IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

At-Risk for Elementary School Educators

Kognito

Dear School Administrator,

Thank you for implementing *At-Risk for Elementary School Educators* into your professional development program!

This online simulation provides school staff with skills, information, and virtual practice. They'll learn about and practice identifying students who may need extra support, approaching them and their caregivers to discuss our concerns, and connecting students with those in your school community who are trained to help. This can make a lifetime of difference, not only for students, but for their families and communities, as well. Our hope is that you'll also see some improvements in student academic performance, attendance, and school climate and safety.

Thank you for all you do to support the health and wellbeing of your students!

Sincerely,
The Kognito Team

Below are a few ways you can promote and use this program.

✓ **Get the word out!**
Distribute flyers and email your staff to introduce and promote the program. An email template and program flyer are included in this packet.

✓ **Check staff progress.**
Keep track of who has completed the program, and send reminder emails to encourage full participation.

✓ **Schedule a follow-up workshop.**
Schedule a workshop where staff can discuss their reactions to and takeaways from the program, role-play similar scenarios with each other, and learn the process for referral at your school. This packet contains a workshop facilitator guide as well as handouts for participants.

Contents

About Kognito

At Kognito, we envision a world where all individuals and communities harness the power of conversation to change lives. Kognito's mission is to combine the science of learning, the art of conversation, and the power of virtual-human simulations to empower educators and students with the tools they need to build safe and supportive school cultures. Our model of change is built on the input of thousands of educators and students from across the country.

The Kognito Model

Every day, conversations take place that have the potential to improve social, emotional, and physical health. Unfortunately, these conversations often suffer in quality and effectiveness. Practice-based experiential learning can build the skills and confidence needed to effectively approach these important conversations.

The Kognito model combines evidence-based SEL skills, learning science, and simulated practice with virtual humans to create a learning experience that leads to improved confidence and behavior change. Learners immerse in simulated real-life scenarios, engaging in conversations with virtual humans and receiving feedback from a virtual coach. This model ensures a more reflective and transformational experience.

At Kognito we believe that:

01. Adults learn best when they do. Kognito's simulations provide key knowledge on conversation and adult SEL skills, followed by practice opportunities. The active experimentation involved in the simulations turns abstract learning concrete.

02. Adult learners need opportunities for critical reflection. The conversations provide coaching and other opportunities for learners to reflect on how they are doing and what steps they can take to improve. These critical reflection points allow for more transformative-learning moments and deeper understanding of the communication strategies taught.

03. Adult learning that evokes an emotional response creates a powerful learning experience that is not easily forgotten. The scenarios are designed to provide these types of "aha" moments by revealing the cause-and-effect relationship between the learners' communication strategies and the responses they elicit. The learner is then able to relate their experience in the simulation to past experiences and impart new meaning on previous interactions.

Steps for Successful Roll-Out

Step 1

Meet with your mental health staff to ensure the school's referral process is defined.

In a recent survey, educators ranked lack of knowledge around their school's policies and referral process as the #1 barrier to connecting students with support. If your teachers do not already have a copy of your policy and process, consider creating a reference document. Also, ensure your school's mental health staff are aware of the upcoming training, as they will most likely receive an increase in questions and referrals.

Note: If your school is going through a period of remote learning, it is critical to adapt referral procedures for at-risk students to assure telehealth options are available to connect students/families with school counselors and mental-health professionals.

Step 2

Plan how you will implement the program at your school.

At-Risk for Elementary School Educators can be used as a standalone training, or it can be rolled out in conjunction with an online or face-to-face workshop where staff delve deeper into the issues and skills learned. The blended-learning option is ideal, as it reinforces learning and provides staff a chance to discuss school-specific policies and resources.

Implementation Options:

01. Staff complete the simulation only
02. Staff complete the simulation, then discuss in a workshop session (recommended)
03. Staff complete the simulation during a larger workshop, with before and after discussion

Step 3

Have your technical contact review the hardware and software requirements.

Most schools will easily meet the minimum requirements, but if you have any questions, please contact the Kognito support team at 866-923-8632 or support@kognito.com.

Steps for Successful Roll-Out

Step 4

Email staff to let them know about the training and provide details on when and how to take the simulation.

We have provided an email template for getting the word out. Personalize these communications to fit with your goals and school voice. Program flyers are also included.

