



Alberta Regional Consortia

Creating Pathways of Hope Planning Tool: Suicide Prevention and Life Promotion

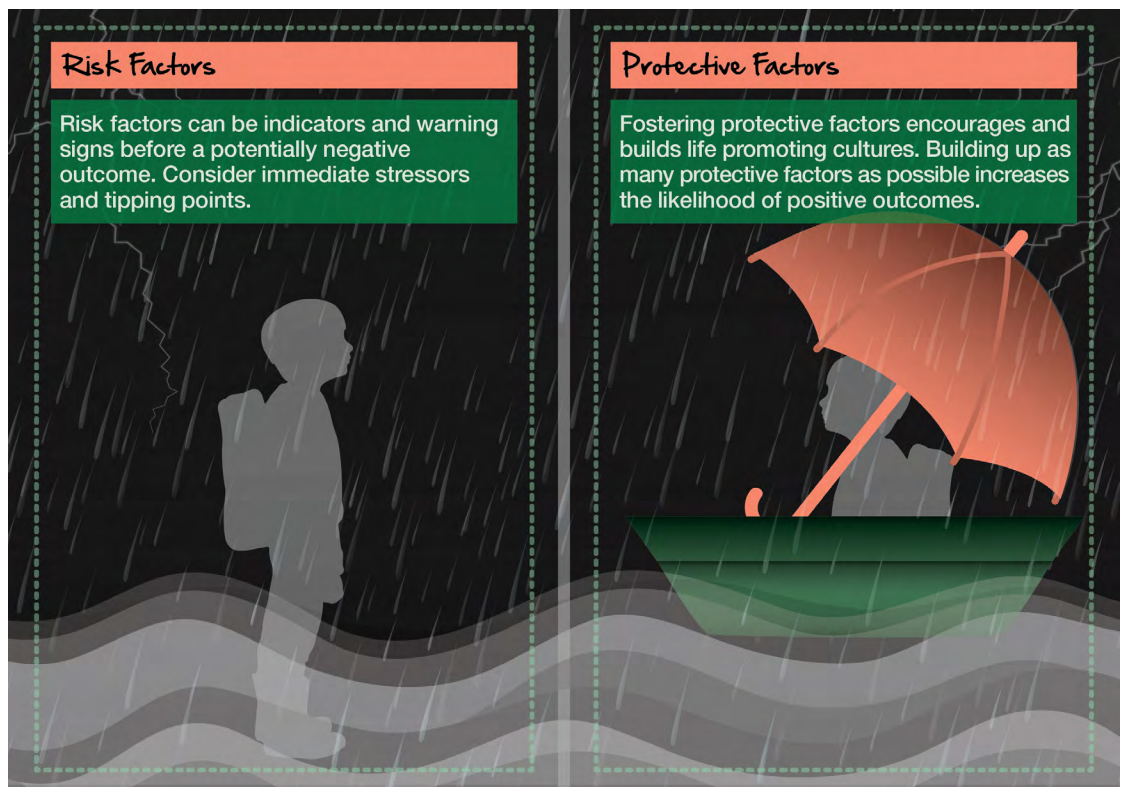
For Use by School Authorities and Their Partners

What Is the Creating Pathways of Hope Planning Tool?

School authorities and leaders can use this planning tool for guidance in designing suicide prevention and life promotion plans that enhance existing mental health and crisis initiatives already in place, while comprehensively including national and provincial research and best practices. In this resource, the term suicide prevention refers to the full spectrum of support school authorities can plan for including prevention, intervention and postvention.

Who Is at Risk for Death by Suicide?

Risk for student death by suicide is not limited to any gender, race or identity. Instead, the potential risk of suicide may be assessed by looking at the individual themselves, relationships, community, societal risk and protective factors. When examining these factors, look whether they are a positive or a negative and consider their capacity to change.



