

# Making a plan to support learning through stress and trauma

Scroll down for completed plan examples and a glossary of terms.

<b>Context</b> Who are the learners?	<b>Environment</b> What is the learning place or space?	<b>Timeframe</b> From when to when?

<b>Safe and respectful environment considerations</b> Pick one for focus.	<b>My plan for environment and timeframe</b> <i>I will _____ by _____.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create predictable patterns (as best as possible during <b>interrupted learning</b>)</li> <li>• Attend to transitions</li> <li>• Leverage strengths, interests, and <b>funds of knowledge</b></li> <li>• Anticipate inclusion and accessibility needs</li> <li>• Be <b>emotionally and sensorially considerate</b></li> <li>• Others?</li> </ul>	

<b>Social learning: Caring relationships plan (Co-create, if possible!)</b>	
<b>Strengths and needs</b> In what ways do we already have strong caring relationships? What needs are arising?	
<b>Goal and path</b> Based on our strengths and needs, what is one goal to grow? What steps will help us meet the goal? What supports will we need?	
<b>Practice</b> When will we work on our goal steps together? (times/days)	
<b>Respond</b> How will we celebrate when we've met our goal? Or what's Plan B, if needed?	

**Social-emotional learning: Emotion and behavior plan (Co-create, if possible!)**

<b>Strengths and needs</b> In what ways do we already have <b>regulated emotion</b> and <b>modulated behavior</b> ? What needs are arising?	
<b>Goal and path</b> Based on our strengths and needs, what is one goal? What steps will help us meet the goal? What supports will we need?	
<b>Practice</b> When will we work on our goal steps together? (times/days)	
<b>Respond</b> How will we celebrate when we've met our goal? Or what's Plan B, if needed?	

**Academic or professional learning: Cognitive growth and overall well-being plan  
(Co-create, if possible!)**

<b>Strengths and needs</b> In what ways do we already have strong <b>cognitive growth</b> without compromising overall well-being? What <b>unfinished teaching</b> needs are arising?	
<b>Goal and path</b> Based on our strengths and needs, what is one goal? What steps will help us meet the goal? What supports will we need?	
<b>Practice</b> When will we work on our goal steps together? (times/days)	
<b>Respond</b> How will we celebrate when we've met our goal? Or what's Plan B, if needed?	

## Classroom teacher plan example

Context Who are the learners?	Environment What is the learning place or space?	Timeframe From when to when?
<i>Eighth-grade students; social studies class</i>	<i>Online Zoom/Google Classroom™/phone check-ins (distance learning due to COVID-19)</i>	<i>May–June</i>

Safe and respectful environment considerations Pick one for focus	My plan for environment and timeframe <i>I will _____ by _____.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create predictable patterns (as best as possible during <b>interrupted learning</b>)</li> <li>• Attend to transitions</li> <li>• Leverage strengths, interests, and <b>funds of knowledge</b></li> <li>• Anticipate inclusion and accessibility needs</li> <li>• Be <b>emotionally and sensorially considerate</b></li> <li>• Other?</li> </ul>	<p><i>When I make contact with students, I will leverage their funds of knowledge by making sure there is always time to share knowledge or expertise from their daily lives while away from school. One way I can do this is by <a href="#">asking relationship-building questions</a>.</i></p>

### Social learning: Caring relationships plan (Co-create, if possible!)

<p><b>Strengths and needs</b> In what ways do we already have strong caring relationships? What needs are arising?</p>	<p><i>While we're out of school due to social distancing, I'm able to connect with approximately 75% of the students via Zoom, Google Classroom, or phone call check-ins.</i></p>
<p><b>Goal and path</b> Based on our strengths and needs, what is one goal to grow? What steps will help us meet the goal? What supports will we need?</p>	<p><i>I will try asking for student leaders to help me make connections with students, especially the 25% that I'm not hearing from. I will: 1. Ask students to be leaders; 2. Schedule check-ins with student leaders; 3. Set up student-to-student check-ins that increase connections but protect the privacy of the student leaders (perhaps this will work with the Remind app because it's a tool that we've already used and I can still monitor the interaction).</i></p>
<p><b>Practice</b> When will we work on our goal steps together? (times/days)</p>	<p><i>I will practice how to guide student-to-student connections with student leaders at least once a week during Zoom check-ins, and then they will try to practice with students at least once a week. We will continue to practice until there's at least a 10% increase in successful connections. Then I will work on the next 10% to continuously work toward connecting with all students.</i></p>
<p><b>Respond</b> How will we celebrate when we've met our goal? Or what's Plan B, if needed?</p>	<p><i>I will ask the student leaders how they would like to celebrate meeting the goal. If the student-to-student connection approach with the Remind app doesn't work, I will ask the student leaders to help me craft an alternative.</i></p>

