DATE:	December 10, 2024
TO:	Board of Trustees
FROM:	Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools
SUBJECT:	Belonging and Safety Draft Framework
ORIGINATOR:	Kathy Muhlathaler, Assistant Superintendent, Instructional and Strategic Division Supports
RESOURCE STAFF:	Zainab Azhar, Kelsey Duebel, Erin Faught, Lee Hodgkinson, Nancy Petersen, Carrie Rosa, Christine Simmons, Kim Smith, Soleil Surette, Lisa Wright, Jon Yin
REFERENCE:	*Education Act,* Sec 33(1)(d)

ISSUE

A culture of belonging and school safety are foundational to student success and core features of welcoming, respectful and inclusive school communities. Supporting students to feel that they have a sense of belonging and feel safe in their schools is a collective responsibility reflecting the commitment of the Division, schools, staff, students, families and members of the community. This responsibility is formalized for the Division through the *Education Act,* which requires the Division to create a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and supports a sense of belonging, and direction set out in board policies and administrative regulations

BACKGROUND

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of community, belonging and safety has become increasingly prominent, particularly for children and youth. The pandemic safety measures were necessary but unfortunately contributed to the erosion of social ties and community life, and disrupted the daily routines of many students through which they connected with each other and supportive adults at school. The result has been negative impacts on student wellness and exacerbation of feelings of loneliness and isolation, leading to difficulty engaging with learning. In their series about Lessons for Education from COVID-19, the OECD highlighted that:

> *"...the crisis has drawn increased attention to the notion that learning is relational and social, and not transactional. It reminds us that effective learning is more about relationships and mind-sets than it is about physical spaces or instruments."* OECD, 2021

- Within our local context, schools have also identified the factors of social media and the complexity of the world around us as having an impact on students. Combined, these influences have only reinforced the importance of the responsibility schools have to support students in experiencing a sense of belonging and feelings of safety within the school community.

- The Division looks at perceptions of belonging and safety through a variety of means including Division Feedback Survey data, Youth Resilience Survey results and Alberta Education Assurance measures. Additionally extensive work has been done to engage with students to hear from them

directly how they experience school and to better understand their feelings of belonging and safety within their school community. Through this work, the Division knows there is an opportunity to build upon current efforts in support of belonging and safety to enable more students to feel a sense of connection and well-being while at school.

- To further support schools in this work, the Division is building out a framework that addresses belonging and safety in schools, *Building a Culture of Belonging and Safety: A Shared Responsibility*. The framework will serve as a living document and has been informed by research, student voice and feedback from school leaders. The draft of this framework is being shared with Trustees to provide an opportunity for feedback to inform further development.

- Individually and collectively, we are responsible for creating welcoming and safe learning environments, where every student feels like they belong. The framework will help demonstrate our commitment to this work and support schools in taking their next steps towards every student experiencing a positive sense of belonging and safety within their school community.

RELATED FACTS
The following actions have been taken to support the development of the draft framework:
- A review of literature and research related to school belonging and safety was conducted
- The Superintendent's Community of Practice in Education provided feedback around actions schools take to support belonging and safety and also did work to theme these actions
- Principals were engaged at multiple times to help inform the development of the framework
- An initial draft concept of the framework was taken to a principal committee for feedback to help inform further development
- A working group of school leaders, central staff from the Diversity Team, Communications and Strategic Division Supports and school staff who work in support of youth and families were engaged to provide feedback that informed this most recent draft of the framework.

ACTION REQUESTED
That the Board of Trustees provide Administration with feedback for consideration to inform the final development of the framework.

CONSIDERATIONS and ANALYSIS
The framework is intended to be a living document; there will be additional supporting resources that complement the framework available to schools and, over time, the framework will be built out to include school stories and additional exemplars.

NEXT STEPS
- Feedback from the Board of Trustees will help to inform the version of the framework that is released to schools.
- The framework, as a living document, will be shared with Division leaders to support them in their work. At the same time, Trustees will receive a copy of the framework.

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES
ATTACHMENT I   Draft Building a Culture of Belonging and Safety: A Shared Responsibility

DR:np

Building a Culture of Belonging and Safety:

A Shared Responsibility

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Introduction

Students should feel a sense of belonging and safety within their school community. Having this connection to school helps build positive behaviours, improves academic outcomes and supports health and well-being.