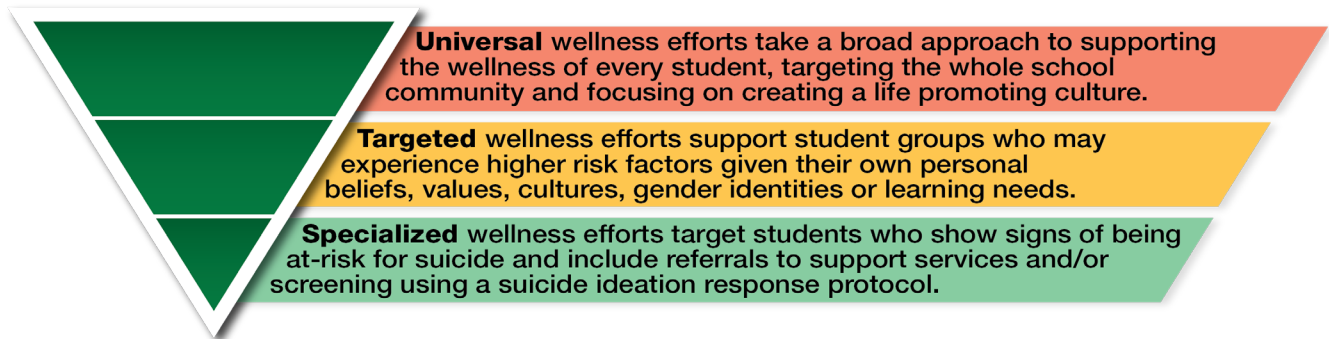
Protective factors include conditions, variables and attributes that promote well-being and contribute to a student's ability to be resilient when experiencing adversity. Risk factors are those conditions that have been found to be related to a higher risk of suicide amongst youth. For more information related to risk and protective

factors, please refer to <https://www.suicideinfo.ca/resource/youthatrisk>.

Making generalizations based on risk factors is an inherently flawed approach. Factors that contribute to and mitigate risk can only be considered in the overall context of how an individual student experiences them.



Because of the importance of strengthening protective factors, schools are best positioned to focus on wellness efforts for all students, with mindful consideration of populations who may benefit from specific supports, approaches or considerations related to beliefs, values, cultures, gender identities or learning needs to further enhance and deepen their ability to be resilient. Supports can be broken into three categories – universal, targeted and specialized. When considering how to promote life and prevent suicide as a school or school authority, factor in the three categories:



Alberta Education, 2017

Life Promoting Cultures

School authorities play an important role in preventing child and youth suicide. Alberta's Education Act calls on educators to maintain "welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that respect diversity and nurture a sense of belonging and a positive sense of self." Crafting the right environment is paramount for students at risk of suicide.

The degree to which students feel a connection to their school is a "leading protective factor against suicidal behaviour," according to the Government of Manitoba. In the context of suicide prevention planning in schools, focusing on creating a life promoting culture as a way to operationalize the building of protective factors is a robust approach.

Life promoting cultures require a systemic approach to:

- Addressing student needs related to learning.
- Addressing student needs related to social belonging.
- The system-wide enhancement of opportunities for students to better understand themselves and their classmates.

Flourishing Life Promoting School Culture Examples

- Students report feeling safe and welcomed at school.
- Educational stakeholders work together to address the social, emotional and academic needs of students.
- Staff demonstrate understanding of belonging being paramount to the school setting for all participants.
- Comprehensive continuums of support meeting social, emotional and academic needs of all learners in an inclusive setting are thorough and supported by families and partners.

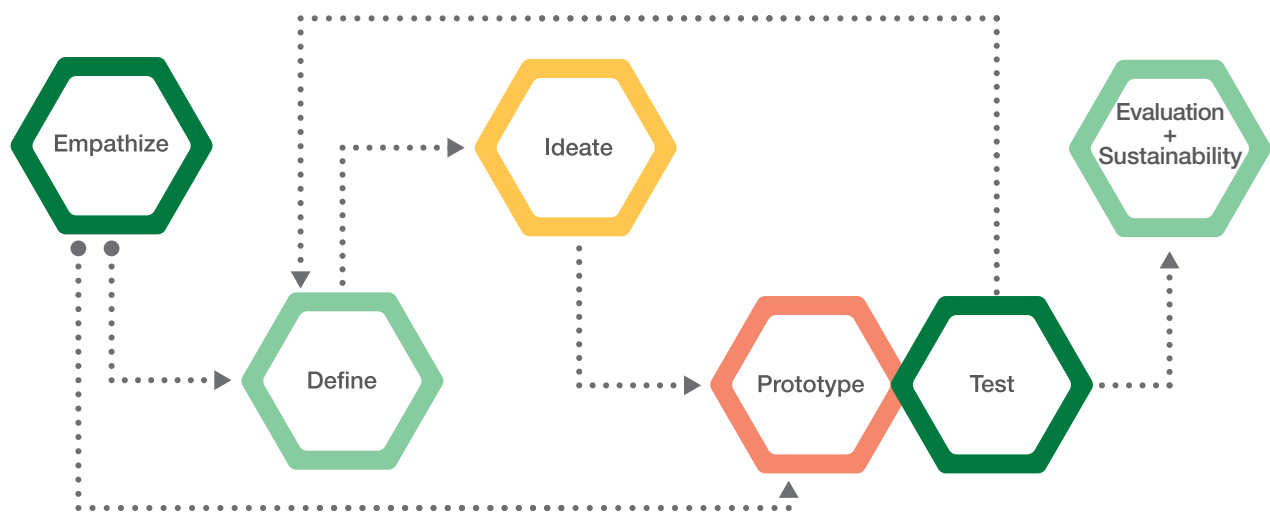
Think about your school and community. What opportunities does your environment provide?



