

# At-Risk Middle School Professional Development

## Identify, Approach, and Refer At-Risk Students

**Insert your name and  
contact information.**

# Workshop Overview

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- Workshop purpose
- Background of *At-Risk for Middle School*
- Take simulation
- 20-minute break
- Group discussion: identifying, approaching, referring
- Role play 1
- 15-minute break
- Suicide warning signs & next steps
- Role play 2
- Referral process
- Takeaways



## Write an “AEIOU” Description

A

**Adjective** - What word describes this 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?

# Group Norms

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- **Actively participate.**
- **Be respectful.**
- **When sharing stories,** do NOT share names or other identifying information of students or staff.
- **Seek help** if you would like to discuss personal mental-health issues.
- **If you find any material triggering,** take a break and rejoin later. Reach out to let me know.
- **Talk to me after the workshop if you are concerned about a student** and have questions.

# What is Kognito?

Kognito is a **health simulation company** that comprises learning experts, designers, technologists and implementation professionals.

Our evidence-based simulations build a variety of competencies and shape attitudes through **role-play conversations with virtual people**.

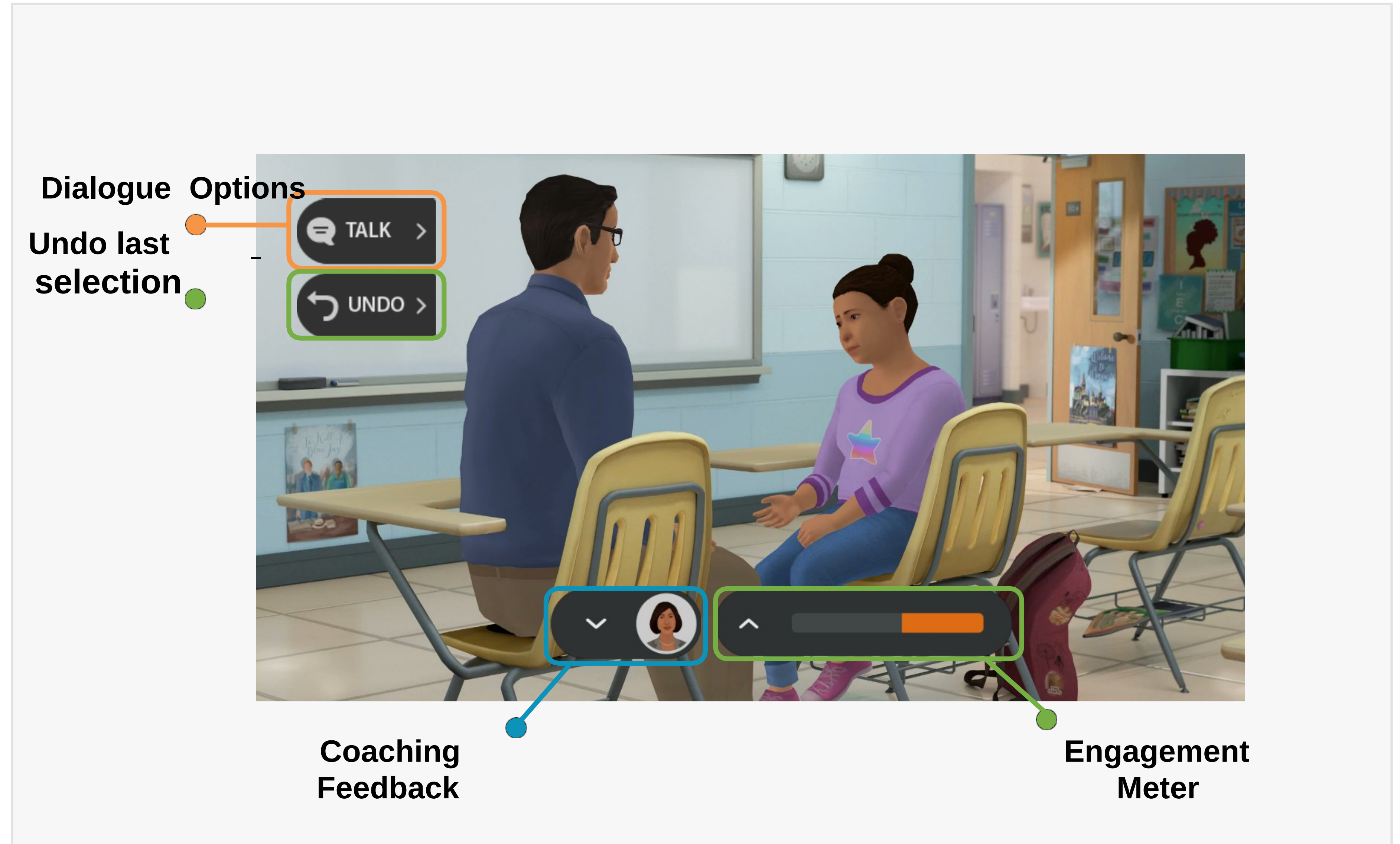
Over 1+ million educators, students, and health care professionals have used Kognito simulations to change lives, including **over 500,000 K-12 educators**.

