Addressing Student Risk and Protective Factors through CTE

Gwendolyn Murray, PhD

Shawndaya Thrasher, PhD, MSW, CSW

Rochelle Picardo, MA, PhD Candidate

LSU
Social Research & Evaluation Center

LSU SREC

We advance social initiatives to improve the lives of individuals, families and their communities through our research, evaluation, professional services, and partnerships. www.lsu.edu/srec

Activator

Picture a student you've worked with who disengaged from school(s). Are you aware of the factors that contributed to disengagement? What interventions were in place to support the student along the way?

LSU
Social Research &
Evaluation Center

Finding Connection & Purpose

- There are many factors—risk and protective—that impact a student's persistence—and success—at school.

- Sometimes we need to dig deeper to develop protective factors at school, like trust and connection.

- We cannot re-engage students when we don't understand them: their interests, their circumstances, their hopes.

LSU
Social Research & Evaluation Center
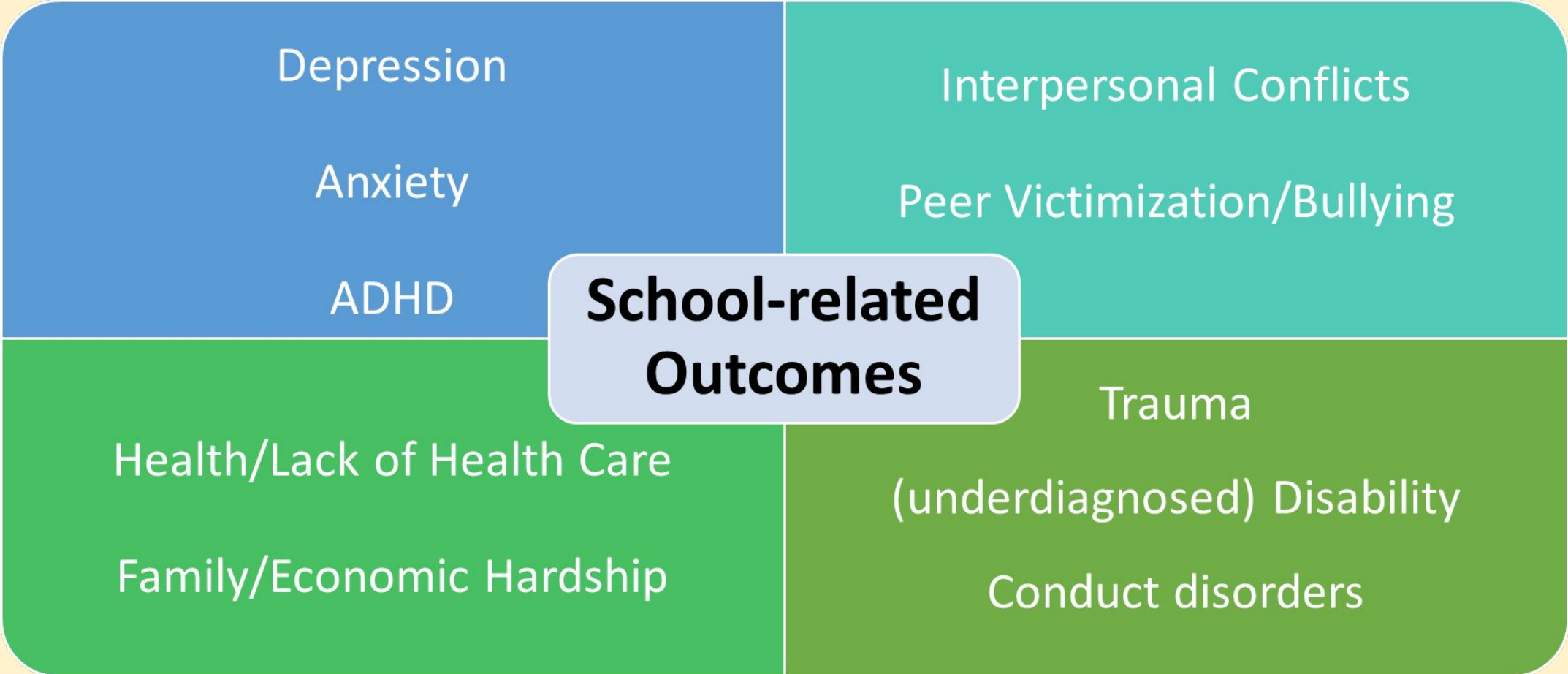
OBJECTIVES

