

A background image showing a crowd of people with their hands raised, suggesting a supportive or celebratory atmosphere. The image is dimmed and serves as a backdrop for the text.

“So Glad You’re Still With Us”:

**Supporting Students’ Psychological Health and
Academic Engagement**

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Agenda

- What have you done well?
- Impact of covid-19
- Current socio-cultural context
- Strategies to support students'/youth mental health and academic achievement
- Discussion and Questions

- Who is in this room?
- Name 3 **challenges** that youth and young adults in your state have encountered since 2020
- Name 3 **successes** that youth and young adults in your state have achieved since 2020
- Name 3 things that you have done to **support** youth and young adults in your state





Covid-19

Covid and Schools

- **Fall 2019-Fall 2020:**
 - **3%** drop in elementary and secondary school enrollment- the largest drop since 1943
 - **77%** of public schools and **73%** of private schools moved to online instruction
- Technology support (public schools):
 - **2019: 23% vs 2021: 96%**

Covid and Families

- **Financial hardship**, mostly for lower- and middle-income families
- Increase in **interpersonal violence**
- Disproportionate rates of **covid-19 related hospitalizations** for Black and Latinx adults
- Disproportionate **unemployment** for Black and Latinx workers
- Increased **food insecurity** for families of color
- 20% of Black children experience a **death of parent** due to covid-19

Covid and Academics

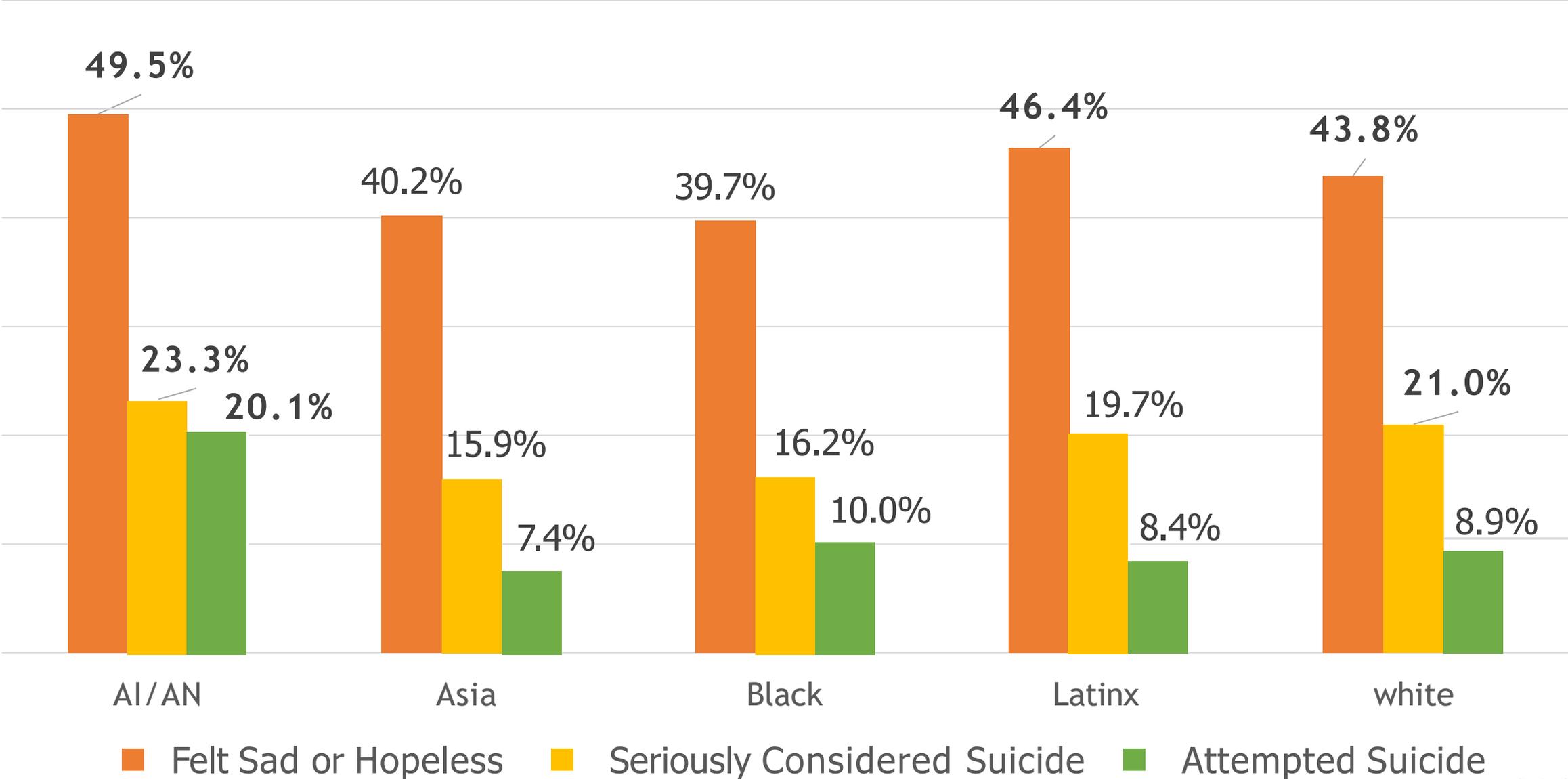
- Fall 2020: **students of color lost 5 months** of learning in math (vs 1-3 months for white students)
- 2021: **math and reading did not recover/worsened** for Black, Latinx, and American Indian/Native Alaska students (vs white and Asian students)
- 2021: 60% of parents of students with learning differences reported that **their student is a year behind** (vs 16% of parents of students without learning differences)
- 2020-2022: 5-point decline in reading and 7-point decline in math for 9-year-old students; **achievement gap widened** from 25 to 33 points for Black students (compared to white students)

