



THE HEART OF RECOVERY

Creating supportive school environments following a natural disaster

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This resource, *The Heart of Recovery: Creating supportive school environments following a natural disaster*, is the result of the actions of many people.

Project Strong is the leadership team supporting recovery after the 2016 wildfires in Fort McMurray and the Wood Buffalo Region. This dedicated group of school authority leaders, along with the regional manager for Regional Collaborative Service Delivery (RCSD), generously shared their experience and advice to help create this resource. Their contribution is an expression of gratitude for the outpouring of kindness and support their community received from so many people across Alberta and across Canada.

Project Strong members represent:

- Fort McMurray Roman Catholic Separate School District;
- Fort McMurray Public School District;
- Northland School Division;
- Greater North Central Francophone Education Region; and
- Wood Buffalo RCSD.

A heartfelt thank you to school authorities, community partners and cross-ministry partners for their willingness to also share their expertise and feedback in the development of this resource, including:

- Christ the Redeemer Catholic Separate Regional Division;
- Calgary Board of Education;
- Foothills School Division;
- High Prairie School Division;
- Alberta Health;
- Alberta Health Services;
- Palix Foundation;
- PolicyWise for Children & Families;
- Canadian Red Cross; and
- Psychologists' Association of Alberta.

An additional thank you to everyone who is committed to promoting welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments across Alberta.

ISBN 978-1-4601-3503-7 (PDF)

Copyright © 2018, the Crown in Right of Alberta, as represented by the Minister of Education. Alberta Education, *The Heart of Recovery: Creating supportive school environments following a natural disaster*

Every effort has been made to provide proper acknowledgement of original sources. If cases are identified where this has not been done, please notify Alberta Education so appropriate corrective action can be taken.

Permission is given by the copyright owner to reproduce this document “as is” for educational purposes and on a non-profit basis. Website references in this document are provided solely as a convenience and do not constitute an endorsement by Alberta Education of the content, policies, or products of the referenced website. The department does not control the referenced websites and is not responsible for the accuracy, legality, or content of the referenced websites or for that of subsequent links. Referenced website content and location may change without notice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
Goals of this resource	4
Focus on psychosocial recovery	5
Positive mental health and supportive learning environments.....	6
First Nations, Métis and Inuit education and community recovery.....	7
Lessons learned from Alberta communities	7
What to Expect After a Natural Disaster.....	8
Emotional responses to a natural disaster	10
Process of recovery	12
How Stress and Trauma Affect Children and Youth.....	25
Common reactions of children and youth following a natural disaster	26
When the effects of stress are prolonged	28
Trauma and brain development	29
Protecting students from long-term effects of trauma	30
Schools as the Heart of Recovery	33
Trauma-informed practice	34
Sample school-based strategies to support recovery	37
Build positive relationships	38
Create a sense of safety and calm	39
Teach new skills and strategies	44
Offer support to families	47
Designing a Continuum of Supports	50
Universal supports for all students	51
Targeted supports and interventions for some students	51
Specialized supports for a small number of students	52
Alignment with stepped-care approach.....	54
Understanding pathways to service	54
Self-care for Educators	55
An invitation to well-being	56
Sample strategies for self-care	57
Websites.....	62
Additional References.....	66

Introduction

Natural disasters, such as wildfires, floods or tornadoes, can be especially challenging for children and youth. Experiencing a natural disaster is frightening, even for adults, and the devastation to the familiar environment (i.e., home, school and community) can be long-lasting and distressing.

Although these types of natural disasters are unpredictable and hard to control, schools and communities do have control over how they respond to these events and the kinds of supports and resources they provide for students, families and school staff during the recovery process.

Goal of this resource

The goal of this resource is to provide information and strategies that school authorities can use to support the resilience and well-being of students and staff following a natural disaster. Although this resource is specifically developed to address recovery after natural disasters, much of the information and many of the strategies may be applicable to planning for and responding to other types of disasters or emergency events.

Based on extensive research and lessons learned from Alberta communities, this resource provides school authorities, school leaders, school staff and community partners with:

- information on what to expect after a natural disaster;
- an overview of the recovery process;
- an understanding of how stress and trauma affects children and youth;
- an introduction to trauma-informed practice in schools;
- a collection of evidence-informed school-based strategies for supporting recovery and promoting resiliency and well-being; and
- a sampling of self-care strategies for educators.

“It was an incredible advantage to have all four boards in our region work so collaboratively during this recovery year. We have always had positive relationships, but this year we all worked side by side to identify priorities, share resources and support one another.”

~Project Strong team member,
Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo
Region, 2017

This resource highlights the importance of collaboration and leadership. The shared observations and reflections of the Project Strong team are a testament to how schools can be the heart of recovery for communities when school authorities, community partners and government collaborate.

An additional benefit of this resource is to build an understanding of the importance of emergency preparedness for schools and communities. In the event of a natural or other type of disaster or emergency event, schools and communities will be in a better position to mitigate a traumatic response and support recovery when:

- emergency plans and protocols are in place;
- all staff and students have basic training in emergency preparedness;
- key staff have training in [Psychological First Aid](#) and [Skills for Psychological Recovery](#);
- evidence-informed strategies and practices for supporting students and their families are identified and readily accessible;
- relationships with community partners are established; and
- safe and supportive learning environments that promote resiliency and positive mental health are in place.



Focus on psychosocial recovery

The information and strategies described in this resource focus on psychosocial recovery—the process of facilitating resilience within individuals, families and communities exposed to disasters. Psychosocial is a term developed to describe the psychological and social impacts of disasters and emergencies. A psychosocial recovery approach works to anticipate, reduce the impact of, cope with, and recover from the adversity.¹ This approach focuses on human needs and considers the whole person.

A psychosocial approach to recovery is collaborative. It builds on the knowledge, skills and abilities of the whole community, including school staff, students, families, community groups and organizations, service providers and other partners. Drawing on these collective resources enhances schools' capacity to support the mental health and well-being of students, families and school staff.

1. Adapted from the definition of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Psychosocial support. Retrieved from <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/health/psychosocial-support/>

The following evidence-informed principles guide intervention efforts for psychosocial recovery:

1. **Promote a sense of safety** (e.g., help individuals appraise future threat in a realistic manner and re-establish their confidence in the world as a safe place)
2. **Promote calming** (e.g., help individuals develop skills to achieve a relaxed physical and emotional state through techniques such as breathing, deep muscle relaxation, imagery and self-talk)
3. **Promote a sense of self and community efficacy** (e.g., help individuals recognize that their actions are likely to lead to generally positive outcomes, and that they belong to a group that is likely to experience positive outcomes)
4. **Promote a sense of connectedness** (e.g., help individuals build social support for problem-solving, emotional understanding and acceptance, and to gain access to group knowledge and expertise)
5. **Promote hope** (e.g., help individuals focus on goals, build on strengths and have the confidence that things will work out reasonably well)²

Attending to the psychosocial needs of a school community, and using evidence-informed intervention principles, is integral to the overall recovery plan. A psychosocial recovery approach provides supports that will help students, families and school staff regain their feelings of safety, confidence and trust. This approach also helps communities and individuals re-establish and make new social connections to promote healing and well-being.

Positive mental health and supportive learning environments

Mental health, as defined by the Public Health Agency of Canada, “is the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face.”³

Current research clearly identifies the importance of mental health to learning, as well as to students’ social and emotional development and well-being. Students who experience positive mental health are resilient and cope with change and adversity, are successful learners and build healthy relationships. Given the important relationships between positive mental health, academic success and overall social-emotional development, schools have an important role in nurturing [students’ mental health](#).

[Welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments](#) make a significant contribution to the mental health and well-being of students, school staff and families. In June 2015, the [School Act](#) was amended to articulate the importance of these supportive learning environments in an inclusive education system. The amendment reads: *Students are entitled to welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that respect diversity and nurture a sense of belonging and a positive sense of self.*

2. Hobfoll, S., et al. 2007. Five essential elements of immediate and mid-term mass trauma intervention. Empirical evidence. *Psychiatry*, 70(4), 283-313. Retrieved from http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/Article_FiveEssentialElementsofImmediate.pdf

3. Public Health Agency of Canada <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/mh-sm/mhp-psm/index-eng.php>

First Nations, Métis and Inuit education and community recovery

The 2015 [Valuing Mental Health](#) report acknowledged that First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and communities in Alberta encounter unique circumstances, challenges and opportunities. Many of the mental health issues faced by Indigenous populations are rooted in historical and intergenerational trauma, socio-economic inequalities and discrimination. High rates of suicide, both provincially and nationally, as well as an over-representation of Indigenous people in our justice and health care systems, are pressing concerns.⁴ Many of these challenges impact Indigenous students' mental health, well-being and social, economic and educational outcomes.

The urgency for action is underscored by current national and regional demographic trends that show First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples are the youngest and fastest-growing segment of Canadian society.

Welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that value all students and respond to individual and diverse cultural needs will reduce barriers, such as marginalization, exclusion and discrimination, and improve educational outcomes for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students and their families.

[Jordan's Principle](#) is a child-first principle that addresses the needs of First Nations children by ensuring there are no gaps in government services to them. Jordan's Principle calls on the government of first contact to pay for the services without delay and seek reimbursement later. Government and school authorities need to ensure that jurisdictional disputes do not cause Indigenous students to experience denials, delays or disruptions of services and supports ordinarily available to other Albertans. This is particularly important when a First Nations community is recovering from the impact of a natural disaster, or states of emergencies, and basic needs may be compromised and resources may be limited.

School staff and mental health providers require increased access to information and services to manage the impacts of trauma and multi-generational issues resulting from Indian residential schools. To promote reconciliation and align with the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), actions to support students' mental health should be informed and guided in collaboration with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Supports and services must acknowledge local and cultural wisdom, be identified by the community as important, and be designed and delivered in culturally respectful ways.

Lessons learned from Alberta communities

Building on the learning from the recovery year following the 2016 wildfires in Fort McMurray and the Wood Buffalo Region, as well as lessons learned from the [2013 floods in southern Alberta](#) and the [2011 Lesser Slave Lake fire](#), this resource outlines school-based strategies for addressing the long-term recovery of students, families and communities.

Welcoming, caring, respectful and safe schools can be a normalizing experience for students, and educators play a lead role in addressing the longer-term effects of a natural disaster. By drawing on a wealth of experience and relevant research, Alberta schools can be the heart of recovery for students, families, school staff and the larger community.

4. Valuing mental health: Report of the Alberta mental health review committee, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/Albera-Mental-Health-Review-2015.pdf>

What to Expect After a Natural Disaster

Every natural disaster has its own unique signature depending on the type of event, the location, and community capacity before and after the event occurs. When an entire community is impacted, an individual's sense of security and normalcy can be undermined.

In the last decade, there have been a number of research-based contributions about lessons learned regarding how a community responds to the needs of students and their families after a natural disaster. These kinds of events have the potential to disrupt every level of an individual's life. School and community responses need to be equally comprehensive in return.

"We looked to other school districts for advice and support. Both Slave Lake and Calgary Board of Education's Critical Incident Response Team offered much encouragement and were always willing to answer questions about their experience, and share what they had learned through their recovery experiences."

~Project Strong team member,
Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo
Region, 2017



The research literature also emphasizes the importance of customizing responses to the particular community and school context, and ensuring supports are culturally appropriate and informed both by the developmental needs of children and youth and sensitivity to families' beliefs, customs, priorities and individual circumstances.

Among families affected by a natural disaster, research shows that it is children and youth who experience the highest level of needs, at the time of the event and up to five years after. In addition, the unmet needs of children and youth can significantly contribute to the distress and symptoms of post-traumatic stress of caregivers, including both parents and teachers. As a result, research emphasizes the importance of attending to the well-being of the significant adults in students' lives.

"We know recovery is a long-term process, and we're committed to this intensive collaboration for the next three to five years. We will work together however long it takes ..."

