

# Montana PAX

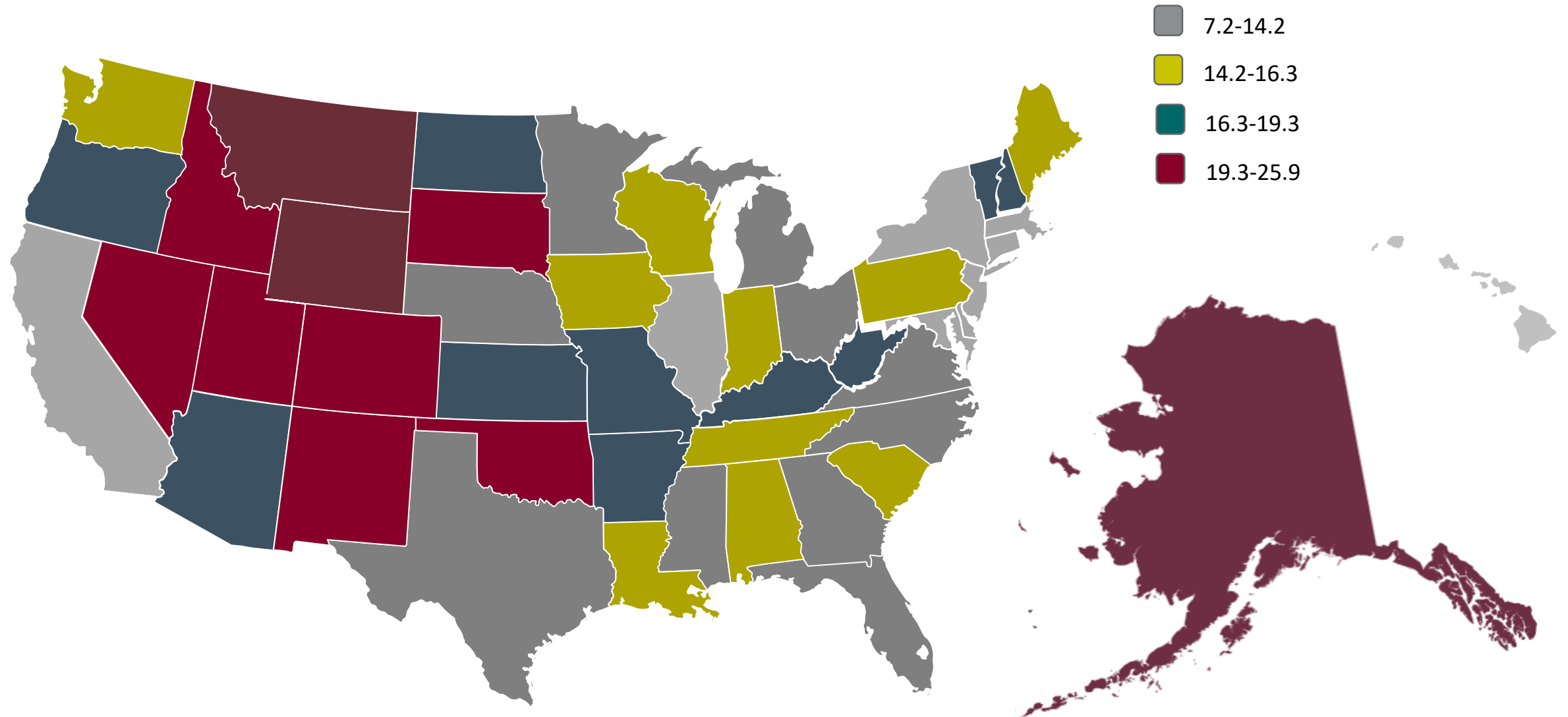
Prevention in Big Sky Country  
Carol Ewen



CENTER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES  
AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

# Suicide Death Per Capita

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# Montana Risk Factors

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## Elevation and Isolation

Correlation between high elevation and suicide, MT has 7 people per square mile



## Homelessness

15 in every 10,000; 35.6% unsheltered



## Montana Culture

Isolation, Self reliance and bootstrap mentality, Value of Privacy



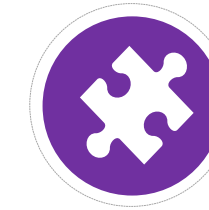
## Substance Use

18,000 dependent on or abusing illicit drugs and 66,500 dependent on or abusing alcohol



