



# Connor's Climb Foundation


School Connectedness  
as a Protective Factor

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[WWW.CONNORSCLIMB.ORG](http://WWW.CONNORSCLIMB.ORG)



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## AGENDA

- What is School Connectedness?
- School Connectedness & Suicidal Behavior
- Measuring School Connectedness
- Interventions for Improving School Connectedness

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## TAKE A BREAK IF NEEDED!



YOU are important!  
Check in with yourself  
throughout the  
hour....take a break if  
you need one!

**988**  
**SUICIDE**  
**& CRISIS**  
**LIFELINE**

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## WHO WE ARE



- Funding for SOS Signs of Suicide Student Program
- Facilitator training & technical assistance for the SOS program
- Trusted adult training for school staff and other community members
- Student Ambassador leadership program
- Stick it To Stigma awareness events

### OUR MISSION:

The mission of Connor's Climb Foundation is to provide suicide prevention education by raising awareness, reducing stigma, and equipping youth, educators, and the community at large with tools and resources focused on the vulnerable age group of 10–24-year-olds, to New Hampshire and bordering communities

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## OUR IMPACT



### ➤ In 2024

- **53 NH schools** received SOS support
- We facilitated **73 trainings**
  - **143 schools**
  - **19 agencies**
  - **3,866 trusted adults trained**



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## MEET YOUR TRAINER



Sarah Gould has been working with and advocating for children and families for more than 15 years. She has experience in both the public school and non-profit world. As a certified School Counselor, she understands the day-to-day challenges of working with youth and is passionate about equipping school staff and the community with the tools they need to tackle these challenges.



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## What is School Connectedness?



"The belief by students that adults in the school community care about their learning and them as individuals."

(Waters and Cross (2010), p. 165)

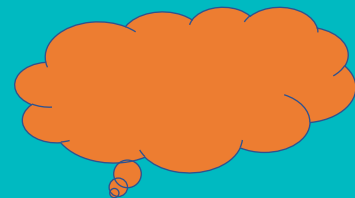
3 Components:

- Interpersonal Relationships
- Relationship to school
- Attitudes Toward School Importance

(Barber and Schluterman (2008))

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## Interpersonal Relationships



- Positive relationships with peers & adults at school
- Feeling cared about & respected by adults at school
- Perceived ability to interact with adults at school

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## Relationship to School



School Belonging

- Feeling part of the school
- Feeling safe in school
- Feeling happy at school

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## Attitude toward School Importance



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Caring about school

2

Trying to do one's best at school

3

Supportive learning environment




Clear & appropriate expectations




Perceived fairness


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## School Connectedness & Suicidal Behavior





School  
connectedness




Suicidal  
Behavior

### Other Benefits

- Better mental health outcomes (decreased depression and anxiety)
- Lower sexual health risks
- Lower likelihood of using substances
- Lower risk of encountering or participating in violence
- Increase in health behaviors (physical activity, healthy eating, pro-social behaviors)
- Increase in grades and test scores
- Better school attendance
- Increase in graduation rates (drug free NH website)

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## Assessing School Connectedness



National School Climate Center

<https://schoolclimate.org/services/measuring-school-climate-csci/>

Create your own: Sample Questions

- Do you have at least 1 adult in the school who you can talk to about important things?
- Do people you care about tell you that school is important?
- Are you involved with activities at school?
- Do you feel teachers at this school care about their students?
- Do your teachers give you extra help when needed?
- Do you feel like you fit in at school?