~Project Strong team member,
Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo
Region, 2017

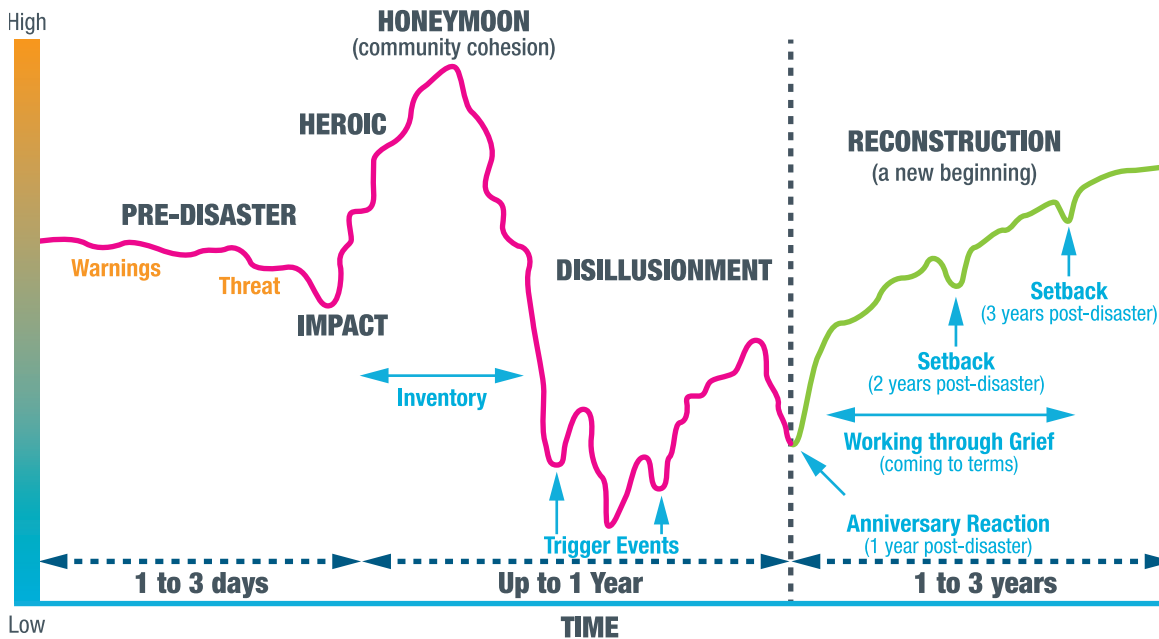
Children and youth look to the significant adults in their lives for guidance on how to manage their emotional reactions after the immediate threat is over. Through the support of caring adults, schools can be safe places that help students and their families return to regular activities and routines, and provide an opportunity to transform a frightening event into an experience that builds well-being and resiliency.

Healing in the aftermath of a natural disaster takes time. It is important to acknowledge that although a natural disaster may last for only a short period, those affected can be involved with the aftermath of the event for months, or even years. However, planned and intentional responses will facilitate coping and recovery.

Emotional responses to a natural disaster

Following a natural disaster, there is a series of typical emotions people may experience. These emotions can be grouped into phases. The illustration below offers a model for visualizing these emotional phases and considering what types of activities and supports might be needed by students, families and school staff at each phase.

Phases of Disasters: Collective Reactions



Pre-Disaster Phase

Each natural disaster is unique and how much warning a community receives before an event occurs affects people's emotional reactions. When there is no warning, students, families and school staff may feel more out of control, vulnerable and fearful of future disasters.

Impact Phase

How individuals are impacted in a natural disaster depends on their past experiences, the nature of the event and losses associated with the event. Often there are initial feelings of confusion and disbelief. During this phase the focus is on survival, safety and reuniting with family or loved ones.

Heroic Phase

As communities respond to a natural disaster, there is a lot of activity happening involving rescues, helping others and protecting property. Although energy may be high during this phase, there are also high levels of anxiety and distraction that can make problem solving challenging.

Honeymoon Phase

During natural disasters, communities often come together to provide support. During this phase, service providers may be more readily available and people who are impacted may experience a temporary sense of optimism.

Disillusionment Phase

During this phase, students, families and school staff begin to come to terms with the challenges ahead and the help and resources available. This reality check may result in feelings of abandonment, exhaustion and increased stress and discord. It can even lead to conflict and ill will between those who feel they were significantly affected and those who are perceived as less affected.

Reconstruction Phase

During this phase, students, families and school staff continue the hard work of rebuilding their lives. They are recognizing that although they may still need to rely on each other for some support, they are now in the position to take on more personal responsibility for their own recovery. Many people will be working through grief and loss. Some might begin to recognize which of their skills and personal strengths are helping them cope. Individuals, families and organizations will re-examine their priorities as they work toward a new normal. How well adults are coping in this phase will have a significant influence on how well children and youth are recovering.

Process of recovery

There are a number of models to describe the process of recovery. Typically, a recovery model describes a process of three distinct but overlapping stages, including:

- response and stabilization (short-term stage of days to weeks);
- re-entry and response (medium-term stage of weeks to months); and
- long-term recovery (up to five years or more).

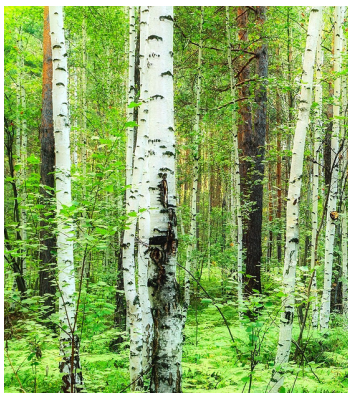
At every stage, schools need to focus on predicting what the specific needs of the school community will be and then plan how they will prepare to respond to and support these evolving needs.

Consider the following examples of the types of actions that school communities might focus on during each stage of the recovery process. These actions will vary according to the nature of the event itself and the specific strengths, resources and priorities of the school community.

During each stage, it is essential that schools work collaboratively with their staff, students, families, community partners, service providers and government to ensure that resources are provided in the most co-ordinated and integrated way possible.

“Our strong connection and positive relationships with community agencies was key during the recovery year. Our team met with representatives from a wide range of community agencies and non-profit groups almost every week. Through these strengthened relationships, we were able to support the basic needs of families and access needed resources for schools. This collaboration enabled the whole community to work together, share resources, identify solutions and support one another.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017



“At the district level, we did the preliminary research and consultation with experts to identify what needed to be done during the first year of recovery. This meant our principals and school teams could get on with the business of doing, with the confidence that they would be doing the right things, based on the best evidence.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Stage 1: Response and Stabilization

(period during event and days to weeks after event)

Immediately following the event, the community may be evacuated and schools closed. During this initial stage, the focus is on:

- following school authority and community emergency response plans;
- protecting students and school staff from harm and danger;
- providing physical first aid (by qualified personnel);
- accounting for all students and staff; and
- reuniting students with their families.

In addition, there are a number of other actions, including the following, to support the response and stabilization period.

Connect with all staff and students – Organize a communication tree or telephone fan-out to ensure that every staff member and every student (and their family) is contacted within the first 24 hours after the event.

Provide [psychological first aid](#) – Ideally all staff should have training in providing practical support in a compassionate and non-intrusive manner. The goal of psychological first aid is to enhance safety, provide physical and emotional comfort, and help people meet basic needs immediately following a natural disaster. Psychological first aid is based on four simple principles:

Prepare: Learn about the crisis event.

Learn about available supports and services.

Learn about safety and security concerns.

Look: Observe for safety.

Observe for people with obvious urgent basic needs.

Observe for people with serious distress reactions.

Listen: Make contact with people who may need support.

Ask about people's needs and concerns.

Listen to people and help them feel calm.

Link: Help people address basic needs and access services.

Help people cope with problems.

Give information.

Connect people with loved ones and social support.

Ensure individual students with disabilities or medical conditions have the specific supports they need – During the evacuation process, ensure students who have medical conditions or disabilities leave the building with the mobility devices, communication devices and/or medical supplies (including medication) that they rely on daily.

Communicate information to students and their families and school staff – Provide timely and accurate information about the event and how the opening of schools, completion of exams and other education-related issues will be affected. Use social media and regular communication messages to provide ongoing information to families and school staff on common emotional reactions to disasters, grief and loss, basic self-care strategies and community resources.

Communicating with students	Communicating with parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailor the language and message to the age and developmental level of students. • Provide accurate information in matter-of-fact language. • Provide consistent information. • Avoid distressing detail. • Outline the action the school is taking. • Describe what students can do to support one another. • Share basic coping techniques for managing stress. • Limit media that increases distress. • Encourage students to direct concerns and questions to teachers and other school staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State the facts in matter-of-fact language. • Describe the action the school is taking. • Share strategies for supporting their children. • Share common reactions children might experience. • Direct them to reliable sources of up-to-date information (e.g., school authority or town website or social media). • Provide information on how to contact school staff with questions or concerns. • Update information and messages frequently.
Communicating with the media	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each school authority should identify a media spokesperson who is responsible for all communication with the media. Make the name and number of the spokesperson available on the school authority website and to all staff, particularly in each office, so that any media requests and questions can be directed to this person. In addition, a central communication team can work to ensure communication messages are intentionally worded and delivered with the goal of reducing stress and confusion and promoting feelings of calm and safety. 	

Communicate with the Ministry of Education – Establish contact with the ministry to discuss programming needs and site-specific issues.

Ensure students are able to register with a school or alternate program for the remainder of the school year, if required – To support transitions, set up communication with receiving school authorities to share student information related to academics and specific learning needs. Share information for families of students with disabilities so they can locate and connect with appropriate resources and agencies (e.g., local disability services, associations and service providers).

Develop a clear pathway to services – Collaborate with community partners and services to create and communicate a clearly identified continuum of supports for students, families and school staff needing mental health supports. Establishing processes for co-ordination and collaboration between schools and their communities (e.g., families, healthcare providers and policy makers) will ensure a seamless link between students in need of mental health supports, and service providers and school staff who provide this support.

Explore funding options for key recovery activities – This could include (but is not limited to) activities such as the following:

- providing basic needs supports;
- co-ordinating regional activities and supports;
- hiring of additional staff to provide mental health supports;
- organizing school and community wellness activities; and
- providing school staff with professional development related to trauma-informed practice.

Connect with experts – Identify local, provincial and national resource people who have expertise on responding to natural disasters and who can provide advice, resource and training. It can also be helpful to connect with school authorities that have had similar experiences.

“After the fire, we knew there was much we needed to learn if we were to truly support our students and staff in the upcoming year. Three days after the evacuation, we were reaching out to experts and accessing training in psychological first aid.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Work with community partners to create opportunities for providing basic needs support for staff students and their families – When a natural disaster occurs, there is often a spontaneous outpouring of generosity in goods and materials, donations and volunteers. Basic needs support is an essential element of recovery, and addressing this requires careful management of funds, goods and services, and volunteer efforts.

“As a district, we worked hard in the rebuilding year to protect our administrators from as much unnecessary chaos as possible. All offers of assistance or donations, as well as research requests, went through the superintendent’s office. This allowed our administrators to focus their energy on the people that needed them the most: students and teachers.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Create re-entry plans – Consider the psychosocial needs of students, families and staff when planning for the re-opening of schools. Involve school authority leadership, school leaders and community partners, and consider both regional and local needs and contexts. Re-entry will be an ongoing process and may take several weeks or months, with different kinds of strategies and supports required at different points throughout the process.

“We used the summer to plan for a strategic re-entry. It was a staged re-entry and began with district office staff, then our custodial crew, then our school administrators, and finally our teachers. Each team received a warm welcome and had a supported opportunity to debrief their experiences related to the fire. We provided psychological first aid, mindfulness tools and an overview of supports and strategies that we needed to put in place for a successful year.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Develop professional learning and capacity-building plans – New knowledge and skills will be needed to effectively support the recovery and build the resilience of students, families and staff. Effective planning includes ensuring that professional learning is relevant, evidence-informed and can evolve to respond to the changing needs, issues and contexts of the school and community.

“It was especially important to use our professional development time strategically. We know teachers and administrators want to stay in their buildings and be as present as possible for their students during this rebuilding year.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Identify strategies for collecting data – It will be important to gather baseline data (e.g., count of referrals to external community mental health supports) and create a plan for collecting and analyzing key data over the course of recovery. Relevant and reliable data can help:

- inform ongoing identification of needs;
- identify emerging trends and issues; and
- be used as evidence of effectiveness of specific activities and interventions.

Ensure protocol is in place and communicated for student disclosures of abuse and suicidal thoughts – Research indicates that domestic violence often rises post-disaster, and that there may also be increased need for suicide prevention, intervention and post-intervention strategies.

Stage 2: Re-entry and Response

(weeks to months after crisis)

As people return to the community and schools re-open, the focus is on:

- helping school staff emotionally prepare for students' return;
- implementing school-wide strategies for supporting students and building resiliency; and
- providing needed supports to families and school staff.

"Re-entry plans focused on helping school leaders and teachers feel emotionally prepared for the first week of school. Using the two questions—'What should it look like for students?' and 'What should it feel like for students?'—staff made a concerted effort to create a welcoming return to school for each and every student."

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

In addition, there are a number of other actions, including the following, to support the re-entry and response stage of the recovery process.

Provide supported opportunities for staff to process their experiences – This might include creating teams of support and/or making mental health support available.

Provide time and support for staff to go through their school and classrooms – This is an essential first step for getting ready for students. Offer space and support for processing the emotional and physical losses. The presence of mental health workers who can provide a listening ear or additional support may also be helpful.

"One unexpected consequence of the fire was how much the loss of teachers' instructional materials would impact their planning and overall workload at the beginning of the school year."

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Recognize that some staff may be unable to return to work immediately – There may be staff that, for mental health reasons or because of personal circumstances related to the disaster event, may not be ready to return to work immediately and/or full time. Develop contingency strategies for staffing that provide as much flexibility as possible and establish clear communication. Some staff will require ongoing support until they are ready to return to work. Encourage staff to access mental health counselling and supports on an as-needed basis throughout the year.

“We know that staff returning after an evacuation need time to assess their living situation and make adjustments. Teachers that returned just a couple of days before school opening had a more challenging start to the school year than staff who returned earlier and had several weeks to get their housing and other affairs in order.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Provide flexibility for staff – Depending on their family and housing situation, some staff may require time during the school day to attend to their own needs related to resettling and recovery.

