



STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH TO SUPPORTING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Dr. Byron McClure & Dr. Kelsie Reed

hackingdeficitthinking.com



ABOUT US



Dr. Byron McClure

Nationally Certified School Psychologist



Dr. Kelsie Reed

Nationally Certified School Psychologist

LEARNER OBJECTIVES



UNDERSTAND

Understand how deficit thinking might impact your work with youth



IDENTIFY

Identify the key elements of a strength-based approach



DISCOVER

Discover how to support youth mental health from a strength-based lens



DAUNTE'S STORY



In foster care system due to loss of parents



Best friend was victim of gun violence in 6th grade



Struggles with anxiety and depression



Preparing to take the SAT



**IN YOUR ROLE, HOW MIGHT
YOU SUPPORT THE MENTAL
HEALTH NEEDS OF A STUDENT
LIKE DAUNTE?**

IF WE'RE NOT
CAREFUL, WE MAY
FALL INTO A **CYCLE**
OF BLAME THAT
HYPERFOCUSES ON
DAUNTE'S
WEAKNESSES



1

IMPACT OF DEFICIT THINKING ON OUR WORK WITH YOUTH

WHAT IS DEFICIT THINKING?

"a distorted lens, focused on student weaknesses, that **blames** students and their families for student difficulties rather than acknowledging the impact of our practices and broader structural inequities."

BREAKING DOWN DEFICIT THINKING



**Distorted and
faulty lens**



**Hyperfocus on
student
weaknesses**



**Blame placed
on students
and families**



**Rather than
taking ownership
as a school**

DEFICIT THINKING

"An essential belief of **deficit ideology** is that inequalities result from intellectual, moral, cultural, or behavioral deficiencies **inherent** in disenfranchised individuals and communities."

DEFICIT THINKING

"says that PEOPLE are deficient, and it blames their struggles on those deficiencies."



"a way to RATIONALIZE why some kids fail and others succeed."

DEFICIT THINKING & MENTAL HEALTH

A deficit-based approach to mental health leads to a hyperfocus on "repairing" **mental illness** rather than cultivating and fostering **mental wellness**

WHY ARE WE SO DEFICIT- BASED IN SCHOOLS?

Our education system was designed this way

This is how we were trained

Our schools are not inclusive of differences

It's easier to place blame elsewhere

HOW MIGHT DEFICIT THINKING IMPACT STUDENTS LIKE DAUNTE?



2

KEY ELEMENTS OF A STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH

STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH

A strength-based approach values the skills, knowledge, connections, and potential of individuals or communities. It does not mean ignoring challenges or spinning struggles into strengths. The emphasis is on a positive outlook and goals.

**“We must be as
interested in
building the best
things in life as in
repairing the worst.”**

–Dr. Christopher Peterson



A STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH TO SUPPORTING DAUNTE

How might you identify strengths in Daunte?

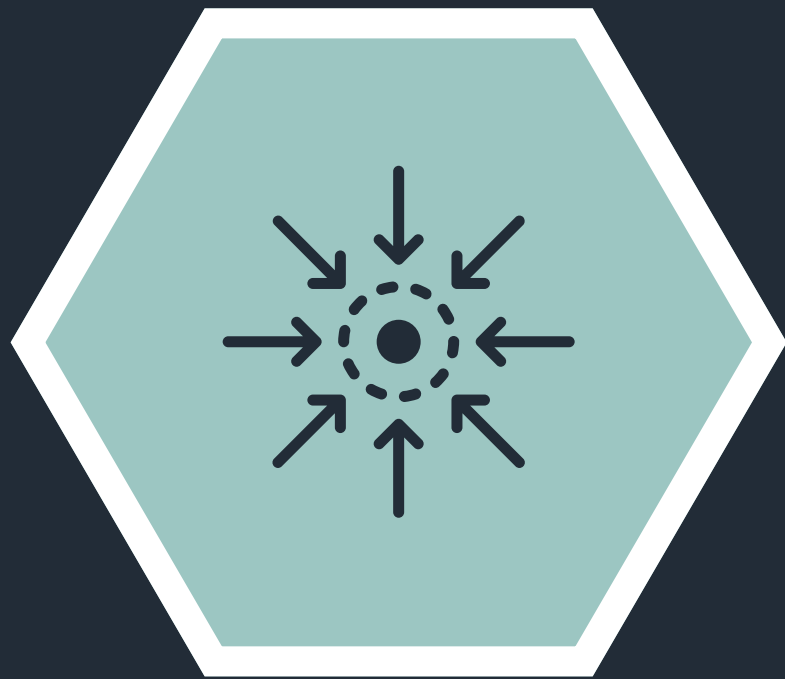
How might you support him directly?

How might you address his mental health needs?

How might you support his academic needs?