Morando-Rhim, L., & Ekin, S. (2021); U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2020 and 2022 Long-Term Trend Reading and Mathematics Assessments.

Covid and Youth Mental Health

- 2021:
 - A consistent increase in mental health concerns (sadness, hopelessness, suicidality)
 - 37% of high school students reported **decreased mental health** during covid-19
 - 48% of parents of students with disabilities reported that their students had **high levels of anxiety** and other behavioral changes
 - Parents of students with learning difficulties were **three times more likely** to report that their students experienced depression

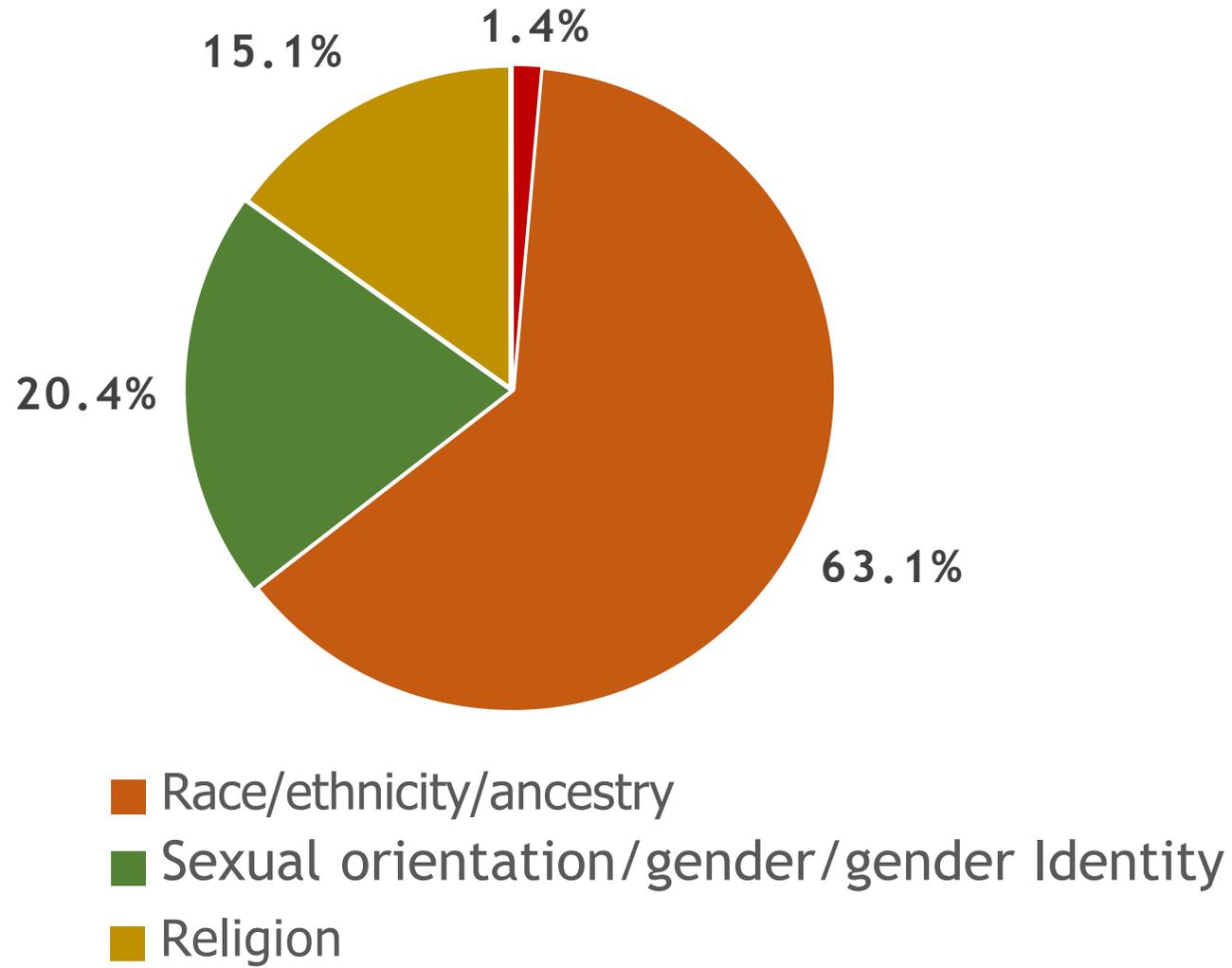
Adolescent Behavior and Experience Survey - 2021