To help articulate the work occurring in schools that supports belonging and safety, the Division has developed a framework, *Building a Culture of Belonging and Safety: A Shared Responsibility*. This framework emphasizes the relationship of belonging and safety and how the two are foundational to student success in school.

How schools contribute to belonging and safety

To inform the development of the framework, we looked at research and literature related to belonging and safety in schools and gathered feedback from Division principals. This work highlighted five factors that together contribute to a positive sense of belonging and safety within a school community.

- **School culture:** School culture is a collaborative effort. School culture is the shared values, everyday behaviours, practices and traditions that shape how the members of a school community interact with each other.

- **Learning environment:** The learning environment is a space where students are encouraged to take risks, explore new ideas and grow both academically and personally. Students thrive in this environment when they experience a sense of belonging and safety.

- **Engagement**: Engagement is the intentional active process of seeking feedback and listening to the voices of students, staff and families across the school community. Creating strong pathways of engagement in schools reflects the importance and value of voice in school decision-making.

- **Family and community**: Family and community is about the strong relationships among school staff, families and community members where everyone works together in support of student success. Family involvement and community partnerships are essential in creating environments where students thrive.

- **School operations**: School operations are the processes, activities and efforts that support the effective daily operations of the school community. These predictable structures and routines help to support belonging and safety across the school community.

This ongoing work is a collective responsibility across the school community. Staff, students and families work together to create spaces for all students to thrive.

Building a Culture of Belonging and Safety:
A Shared Responsibility

A culture of belonging and safety are vital to student success and are key features of healthy, vibrant school communities. As a Division, we strive for continuous improvement to ensure that every student feels connected and safe within their school. We are listening to the voices of students, families, staff and community to learn more about belonging and safety within the context of school to help inform our actions.

To further support schools in this work the Division looked at research and gathered voices related to belonging and safety. This, along with principal feedback, helped to inform the development of a framework that articulates key factors within a school community that influence belonging and safety.

The framework is intended to support school leaders as they are responsive to the unique needs of their school communities and the students they serve. The framework includes inquiry questions to help schools take next steps or go deeper in this work, exemplars of current practices and questions that can help schools monitor for progress. Intended to be a living document, there will be additional supporting resources that complement the framework available to schools and, over time, the framework will be built out to include school stories and additional exemplars.

The Division will continue to engage students, families, staff and community in conversations as we collectively work towards every student feeling a sense of belonging and safety in their school community.

Why belonging and safety matter

Schools understand the importance of experiencing a sense of belonging and feeling safe. When students feel connected, they are more likely to positively contribute to the overall culture of the school community. When they feel safe, they can develop strong and trusting relationships with their peers and school community. This importance is underscored by our responsibility as set out in Alberta's *Education Act*, Sec 33(1)(d), which requires that each student enrolled in a school operated by the Board and each staff member employed by the Board is provided with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respect diversity and fosters a sense of belonging.

The importance of this work is further reinforced through research, where positive feelings of belonging and safety have been linked to school success.

How belonging and safety are connected

The sense of belonging and safety are built on the foundation of a positive school culture, effective operations, meaningful family and community relationships, active engagement and a supportive learning environment. These pieces fit together to create a space where every student feels valued, supported and ready to learn.

Belonging

Schools support a sense of belonging through the development of a welcoming school culture. The everyday actions of members of the school community establish an environment where students feel cared for and have the opportunity to succeed.

Stronger well-being: Feeling connected at school supports students' mental health and well-being

Positive behaviour: A sense of belonging promotes kindness, respect, helpfulness and increases positive behaviour.

Improved learning: Students who feel connected and safe are more likely to learn and succeed academically and socially.

According to Allen et al. (2021), belonging incorporates a dynamic set of emotions and experiences including individual competencies, motivations and perceptions, along with the opportunities or barriers that encourage or hinder connection with others. Belonging in educational settings arises from being accepted, valued and supported within the school community, a sentiment that is created through close relationships with peers and teachers (Allen et al., 2018). These relationships contribute to students' feelings of security and acceptance. The everyday interactions and intentional facilitation of spaces that celebrate students and build connections all provide opportunities to build a school culture that centres on belonging.