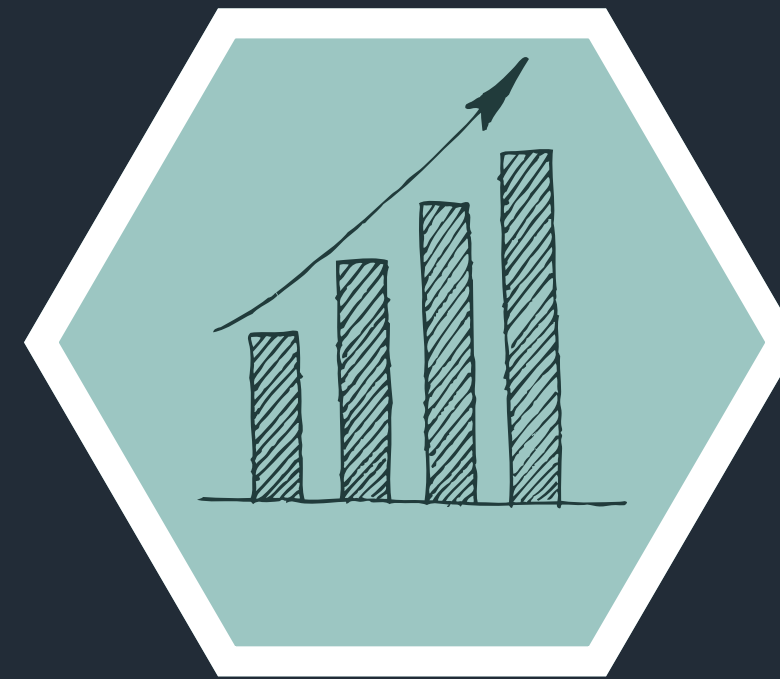
KEY ELEMENTS OF A STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH



**Focus on identifying
and understanding
strengths**



**Human-centered;
Puts the needs of
people first**



**Growth and
goal oriented**



**Leverages social
support and
resources**

3

SUPPORTING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FROM A STRENGTH- BASED LENS

SUPPORTING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FROM A STRENGTH-BASED LENS

Listen to the needs of youth

Recognize the needs of youth

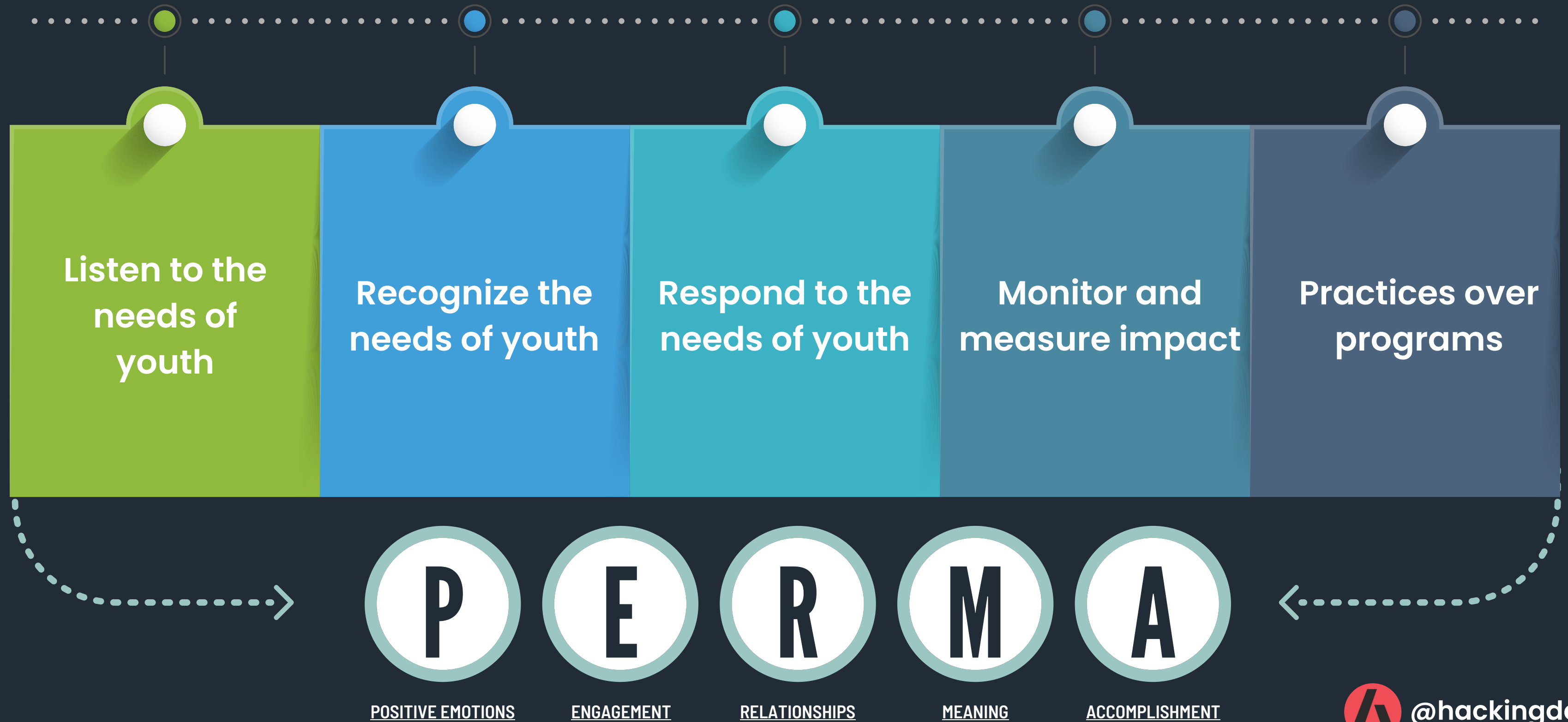
Respond to the needs of youth

Monitor and measure impact

Practices over programs



SUPPORTING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FROM A STRENGTH-BASED LENS





POSITIVE EMOTIONS

What makes you feel good?

