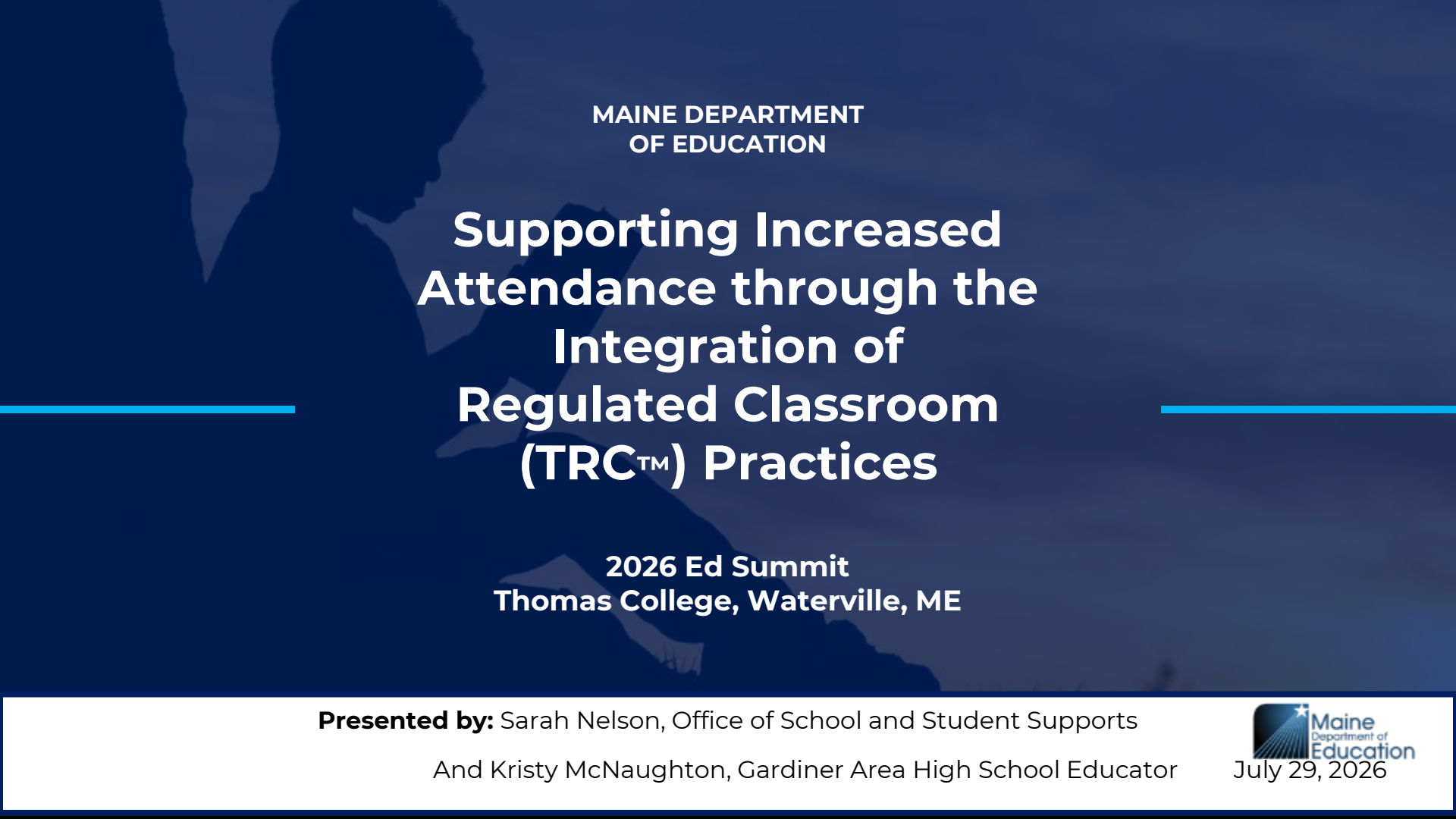




MAINE DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

Supporting Increased Attendance through the Integration of Regulated Classroom (TRC™) Practices