In life promoting cultures, all students are supported and inspired to succeed because they feel able, welcomed and engaged. Students have meaningful relationships with adults and peers in their learning environment. They feel safe to experience success, failure, and to take risks in their learning. Programming and learning environments reflect diversity.

Using a Design Thinking Process to Build Life Promoting Cultures

The Interaction Design Foundation (2020) explains, “Design Thinking is an iterative process in which knowledge is constantly being questioned and acquired so it can help us redefine a problem in an attempt to identify alternative strategies and solutions that might not be instantly apparent with our initial level of understanding.” Centering the human experience within the process makes it an ideal structure to guide reflection and planning related to life promoting cultures within our school authorities. Our resource adds an additional stage to the traditional approach in order to address evaluation and sustainability:



The *Design Thinking Toolkit: Building Life Promoting Cultures in Schools* is intended to guide your team in considering your current initiatives and planning future approaches. Designed to be used with jurisdictional teams including community partners, the Design Thinking Toolkit will guide your working team through a process to support identification and action planning.

Foundational Understanding Resources

- Building Strength, Inspiring Hope: A Provincial Action Plan for Youth Suicide Prevention
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/96258654-ed5c-4bb5-809b-717ddcf11dc4/resource/3c368257-c873-41fc-8f89-3f9853d49ec1/download/alberta-youth-suicide-prevention-plan.pdf>
- Alberta Education's Pathways to Hope
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/71ab7d6a-d469-4958-9512-e4e50ca8e2a7/resource/07e6ec0a-76ce-4976-850a-0da770a9a107/download/edc-pathways-to-hope-best-practices-in-suicide-prevention-2020.pdf>
- The Centre for Suicide Prevention
<https://www.suicideinfo.ca>
- Working Together to Support Mental Health in Alberta Schools
https://education.alberta.ca/media/3576206/working_together_to_support_mental_health.pdf
- Supporting High School Completion: A Toolkit For Success
<https://arpcresources.ca/consortia/supporting-high-school-completion-tool-kit-success>
- Working Together to Prevent Suicide in Canada: The Federal Framework for Suicide Prevention
<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/public-health/migration/publications/healthy-living-vie-saine/framework-suicide-cadre-suicide/alt/framework-suicide-cadre-suicide-eng.pdf>
- Manitoba's Best Practices in School-based Suicide Prevention: A Comprehensive Approach
https://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/ysp/ysp_bestpractices.pdf
- CASP (Canadian Association for the Prevention of Suicide)
<https://suicideprevention.ca>
- AHS Mental Health Online Resources for Educators
<https://more.hmhc.ca>
- NSSI Protocol and Modules (Targeted/Individual Support Level)
<https://more.hmhc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/1-Page-NSSI.pdf>
- SI Protocol and Modules (Targeted/Individual Support Level)
<https://more.hmhc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/1-Page-SI.pdf>

References

- Alberta's Education Act
https://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=e00p3.cfm&leg_type=Acts&isbncln=9780779812097
- Building Strength, Inspiring Hope
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/96258654-ed5c-4bb5-809b-717ddcf11dc4/resource/3c368257-c873-41fc-8f89-3f9853d49ec1/download/alberta-youth-suicide-prevention-plan.pdf>
- Interactive Design Foundation
<https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/design-thinking>
- Manitoba's Best Practices in School-based Suicide Prevention: A Comprehensive Approach
https://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/ysp/ysp_bestpractices.pdf

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