Music, tv shows, movies
Spending time with family or friends
Exercise/working out
3 Good Things

ENGAGEMENT

When do you lose track of time (flow)?

Singing, dancing, working out.
Yoga
Writing
Being part of a team

RELATIONSHIPS

Who uplifts and supports you?

Get-togethers
Showing appreciation
Meeting new people
Showing gratitude

MEANING

What causes do you find important?

Supporting a cause
Volunteering
Teaching others
Engaging in spiritual activities

ACCOMPLISHMENT

What are your goals?

Setting goals and achieving them
Crushing your to-do-list
Starting a long-term project
Setting personal or professional targets



LISTEN to the needs of youth

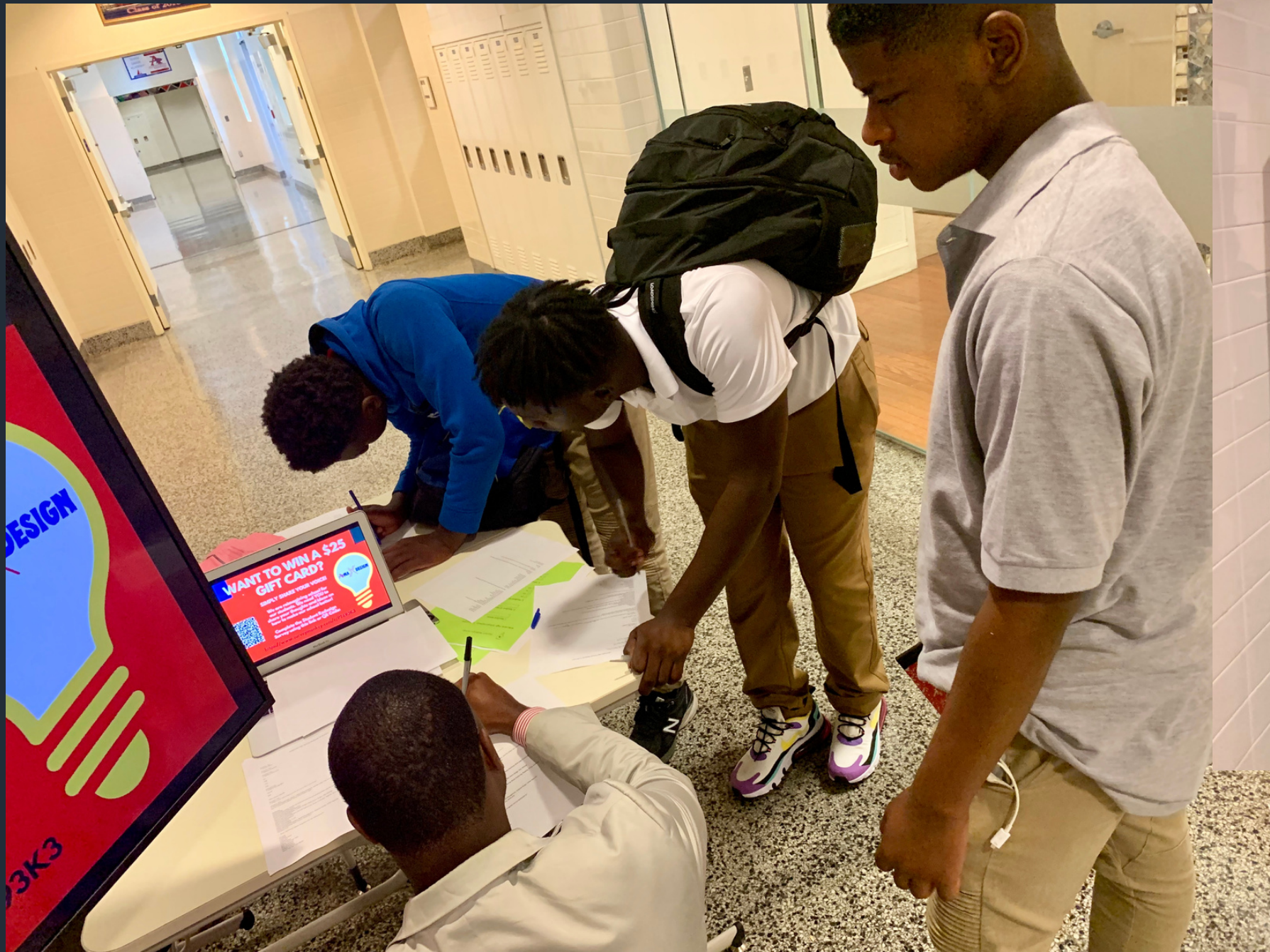
- Youth interviews
- Youth surveys
- Chat and chews

Start here

STRENGTH-BASED INTERVIEWS

ALWAYS BEGIN BY
ESTABLISHING
RAPPORT





STRENGTH-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What is working well
for you in school?