School leaders walk alongside students, staff, families and other professionals to promote school connectedness and explore possibilities of support or intervention for students. Students' experiences become unified when they know what to expect and how others will support their success.

Safety

Sense of belonging in educational settings intertwines with students' sense of safety—where students feel safe to express themselves within their learning space, knowing their contributions are welcomed—and physical safety, where students feel protected from physical harm within the school environment. Every day, teachers and school staff work together to make students feel protected and valued.

The Division's commitment goes beyond physical security, to include psychological, academic and emotional safety as staff understand the deep connection between belonging and safety. When students feel secure, they are able to develop strong relationships with their peers and trust in their school community. When they see themselves as valued members of a school community, they are more likely to act in a way that contributes positively to the overall culture. Research supports a connection between students' sense of belonging with prosocial behaviour and the prevention of behavioural problems (Stojanović et al., 2022).

The broader school environment encompasses the physical setting, policies and culture that together create a safe and inclusive space conducive to learning. Schools have direct control over these elements and can design environments that support both physical and psychological safety, promoting better mental health and engagement (Ungar et al., 2019). Physical safety in schools involves creating
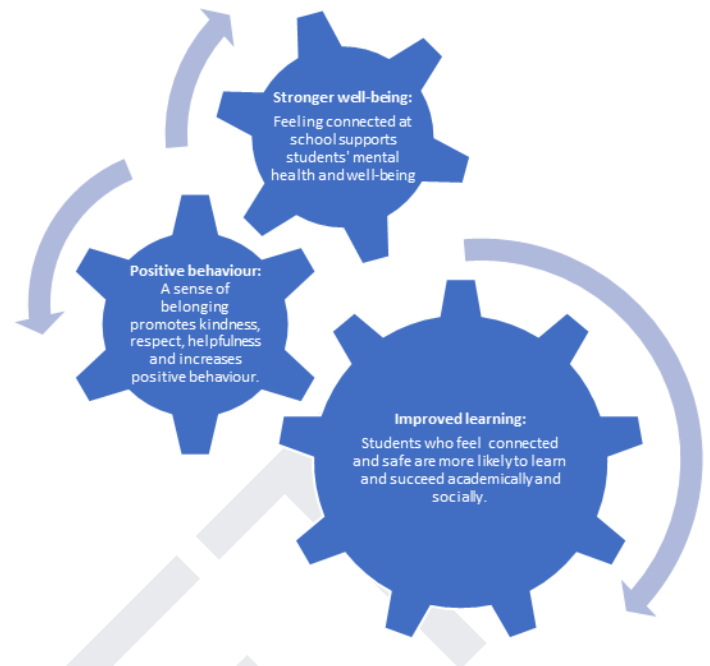
environments free from violence and threats, with robust security measures and comprehensive safety protocols directly within the control of school divisions (Richard et al., 2012). Psychological safety refers to students feeling secure enough to express their identities and opinions without fear of judgment or retaliation, created by a supportive school culture that promotes open communication and mental health awareness. The broader school environment also impacts student mental health. This includes physical settings and the cultural climate of the school, which should be welcoming and inclusive (Ungar et al., 2019). A safe and engaging physical environment can decrease stress and alienation among students, promoting better mental health outcomes. School divisions can manage these aspects by designing spaces conducive to learning and psychological well-being.

A supportive framework

The responsibilities of educators are guided by legislation, board policy, administrative regulations and the unique context of their school community. Every day schools are taking actions that design, create, maintain and enhance the environment of the school community in support of feelings of belonging and safety. The strategies being used are incorporated into school culture and complement instructional practice, recognizing that learning and well-being are mutually reinforcing.

How the framework is intended to help support schools:

- **Encourages reflection on current practices:** Identify what they're already doing well and areas to improve.

- **Provides examples of evidence-based strategies:** Learn about and explore additional ways to enhance belonging and safety.

- **Supports a layered approach:** Provide support for all students across a continuum of proactive to responsive strategies.

