

# Shrinking the Change: 7 Steps to Advance Mental Health Systems at Your School

Educators, counselors, and administrators are faced with the challenge of mediating day-to-day crises while building comprehensive mental health support systems to create safe, stable learning environments for students. Thriving Minds has had the opportunity to work with many practitioners to learn more about how the following methods can create attainable systemic change that advances the well-being of students beyond the classroom.

## Select a theme for your next Student Support Team (SST) meeting.

Provide a theme—such as data, Tier 1 supports, or needs assessment—to focus efforts during team convenings. Communicate themes and agendas in advance of meetings to grant team members time to prepare for a focused gathering.



## Record next steps at the end of each SST meeting.

Ensure team members leave meetings with a clear understanding of next steps. Include long-term goals for the team and short-term action items for individuals to guide accountability.

## Start universal screening with one student, one measure, one day.

Look for an easy win to pilot mental health screening. Pick a student who you have a strong relationship with—ideally one already enrolled in services—and whose family is responsive, engaged, and appreciative of support to build early success.

Start *small*,  
but **START!**

## Create a School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System account.

[SHAPE](#) users have access (at no cost) to a variety of self-assessments that allow users to identify areas for improvement in their school mental health systems, along with additional resources like a library of screening measures.



## Test a new optimistic closure practice with one student.

Optimistic closures are reflective exercises used to highlight work that has been done, provide a sense of accomplishment, and support forward thinking. These experiences bring a moment of reflection to help anchor learning and build anticipation for future efforts.



## Ask for a teacher's opinion on a new CASEL signature practice.

[CASEL social emotional learning \(SEL\) signature practices](#) set a foundation of safety, consistency, and belonging for students that promote their mental health. Asking teachers for their opinion on a new practice broadens the use of SEL practices in classrooms while still respecting teachers' autonomy.



## Speak with one person outside the SST to build buy-in.

Changing hearts and minds begins with a conversation. Share the importance of a robust mental health multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) with someone new to increase support from stakeholders at your school.