What could be
going better?

What is one
thing you
need help
with?

What small
things could you
do to help things
go better?

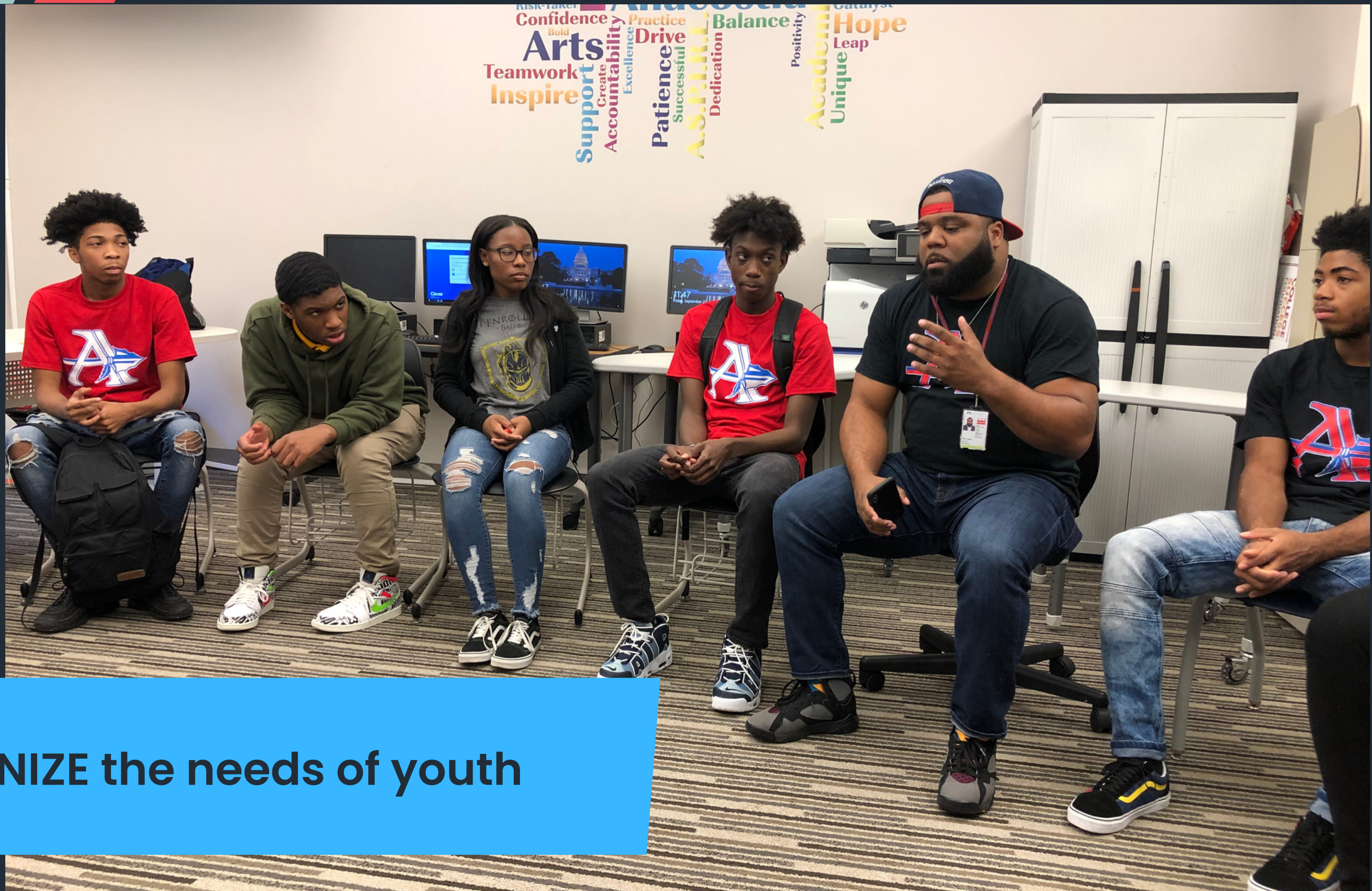
*Who is
important in
your life?
Why?

What does a
good day look
like for you?

What makes it
a good day?

What do like to
do and why?

What comes
easily to you?