Step 5

Designate someone to lead the workshop discussion.

Designate someone to lead the workshop discussion, as well as a point person for those who are unable to attend. Kognito's Workshop Facilitator Guide provides step-by-step instructions for leading a valuable workshop discussion. Again, this step is optional, as the simulation can be used as a standalone learning experience.
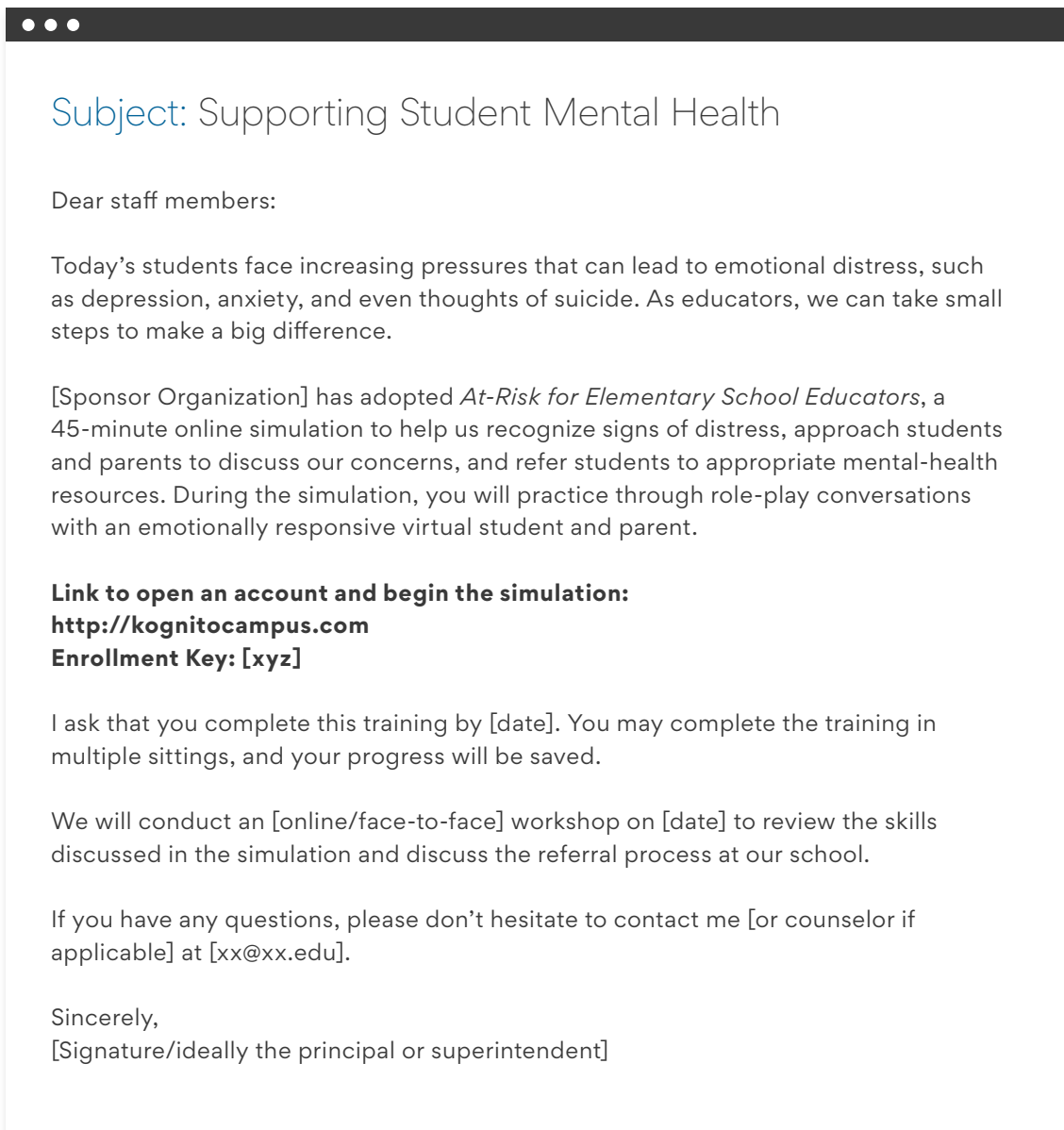
Step 6

Track staff completions and send reminder emails.