- **Supports engagement with school communities:** Seek feedback and listen to the voices of students, staff and families across the school community.

While using a range of approaches, school leaders consider contributing factors related to belonging and safety as unique and comprised of a continuum of actions that includes proactive strategies as well as responsive approaches and interventions. However, the strength of the framework lies in the interconnectedness of these factors as they work together to support a school community where every student is able to experience a sense of belonging and safety.

School culture

Learning environment

Engagement

Family and community

School operations

How the framework is designed

The framework is designed around the five identified factors that inform belonging and safety within a school community, with one page for each factor. Each page provides schools with the following:

- A brief descriptor of each of the factors: school culture; learning environment; engagement; family and community; and school operations.

- Exemplars of practices that have been mapped out across a pyramid of action reflecting universal, targeted and specialized strategies schools use that enhance/promote belonging and safety.

- Questions of inquiry to support reflection, dialogue and next steps within a school community.

- Questions to support schools in monitoring the impact and effectiveness of their actions.

The framework is intended as one tool to support schools in this ongoing work and will be built out with additional supporting materials over the coming months, such as sample focus group questions, school stories and materials to support engaging with staff and families around this work.

Our path forward

Building a Culture of Belonging and Safety: A Shared Responsibility is responsive to the diversity across Division schools. As school leaders reflect on their own schools' context, the voices of their school community and data related to belonging and safety, this framework can deepen understanding of the relationship between belonging and safety and inform next steps. The framework also supports the implementation of evidence-based practices that promote schools as places where students experience belonging and feel safe.

Individually and collectively, we are responsible for creating welcoming and safe learning environments, where every student feels like they belong. The framework will help demonstrate our commitment to this work and support schools in taking their next steps towards every student experiencing a positive sense of belonging and safety within their school community.

Factor: School Culture – Pyramid of Action

School culture is a collaborative effort. School culture is the shared values, everyday behaviours, practices and traditions that shape how the members of a school community interact with each other. Viewing schools as relational and multidimensional spaces, schools consider their unique contexts and use a whole-school approach as a means to creating schools that build on a culture of belonging in support of safety. The everyday actions of members of the school community establish an environment where students feel cared for and have the opportunity to succeed.

The following inquiry questions could be used to identify next steps in your community:	Evidence of impact

● What are our school community's strengths in supporting a sense of belonging and safety for students and staff?
 	
● How are school teams intentionally identifying and eliminating barriers for staff and students to support belonging and safety?
 	
● What whole school approaches to belonging and safety that address harmful behaviours including bullying, violence, threat, discrimination, intimidation and harassment do we have in place?
 	
● How are staff being supported in their capacity to create safe, engaging and inclusive learning environments?
 	
Note: Strategy selection will depend on the school context and current evidence.
	● How do we know that what we are doing is having an impact? What evidence do we have? What evidence might we need?
	
	● What information or perspective may be missing?
	   ○ Who else might we need to engage with? How might we engage them?
	
	● What do we notice in our evidence? Where are we seeing strengths, concerns or areas for further exploration?
	   ○ What areas for growth are indicated?
	
	● How can our evidence inform possible adjustments to our school structures, processes and practices?
	
	● What questions or perspectives does this evidence raise to explore further?

Level 3: Examples of Specialized strategies: *For a select number of students*

- Restorative Community Conferencing held with the support of Division Support Services (DSS).
- Requesting support from the Critical Incident Support Services (CISS) team or the Anti-racism Critical Support (ARCS) team in support of an emergent issue that disrupts the sense of belonging and/or safety for the school community.

Level 2: Examples of Targeted strategies: *For some students (some of these strategies will be in support of all students)*

- Building staff capacity to support culturally responsive practices that contribute to welcoming students and families (e.g., Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Intercultural supports, Diversity team support).
- Accessing resources and/or agencies to support families and/or students related to specific concerns (e.g., Alberta Health Services, Child and Family Services, Bent Arrow, Food Bank).

- Leveraging multi-disciplinary collaborative opportunities:
  - Care team consisting of school staff and partners (e.g., All in for Youth, The Family Centre) that meets regularly to plan how best to support students.
  - Helping families connect with community resources that address barriers (e.g., food security, emotional, physical health, transportation).
  - Support from the Anti-racism Critical Support (ARCS) team responsive to emergent issues related to discrimination and equity.

