# REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

The good news is that young people are incredibly resilient. With the proper supports and interventions, as well as the thoughtful implementation of trauma-informed practices as schools reopen, students are likely to see significant improvements in their mental health and well-being.

We know that interventions such as school counseling, peer-to-peer interactions, socio-emotional learning, mentoring programs, and self-care practices go a long way in supporting the mental and physical health of students. It will be key to ensure that every student and family has the opportunity to access these support systems.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

PEER-TO-PEER INTERACTIONS

MENTORING PROGRAMS

SCHOOL COUNSELING

SELF-CARE PRACTICES
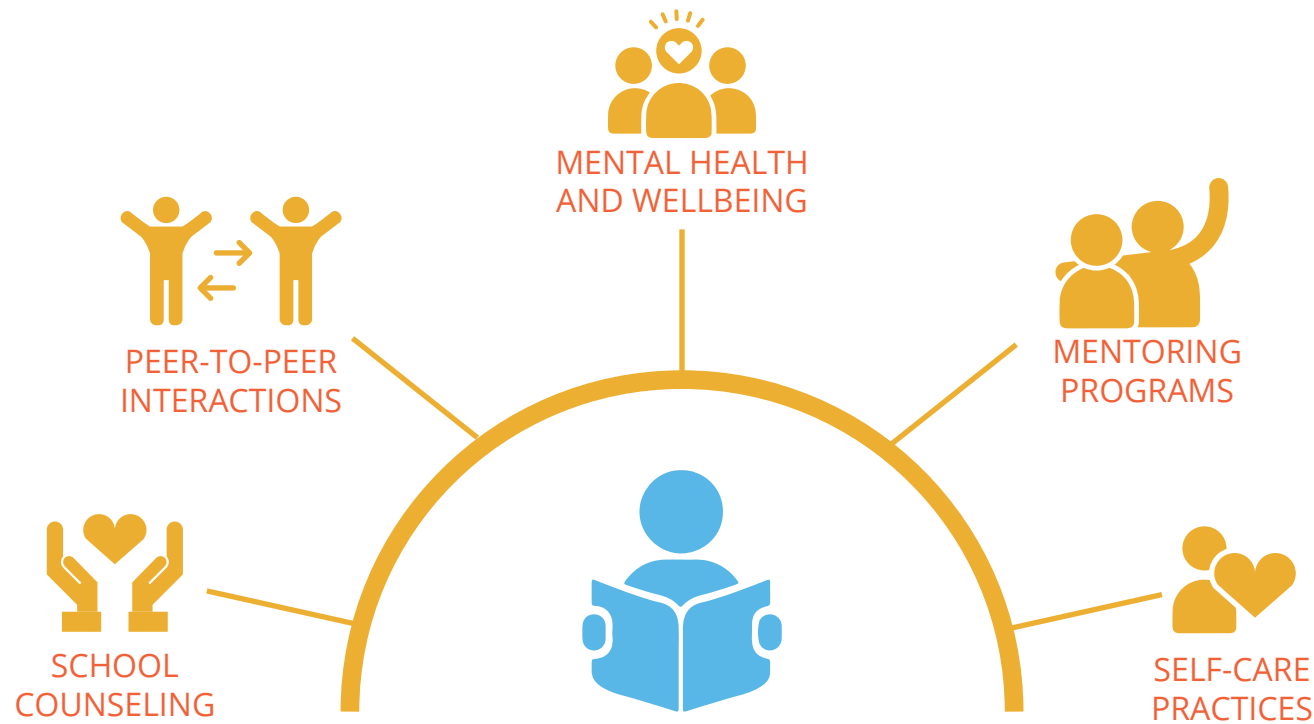
RETURN TO SCHOOL: BEST PRACTICES IN SUPPORTING STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

For Parents:

Validate kids' feelings

- Acknowledge that your student might have negative feelings or concerns about the return to school, but model a calm and positive attitude for them.

Set a confident tone for the return to school

- Parents set the tone for children in how they approach the return to school. Demonstrating confidence and an optimistic outlook will go a long way in supporting students' own positive approach to in-person learning.

Help kids think positively

- Focus on the good: what is your student looking forward to about returning to school? What was the best part of their day at school?

Practice separation from your child

- After a year or more of hybrid or fully remote learning, practicing small periods of separation before students transition to fully in-person learning will be helpful, particularly for younger students.

Ease back into predictable routines

- COVID-19 greatly disrupted many family's routines. Help support students' return to school by easing back into a more structured and predictable daily routine.

Emphasize safety measures

- Reassure your child by emphasizing the safety measures schools are taking to keep them healthy.

Encourage flexibility

- Let kids know that you are prepared for any changes that might occur throughout the return to school process, and that in times of uncertainty, it's beneficial to practice flexibility. Reassure them that you will keep them in the loop.

Source: The Child Mind Institute
Back-to-School Anxiety During COVID
Supporting Students' Mental Health During COVID

RETURN TO SCHOOL: BEST PRACTICES IN SUPPORTING STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

For Educators:

Focus on mental health and wellbeing

- Building mental health and wellbeing into lessons throughout the day will empower students to manage and process whatever emotions they may be experiencing.

Build student relationships

- Many students have felt isolated and anxious throughout the course of the pandemic. Emphasizing student-to-student interaction and relationship building will go a long way in reducing these feelings. Strong teacher-student relationships are also protective for students' mental wellbeing.

Incorporate mindfulness and relaxation into the day

- Practicing mindfulness, or the practice of staying present in the moment purposefully and without judgment, will help students to maintain feelings of calm throughout the day and regulate their emotions.

Keep kids informed

- Students will feel safe and engage more deeply in their academics when they feel they are being kept abreast of information, particularly in a time that has been so tumultuous.

Prioritize hands-on activities

- Many kids still have a lot of free time on their hands and may be limited in the types of activities they can participate in outside of school hours. By incorporating hands-on activities throughout the day, teachers can help students to keep moving and stay engaged.

Source: The Child Mind Institute
Back-to-School Anxiety During COVID
Supporting Students' Mental Health During COVID