Designate a school lead to track usage and completions. You can ask staff to submit their certificate of completion or your school lead can contact the sponsoring agency for a complete list.

Email Template

Below is sample content you can use for emails, newsletters, or posts on your school website. Request the principal or school counselor send the email to emphasize the simulation's importance to school goals and student outcomes, and customize the language to fit your needs.

Subject: Supporting Student Mental Health

Dear staff members:

Today's students face increasing pressures that can lead to emotional distress, such as depression, anxiety, and even thoughts of suicide. As educators, we can take small steps to make a big difference.

[Sponsor Organization] has adopted *At-Risk for Elementary School Educators*, a 45-minute online simulation to help us recognize signs of distress, approach students and parents to discuss our concerns, and refer students to appropriate mental-health resources. During the simulation, you will practice through role-play conversations with an emotionally responsive virtual student and parent.

Link to open an account and begin the simulation:
http://kognitocampus.com
Enrollment Key: [xyz]

I ask that you complete this training by [date]. You may complete the training in multiple sittings, and your progress will be saved.

We will conduct an [online/face-to-face] workshop on [date] to review the skills discussed in the simulation and discuss the referral process at our school.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me [or counselor if applicable] at [xx@xx.edu].

Sincerely,
[Signature/ideally the principal or superintendent]

Kognito

ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT A STUDENT?

Life can be stressful, even for kids. Build the confidence to talk with a student you're concerned about.

At-Risk for Elementary School Educators

Recognize when a student is in distress, initiate a conversation with a student about your concerns, and connect parents and students to support services.

TO ACCESS THIS SIMULATION:

1. Visit **kognitocampus.com**

2. Log in or create a new account

3. Launch *At-Risk for Elementary School Educators*

Workshop Facilitator Guide

Print the following pages and use as a guide for leading the workshop.

Workshop Facilitator Guide

Facilitator Prep time: 2-3 hours
Workshop Runtime: 2.5-4 hours

Preparation

✓ Determine how to best implement the training at your school:

Decision 1: Will staff complete the simulation prior to coming to the workshop?
- We recommend staff complete the simulation on their own and then meet for a 2.5 hour workshop.
- Alternatively, staff can take the simulation as part of the workshop (on separate computers). Then they rejoin the group for discussion. This would be a half-day training.

Decision 2: Will the workshop be face-to-face or online?
Tips for online workshops:
- Some software possibilities are Zoom, Google Hangouts, WebEx, or Skype.
- The "breakout rooms" in Zoom allow participants to partner for role plays and discussion.
- Share your screen to show PowerPoint slides.
- Assign a co-host to help you manage the workshop.
- Complete a recording of the online workshop and make it available for those who cannot attend.

✓ Review *At-Risk for Elementary School Educators* and the full Workshop Facilitator Guide and corresponding PowerPoint. Customize the PowerPoint to include your school's or district's logo and any mission- or vision-specific details. If you will have less than 2.5 hours for your workshop, customize it to suit your time constraints.

✓ Discuss your school's referral process with the school leader, counselor, and/or mental-health team. Customize slides 15 and 16 (referral process and local resources) and be ready to present this information to the group. Be sure to include both the traditional at-school referral process as well as the process for referral and connection if students are learning from home. If you will provide mental health services via telehealth, explain that process.

✓ Cue up the corresponding PowerPoint presentation and make sure you have adequate means to present it to your participants. If needed, you can adjust the length of time of your workshop by adding/removing discussion items or activities (download the PowerPoint presentation https://kognito.com/ares_ppt_presentation).

✓ Print or email the workshop handouts.
- Note-Taking Guide
- Simulation Summary
- Role-Play Scenarios
- Local Resources page from the simulation

Sample Planning Timeline

- **60 Days Prior:** Confirm simulation training date and location
- **45 Days Prior:** Ensure account access for district/school staff
- **30 Days Prior (if staff will take simulation prior to workshop):** Confirm registration and that attendees have created their accounts
- **5 Days Prior:** Send reminder to staff

Workshop Flow

Welcome & Hook Activity

10 min

Slide 1: Welcome
- Welcome attendees and thank them for coming.

Slide 2: Your role [customize]
- Introduce yourself and (if necessary) your role within the school or district.
- Share contact information. Encourage attendees to reach out to you with questions or follow up after the training.

