In the compass model, the four sectors, Mind, Spirit, Strength and Heart, not only contribute to your overall wellness, but also provide guidance on strategies to help build your compassion resilience. Heart is one of the sectors. This section will take a deeper look at our emotions, and our relationships, both with ourselves and with others. We will be invited to focus on our self-compassion as we seek to be compassionate in our relationships with students, families and colleagues.

Distribute this document to all participants to explore prior to the following application activities

**Staff & Leadership Combined Activities**

**Colleague Conversations – Use this Visual and Display in Staff Break Areas**

**A Self-Compassion Exercise (10min)**

**Self-Compassion Self-Scoring Scale (Dr. Neff)**

**Staff Circle Agenda**

**Additional Resources for Leadership**

**Fostering Relationship Building among Staff**

**Department of Public Instruction’s Emotional Regulation Plan**

**Additional Resources**

This article explains the importance of communication: 7 things to avoid, 11 things to keep in mind.

This article offers a brief introduction and tips for developing better communication skills through structured dialog and communicating your trust distinctions.

For more excellent resources on self-compassion go to Dr. Kristin Neff’s website
In the compass model, the four sectors, Mind, Spirit, Strength and Heart, not only contribute to your overall wellness, but also provide guidance on strategies to help build your compassion resilience. Heart is one of the sectors. This section will take a deeper look at our emotions, and our relationships, both with ourselves and with others. We will be invited to focus on our self-compassion as we seek to be compassionate in our relationships with students, families and colleagues.

Humans were made for connections and relationships to others. Research has shown both the positive outcomes for our overall health when we feel connected to others and the decline in connectedness in America in the past 30 years. Brené Brown, a researcher who studies courage, vulnerability, shame and empathy, says this about human connection: “A deep sense of love and belonging is an irresistible need of all people. We are biologically, cognitively, physically, and spiritually wired to love, to be loved, and to belong. When those needs are not met, we don’t function as we were meant to. We break. We fall apart. We numb. We ache. We hurt others. We get sick.”

As we saw in the Positive Staff Culture section, relationships and how we interact with others is important to a healthy workplace environment. Good communication skills contribute to developing healthy relationships at work. Among the key skills necessary to good communication are listening well, being aware of body language, and showing empathy and respect.

Strong emotional health supports strong relationships and is very important to our overall wellbeing. Being able to stay present and centered even in the midst of difficult circumstances allows us to be thoughtfully responsive rather than impulsively reactive. We seek to have our emotions serve our well-being rather than for our emotions to overwhelm us. When we practice mindfulness, we are better able to respond with compassion in challenging situations.

Being mindfully aware of our emotions is not only valuable to our connection to those around us, but to ourselves as well. A healthy relationship with oneself is demonstrated by being self-compassionate. Self-compassion involves supporting and soothing ourselves when we are struggling, just as we would for a dear friend in a similar situation. Dr. Kristin Neff researches self-compassion and has found three elements of self-compassion: 1) be kind to yourself versus judging yourself, 2) recognize your common humanity, versus isolating yourself, and 3) be mindful about your emotions versus over identifying with them.

We can learn skills to increase our self-compassion. Consider these words from a parent on her use of mindful self-compassion to allow her to show empathy and compassion to her child in tough situations:

"I am the mother of a 24 year old daughter who is completely blind and lives with autism. Frankly, her autism throws a wrench, okay sometimes a crowbar, into her behavior. It’s tough. She gets stuck on things that happen to her that most
Advancing Adult Compassion Resilience: A Toolkit for Schools | Section 11 | Wellness and Resilience Strategies: Heart

“neurotypical” people would brush off. A cup of water spills, an outing with a friend is cancelled, a flight time changes — these all result in anger, catastrophizing, and a ruined day. A night’s sleep will usually reset her mood. It’s tough on her, but it’s also tough on me. Yes, I now actually take my feelings into account during my daughter’s rough spots. Mindful self-compassion is a new tool in my parental toolbox, and it has helped me to shift my perspective, from a 90% focus on my daughter’s needs to split my focus 50/50 between hers and mine.

Kristin Neff describes the 3 components of Mindful Self-Compassion. First, notice and accept how we feel, react, etc. to a given situation in a non-judgmental way. Recognize that we are in emotional pain, that there is some degree of suffering (Mindfulness). Next, remember that suffering is part of life for humans, that we all suffer (Common Humanity). Finally, ask ourselves, how can I be kind to myself in this moment, what do I need?

For me, taking a Self-Compassion Break decreases my parental anxiety, guilt, and shame (the emotions behind my anger), which significantly reduces my daughter’s anger. I help myself first, which helps my daughter. The proverbial “put your own oxygen mask on first.” And this is a very portable tool. Deploy it right in the middle of a tantrum!