## Poverty

High rates; Child Poverty – white-15% Hispanic-32%, Native- 48%



## Fragmented Systems

Tx.-inconsistent, EBP rare  
Locally driven



## Foster Care

3,500 children in care statewide – highest per capita



## Trauma

One in seven children experience 3 or more adverse childhood experiences



## Workforce Shortages

Lack of willingness to relocate to rural areas



PAX = Peace • Productivity • Health • Happiness



Peace

Reduce stress and anxiety while improving climate



Productivity

Increase intentional time, focus, and performance on tasks



Health

Reduce substance misuse, mental illness, and legal involvement



Happiness

Promote relationships with peers, adults, and other individuals within the community



# What is

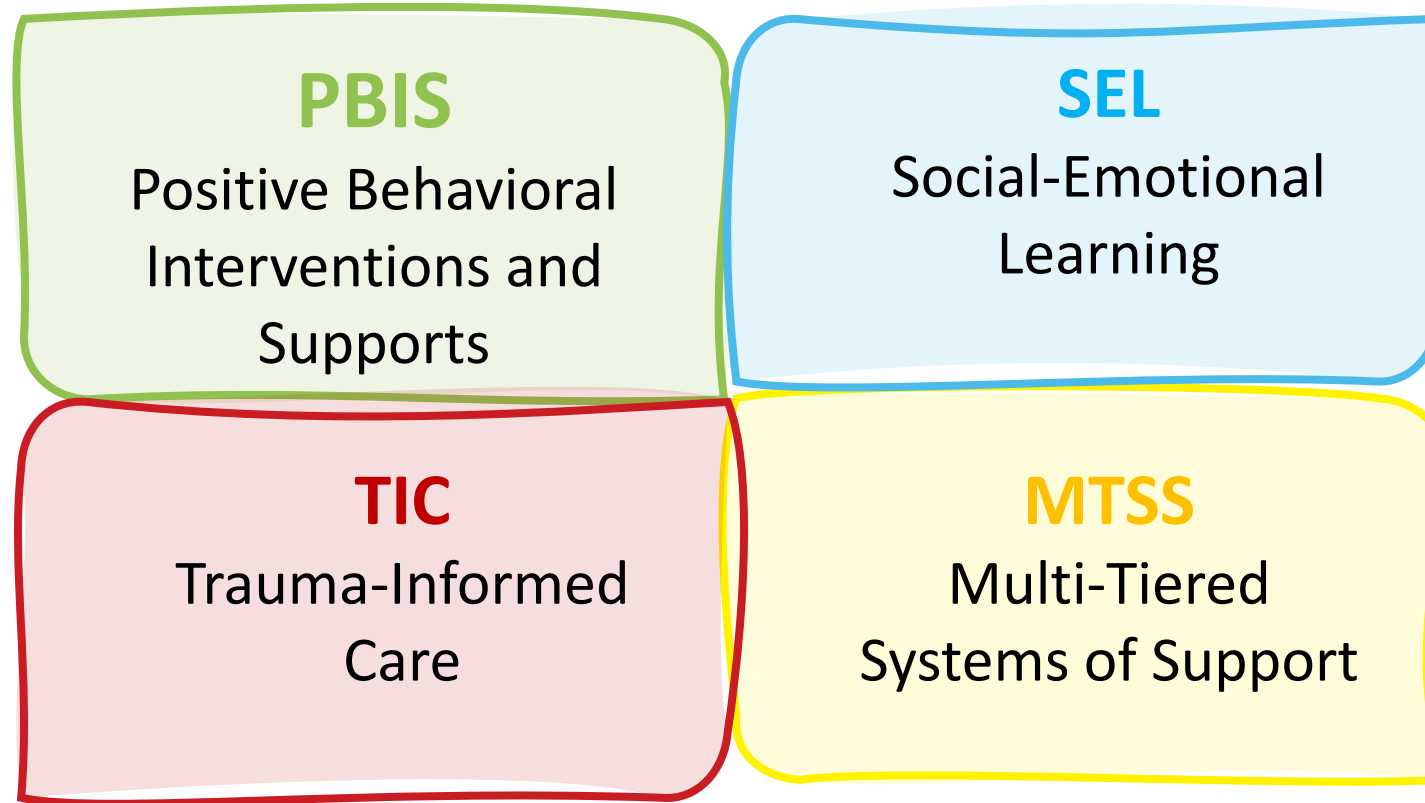
PAX utilizes Evidence-based Kernels to teach **self-regulation** and **positive behavior** as a skill set. Evidence-based Kernels are