RECOGNIZE the needs of youth



Define the problem



**Seek to understand and
clarify what you heard**



**Develop how might we
questions**





WHAT WE HEARD

1

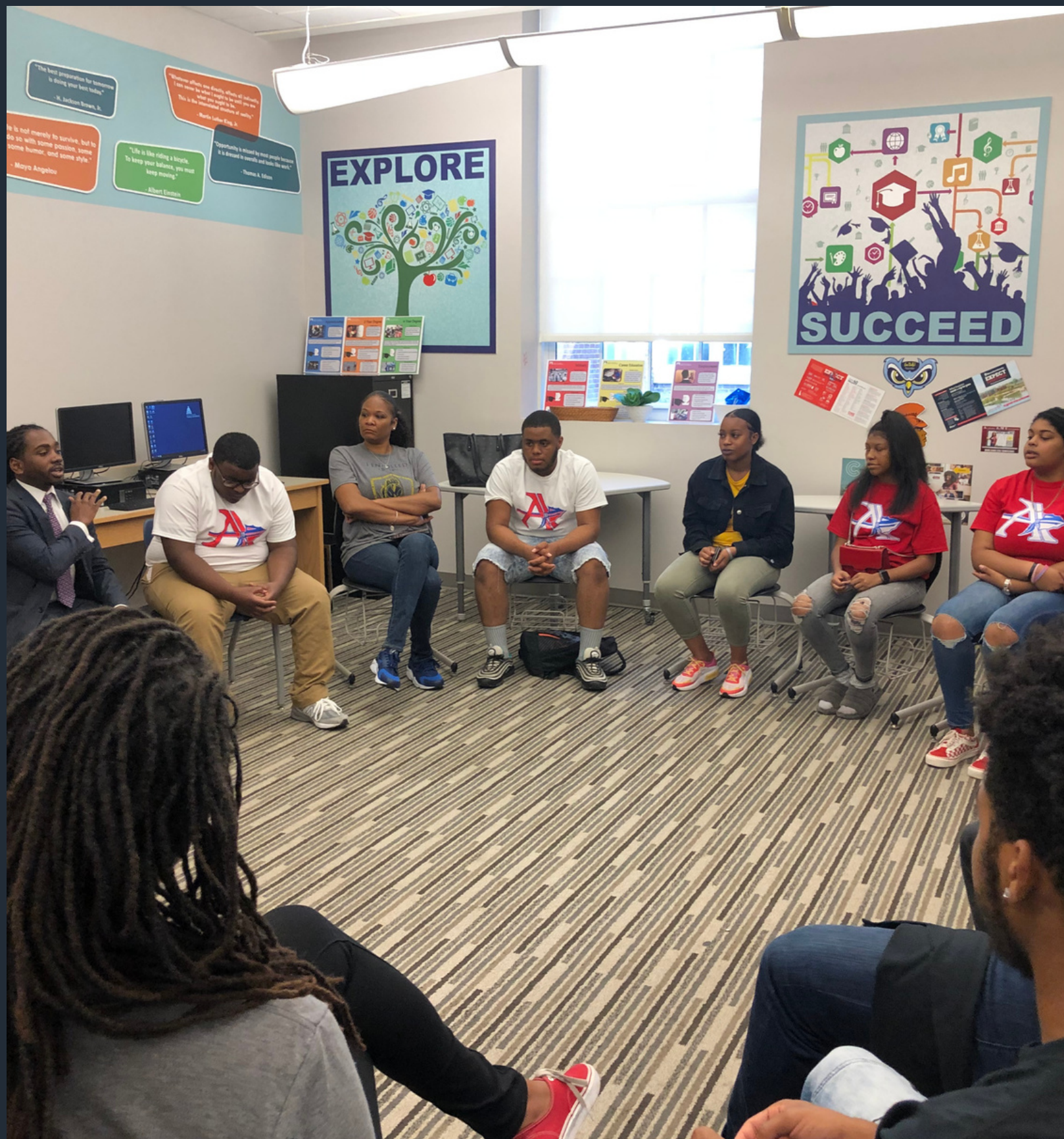
**Students didn't
feel wanted or
cared for**

