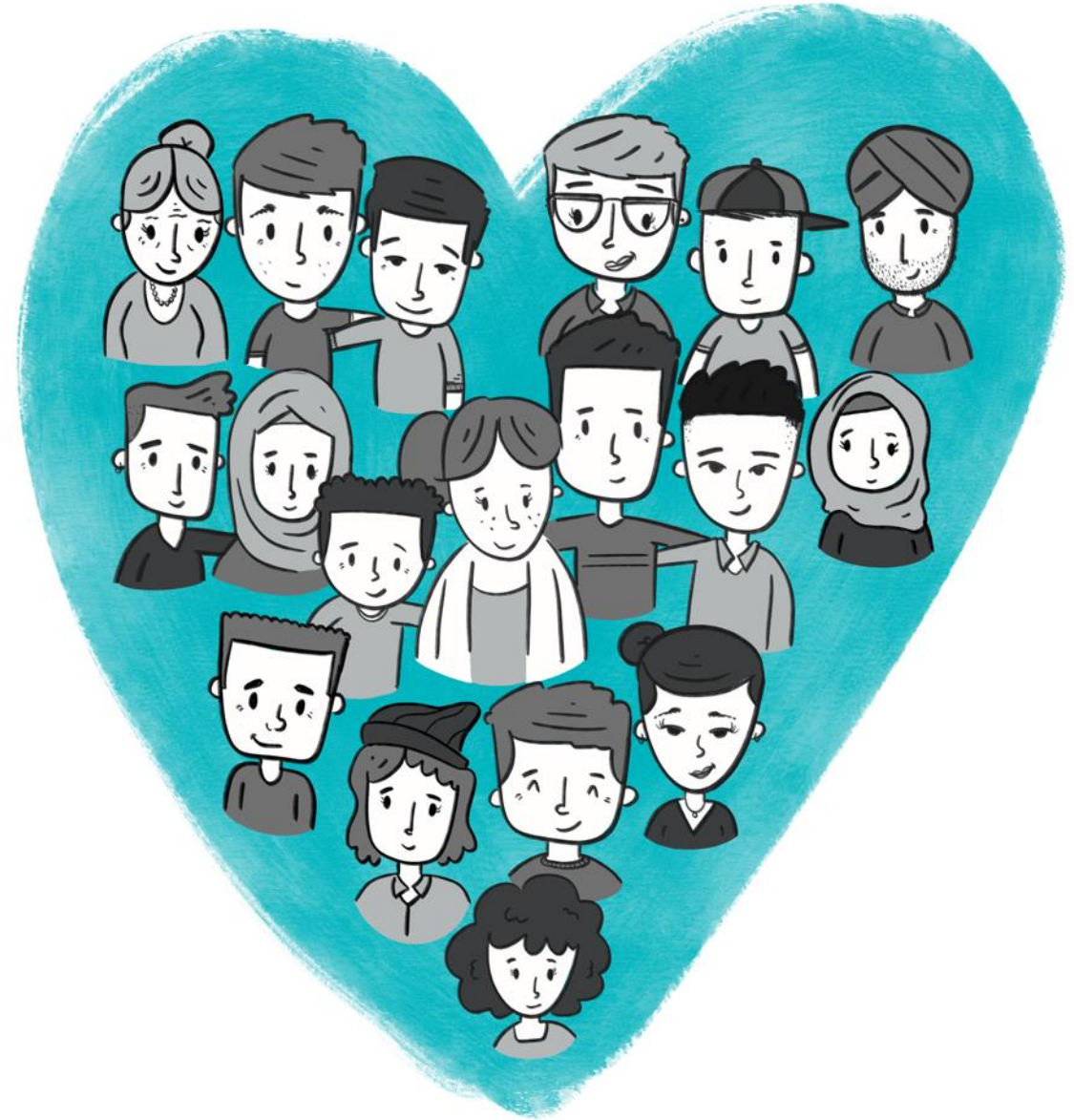


# Prioritize Mental Health & Responding to Challenges

SAIS Conference Workshop  
June 16, 2025

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[www.WholeChildWholeLife.com](http://www.WholeChildWholeLife.com)



# **Power Of Our Work**

**A focus on thriving optimizes conditions for health and healing,  
learning and development.**

Our job is to prepare and care, never to hold back and harm.

We want kids to be ready and well.

This is how they can thrive in turbulent times.