Level 1: Examples of Universal strategies: *For all students*

- Communication strategies implemented with students and families to share celebrations, opportunities, welcome information for new families and newcomers and how to connect with school staff.
- Multiple pathways for students to access support (e.g., QR codes, self-referral form, staff photo wall).
- Implementing common language, consistent expectations across the school community
- Using the multi-faith Division calendar to support planning.
- Leadership experiences provided to allow students to meaningfully connect with their school community (e.g., winter mitten drive, recycling program, shoveling snow angels to help seniors in the community).
- Mentoring to support building a sense of community (e.g., buddy classrooms, peer mentoring, volunteer mentoring).
- Student or staff led groups that support student connectedness (e.g., student associations, buddy classes, peer tutoring).

- Extracurricular activities that encourage students' sense of belonging, and increase motivation to connect and contribute within the school community (e.g., clubs, celebrations, teams).
- School-wide use of restorative practices, co-regulation strategies and social-emotional learning (e.g., Mindfulness, Zones of Regulation, Growth Mindset, morning circles, Hats on for Mental Health).
- School community events that engage students in awareness of societal initiatives (e.g., National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Pink Shirt Day, Hats on for Mental Health).
- Using a comprehensive school health approach to create a school culture that focuses on improving healthy eating, active living and positive mental health.
- Student and family engagement opportunities that provide pathways to share voice (e.g., student associations, school/parent council, advisory groups, focus groups, school surveys).
- Professional learning for staff that supports key areas (e.g., trauma-informed practices, differentiation, co-regulation, resilience).

Factor: Learning Environment – Pyramid of Action

The learning environment is a space where students are encouraged to take risks, explore new ideas and grow both academically and personally. Students thrive in this environment when they experience a sense of belonging and safety.

The following inquiry questions could be used to identify next steps in your community:	Evidence of impact
- What strategies are in place to help our staff understand how diverse groups of students and families may experience the education system? - How do school staff get to know students as learners? - What structures and practices do we have in place to plan for the success of all students and for monitoring progress? - What practices and/or strategies are in place that promote positive social and emotional behaviours for all students and staff? - How are diverse identities represented in the learning community and/or classroom? - How do school staff build relationships across the school community? *Note: Strategy selection will depend on the school context and current evidence.*	- How do we know that what we are doing is having an impact? What evidence do we have? What evidence might we need? - What information or perspective may be missing? - Who else might we need to engage with? How might we engage them? - What do we notice in our evidence? Where are we seeing strengths, concerns or areas for further exploration? - What areas for growth are indicated? - How can our evidence inform possible adjustments to our school structures, processes and practices? - What questions or perspectives does this evidence raise to explore further?

Level 3: Examples of Specialized strategies: *For a select number of students*

- Restorative Community Conferencing held with the support of Division Support Services (DSS).
- CASA Mental Health Classroom and the Division's CARE Classrooms.
- Continuum of responses set out in the school's Student Rights and Responsibilities documents.
- Implementation of identified Individual Behaviour Support Plan strategies to crisis response.
- Support from the Critical Incident Support Services (CISS) team and the Anti-racism Critical Support (ARCS) team that builds the sense of belonging and/or safety for the school community.

Level 2: Examples of Targeted strategies:
For some students (some of these strategies will be in support of all students)

- Inviting Elders and Knowledge Keepers into the school, organizing presentations and experiences that support students making connections (e.g., Smudging, ceremony, teachings).
- Access to a sensory room, use of quiet corners and other sensory supports (e.g., rocking chair, wiggle cushion).
- Differentiated support for English as additional language learners.
- Division Centres and Alternative Programs (e.g., Opportunity, Connections, Interactions, Logos, language programs).
- Leveraging multi-disciplinary collaborative opportunities:
  - Connecting with Mental Health Wellness Coaches for classroom workshops and/or staff presentations.
  - Working with Specialized Learning Supports (SLS) to support student programming (e.g., reading specialists, occupational therapists, psychologists, educational and behavioural programming).
  - Development and ongoing review of an Individual Program Plan, Individual Behaviour Support Plan or specific learning plan in collaboration with families.

