



Supporting Every Student: 18 Research-Based Interventions for Your MTSS

Strategies Across Literacy, Math, Life Skills, and Behavior

A strong multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) must provide educators with research-based strategies that support students' academic, behavioral, social, and emotional growth. But finding interventions that fit the needs of students and educators can be difficult. Your time and energy is precious, and you want to spend your day working to create a better school for your students, not scouring websites and workbooks for high-quality interventions.

In this toolkit, you'll find detailed, step-by-step guides to 18 high-quality strategies in the central areas of student growth: academics, behavior, and life skills. Each guide provides information about the strategy, use in MTSS tiers and developmental stages, and detailed implementation instructions.

Whether you are a classroom teacher working directly with students, a member of a school-based MTSS team working to build your school's intervention library, or a district leader ensuring district-wide MTSS implementation, we hope these intervention strategy guides will be a powerful resource to help you holistically support every student.

How to use these guides:

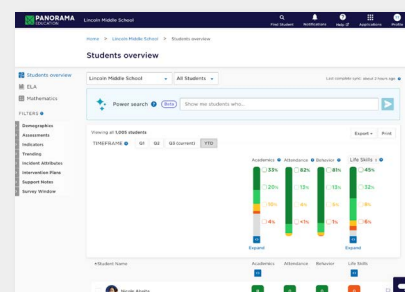
- **District Leaders:** Incorporate these strategies into your district-wide intervention menu. You can also share these resources with your school teams and consider ways to consistently implement interventions districtwide.
- **School Leaders:** Bring these strategies to PLCs, staff meetings, or MTSS and Student Support team meetings to share with staff and support students at every tier.
- **Classroom Teachers and Support Staff:** Try these activities in class, small group, or individual settings to support the academic, behavioral, and growth of every student.

Meet Panorama Student Success

[Student Success](#) is the leading K-12 platform for turning insights into effective student supports. With unified data and intervention planning tools, Success makes it easy to understand student needs and deliver support to drive academic outcomes.

Educators use Student Success to create and track MTSS interventions, set goals, and select progress monitoring methods. And with Panorama Playbook, schools and districts move from understanding data to taking action. With Playbook, districts can explore nearly 900 strategies for academic, behavior, and well-being support.

The interventions in this toolkit have been selected from Playbook. These evidence-based strategies provide educators with the tools and resources needed to plan, track, and implement effective interventions—supporting holistic student success within an MTSS framework.



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1. Math Journal

Focus Area: Mathematics • **MTSS Tiers:** 1, 2, and 3

Developmental Stage: Upper Elementary, Middle School, High School

About This Strategy:

Math Journals are a collection of thoughts, explanations, and illustrations that show evidence of a student's learning. Journals give students practice at putting their knowledge into words and communicating mathematically, and help students develop their own thought processes as they explain their understanding of math concepts and problem-solving strategies. They can also provide a platform for students to share any concerns or problems they may be having that interfere with their learning the material.

Instructions:

Students may use their Math Journals to:

- Take notes on important ideas, definitions, and formulas
- Solve problems
- Illustrate ideas
- Explain their thinking
- Reflect on their learning

Preparation

- Download and distribute the **math journaling prompts**:
 - To download a **Word document**, click [here](#).
 - To create a copy of the **Google Doc**, click [here](#).
- Ensure all students have a **journal**. Students can use a notebook or piece of paper.
- Consider the lesson objectives and the types of questions you want to ask students.
- Journaling can be done daily, weekly, or at the end of a topic.

Action

1. Assign a writing prompt or problem.
2. Allow time for students to complete the task. Walk around the classroom to answer questions and provide guidance.
3. Allow students to share their work in pairs or with the class. Encourage students to use mathematical vocabulary.
4. Collect journals to evaluate methods, mathematical reasoning, and solutions.
5. Give feedback.

2. Question-Answer Relationships (QARs)

Focus Area: Mathematics • **MTSS Tiers:** Tiers 1 and 2

Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Middle School, High School

About This Strategy:

Students can use Question-Answer Relationships (QARs) to help recognize how to interpret math graphics. QARs require students to determine whether the answer to the question is found directly from reading a graphic, through a search of the graphic to make a connection between parts, through an interpretation made based on the graphic, or without use of the graphic.

Instructions:

Preparation

- Download the QAR worksheet:
 - To download a **Word document**, click [here](#).
 - To create a copy of the **Google Doc**, click [here](#).
- Ensure students can differentiate among graphic types.
- Ensure students can read graphics and relay data displayed in graphics.
- Create a set of four data questions and answers relating to a graphic, one that matches each of the four QARs.
- Create a worksheet of problems that include graphics.