“When we had a special parenting information session on resilience during the school day, we booked subs for any of our teachers who were parents and wanted to participate. It’s important to acknowledge that many of our teachers are parents and have the same needs and concerns as other parents in the community.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Work with community partners, such as Alberta Health Services, to support the return to school of students and their families – Mental health supports need to be readily available for the re-opening of school, not only for students but also for families and staff members. Skilled professionals need to be on-site, visible and ready to interact with individuals on an as-needed basis. A calm and welcoming environment will be all the support some individuals need, while other people may experience more intense emotional reactions and need additional support.

“The first day back at school each school set up a welcome centre so parents could visit, relax and check in with each other. A mental health worker, with a pink lanyard to identify themselves, was there to offer low-key support and encouragement, and to support any family members who might need more one-to-one support or a referral to more intensive mental health supports.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Reunite students with friends and teachers – Returning to their school community and having the opportunity to interact with familiar and trusted people will help students regain their sense of belonging and safety.

Resume the structure and routine of the school day – In the midst of uncertainty, schools can provide predictable and stable social environments that help students feel safe, confident and optimistic that life can return to normal.

“Although many parents were nervous that first day, most of our students just wanted to be back in school and see their friends.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Create safe and supportive opportunities for students to explore and process their experience – Many students will need to work through their personal experience and understanding of the disaster event. Create opportunities for facilitated classroom discussions and creative expressions as a way for students to process their experiences and associated feelings so they are better able to move forward.

Identify evidence-informed strategies and resources that school staff can use to support students and help build resiliency. This could include:

- listening – helping students put their experiences and feelings into words;
- protecting – helping re-establish students’ feelings of both physical and emotional safety;
- connecting – helping students re-establish their social relationships and experience social support;
- modeling – being a role model for calm and optimistic behaviour; and
- teaching – helping students understand the range of normal stress reactions and learn specific ways of coping, including participating in emergency preparedness activities.

For further information on strategies and resources, refer to the sections entitled [“Schools as the Heart of Recovery”](#) and [“Designing a Continuum of Supports”](#).

Co-ordinate school-based events that bring students, families, school staff and community partners together – These types of events create opportunities for people to meet one another and interact in natural and positive ways. Informal relationships can build a sense of belonging and provide emotional and social support for individuals and families.

“Over the next year, we will be organizing a series of community dinners as informal opportunities for our school communities to come together and support one another.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Work with community partners to provide ongoing professional learning for school staff – This could include topics such as common reactions to natural disasters, grief and loss, trauma-informed practice, resiliency and mental health, and the importance of self-care.

Provide targeted professional learning for leadership staff, counsellors and other school-based mental health personnel – To respond effectively to the needs of students and families following a natural disaster, staff co-ordinating and providing mental health supports will need to build their knowledge and skills related to trauma-informed counselling and interventions. This could include training in [Psychological First Aid](#), [Skills for Psychological Recovery](#), cognitive behaviour approaches, mindfulness and targeted strategies for teaching self-regulation.

Identify students who may be at-risk – Develop and communicate a clear process for identifying and responding to individual or groups of students who are experiencing behavioural and emotional difficulties related to the disaster event, past trauma or a history of mental health difficulties.

“We increased counselling support in every school for the year. Our counsellors worked closely with teachers, monitored the progress of individual students and did lots of small group work focused on mindfulness, self-regulation and coping skills.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Make information available for families – Schools, with the collaboration of community partners, can serve as community hubs for families that are looking for basic information about children’s common post-disaster reactions, grief and loss, resiliency and mental health, and how families can support their children during challenging times.

Provide a continuum of mental health supports – Collaborate with community partners to provide a co-ordinated and responsive continuum of supports that includes mental health promotion and prevention strategies, screening and early identification, intervention and specialized supports.

Identify barriers to access of needed supports and services – Work with partners to develop strategies (such as information sharing between schools, parents and service providers) to address or eliminate these barriers.

Co-ordinate basic need support for students and their families – This could include access to school supplies, clothing, nutritious snacks, and in-school breakfasts and lunches, on an as needed and ongoing basis.

“Families that had never accessed social supports previously were lining up early in the morning for free backpacks of school supplies for their children. The number of families needing to access Santos Anonymous and the Food Bank rose sharply.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Plan and prepare for significant events throughout the calendar year

– As a school team, review the annual school calendar and identify any dates or activities (e.g., anniversary date of disaster event, holidays, exam weeks) that could be potentially stressful for students and staff. Develop detailed and responsive plans for preparing and supporting students, including how the activities might be designed to optimize learning and build student success and resiliency.

“As the anniversary date approached, we encouraged each school to plan how they wanted to mark this date with students and families. Each school planned their own low-key activities. For example, one Kindergarten class blew bubbles to represent their worries floating away, other classes made celebratory chalk drawings, and others had special snacks. We also encouraged teachers to take time to be with their own families for the rest of the day.”

~Project Strong team member,
Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo
Region, 2017



Stage 3: Long-term

(months to years after the natural disaster)

During ongoing rebuilding and recovery (which may be five or more years), the focus is on:

- incorporating trauma-informed practices into school culture;
- planning hope-focused activities to mark anniversary dates and support individuals and groups;
- providing opportunities for ongoing professional learning related to positive mental health; and
- providing access to ongoing mental health support to students, their families and school staff.

“We still have work to do about helping our community understand the nature of trauma and what this means for families, the workplace and our relationships with one another.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

It is essential to continue to listen to the school community to identify what additional or different kinds of supports and activities are needed to promote healing and recovery.

“We recognize that each school in our district may have very different needs, depending on how the neighbourhood was affected by fire and how individual families and staff were impacted...that is why it is so important that each school team has the flexibility to plan for how they will best meet the needs of their school community.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

An important part of recovery planning is promoting emergency preparedness through the use of evidence-informed strategies and resources. There are a number of resources available to support this, including:

- Australian Red Cross’ [Prepare](#) program;
- Canadian Red Cross’ [Expect the Unexpected](#) and [First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities Emergency Preparedness](#);
- Alberta Emergency Management Agency’s [72-Hour Emergency Kit](#);
- Alberta Health Services’ [Personal and Family Disaster Preparedness Guide](#); and
- Alberta Health Services’ Emergency Preparedness (E-Prep) workshop.

How Stress and Trauma Affect Children and Youth

Understanding how exposure to a natural disaster can impact an individual's ability to cope is key to:

- understanding why students may behave the way they do;
- empathizing with students and families;
- creating supportive learning environments and designing meaningful learning experiences; and
- developing effective supports for students and their families.

Adults in the school also need to understand the cycle of trauma, including:

- how trauma leads to emotional and psychological stress;
- how stress may lead to behavioural problems; and
- how punitive responses to problem behaviour (or ignoring misbehaviour) can lead to further trauma.



Common reactions of children and youth following a natural disaster

Because many factors influence how an individual reacts to stressful events, no two students will be affected by a similar event in exactly the same way. It may be difficult to accurately predict who will be most impacted by a natural disaster and who will not be.

Common reactions in the first days to weeks following a natural disaster can vary depending on age. For example:

- *Elementary-age students* may experience irritability and temper tantrums (and other sudden mood changes), aggressiveness, clinginess (as part of increased separation anxiety), nightmares (and other sleep disturbances), poor concentration and withdrawal from social activities and friends.
- *Adolescents* may experience sleeping and eating disturbances, agitation, anger (and other sudden mood changes), increase in conflicts, physical complaints, questionable and/or risk-taking behaviour, withdrawal and poor concentration.

Other reactions that students may experience following a natural disaster include:

- increased fears and worries, including dread of another event occurring;
- increased concerns about the safety of loved ones, friends, classmates, teachers and neighbours;
- increased feelings of sadness, numbness and helplessness;
- increased school absences and physical illnesses; and
- decline in school performance and overall engagement in learning.

Families may feel overwhelmed by practical and economic hardships after the event, and this can lead to feelings of being overloaded or in a state of constant distress. Changes in social networks can also increase family stress. As a result, parents may experience increased marital discord and/or be less tolerant of their children's misbehaviour.

Up to 20 per cent of people (including children and youth) impacted by a natural disaster can experience mild to moderate rates of depression and anxiety in the first weeks to months after an event. With the right supports in place, these reactions will generally diminish over time.⁵

5. After the bushfires: Victoria's psychosocial recovery framework. September 2009. Retrieved from: <http://bit.ly/2upwZFY>

A small percentage of students may be at risk of more severe reactions that may require referral for appropriate mental health assessment and support. The following are severe stress symptoms that could indicate increased risk for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD):

- terrifying memories, nightmares, or flashbacks;
- extreme avoidance of disturbing memories;
- extreme numbness to emotional topics;
- increased arousal such as startle reactions;
- feelings of extreme helplessness or hopelessness;
- fragmented thoughts or dissociation;
- significant changes in functioning;
- suicidal ideation or intent; and
- excessive use of alcohol and drugs.

Most students will be able to cope with a natural disaster over time, with the help of supportive families, school staff and other caring adults. As students stabilize, regulate their emotions, make sense of their experience, the impact on their health, behaviours and relationships will likely be minimal and can, over time, lead to personal growth.

When the effects of stress are prolonged

The severity of students' reactions will depend on their specific risk factors, including:

- exposure to the actual event;
- dislocation from their home or community;
- disruption in routine;
- the level of physical destruction;
- loss of family members, friends or animal companions;
- the level of family support; and
- pre-functioning ability (ability to cope).

For those students with pre-existing risk factors—such as being continually exposed to stressful or adverse conditions without the benefit of secure and caring relationships, past trauma, history of emotional or behavioural problems, limited social support and families who have difficulty coping—the experience of a natural disaster can be challenging and can develop into a toxic form of stress, the kind of stress that can negatively impact brain architecture and brain chemistry.

Toxic stress can derail healthy development and can result in trauma. Trauma is not an event itself but occurs when the body's alarm response is so prolonged that the individual's ability to cope is dramatically undermined.

Some students who have been exposed to danger that is unpredictable and uncontrollable (such as a natural disaster) may experience prolonged effects and continue to respond to the world as a place of constant danger, even if the events happened months or years earlier. This can affect their ability to regulate attention, emotions and reactions. This can translate into a number of behaviour patterns, such as fight, flight or freeze responses; rigid or chaotic behaviour; or difficulties with attachment and social relationships.



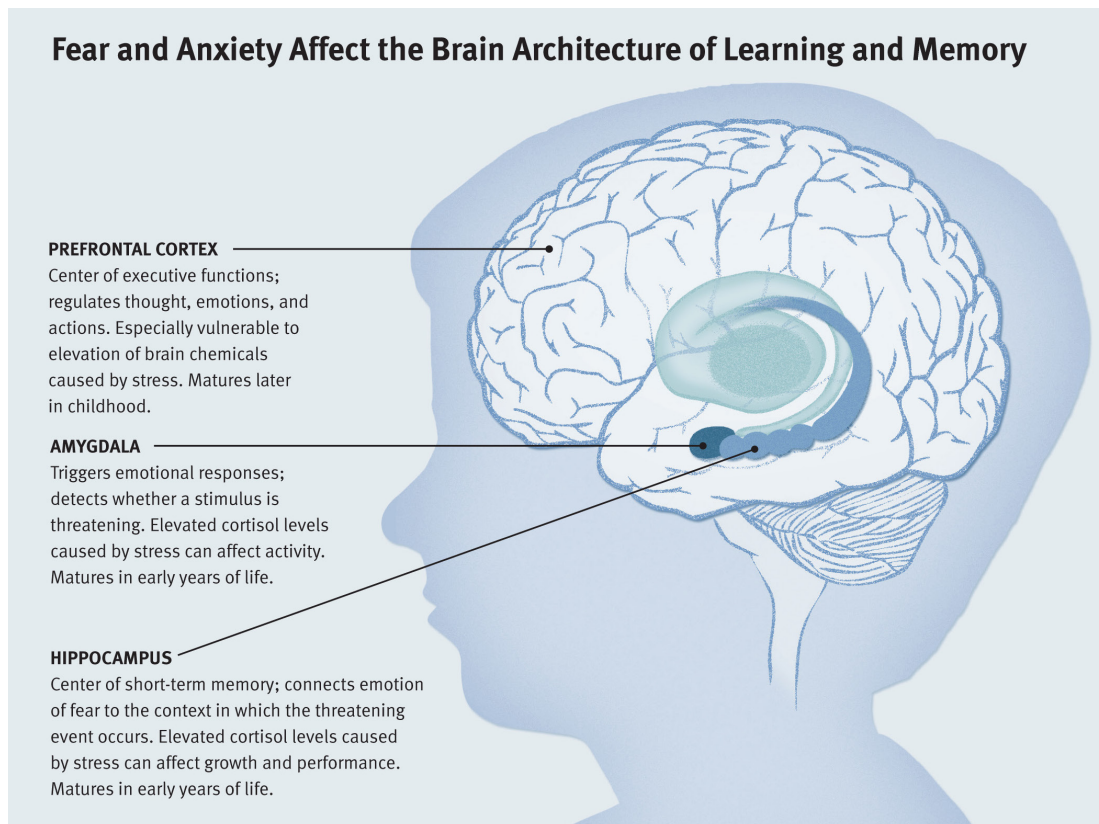
Trauma and brain development

Strong, frequent, and/or prolonged exposure to traumatic events during childhood can result in changes to the brain, an impaired immune system and delays in development. Early experiences are built into children's brains and bodies and positively or negatively affect lifelong learning, behaviour and health outcomes.