Here’s an example: My daughter was looking forward to going out with her friend for lunch. Thirty minutes before the appointed time, her friend called to say she had been in a car accident, is ok, but has to cancel the outing. My daughter’s reaction? Devastation! Anger! Tears! Slamming doors! “I have such bad luck, now I’m having more bad luck! Why do I always have such bad luck?” She’s holed up in her room, and eventually I have to go in there with some empathy. And I’m not feeling so empathetic at the moment. I am frustrated, and feel badly for my daughter. I am angry that she is thinking only of herself, not that her friend was in an accident. Some guilt and shame and self-judgement roll in: “Why am I not a better parent? More empathetic? Why didn’t I go comfort my daughter right away, instead of waiting 30 minutes?”

I gingerly knock on her door and go in. I remember my Mindful Self-Compassion tools. First, recognition of my emotional pain- I say to myself, “This hurts, Ouch! I feel bad, this is a moment of suffering.” Just acknowledging this fact gives me a bit of separation from what’s going on. It keeps me from getting carried away with my emotions. I can step back a bit from the situation and help myself. Next, I remind myself “All parents feel this way at times. “ Then I ask myself “What do I need right now? How can I be kind to myself?” And I’m thinking all these thoughts in rapid succession, while I’ve got my daughter in a bear hug. I decide that what I need right now is some loving-kindness. Directed at me. So I start to focus and breathe. Breathing in I say to myself “Love for me” breathing out “Love for her,” and so on. I’m giving myself what I need, and after about 8 cycles of breathing like this, things get better for me. My anxiety level goes down, I’m no longer angry, and my empathy has returned for real. Other things I might have needed in that moment? A soothing touch, speaking to myself in a warm tone.“You’re not a bad parent, this is a tough emotional situation, and you are doing your best.” Or a cup of chamomile tea. My daughter is still stuck for the day, but I’m not stuck with her. I can just love her and move on.

Mindful Self-Compassion and the Self-Compassion Break. Try it for yourself!

* The compass model is adapted from the work of The Samaritan Family Wellness Foundation.
Leadership Activity:  
Fostering Relationship Building among Staff

As discussed in the information above, as well as in the section on Positive Staff Culture, we understand how vital healthy relationships are to the workplace environment. This blog offers a good place to start for leadership to help build relationships among their staff.

One way to encourage your staff to communicate with one another and build relationships would be to have a question of the day (or week). Selecting one “get to know you” question that staff can easily answer when passing in the hallways, in the teacher lounge or even in the space before and after a meeting. This link provides 76 ice breaker questions to pull from.
Activity: Department of Public Instruction’s Emotional Regulation Plan

On the DPI website there are three emotional regulation plans for different age groups of students. These plans are to be completed with students about their emotional regulation strategies. These are helpful tools to share with your staff to use with each student in the school. All adults can benefit from completing such plans for themselves and sharing them with those they would like to offer them support when they are moving towards dysregulation. Suggest that staff practice using the emotional regulation plans by completing their own!
Colleague Conversations

Relationships with your colleagues are essential to a healthy, positive work culture. One way to foster work relationships is to have intentional conversations.

These questions relate to the content in the Compassion Resilience Toolkit.

1. What got you into this line of work?

2. What keeps you going and able to bring compassion to yourself, colleagues and students?

3. What wisdom do you have about how to balance care for yourself while being compassionate to others?

4. What is something you have done differently over the past year or two that has helped you to show up in the way that you desire for yourself, your colleagues and your students?
Activity: A Self-Compassion Exercise

Adapted from The Reality Slap, by Russ Harris

A Compassionate Hand

I invite you now to find a comfortable position in which you are centered and alert. For example, if you’re seated in a chair, you could lean slightly forwards, straighten your back, drop your shoulders and press your feet gently onto the floor.

Now bring to mind a current, significant challenge. This might be something that’s happening that you don’t feel you have the skills to handle. Maybe it’s on-going self-criticism. Maybe you are struggling to communicate your thoughts or feelings. Or, you find yourself frequently impatient. Take a few moments to reflect on the nature of this challenge: to remember what happened, to consider how it is affecting you, and to think about how it might impact your future. And notice what difficult thoughts and feelings arise.

Now pick one of your hands and imagine it’s the hand of someone very kind and caring.

Place this hand, slowly and gently, on whichever part of your body experiences the most pain. Perhaps you feel the pain more in your chest, or perhaps in your head, neck or stomach. Wherever it is most intense, lay your hand there. And if you’re numb, lay your hand on the part that feels the numbest. (If you’re feeling neither pain nor numbness, then simply rest your hand on the center of your chest.)