2026 Ed Summit
Thomas College, Waterville, ME

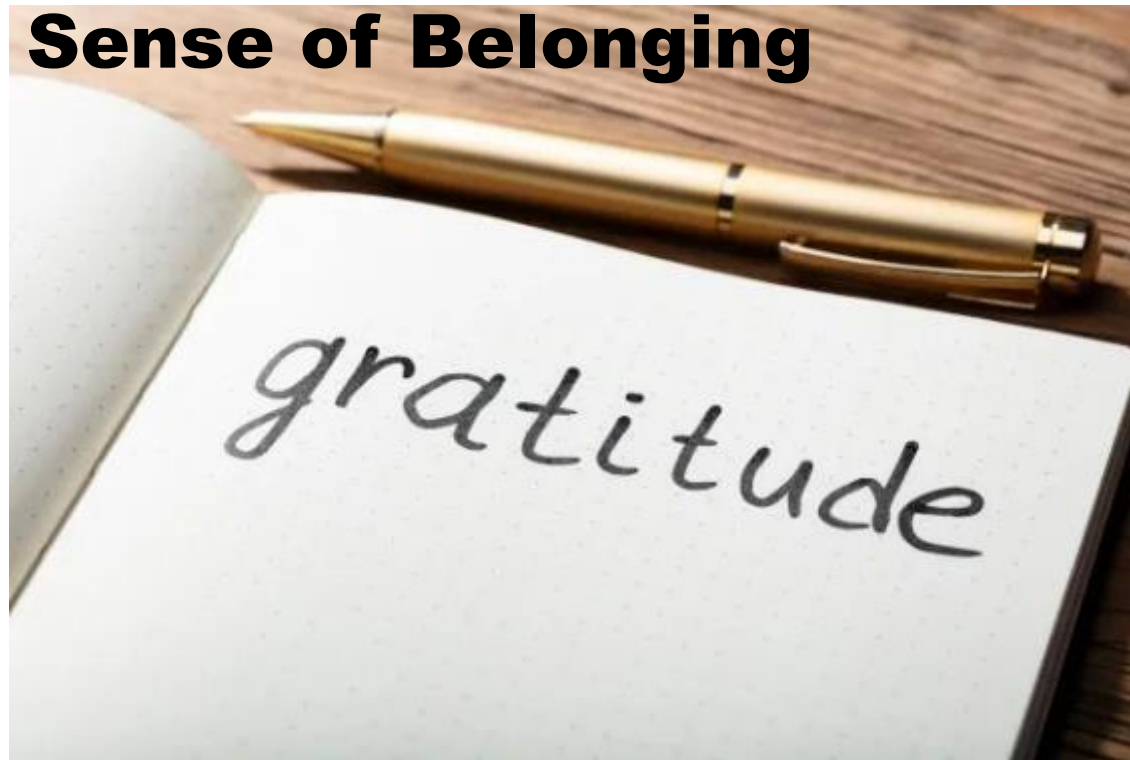
Presented by: Sarah Nelson, Office of School and Student Supports

And Kristy McNaughton, Gardiner Area High School Educator



July 29, 2026

Co-Regulation to Build Felt Safety and Sense of Belonging



(Embodied Gratitude pg. 80 The Regulated Classroom™ Guidebook, Affirmation Gr. 3-12)

POLYVAGAL
Nervous System

AROUSAL INCREASES

FIGHT

FLIGHT

ANXIOUS WORRY

SYMPATHETIC CHARGE

FRUSTRATION
IRRITATION
ANGER RAGE

ESCAPE MOVE AWAY
RUN AWAY FEAR
PANIC

OVERWHELM

VENTRAL

RATIONAL THOUGHT

COMPASSION

JOY

CURIOSITY

DORSAL

ANXIETY
DISSOCIATION

AROUSAL DECREASES

TRIGGER
Cue of threat, danger, risk or novelty

Glimmer
Micromoment cue of safety

SHUTDOWN
TRAPPED
HOPELESS

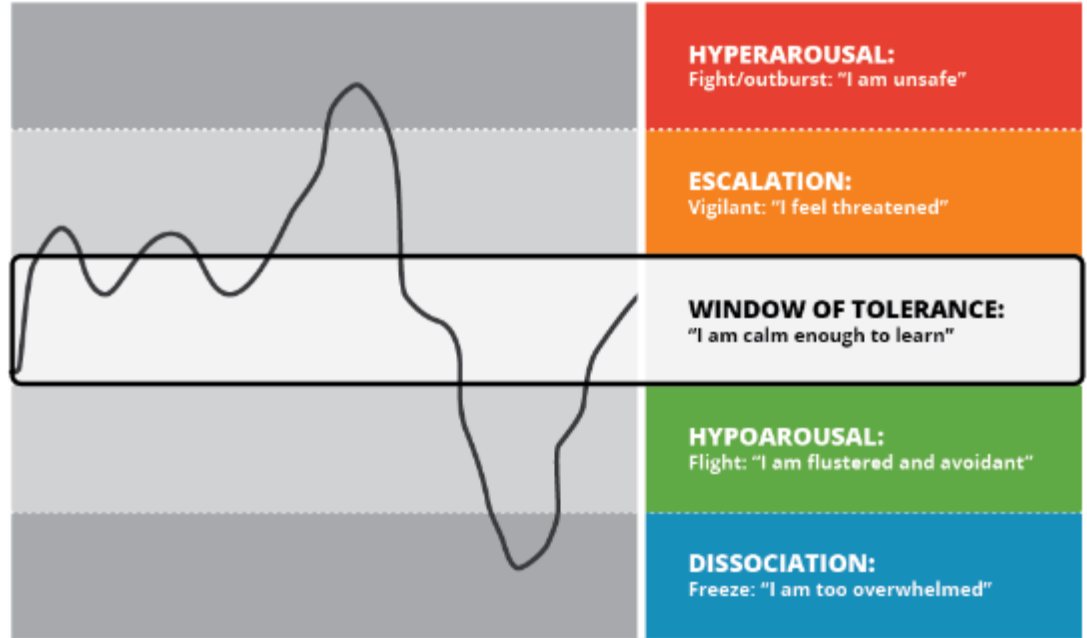
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could observe no no