Lohmeier & Lee (2011)

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## Assessing School Connectedness



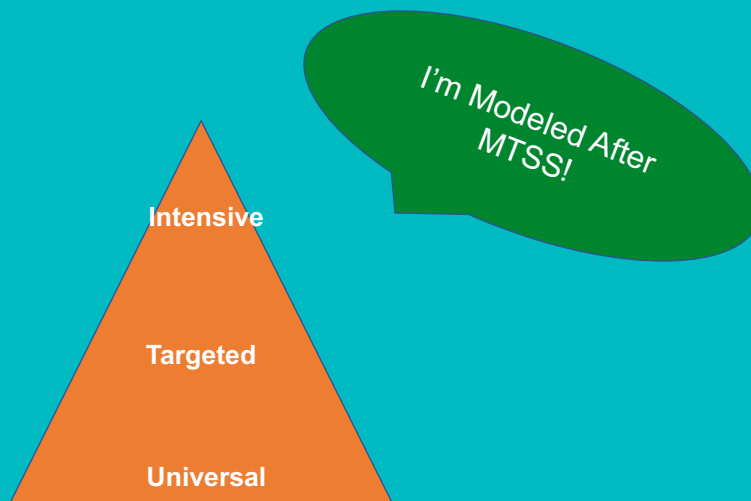
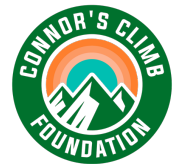
### "Dot Activity"

- Ask teachers to identify students they feel connected to within the building
- Ask students to identify teachers they feel connected to within the building
- Compare lists
- Identify students without a connection




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## Interventions




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Engage all stakeholders in decision making

- Democratic classrooms when appropriate
- Assess School Connectedness of all students
- School-wide community service projects
- Utilize surveys for all stakeholders & utilize data in decision making
- Provide regular opportunities for families and communities to offer feedback
- Allow students input on classroom rules, how classroom time is spent, etc.


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Partner with families, so they can be actively involved in their children's education.

- "Happy Grams"
- Targeted Volunteer Recruitment
- Home Visits (preventative, positive)
- Commitment to engaging all parents
- Educate parents on reasons for assignments/assessments
- Parenting education (speakers, "Coffee with the Counselor", etc.)


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Give students what they need to be happy and healthy

- Greet students by name as they enter class or as you pass them in the hallway
- Regularly ask about students' general well-being
- Get to know students' strengths, interests and goals – find something you have in common with as many students as you can
- Let students get to know a little about you personally by sharing some personal interests & use humor to build trust
- Match each student with a staff member with similar interests
- Build physical and psychological safety
- Ensure school policies and procedures effectively reduce bullying


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Utilize "good teaching" and best practices to form a classroom your students want to be part of

- Ensure classroom management is consistent
- Recognize the contributions that all students make
- Encourage students to share their own personal experiences with one another
- Be positive & encouraging of all students
- Provide clear instructions
- Communicate high expectations for all students
- Be aware of classroom social dynamics
- Instructional monitoring & support
- Ensure content is relevant
- Small learning environments (particularly advisory in MS and HS)

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Identify professional development topics that would be helpful for you to improve your students' school connectedness

**NH DOE Office of Social and Emotional Wellness**

- Toolkits – Family Engagement, Suicide Prevention, Bullying and CyberBullying, Social Media, Trauma Informed Schools
  - <https://nhdoe.instructure.com/courses/37/pages/osew-toolkits>
- Everyone is an Asset Builder training
  - <https://www.education.nh.gov/who-we-are/division-of-learner-support/bureau-of-student-wellness/professional-development>

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Identify professional development topics that would be helpful for you to improve your students' school connectedness

**National School Climate Center**

- <https://schoolclimate.org>

**Four Building Blocks of Hope**

- <https://positiveexperience.org/resource/the-four-building-block-of-hope/>

**CDC – Healthy Schools (School Connectedness)**

- [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/school\\_connectedness.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/school_connectedness.htm)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/vhs/index.html>  
(Healthy Schools Virtual School)

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## Targeted & Intensive Intervention Examples



- Mentoring programs for identified students/groups of students (i.e. [Check & Connect](#), [One Trusted Adult](#))
- Allow space for students to develop relationships with individuals who share their interests
- Allow students to have a “special job” within the school community
- Work with student to create a club/activity they are interested in
- Have student teach their classmates a skill
- Encourage students to propose a change they would like to see within the school
- Small group social opportunities (i.e. One Trusted Adult)
- Family supports as necessary

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## ACTION STEPS



### 1

Choose a way to formally or informally assess School Connectedness & advocate for it to be implemented

### 2

Choose 1 (or more) of the universal or targeted strategies to implement into your routine

### 3

Choose 1 strategy to engage parents more effectively & implement it

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## 2023 5K & FAMILY WALK September 21, 2025



Join us for Connor's Climb Foundation's annual 5K and Family Walk! Runners and walkers of all ages and abilities are invited to come out, enjoy the company of family, friends, and community members, and support youth mental health and suicide prevention, all under a beautiful New England autumn sun!