Slide 3: Workshop overview [customize this slide if participants will not take the simulation during the workshop]
- Discuss what participants will learn in the workshop.

Slide 4: Group norms [customize as necessary]
- Sample norms: actively participate, be respectful, do not share names or identifying information of students or staff, seek help if you would like to discuss personal mental-health issues, take a break if any of the material is triggering, reach out to me at the end if you are concerned about a student.

Slide 5: Hook activity (5 min)
- Ask attendees to use a scrap piece of paper to describe the image on the slide, using the acronym AEIOU. (1 min)

  A **Adjective**: A word to describe the image.
  E **Emotion**: How do you feel about the image?
  I **Interesting**: What is interesting to you about the image?
  O **OMG**: What surprised you about the image?
  U **Um?**: What question do you have about the image?

- Ask participants to share their observations with a neighbor. (1 min)
- Ask participants to share a few answers with the whole group. (2.5 min)

- Quick Debrief: (0.5 min)
  - Sometimes we see the kid at the desk but we don't see the wave behind them. Understanding a student's mental health helps educators see the student's bigger picture.
  - As educators, we should know how to identify signs of mental-health distress, approach students confidently, and refer students to the support they need in order to succeed.

Note: If staff have taken the Kognito simulation prior to the workshop (recommended), then skip to Discussion.

Preparing for Simulation
Up to 10 min

Slides 6 - 9: Brief overview of Kognito and the simulation they are about to take
- Kognito's simulations are evidence-based.
- Encourage staff to choose the conversation pathway that best reflects what they would actually say in a real-life conversation.
- Let staff know we are not asking them to become counselors... but to capitalize on the limited time they have with students to provide the most effective support.

Simulation
1 hr

Slide 10
- Ensure participants are able to login to their account.
- Provide headphones to all participants.
- Pass out the note-taking handout to all participants.
- Proctor the room to allow anyone needing assistance to communicate with you.
- Participants who finish early can begin their break. Write on the board what time the workshop will reconvene for discussion.

20-Minute Break

Discussion
35 min

Slide 11: Simulation review (5 min)
- Pass out the Simulation Summary.
- Remind participants about the conversations in the simulation (include more detail if the participants took the simulation prior to the workshop).
- Ask a few questions to get the discussion going. Sample questions:
  - How similar did these feel to conversations you've had in real life?
  - Did you try new things in these conversations that you haven't tried in real life?

Slide 12: Warning signs (10 min)

- "Remember the wave we saw in the picture at the beginning of the workshop? Often we don't know that wave is there. All we see are the student's reactions to that wave. These are warning signs that tell you a child might be dealing with more under the surface than we realize."
- Possible discussion questions:
  - What kinds of things do kids your students' age struggle with emotionally? (Possible answers: managing school work, responsibilities at home, relationship stuff, parents fighting, divorced parents, mental disorders)
  - How do young people typically cope with these kinds of struggles? (Possible answers: they don't, they shut down, maybe they don't do their work, they talk to an adult who can help)
  - Were there any signs that surprised you, or that you hadn't thought to take note of before playing through the simulation?
  - Why is it important for teachers to notice these things, reach out to the student or their caregiver, and possibly refer them for support? (Possible answers: educators in an ideal position to notice when a student needs help and connect them with the resources designed to help them; the earlier a child gets the help they need, the better their overall outcomes might be; students receiving needed support may take less of our time and attention in the classroom and cause less disruption)
  - Why do some students' warning signs not lead to approach and referral by a teacher? (Possible answers: teachers may not realize the behavior is indicative of a deeper issue; or the student's behavior may not be a problem in the classroom)
  - How might identifying an at-risk student save you time in the long run? (Possible answers: the student could get the help they need to improve behavior in the long run; when you improve your relationship with the child, their behavior may also improve)

Slide 13: Bringing up concerns (10 min)

- Review the "EASING" techniques.

E	Check your own **Emotions**
A	**Ask** for permission
S	Be **Specific**
I	Use **"I" statements**
N	Keep it **Neutral**
G	Show **Genuine** curiosity

- "Using these techniques encourages a student or parent to share and creates a more open environment for discussion to avoid the other person becoming defensive and refusing to communicate."
- Possible discussion questions:
  - Which of these techniques do you already use when talking to students/ caregivers? How are they helpful?
  - Which of these are new techniques you want to try in the future? Why?
  - How did you do in the conversation with Ms. Parker, Mia's mother? Did anything surprise you about this approach for discussing your concerns with a parent?