- Widening the
'Window of
Tolerance'p.11

(Siegel, 1999)



“Behavior” or... Dysregulation?

- Important to consider: Are we talking about “behavior” or emotional dysregulation?
- Behavior is in our control, is a choice (mostly)
- Emotional dysregulation is **not** always in a young child’s control.
- How adults perceive or understand a child’s behavior influences their response to the child- Perception vs reality.
- IF we see Dysregulation as a Behavior it prompts the behavior management style of consequences... a punitive reaction
- “Unmet needs”= Dysregulation which requires **tools to regulate** the brain & body



Applying brain **science** to cultivate conditions for felt safety

Our senses make associations with cues in our environment and in our relationships... this is the essence of how we interpret our experiences.

Developmental trauma and / or traumatic experiences in childhood can interrupt sequential growth which may manifest as sensory processing difficulties, stress behavior, and / or cognitive impairment...

Based on the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics- Dr. Bruce Perry, and the *Child Trauma Academy* when sequential brain development is interrupted, the wiring of neural networks manifests as disorganized patterns of behavior in children... very challenging

Sequence of Engagement... The 3 RRRs

- **Regulate...** help the child regulate... calm their fight/flight/freeze response
 - **Relate...** connect with the child, through an attuned and sensitive relationship
 - **Reason...** only then can we support the child to reflect, learn, remember, articulate, and become self-assured



So, Now... What Do We Do???

What is this behavior telling me???

- This is an UNDERSTANDING... not an excuse...
- Co-regulatory and restorative practices empower both individuals and the school community to address root causes (rather than just the symptoms) of issues while building and maintaining trust and relationships.



What gets in the way of Regulation?



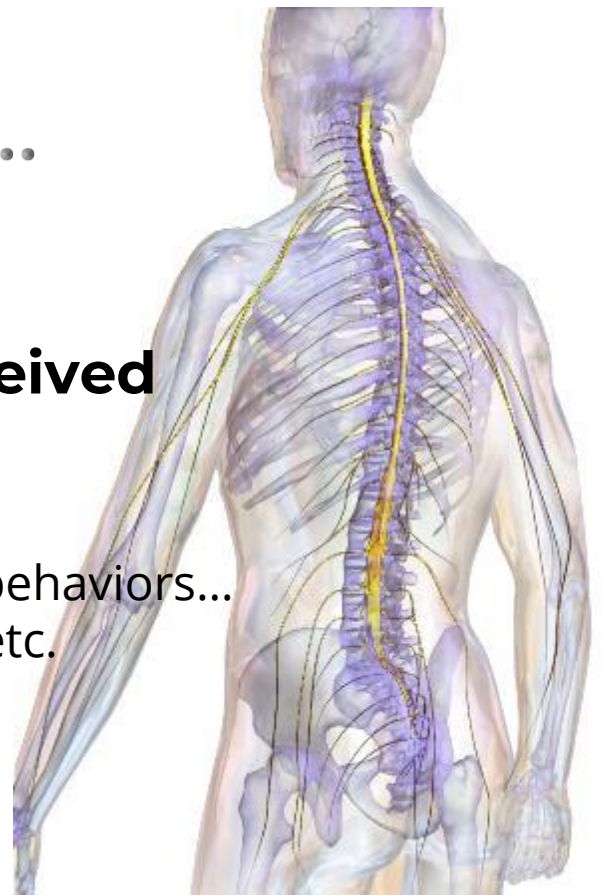
Emotion drives our attention...
Attention drives our focus...

**All Behaviors stem from messages received
by our brains, hearts, and bodies...**

Within the school setting... we **WILL** see challenging behaviors...
lack of focus, non-compliance, emotional outbursts, etc.