**“The art of this work is doing what is best for kids and having it also be good for us. It is the everyday actions that contribute to our collective well-being and in nurturing relationships, environments, and experiences that enrich everyone in them.”**



# Differently Wired

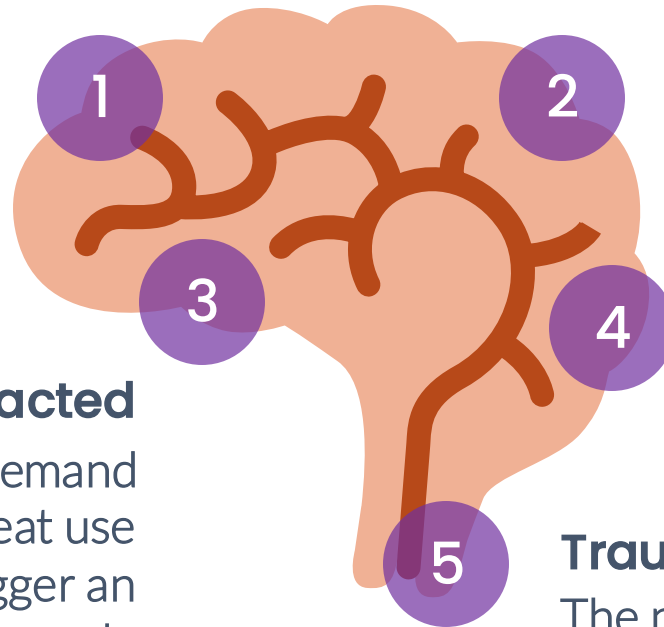
**Kids' wiring has been shaped and reshaped by how they're growing up**

## Overloaded

Kids are faced with too many demands and challenges. It can inhibit and delay executive functioning.

## Distracted

Distractions and notifications demand attention. Big tech is designed for repeat use not health and tech notifications trigger an addictive response stronger than crack.



## Overwhelmed

Kids have access to information, 24/7. They are growing up in an “Open Source” society.

## Unsafe and Unsettled

Kids have lived a lifetime of threats, stress, and volatility. They crave safety, security, and predictability.

## Traumatized

The past few years have been collectively traumatizing. Young people most harmed are those with past and ongoing trauma, grief, and loss.

**Challenging Behaviors**  
**Tell Us What Students Need to**  
**Learn, Grow, and Thrive**

# How are the children?

The “thrive five” as an immediate inventory



SAFE +  
SUPPORTED



HEALTHY  
+ HEALING



ROOTED +  
CONNECTED



LEARNING  
+ GROWING



LIVING WITH  
JOY + PURPOSE

# Whole Life Thriving Practices



MEET  
BASIC  
NEEDS



PRIORITIZE  
MENTAL  
HEALTH



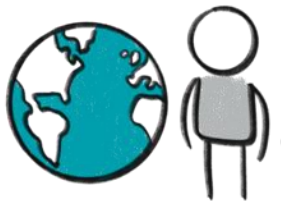
INVEST IN  
PERSONAL  
INTERESTS



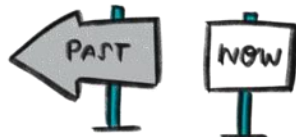
NURTURE  
HEALTHY  
RELATIONSHIPS



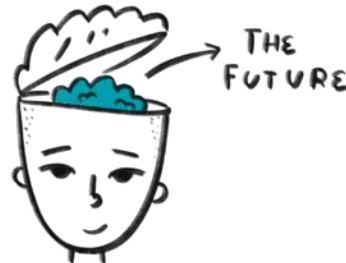
BUILD COMMUNITY  
& BELONGING



EMBRACE  
IDENTITIES  
& CULTURES



ATTEND TO THE  
PAST & THE PRESENT



ACT WITH A  
100 YEAR  
MINDSET



BE A FORCE  
FOR GOOD

Wow!

SEEK AWE  
& WONDER



## **Mental Illness & Crisis**

Disturbing thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that interfere with or impede students' relationships, responsibilities, and activities.





PRIORITIZE  
MENTAL  
HEALTH

## Mental Illness & Crises

This year:

- What did you see?
- What did you experience?

Next year:

- What can you do?
- What do you need?





## Grief and Loss

Grief includes many of signs of mental health challenges, including changes in appetite, restlessness, trouble focusing and paying attention, anger and deep sadness. When we see these symptoms and know a child has lost someone or something, we can help them name what they are feeling as grief.



PRIORITIZE  
MENTAL  
HEALTH

## Grief and Loss

This year:

- What did you see?
- What did you experience?

Next year:

- What can you do?
- What do you need?





## Stress and Trauma

Because of when and how kids are growing up, they experience chronic and complex stress with varying levels of trauma. This impacts their physical and emotional well-being, influencing behavior and executive functioning.



PRIORITIZE  
MENTAL  
HEALTH

## Stress & Trauma

This year:

- What did you see?
- What did you experience?