Our **innovative approach** has resulted in partnerships with government agencies and NGOs.



# How Does A Kognito Simulation Work?

- **User interacts** with a fully animated at-risk virtual student
- **Navigate** through the scenarios by selecting what to say to the virtual student
- **Receive instant feedback** from the virtual coach and engagement meter
- **Can undo decisions** and explore different conversation approaches
- **Receive personalized performance** summary upon completion



# At-Risk for Middle School Educators



## TOPICS

Mental health and suicide prevention

## SETTINGS

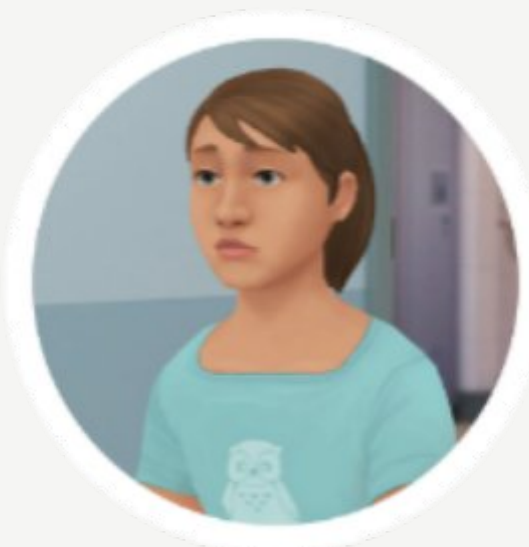
Middle schools, youth programs, foster care

## USERS

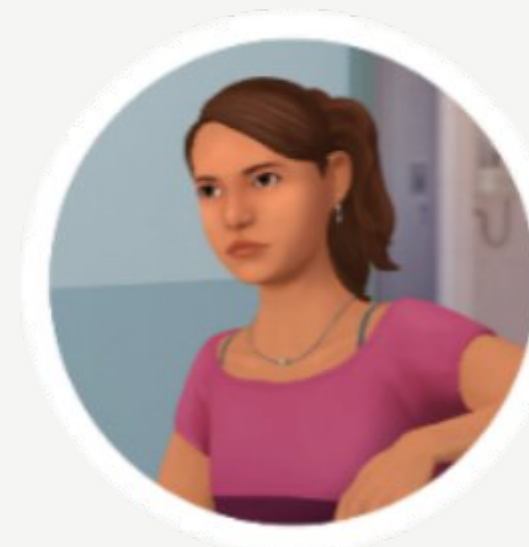
Educators, teachers, and staff

## DURATION

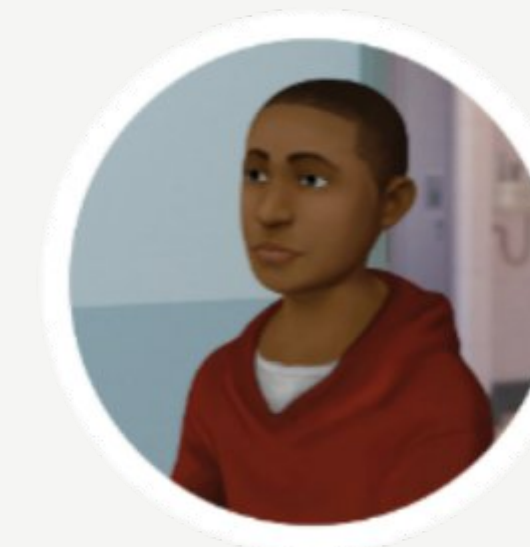
60/120 minute versions\* (\*satisfies state mandates)