- proven
- culturally responsive
- trauma-informed

**Teachers** implement the *evidence-based* **PAX Good Behavior Game** through typical classroom procedures.

**Parents, caregivers, youth-serving professionals, and other caring adults** implement evidence-based **PAX Tools Strategies** during their daily interactions with young people

# PAX integrates with and operationalizes common initiatives including:



PAX is **not something extra** teachers have to do.  
It is a way to do **what they already do**.

# PAX GBG

- Teachers attend 6 hours of training from the PAXIS Institute to learn and understand PAX GBG.
- Teachers implement 10 research-based strategies during typical instruction.
- Teachers play the evidence-based PAX Good Behavior Game several times each day.
- Teachers receive guidance and ongoing assistance from internal and/or external supports.





# PAX Tools

PAX Tools is a collection of **evidence-based, trauma-informed** strategies that support **parents, caregivers, and other caring adults** who interact with children in settings outside of a classroom.

Caring adults can use **PAX Tools to**

- **improve** self-regulation
- **decrease** problematic behavior and
- **improve** relationships



# Who can use PAX Tools Strategies?

- Parents / Caregivers
- Foster Parents
- Before/After-School Staff
- Childcare Providers
- Coaches
- Faith Based Staff / Volunteers
- Human Service Professionals
- Youth Workers



# PAX FUNDING

- 2018-2019 HB118 allocated 1 million for suicide prevention
- 2019-2021 State allocated 1.4 million to implement PAX (SOR)
- 2021-2022 State allocated 1.4 million to implement PAX(SOR and Block Grants)
- 2022-2023 State plans to allocate funds from Covid supplemental funds and state initiatives

# Participating Districts

2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Alder	Absarokee	Absarokee
Billings	Belt	Belt
Broadus	Billings	Big Timber
Browning	Cayuse	Billings
Cayuse	Cardwell	Cayuse
Chester-Joplin	Choteau	Cardwell
Choteau	Clancy	Choteau
DeSmet	Cutbank	Clancy
Dillon	DeSmet	Cutbank
Drummond	Dillon	DeSmet
East Helena	Glasgow	Dillon
Harrison	Havre B&G	East Glacier
Havre	Helena	Glasgow
Hays Lodge Pole	Joilet	Havre B&G
Irle	MCPS	Helena
Missoula	Power	Hellgate
Phillipsburg	Seeley	Joilet
Power	Twin Bridges	Lolo
Rocky Boy		MCPS
Seeley Lake		Montana City
Shodair		Power
Townsend		Roberts
Twin Bridges		Rocky Boy
West Yellowstone		Seeley
Wyola		Turner
		Twin Bridges
		Wyola

# Prevention Science

- ❑ Identify factors that lead to the problem
- ❑ Identify protective factors that improve health
- ❑ Identify evidence-based practices that increase protective factors



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# Protective Factors Impacted by PAX GBG

- Social skills (decision-making, problem-solving, and anger management)
- Strong connections to friends
- Impulse control
- Strong sense of self-worth or self-esteem
- Coping skills/resiliency
- Opportunities to participate in and contribute to school projects and activities

# PAX RESEARCH





## PAX GBG: a well-studied intervention

**Short-term:** improved student classroom behavior, including improved student emotion regulation as well as teacher retention

**Long-term:** decreased substance use, mental illness, and suicidality among students exposed to the intervention



# John Hopkins Center for Prevention and Early Intervention

- Followed over 2,000 1<sup>st</sup> grade students through their 30<sup>th</sup> year
- Compared students in PAX GBG classrooms to students who were not exposed to PAX GBG





# Positive, Nurturing Classroom Culture

- Produces higher levels of:
- Pro-social behavior
- Social acceptance
- Positive peer relationships
- Social adaptation

(Kellam et al., 2014; Newcomer et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2018)





# Positive, Nurturing Classroom Culture

Reduces:

- Bullying
- Aggression
- Threats
- Acting out
- Impulsivity

(Kellam et al., 2011; Kellam et al., 2014;  
Poduska et al., 2008)



# Substance Abuse and Risky Behavior

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- Significant reduction in lifetime drug abuse and dependence disorders
- Significant reduction in risky sexual behaviors

Kellam, S., Wang, W., Mackenzie, A., Brown, H., Ompad, D., Or, F.,... Windham, A. (2014)

Poduska, J., Kellam, S., Wang, W., Brown, C. H., Ialongo, N., & Toyinbo, P. (2008).