Brain research shows that experiencing nurturing, responsive and stable relationships is essential for healthy brain development. By providing these supportive relationships, family members, caregivers, school staff, coaches and other significant adults in students' lives play an important role in building a strong foundation for learning, memory, behaviour, health and the ability to form healthy relationships. These caring relationships will help buffer children against the negative effects of adverse experiences (like a natural disaster).

Recent progress in neuroscience highlights the importance of welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that nurture well-being and a positive sense of self and belonging. Supportive learning environments can help reduce the effects of toxic stress. Healthy interactions and experiences shape the developing brain in positive ways; negative experiences interrupt brain development.

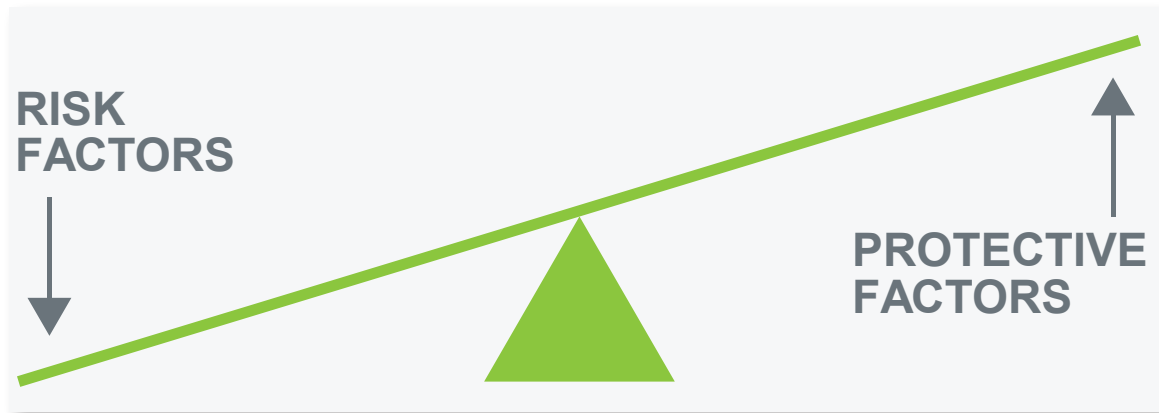
For further information on how the architecture of the brain is foundational for learning and mental health, see the video [How Brains are Built](#).



Illustrated by Betsy Hayes. Reprinted with permission by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. <http://developingchild.harvard.edu>

Protecting students from long-term effects of trauma

Families, schools and communities can work together to minimize long-term health issues related to the trauma experience by increasing the number of protective factors in a student's life while decreasing risk factors. School communities have the capacity to be powerful models for proactively building resiliency and promoting recovery following a disaster.



Protective factors are conditions or attributes that promote well-being and reduce risk for negative outcomes (or insulate individuals from harm). These factors strengthen students' mental health and buffer the effect of risk or adverse factors. Protective factors are enhanced when students have opportunities to develop social-emotional skills and healthy relationships. The more protective factors in a student's life, the more likely they are to have positive mental health.

Protective factors that promote students-mental health include:

- experiencing success in school;
- having support from a wide circle of family, friends, peers and school staff; and
- learning to understand, express and manage their emotions and behaviour.

Risk or adverse factors are attributes, characteristics or experiences that increase the likelihood of illness, injury and/or social difficulties.

Risk factors for students' mental health may include:

- events that challenge their social-emotional well-being, such as unsupportive or negative social interactions;
- isolation;
- learning delays;
- bullying;
- unresolved loss and grief;
- maltreatment (including exposure to substance, physical, psychological or sexual abuse);
- poverty;
- abandonment;
- malnutrition; and
- transiency.

Generally speaking, the more risk factors in a student's life, the higher the chances of them experiencing mental health difficulties. Protective factors lessen the effect or impact of risk or adverse factors. Positive mental health is strongly correlated with resiliency. Resiliency refers to the capacity of individuals to cope successfully with stress-related situations, overcome adversity and adapt positively to change. Resiliency is often compared to a rubber band with the capacity to stretch almost to its breaking point, but still be able to spring back into shape.

"The skills we are teaching our students about self-regulation and building resiliency will carry them throughout their lifetime."

~Project Strong team
member, Fort McMurray and
Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Just as students come to school with varying skills in reading, they also have differing levels of resiliency. Supporting resiliency means helping students develop the skills and attitudes that will help buffer against negative life experiences.

Supporting resiliency can also mean assisting students and families with accessing specific mental health supports to help buffer against conditions and factors that interfere with or compromise mental health.

Research suggests that resilient individuals:

- feel appreciated and valued for their individual strengths and contributions;
- understand how to set realistic expectations for themselves and others;
- have effective problem-solving skills;
- use productive coping strategies when they encounter challenges;
- seek help from others when they need support; and
- experience positive support and interactions with peers and adults.

Resilient individuals have protective factors that help them handle difficult situations without becoming overwhelmed. These protective factors (and the related risk factors) are described in the following chart.

Protective and Risk Factors that Affect Mental Health⁶

	Protective Factors are conditions or attributes that protect mental health	Risk Factors (or adverse factors) that may threaten mental health
Individual Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive sense of self, confidence • Ability to solve problems and manage stress or adversity • Communication skills • Physical health and fitness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative sense of self • Emotional immaturity and limited ability to manage stress and solve problems • Difficulties communicating • Chronic health condition or frequent illness • Substance abuse
Social Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social support of family and friends • Healthy family interactions • Physical and economic security • Academic achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loneliness, bereavement • Neglect, family conflict • Exposure to violence or abuse • Low income and/or poverty
Environmental Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality of access to basic services • Social justice and tolerance • Social and gender equality • Physical security and safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited access to basic services • Injustice and discrimination • Social and gender inequality • Exposure to war or disaster

6. Adapted from http://www.who.int-mental_health/mhgap/risks_to_mental_health_EN_27_08_12.pdf

School as the Heart of Recovery

For many students who have experienced a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, school can be the place where they feel safest. Schools can become hubs of healing where routines are familiar and predictable, and where students have ongoing access to supportive peers and caring adults. Positive relationships and successful experiences in school can help buffer the impact of a natural disaster or other adverse events students might experience.

Following a natural disaster, schools need to focus on keeping students in school, having them experience it as a welcoming and safe place, and encouraging them to engage in day-to-day learning activities as fully as possible.

As schools plan for the re-entry of students after a natural disaster, a key priority is creating learning environments where every student feels safe and supported. Using the lens of trauma to inform decisions about practices and activities can ensure that the emotional safety of students who have experienced trauma is not inadvertently threatened.

The goal of this approach, known as trauma-informed practice, is to provide embedded supports across the school environment and throughout the school day. This approach is based on research and capacity-building activities of the [Trauma and Policy Initiative](#), a collaboration of the Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School.

“During the rebuilding, rather than dispersing students across the city, we kept school communities together. So even though students might be attending school in a different neighbourhood, they remained with their peers and teachers. Their familiar school community remained intact and provided a needed sense of safety and belonging.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Trauma-informed practice

Trauma-informed practice offers an intentional and evidence-informed approach to creating supportive learning environments where all students can learn to:

- regulate their feelings and behaviour;
- develop healthy relationships with adults and peers; and
- be successful learners.

This approach is not only effective for schools recovering from a natural disaster, it offers a set of sound principles and practices that any school can use to create more supportive learning environments and a more resilient school community.

“Trauma-informed practice gave us a framework for talking about our experience, structuring school routines, and building stronger relationships with our students and their families...We are discovering that trauma-informed practice is just good teaching practice.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Trauma-informed practice is based on brain science and considers how the body responds to stress. It shifts the focus from “What is wrong with this student?” to “What has happened to this student?” This shift in thinking builds empathy and encourages educators to choose strategies that will help students learn positive ways of handling emotions and relating to others. Trauma-informed practice enhances social connectedness, school bonding and a sense of belonging—all conditions that are vital to positive mental health and school success.

To enable a school-wide trauma-informed approach, school staff need professional learning opportunities that build a shared understanding of the impacts of stress and trauma on students’ mental health, well-being and learning. This shared understanding will help ensure that all school staff have the knowledge and understanding needed to respond effectively to students, and that students will feel safe and cared for across the school setting.

Developing a shared language around trauma will help staff communicate with one another and community partners, as they identify and implement effective strategies that will help students regulate emotions, behaviours and attention.

To be most effective, trauma-informed practice needs to be implemented as a whole-school approach that is embraced by all school staff and championed by school leaders. A whole-school approach reinforces that recovery, mental health and well-being are basic needs and the responsibility of all members of the school community.

Trauma-informed practice means that all adults in the school:

- share an understanding of how adverse experiences, such as natural disasters, impact students' learning and development;
- help all students to feel physically, socially and emotionally safe;
- connect students with others and help them build positive relationships with peers and adults;
- embrace teamwork with a sense of shared responsibility for every student;
- develop an understanding of how trauma affects the adults who are supporting students and families, and who may also have experienced the traumatic event themselves;
- actively support one another throughout the journey of recovery; and
- commit to self-care practices and strategies that build personal resilience and contribute to positive mental health and well-being.

A trauma-informed approach anticipates and adapts to the ever-changing needs of students, school staff and the community. It also involves a systematic collection and analysis of information to ensure strategies and supports are making a positive difference in the learning environment.

Trauma-informed practice is a long-term commitment. It happens over a sustained period of time such as a full school year or longer, until the related principles and strategies are naturally and seamlessly embedded in the culture and practices of the school.

"We know we need to be cognizant of potential risks in the school environment, predict how students will react, and then plan for how we can mitigate these risks and support our students and staff at every point of this recovery journey."

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

This whole-school approach builds on the existing strengths and capacities of the school community. It creates opportunities for professional development that enhances staff capacity to understand, respond to and support students' individual needs related to trauma, social-emotional development and resilience. Implementing a trauma-informed practice means connecting to credible information, reliable experts and appropriate resources in the school, community and beyond.

"We built strong relationships with non-profit groups and social agencies in the community, and these partnerships sustained us over the year. We all worked hard to ensure there were no barriers between systems."

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

A trauma-informed approach ensures multiple evidence-informed practices and strategies are in place across the school day to support social-emotional learning, academic success and students' mental health and well-being.

A trauma-informed practice also:

- engages community partners and families;
- connects families who are vulnerable with needed supports and services; and
- considers the needs and resources of school staff.

To learn more about using a trauma-informed approach to create supportive school environments, see the [Alberta Education resource page](#) that includes a short [video](#), a video [conversation guide](#), and [links for further information and research](#).

PolicyWise for Children & Families, in collaboration with Alberta Education, also developed a series of [presentations and conversation guides](#) on trauma-informed practice in schools.

Sample school-based strategies to support recovery

An important aspect of the recovery process is that school staff work together to pool their professional knowledge and experience to develop a common set of strategies that all adults in the school community can use to support students during the rebuilding year (and beyond).

“Much of recovery is about regaining control. Giving each school team as much flexibility as possible to plan how they will support students is an important step in the recovery process.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

The sample strategies that follow are adapted from a number of evidence-informed [whole-school approaches](#) for creating safe and supportive learning environments, including:

- [trauma-informed practice](#);
- [restorative practice](#);
- [comprehensive school health](#);
- [differentiated instruction](#);
- [universal design for learning](#); and
- [positive behaviour supports](#).

These school-based strategies for recovery focus on:

- building positive relationships;
- creating a sense of safety and calm;
- helping students build new skills; and
- supporting families.

The strategies promote resilience and a sense of safety, calming, hope, self-efficacy and connections with others. These are all elements identified as essential in psychosocial recovery research.⁷



7. Hobfoll, S., et al. 2007. Five essential elements of immediate and mid-term mass trauma intervention. Empirical evidence. Psychiatry, 70(4), 283-313. Retrieved from: http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/Article_FiveEssentialElementsofImmediate.pdf

BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Create regular and predictable opportunities to interact with students – A student interacts with his or her teacher for close to 30 hours each week. Maintaining regular routines and expectations and creating multiple opportunities to interact with students in positive and personal ways will provide a sense of predictability and familiarity and contribute to students' sense of safety and belonging. Building on and maintaining safe and caring relationships between students and school staff is foundational to recovery.

Provide unconditional positive regard – As consistently caring adults, school staff have the opportunity to help students rebuild trust and form positive relationships by providing unconditional positive regard. For example, if a student says, "I hate you. You just want everything done now," a teacher can respond with unconditional positive regard by saying, "It sounds like you may be feeling overwhelmed. I care about you and I want to support you in getting your work done. Is there anything I can do to help you right now?"