**Mariah:** A new girl who is being teased by a clique of popular girls



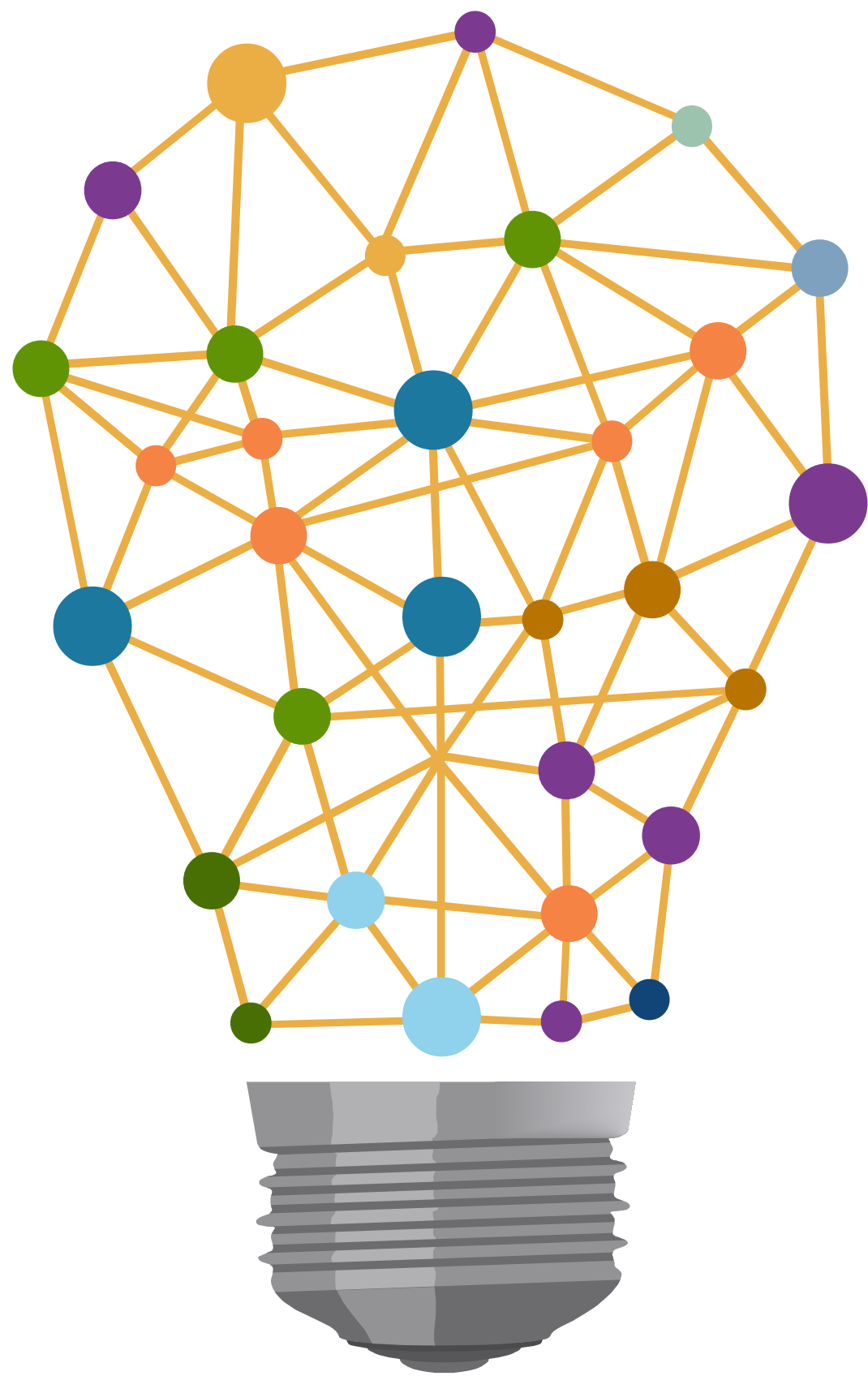
**Jen:** The clique ringleader, who is having trouble at home