<b>Social and emotional learning: Emotion and behavior plan (Co-create, if possible!)</b>	
<p><b>Strengths and needs</b> In what ways do we already have <b>regulated emotion</b> and <b>modulated behavior</b>? What needs are arising?</p>	<p><i>When students use online tools such as Zoom and Google Classroom together, they are staying school appropriate for the most part. Sometimes there are examples of inappropriate use, which can distract from the check-in or possibly even deter students from participating in the check-in.</i></p>
<p><b>Goal and path</b> Based on our strengths and needs, what is one goal? What steps will help us meet the goal? What supports will we need?</p>	<p><i>I will make time during the next check-in to do the following: 1. Co-create expectations, rewards, and consequences for school appropriate use of Zoom and Google Classroom that align to expectations students will experience in college and careers; 2. Assign students to take turns monitoring whether we're following through with expectations, rewards, and consequences; 3. Work with school leaders and families to follow through with consequences and rewards.</i></p>
<p><b>Practice</b> When will we work on our goal steps together? (times/days)</p>	<p><i>Start next week and then make time in each weekly check-in for review of expectations, assigning students to monitor and giving updates regarding rewards or consequences from the school or families. We will continue to practice until we can consistently remain school appropriate for at least three meetings in a row.</i></p>
<p><b>Respond</b> How will we celebrate when we've met our goal? Or what's Plan B, if needed?</p>	<p><i>I will ask students for ideas about how they would like to celebrate and determine which ideas are feasible given the timeframe, context, and access to resources. If the plan doesn't work, I will ask students to help me co-create a Plan B.</i></p>

<b>Academic or professional learning: Cognitive growth and overall well-being plan (Co-create, if possible!)</b>	
<p><b>Strengths and needs</b> In what ways do we already have strong <b>cognitive growth</b> without compromising overall well-being? What <b>unfinished learning</b> needs are arising?</p>	<p><i>Even though we are engaged in distance learning, approximately 65% of students are still able to show US geography knowledge growth through short, engaging, and sometimes funny online and verbal exercises. I want to figure out how to support US geography knowledge growth for more students.</i></p>
<p><b>Goal and path</b> Based on our strengths and needs, what is one goal? What steps will help us meet the goal? What supports will we need?</p>	<p><i>To make sure all students are growing in US geography knowledge even while we're engaged in distance learning, I will ask my student leaders to help reach out to students who may not have access to tools or who need student-to-student interaction for successful learning. During my check-ins with student leaders, I will ask them to collect information from students so that we'll have more ideas for how to support all students' growth.</i></p>
<p><b>Practice</b> When will we work on our goal steps together? (times/days)</p>	<p><i>I will practice how to guide student-to-student connections with student leaders at least once a week during Zoom check-ins, and then they will try to gather information from peers at least once a week. We will continue to practice until there's at least a 10% increase in knowledge growth. Then I will work on the next 10% to continuously work toward including all students in growth.</i></p>

**Respond**

How will we celebrate when we've met our goal? Or what's Plan B, if needed?

*I will ask the student leaders how they would like to celebrate meeting the goal.*

*If the student-to-student connection approach to growing in US geography knowledge doesn't work, I will ask the student leaders to help me craft an alternative.*

## Principal plan example

Context Who are the learners?	Environment What is the learning place or space?	Timeframe From when to when?
<i>Middle school teachers</i>	<i>Zoom staff meetings (distance learning due to COVID-19)</i>	<i>May–June</i>

Safe and respectful environment considerations Pick one for focus	My plan for environment and timeframe <i>I will _____ by _____.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create predictable patterns (as best as possible during <b>interrupted learning</b>)</li> <li>• Attend to transitions</li> <li>• Leverage strengths, interests, <b>funds of knowledge</b></li> <li>• Anticipate inclusion and accessibility needs</li> <li>• Be <b>emotionally and sensorially considerate</b></li> <li>• Other?</li> </ul>	<p><i>During Zoom staff meetings, I will be sensorially considerate by making sure to cue members to click mute at the beginning of the meeting. This will help ensure background noises don't cause additional stress or distraction. I will ask staff members to help me remember this cue.</i></p>