Facilitate relationships between students and with other adults – Social support networks can be disrupted following a natural disaster. Rebuilding connections with others and making new ones is important to healing, particularly for those students with a history of loss. Teachers and other school staff can act as relationship coaches by helping students develop social skills and looking for opportunities to support positive relationships between students and between students and adults in the school.

Use co-operative learning strategies as part of classroom instruction – Co-operative tasks and activities can be opportunities to model, explicitly teach and practice key social skills such as sharing ideas, problem solving or supporting others. Co-operative learning can be a powerful strategy for building and strengthening relationships.

Respect individual responses – Recognize that each student will be responding to their experience in individual and unique ways depending on their experience, family circumstance and support, and temperament and personality. Make time to listen with interest and empathy to individual students' stories and concerns.

Build on students' individual interests and competencies – Take time to get to know your students as individual learners. Work with students to help them identify their own interests and strengths. Use this knowledge to increase engagement in learning by creating tasks and activities that build on these strengths and interests.

Check in with students – Adults should never underestimate the difference they can make by simply asking "What's going on?" when students are struggling with behavioural expectations. This simple question can open up a dialogue and provide adults with valuable information they can use to better understand students' worldviews so they can provide the most appropriate support and advice.

Pay attention to nonverbal communication – Students who have experienced trauma often pay more attention to non-verbal cues than verbal communication. School staff need to use multiple ways to communicate with students, and ensure body language and non-verbal cues match verbal messages.

Check assumptions, observe and question – Trauma can manifest in many different ways. Realize when you are making assumptions and, instead, make time to have in-depth conversations with students. Use these conversations to observe students' behaviour and explore questions together.

Be a role model – Don't reflect back students' anger or confusion. Model a positive attitude, work to de-escalate potentially volatile situations, and actively engage in problem-solving behaviour.

Create opportunities for mentoring relationships – One effective way to connect students to emotional and social support is through [mentoring relationships](#). Whether that be through peer support or with adult volunteers or school staff, connecting a student to a caring individual who provides support and friendship over a sustained period of time will help build that student's sense of belonging and community.

Help students build a support system – One of the most distressing outcomes following a natural disaster is the loss of community and the disruption of relationships. As part of recovery, it is important for students to build a strong support system. Students will benefit from having multiple sources of support at school, as well as at home and in the community. Teachers can help students identify who they can talk to about the difficult situations and problems they may be experiencing. Being able to identify natural supports and informal mentors can be an empowering life skill for students.

CREATE A SENSE OF SAFETY AND CALM

Be prepared for change throughout the school year – Plan for fluctuating class sizes throughout the school year. Because of home rebuilding and work situations, there may be an ebb and flow of students in classrooms. Teachers need to be prepared to welcome new or returning students (and help other students transition to different schools or locations) at any point throughout the school year. Consider having extra seating and school supplies in each classroom so teachers can welcome a new student with minimal notice. Design learning experiences with multiple entry points so students joining or leaving the classroom throughout the school year can participate and benefit from learning activities and assignments as much as possible.

"Early in the fall, we realized a number of our high school students were concerned that with all the resettling, they would not be prepared for upcoming provincial exams. We created a Learning Bridge program where teachers were available from 5 to 7 p.m. to offer re-teaching and one-to-one tutorials to interested Grade 11 and 12 students. We had packed sessions and the students really appreciated the extra support. In the new year, we extended the program to all grade levels and offered a variety of sessions, including Saturday morning learning sessions for younger students and their families."

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Maintain and strengthen regular classroom and school routines and expectations – A return to normalcy will communicate the message that students are safe and life will go on. Implementing strategies to create consistency and routine will contribute to a feeling of safety in the classroom.

Help students manage and maintain attention and focus – Consider strategies such as:

- breaking longer assignments into more manageable chunks;
- allowing additional time to complete assignments or tasks; and
- providing short breaks within the work period for students to decompress and/or refocus.

Provide additional support for organizing and remembering assignments and expectations. Consider strategies such as:

- posting visual schedules on the classroom wall;
- designing cue cards for often-used strategies and processes;
- providing exemplars of completed assignments or projects;
- providing written directions or rubrics to support longer or more complex learning tasks; and
- reinforcing instruction, directions and expectations multiple times, in multiple ways.

Reassure students about common responses to a natural disaster – Let students know that what they are feeling about the event is a normal reaction and that negative feelings will fade over time. This also creates a context for sharing strategies for managing these challenging feelings and emotions.

Create supported opportunities for students to reflect on their experiences related to the disaster event – Use [structured learning activities](#), focused conversations and creative expression (e.g., journaling, painting, drawing, clay, music, rhythmic activities) as ways for students to tell their stories, explore their feelings, make meaning of the changes they have experienced and express their hopes.

“We encouraged teachers to use the lesson plans on emergency recovery from Australian Red Cross as a starting point for talking with students about their experience. These materials offer solid advice for helping students reflect on their experience and identify what they did and can do to be safe.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Be sensitive to cues in the environment that may cause a reaction – During the recovery year, school staff need to predict what circumstances might cause students stress and plan for how to prepare and support them to cope with these circumstances. For example, after a wildfire it will be necessary to consider how students will react to fire drills and other fire-related experiences such as fireworks. As much as possible, warn students before something out of the ordinary is to happen. Even turning off the lights or making a sudden loud noise could cause some students to startle.

“During the year of rebuilding we committed to making school a ‘No surprise’ zone for our students. This meant that staff worked to create predictable routines, and took the time to prepare students for any upcoming potentially upsetting events, such as fire drills or leaf-burning season.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Teach students how to predict and prepare for potentially stressful events – Plan for these upcoming events with extra communication and by teaching predict and prepare strategies to students, as outlined below. Communicate with families before and after the event so that parents can talk with their children about their feelings and experiences and reinforce their child’s ability to handle the event competently.

Sample Predict and Prepare Strategy

Predict – When you imagine yourself in a potential stressful situation:

- What do you think might happen?
- How do you think you might handle this?
- What do you think might happen because of how you react in this situation?

Prepare – Now ask yourself:

- What can I do when the situation occurs?
- What positive coping strategies do I already use to deal with this kind of situation?
- What do I still need to learn?
- How can I best prepare myself?

Develop strategies for guided classroom discussions – Teachers and counsellors can collaborate to develop sample scenarios for facilitating classroom discussions about potentially stressful topics, such as upcoming anniversary dates or natural occurrences that could trigger memories of the disaster event (e.g., wildfire season, fireworks).

To guide these discussions consider the following sample steps:

- set the context and goals (e.g., “We will prepare together so everyone will feel confident and safe at school that day”);
- gather and share facts (e.g., if smoke from regional forest fires is in the air, teachers might guide students to collect factual information about how many kilometres away the fire is, how it is being managed and what related safety precautions are in place in their hometown);
- explore feelings (e.g., provide questions for reflection such as “How are you feeling about this? What are you most worried about?”);
- check for comprehension (e.g., encourage students to share responses to questions such as “What have you learned about yourself through the first year after the wildfire? What works to keep you calm and feeling safe? How can your friends, family, classmates and teachers support you?”);
- identify actions (e.g., ask students to commit to action: “What steps will you take to prepare yourself and feel safe and calm on that date?”); and
- wrap-up (e.g., discuss routine for that day and what will be the same and what might be different. Reinforce that students have the knowledge, skills and strategies to successfully cope with these kinds of new or emerging events and challenges).

Re-affirm that school is a safe place – Part of creating a sense of safety may involve disproving beliefs students may have about safety and the trustworthiness of adults. For example, if a student’s challenging behaviour is saying the world is a dangerous and unpredictable place, a teacher can take a ‘disconfirming stance’ to disprove that perception in a number of ways, such as developing predictable classroom routines, posting written reminders of what is happening over the school day and across the school year, and taking opportunities to informally interact with individual students in positive and personal ways.

Anticipate potentially difficult times such as anniversary dates and provide additional support – Students may increase problem behaviour near an anniversary of the event. As a school community, collaborate to plan positive rituals that acknowledge the event, as well as the recovery efforts. The focus should be on a gentle day of remembering, rather than a day of celebration. People will be at different points in their recovery journey and it may not be a joyful day for everyone.

“There were certain cautions we considered when planning for the first anniversary date. We reminded schools that the gym might be a trigger for some students and staff, due to evacuation. Also, repeating activities from the evacuation could potentially increase anxiety for some individuals. We also encouraged principals to identify staff who might be struggling on this date and pair them with a support buddy. And if staff called in sick unexpectedly principals needed to ensure these individuals were not at home alone and they had access to any support they needed.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Emphasize the positive – Students who have experienced trauma tend to expect the worst and focus on the negative. While it is important to acknowledge students' feelings, teach students to find more positive alternatives to their way of viewing and experiencing the event. This will help them shift their perspective to be more empowered to act. Set small goals and celebrate daily successes. Help students see that good things are happening now, and that their efforts will likely lead to positive outcomes.

Give students choices – Often, traumatic events such as natural disasters involve loss of control and/or chaos. Teachers can help students feel safe by providing them with some choices or control over their learning and activities.

Make time for fun during the school day – Play is very healing to the brain and emotions so look for opportunities for students to laugh and enjoy one another's company. Support and facilitate participation in extracurricular activities to build students' positive experiences and sense of mastery.

"Throughout the year, our teachers used Daily Physical Activity in creative ways. Students danced, played games and learned to calm their bodies and minds through fun activities throughout the school day."

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Choose read-aloud stories, novel studies and other text thoughtfully – Consider what kinds of topics and issues will be inspiring and engaging for students and help them build resiliency, empathy and problem-solving skills.

Create authentic opportunities for students to contribute and be of service to others – Supported opportunities for service learning, volunteerism and mentoring can help students focus on their strengths and regain their sense of mastery. Students can also provide invaluable support to one another through these kinds of activities.

Doing for others and connecting with others is an important part of the healing process."

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Use a trauma-lens to inform discipline policies and practices – Balance accountability with an understanding of how trauma affects behaviour. School discipline practices need to consider the underlying factors prompting student misbehaviour. Teachers and school leaders need to consider all problem behaviour within the context of stress and trauma, to better understand how what the student is feeling and experiencing may be affecting their behaviour.

Seek to empower, not disempower students – Adults can avoid power struggles with students by offering choices for participation and encouraging their sense of agency and control over their lives. Students who have experienced trauma often seek to control their environment to protect themselves, and their behaviour may deteriorate when they feel helpless. Discipline should be done in a way that is respectful, consistent and non-punitive.

While it is important to communicate high expectations for all students, it is equally important, especially during times of recovery, to respond with flexibility and support when students struggle to fully meet these expectations.

Some situations require logical and fair consequences, but these consequences should be restorative rather than punitive. Throughout any discipline process, students should have access to a supportive adult and a comforting and safe environment. This means limiting out of school suspensions or other consequences that isolate students and do not provide them with the emotional and instructional supports needed to develop self-management or problem-solving skills.

Involve students in emergency preparedness planning – Students often feel a loss of control following a natural disaster. It can be empowering for them to learn more about various aspects of natural disasters such as strategies for prevention, and specific school and community protocols for preparing for and responding to natural disaster events and other emergencies.

TEACH NEW SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

Teach problem-solving skills – During the recovery, it is important to explicitly teach problem-solving skills. Students will benefit from learning specific problem-solving strategies and working through scenarios that apply these strategies to different contexts. Skills will be enhanced when there are opportunities for reflective questioning for evaluating effectiveness of solutions and identifying lessons learned.

Help students develop a repertoire of personal strategies for regulating their physical and emotional responses to stress or conflict – Teach and encourage the use of [mindfulness](#) and personal self-management strategies, such as [positive self-talk](#) and [one-minute vacations](#). Students can create visual reminders of effective strategies for their own use or to display around the school and share with families.

“Mindfulness was an important tool for our teachers and students. Children learned strategies to calm their bodies, and these became tools that they could use not only in the classroom, but also on the playground and at home with their families.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Consider the use of evidence-informed resources that support a whole-school approach and build a shared language and a common set of strategies. As part of their recovery effort, Project Strong explored the use of two such resources: *The Zones of Regulation: A Framework to Foster Self-Regulation and Emotional Control* and HeartMath.

[Zones of Regulation](#) is a cognitive behaviour approach for teaching self-regulation that uses colours to categorize the different ways we feel and the states of alertness we experience. This approach also teaches strategies for managing emotions and impulses and resolving conflict. Alberta Health Services also offers [HeartMath](#), a stress management system based on simple strategies and technologies that teach individuals to use breathing, positive emotions and self monitoring to synchronize their heartbeat and reduce stress reactions.

There are a number of other evidence-informed resources schools might wish to explore, including the [Shanker Self-Reg Took Kit for Educators](#), available at no-cost on The Mehrit Centre website. This is an evolving collection of tools and information to help schools and teachers incorporate the teaching of self-regulation skills into day-to-day classroom instruction.

Create a quiet spot in the classroom – Set up a quiet and comfortable corner or table where individual students can retreat when they feel overwhelmed or just need a simple time-away from the group.