- If you have had concerns about one or more of your students in the past and have initiated conversations similar to this one with Ms. Parker, what worked well for you?

Slide 14: Listening actively (10 min)
- Review the techniques learned for being a supportive, active listener.
  - Ask open-ended questions
  - Reflect
  - Avoid criticizing, giving advice, disagreeing
- Possible discussion questions:
  - What words/tone do we often use when we're approaching a student as an authority figure? (Possible answers: "you should/shouldn't," jumping to discipline, acting like we already know the reason the child is behaving the way they are)
  - How do we change our tone when we're approaching a child as a supportive adult? (Possible answers: ask questions and be genuinely interested in their answers, go into the discussion without preconceived ideas for what's causing the behavior, ask questions and reflect, use a supportive tone)
  - How do we know when to use one tone or another? (Possible answers: consider if the issue is a warning sign for psychological distress, if the student's behavior has changed recently, if the behavior is out of character)
  - What were some effective and ineffective things you said to Derrick? How did he react? (these should mostly be examples of the techniques on the slide)
  - How can these techniques for active listening put you in a better position for collaborative problem-solving? Why is that important? (Possible answer: the student feels heard and respected / like an equal partner in the conversation and is, therefore, more likely to listen to concerns and brainstorm solutions with you)
  - If you have had concerns about one or more of your students in the past and have initiated conversations similar to this one with Derrick, what worked well for you?

Role Play 1
30 min

Prepare for role play (5 min)
- Ask participants to break into groups of two for a set of role plays. Online-meeting systems like Zoom offer randomized break-out rooms for set periods of time and set group sizes.
- Tell participants they will role-play a challenging conversation between a teacher and a guardian and then between a teacher and a student.
- Ask them to decide who will play the teacher first.

Role play (10 min)
- Participants should look at the Role Play Handout and read ONLY about their character (the concerned teacher or the guardian). Then they begin their first role play.
- Keep up Slide 13 (the list of the EASING techniques).
- Give participants a one-minute warning before the end of the role play.

Role play discussion (15 min)
- If you played the role of the teacher... Raise your hand if you tried anything new in this conversation (anything you haven't tried in the past in discussions with parents)? What did you try and how did it work or not work? What did you learn about Tamina's home life?
- If you played the role of the guardian... What did your partner do in this conversation to make you feel comfortable and respected? What did you learn about Tamina's behavior at school?
- How did this conversation improve both the teacher and the parent's ability to help Tamina? (Possible answer: now the teacher and parent can work as a team, communicating and coordinating their approach to helping Tamina)
- How were EASING techniques or active-listening techniques used in your conversation? Or how could they have been used to make the conversation even better? (can move between slides 13 and 14)
- What kind of advance planning, if any, is necessary for conducting a conversation like this? (Possible answers: checking your emotions to put aside any unhelpful thoughts or presumptions you may have about the student or parent; considering how you might bring up the things you've noticed and what kind of language you will use)
- Could Tamina be helped by a referral to a school mental-health professional? (Yes, Tamina seems to be under a lot of stress and may benefit from talking with a trained professional at school.)

15-Minute Break

Role Play 2

25 min

Role play (10 min)
- Now participants will switch roles. Whoever played the teacher before will now play the student.
- Ask participants to read Section B on the Role Play Handout and begin their second role play.
- Keep up Slide 14 (active-listening techniques).
- Give participants a one-minute warning before the end of the role play.

Role play discussion (15 min)
- If you played the role of the teacher… Raise your hand if you tried anything new in this conversation? What did you try and how did it work or not work? What did you learn about Dallas's emotional state?
- If you played the student… What did your partner do in this conversation to make you feel comfortable and respected?
- How were the EASING and active-listening techniques used in your conversation? Or how could they have been used to make the conversation even better? (can move between slides 13 and 14)
- What might be the main challenges to using these techniques in real life? How might you overcome them?
- Could Dallas be helped by a referral to a school mental-health professional? (Yes, Dallas seems to be under a lot of stress and may benefit from talking with a trained professional at school; it would also be helpful to talk with his parents about your observations.)

