

Introduction to the Protective Factor Framework

The goal of school-based prevention work is to design and implement approaches that will help promote the knowledge, attitude, and skills necessary for students to lead productive and meaningful lives, both in the present and in the future. Put simply, prevention work is meant to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors so that students can thrive.

The Protective Factor Framework is a **research-based** and **evidence-informed approach** to prevention work that has demonstrated the ability to **increase the well-being of both children and families** by reducing the **risk of unhealthy behaviors**. When implemented, research has shown that the protective factor framework can increase the probability of positive outcomes **even in the presence of risk and adversity**. When used in education, it helps education staff to identify **the five characteristics or attributes we need to focus on most** in students to reduce or eliminate risk factors and actively enhance their well-being.

The Protective Factor Framework is not a “program” or “intervention”. It is a way to think about and organize prevention work **in order to have the most impact**. The Framework can and should be **implemented into existing prevention approaches, practices, and programs** through making small, strategic adjustments to the every day work that schools are already doing. Recognizing how to address and build these 5 Protective Factors into our work with students provides a solid base for the success of prevention work in schools.

The 5 Protective Factors are:

1. Concrete Supports in Times of Need
2. Knowledge of Development
3. Social Connections
4. Resilience
5. Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Competence



The following chart provides more information about the Protective Factor Framework, defines each protective factor in an educational setting, and describes how schools can systematically build and support each of the five protective factors. Many of these approaches are already being utilized in schools. Prevention work will be most effective when all five protective factors are intentionally addressed and reinforced.

Protective Factor	Students:	Schools Support By:
Concrete Supports in Times of Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● have access to quality services that meeting their basic needs ● feel safe and regulated ● know how to ask for help and advocate for themselves <p><i>Basic needs include nutrition, clothing, shelter, healthcare, sleep, and a safe school environment.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● providing resources to help students and families access concrete supports, when needed ● deliberately teaching and helping students practice skills to support self-advocacy ● creating a culture where seeking help is viewed as a strength
Knowledge of Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● understand important aspects of human and brain development, including the effects of trauma ● believe that intelligence is not fixed and is something that can be influenced through hard work and effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● helping parents and teachers understand child development and age-appropriate behaviors ● implementing policies and procedures that reflect a deep understanding of child and adolescent development ● creating a trauma sensitive school environment ● facilitating knowledge / belief that intelligence can be influenced through effort and hard work

Protective Factor	Students:	Schools Support By:
Social Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have healthy, sustained relationships with peers and adults that promote a sense of trust, belonging, safety, and a sense that they matter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helping students develop the social skills necessary for forming and sustaining healthy relationships • facilitating opportunities for students to develop healthy relationships with adults peers • create a culture of school connectedness
Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have the ability and skills to manage stress and function well when faced with stressors, challenges, and/or adversity • have hope and a sense of optimism for the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • integrating a strength-based approach into their culture and climate to help students develop a resilient mindset • working with students to develop their plans for the future
Cognitive and Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acquire the skills and knowledge that are essential to forming an independent, positive identity and having a productive adulthood, such as: executive functioning skills, self-regulation skills, self-awareness, self-esteem, empathy for others, positive coping skills, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding and emphasizing that BOTH cognitive and social-emotional competence are important to help students achieve academic success • incorporating direct and indirect instructional opportunities for students to learn and practice academic and social emotional skills, which will build emotional intelligence, academic success, and workforce readiness