2

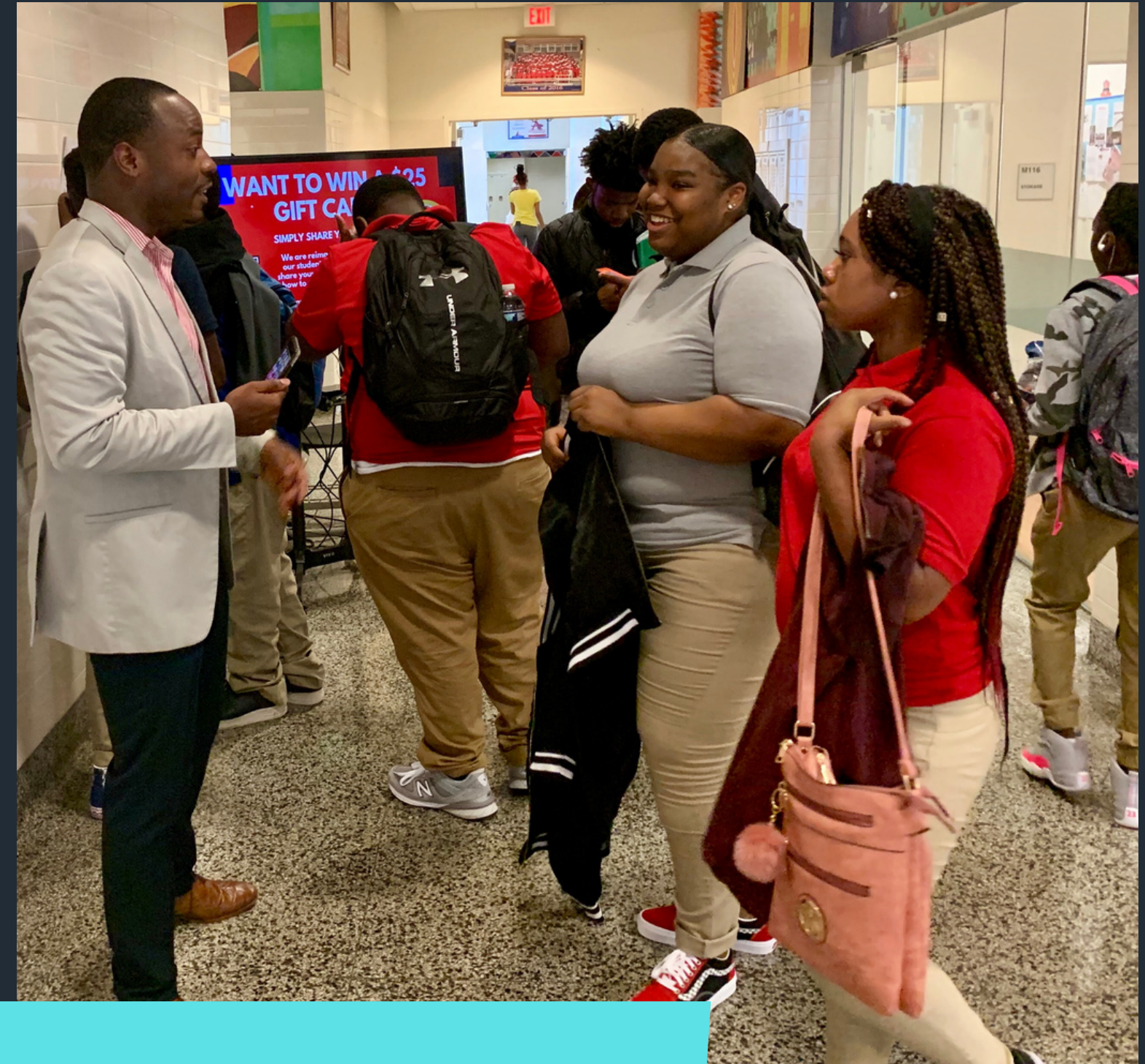
**Poor sense of
belonging**

3

**Students wanted
to feel more
connected at
school**



“How might we create an environment where students feel loved, cared for, and connected to the school community?”



RESPOND to their needs

RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF YOUTH

TAKE ACTION (IN YOUR SPHERE OF CONTROL)

Set Goals

SMART Goals

Strength and Skill Develop

Explicitly develop strengths and skills
Name, know, and help youth to use strengths