Participant will be able to:

- think critically about student risk and protective factors that influence school-related outcomes;

- analyze successful examples of CTE that respond to these factors

- implement strategies to identify and respond to student risk and protective factors through CTE

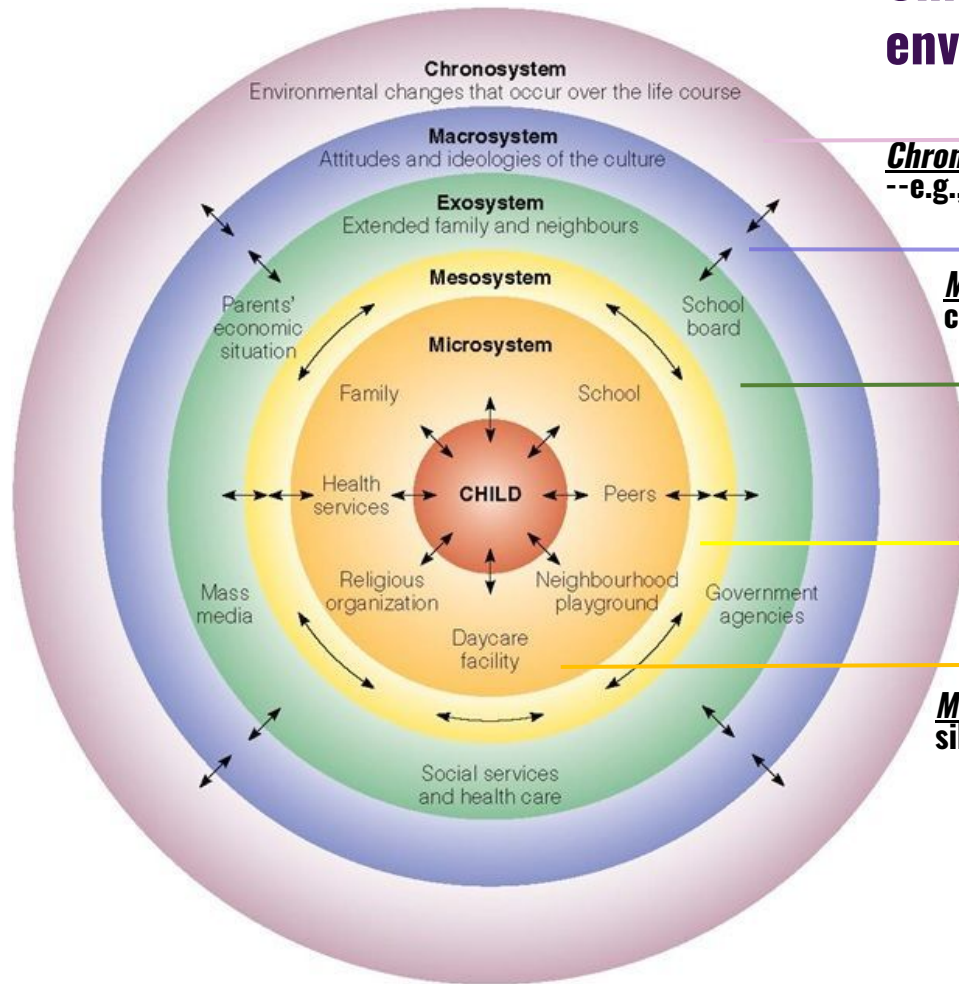# STUDENT RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND THE IMPACT ON SCHOOL-RELATED OUTCOMES

thinking critically about student risk and protective factors that influence school-related outcomes

LSU
Social Research &
Evaluation Center

Social, Emotional, Physical, and Behavioral Factors

Depression

Anxiety

ADHD

Interpersonal Conflicts

Peer Victimization/Bullying

School-related Outcomes

Health/Lack of Health Care

Family/Economic Hardship

Trauma

(underdiagnosed) Disability

Conduct disorders

Systems Theory

Child development is influenced by the surrounding environment on multiple levels.