How can we shift our approach to ask...

What is THIS behavior telling me?



How does all this translate to our work with youth?



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY SA](#)

MIYHS and Maine CDC data

53% of Maine high school students feel they matter in their community.

(Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 2025).

How can we reach the other 47%?

Maine high school students who felt they matter in their community are less likely to report depressive symptoms, suicide ideation, current substance use, or 4+ ACEs.

(Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Oct. 2025)

How can we develop a culture of mattering?

Attendance data

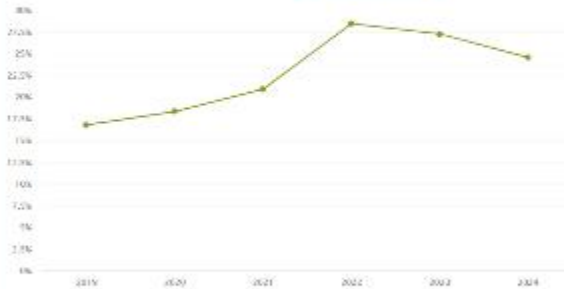
CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM IN MAINE

TABLE

MAP

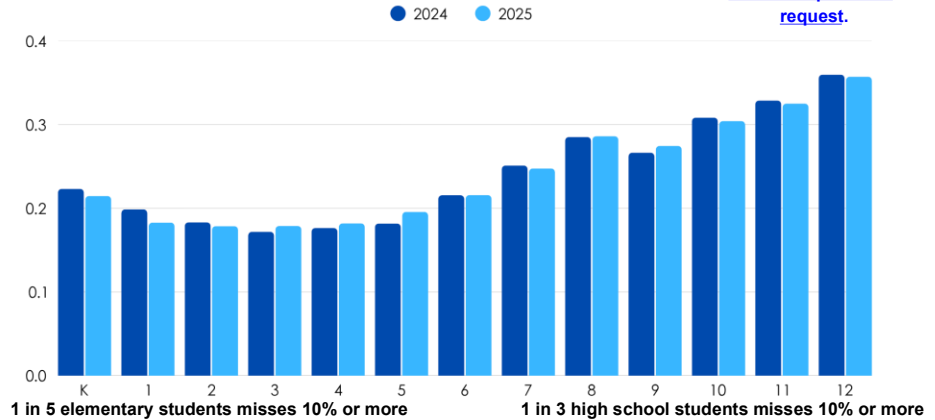
TRENDS

BAR



Chronic absenteeism | KIDS COUNT Data Center (aecf.org)

Source: Chronic absenteeism - KIDS COUNT



In the words of Floyd Cobb and John Krownapple, authors of *Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity* (2019), we urgently need to “dust off our knowledge of Maslow” and prioritize the belonging gap. Belonging is the foundation for learning. It’s the step before academic achievement (p. 45).

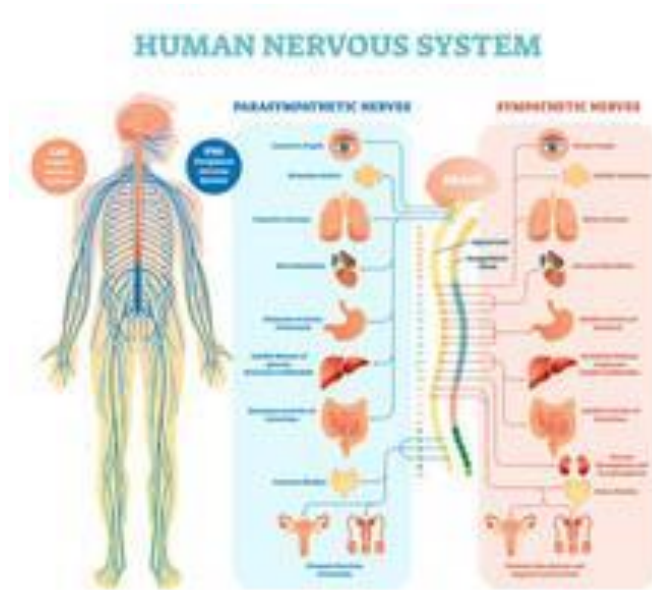
“ **Belonging is a fundamental human need and a precursor to self-worth, self-confidence, and agency.**



Kathleen M. Budge, Grant Chandler, July 1, 2025, Vol. 82, No. 9, The Signals We Send About Who Belongs

[The Signals We Send About Who Belongs](#)

Activator Shake it Out



Nervous System check- in

Not every practice lands well

For some, this elicits Joy... for some... not so much

The most Important piece of reflecting is constantly revisiting our OWN self-awareness

What is this feeling?

Where does it live in my body?

