEADERS

Why This Matters to Public Safety
Prevention is public safety. Early identification, behavioral threat assessment teams, and restorative practices reduce suspension rates and improve school climate without increasing violence.

If/Then
If schools implement multidisciplinary threat assessment and Tier 1 prevention systems, then suspension rates decrease and long-term justice involvement declines.

Why SSA Funding Matters
Protected funding for psychological safety strengthens early intervention—reducing downstream costs in law enforcement and corrections.

Local Story Prompt
“In our community, prevention has helped us”



1 IN 5 CHILDREN
EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE



1 IN 5 CHILDREN
EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE

**BE AN
ADVOCATE**

**BE AN
ADVOCATE**



1 IN 5 CHILDREN
EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE



1 IN 5 CHILDREN
EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE

**BE AN
ADVOCATE**

**BE AN
ADVOCATE**



1 IN 5 CHILDREN
EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE



1 IN 5 CHILDREN
EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE

**BE AN
ADVOCATE**

**BE AN
ADVOCATE**

SCHOOL SAFETY IS PUBLIC SAFETY

Texas schools can use available School Safety funds for mental health prevention. In 2023:

Only 13% of districts did.

Just 1.39% of funding supported psychological safety.

Prevention is permitted—but not protected.

Every \$1 invested in school-based prevention saves \$7 in future criminal justice costs.

We are asking for to do

COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT SUPPORTS
BUILD TEXAS’ TALENT PIPELINE

Texas schools can invest in Tier 1 supports that strengthen attendance, engagement, and graduation.

When students feel connected and supported, they are more likely to complete school and pursue college, career, or military pathways.

Stronger student supports today lead to a more skilled and stable workforce tomorrow.

Investing in Tier 1 prevention strengthens Texas’ economic future..

We are asking for to do

SCHOOL SAFETY IS PUBLIC SAFETY

Texas schools can use available School Safety funds for mental health prevention. In 2023:

Only 13% of districts did.

Just 1.39% of funding supported psychological safety.

Prevention is permitted—but not protected.

Every \$1 invested in school-based prevention saves \$7 in future criminal justice costs.

We are asking for to do

COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT SUPPORTS
BUILD TEXAS’ TALENT PIPELINE

Texas schools can invest in Tier 1 supports that strengthen attendance, engagement, and graduation.

When students feel connected and supported, they are more likely to complete school and pursue college, career, or military pathways.

Stronger student supports today lead to a more skilled and stable workforce tomorrow.

Investing in Tier 1 prevention strengthens Texas’ economic future..

We are asking for to do

SCHOOL SAFETY IS PUBLIC SAFETY

Texas schools can use available School Safety funds for mental health prevention. In 2023:

Only 13% of districts did.

Just 1.39% of funding supported psychological safety.

Prevention is permitted—but not protected.

Every \$1 invested in school-based prevention saves \$7 in future criminal justice costs.

We are asking for to do

COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT SUPPORTS
BUILD TEXAS’ TALENT PIPELINE

Texas schools can invest in Tier 1 supports that strengthen attendance, engagement, and graduation.

When students feel connected and supported, they are more likely to complete school and pursue college, career, or military pathways.

Stronger student supports today lead to a more skilled and stable workforce tomorrow.

Investing in Tier 1 prevention strengthens Texas’ economic future..

We are asking for to do

SCHOOL SAFETY IS PUBLIC SAFETY

Texas schools can use available School Safety funds for mental health prevention. In 2023:

Only 13% of districts did.

Just 1.39% of funding supported psychological safety.

Prevention is permitted—but not protected.

Every \$1 invested in school-based prevention saves \$7 in future criminal justice costs.

We are asking for to do

COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT SUPPORTS
BUILD TEXAS’ TALENT PIPELINE

Texas schools can invest in Tier 1 supports that strengthen attendance, engagement, and graduation.

When students feel connected and supported, they are more likely to complete school and pursue college, career, or military pathways.

Stronger student supports today lead to a more skilled and stable workforce tomorrow.

Investing in Tier 1 prevention strengthens Texas’ economic future..

We are asking for to do

APPENDIX

Annual Sentinel Reporting Requirements
Safe and Supportive Schools Program (SSSP)

A. Purpose of Inclusion in This Blueprint

Texas school districts annually collect and report comprehensive data related to psychological safety, behavioral health systems, school climate, and threat assessment practices through the Sentinel reporting system in accordance with Texas Education Code (TEC) §37.115.