Chronosystem
Environmental changes that occur over the life course

Macrosystem
Attitudes and ideologies of the culture

Exosystem
Extended family and neighbours

Mesosystem

Microsystem

Parents' economic situation · School board · Family · School · Health services · CHILD · Peers · Mass media · Religious organization · Neighbourhood playground · Government agencies · Daycare facility · Social services and health care

Chronosystem: all environmental changes that occur over the lifetime which influence development, --e.g., major life transitions and historical events

Macrosystem: cultural elements influencing child development-- e.g., socioeconomic status, wealth, poverty, ethnicity.

Exosystem: formal and informal social structures that don't contain the child but indirectly influence them through affecting one of the microsystems-- e.g., neighborhood, parent's workplace.

Mesosystem: INTERACTIONS between child's microsystems – e.g., relationship between parents and siblings.

Microsystem: direct contact with child in immediate environment-- e.g., parents, siblings, schoolteachers, classmates.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory: a framework for understanding child development

Systems Theory

- Creating healthy schools involves cultivating relationships not only with students, but also with their families.

- Creating healthy schools is as much about building community as it is about educating students.

- When determining risk and protective factors, it's important to consider all systems because risk and protective factors can complement or offset one another (e.g., strong family relationships (protective factor in microsystem) can be complemented by good family-school relationship (protective factor in the mesosystem).

Protective factors are strengths, supports, and resources that allow children to succeed in school despite challenges/risk factors.

Protective Factors for School-related outcomes

Family, parent, & student engagement/support

Value on achievement/health

Holistic approach promoting good mental/emotional health

School Climate, Belonging, and Involvement

School Connectedness

Programs and clear policies on bullying & peer victimization

Factors that Affect Student Engagement

BARRIERS	AVERSION	DISENGAGEMENT
Students <u>CANNOT</u> attend school for these reasons	**Students <u>WILL NOT</u> attend schools as an avoidance strategy**	**Students <u>DO NOT</u> attend school due to disinterest, lack of connection, or parent mindset**

Illness / Chronic Disease • physical • behavioral **Family Responsibilities** • childcare/caring for siblings or other family members • difficulty supporting learning) • Parent incarcerated **Unmet Basic Needs (Maslow's)** • housing instability • poor transportation • no safe path to school • natural disasters/ property loss **Involvement with Juvenile Justice System**	**Academic Struggles** • avoidance of challenging work (**student may be academically behind) **Social Struggles** • Avoidance of embarrassment • Fear of stigma or being teased • Language barriers **Mental Health Struggles** • PTSD • Acute anxiety • Depressive or manic episode • Trauma **School Climate** • Avoidance of bullying • Avoidance of unsafe conditions **Parent Concerns** • Fear of COVID • Parents' poor experiences with school	**Lack in Cultural Competence (Academic)** • Irrelevant curriculum • Unengaging curriculum **Poor Relationships and Climate** • No trusted adults • Lack a sense of safety, belonging, and support in school • Poor peer relationships **Discipline Patterns** • School discipline rates • Frequent discipline referrals • Personal experience with suspension **Questioning Value of Attending School** • No perceived consequences for skipping • Peer pressure to skip • Interest in entering workforce/trade **Student is Overage**

LSU
Social Research & Evaluation Center

© 2022 LSU, Social Research & Evaluation Center

RISK FACTORS

Vs

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Success Stories

analyzing successful examples of CTE that respond to these factors

LSU
Social Research &
Evaluation Center

CTE fosters protective factors

Pilot project interviewing 94 students from seven high schools participating in CTE, and Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs).

Advisors organized cohorts of 6-12 student participants. Each student participated in a qualitative interview.

CTSO participation helped to overcome stigma of mental health & wellness

- Developed meaningful relationships with peers and learn to care for others

- Develop resilience, wellness strategies, and coping skills

Career and Technical Education creates opportunities for students to:

- Learn from one another by sharing stories of experiences, struggles
  - Trauma
  - Family mental health struggles
- Engage in activities that focus on nurturing personal strengths

Beck, C., Loera, G., Nakamoto, J., and Parsons, J. (2022) A Qualitative Study: Examining Students' Involvement in A Career and Technical Student Organization and Practicing and Promoting Mental Wellness. *Journal of Research in Technical Careers, Vol 6*(1), 47-63. https://doi.org/10.9741/2578-2118.1108