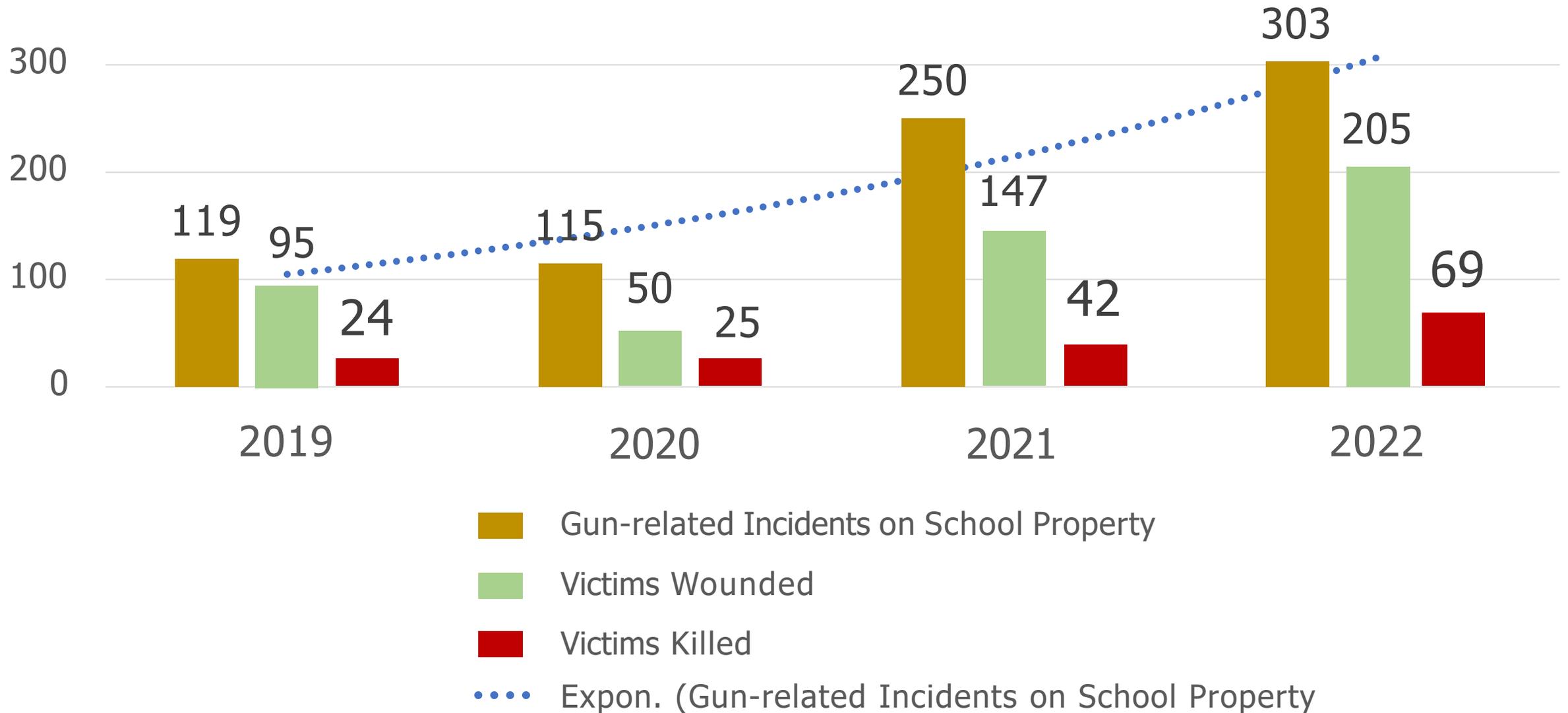


Social Context

Hate Crimes: 2021



School Shootings



Additional Stressors

In 2021:

- 55% reported **emotional abuse** by an adult at home
- 11% reported **physical abuse** by an adult at home
- 64% of Asian and Asian American students and 55% Black students and students of multiple races reported incidence of **racism**

In 2022:

- 46% of students report experiencing at least once instance of **cyberbullying**



What Can We Do?

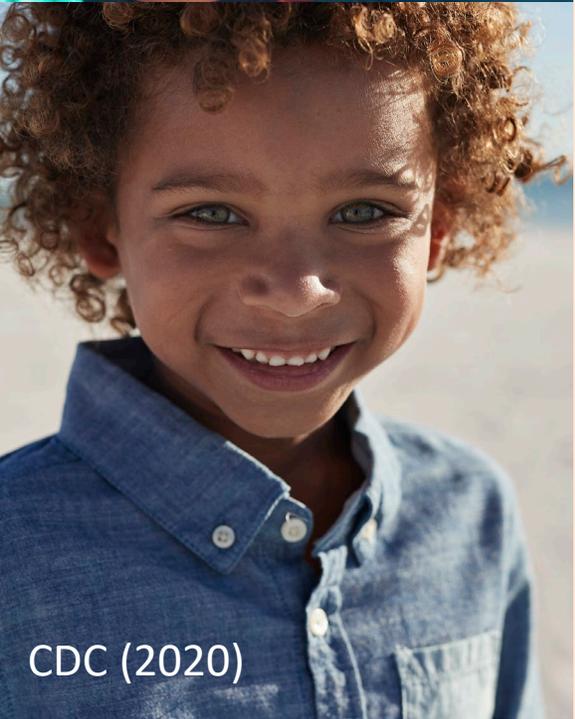


[Watch it on YouTube with captions](#)