Referral Process
10 min

Slides 15-16: Referring at-risk students
- Ask participants to turn to the back of the Simulation Summary and take notes.
- Pass out copies of the "Local Resources" page from the simulation. These are resources that will have been provided by the agency sponsoring your access to the simulation.
- Go over the information on your customized referral-process and local-resources slides (slides 15 and 16).

Conclusion Activities
20 min

Slides 17: 3, 2, 1 Activity (8 min)
- On a new piece of paper, write down 3 things you learned today, 2 questions you have, and 1 way you're going to change your practice.
- Allow participants to share their answers.

Slide 18: Bridging the Gap Activity (12 min)
- "Let's do some action planning, to think about your school and commit to some takeaways. Visualize where you are, where you'd like to be, and what it takes to get there."
- **01.** Where You Are: List some of your observations.
- **02.** Where You'd Like to Be: List some of the qualities of your ideal school.
- **03.** What It Takes: Finally, list some ideas that might bridge the gap between where you are and where you'd like to be. What could happen to bring your school one step closer to your ideal?
- Allow participants to share their ideas.

Slide 18: Conclusion
- Thank participants for their time and remind them of why this topic is important.
- Allow for questions.

Note-Taking Guide

Print the following pages and distribute to workshop participants.

Note-Taking Guide

By the end of this simulation, you will be able to:

- **Identify students** in psychological distress
- **Approach students and parents** with your concerns, by broaching concerns effectively and listening actively
- **Refer students** to mental-health resources within your school

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Students in Distress

13-20% of children living in the U.S. experience a mental disorder in a given year

CDC, 2016
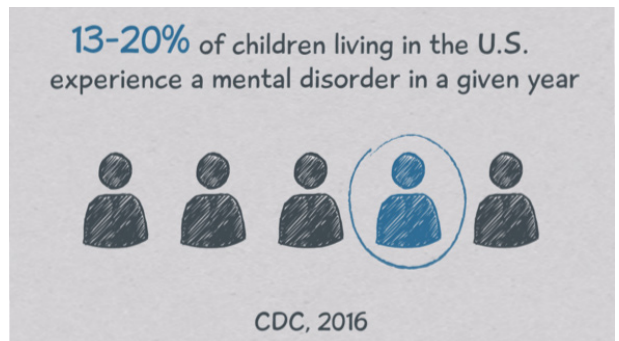
Look for worrisome behaviors or worrisome changes in behavior.

- **Behaviors:** Trouble concentrating, withdrawal and isolation, lack of energy, physical complaints, and self-destructive behaviors
- **Emotions:** Irritability, aggression, anger, emotional outbursts, being nervous or easily startled, clingy, low self-esteem and negative self-talk, sadness, guilt, shame, or fear
- **Appearance:** Disheveled or worsening appearance, lack of cleanliness, gaining or losing a lot of weight, and appearing very tired
- **Academics:** Refusal to comply with rules and requests, worsening school performance, nervousness around academics/getting everything right, and frequent absences from school

Note-Taking Guide

Bringing Up Your Concerns

E	Check your **Emotions**
A	**Ask** for permission
S	Be **Specific**
I	Use **"I"** statements
N	Keep it **Neutral**
G	Show **Genuine** curiosity

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Note-Taking Guide

Learn about Mia / Talk with Mia's Mom

Learn about Mia / Talk with Mia's Mom

✓	Ask open-ended questions
✓	Reflect
✗	Criticize
✗	Give advice
✗	Disagree

Note-Taking Guide

Learn about Derrick / Talk with Derrick

Connecting Students to Help

Note-Taking Guide

My Reflections, Takeaways, and Possible Next Steps

Simulation Summary

Print the following handout and distribute to workshop participants.

Simulation Summary

Identifying At-Risk Students

When identifying students who may be in distress, look for **significant changes in behavior** and look for **behaviors that seem extreme**. Trust your Instincts. Below are some common warning sings of distress.

Signs of Distress

01. **Behavioral changes,** like trouble concentrating, withdrawal and isolation, lack of energy, physical complaints, and self-destructive behaviors.

02. **Emotional changes,** like irritability, aggression, anger, emotional outbursts, being nervous or easily startled, clingy, low self-esteem and negative self-talk, sadness, guilt, shame, or fear.