“As a result of using mindfulness techniques for a year, one of the high schools is setting up a designated quiet space in the building, where students can do a mindfulness activity or just take a few moments out to breathe.”

~Project Strong team member,
Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo
Region, 2017

Mindfulness and resilience

Self-awareness is an essential part of recovery. That's why mindfulness—the natural human capacity for looking inward—has many benefits. These include a positive effect on physical health, including improvements in the body's immune response, lower blood pressure and decreased levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

As a result of the work of medical professor, Jon Kabat-Zinn, and other researchers, mindfulness is gaining widespread acceptance, including within schools, businesses, government and clinical psychology. Today there is a wide array of practical mindfulness resources for educators, including online sites and apps.

Mindfulness is an evidence-informed practice that supports the well-being of students and educators by sharing simple practices and developing an attitude of inquiry around how the mind works. Mindfulness techniques help students cope with difficult emotions without becoming overwhelmed or shutting down. The practice of being present helps individuals remember that they always have choice in how to respond to events and feelings. Mindfulness can be particularly helpful in dealing with the effects of trauma and can be part of a cognitive behavioural approach.

These practices may be helpful not only for students who have been exposed to trauma, but for those dealing with the constant distractions of a multitasking, multimedia culture, or those who simply want to increase their ability to focus or decrease their feelings of anxiety.

Guidelines for implementing mindfulness practices in the classroom

- Mindfulness is most effective when it is part of a whole-school approach to recovery and is implemented in an intentional and systematic way.
- Teachers need to be familiar with the basic theory behind mindfulness and have some experience with basic techniques before introducing it to their students.
- Mindfulness is a skill that improves with practice and provides benefits over time. Students need regular opportunities for practice over a sustained period of time. Build time for mindfulness activities into the daily schedule and look for informal opportunities to use or reflect on mindfulness practices.
- Teach students the science behind mindfulness. For example, what are the relationships between the body, mind, emotions and actions?
- Use mindfulness as a context for talking about self-regulation, resilience and positive mental health.
- Look for meaningful ways for students to track their experience. Some students may want to talk about their experience, keep logs, charts or write in a journal.

OFFER SUPPORT TO FAMILIES

Make school a welcoming place for parents – The support provided by informal community relationships can be invaluable. Providing opportunities for families to connect with one another at the school can create natural supports based on reciprocal (give and take) relationships. Natural supports can be a major source of emotional support for individuals and families. Having access to natural supports also builds a sense of social belonging and reduces reliance on more formal services.

“The school community was always important to our families, as many don’t have extended family nearby. But now the school plays an even bigger role in the lives of families; it has become a safe and welcoming meeting place where parents can come, have a cup of coffee, relax and talk with one another.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Schools can also collaborate with local community services and social agencies to ensure key information and resources are available for families at the school. Having ready access to information about common concerns families have (such as basic needs, housing, safety and parenting information) provides a valuable support for parents, staff and other community members.

Be sensitive to the fact that students’ families may also be dealing with trauma – When working with families, recognize that past experiences may influence how they interact with school staff. Build trusting relationships and make the school a safe place for families. Consider that many families will be re-establishing their home life, so be thoughtful about assigning homework and making requests of parents.

“After-school programming was a key component of this rebuilding year. Schools were hopping after school with lots of fun, mostly free recreational activities from robotics to yoga. Community agencies organized and staffed these programs. This created much-needed breathing time for parents to attend to the many tasks of recovery, knowing their children were safe and having fun.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Respect families' privacy and confidentiality – You can demonstrate compassion for others without having to know the details or specifics of their personal circumstances.

“Families living out of the city may not have lost their homes but their lives were impacted by the fire in other ways. Many families were hosting extended family who had lost their homes; other families were struggling with loss of income related to the evacuation and time away from work.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Share good news with families – Consider creative strategies for sharing events from the classroom, samples of student work and small successes their children are experiencing. Explore the use of digital portfolios, email and other technology to document and communicate the good things happening in school, and keep parents informed and reassured that their children are safe and thriving at school.

Look for ways to promote family wellness – Recognizing that physical wellness is a major component of recovery, create fun and informal school-based opportunities to support healthy eating and physical activity of students and their families.

“As part of our focus on healthy eating, Elders came in to cook with families and children in an after-school program. Participants are using what they learned to create a community cookbook.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Offer information sessions for families – Schools can play a proactive role in recovery by providing information and resources, both formally and informally, to families. A variety of communication tools can be used, including bulletin board displays, school newsletters and websites, videos and printed material. There are a variety of resources, such as [Skills for Psychological Recovery](#), that can offer starting points for hosting informal facilitated conversations with families.

“Parents were eager to learn new skills to support their children. They showed up in -30° weather for sessions on mindfulness, building resiliency and how to have difficult conversations with their children.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

Connect families with community resources and supports – Many students and their families who experience post-disaster mental health difficulties may not have accessed mental health supports in the past, and may be reluctant to seek out formal mental health care. Schools play an important role in sharing information and supporting a clear pathway to service so that students and their families get the right supports at the right time.

“With the help of recovery funding, we are able to have counsellors based in every school. Our counsellors also make themselves available to families; this is especially helpful in rural schools where parents might be reluctant or unable to access services in town.”

~Project Strong team member,
Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo
Region, 2017



Designing a Continuum of Supports

Many Alberta schools use a pyramid of intervention approach (sometimes referred to as [response to intervention](#)) to address student learning and social-emotional needs. A pyramid of intervention approach offers a systematic and flexible way to provide a **continuum of supports and services** that range in type and intensity, depending on the individual needs of students.

Student and school needs shift and change over time and context; therefore, supports and interventions must also be fluid and flexible. It is this ability to be flexible and responsive to changing needs that makes the pyramid of intervention approach an effective one for both schools using it proactively to increase student success, and those schools who are using it as a tool for promoting recovery in response to a specific traumatic event.

“In response to changing community needs, our pyramid of supports is evolving. The additional training our staff and community partners are doing related to the [Attachment, Regulation, Competency Framework](#) is giving us a framework for addressing a range of student needs.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

A pyramid of intervention approach to supporting recovery is strength-based because it builds on the following two key understandings:

- with the right strategies and supports, all students can be successful learners and experience positive mental health and well-being; and
- identifying the most effective supports for students is a collaborative, problem-solving activity.

A typical pyramid of intervention is organized around three levels of supports and interventions:

- universal (also called Tier 1 or primary prevention tier);
- targeted (also called Tier 2 or secondary prevention tier); and
- specialized (also called Tier 3 or tertiary prevention tier or intensive/individualized).

The metaphor of the pyramid also illustrates that to be effective, targeted and specialized levels of support need the solid base of universal supports. Enhancing universal supports will reduce the number of students requiring targeted supports, and enhancing targeted supports will lessen the number of students requiring specialized levels of supports. In addition, intervention typically starts with universal supports before moving to more intensive interventions.

Universal supports for all students

Universal supports are those strategies and supports incorporated into the learning environment for all students during the recovery and rebuilding year(s). This includes frameworks and strategies that contribute to welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments and provide ongoing [social-emotional learning](#), school and community connection, and [positive mental health](#).

Many universal supports that enhance positive mental health and promote recovery can be naturally embedded in day-to-day activities and practices across the learning environment. This includes basic trauma-informed practices, such as showing compassion and support, demonstrating interest in students, and incorporating opportunities for students to learn and practice [social-emotional skills](#) into classroom activities. Universal supports can also enhance physical health by promoting healthy eating and increased physical activity.

All students benefit from universal supports, regardless of risk factors, and these supports are sufficient for 80 to 85 per cent of the student population to experience success.

Targeted supports and interventions for some students

Targeted supports are those strategies and interventions designed for the approximately five to 15 per cent of the student population who require additional supports or interventions to be successful.

Students identified as being at risk for or experiencing mental health problems that affect their functioning at some level (home, school and/or community) may need targeted, short-term interventions focusing on skill-building in areas such as managing emotions, focusing attention, resolving conflict or building problem-solving skills. There may be a need for referral to mental health supports or services, which may be internal or external to the school.

Targeted strategies are proactive in addressing mental health problems that may be typical reactions to life circumstances or events and that are impacting a students' ability to function.

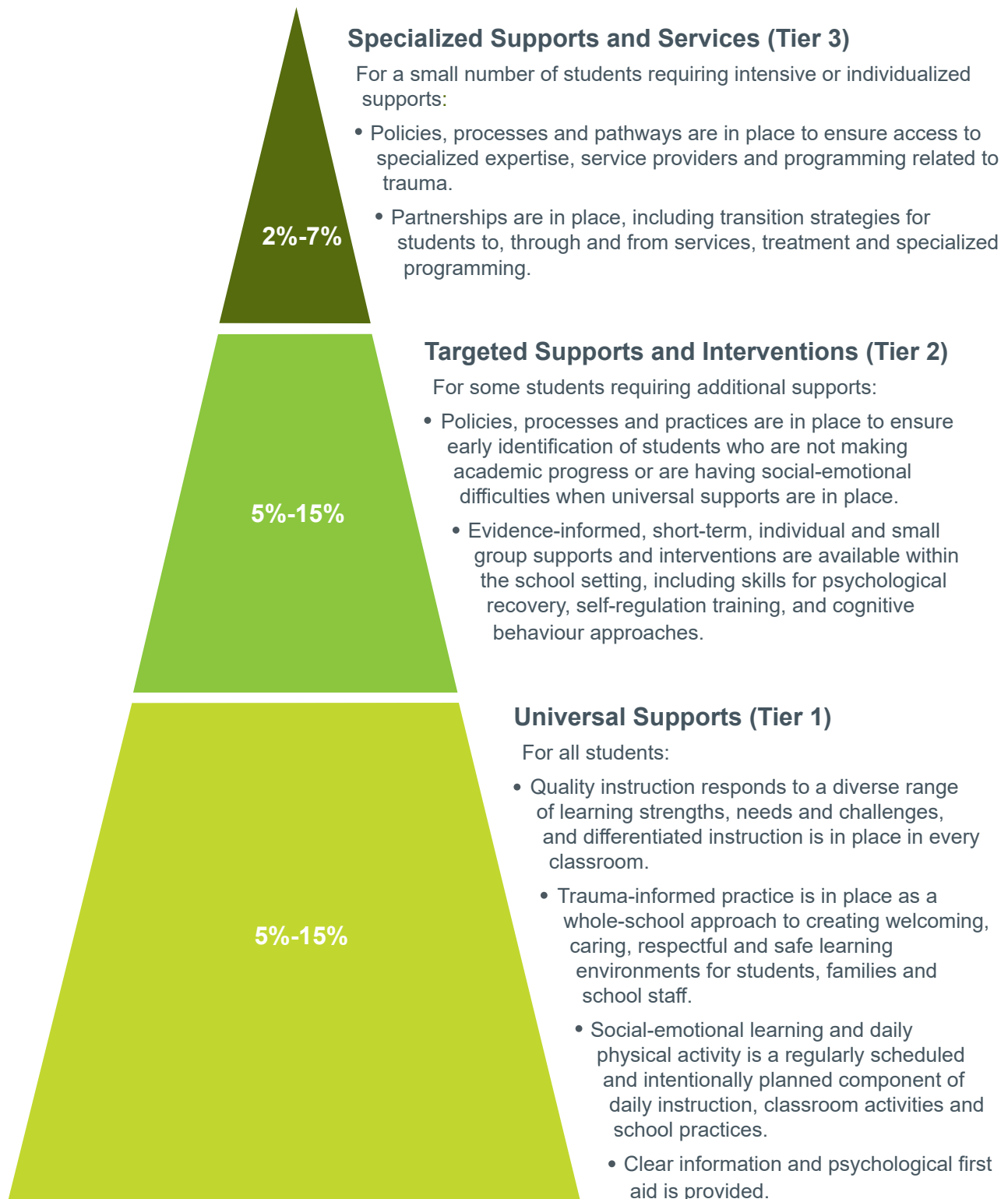
Specialized supports for a small number of students

Specialized supports are supports and interventions for those two to seven per cent of students who require more intensive and individualized supports that focus on their particular mental health needs. This level of support may include access to specialized expertise, service providers, partnerships and/or training.

The complexity and intensity of significant mental health needs can challenge the capacity of school staff and may sometimes require intervention services in a clinical setting. Educators often do the initial referral (as they, along with parents, are often the first to notice changes in a student's performance or behaviour), and a clinical service provider takes on the diagnostic and therapeutic role.

In these instances, the role of school staff is to support students as they move to, through and from community services.

Clear communication and the sharing of appropriate information between schools and community partners is a key component in successful treatment planning. The role of school administrators is to understand and implement board protocols and procedures for information sharing, know the resources available both within the school and in the community, and ensure that collaborations align with school and school authority policies and practices.



