



**National School Mental Health Best Practices: Implementation Guidance Modules
'Always and Now' Learning Series
Module 8: Always & Now**

Presenters:

Dr. Louis Laffitte, Jr. is an instructional trailblazer who partners with thought leaders across the country to improve outcomes for learners of all ages and demographics. With more than two decades dedicated to the field of education, Dr. Laffitte's critical insight into what drives teaching and learning has benefited students and colleagues alike. With a career path focused on empowering the disenfranchised, Laffitte has been a voice and advocate for change, which has benefited the many leadership roles he's undertaken as an educator. These roles have included principal, special education director, human resources director and assistant superintendent.

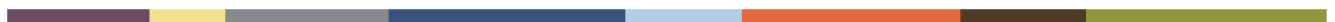
Amber Fox has been a member of the Kent School Services Network Administrative team in Kent County, Michigan since 2014. She has a Master's in Social Work and more than 20 years of experience in the fields of Youth Development, Education and Social Work. Previously, she served as the Kent ISD program coordinator for Michigan's Project AWARE (2014-2018). In her current role of Director of Integrated Supports and Team Lead Supervisor, she co-coaches and co-develops a team of 40 community school coordinators and 5 team leads, serving 45 schools in 9 school districts. She is a certified Youth Mental Health First Aid trainer and Youth Program Quality External Assessor.

Elizabeth Conners received her Ph.D. in Clinical Child and Community Psychology from the University of Maryland Baltimore County and is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry (Psychology) and in the Child Study Center, Yale School of Medicine. Her program of research focuses on improving the quality of mental health promotion, prevention and intervention services for underserved children, adolescents and their families in critical access points such as schools, community-based clinics and primary care settings.

Participant Question & Presenter Response

Q1 Should schools start the conversation with Impact (Module 8) at their first meeting? Module 8 should be Module 1?

A1 The National School Mental Health Best Practices: Implementation Guidance Modules are not necessarily sequential or prescriptive. Based on the culture of your district, county or team, you can choose with which modules may be helpful to begin. At the same time, many modules build off of each other (e.g., understanding the needs and resources in your school mental health ecosystem may be valuable to proceed the module on screening).



And, beginning with the “why” (individual and collective) is essential to centering and driving school mental health championship work. Teams may benefit in beginning with articulating and identifying the “why” that roots the work, backwards mapping from visionary outcomes to actionable steps (see resources below for content related to identifying the “why.”)

Q2 How does the concept of impact intersect with staff wellness?

A1 Without the leaders, staff, faculty, and stakeholders feeling seen, heard, and valued, authentic impact may be hard to actuate due to employee burn out, ongoing turnover and low morale. Cultivating impact requires a healthy and flourishing educator investment in their school community. As such, it is essential that staff wellness is a top priority, supported collectively and systemically (e.g., at a district level) rather than placed on school sites or staff to figure out.

Initiatives that only thrives with a certain leader is in place, and then the momentum, initiative, or movement ends when that leader leaves signals a need for leadership investment in staff and school community wellness and connectedness. One person holding the work is a signal of system unwellness, and inevitable lack of long-term impact.

Connectedly, recent work in social emotional learning highlights how school mental health champions can support staff to develop their resiliency skills, to supplement staff professional wellness, encourage interpersonal connectedness and promote healthy problem solving among peers. . The Compassion Resilience Toolkit has great resources on staff conversations and activities to promote team building, cohesion, mutual support, etc. See more here:

<https://www.wellsteps.com/blog/2020/01/02/school-wellness-programs/>

The more capacity we have (emotional, cognitive, and social) as leaders, the more likely our work’s seeds will grow.

Q3 How might the replacing terms like “self-care” with “wellness” change long term impact and staff receptivity?

A3 Staff can have 'self-care' fatigue. It can feel like such an add-on, another burden or "to do". Wellness is an imperative, foundational to our survival, strength, and resilience. I encourage use of whatever language staff indicate resonates with them the most.”



Stores of Impact from Module 8 Participants

At the end of Module 8's main session, we asked participants, "What does school mental health championship and impact mean, look like, and sound like to you?" Here are a few responses:

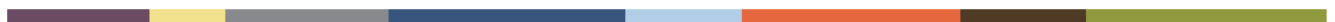
- *Impact comes down to the why of everything we do*
- *Impact is a foundational topic for SMH! Discussing what type of impact you hope to have, and aim to have, is a proactive way to even select or invest in specific mental health supports. Sometimes we end up with services and supports in schools that we're not sure what type of impact or outcomes we expect them to have which can create noise in our system.*
- *Seems schools need to start the conversation with Impact at their first meeting*
- *Observe, evaluate, and adjust to the situation!*
- *Building a foundation that allows others to build on top of it that moves further in the direction of equitable behavioral health services for youth.*
- *We had to shift our language [to create lasting impact]*
- *Students don't care about what we know, they only know that we care*
- *Focusing on staff wellness as a foundation of overall wellness has been eye opening for many admin we work with*

Additional Resources on the National School Mental Health Best Practices:

- Access the COMPLETE National School Mental Health Best Practices: Implementation Guidance Modules resource, free of charge, [here](#).
- For information about local, state, and regional school mental health training and technical assistance activities, access your MHTTC Regional Center [here](#).
- The SHAPE System, developed by the [National Center for School Mental Health](#), is a free, private, web-based portal that offers a virtual workspace for school mental health teams at school, district, and state levels to document, track, and advance quality and sustainability improvement goals as well as assess trauma responsiveness. Click [here](#) to learn more

Additional Resources on Impact:

- Link to the aforementioned Compassion Resilience Toolkit: <http://compassionresiliencetoolkit.org/>
- Center for Creative Leadership (2020). Measuring Impact of Leadership Development Investments: 6 Steps, [Measuring Impact of Leadership Development Investments: 6 Steps |](#)
- Gugerty, M. & Karlan, D. (2018). Ten Reasons Not to Measure Impact- and What to do Instead. *Stanford Social Innovations Review*. [Ten Reasons Not to Measure Impact—and What to Do Instead \(ssir.org\)](#)



- National Council of Nonprofits, Evaluation and Measurement of Outcomes, [Evaluation and Measurement of Outcomes | National Council of Nonprofits CCL](#)
- Shane, S. (2015). The Power of Story in School Transformation. *Edutopia*. [The Power of Story in School Transformation | Edutopia](#).
- Simon, S. Everyone has a WHY. Do you know yours? [Find Your WHY \(simonsinek.com\)](#)
- **Video:** This video captures Project AWARE Michigan's state and local leaderships' celebrations, challenges, and lessons learned over five years (2014-2018) through the on-going journey of cultivating a statewide culture of school mental health championship in Michigan. It is a powerful testimony to the extraordinary work of AWARE stakeholders- from government program officers to technical assistance partners to fellow AWARE leaders across the country, many hands go into this work's impact. This video is *one* capture of a larger national fabric of school mental health championship.
- Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness & Resilience in Education) is a 5 - year SAMHSA grant program designed to help state and local education agencies 1) increase awareness of mental health issues among school-age youth; 2) train educators and other youth-serving adults to detect and respond to mental health issues; and 3) connect children, youth, and families who may experience behavioral health issues with appropriate services. Part of the initiative's first cohort, Michigan Department of Education launched AWARE in 2014 and closed the grant in 2019. **See the video here:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRXO59mpktE&feature=youtu.be>

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