LSU
Social Research & Evaluation Center

Jump Start offers 2.0 11 pathways, with an additional 7 STEM-specific pathways

- **145,788 Students enrolled in secondary CTE**
- **92% CTE HS students graduate**
- **74,288 Students in Louisiana participate in on of 9 CTSOs (2015)**

CTSOs are enrich CTE experiences:

- Create smaller learning communities wi
communities

- Re-engage students: reduce dropout ro

- Aid students in identifying interests, connecting to
purpose

- Build community

National Organizing Council: Career and Technical Student Organizations. (2015). Serving Career and Technical Education Students in Louisiana
https://www.ctsos.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Louisiana.pdf

PROTECTIVE FACTORS & SUCCESS

School Connectedness has health benefits

Students who feel connected to school are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors.

National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health

- **Examined protective factors in 36,000 students, grades 7-12**

- **School connectedness ▯ strongest protective factor against range of adverse behaviors** (substance use; violence; sex…)

https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/pdf/connectedness.pdf

LSU
Social Research &
Evaluation Center

https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9293990/

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS STUDENT RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR CTE

implementing strategies to identify and respond to student risk and protective factors through CTE

Bridging Factors through School Connectedness

"School Connectedness is the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals." (CDC, 2009)
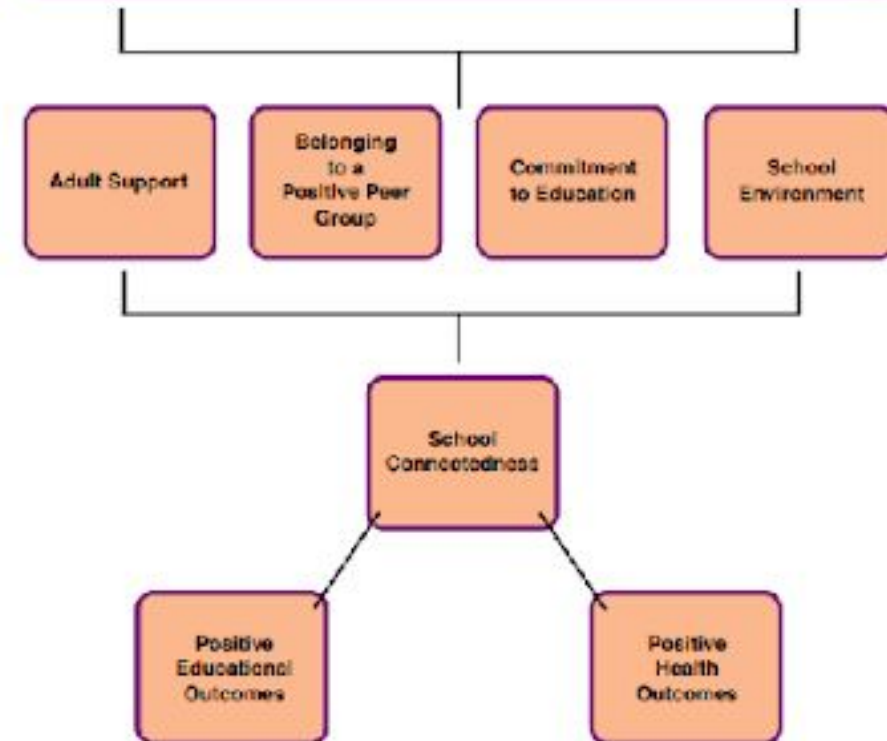
- Four factors
  - Adult support
  - Belonging to a positive peer group
  - Commitment to education
  - School environment

https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/pdf/connectedness.pdf

Promoting School Connectedness

Strategies to Increase School Connectedness

1. Create decision-making processes that facilitate student, family, and community engagement, academic achievement, and staff empowerment.

2. Provide education and opportunities to enable families to be actively involved in their children's academic and school life.

3. Provide students with the academic, emotional, and social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school.

4. Use effective classroom management and teaching methods to foster a positive learning environment.

5. Provide professional development and support for teachers and other school staff to enable them to meet the diverse cognitive, emotional, and social needs of children and adolescents.

6. Create trusting and caring relationships that promote open communication among administrators, teachers, staff, students, families, and communities.