Leverage Community

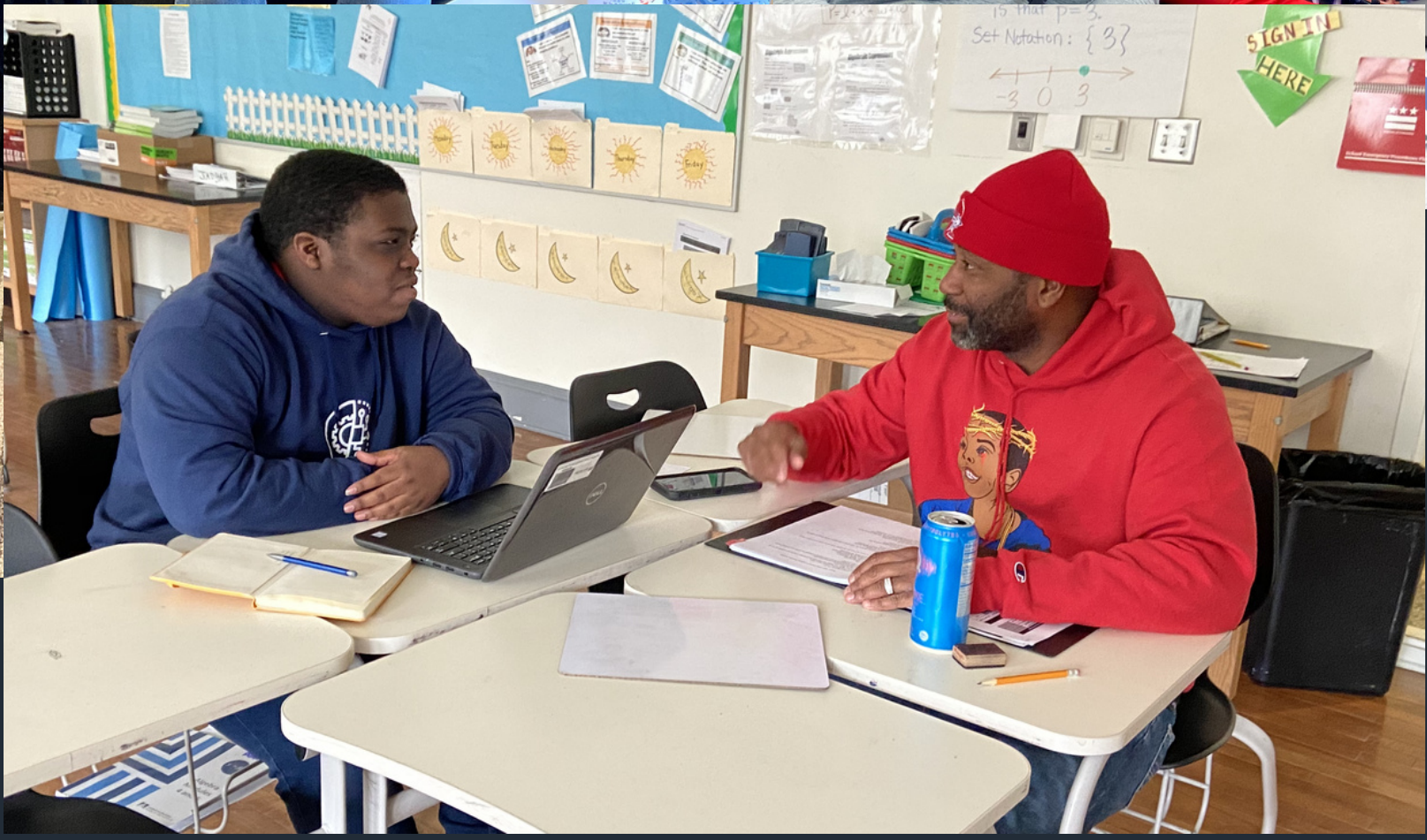
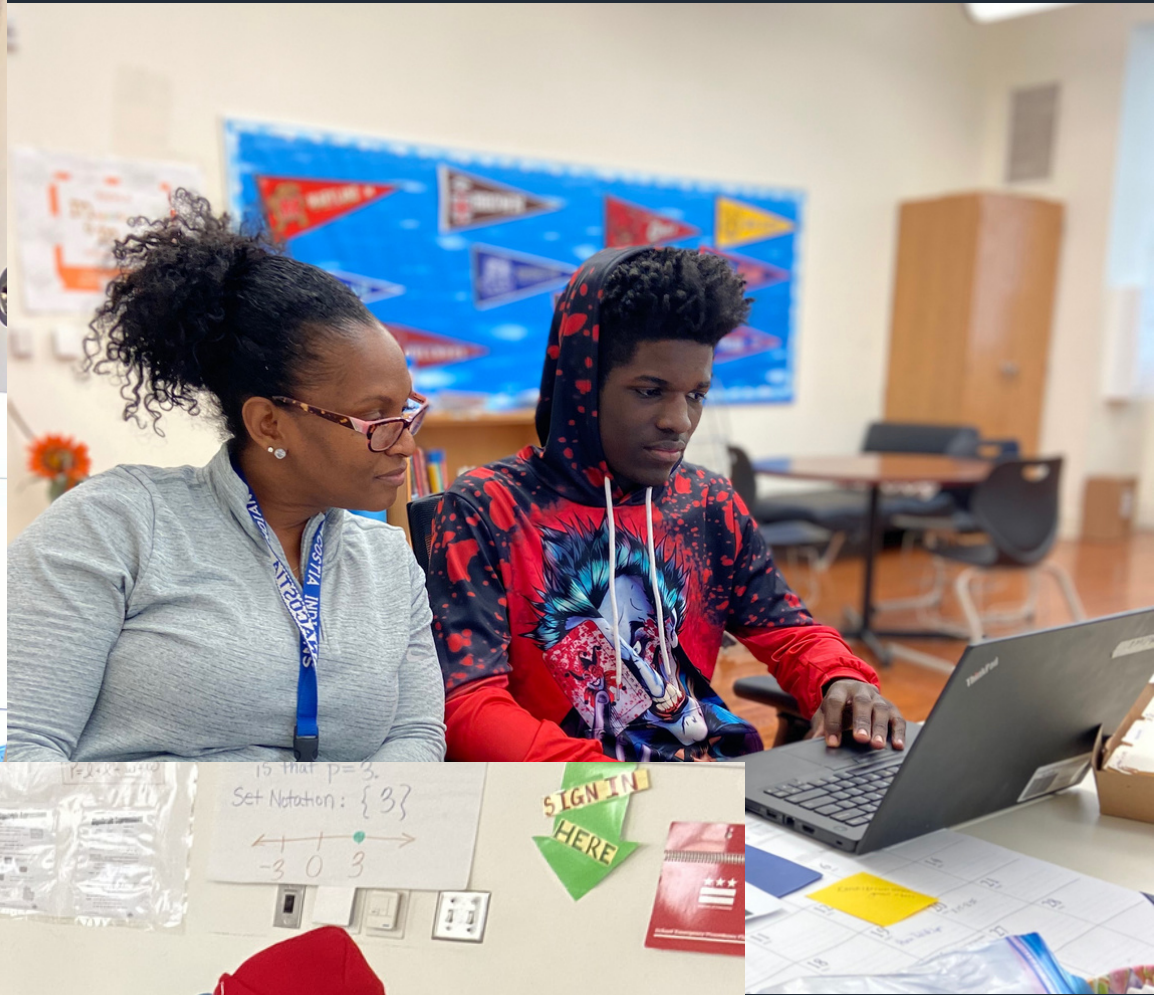
Leverage family resources
Connect youth with caring adults
Use community supports and partners

Be Action-Oriented

Lean towards action



@hackingdeficits





Dr. Byron McClure @SchoolPsychLife · Aug 22, 2018

Thanks to @trayonwhite @DCPSChancellor @stoverdcps and @pinderDCPS for visiting us at @AnacostiaHigh today. You all are welcome back anytime to see how we are implementing SEL, Restorative Practices, & Trauma-Informed Practices to support our students. #WhyAna