Maine DOE Announces No Cost Program to Support Educator Wellbeing and Create Calm and Supporting Learning Environments

- *600 Educators Can Attend Train-the-Trainer Events Across Maine to Bring Tools and Strategies Back to Their School Communities*

The COVID-19 pandemic took a tremendous toll on educator and student wellbeing, with educators reporting increased numbers of dysregulated students, stress, and classroom disruptions. Many educators reported feeling overwhelmed by these pandemic-induced behavioral issues.

“The Maine Department of Education is committed to supporting educator and student wellbeing and we’re thrilled to partner with The Regulated Classroom™ to offer this program at no cost to Maine educators. The Regulated Classroom™ provides tools and strategies based on brain science that any educator in Maine can infuse into their teaching and daily routines to support themselves and their students in creating calm, safe, joyful, and engaging learning environments,”
-Maine Education Commissioner Pender Makin.

[Maine DOE Announces No Cost Program to Support Educator Wellbeing and Create Calm and Supporting Learning Environments – Maine DOE Newsroom](#) 2023/09/25

What is The Regulated Classroom?



- <https://www.regulatedclassroom.com/>

SIGNS YOU NEED ONE OF OUR FOUR CORE PRACTICES



Activator if you feel:

- Heavy
- Sluggish
- Foggy
- Flat



Settler if you feel:

- Tight
- Buzzing
- Restless
- Wired



Connector if you feel:

- Distant
- Withdrawn
- Alone
- Disconnected



Affirmation if you feel:

- Deflated
- Small
- Discouraged
- Invisible



www.regulatedclassroom.com

4 Tier I Core Practices...

Based on the framework of The Regulated Classroom™
by Emily Read Daniels

Connectors... cultivate relationships

Rooted in the principles of group development,
scientifically-validated benefits of play, and the
Polyvagal Theory

Activators... engage in collective rhythm-making to energize
Based in perspective of regulating brainstem
functioning

Settlers... calm the brain's stress response
Developed to create a peaceful classroom atmosphere

Affirmations... embodied gratitude
Designed to create positive associations with school
experiences

TRC CoP

**There's a team to help
you!**

Here's how to join...

The Regulated Classroom Community of Practice



You're not meant to do this work
alone. Join our Community of
Practice.



Felt safety is a subjective feeling of safety on the inside of your body.

It's a regulated, balanced state in your stress response system.



It is a tier 1
somatosensory and
Polyvagal-informed
framework for
cultivating conditions of
felt safety in the
classroom.



Model greeting

ALL ages benefit from this practice...
I see you! You matter! I'm glad you're here!

The power of something simple... taking a moment to change things up and do something that seems to have nothing to do with the curriculum, but actually has everything to do with it!

Random late night shower thought

Inbox x



Fri, Apr 4, 11:22 PM



to me ▾

Hi Mrs.McNaughton, sorry it's so late but I just had this late night shower thought (like quite literally, I thought about this in the shower just now haha) but I think we should really do that activity you have to do, The fist bump, high-five or hug, Activity that helps put us into uncomfortable situations because it's good for us. I was just thinking about it and thinking how much that piece helps for me to reset my brain but also to get hugs from people that wants them because I love them so much and it really does help to reduce stress for me and I think a lot of other people like it as well, even if they happen to be complaining about it before it happens. But I just found that the last time we did it it really helped to reset my brain and really reduce stress, especially after a hard day. And I think it would be beneficial to not only myself, but to some of my other peers if we did that activity more often. I'm not saying every class or even once a week but definitely incorporating it more if we have time would be really awesome because I love the idea of it.

Thank you for listening to my late night "ted talk" I appreciate it and hope you can do this more. Have a good rest your night and enjoy your weekend!

Grade 12
Homeroom 214

Connectors...

EVERY DAY, Every Person Greeting

(Every Day, Every Person Greeting pg. 35 The Regulated Classroom™ Guidebook- Connector, Pre K-12)

Good Morning,
Team Nelson!

How may I greet you????



Authentically greeting students at the door each morning, at their level, creates a feeling of belonging and mattering.



Offering students and teachers choices about what type of greeting they prefer—warm hugs, high fives or no-contact options such as a thumbs up—allows for individual preferences and may reduce anxiety for those who may be fearful of close contact



As children, our #1 survival priority is to attach to caregivers.

Bitmoji

<https://www.bitmoji.com>

**Looking for a
Low-Burden /
High Impact
strategy to
increase
Academic Engaged
Time
by 20%???**



(Every Day, Every Person Greeting pg. 35 The Regulated Classroom™ Guidebook- Connector, Pre K-12)

What are implementers saying???

How has TRC™ implementation impacted the culture of your school community?