Action

1. Have students work in small groups. Give each group the question/answer sets.
2. Ask groups to identify the QAR associated with each question/answer. Groups should include reasoning for their choices.
3. Discuss the findings as a whole class.
4. Provide each student with a worksheet of **graphic problems**. Have students work individually to choose the appropriate QAR for each question.
5. Discuss the findings from the QAR determinations as a class.
6. Have students use the appropriate QAR to answer the questions.

3. Anchor Charts

Focus Area: Mathematics, Problem Solving • **MTSS Tiers:** Tiers 1, 2 and 3

Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Middle School, High School

About This Strategy:

Anchor Charts in math are visual displays commonly used for vocabulary, processes, and strategies. Anchor Charts engage students in the learning process as they work with the teacher to create them.

Instructions:

Preparation

- Download the Anchor Chart Template.
 - To download a **Word document**, click [here](#).
 - To create a copy of the **Google Doc**, click [here](#).
- Prepare the framework for the Anchor Chart in advance. Include a title, headers, a blank chart, etc., but don't fill in the details.
 - Create the Anchor Chart on paper, whiteboard, or on the computer.
 - You may also choose to print copies of the templates for students to fill out for their own notes.

Action

1. Work with the students as a class to complete the chart.
2. Ask prompting questions to encourage student involvement.
3. Make Anchor Charts colorful; use pictures, models, or other visual representations; and keep them simple.
4. Anchor Charts can be displayed in the classroom, or they can be individual charts on paper that students can keep in their notebooks. Limit the number of Anchor Charts that are displayed at one time, and reuse them during the year as a reminder of prior learning as students learn new skills.

4. Explore Before Explain

Focus Area: Mathematics, Problem Solving • **MTSS Tiers:** Tiers 1, 2 and 3

Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Middle School, High School

About This Strategy:

Explore Before Explain allows students to explore real-life situations as they relate to a concept before an explanation of the concept occurs. Making connections between math concepts and the real world will help students be more engaged and remember what they've learned.

Instructions:

Preparation

- Think about student experiences that can relate to the math concept in consideration. Consider how students could explore an experience to discover useful information about the concept.
 - a demonstration
 - using the classroom environment
 - describing a relatable scenario
 - watching a video
- In elementary school, this might be a great time to bring in a guest expert—a parent or other relative of one of the students who uses this concept in their work or daily lives.
- Students must be given the opportunity to explore the math concept on their own before those thoughts can be shaped into a formal definition or process.

Action

1. Engage students in the context. Provide expectations of the task at hand. Do not formally introduce the math concept at this stage.
2. Allow students to explore a common experience related to the concept.
3. Explain how the exploration connects to the formal concept.
4. Have students elaborate on the concept by applying the concept to a new scenario or using follow-up practice questions.
5. Evaluate student understanding of the formal math concept.

5. Four-Step Problem Solving

Focus Area: Mathematics, Problem Solving • **MTSS Tiers:** Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3

Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Middle School, High School

About This Strategy:

The Four-Step Problem-Solving Approach is a consistent way for students to develop skills in understanding what a problem is asking, choosing the most appropriate method for solving problems, and reviewing answers. It allows students to collaborate and share ideas and promotes healthy discussions about best practices in mathematics.

Instructions:

Preparation

- Download and distribute the four-step problem solving worksheet. (The worksheet can be adapted for grade-level-appropriate language and plan options for lower grades.)
 - To download a **Word document**, [click here](#).
 - To create a copy of the **Google Doc**, [click here](#).
- Choose the problems for which this approach can be applied. It is helpful to use a variety of problems, including some that can be solved using more than one strategy. This will allow for a class discussion afterward on methods used and eventual best practices. Students can also see that sometimes there is more than one way to solve a problem.

Action

1. Assign a problem to students.
Ask students questions to help them focus on understanding the problem. See the Four-Step Problem-Solving Approach worksheet for guiding questions. Alternatively, refer students to Step 1 of the worksheet. Encourage students not to rush through this step.
2. Guide students to move from step to step through the four-step approach, reiterating the need for patience as they work through their plans. As you walk around, ask students to share their progress with you.
3. After completion of the four-step approach, have students share their plans and analyses from Step 4. Be sure to discuss difficulties they encountered and alternative strategies.

6. Story Mapping

Focus Area: Literacy, Writing • **MTSS Tiers:** 1, 2, and 3

Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Middle School, High School

About This Strategy:

Story Mapping is a strategy where students create a graphic organizer to visualize the elements and structure of a story. It equips students with a reliable method of identifying the key elements of a story and their connections to each other and understanding the text on a structural level. Story Mapping can be used as an individual or group exercise, learning strategy, or an assessment tool.

Instructions:

Story maps can have a variety of looks and layouts, depending on the level of your students. At higher grades, maps might include the story exposition, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. Lower grades might simply include the setting, characters, and events in the beginning, middle, and end of the story.