# Suicide Ideation and Attempts

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50%

- Students exposed to PAX GBG were half as likely to experience suicide ideation



- Reduction in relative risk estimates for suicide attempts by 30%

Wilcox, H. C., Kellam, S. G., Brown, C. H., Poduska, J. M., Ialongo, N. S., Wang, W., & Anthony, J. C. (2008).

Katz, C., Bolton, S. L., Katz, L. Y., Isaak, C., Tilston-Jones, T., Sareen, J., & Swampy Cree Suicide Prevention Team. (2013).

# Improved Life Outcomes



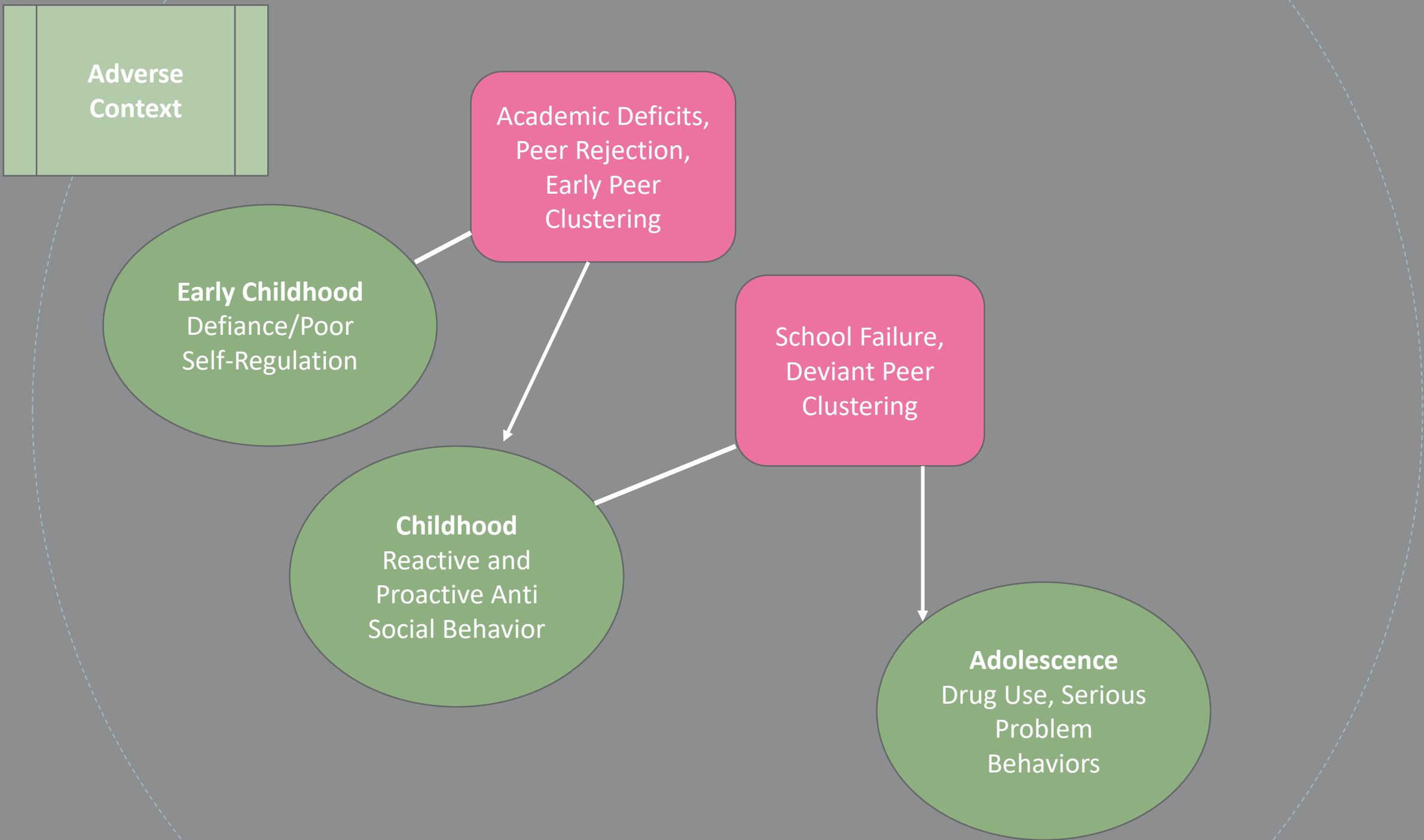
- Higher academic achievement
- Higher graduation rates
- Increased College attendance