- feeling much more *connected* as a school community, students *feel safe* within their settings when TRC™ is implemented
- *Massive impact* in the classrooms using it. More regulated kiddos and staff.
- *100% positive*, culture of positive change, lower discipline referrals
- Supportive of our shift towards *embracing* an integrated trauma responsive approach. Kids and staff *enjoy* the practices
- It has impacted ME significantly in *not feeling burned out*.
- It's been amazing for my k class. Our students have *come together as a community*, and they have *so much fun* with the practices.
- People are now open to trying new knowledge to help kiddos. Our district is making it a *priority to listen to teachers and help*
- **Helps bring joy!**

The Regulated Classroom®

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN REVIEW

Educators
feel more
connected to
students

TRC is indirectly but powerfully linked to attendance by creating classroom environments where students experience felt safety and connection, reducing stress responses in the body. This makes students more likely to feel welcome, safe, and want to attend school.

students
experience felt
safety and
connection

State-Wide Outcome Data



Number of program participants

New Hampshire DOE program:

2,800+
educators (2022)

Maine DOE program:

1100+
educators (2023-2025)

In the wake of the pandemic, teachers reported the highest level of occupation-related stress. Both the New Hampshire Department of Education (NH DOE) and the Maine Department of Education (ME DOE) sponsored state-wide training programs in The Regulated Classroom™ (TRC™).

TRC™ is evidence-based and rooted in the most cutting edge neuroscience, enabling educators to learn the practices and tools that effectively manage their stress and student stress in the moment. The results of these state-wide programs have been outstanding and sustained.

STATEMENT

AGREE

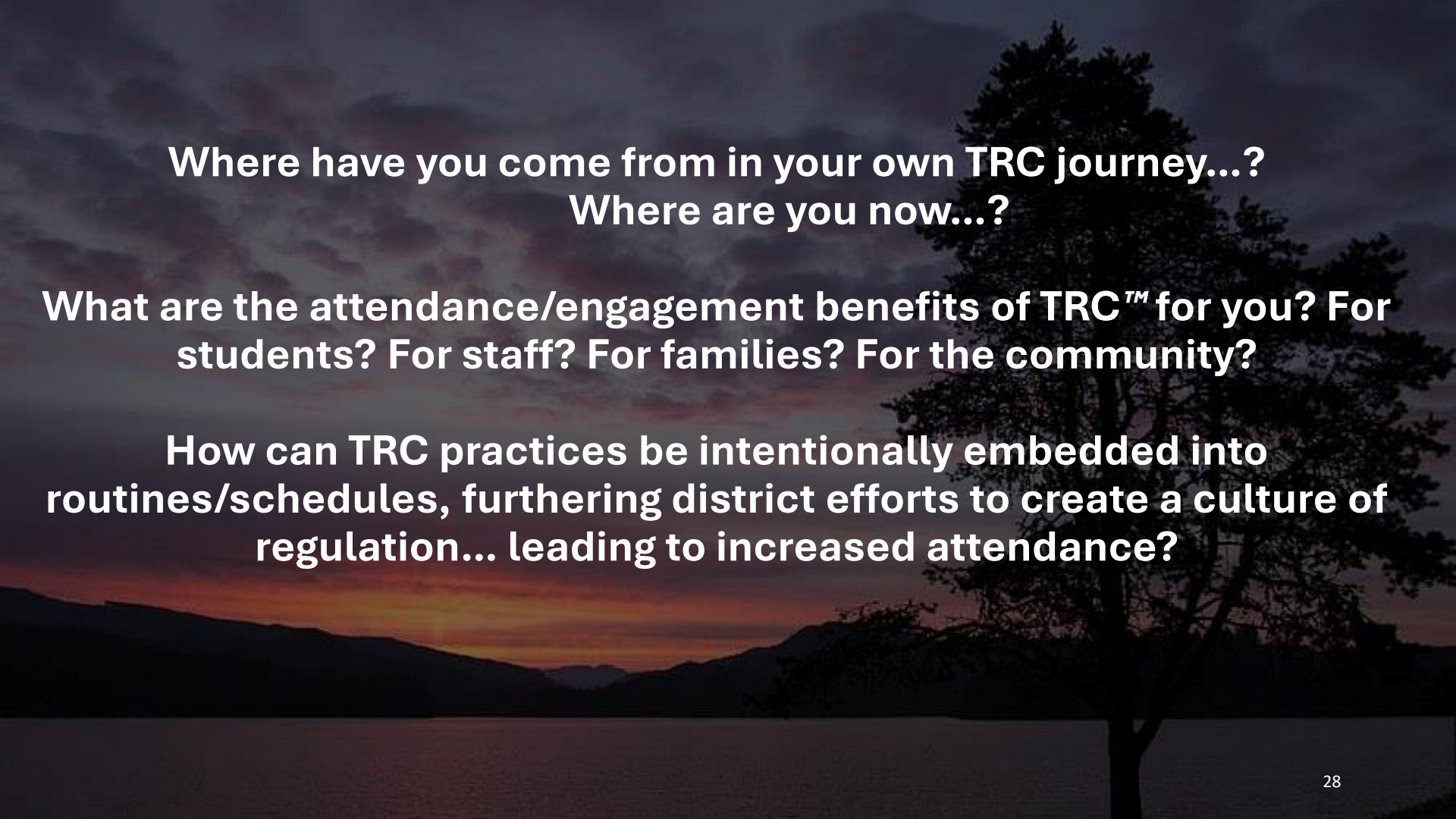
I feel more regulated and connected to my students when I use TRC™ practices and tools	-90% (NH: 91%, ME: 89.3%)
I notice my students/colleagues are more regulated when I am more regulated	-86% (NH: 86%, ME: 84.8%)
I better understand how to manage my own stress in the moment	-82% (NH: 85%, ME: 78.6%)
I understand how stress impacts my behavior or students' behavior	-91% (ME only: 91.1%)
I feel more self-aware of my stress response	-90% (ME only: 90.2%)
I incorporate the 4 TRC® practices (Connectors, Activators, Settlers, Affirmations) into routines	-76% (NH: 74%, ME: 78.6%)
I use TRC® practices/tools with students multiple times a day or most days	-66% (ME only)
I reach for items in my Self-Care Sensory Toolkit to manage my stress or student stress	-91% (NH: 95%, ME: 86.5%)
My administration is supportive of me using TRC® tools	-80% (ME only: 79.5%)