**Michael:** A boy struggling with impending loss and thoughts of suicide



## At-Risk Learning Objectives



- 1) **Recognize** warning signs that a student may be suffering from psychological stress, including anxiety, depression, substance abuse and suicidal ideation
- 1) **Initiate** a conversation with a student to build resiliency and help the student identify sources of support
- 1) **Connect** the student to appropriate support services
- 1) **Learn** motivational interviewing techniques and how to avoid common pitfalls, such as attempting to diagnose the problem or giving unwarranted advice

# Take the Simulation

## [www.KognitoCampus.com](http://www.KognitoCampus.com)

For technical support or any questions about your simulation, please contact Kognito at [support@kognito.com](mailto:support@kognito.com) or 866-449-8834

# Identifying At-Risk Students

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Look for worrisome behaviors or worrisome changes in behaviors.

**Behaviors** — withdrawal/isolation, anger, emotional outbursts, mood swings, excessive worry, demands for your time and attention, frequent health complaints, unnecessary risk taking

**Academics** — frequent missed/late assignments, falling grades, low participation, low attendance

**Appearance** — poor grooming/hygiene, disheveled/worsening appearance, drastic weight gain/loss, avoidance of eye contact

# Approaching At-Risk Students

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- **Use “I” statements**, with phrases such as “I think,” “I feel,” and “it seems like.”
- **Avoid negative labels** and replace them with neutral phrases that avoid accusation.
- **Avoid exaggeration** and use soft modifiers.
- **Be specific** about what you’ve observed.

# Referring At-Risk Students

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- **Normalize it.** — “The counselor has helped students with similar issues...” (don’t name names!)
- **Discuss advantages.** — “It can feel good to talk about your feelings.” “The counselor can help you meet your goals.”
- **Make the introduction.** — “I can introduce you.”

# Suicide Warning Signs

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- Talking about or making plans for suicide
- Expressing hopelessness about the future
- Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain or distress
- Showing worrisome behavioral or changes in behavior, such as:
  - Withdrawal from or changing in social connections/situation
  - Changes in sleep (increased or decreased)
  - Anger or hostility that seems out of character or out of context
  - Recent increased agitation or irritability

# What if a student may be suicidal?

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1) Gather as much information as the student is willing to share:

- Are they thinking about suicide?
- Do they have a plan?
- Do they intend to act on the plan?
- Do they have the means to act on the plan?

2) Connect the student *immediately and in person* to a supportive counselor, staff member, local service provider, or crisis center.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
1-800-273-TALK (8522)  
24 hours a day, seven days a week

# How to Ask the Question

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- ✗ You're not thinking about suicide, are you?
- ✗ You wouldn't kill yourself. I know you're smarter than that.
  - ✓ Are you considering suicide?



# Bullying Policy

- What is the definition of bullying at your school?
- What is the process for reporting bullying?

# Referral Policy

- What is the referral policy in our school? To whom do you make a referral if you are worried about a student in psychological distress that is not deemed an imminent threat to a student's life?
- Is that the school psychologist, guidance counselor, social worker, or nurse?

# Insert Local Resources



## 3, 2, 1 Activity

Q. What are 3 things you learned?

Q. What are 2 questions you have?

Q. What is 1 way you're going to change your practice?

# Bridging the Gap

**Q. Where You Are:** List some of your observations.

**Q. Where You'd Like To Be:** List some of the qualities of your ideal school.

**Q. What It Takes:** 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?

# Thank you!

The conversations you have with students can open the door to them getting the help they need. If you do this for just **one** student, you will have made a ***difference***.