Level 1: Examples of Universal strategies: *For all students*

- Communication tools for families that inform them of school-wide practices and individual student progress (e.g., School Assessment Plan, Students Rights and Responsibilities document, learning conferences, interim progress reports).
- Selecting school and classroom resources that reflect the diversity of the students across the school community (Administrative Regulation GI.AR Teaching and Learning Resources).
- Personal contact established with new families to welcome them and support ongoing communication pathways.
- Staff professional learning to enhance capacity to be responsive to all students (e.g., co-regulation strategies, culturally responsive practices, meeting requirements set out in the Teacher Quality Standard *Applying Foundational Knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit*).
- Use of differentiated furniture responsive to a range of learning styles (e.g., student collaborative groupings, high-tables, bean bags).
- Weaving foundational knowledge about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit worldviews, histories and culture into learning for all students.
- Direct teaching of positive peer relational skills (e.g., social-emotional learning, collaborative learning).
- Use of the multi-faith calendar to support school planning, including assessment timelines.
- Connecting learning to life after high school through Career Pathways (e.g., myBlueprint, Campus EPSB, student portfolios).
- Engaging students in land-based learning opportunities.
- Taking intentional action to help students understand who they are as learners, resulting in a greater sense of self-efficacy, confidence and willingness to take risks in their learning.

Factor: Engagement – Pyramid of Action

Engagement is the intentional active process of seeking feedback and listening to the voices of students, staff and families across the school community. Creating strong pathways of engagement in schools reflects the importance and value of voice in school decision-making.

The following inquiry questions could be used to identify next steps in your community:	Evidence of impact
- How do school staff build positive home-school-community connections? - How do staff develop partnerships that draw on community and multi-disciplinary resources to support a sense of belonging for students and families in our school? - What processes and procedures are in place to support students, staff and families with transitions (grade-to-grade, elementary to junior high, junior high to high school, high school to postsecondary/world of work)? - How are staff creating and nurturing a sense of belonging and safety for all students, families and staff? (as a leader, as a leadership team, as a staff). *Note: Strategy selection will depend on the school context and current evidence.*	- How do we know that what we are doing is having an impact? What evidence do we have? What evidence might we need? - What information or perspective may be missing? - Who else might we need to engage with? How might we engage them? - What do we notice in our evidence? Where are we seeing strengths, concerns or areas for further exploration? - What areas for growth are indicated? - How can our evidence inform possible adjustments to our school structures, processes and practices? - What questions or perspectives does this evidence raise to explore further?

Level 3: Examples of Specialized strategies: *For a select number of students*

- [Restorative Community Conferencing](#) held with the support of Division Support Services (DSS).
- [Office of Student Attendance and Re-engagement](#) (OSAR) contacted for support.
- Requesting support from the Critical Incident Support Services (CISS) team or the Anti-racism Critical Support (ARCS) team in support of an emergent issue that disrupts the sense of belonging and/or safety for the school community.

Level 2: Examples of Targeted strategies:
For some students (some of these strategies will be in support of all students)

- Facilitating Student Action Summits to support student collaboration around school culture and belonging.
- Establishing advisory groups (student, staff and/or family) to hear voice and perspective around a topic important to the school community (e.g., a new playground, developing a school level policy to support open campus noon hour).
- Inviting guest speakers and/or hosting information sessions for families and students around specific topics of interest (e.g., post-secondary night, test taking, anxiety).
- Accessing resources and/or agencies to support families and/or students related to specific concerns (e.g., Alberta Health Services, Child and Family Services, Bent Arrow, Food Bank).