Allow your hand to rest on you, lightly and gently; feel it against your skin or against your clothes. And feel the warmth flowing from your palm into your body. Now imagine your body softening around this pain: loosening up, softening up and making space. If you’re numb, then soften and loosen around that numbness. (And if you’re neither hurting nor numb, then imagine in any way you like, that in some magical sense your heart is opening.)

Hold your pain or numbness very gently. Hold it as if it is a crying baby, or a whimpering puppy, or a priceless work of art.

Infuse this gentle action with caring and warmth — as if you are reaching out to someone you care about.

Let the kindness flow from your fingers into your body.

Now use both of your hands in one kind gesture. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach. Let them gently rest there, and hold yourself kindly. Take as long as you wish to sit in this manner, connecting with yourself, caring for yourself, contributing comfort and support.

After reading this script, continue this for as little or as long as you wish: five seconds or five minutes, it doesn’t matter. It’s the spirit of kindness that counts when you make this gesture, not the duration of it.
Activity: Self-Compassion Scale

*Used in this toolkit with permission from Dr. Kristin Neff*

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner. You can also take this self-scale online with automatic scoring.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Almost never</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Almost always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. I’m disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies. _____
2. When I’m feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that’s wrong. _____
3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through. _____
4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world. _____
5. I try to be loving towards myself when I’m feeling emotional pain. _____
6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy. _____
7. When I’m down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am. _____
8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself. _____
9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance. _____
10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people. _____
11. I’m intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don’t like. _____
12. When I’m going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need. _____
13. When I’m feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am. _____
14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation. _____
15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition. _____
16. When I see aspects of myself that I don’t like, I get down on myself. _____
17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective. _____
18. When I’m really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier time of it. _____
19. I’m kind to myself when I’m experiencing suffering. _____
20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings. _____
21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I’m experiencing suffering. _____
22. When I’m feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness. _____
23. I’m tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies. _____
24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion. _____
25. When I fail at something that’s important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure. _____
26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don’t like. _____
Left blank to make scoring easier for double sided copies.
**Calculating Your Level of Self-Compassion**

Please record the score you gave for each item in the scale, and then calculate your Grand Compassion Average as given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Kindness (SK) Items:</th>
<th>Self-Judgment (SJ) Items:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#5 _____</td>
<td>#1 _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#12 _____</td>
<td>#8 _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#19 _____</td>
<td>#11 _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#23 _____</td>
<td>#16 _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#26 _____</td>
<td>#21 _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SK Subtotal of items:_____</td>
<td>SJ Subtotal of items:_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SK Average (divide subtotal by 5):_____</td>
<td>SJ Average (divide subtotal by 5):_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Humanity (CH) Items:</th>
<th>Isolation (I) Items:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#3 _____</td>
<td>#4 _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7 _____</td>
<td>#13 _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10 _____</td>
<td>#18 _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#15 _____</td>
<td>#25 _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH Subtotal of items:_____</td>
<td>I Subtotal of items:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH Average (divide subtotal by 4):_____</td>
<td>I Average (divide subtotal by 4):_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mindfulness (M) Items:</th>
<th>Over-identification (OI) Items:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#9 _____</td>
<td>#2 _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#14 _____</td>
<td>#6 _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#17 _____</td>
<td>#20 _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#22 _____</td>
<td>#24 _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Subtotal of items:_____</td>
<td>OI Subtotal of items:_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Average (divide subtotal by 4):_____</td>
<td>OI Average (divide subtotal by 4):_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Self-Compassion Score:**

1. Reverse-code (rc) the negatively worded subscales (SJ, I, and OI) by subtracting each average from 6.
   
   6 – SJ average = ____  
   6 – I average = ____  
   6 – OI average = ____

2. Add the six averages: SK ____ + SJ (rc) ____ + CH ____ + I (rc) ____ + M ____ + OI (rc) ____ = ____

3. Calculate Grand Self-Compassion Average (total average divided by 6) = ____
Wellness and Resilience Strategies: Heart

**What Your Score Means:**
Average scores tend to be around 3.0 on the 1-5 scale, so you can interpret your total self-compassion score accordingly. As a rough guide, a score of 1-2.5 indicates you are low in self-compassion, 2.5-3.5 indicates you are moderate, and 3.5-5.0 means you are high. Remember that higher averages for the SJ, I, and OI subscales indicate less self-compassion before reverse-coding and more after reverse-coding.

**References**

For more excellent resources on self-compassion go to Dr. Kristin Neff’s website.