



# Strategies to Support a Positive School Climate

## Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is the “conscious control of thoughts, behaviors and emotions” (McClelland & Tominey, 2016, p. 4). It goes hand-in-hand with executive function, which refers to a set of processes that enable children and adults to adapt to demands in a flexible way, especially when there are competing distractions.



### Why is it important?

- Self-regulation skills are necessary for students to thrive in both social and educational settings (McClelland & Cameron, 2012).
- A students' ability to self-regulate impacts foundational literacy and math skills (Gerst et al., 2015; Dekker et al., 2017).
- Early childhood self-regulation predicts long-term academic achievement and educational attainment, including completion of post-secondary studies (McClelland et al., 2013).
- Curriculum-based self-regulation interventions in schools can have a positive effect on student health, educational, and social outcomes (Pandey et al., 2018).

## In Practice

Schools play a crucial role in helping students learn to manage their emotions by supplying them with support and strategies to become emotionally self-aware and responsible for their behaviours.



### What can schools do?

Schools can adopt self-regulation interventions, designed to teach students to better understand and manage their thoughts feelings and behaviours, within a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS).

MTSS frameworks support student screening and progress monitoring to deliver targeted, evidence-based services to students most in need of intervention.

- **Tier 1** interventions are delivered within the regular classroom setting and are intended to support fundamental self-regulation skills (e.g., teaching all students the basic tenants of social emotional learning).
- **Tier 2** involves a more targeted approach by teaching students to resist reacting on impulse, maintain focus on a task and make better choices overall (e.g., supporting self-monitoring skills within a smaller group of students).
- **Tier 3** entails smaller groups and/or one-on-one support, referral to the school counsellor and, if required, the use of community support services.

Through data-driven decision-making, schools can use a MTSS to support the self-regulation of all students (Webb et al., 2018).



### In the Classroom

All students, especially those who exhibit disruptive behavior, can benefit from self-regulation skills. Self-regulation develops over time and, with continual practice; teachers can help all students adapt to the demands of their classroom in a flexible way.

- Teach students a range of “go to” coping strategies to be used during periods of stress or unbalance (e.g., deep breathing, meditation, yoga, positive affirmations and mantras, slow counting, visual imagery etc.).
- Look out for warning signs of emotional dysregulation and help students to react in the moment by being a calming presence and modeling appropriate self-regulation strategies.
- Implement structured daily routines designed to create classroom environments characterized by predictability (e.g., consistent rules, rituals and expectations).
- Provide a variety of tools that support self-regulation in the classroom (e.g., fidget spinners, plush toys, colouring books, music corner with headphones etc.).

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- Organize the physical classroom around safe, calming spaces by creating a cool down corner or distress zone.
- Focus on preventative measures and teachable moments over punitive consequences.
- Find opportunities for students to put their self-regulation skills into practice through role-playing scenarios so they will be prepared to use them in real world settings.

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