03. **Academic changes,** like refusal to comply with rules and requests, impulsive choices, decline in academic performance, extreme nervousness around academics or excessive worry about getting everything right, and frequent absences from school.

04. **Appearance changes,** like disheveled or worsening appearance, lack of cleanliness, gaining or losing a lot of weight, and appearing very tired.

Listening Actively

Do

✔ Ask open-ended questions
✔ Reflect

Don't

✘ Criticize
✘ Give advice
✘ Disagree

Bringing Up Concerns

E	**A**	**S**	**I**	**N**	**G**
Check your own **Emotions**	**Ask** for permission	Be **Specific**	Use **"I"** statements	Keep it **Neutral**	Show **Genuine** curiosity

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Simulation Summary

Q. To whom should you refer a student who may be in psychological distress?

Q. What is the referral policy in your school for students who may be a danger to themselves or others?

Q. When and how would a student's parents/guardians be notified about your concerns? Whose role is it to notify them?

Role-Play Scenarios

Print the following handout and distribute to workshop participants.

Role-Play Scenarios

Role-Play Scenario Ⓐ

Concerned Teacher
Read this if you are playing the teacher role.

During the first half of the school year, your student Tamina did well, making mostly Bs and Cs, and seemed happy and outgoing. She was popular and often told jokes in class that made the students (and you) laugh. However, since the winter break, there's been a change in her. She often comes to school in clothing that seems stained and dirty. You've noticed her sometimes smelling of body odor. She's become more quiet and withdrawn. Now, instead of laughing with her friends, she's more likely to say things that hurt their feelings—in class or out. Last week, she made a girl in class cry when she made fun of her reading and told her she was stupid. You're concerned about Tamina's change in behavior and want to reach out to her parent to talk things over.

Guardian
Read this if you are playing the guardian role.

Tamina is your third of four children, who you are raising mostly on your own. Your mother used to help out with cooking and cleaning, especially on the nights when you have to work the evening shift. But, right after the holidays, your mother had a stroke. Now she spends most of her time in bed, and you're feeling the strain of constant work and childcare. Often, you leave your oldest child, Amira, in charge of the younger ones. You've noticed that sometimes Amira bullies and yells at the others, but you don't stop her because you need the help. It's hard to keep up with how all the kids are doing at school; but, as far as you know, Tamina is doing fine. She always hugs you tight when she sees you and has a big smile. She is one of the real joys in your life.

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Role-Play Scenarios

Role-Play Scenario B

Concerned Teacher
Read this if you are playing the teacher role.

Dallas is in 2nd grade. Earlier this year, his parents divorced. Now you have to monitor who picks him up on what days. Twice, the father accused you of allowing Dallas to be sent home with the mother on the wrong day, which leads you to believe the custody agreement may be complicated and antagonistic. Mondays through Wednesdays he comes to school looking tired. He rests his head on the desk and falls asleep. Sometimes he asks to stay inside and nap instead of go to recess. On Thursdays and Fridays, he seems happy--more like his old self. You want to check in with him and see how things are going.

Dallas
Read this if you are playing the student role.

Last summer, your parents split up. Your dad went to live in an apartment on the other side of town, while you and your sister stayed with your mom in the house. Mom and dad fought a lot before dad moved out. Now they fight even more—on the phone, in person, and through you. They often tell you bad things about each other. Your dad says your mom is a drunk. Your mom says your dad is a cheater. You're not sure what all that means, but you know it's bad. Lately it's been a lot more fun to stay at your dad's house, Wednesday through Friday nights. Dad plays with you and your sister, you watch movies, he makes good food, and he gets you to school on time. The other days, when you're with your mom, it's pretty tough. Mom lies around on the couch a lot, playing on her phone and watching TV. When you or your sister get too loud, she yells. She lets you watch TV at night while she works in the other room, so you and your sister stay up late. On those nights you're really tired for school the next day. You wish things could just go back to normal.

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Stay Connected

Congratulations! You have completed the Kognito At-Risk for Elementary School Educators Program. You and your school are creating a more positive climate for your community, and the entire Kognito staff is here to celebrate all of your successes! Please stay connected with us, we would love to hear from you.

Customer Support

Phone: 866-449-8834

Email: Support@Kognito.com