Preparation

- Prepare a blank story map for each student.
 - **Word document:**
 - Download a template for elementary students [here](#).
 - Download a template for middle and high school students [here](#).
 - **Google Docs:**
 - Make a copy for elementary students [here](#).
 - Make a copy for secondary students [here](#).
- In order to use the story map, students must be familiar with the elements of a story: character, plot, setting, and theme.
- The terminology for various story elements may be scaffolded, or adapted for younger grades, such as:
 - Character, Setting, Actions, Problem, Solution
 - Character, Setting, Events, Ideas
 - Who, Where, What happens, Why

Action

1. Assign a problem to students.
2. Ask students questions to help them focus on understanding the problem. See the Four-Step Problem-Solving Approach worksheet for guiding questions. Alternatively, refer students to Step 1 of the worksheet. Encourage students not to rush through this step.
3. Guide students to move from step to step through the four-step approach, reiterating the need for patience as they work through their plans. As you walk around, ask students to share their progress with you.
4. After completion of the four-step approach, have students share their plans and analyses from Step 4. Be sure to discuss difficulties they encountered and alternative strategies.

7. Generating Questions

Focus Area: Literacy, Comprehension • **MTSS Tiers:** Tiers 1, 2, and 3

Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary

About This Strategy:

Generating Questions is a strategy that helps students engage with the text and self-monitor comprehension. This strategy enriches the reading experience by having students ask questions before, during, and after reading to help them clarify, revise, and extend their understanding of a text.

Instructions:

Preparation

- Select a reading passage that will be challenging for most students.
- Prepare a two-column questioning chart as described.
- Make copies of blank questioning charts for students. You can download a copy [here](#).

Action

1. Explain that reading is not a passive activity. To understand and think about a text, readers must engage with the text. One way to engage with a text is to ask questions. Some questions may be answered by the text and help a reader clarify comprehension. Some questions may require inferring, concluding, or evaluating. To answer these types of questions, readers combine text details with prior knowledge and experiences.
2. Model the strategy: Display question prompts as follows in a two-column chart:
 - **Comprehension column:** Who? What? Where? When?
 - **Thinking column:** Why? How?
3. Provide students with a passage to read that will be challenging for most of them.
4. Point out that before students do any thinking about the passage, they should clarify their understanding.
5. Ask four volunteers to provide questions for the **Comprehension column** of the chart. Record their questions.
6. Then, lead the class to revisit the text and provide answers to the questions.
7. Point out that now that students have clarified their understanding of the text, it's time to do some thinking about the ideas in the text.
8. Ask two volunteers to provide questions for the **Thinking column** of the chart. Record their questions.
9. Lead students to combine text details with prior knowledge and experiences to answer the two thinking questions.

8. 3H Strategy

Focus Area: Literacy, Comprehension • **MTSS Tiers:** Tier 2 and Tier 3

Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Middle School, High School

About This Strategy:

3H is a mnemonic learning strategy that students can use to remember how to answer different types of comprehension questions. It involves the three types of question-answer relationships: **here**, **hidden**, and **in my head**.

Instructions:

Preparation

- Select reading passages
- [Download the 3H poster](#)

Action

1. Explain why students should learn this strategy. Using the 3H poster, explain each type of question.
 - **Here:** Refers to answers that are found in the text directly “on the lines.” These answers are typically found in one place.
 - **Hidden:** Refers to answers that are found “between the lines.” These answers can be found by joining together information that is found in different places in the text.
 - **In My Head:** Refers to answers that are found “beyond the lines.” These answers come from background knowledge or may involve opinions or what a reader thinks.
2. Give an example of each type of question from a current movie or fairy tale students are familiar with or use relevant examples from the school’s culture.
3. Model the strategy: After explaining the strategy, proceed with modeling. Use a think aloud strategy, and voice out the thought process behind each stage.
 - Instruct the students to write “Here,” “Hidden,” or “In My Head” next to each comprehension question. Repeat this activity with different passages and different comprehension questions. This may need to occur over the course of several days based on the needs of the students
4. Guided practice: Guide students in performing the strategy in small groups or in pairs. If students need additional support, they can orally recite the description of the three H’s or use notecards with a description written on them. Monitor student progress.
 - During this time, scaffold the learning and support students who need assistance in using the strategy. They can also model the think aloud strategy (when in pairs) to strengthen comprehension and learning of the steps involved.
5. Independent practice: After guided practice, students should only use the strategy independently, once they have shown they have mastered the strategy.

9. KWL Chart

Focus Area: Literacy, Comprehension • **MTSS Tiers:** Tiers 1, 2, and 3
Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary

About This Strategy:

The KWL Chart is a strategy which helps to structure a lesson that introduces new content, in any subject area, by having students write out what they **know (K)** about the topic, what they **want to know (W)** about the topic, and what they **learned (L)** once the lesson is complete.