Level 1: Examples of Universal strategies: *For all students*

- Using instructional processes that enhance learning experiences for all students (e.g., book clubs, experiential learning, sharing circles).
- Connecting learning to life after high school through Career Pathways (e.g., myBlueprint, Campus EPSB, student portfolios).
- Using a range of strategies with families to support communication and provide multiple pathways for access to information. (e.g., SchoolZone, conferences, newsletters, parent/guardian email).
- Learning conferences as a means to share student progress and set goals.
- Mentoring to support building a sense of community (e.g., reading buddies, Community Helpers, peer mentoring, volunteer mentoring).
- Selecting school and classroom resources that reflect the diversity of the students across the school community ([Administrative Regulation GI.AR Teaching and Learning Resources](#)).
- Using *Talking Circles,* focus groups and/or student symposiums to empower student voice in the classroom and the broader school community.
- Extracurricular activities that encourage students' sense of belonging, and increase motivation to connect and contribute within the school community.
- Bringing an enrichment learning opportunity into the school community to work with students (e.g., Artist in Residence).
- Supporting student governance and agency through student groups and/or associations that enable students to share voice, feedback and perspectives (e.g., GSA's, athletic groups, student associations, student senate, student councils).
- Family engagement opportunities to share feedback that helps to inform decision-making (e.g., parent associations, school/parent council, advisory groups, focus groups, school surveys).
- Facilitating opportunities for parents, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and community members to share knowledge and teachings, volunteer and/or support the school community.

Factor: Family and Community – Pyramid of Action

It is about the strong relationships among school staff, families and community members where everyone works together in support of student success. Family involvement and community partnerships are essential in creating environments where students thrive. School leaders bring everyone together—staff, students, families and community partners—to build strong, caring and supportive school communities.

The following inquiry questions could be used to identify next steps in your community:	Evidence of impact
- How are school staff co-creating regular opportunities for student voice to inform school and classroom decisions? - How do staff co-create regular opportunities for family voice at our school? - How do school staff reflect on what students/families share and incorporate their ideas where possible? - How are school staff reflecting back on what students/families share so they know they have been heard? *Note: Strategy selection will depend on the school context and current evidence.*	- How do we know that what we are doing is having an impact? What evidence do we have? What evidence might we need? - What information or perspective may be missing? - Who else might we need to engage with? How might we engage them? - What do we notice in our evidence? Where are we seeing strengths, concerns, or areas for further exploration? - What areas for growth are indicated? - How can our evidence inform possible adjustments to our school structures, processes and practices? - What questions or perspectives does this evidence raise to explore further?

Level 3: Examples of Specialized strategies *For a select number of students*

- [Restorative Community Conferencing](#) held with the support of Division Support Services (DSS).
- Calling 911 as an emergency response to a school or community situation.

- Collaborating with community resources to support student specific concerns (e.g., Alberta Health Services, Child and Family Service, CARRT team).

Level 2: Examples of Targeted strategies
For some students (some of these strategies will be in support of all students)

- Work with Specialized Learning Supports (SLS) during student transitions responsive to the needs of individual learners (e.g., occupational therapist, vision consultant, physical therapist).
- Development and ongoing review of an Individual Program Plan, Individual Behaviour Support Plan or specific learning plan in collaboration with families.
- Accessing resources and/or agencies to support families and/or students related to specific concerns (e.g., Alberta Health Services, Child and Family Services, Bent Arrow, Food Bank).

- Leveraging multi-disciplinary collaborative opportunities:
  - Connecting with Mental Health Wellness Coaches for classroom workshops and/or staff presentations.
  - Development and ongoing review of an Individual Program Plan, Individual Behaviour Support Plan or specific learning plan in collaboration with families.

Level 1: Examples of Universal strategies *For all students*

- Using a range of strategies with families to support communication and provide multiple pathways for access to information. (e.g., SchoolZone, conferences, newsletters, parent/guardian email).
- Intentionally confirming the contact information with a family to support ongoing and timely communication.
- School events, celebrations and information sessions to support families in feeling connected to the school, building relationships with school staff, and gaining relevant information.
- Working in partnership with community agencies or groups for the provision of support responsive to the needs of students (e.g., Free Play, after school clubs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, The Family Centre, EISA, YMCA, e4c).
- Learning conferences as a means to share student progress and set goals.

- Taking intentional steps to support transitions (e.g., grade-to-grade, elementary to junior high, junior high to high school, high school to postsecondary/world of work).
- Family engagement opportunities to share feedback that helps to inform decision-making (e.g., parent associations, school/parent council, advisory groups, focus groups, school surveys).
- Facilitating opportunities for parents, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and community members to share knowledge and teachings, volunteer and/or support the school community.
- Building staff capacity to support culturally responsive practices that contribute to welcoming students and families.
- Having external partners working alongside school staff within the school community in the delivery of wrap-around supports and services (e.g., Elders, Knowledge Keepers, mental health therapist, Success Coach, School Resource Officer, Roots and Wings worker).