Alignment with stepped-care approach

The school-based pyramid of intervention approach also aligns with and complements the [stepped-care approach](#) used by Alberta Health Services. This community-based approach offers three levels of mental health supports following a disaster, including:

- clear information and [Psychological First Aid](#) for many people;
- action-orientated supports such as [Skills for Psychological Recovery](#) for some people; and
- professional mental health treatment for the small number of people experiencing more prolonged and intensive problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

Understanding pathways to services

A pathway to service is a continuum of supports from promotion to prevention, early identification, intervention and specialized services. It provides a seamless link between students in need of mental health supports and care providers and school staff who provide support to students. An integrated pathway to service includes processes for co-ordination and collaboration between schools and their communities (e.g., families, healthcare providers and policy makers). This pathway is especially important when a large number of students and their families have been impacted by a traumatic event such as a natural disaster.

The aim of a school-based pathway to service is to:

- promote positive mental health across environments;
- provide universal supports within the classroom and school settings;
- identify students in need of additional mental health supports;
- facilitate referrals to specialized school staff and/or mental health care providers; and
- support the student's recovery process in the school setting once interventions have been initiated.

The overall goal of a comprehensive pathway to service is to enhance collaboration and optimize the use of resources to ensure all students and their families have timely access to needed mental health supports and services.

To create this pathway to service, families, youth, school staff and service providers need a shared understanding of the route to, through and from mental health services in their community. This includes identifying and understanding the unique but complementary roles of each key partner who serves children and youth; most specifically, families, community mental health agencies, hospitals and other health care organizations, schools and young people themselves.

Understanding roles and responsibilities in pathways to, through and from service enhances partners' abilities to collaborate and ensure students who need mental health supports receive them in timely, sustainable and culturally-appropriate ways.

Self-care for Educators

Educators play a lead role in recovery and addressing the longer-term effects of traumatic events for the students they influence. In order to effectively respond to students and continue with the expectations of their work, educators and other school and school authority staff need to protect their own physical and mental health.

Self-care is a personal matter. Everyone's approach will be different. Individuals need to be intentional about identifying strategies—big and small—that will help them feel grounded, energized and calm.



“In their work with students and families, our teachers and principals are ‘first responders.’ Most of them were directly involved in the evacuation reuniting children with their families. We recognize that there can be high levels of stress and uncertainty associated with this, and we need to ensure that our staff has the support they need to maintain their physical and mental health during the recovery.”

~Project Strong team member,
Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo
Region, 2017

An invitation to well-being

A number of communities in Alberta and around the world are using [Five ways to wellbeing](#) as a framework for promoting positive mental health for adults. The five ways are a set of 'invitations to action', based on solid research.⁸

The actions include:

Connect – With people around you. With family and friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work and in the community. These social connections are the cornerstone that can enrich and support an individual's recovery and well-being.

Be active – Go for a walk or run. Cycle. Play a game, try gardening, dancing or yoga. Discover a physical activity you enjoy.

Take note – Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Keep learning – Try something new. Rekindle an old interest. Learn new things to discover new ways to manage life, have fun and connect with others.

Give – Be there for someone else. Listen. Thank someone. Smile. Look out, as well as in. Share your gifts with others and the world around you.

A framework such as the Five ways to wellbeing creates a shared language that individuals can use to more effectively communicate and demonstrate care and concern for one another. For example, rather than asking a colleague the standard "How are you?", the five actions can be used as prompts for asking more meaningful check-in questions such as:

- Who are you connecting with?
- What are you doing to stay active?
- What are you being curious about?
- What is something new you are trying (or learning about)?
- How are you sharing your gifts with others?

8. Five ways to well-being. Retrieved from http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/8984c5089d5c2285ee_t4m6bhqq5.pdf

Sample strategies for self-care

Like the sample school-based strategies for students included in this resource, the following self-care strategies for educators promote resilience and a sense of safety, calming, hope, self efficacy and connections with others. These are all elements identified as essential in psychosocial recovery research.⁹

LEARN ABOUT THE DYNAMICS OF STRESS AND TRAUMA

Understanding how exposure to a natural disaster can impact an individual's ability to cope is key to developing compassion for one's self and others. Difficult experiences can prolong the body's alarm system so that individuals respond to the world as a place of constant danger. This can affect the ability to regulate emotions, behaviours and attention. It is important that individuals understand their own experience with trauma and identify possible 'triggers' that might be unsettling to them.

"We knew the first anniversary date would be an important marker for acknowledging the first year after the fire and moving forward. We met with each school staff member and encouraged them to take time and prepare themselves for the date and the days preceding it. We suggested they review their personal health plan, and maybe even consider talking with a counsellor. We reinforced that the best strategy for handling the day was to be flexible, anticipate that it may be emotional and know that tears are okay."

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

TAKE A STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH

Individuals need to take the time to identify their own strengths and the strengths of their students and colleagues. This will help give them the confidence that their school community has the resources to focus on solutions and recovery. Part of a strength-based approach involves the philosophy of 'holding people capable,' including yourself.

USE POSITIVE AND HOPEFUL LANGUAGE

Words have power. Your mind hears what you say aloud, and if you continually describe your life as stressful or chaotic, that is how you will perceive it. Your body and mind will reflect this. If you choose more positive words such as eventful or lively, you are more likely to feel less stressed and be more open to enjoying life.

9. Hobfoll, S., et al. 2007. Five essential elements of immediate and mid-term mass trauma intervention. Empirical evidence. *Psychiatry*, 70(4), 283-313. Retrieved from http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/Article_FiveEssentialElementsofImmediate.pdf

When talking about or with students, educators need to intentionally avoid language that is:

- judgmental (e.g., troubled family life, broken home);
- blaming (e.g., he never..., she always...);
- pitying (e.g., victim, suffering); or
- alarming (e.g., catastrophe).

Using negative language reinforces negative feelings and minimizes strengths and positive feelings that exist.

ADJUST EXPECTATIONS

Expect the recovery year to be different from other years. Be prepared for priorities to shift, and new issues to emerge. There are very few things in life that we have complete control over. What we can control is the effort we put in and how we react.

FOCUS ON THE PRESENT

As much as possible, stay in the present and focus on what is happening now, the small things you can do, and what there is to enjoy and appreciate in the immediate environment. Exploring mindfulness techniques and committing to a daily practice can be a powerful way to increase your ability to focus on the present.

EMPHASIZE THE POSITIVE

New research is explaining why negative memories tend to have more sticking power than positive memories. Our brain stores details differently for each type of memory. We tend to remember specific details about unpleasant events and have more general memories of positive events.

To help positive memories override the negative, intentionally savour pleasant memories, use positive self-talk and create evocative reminders, such as photos or mementos, to reinforce positive thoughts and feelings.

Notice when things are working. Share what is working with colleagues and school leaders. Celebrate daily success.

BE A SUPPORTIVE LISTENER BUT DO NOT TAKE ON OTHER PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS

Focus on listening, reflecting and being supportive, accepting and encouraging. Set clear and reasonable boundaries and refrain from attempting to rescue, commiserate or give advice to others. Set clear limits on the private information you wish to hear and share with others. When appropriate, help students, families and colleagues connect with other natural supports and community resources.

CULTIVATE GRATITUDE

Intentionally focus on the positives that already exist in your life. Express appreciation to people who do or say positive and helpful things. Reframe difficult or disappointing events as opportunities for growth and learning. Consider a personal gratitude journal for writing down three things you feel grateful for every day. Be aware that gratitude is a personal experience; model happiness and appreciation, but watch the tendency to tell others what they should feel grateful for.

“As a community, we appreciated the big gestures, but it was the thousands and thousands of small kindnesses that were the heart of recovery.”

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

MAKE TIME FOR FUN AND RELAXATION

Play is healing for the brain. Look for simple ways throughout the day to have fun, share laughter or use your creativity.

DEVELOP A PERSONAL SET OF STRATEGIES

As educators work with students to develop new skills for self-regulation through mindfulness and other practices, they can use this as an opportunity to explore which strategies they might adapt for their own personal repertoire. Being able to model when and how to use specific self care strategies can be an effective way to teach students and inspire colleagues.

KNOW WHAT GIVES YOU ENERGY

As part of your commitment to good health, identify habits and activities that will help you maintain the physical energy you need to get through your work and personal commitments.

For example:

- developing a regular sleep routine;
- aiming for a healthy diet;
- making time to eat lunch and take a short mental break;
- having nutritious snacks throughout the day;
- building time in your day for physical activity; and
- seeking out the company of supportive colleagues and friends.

CREATE A NETWORK OF NATURAL SUPPORTS

Guard against isolation. While respecting the confidentiality of students, get support by working in teams, talking to others in your school, and asking for support from school leaders and colleagues.

School staff need safe places to talk in constructive ways about frustrations related to dealing with students' behaviour (that may be a result of trauma). Without an outlet for these emotions, educators may internalize all the hard and frustrating moments, making it harder to respond the next time and contributing to burnout.

Providing opportunities for school staff to connect with one another can create natural supports based on reciprocal (give and take) relationships. Natural supports can be a major source of emotional support for individuals; having access to natural supports also builds a sense of social belonging and reduces the reliance on more formal services.

"Throughout this rebuilding year we found that a lot of healing happened when teachers had an opportunity to get together for food and conversation with one another."

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

STAY TUNED TO HOW YOU ARE DOING

We cannot take care of others unless we first take care of ourselves. Sometimes we do not realize how stressed we are. When we're caught up in intense events and taking care of other people, it's easy to forget how much our own health matters.

You cannot eliminate stress from your life, but you can take care of yourself so that stress is less likely to overwhelm you. Respect your individual response and be prepared for feelings and emotions to ebb and flow. Pace yourself. And always remember: You can begin again. Every day.

"Each one of our students and staff experienced the fire differently. There are 80,000 different stories and they are all valid and evolving. As adults, we are learning that you cannot compare your experience to other people's experience and what's important is to pay attention to your own feelings and your own needs."

~Project Strong team member, Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo Region, 2017

WATCH FOR SIGNS OF COMPASSION FATIGUE

Any educator who works directly with students who have experienced a stressful event is vulnerable to the effects of trauma, referred to as compassion fatigue or secondary traumatic stress—being physically, mentally or emotionally worn out, or feeling overwhelmed.

Educators with compassion fatigue may exhibit some of the following signs:

- increased irritability or impatience with students;
- difficulty planning learning activities;
- decreased concentration;
- intense feelings and intrusive thoughts, that don't lessen over time, about a student's trauma;
- denying that traumatic events impact students; and
- feeling numb or detached.

Compassion fatigue is not a sign of weakness or incompetence; rather, it is the cost of caring and approaching students with an open heart and a listening ear. If you are experiencing compassion fatigue for more than three or four weeks, seek help from a mental health professional who is knowledgeable about trauma.

REMAIN HOPEFUL

The human brain and body are capable of healing in ways we do not yet understand. It may be a long road to recovery, but every positive step along the way makes a difference to you, your students and your community.

KEEP LEARNING

Consider starting a book study or informal learning series with colleagues. For example, Bessel Van Der Kolk's book, *The Body Keeps Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, uses neuroscience to explain the effects of trauma and offers practical and hopeful strategies for recovery and building resiliency.

Websites

Please note: Website references contained within this document are provided solely as a convenience and do not constitute an endorsement by Alberta Education of the content, policies or products of the referenced website. The department does not control the referenced websites and is not responsible for the accuracy, legality or content of the referenced websites or for that of subsequent links. Referenced website content and location may change without notice.

Websites are listed in the order in which they appear in this resource.