Instructions:

Preparation

- Provide each student with a blank KWL Chart before beginning the lesson:
 - To download a **Word Document**, click [here](#).
 - To create a copy of the **Google Doc**, click [here](#).
- The strategy works best with informational texts but may also be helpful when reading historical fiction to gauge students' prior knowledge about a particular period of history.

Action

1. Tell students the topic of the upcoming lesson.
2. Have students fill out the chart as a group (by calling on volunteers) or individually (written out on the chart) stating what they already want to know about the topic and what they'd like to know. This may include questions they have about the topic.
3. Teach the lesson as you normally would, or use the student feedback to tailor your lesson or suggest further reading.
4. Reserve five minutes at the end of the session for students to complete the last section of the chart.

10. Retelling

Focus Area: Literacy, Comprehension, Vocabulary • **MTSS Tiers:** Tiers 2, 3
Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary

About This Strategy:

Retelling is a strategy where students read or listen to a text (or both), and recount the story either verbally or in writing. It can be an excellent tool to develop students' reading, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skills. It also serves as an assessment tool, which gives the teacher and student important insight into the student's comprehension and language skills.

Instructions:

Preparation:

- Download and distribute copies of the retelling worksheet.
 - To download a **Word Document**, click [here](#).
 - To create a copy of the **Google Doc**, click [here](#).
- Locate an on-level story you would like students to use to practice the strategy and decide whether you will read it aloud or have students read it independently. Attempt to find a story that students are unfamiliar with. Start with short and simple stories and choose more complex stories as students begin to master the strategy.
- **Note:** While this was designed as a targeted intervention, it can also be adapted for use at the Tier 1 level

Action

1. Have the student read the story aloud, or read it aloud to them. If students are reading aloud, correct pronunciation errors.
2. Model retelling the story to the student by including all major events in order and naming all major characters. Include the story's problem and solution and do not include unimportant details.
3. Ask the student to reread the story, or reread it to them.
4. Ask the student to retell the story again on their own in as much detail as they can. The retelling can be oral or written.
5. If the student pauses during the retelling or writing, simply prompt the student to write or tell you more about what they read.
6. When the student is done with the retelling, have them reflect on how well they feel they retold the story. Provide positive feedback and correct errors in their retelling. Provide suggestions for "next time."
7. Practice the strategy again with a different story, asking students to do the retelling.
8. Continue practicing the strategy with stories that are more complex.

11. Check and Connect

Focus Area: Behavior • **MTSS Tiers:** Tiers 2 and 3

Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Middle School, High School

About This Strategy:

Check and Connect is a long-term intervention used with K-12 students who show signs of disengagement with school (such as poor attendance, behavioral issues, and/or low grades). The goal is to build a trusting relationship between the student and a caring mentor who can both advocate for the student as well as challenge them to ensure they are engaged academically and socially.

Instructions:

The Check and Connect intervention is a long-term strategy that pairs mentors with students for at least two years. These mentors function as liaisons between the school, the student, and their family to build a constructive relationship and ensure authentic, two-way communication.

The Check and Connect includes four main components:

- **The Mentor:** This is an individual assigned to a specific student for the purpose of building a strong relationship with them. A mentor can be any adult in a school building, usually a classroom teacher or support staff member. This relationship is developed over time, with a focus on long-term success at school and with learning.
- **The Check:** The process where a mentor monitors student performance across attendance, behavior, and academics. [Click here](#) to download a monitoring form for use with high school students.
- **The Connect:** This refers to mentors providing personalized and timely interventions for the student that are designed to support skill-building in specific areas. These interventions should be informed by “check” data that is readily available to school personnel.
- **Family Engagement:** Mentors deliberately partner with the student’s family and function as liaisons between home and school, striving to build authentic family-school partnerships and develop a two-way communication system.

Each week, the mentor spends approximately one hour performing the “Check” and “Connect” components of the intervention, along with other activities (engaging with family members, collaborating with school staff, or referring to resources) when appropriate.

There are **three main elements** to keep top-of-mind when implementing the Check and Connect intervention:

- 1. Relationships:** The relationships (between both the student and mentor as well as the mentor and family members) must be based in mutual trust and open communication. This is nurtured through the long-term commitment of the intervention and focus on promoting the student's success over the course of two years.
- 2. Problem-Solving and Capacity-Building:** In their work with the student, the mentor should strive to take a cognitive-behavioral approach to promote skill-building around resolving conflict constructively, proactively searching for solutions (versus blaming others), developing coping skills, and eventually reducing dependency on the mentor.
- 3. Persistence Plus:** This refers to persistence, continuity, and consistency. The mentor serves as a persistent source of motivation, grows to be familiar with the student and their family, and continually underscores the importance of education.

12. Classroom Buddies

Focus Area: Behavior • **MTSS Tiers:** Tiers 1 and 2

Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary

About This Strategy:

Classroom Buddies is a peer intervention program that is designed to intentionally create opportunities for students to get to know one another, form connections, collaborate, and learn together.