Adult Support — Belonging to a Positive Peer Group — Commitment to Education — School Environment

School Connectedness

Positive Educational Outcomes — Positive Health Outcomes

STRATEGIES
adult support

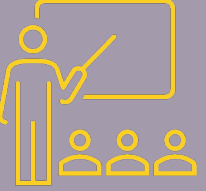| FACTOR	CONNECTION TO CTE	TECHNIQUES

Adult Support	**They way students feel about themselves is influenced by the way that they perceive adults care for them.**
	
	CTE creates opportunities for students to connect with adults in a smaller setting.
		Teachers
		• Create or promote advisory or check-in structure to create more micro-moments for relationship-building
		    • Intervention blocks, social learning
		    • Thresholding classrooms, active duty
		• Create opportunities for students to help adults (TA, community connection, curricular feedback, committees)
		Families
		• Offer opportunities for families to learn more about CTE, to participate in IGPs
		    • get creative with communication: social media, parent groups, calls, newsletters

LSU
Social Research & Evaluation Center

STRATEGIES
peer influence

FACTOR	CONNECTION TO CTE	TECHNIQUES
Belonging (Peer Influence)	**Peer influence impacts student health and educational outcomes.** CTE creates opportunity for a stable peer group. In CTE, students develop interpersonal skills, strong relationships built on shared interests. In CTSOs, students can unpack stigma around mental health and learn skills for coping and wellness.	**Foster caring and other pro-social behaviors** • Utilize peer tutors • Create opportunities for peer learning • Collaborative projects where students can play different roles • Community work to build networks and interpersonal skills • Circles to share experiences, repair relationships, or collectively problem solve

STRATEGIES
learning relevance

FACTOR	CONNECTION TO CTE	TECHNIQUES

Learning Relevance	**Students leave school when they struggle to recognize the relevance of what they are learning to future success.**
	
	CTE helps students to develop purpose by helping them to identify their unique skills that align to their interests**.**
		Understand Strengths & Growth Areas
		• Analyze student data from previous years (e.g., formative and summative assessments, course grades, attendance records).
		Map student interests
		• Use elective or intervention time to allow students to investigate career interests
		• Use career planning tools to help students explore careers and align their academic work with their professional goals
		   • My Life. My Way. from Louisiana Workforce Commission,
		   • Unlock My Future from Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance)
		Connect with the community
		• Teach students networking skills
		• Encourage students to share their community experiences & knowledge
		• Lean on lived experiences for networking

STRATEGIES
school environment

FACTOR	CONNECTION TO CTE	TECHNIQUES

School Environment	**A safe and supportive learning environment is essential for student well-being.**
	
	Students' perceptions of school are rooted in their perceptions of their environment:
	
	Research shows that school climate impacts academic success.
	
	CTE takes place in a smaller setting where it is easier to address physical and social to make school a positive place to be.
		Safety
		• Proactive discipline
		  • Building strong relationships built on empathy and sharing
		• Respectful redirection
		  • Using proximity to address when students do not meet expectations
		  • Mutual respect: repairing a relationship through a close-the-loop conversation after an incident
		Engagement
		• Clear expectations
		  • Make sure that students understand what to do to complete a task; have clear criteria for success
		• Positive feedback
		  • Lean on positive over corrective feedback
		  • Share the love with families

Factors & Strategies: Summary

Four key factors support connectedness and all four of them can occur organically in CTE, especially when CTSOs are in play.

- **Adult support**
  - Perception of adult caring influences student self-concept
  - CTE creates opportunities for students to connect with adults in a smaller setting
- **Peer influence**
  - Peer influence can positively impact student health & educational outcomes
  - CTE creates a stable peer group and opportunities to build pro-social skills
- **Learning relevance**
  - Students are at risk for dropout when they struggle to connect relevance of curriculum to lived experiences and their futures
  - CTE helps students find purpose by identifying interests and honing professional skills
- **Environment**
  - Schools within schools where it is easier to create and sustain safe and positive environments
  - Safe and supportive schools are essential for academic success and student well-being
  - CTE can feel like a school within a school

IMPLEMENTATION

protective factors & school connectedness through CTE

LSU
Social Research &
Evaluation Center

Implementation Procedure

1. **Define the risk factors/issues**
   - Think about the Barriers, Risks, Aversions framework
   - Ask: where does this student need more support? How can we provide it socially? Through learning?