Sample size: Participants were surveyed 6 months after participating in the training program
425 NH respondents, 112 ME respondents

Connector... 3-2-1 JUMP!

(*Back-to-Back Countdown* pg. 34 The Regulated Classroom™ Guidebook- Connector, 1-12)





**Where have you come from in your own TRC journey...?
Where are you now...?**

What are the attendance/engagement benefits of TRC™ for you? For students? For staff? For families? For the community?

How can TRC practices be intentionally embedded into routines/schedules, furthering district efforts to create a culture of regulation... leading to increased attendance?

**What feels *familiar* about
these practices?**

What are you *already* doing?

Down and Dirty... How Can I Make a Difference?

Tomorrow...

- It's all about RELATIONSHIPS!!!
- Paying attention on purpose
- Seeing kids... everyday...
REALLY



What is YOUR role in increasing attendance?



It's a process...

As a team... create a school community climate where everyone can:

FEEL SAFE...

allow themselves to be **VULNERABLE...**

And have **FUN...**

Step back from the wheel of academic urgency and outcomes...

And **PRIORITIZE CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS,**
and a **TRUE SENSE** of **BELONGING**

MAKE POSITIVE CONNECTIONS TO START THE DAY

What do students see / feel when they arrive at school each day?

What could be done to positively impact student learning?

We must be ready... before students even arrive

- It's a NEW day and it's going to be GREAT!!
 - Develop a Mindful mantra



Connector... What do YOU prefer? THIS or THAT?

(Preferences pg. 43 The Regulated Classroom™ Guidebook- Connector, Pre K-12)

WALKING vs. JOGGING



DIFFERENCES

- Walking is lower impact
- Walking is easier on the joints
- Walking can be longer durations
- Jogging requires more breath
- Jogging builds more muscle
- Burns calories