Instructions:

Preparation

- Create a system for assigning buddies and pairing students together. Pairings should change each week. Share this on a poster with students at the beginning of each week.
- Assign buddy pairs randomly (not by gender or other social groupings). Never force students to be buddies if they feel uncomfortable.
- Determine how many times per week you will have established “Classroom Buddies time” built into the schedule.
- This strategy should take only 5 to 10 minutes to implement. If possible, it is recommended that teachers integrate this short strategy into the weekly schedule to reinforce the idea that interacting with peers is a valuable part of the day.

Action

1. Before the first Classroom Buddies session, share some details about how it will work.
 - Students can check their Classroom Buddy pairing at the beginning of each week. Everyone will have the opportunity to pair with each member of the class.
 - Students will complete short, fun activities with their buddy.
2. Share the Classroom Buddy assignments for the first week.
3. During predetermined “Classroom Buddy times,” share a short activity or icebreaker with the pairs. These should be supportive of having students work together and get to know each other (e.g., solving a puzzle; working on an art project).

13. Social Stories

Focus Area: Behavior • **MTSS Tiers:** Tier 2

Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Middle School

About This Strategy:

Social Stories is an intervention that involves a description of situations or skills in terms of relevant social cues. The Social Stories intervention is primarily used for both social behaviors and routines that you want to increase as well as those that are new and anxiety-provoking for students. Social Stories are used to teach individual students or small groups about the “who, what, when, where, and why” of social interactions and to clarify social expectations.

Instructions:

Preparation

- Stories are used to describe social situations that are specific to individuals and circumstances while promoting self-awareness, self-management, and social perspective-taking.
- Select an option from [this library of pre-written social stories](#) and adapt it to your students’ needs
- You may also consider writing your own using [these guidelines](#) and personalizing the story to your students’ context.

Action

1. Tell the student that you want to share a story with them. Explain that you helped write the story and that it focuses on specific situations that you’ve seen the student encounter at school.
2. Review the social story in-depth with the student. Be sure to provide space for the student to process and ask questions.
3. Before the next time the student is asked to perform the routine/procedure/activity or encounter the situation that is the focus of the story, briefly review the social story with them. When you’re first getting started, it’s important to review the story on a daily basis. After the student has reviewed and learned the social story, you can have them review it on their own each day or week.
4. Monitor the student’s progress and positively reinforce their prosocial interactions, calming strategies, or other behaviors outlined in the story.

14. R.E.S.P.O.N.D. Framework

Focus Area: Behavior • **MTSS Tiers:** Tiers 2 and 3

Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Middle School, High School, Adult

About This Strategy:

The R.E.S.P.O.N.D Framework provides educators with a framework for safely navigating situations in which a student is in crisis. This co-regulation strategy is a trauma-informed and proactive approach for safely managing disruptive behavior.

Instructions:

- **R:** Read the room to understand the level of safety. Are you able to directly de-escalate with the student? Do you need a support staff member to take the student to an alternate location?
- **E:** Engage the student by validating the emotions that they are experiencing. For example:
 - *"I can see that you are upset about _____."*
 - *"I can tell that you are angry right now, and that is OK; you are showing me that you're frustrated, and that is OK, but it's not okay to be unsafe."*
- **S:** Support the student, making sure to restate what they say if they verbalize a need. Try to be an active listener and embrace silence.
- **P:** Provide the student with the opportunity to take a break in a calming corner, go for a walk, engage in an alternative activity (e.g., drawing, reading a book, etc.).
- **O:** Open the door to problem-solving with the student. Although a mentor or interventionist or paraprofessional may take the lead with de-escalation, the student needs to know that you are playing an active role in processing the event and are there for them.
- **N:** Name the behavior along with the expectations around it. For example:
 - *"I am giving you time and space and setting the timer for five minutes. Then, if you are ready to talk with me, we can chat about why you think you need a different seat. Does that sound OK? I want you to know that you have a choice but we also need to make sure everyone in the classroom is safe."*
- **D:** De-escalate as much as possible, based on the situation and the student's needs. If you feel as though the level of emotional dysregulation isn't something you can manage without significant disruption, request assistance from a paraeducator or another colleague to cover your class while you step out with the student. If you decide to step out of the classroom with the student, the goal should be to ultimately push back in and return alongside the student so that they can reconnect with their classmates and "restart."

15. Growth Mindset Statements

Focus Area: Life Skills • **MTSS Tiers:** Tiers 1, 2, and 3

Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Middle School, High School

About This Strategy:

Growth Mindset statements are statements that aim at motivating students to develop to their best potential by reflecting on and working on their abilities. This strategy strives to shift a student's mindset from a fixed one (where abilities are considered innate) to a growth mindset (where abilities can be acquired and improved through effort and study). This outlook creates a positive approach toward the learning process and builds the resilience students need to manage setbacks in learning.