Strategies

- Self-Determination
- Critical Consciousness



Self-Determination



Self-Determination: Definition

- Intrinsic/autonomous motivation
 - Autonomy
 - Competence
 - Relatedness





Self-Determination: Impact

- Academic achievement
- Psychological well-being
- Evidence-based predictor of post-school success for students with disabilities

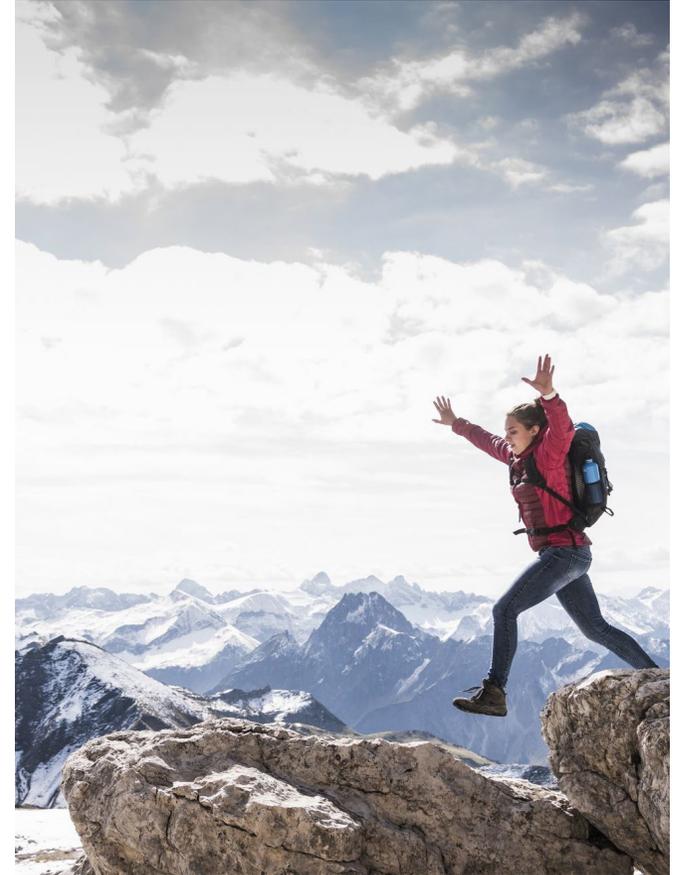
Strategies to Support Autonomy

- Often and explicitly acknowledge and support needs, preferences, and perspectives
- Provide and honor choice
- Provide opportunities for leadership
- Review how student's/youth's past *positive* actions have led to a *positive* outcome
- Reframe *negative* outcomes as opportunities to learn



Strategies to Support Competence

- Opportunities to be an expert
 - All students and youth are **experts on their lives**
- Explore **strengths** (not once; often!)
- Explore **values** (not once; often!)
 - How values impact actions and goals
- **Ask for feedback** and implement feedback
- Identify and support **cultural and community strengths**