### FEATURING:

- Speakers discussing the impact of suicide prevention education
- FREE refreshments & swag for participants
- Raffles with fabulous prizes



See you at the finish line!

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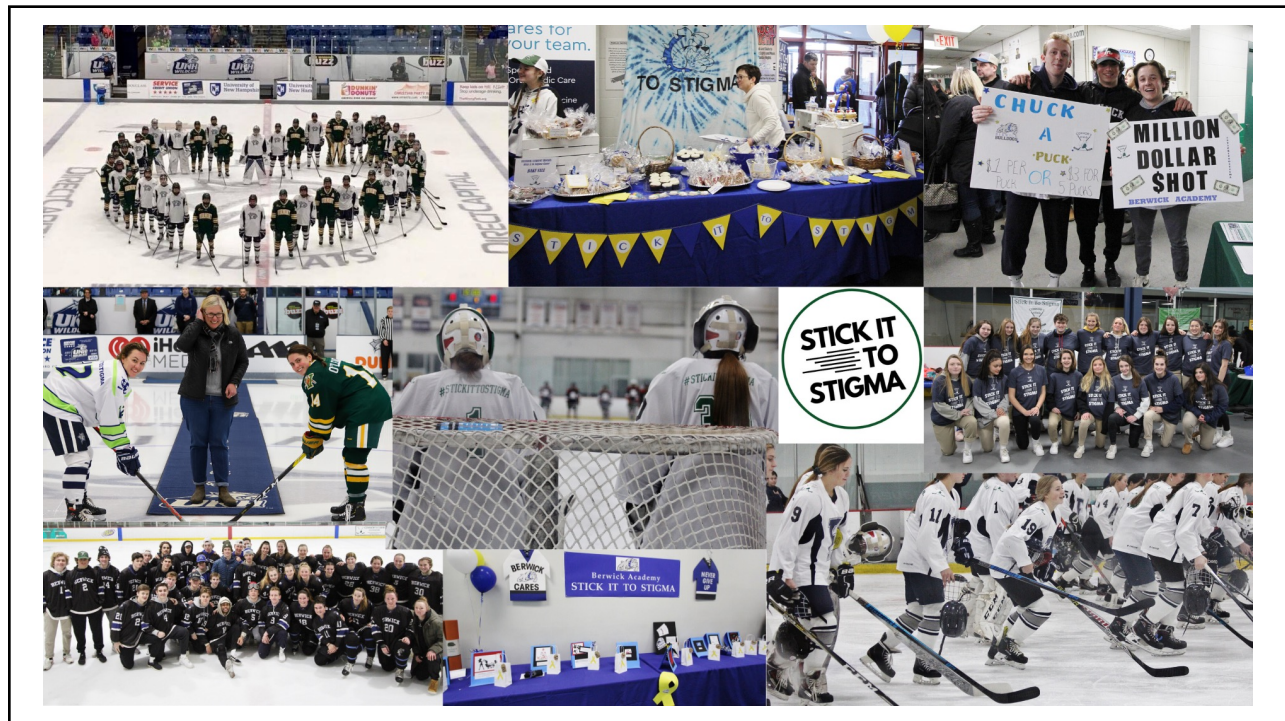
## NEW VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!



- Do you have a passion for mental health and suicide prevention?
- Looking for a way to give back?
- Help us provide education to more schools and communities throughout NH!
- Become a trained CCF volunteer training facilitator!

Contact Sarah Gould:  
[sarah@connorsclimb.org](mailto:sarah@connorsclimb.org)

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# THANK YOU!

Follow us on social media:  
**@ConnorsClimb**

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