### Social learning: Caring relationships plan (Co-create, if possible!)

<p><b>Strengths and needs</b> In what ways do we already have strong, caring relationships? What needs are arising?</p>	<p><i>The staff members who have worked together for many years have a strong relationship and are able to interact and speak up during Zoom meetings. The newer staff are quiet and not interacting or speaking up very often.</i></p>
<p><b>Goal and path</b> Based on our strengths and needs, what is one goal to grow? What steps will help us meet the goal? What supports will we need?</p>	<p><i>I will ask veteran teachers to team up with newer staff members. I will provide time at the beginning of Zoom staff meetings for the veteran teachers to use the chat feature of Zoom to connect with newer staff members and/or to use the breakout room feature of Zoom to interact. I will ask both veteran and newer staff members to try using <a href="#">relationship-building questions</a> or propose a different tool.</i></p>
<p><b>Practice</b> When will we work on our goal steps together? (times/days)</p>	<p><i>This will occur at the beginning of each Thursday staff meeting. I will partner with tech support so that the use of the chat and breakout rooms goes as smoothly as possible and so that the exercise lasts approximately 10–15 minutes. We will continue to practice until there is a balance of veteran and newer teachers interacting and speaking up during meetings.</i></p>
<p><b>Respond</b> How will we celebrate when we've met our goal? Or what's Plan B, if needed?</p>	<p><i>I will ask staff how they would like to celebrate meeting the goal. If the balanced staff approach with the chat and break out rooms doesn't work, I will ask interested staff members to help me craft an alternative.</i></p>

<b>Social and emotional learning: Emotion and behavior plan (Co-create, if possible!)</b>	
<b>Strengths and needs</b> In what ways do we already have <b>regulated emotion</b> and <b>modulated behavior</b> ? What needs are arising?	<i>When staff use online tools such as Zoom together, they are staying professional for the most part. Sometimes there are examples of unprofessional use, which can distract from the meeting or possibly even deter staff from participating in the meeting.</i>
<b>Goal and path</b> Based on our strengths and needs, what is one goal? What steps will help us meet the goal? What supports will we need?	<i>I will make time during the next meeting to do the following: 1. Co-create expectations for the professional use of Zoom, 2. I will assign staff members to take turns monitoring and reporting out whether we're following through with expectations.</i>
<b>Practice</b> When will we work on our goal steps together? (times/days)	<i>Start next week and then make time in each weekly Zoom staff meeting for reviewing expectations, assigning staff to monitor, and reporting out whether we're following through with expectations.</i>
<b>Respond</b> How will we celebrate when we've met our goal? Or what's Plan B, if needed?	<i>I will ask staff for ideas about how they would like to celebrate and determine which ideas are feasible given the timeframe, context, and access to resources. If the plan doesn't work, I will ask staff to help me co-create a Plan B.</i>

<b>Academic or professional learning: Cognitive growth and overall well-being plan (Co-create, if possible!)</b>	
<b>Strengths and needs</b> In what ways do we already have strong <b>cognitive growth</b> without compromising overall well-being? What <b>unfinished learning</b> needs are arising?	<i>Staff have made a tremendously fast switch to provide distance learning. Many have learned how to use a variety of distance-learning tools, such as Zoom, Google Classroom, Pear Deck®, and Remind, to engage their students from afar. Approximately 40% of staff report (via a Poll Everywhere question) that they are still in the process of learning how to effectively use these tools and feel overwhelmed.</i>
<b>Goal and path</b> Based on our strengths and needs, what is one goal? What steps will help us meet the goal? What supports will we need?	<i>To make sure all staff are supported in growing their knowledge of how to effectively use distance-learning tools without feeling overwhelmed, I will form groups of staff members to swap ways to increase knowledge and skill with distance tools. I will provide 15 minutes during weekly Zoom staff meetings for the groups to check in and share out. I will ask that staff groups also meet for an additional half hour per week to continue swapping knowledge and skills.</i>
<b>Practice</b> When will we work on our goal steps together? (times/days)	<i>I will model the use of distance-learning tools during our weekly Zoom staff meetings and provide at least 45 minutes per week for groups of staff to work together to increase knowledge and skill. We will continue to practice until at least 80% of staff report an increase in knowledge and a decrease in feeling overwhelmed (measured by quick a Poll Everywhere question once a week).</i>
<b>Respond</b> How will we celebrate when we've met our goal? Or what's Plan B, if needed?	<i>I will ask staff how they would like to celebrate meeting the goal. If the staff group approach to growing in knowledge and skill doesn't work, I will ask staff to help me craft an alternative.</i>

## Glossary of terms and concepts

**Accessibility considerations:** Provide multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression. (For more information, see [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\) Guidelines](#).)