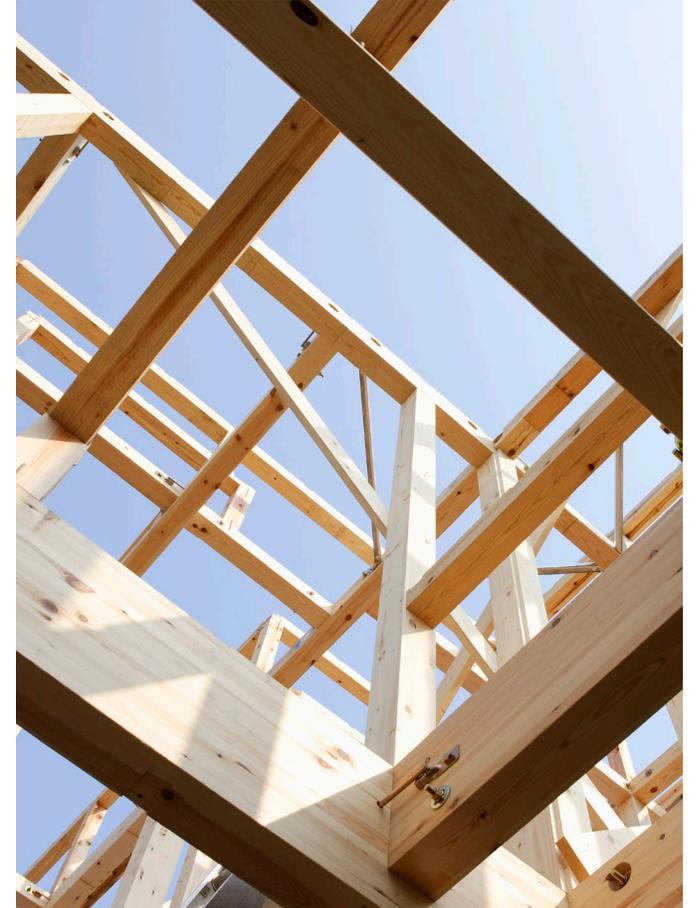
Strategies to Support Relatedness

- Bring up information shared in the past
- Affirmations
 - Share what they appreciate about each other
- Cultural diversity
 - Opportunities to share about their cultures/communities
- Affirm students/youth (not once; often!)
- Hold meetings in community spaces
- Attend student/youth community and cultural events



Supporting Self-Determination through Program Structures

- Interagency professional development
- Collaborative communities of practice
- Readily available self-determination resources for staff
- Evaluating curricula and materials to ensure that they include elements of self-determination