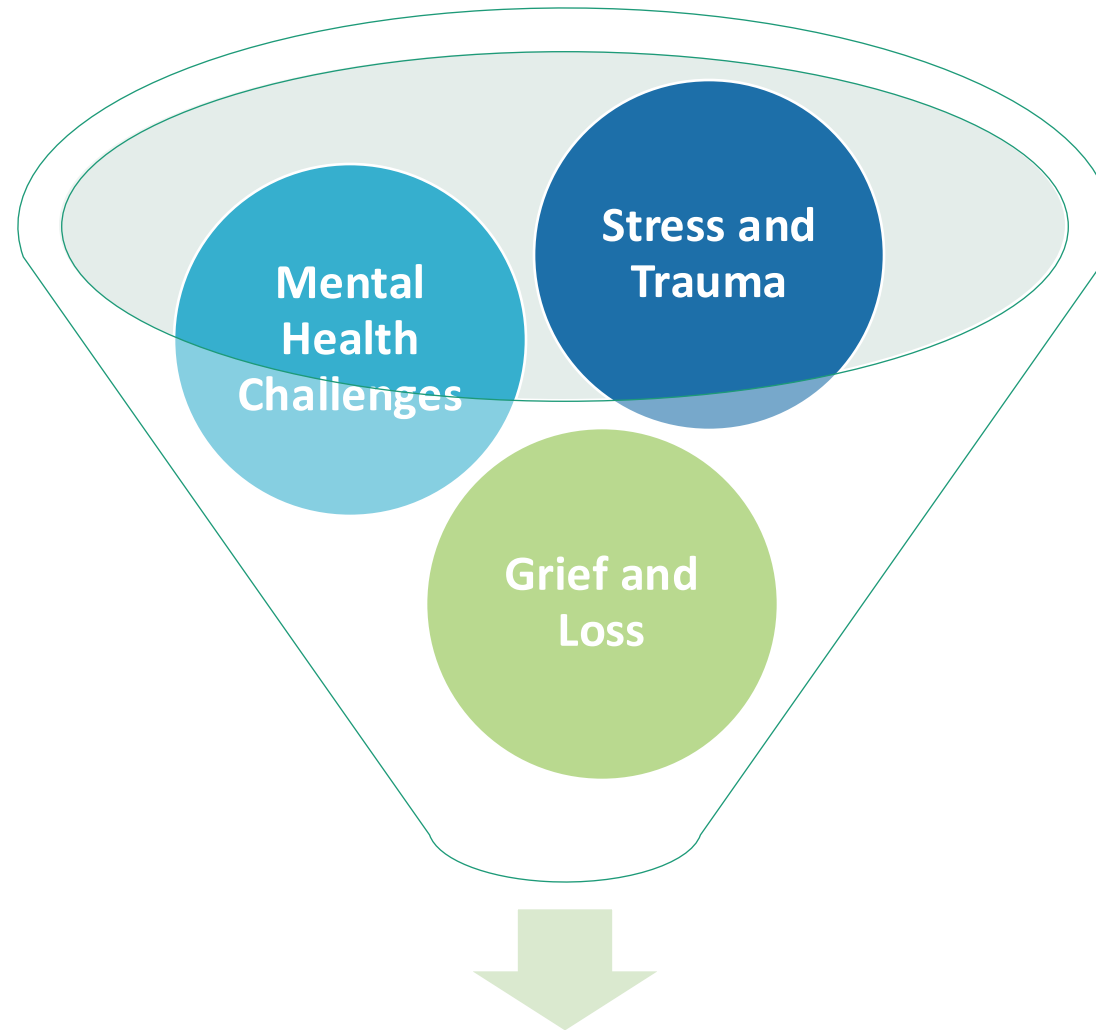
Next year:

- What can you do?
- What do you need?





PRIORITIZE  
MENTAL  
HEALTH



**Academic, Emotional, and  
Behavioral Challenges**



PRIORITIZE  
MENTAL  
HEALTH

## Mental Health First Aid

- Assess for risk of harm
- Listen non-judgmentally
- Give reassurance and information
- Encourage appropriate professional help
- Encourage self-help and other support strategies

COMMUNITY WISDOM: WHAT WORKS?



## Mental Health Habits & Hygiene

Think of mental health habits and emotional hygiene as everyday “tips, tricks, and tools” that support cognitive functioning and mental health. They can be done individually, or in a group. Give children plenty of opportunities to try different self-care strategies and create their own. Kids need a toolbox full of tips, tricks, and tools to fix or prevent a sudden hurt.

COMMUNITY WISDOM: WHAT WORKS?



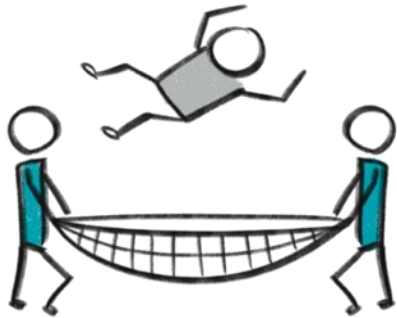


## Emotional Wound Care

- Overwhelmed and overloaded
- Anxious and worried
- Sense of doom and dread
- Panicky
- Overstimulated
- Self-destructive & strong, negative emotions

COMMUNITY WISDOM: WHAT WORKS?

# Prioritize the Thrive Five



SAFE +  
SUPPORTED



HEALTHY  
+ HEALING



ROOTED +  
CONNECTED



LEARNING  
+ GROWING



LIVING WITH  
JOY + PURPOSE