Instructions:

Preparation

- First, understand the difference between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset:
 - Students with a **fixed mindset** assume that talent and intelligence are inborn. Because of this, they may think that they cannot improve, so they resist learning.
 - Students with a **growth mindset** believe that they can develop their skills through practice and challenging work. They are also receptive to feedback as they believe it helps them improve their performance.

Action

1. Reflect on how encouragement and feedback can foster a grade-appropriate growth mindset in students in various learning situations. Fostering a growth mindset requires intentional effort and can be integrated into everyday classroom practice.
2. Remind students that mistakes are part of the learning process. Point out examples of your own mistakes and share steps you took to correct your mistakes.
3. Teach students to overcome challenges in learning. Portray difficult tasks as fun and exciting.
4. Promote cooperative learning. Explain that working together develops team spirit and enhances the possibility of finding solutions to challenges. Encourage growth mindset statements among students. When students work in small groups, direct them to make positive statements to classmates as they work together.
5. Encourage students to share their goals in a journal and hold periodic discussions with them on their progress in meeting these goals. Ensure them that their goals can be met in small steps, achievable by the end of the grade.

6. Examples of growth mindset statements to use with students:

- *"This story is really good. The time taken to develop the plot has really helped."*
- *"Kiera, this is a tough assignment. It is fine to turn to your partner or ask me for help. Remember to use your checklist and you WILL complete the assignment!"*
- *"You had expected higher scores in your test, Juan. Let's come up with some ideas on how to prepare for the next test. I know you will put in the effort to improve your scores."*
- *Encourage students to say "I do not understand this material yet, but I'm getting there."*

16. Plus Delta T-Chart

Focus Area: Life Skills • **MTSS Tiers:** Tier 1

Developmental Stage: Upper Elementary, Middle School, High School

About This Strategy:

A plus delta T-chart is a simple tool that can be used to both help students reflect on their progress in learning as well as assist educators in analyzing their own teaching.

Incorporating plus delta in the classroom supports student agency, fosters a growth mindset, and increases learners' ownership over their own learning.

Instructions:

This strategy can be helpful when reflecting on an activity or unit of study. Educators and students can understand their strengths as well as areas for growth, and things that might need to change in future exercises.

Preparation

- Materials: poster paper or whiteboard

Action

1. Draw a T-chart on poster paper or a whiteboard. Draw a plus sign (+) at the top of the left side of the chart. Draw a delta sign (Δ) at the top of the other side.
2. After students complete a lesson or learning activity, ask them to reflect on the experience using the T-chart.
 - Ask: "What went well in this activity?"
3. Write student responses underneath the plus sign. The goal here is to encourage students to identify positive elements of the activity and highlight aspects that they want future lessons to continue incorporating.
4. After several minutes of reflecting about what went well, ask students to consider areas to improve.
 - Ask: "What could we change about this activity in the future?"
5. List student answers under the delta sign in the T-chart.
6. After a few minutes, review the full list of pluses and deltas. Work with the class to select one or two specific deltas that can be improved upon.
7. Start to co-create a plan or new class goals for specifically addressing these areas of improvement in the near future. These goals can range from changes in the delivery of a lesson to class-wide behavioral goals.

17. Circle of Concern

Focus Area: Life Skills • **MTSS Tiers:** Tier 1

Developmental Stage: Middle School, High School

About This Strategy:

This activity, adapted from the [Making Caring Common Project at Harvard University](#), helps students explore the concept of a “circle of concern” while building key social awareness and empathy skills. The goal of this exercise is to help students develop greater empathy, demonstrate ways to express empathy for others, and appreciate individual differences.

Instructions:

Preparation

- Materials: chart paper or whiteboard; journal or notebook; writing utensils

Action

1. Explain to students that a “circle of concern” is a group of individuals who we think about, care about, and interact with in a kind and thoughtful manner.
2. Illustrate an example by drawing a stick figure within two concentric circles. Share that the smaller circle is your circle of concern, with those closest to you inside it. The larger circle represents those who are outside your circle of concern.
 - *Share a few examples of people who might be inside of your circle of concern, and a few who are outside of it.*
 - *Say: “We all have circles of concern, and they look different for everyone. Because circles can be both confining as well as inclusive, we usually have people who fall outside of our circle of concern.”*
3. Provide students with 5-10 minutes to free-write about who at school they would consider to be inside their circle of concern (and who is not).
4. Ask for volunteers to share their circles of concern. Why are some people outside of their circle of concern? How might this affect those people? How might it affect our community as a whole?
5. Using large chart paper or a whiteboard, work as a group to brainstorm examples of groups/roles (vs. specific names) in the school community that are usually inside a student’s circle of concern, and groups that are usually outside the circle of concern.