Weis, R., Osborne, K., & Dean, E



# How PAX Works



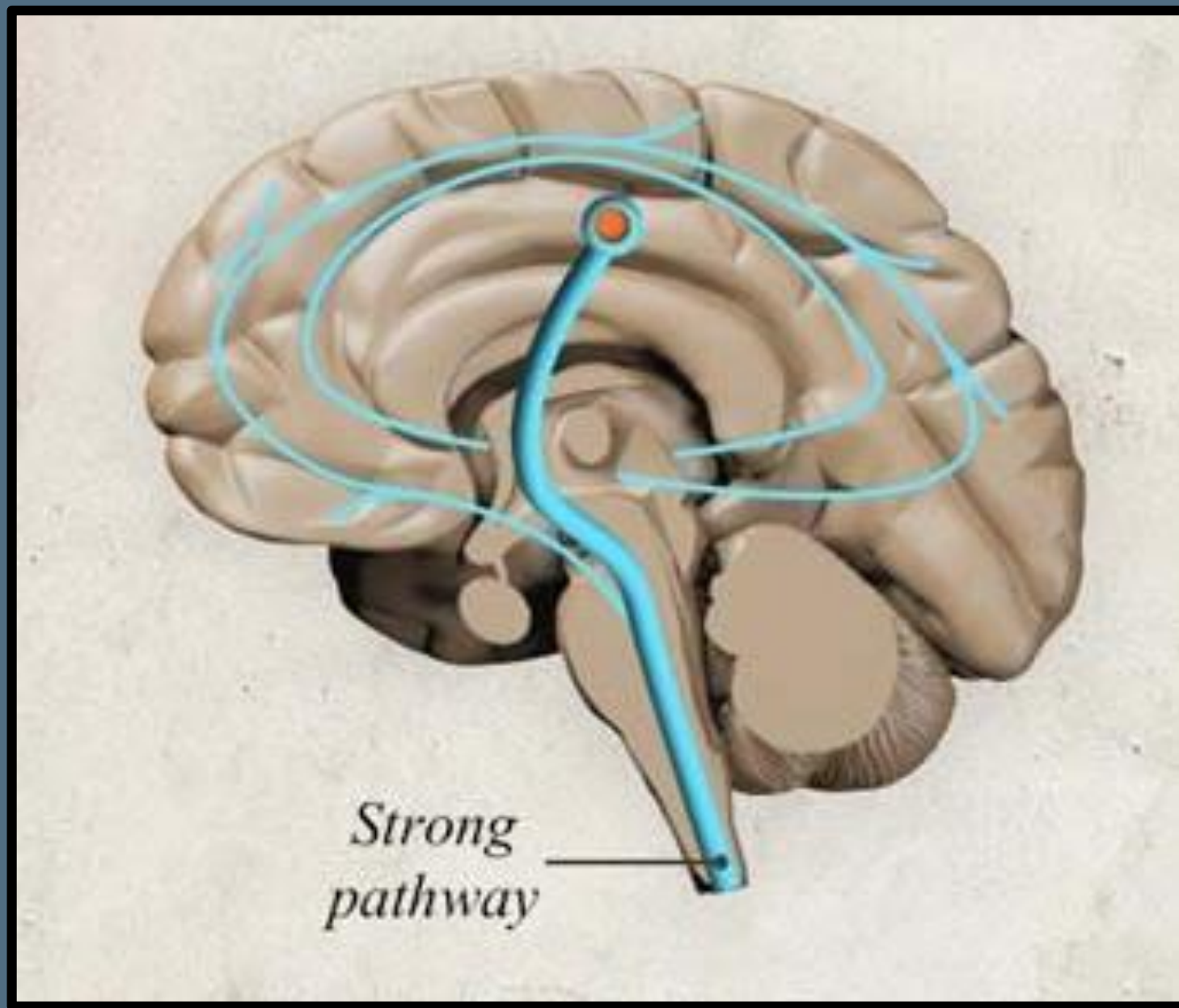


# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)