2. **Identify strategies to strengthen connectedness through CTE**
   - Think about the risks or issues identified
   - Pick the component of connectedness most applicable to the risk factors or issues
   - Select strategies to re-engage the student through connectedness

Taylor

Taylor is grade levels behind in reading. He opts out of critical assignments because he is tired of struggling. His English I class has 35 students in it, and he is not getting the attention he needs. His self-esteem is suffering, and he has developed some panic about school, especially about being teased by peers. His attendance has decreased. Taylor has flown under the radar because he has never had disciplinary concerns and met the minimum requirements for 9th grade. Sometimes Taylor must babysit his siblings and leaves early. He has previously expressed an interest in marketing, and you know that he is skilled at content creation. Taylor is also in band, and his grades were better in the Fall when he was performing at football games.

1. How would you characterize Taylor's risks and issues? (Look at the Barriers, Aversions, Disengagement table)
2. What are Taylor's protective factors? (Look at the protective factors umbrella)
3. Why might CTE be a good fit for Taylor?
4. Which area of connectedness and strategies would you focus on to re-engage Taylor? (look at the connectedness flowchart & strategy tables)
5. What steps would you take to support Taylor and his family with pathway decisions?

Taylor

- **How would you characterize Taylor's risks and issues?**
  - AVERSIONS: avoidance of challenging work; performance anxiety
  - DISENGAGEMENT: poor peer relationships; no trusted adult

- **What about protective factors?**
  - School: belonging & involvement: band

- **Why might CTE be a good fit for Taylor?**
  - Small groups (cohorts)
  - Learning relevance

- **Which area of connectedness and strategies would you focus on to re-engage Taylor?**
  - Adult support: check-in structure
  - Learning relevance: identifying interests and course offerings that align with his unique skills

- **What steps would you take to support Taylor and his family with pathway decisions?**
  - Exploring the Jump Start Arts, AV Technology and Communication pathway
  - Invite Taylor to sit in on a communication class
  - Provide Taylor with information on the CTSOs

Arielle

Arielle is an overage student. During COVID, she participated in virtual learning. Her teachers noted she barely logged on. One teacher knows that Arielle and her family have housing instability, and it can be inferred that her access to internet is inconsistent at best. Arielle lives with her Grandma, who did not complete high school. She has been with her Grandma since she was 4. She reports that they are very close. Despite lack of transportation, Grandma attends all parent nights at school. Arielle feels pressure to support her household and has been steadily increasing her hours at McDonald's where she has worked for the last year. Arielle is withdrawn in big group settings but has a core group of friends with whom she feels confident.

1. How would you characterize Arielle's risks and issues? (Look at the Barriers, Aversions, Disengagement table)
2. What are Arielle's protective factors? (Look at the protective factors umbrella)
3. Why might CTE be a good fit for Arielle?
4. Which area of connectedness and strategies would you focus on to re-engage Arielle? (look at the connectedness flowchart & strategy tables)
5. What steps would you take to support Arielle and his family with pathway decisions?

Arielle

- **How would you characterize Arielle's risks and issues?**
  - BARRIERS: transportation, housing instability, connectivity
  - DISENGAGEMENT: overage
- **What about protective factors?**
  - Belonging: stable peer group
  - Belonging: Supportive adults at school
  - Family engagement/support
- **Why might CTE be a good fit for Arielle?**
  - Learning relevance: connecting work experience to moving forward in a career
  - Peer influence: working with a cohort and CTSO build a specific skillset
- **Which area of connectedness and strategies would you focus on to re-engage Arielle?**
  - Adult support
  - Peer influence
- **What steps would you take to support Arielle and her family with pathway decisions?**
  - Exploring the Jump Start Business Management pathway
  - Invite Arielle to sit in on a Business Math class
  - Provide Taylor with information on the Business Professionals of America CTSO

KEY POINTS
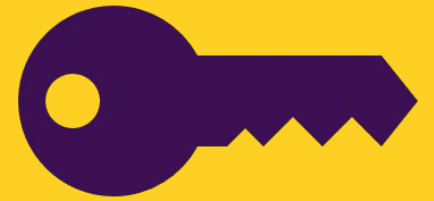
1. Child development is influenced by the surrounding environment on multiple levels.

2. There are risk and protective factors within the systems.

3. School connectedness is an important protective factor directly tied to student health and well-being and educational success.

4. CTE is a powerful pathway to address risk factors and re-engage students through protective factors.

LSU
Social Research &
Evaluation Center

Q & A