Factor: School Operations – Pyramid of Action

School operations are the processes, activities and efforts that support the effective daily operations of the school community. These predictable structures and routines help to support belonging and safety across the school community.

The following inquiry questions could be used to identify next steps in your community:	Evidence of impact
- How can school policies, processes and structures support belonging for students from different backgrounds (or groups)? - How do we work with students, staff and families to build ongoing understanding and expectations around students' Rights and Responsibilities practices? - What processes and procedures are in place to support student transitions (e.g. new, between grades, program or departing students)? - What risk management protocols/plans (e.g., emergency plans) are in place and how often are they reviewed, updated and shared? - How are staff creating and nurturing a sense of belonging and safety for all students, families and staff? (as a leader, as a leadership team, as a staff). *Note: Strategy selection will depend on the school context and current evidence.*	- How do we know that what we are doing is having an impact? What evidence do we have? What evidence might we need? - What information or perspective may be missing? - Who else might we need to engage with? How might we engage them? - What do we notice in our evidence? Where are we seeing strengths, concerns, or areas for further exploration? - What areas for growth are indicated? - How can our evidence inform possible adjustments to our school structures, processes and practices? - What questions or perspectives does this evidence raise to explore further?

Level 3: Examples of Specialized strategies: *For a select number of students*

- Implementation of identified Individual Behaviour Support Plan strategies to crisis response.
- The annual review of determining the commissioning or decommissioning of an operational seclusion room within the school community.

- Calling 911 as an emergency response to a school or community situation.
- As a response to behaviour that compromises safety within the school community, utilize responsive action as set out in the school's Student Rights and Responsibilities document.

Level 2: Examples of Targeted strategies:
For some students (some of these strategies will be in support of all students)

- Dedicated space for cultural and religious practices that help to support a sense of belonging (e.g., prayer room, smudging).
- Scheduled, committed time where staff collaborate to examine student learning and monitor for progress.
- Staff trained in Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) protocols.
- Work with Division Security and/or Division Support Services around an incident.

- Leveraging multi-disciplinary collaborative opportunities:
  - Processes to support communication and coordination amongst members of the school community Care team assembled consisting of school staff and partners (e.g., All in for Youth, The Family Centre) to support students.
  - School level processes to identify students for referral to Specialized Learning Supports (SLS).
  - Exploring alternative responses to unacceptable behaviour as part of the school's Student Rights and Responsibilities document and accessing alternative suspension programs (e.g., YMCA).

Level 1: Examples of Universal strategies: *For all students*

- Developing the Student Rights and Responsibilities document under the direction of Board Policy HG.BP Student Behaviour and Conduct to support a safe school community.
- Developing and practicing emergency protocols (e.g., evacuation drills, maintaining security systems).
- Structures and routines are in place to support predictable school operations that help to promote safety (e.g., bell schedules, supervision schedules, bus procedures, parent drop off and pick up procedures).
- Staff trained in First Aid and staff identified to support OHS requirements across the school community.
- Feedback opportunities for students and family to help inform decisions related to school operations (e.g., scheduling, clubs, school events and celebrations, fees).
- Taking intentional steps to support transitions (e.g., grade-to-grade, elementary to junior high, junior high to high school, high school to postsecondary/world of work).

- Extracurricular activities that encourage students' sense of belonging, and increase motivation to connect and contribute within the school community (e.g., clubs, celebrations, teams).
- Supporting staff in creating welcoming school culture through professional learning focused on topics such as resilience, using proactive Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Response strategies, trauma-informed practices, etc.
- Using evidence, research and feedback to inform planning for the school community (e.g., school organization and staffing, setting goals, school budget).
- Having external partners working alongside school staff within the school community in the delivery of wrap-around supports and services (e.g., Elders, Knowledge Keepers, mental health therapist, Success Coach, School Resource Officer, Roots and Wings worker).