This Or That



Affirmations... ACTS OF KINDNESS

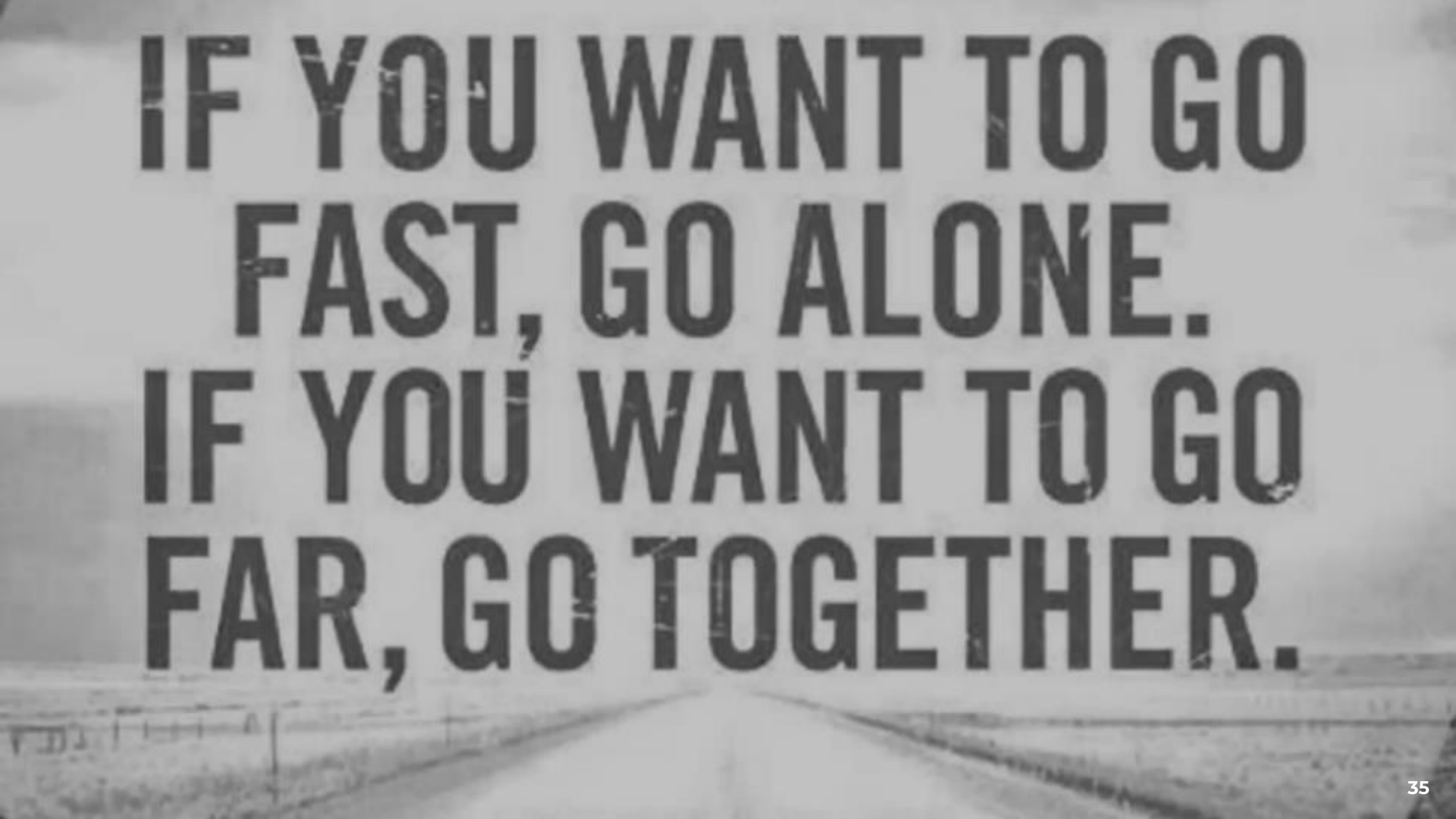
[Acts of Kindness pg. 83 The Regulated Classroom™ Guidebook- Affirmation, Pre K-5]



- ❖ Highlight an act of kindness your community will notice together
- ❖ When you or your students observe this... call it out with a heart sign
- ❖ Reflect... How does it feel on the inside of the body when you act in a kind way OR receive someone's act of kindness ?

Helping someone, sharing, practicing patience, waiting for someone, offering a place to sit, giving a compliment, standing up for someone, encouraging others, inviting someone to play, using manners, etc...





**IF YOU WANT TO GO
FAST, GO ALONE.
IF YOU WANT TO GO
FAR, GO TOGETHER.**

**What's your next
step in supporting
increased attendance?**

Remember...

Your answer depends on your
unique circumstances....



- ❖ Talk to a colleague about the importance of Co-Regulation
- ❖ Plan an engagement night focused on practices of Co-Regulation. Advertise it as **"Want fun ideas for helping your kids regulate?"**
- ❖ Plan a time to speak for 15 minutes to your board – educate board and community members on practices of regulation and share its impact for you



- ❖ Review *The Regulated Classroom™* Guidebook
- ❖ Go old school with a flyer and invite colleagues to join you in a mini (15 minute) training. Select 4 practices for regulation... do them in quick succession asking for reflection after each one

Create a Roadmap for Your Own Co-Regulation Implementation...



**YOU are wanted,
welcomed, cared
about, and needed
in our
community!!!**

**Thank YOU for
being HERE!!!**

How can you connect with us?



Sarah Nelson:
sarah.nelson@maine.gov



Kristy McNaughton:
kmcnaughton@msad11.org



**To access
The
Regulated
Classroom
shop:**





Stay Connected!

Find Us Online!



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