Introduction

1. Alberta Health Services. *Psychological First Aid: After a Disaster or Emergency*. Retrieved from <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/mh/hi-amh-prov-mhpi-pfa-after-a-disaster.pdf>
2. Alberta Health Services. *Skills for Psychological Recovery After a Disaster or Emergency*. Retrieved from <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/mh/hi-mh-spr-after-disaster-emergency-public.pdf>
3. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Psychosocial support. Retrieved from <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/health/psychosocial-support/>
4. Hobfoll, S., et al. (2007). *Five Essential Elements of Immediate and Mid-Term Mass Trauma Intervention: Empirical Evidence*. *Psychiatry*, 70(4), 283-313. Retrieved from http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/Article_FiveEssentialElementsofImmediate.pdf
5. Public Health Agency of Canada. Mental Health Promotion. Retrieved from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/mh-sm/mhp-psm/index-eng.php>
6. Alberta Education. *Working Together to Support Mental Health in Alberta Schools*. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/mental-health/information-and-resources/?searchMode=3>
7. Alberta Education. Welcoming, Caring, Respectful & Safe Schools. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/safe-and-caring-schools/safe-and-caring-schools/>
8. Alberta Education. Legislation. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/safe-and-caring-schools/legislation/>
9. Alberta Government. *Valuing Mental Health: Report of the Alberta Mental Health Review 2015*. Retrieved from <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/d8413604-15d1-4f15-a979-54a97db754d4/resource/1a5e7a16-3437-428e-b51f-4ba9201767a4/download/Alberta-Mental-Health-Review-2015.pdf>
10. Government of Canada. First Nations and Inuit Health. About Jordan's Principle. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/first-nations-inuit-health/jordans-principle.html>
11. United Nations. (2008, March). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf
12. MNP. (2015, July). *Review and Analysis of the Government of Alberta's Response to and Recovery from 2013 Floods*. Retrieved from <http://www.aema.alberta.ca/documents/2013-flood-response-report.pdf>

13. KPMG. (2012, November). *Lesser Slave Lake Regional Urban Interface Wildfire – Lessons Learned: Final Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.aema.alberta.ca/documents/0513-Slave-Lake-Summary-and-Recommendations.pdf>; <http://www.aema.alberta.ca/documents/0426-Lessons-Learned-Final-Report.pdf>

What to Expect After A Natural Disaster

1. Alberta Health Services. *Psychological First Aid: After a Disaster or Emergency*. Retrieved from <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/mh/hi-amh-prov-mhip-pfa-after-a-disaster.pdf>
2. Alberta Health Services. *Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR): An Introductory Guide for SPR Providers*. Retrieved from <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/recovery-after-disaster-emergency-resources.aspx>
3. Australian Red Cross. Resources About Disasters: For schools (Early childhood to Years 12). Retrieved from <http://www.redcross.org.au/schools.aspx>
4. Canadian Red Cross. Expect the Unexpected Program. Retrieved from <http://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/emergencies-and-disasters-in-canada/for-teachers-and-educators-of-children/help-students-learn-about-and-prepare-for-disasters/expect-the-unexpected-program>
5. Canadian Red Cross. Emergencies and Disasters in Canada. For Home and Family. For First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities. Retrieved from <http://www.redcross.ca/how-we-help/emergencies-and-disasters-in-canada/for-first-nations--metis-and-inuit-communities>
6. Alberta Health Services. (2011). *Personal and Family Disaster Preparedness Guide*. Retrieved from <http://www.fmpsdschools.ca/documents/general/hi-hw-disaster-preparedness-guide.pdf>
7. Alberta Emergency Management Agency. Build a Kit. Retrieved from <http://www.aema.alberta.ca/72-hour-emergency-kit>

How Stress and Trauma Affects Children and Youth

1. Victorian Government Department of Human Services. (2009, September). *After the bushfires: Victoria's psychosocial recovery framework*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2upwZFY>
2. Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. [Illustrated by Betsy Hayes]. *Fear and Anxiety Affect the Brain Architecture of Learning and Memory*. Retrieved from <http://developingchild.harvard.edu>
3. Alberta Family Wellness Initiative. How Brains Are Built: Core Story of Brain Development [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources/video/how-brains-are-built-core-story-of-brain-development>
4. World Health Organization. (2012, August). *Risks to Mental Health: An Overview of Vulnerabilities and Risk Factors*. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/mental_health/mhgap/risks_to_mental_health_EN_27_08_12.pdf

School as the Heart of Recovery

1. Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative. Helping Traumatized Children Learn. Retrieved from <https://traumasensitiveschools.org/about-tlpi/>
2. Alberta Education. What is Trauma Informed Practice? [Video file and conversation guide]. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/trauma-informed-practice/>
3. Alberta Education. Trauma-Informed Practice: Links to Further Information and Research. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/trauma-informed-practice/what-is-trauma-informed-practice/everyone/links-to-further-information-and-research/>
4. PolicyWise for Children & Families. Trauma Informed Practice [presentation and conversation guides]. Retrieved from <https://policywise.com/initiatives/ses/trauma-informed-practice/>
5. Alberta Education. Safe and Caring Schools. Whole-school Approach. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/safe-and-caring-schools/whole-school-approach/>
6. Alberta Education. Trauma-Informed Practice. What is Trauma Informed Practice? [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/trauma-informed-practice/what-is-trauma-informed-practice/everyone/trauma-informed-practice-video/>
7. Alberta Education. Restorative Practices. What are Restorative Practices? [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/restorative-practices/what-are-restorative-practices/everyone/video/>
8. Alberta Health Services. The Comprehensive School Health Approach. Retrieved from <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/csh.aspx>
9. Alberta Education. *Building A Shared Understanding: Using Differentiated Instruction to Support All Learners*. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/media/464640/video-discussion-guide-3-differentiated-instruction.pdf>
10. Alberta Education. *Building A Shared Understanding: Making Sense of Universal Design for Learning*. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/media/464643/video-discussion-guide-7-positive-behaviour.pdf>
11. Alberta Education. *Building A Shared Understanding: Using Positive Behaviour Approach to Support Learning*. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/inclusive-education/inclusive-education/everyone/librarieslearning-supports/>
12. Hobfoll, S., et al. (2007). *Five Essential Elements of Immediate and Mid-Term Mass Trauma Intervention: Empirical Evidence*. *Psychiatry*, 70(4), 283-313. Retrieved from http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/Article_FiveEssentialElementsofImmediate.pdf
13. Alberta Mentoring Partnership. *Framework for Building Mentoring Relationships in Schools*. Retrieved from <https://albertamentors.ca/mentoring-in-schools/framework-building-mentoring-relationships-schools/download/>
14. Australian Red Cross. How we help. Emergency services in Australia. Resources about disaster. For schools. Retrieved from <http://www.redcross.org.au/schools.aspx>
15. Mindful Schools. Get Help Introducing Mindfulness to Your School. Retrieved from <http://www.mindfulschools.org/resources/explore-mindful-resources/>

16. Alberta Education. Student Tip Sheet. *Positive Self-talk*. Retrieved from <http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/insp/html/student/positiveselftalk.pdf>
17. Alberta Education. Student Tip Sheet. *Take a One Minute Vacation*. Retrieved from <http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/insp/html/student/takeaoneminutevacation.pdf>
18. Kuypers, L. The Zones of Regulation®: A Framework to Foster Self-Regulation and Emotional Control. Retrieved from <http://www.zonesofregulation.com/index.html>
19. The Mehrit Centre. The Shankar Self-Reg® Tool Kit for Educators. Retrieved from <https://self-reg.ca/toolkit/>
20. Alberta Health Services. *Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR): An Introductory Guide for SPR Providers*. Retrieved from <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/mh/hi-mh-spr-after-disaster-emergency-public.pdf>

Designing a Continuum of Supports

1. Alberta Education. Response to Intervention. What is a Response to Intervention Approach? Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/response-to-intervention/what-is-a-response-to-intervention-approach/>
2. Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute. Attachment, Regulation and Competency Framework (ARC). Retrieved from <http://www.traumacenter.org/research/ascot.php>
3. Alberta Education. Social-Emotional Learning. What is Social-Emotional Learning? [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://education.alberta.ca/social-emotional-learning/what-is-social-emotional-learning/everyone/social-emotional-learning-video/>
4. Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health. Positive Mental Health Toolkit. Retrieved from <http://wmaproducts.com/JCSH/>
5. CASEL. SEL in the Classroom. Retrieved from <http://www.casel.org/in-the-classroom/>
6. Alberta Health Services. *Psychological First Aid: After a Disaster or Emergency*. The 'Stepped-Care Approach'. Retrieved from <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/mh/hi-mh-pfa-after-disaster-emergency-public.pdf>
7. Alberta Health Services. *Psychological First Aid: After a Disaster or Emergency*. Retrieved from <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/mh/hi-amh-prov-mhpi-pfa-after-a-disaster.pdf>
8. Alberta Health Services. *Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR): An Introductory Guide for SPR Providers*. Retrieved from <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/mh/hi-mh-spr-intro-pros.pdf>

Self-care for Educators

1. New Economics Foundation. (2008, October 22). *Five Ways to Wellbeing: The Evidence*. Retrieved from http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/8984c5089d5c2285ee_t4m6bhqq5.pdf
2. Hobfoll, S., et al. (2007). *Five Essential Elements of Immediate and Mid-Term Mass Trauma Intervention: Empirical Evidence*. *Psychiatry*, 70(4), 283-313. Retrieved from http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/Article_FiveEssentialElementsofImmediate.pdf

Additional References

1. Alberta Centre for Child, Family & Community Research (2016). *Implementation of Skills for Psychological Recovery in Alberta Post-flood: A Developmental Evaluation Final Report*. Retrieved from <https://policywise.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/2016-05MAY-31-Implementation-of-Skills-for-Psychological-Recovery-in-Alberta-Post-flood-A-Developmental-Evaluation.pdf>
2. Alberta Municipal Affairs. (2016, November). *Home Again: Recovery after the Wood Buffalo Wildfire*. Retrieved from <http://www.alberta.ca/documents/Wildfire-Home-Again-Report.pdf>
3. American Psychological Association. Psychological Science. Research in Action. Responding to the Needs of Children and Families Following Disaster. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/research/action/disaster.aspx>
4. Dash, S. (2009). Post-Disaster Psychosocial Support: A framework from lessons learnt through programmes in South-Asia. *The Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies*, 2009-1. Retrieved from <http://www.massey.ac.nz/~trauma/issues/2009-1/dash.htm>
5. Davidson, J., & Mcfarlane, A. (2006). The extent and impact of mental health problems after disaster [Abstract]. *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 67 Suppl 2:9-14. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/7176739_The_extent_and_impact_of_mental_health_problems_after_disaster
6. Goodman, R.F. (2002). *Caring for Kids After Trauma, Disaster and Death: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND PROFESSIONALS*. Retrieved from www.AboutOurKids.org
7. Hammond, W. (2010). *Principles of Strength-Based Practice*. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2upS670>
8. Hutton, D., (2001). Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction. Paper # 2. *Psychosocial Aspects of Disaster Recovery: Integrating Communities into Disaster Planning and Policy Making*. Retrieved from http://www.icir.org/images/Psychosocial_aspects_of_disaster_recovery.pdf
9. Jaycox, L.H., et al (2010). Children's Mental Health Care following Hurricane Katrina: A Field Trial of Trauma-Focused Psychotherapies [Abstract]. *J Trauma Stress*. 2010 Apr, 23(2), 223-231. doi: 10.1002/jts.20518. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2860874/>
10. Clinic Community Health Centre. (2013). *The Trauma-informed Toolkit*, 2nd Ed. Retrieved from www.trauma-informed.ca
11. Lazarus, P., Jimerson, S., & Brock, S. *Responding to Natural Disasters: Helping Children and Families: Information for School Crisis Teams*. National Association of School Psychologists. Retrieved from <http://www.psychology.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/4-Responding-to-Natural-Disasters-Helping-Children-and-Families-Information-for-School-Crisis-teams1.pdf>
12. Madrid, P., & Grant, R. (2008). Meeting mental health needs following a natural disaster: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, vol. 39, No1, 86-92. Retrieved from [http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?sessionid=3FD96752375E09C-5C5E2E350780DAEBB?doi=10.1.1.461.502\\$rep=rep1&type=pdf](http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?sessionid=3FD96752375E09C-5C5E2E350780DAEBB?doi=10.1.1.461.502$rep=rep1&type=pdf)

13. McDermoth, B.M., & Cobham, V.E. (2014). A stepped-care model of post-disaster child and adolescent mental health service provision [Abstract]. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 5. doi: 10.3402/ejpt.v5.24294. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4095762/>
14. McGee, T.K., (2011). Public engagement in neighbourhood level wildfire mitigation and preparedness: Case studies from Canada, the US and Australia. *Journal of Environmental management* 92. 2524-2532. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301479711001721>
15. McLnerney, M. and McKlindon A. *Unlocking the Door to Learning: Trauma-Informed Classrooms & Transformational Schools*. Education Law Centre. Retrieved from <http://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Trauma-Informed-in-Schools-Classrooms-FINAL-December2014-2.pdf>
16. Ministry of Education, New Zealand. (2016, December). *Planning and preparing for emergencies and traumatic incidents: PRACTICAL INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS, DECEMBER 2016*. Retrieved from <https://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/School/Supporting-students/Emergencies-and-traumatic-incidents/Emergency-Planning-Guidance.pdf>
17. Nastasi, B.K., et al. (2011). Facilitating long-term recovery from natural disasters: Psychosocial programming for tsunami-affected schools of Sri Lanka [Abstract]. *School Psychology International*, 32, issue 5. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0143034311402923>
18. Reifels, L., (et al). (2013). Lessons learned about psychosocial responses to disaster and mass trauma: an international perspective. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 4. doi: 10.3402/ejpt.v4i0.22897. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3873118/>
19. Rowe, F., Stewart, D., & Patterson, C. (2007). Promoting school connectedness through whole school approaches. *Health Education*, 107(6), 524-542. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09654280710827920>. Retrieved from: <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1108/09654280710827920>
20. Tedeschi, R.G. and Calhoun, L.G. (2004). Posttraumatic growth: Conceptual Foundations and Empirical Evidence. *Psychological Inquiry*, 15(1), 1-18. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli1501_01. Retrieved from: <https://ptgi.uncc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2013/01/PTG-Conceptual-Foundtns.pdf>
21. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN). (2008, October). *Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators*. Retrieved from http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/Child_Trauma_Toolkit_Final.pdf
22. Van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*.
23. Wolpow, R., Johnson, M., Hertel, R., and Kincaid, S. (2016, May). *The Heart of Learning: Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success*. Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Compassionate Schools. Retrieved from <http://www.k12.wa.us/compassionateschools/pubdocs/TheHeartofLearningandTeaching.pdf>