**Cognitive growth:** For the purposes of this publication, academic learning for students and professional learning for educators.

**Emotional safety considerations:** Being responsive to students' perspectives and needs, affirming all students' full identities, and establishing structures that create predictability and consistency. (For more information, see [Trauma and Learning in America's Classrooms](#) from *Phi Delta Kappan*.)

**Funds of Knowledge:** "Collections of knowledge based in cultural practices that are a part of families' inner culture, work experience, or their daily routine. It is the knowledge and expertise that students and their family members have because of their roles in their families, communities, and culture."<sup>1</sup> (For more information, see [How to Use Funds of Knowledge in Your Classroom and Create Better Connections](#).)

**Inclusion considerations:** Know your students' learning strengths, needs, and funds of knowledge. This information can be gathered through formal processes such as IEPs, 504s, and EL plans as well as from students, families, and educators. Address students' strengths, needs, and funds of knowledge with multiple means of representation, multiple means of action and expression, and multiple means of engagement. (For more information, see the [UDL Guidelines](#).)

**Modulated behavior and regulated emotion:** "The ability to self-regulate—to strategically modulate one's emotional reactions or states in order to be more effective at coping and engaging with the environment—is a critical aspect of human development."<sup>2</sup> (For more information, see the [UDL guidelines for self-regulation](#)).

**Retraumatization:** Feelings, conditions, or occurrences that can trigger painful memories of past trauma and even interfere with healing and recovery.

**Interrupted learning:** Learning that occurs irregularly, with breaks in established routines and inconsistencies in meeting the academic, social, emotional, and/or physical needs of learners; can cause or add to stress and trauma.

**Sensory considerations:** Some sensory inputs can cause/increase stress or activate trauma. When possible, make decisions about lighting, temperature, volume, and tactile experiences that contribute to a safe and respectful environment. (For more information, see the [UDL Guidelines](#).)

**Tolerable stress:** Activates the body's alert systems. If the activation is buffered by relationships and processes that help us adapt, the body can recover and learning can happen. (For more information, see [Toxic Stress](#) from Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child.)

**Toxic stress:** Strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity without adequate support. This kind of prolonged activation of the stress response systems can disrupt our body's systems, resulting in a cumulative health toll and learning barriers. (For more information, see [Toxic Stress](#) from Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child.)

**Trauma:** Unique to individuals; an event or enduring condition in which a person's ability to integrate their emotional experience is overwhelmed. The person experiences a threat to their psychological safety, bodily integrity, life, or safety of a caregiver or family member. (For more information, see [Standards of Practice for Trauma Informed Care: Definitions and Additional Resources](#).)

**Unfinished learning:** "Prerequisite knowledge or skills that students need for future work that they don't have yet."<sup>3</sup> (For more information, see [Addressing Unfinished Learning in the Context of Grade-Level Work](#).)

**Vicarious traumatization:** A stress reaction; may be experienced by people who are exposed to disclosures of traumatic images and events by those seeking help. Symptoms of vicarious trauma can affect those with considerable training and experience. (For more information, see [Standards of Practice for Trauma Informed Care: Definitions and Additional Resources](#).)

1. Allison McDonald, “How to Use Funds of Knowledge in Your Classroom and Create Better Connections,” *No Time for Flash Cards* (blog), February 11, 2018, <https://www.notimeforflashcards.com/2018/02/funds-of-knowledge.html>.
2. CAST, “Guideline 9: Provide Options for Self Regulation,” *Universal Design for Learning Guidelines* (2018), <http://udlguidelines.cast.org/engagement/self-regulation>.
3. Christina Alison, “Addressing Unfinished Learning in the Context of Grade-Level Work,” *Aligned* (blog), December 6, 2017, <https://achievethecore.org/aligned/addressing-unfinished-learning-context-grade-level-work/>.



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