Critical Consciousness





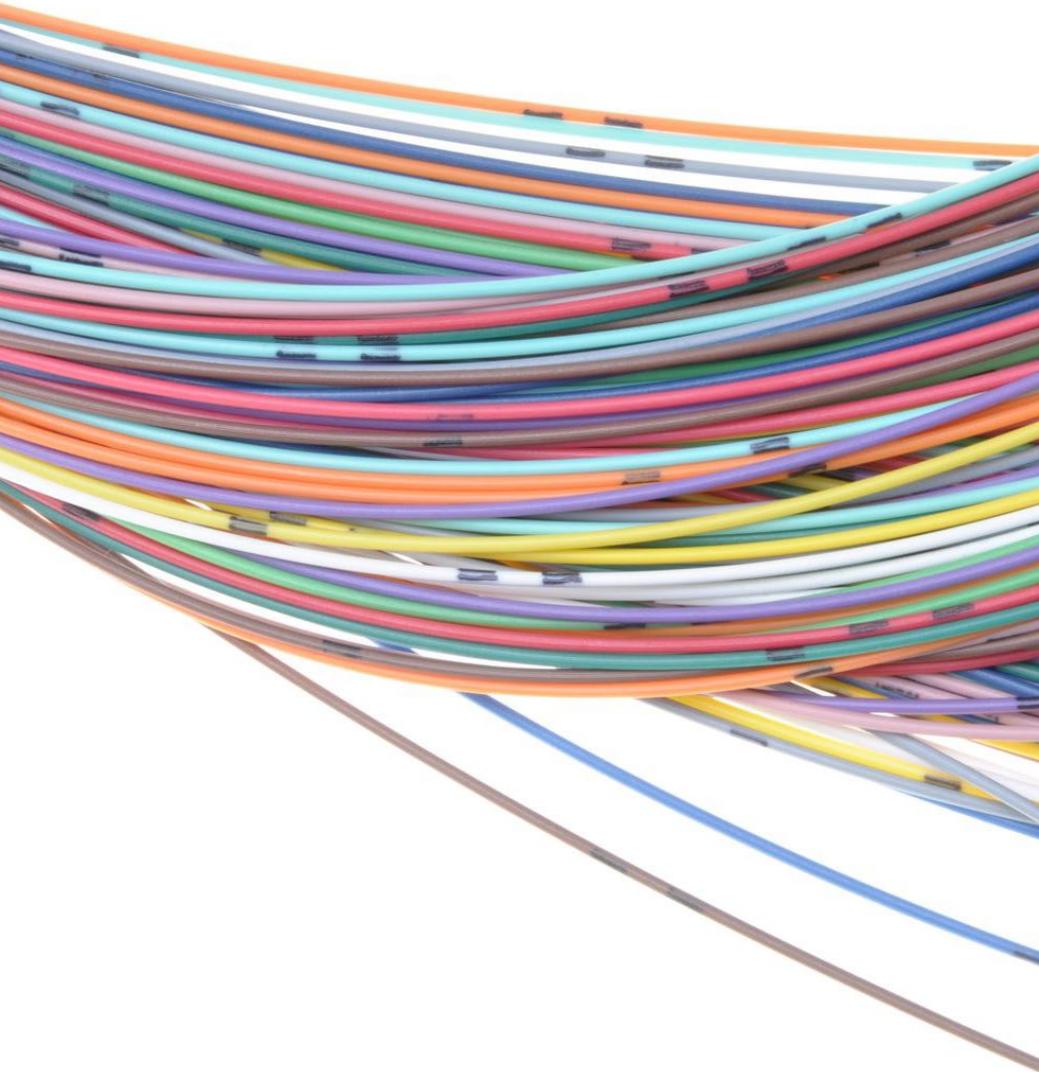
Critical Consciousness: Definition

- Foundation of culturally responsive and anti-racist and anti-ableist work
- **Awareness** of discriminatory/harmful practices
- **Motivation/Efficacy** to change these practices **and** sense of self-efficacy to change these practices
- **Action** to make these practices more equitable and just

Diemer (2020)

Critical Consciousness: Impact

- Mental Health
- Academic Engagement
- Academic Achievement
- Career Development



Supporting Student/Youth Critical Consciousness



Awareness

- Critical analysis of class content: *stock, concealed, resistance stories*
- Reflection on lived experience of self, family members, community members
- Exploration of implicit and explicit biases within systems surrounding student/youth

Motivation/Efficacy

- Identify cultural and community strengths
- Learn successful acts of resistance by minoritized communities
- Student/youth-led project:
 - Identify a classroom or school/agency practice that is inequitable and present a proposed plan to change the practice

Action

- Present proposed plan to change a discriminatory to administrative leadership
- Social-action project in the community as part of classes or work-based learning experience
- Teachers/staff sharing own stories of activism/modeling activism

Administrator Support of Critical Consciousness



Awareness

- Staff professional development:
 - Social-historical contexts of discriminatory practices (e.g., racism, ableism)¹
 - Implicit and explicit bias
 - Family and community cultural wealth
 - Building school-family partnerships

Efficacy

- Joint data-based decision-making process
- Support educators/staff in evaluating their practices
- Center the voice of educators/staff of color and educators/staff with disabilities

Action

- Support student/youth-led social-action projects
- Support educators/staff in developing and implementing a plan to reduce bias in their practices
- Integrate recommendations from educators, staff students/youth, and families into strategic plans



**Where Does This Leave
Us?**



Summary

- Over the past 3 years, youth and young adults have experienced an increase in academic and mental health challenges
- Strategies that support students'/youth autonomy, competence, relatedness, and critical consciousness could support youth and young adult academic achievement and psychological well-being

What Might You Do?

- How could you use the information presented here in your work?

Questions?

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Please take a moment to submit your session
Quick Reaction