# How Common is Trauma?

- 1 out of 7 Montana children who attend school have been exposed to a traumatic event
- Screening results indicate in some communities that upwards of 70% of children have been exposed to trauma and are experiencing traumatic stress symptoms



# Threat Appraisal and Detection in Traumatized Children





# Creating Nurturing Classrooms

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- ✓ **Antecedent Kernels:** Prompts students before activities to create peaceful and productive transitions
- ✓ **Relational Frame Kernels:** Unique words or concepts to help students predict, self-monitor and reflect on actions both individually and as a group
- ✓ **Reinforcement Kernels:** Wire brain to learn complex behavior by providing reward after behavior occurs
- ✓ **Physiological Kernels:** Directly affect behavior and brain

# Teaching Psychological Flexibility

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## Cognitive Flexibility:

With PAX Vision, Beat the Timer, PAX Leader and Okay/Not Okay students learn to predict, monitor and reflect on daily activities.



## Emotional Flexibility:

With PAX Game, Tootles, PAX Leader and Granny's Wacky Prizes students learn to celebrate achieving goals and tolerate losing and being resilient

## Behavioral Flexibility:

PAX Game, Voices, Hands and Feet and Quiet all students to try to perfect new behaviors to reach authentic goals



# We know what works!

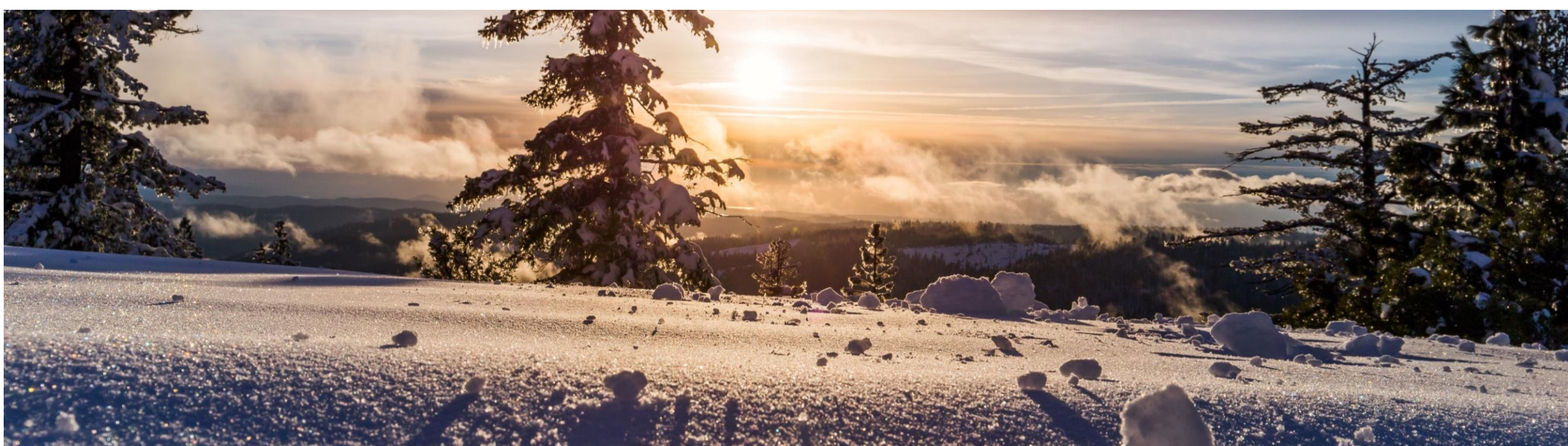
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- ✓ **Teach behavior just like academics**
- ✓ **Focus on pro-social behavior**
- ✓ **Consistent application of reinforcement**
- ✓ **Provide verbal and non-verbal cues**
- ✓ **Provide authentic opportunities for students to support each other**





# Questions?



**Carol Ewen, MA, EdS**

**Director of School Mental Health**

**Programs**

[Carol.Ewen@umontana.edu](mailto:Carol.Ewen@umontana.edu)



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