The purpose of including this appendix in this blueprint is to clarify that when assessing campus or district needs related to psychological safety, mental health infrastructure, or school climate, a substantial body of required data already exists. This information is reported annually to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and reflects statutory implementation of Safe and Supportive Schools Programs (SSSPs) across campuses.

This Appendix:

- Promotes alignment between local planning efforts and existing state reporting requirements.
- Reduces duplication of assessment processes.
- Supports data-informed decision-making.
- Enhances transparency for community partners and stakeholders.
- Encourages integration of Sentinel data into broader mental health and school safety planning initiatives.

Districts and partners are encouraged to leverage existing Sentinel reporting data when conducting needs assessments, developing improvement plans, or applying for grant funding related to psychological safety and student mental health.

B. Statutory Authority

In accordance with TEC §37.115, each public school campus shall develop and implement a Safe and Supportive Schools Program (SSSP) and annually submit required implementation data through the Sentinel system.

The annual Sentinel submission documents campus compliance with statutory requirements and supports continuous improvement of school safety, behavioral health, and threat assessment systems.

C. Annual Reporting Requirements

C.1 Reporting Authorization

Name, title, email address, and phone number of the individual completing the report.

Confirmation that the individual is authorized to submit data on behalf of the campus.

C.2 SSSP Team Composition

Total number of members serving on the SSSP team.

Number of team members who have completed School Behavioral Threat Assessment training through the Texas School Safety Center (TxSSC) or a regional Education Service Center (ESC).

Areas of expertise represented on the team include:

- Counseling
- Behavior management
- Mental health and substance abuse
- Classroom instruction
- Special education
- School administration
- School safety and security
- Emergency planning
- Law enforcement

C.3 Overall SSSP Implementation

Development and implementation of an SSSP aligned with TEC §37.115(b).

Inclusion of the six required statutory components:

- Promotion of a positive school climate
- Implementation of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)
- Conducting behavioral threat assessments
- Provision of SSSP-related staff training
- Collection and analysis of relevant data
- Support of school safety and security systems

D. Required Program Components

D.1 Component I: Positive School Climate

Stakeholder input collected from:

- Students
- School staff
- Parents

Assessment measures include:

- Student connectedness and belonging
- Student-staff relationships
- Family involvement
- Teaching and learning
- Discipline and behavioral expectations
- School safety
- Peer conflict and bullying
- Substance use

Additional staff measures may include:

- Staff connectedness and morale
- Administrative support

D.2 Component II: Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)

- Established MTSS team to address behavioral, emotional, and mental health needs.
- Completion of basic MTSS training by team members.
- Clearly defined referral pathway understood by staff.
- Mapped school and community resources.
- Prevention and promotion strategies implemented across tiers.
- Processes to connect families to resources.
- Coordination with other campus teams to align supports.
- Systems to monitor student progress.
- Analysis of MTSS data incorporated into SSSP planning.

D.3 Component III: Behavioral Threat Assessments

D.3.a Threat Reports

- Immediate danger or imminent safety concerns
- Threats toward others
- Threats toward self
- Threats toward both self and others
- Bullying or cyberbullying
- Sexual harassment, assault, stalking, domestic violence, or dating violence
- Reports involving students receiving special education services

- Reports involving students with Section 504 accommodations
- Staff requests for confidentiality pursuant to TEC §37.115(c)

D.3.b Threat Assessment Outcomes

- Behavioral threat assessments conducted.
- Action by law enforcement.
- Referral to or modification of counseling services.
- Referral to mental health services.
- Referral to acute care services.
- Engagement of parents or guardians in intervention planning.
- Referral to or modification of special education services.
- Disciplinary outcomes are reported separately through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS).

D.4 Component IV: Staff and Student Training

- Total number of staff who regularly interact with students.
- Number of staff trained in required safety and mental health areas.

D.5 Component V: Data Collection and Analysis

- Analysis of prior year SSSP data.
- Sharing of findings with the campus leadership team.
- Sharing of findings with the School Safety and Security Committee.

D.6 Component VI: Supporting School Safety and Security

- Support provided to the School Safety and Security Committee in implementing the multihazard emergency operations plan.
- Collaboration with the committee to train staff on physical and psychological safety during crisis events.

E. Continuous Improvement

Annual Sentinel reporting supports statewide monitoring of compliance with TEC §37.115 and promotes data-informed refinement of campus systems. The structured reporting process strengthens accountability, transparency, and coordination among educational, behavioral health, and community partners.



H.E. BUTT
FOUNDATION