6. Ask students to reflect on this and consider how one's circle of concern might be expanded. What actions might they take to expand their circle? What would be easy or hard about taking these actions? Record ideas and responses.
 - Examples: sitting with someone at lunch who they normally wouldn't; organizing an event with students they do not know; learning the names of cafeteria workers
7. Discuss how these actions might impact the school community. What benefits would be seen and felt?
8. Wrap-up the activity by asking students to journal about one change or action that they can commit to making within the next few days to expand their circle of concern.

18. My Trusted Person Plan

Focus Area: Life Skills • **MTSS Tiers:** Tiers 1 and 2

Developmental Stage: Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary

About This Strategy:

Use this lesson to guide students through a discussion of what it means to develop a relationship with a “trusted adult” and how to create a back-up plan if or when that person is not available to help.

Instructions:

PART 1: Define and Identify Trusted Adults

1. Define the term “trusted adult.”
 - *“Trusted adults are people whose words and actions make you feel safe. They are individuals who respect you and who you might talk to about a personal problem. A trusted adult can be any grown-up, from your teacher to a coach to a bus driver.”*
2. Explain to students that when they need help for their mental or physical health, trusted adults are important.
 - *“When you’re feeling upset or hurt, it’s important to identify adults in your life that you trust and that you can talk to about it.”*
 - *“When you are feeling sad or lonely, it’s important to talk to an adult about how you are feeling.”*
3. Guide students to define the words “trust” and “help” by showing them an example of a trusted adult that helps you. Explain why you chose this person, highlighting different characteristics they possess.
4. Model asking the following questions:
 - *“What helps me trust someone?”*
 - *“How does an adult help me?”*
 - *“What does an adult do that makes me feel safe?”*

PART 2: Describe a Trusted Adult

5. Give students a blank sheet of paper and drawing materials. Ask students to draw a picture of a trusted adult in their life helping them with something.
6. Ask the following questions as students draw:
 - *“Who is the person that is helping you?”*
 - *“How are they helping you?”*
 - *“Why did you choose this person?”*
 - *“Why do you trust them?”*

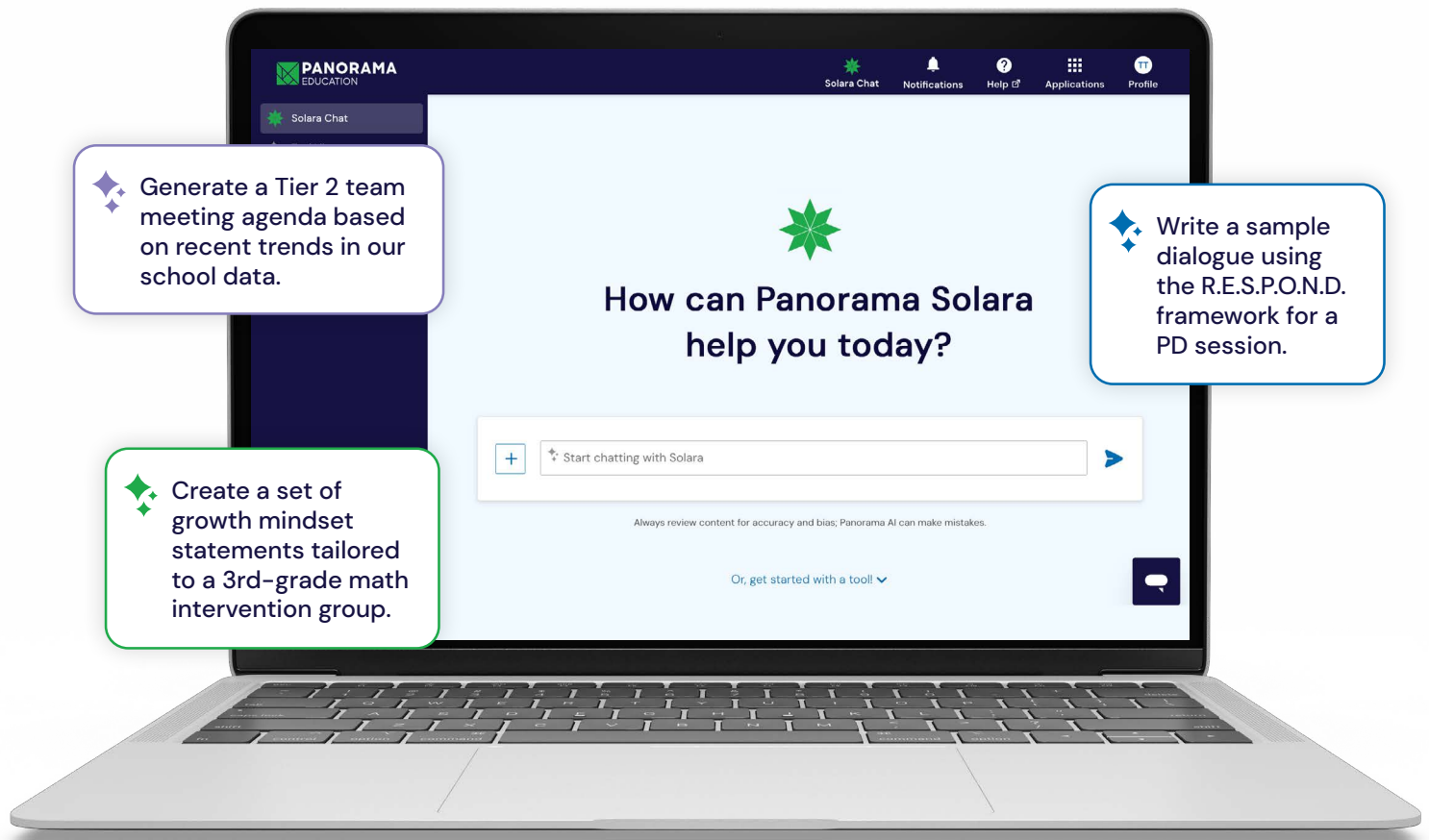
7. You can also prompt students to think of situations that are specific to their physical (e.g., taking care of a person when they are sick) and mental health (e.g., comforting when they are sad).
8. Discuss other example scenarios of when it might be appropriate to seek out a trusted adult during school.

PART 3: Seeking Out a Trusted Adult + Plan B

9. Split students into small groups and ask them to brainstorm ways that they might seek out a trusted adult in their school if they need support.
 - *“When might you go to find your trusted person?”*
 - *“What can your trusted person do to support you?”*
 - *“What is your Plan B if that person is not available? Are there other adults that you can talk to?”*

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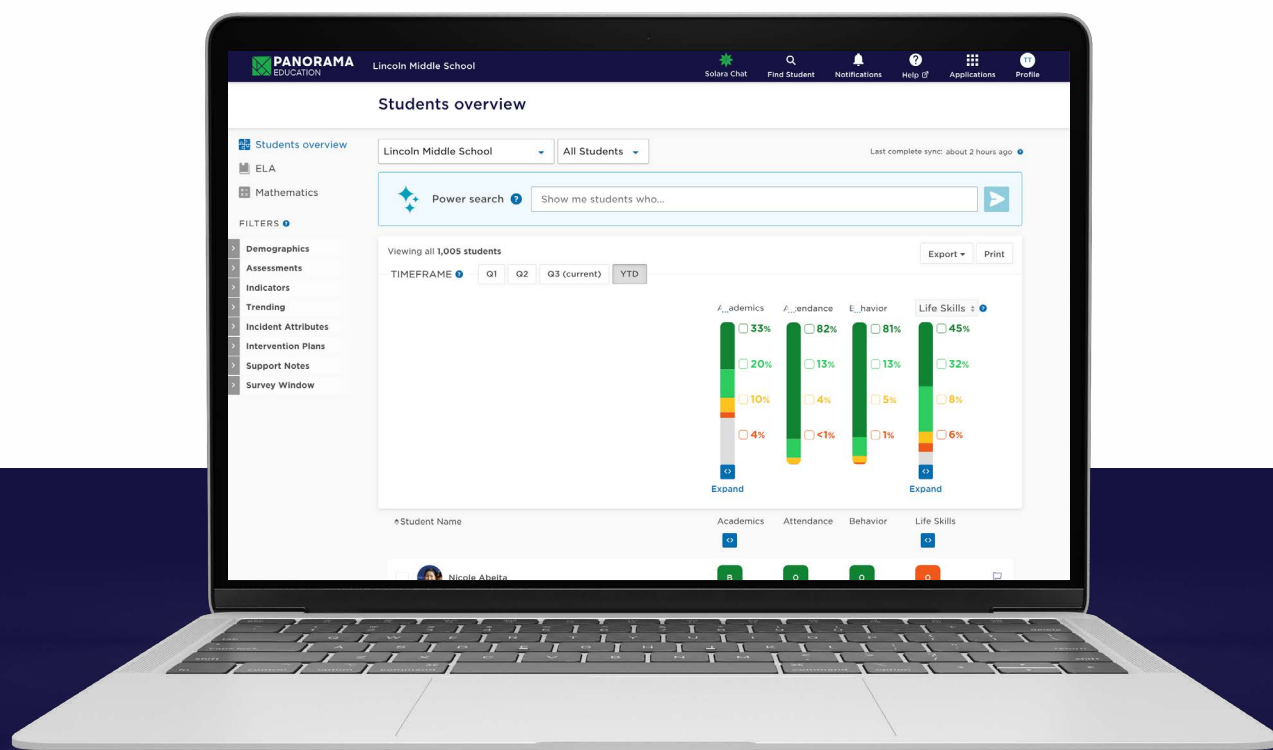
– Sarah Jay, Executive Director of Equitable MTSS, Boston Public Schools (MA)

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