5

10

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Show this thread



Dr. Byron McClure @SchoolPsychLife · Jan 7, 2019

Getting the Peace Room prepped for our weekly staff check-in circle. I shared a quote from @_charlesbarrett for our mindful moment - "Poverty is not an excuse for poor outcomes". Let's have a great week y'all! #SEL #itsalwaysaboutthechildren #SP4SJ #WhyAna



Anacostia New Tech High School



9

39





Dr. Byron McClure @SchoolPsychLife · Oct 3, 2018

Today's brotherhood assembly consisted of influential brothers involved with DC Government and Politics. We had a powerful convo about political & economic empowerment for young black youth 🖐️ Much respect to @MarkusSBOE @trayonwhite @TroyDonte and Tony Dugger! #whyAna



David Pinder, Ed.D. and Anacostia New Tech High School



RESPONDING TO STUDENT NEEDS IN ACTION



Jess Arnold 
@JessArnoldTV · [Follow](#)



Replying to @JessArnoldTV @AnacostiaHigh and @wusa9

What was on your mind when you were taking the SATs?

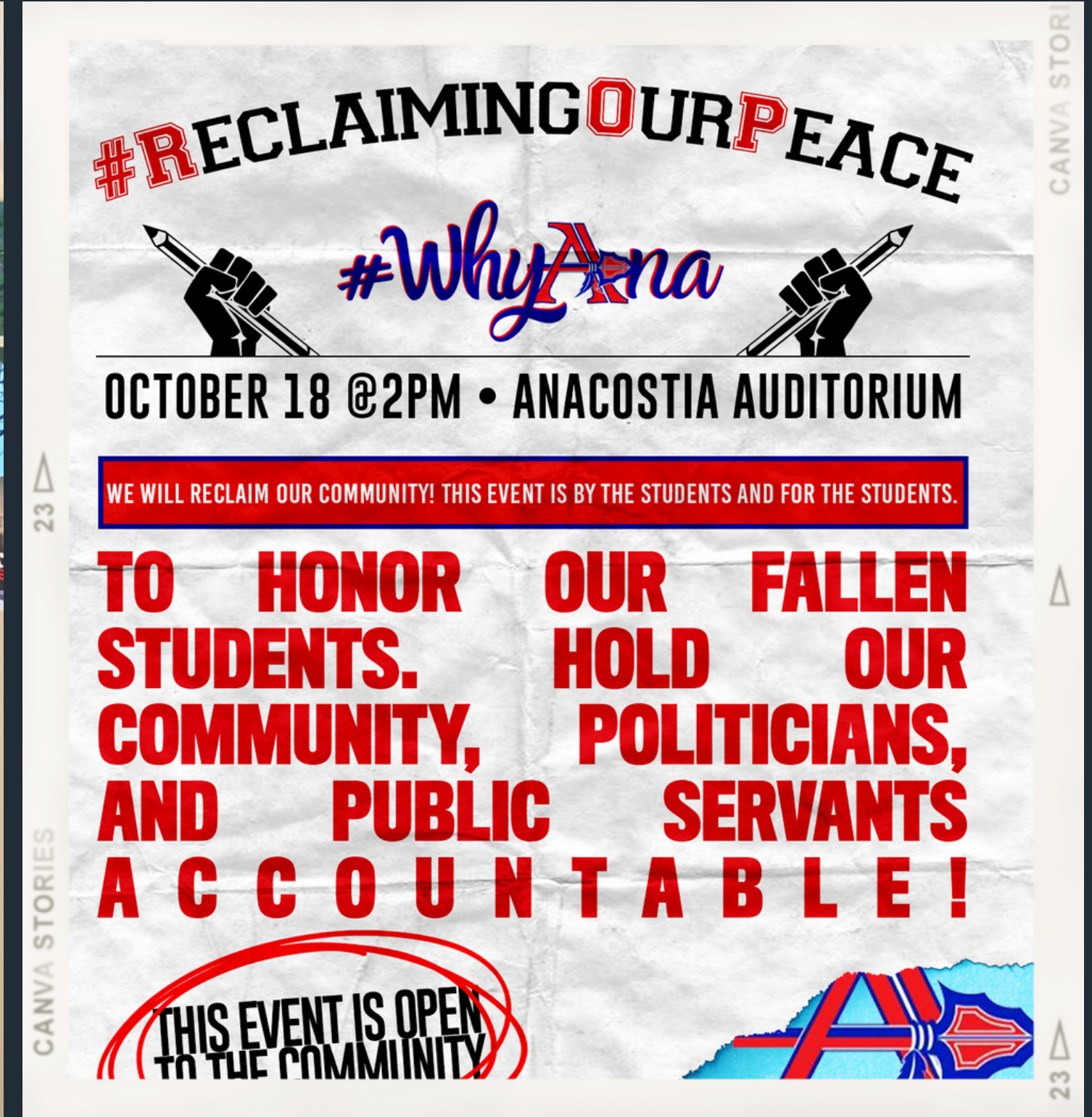
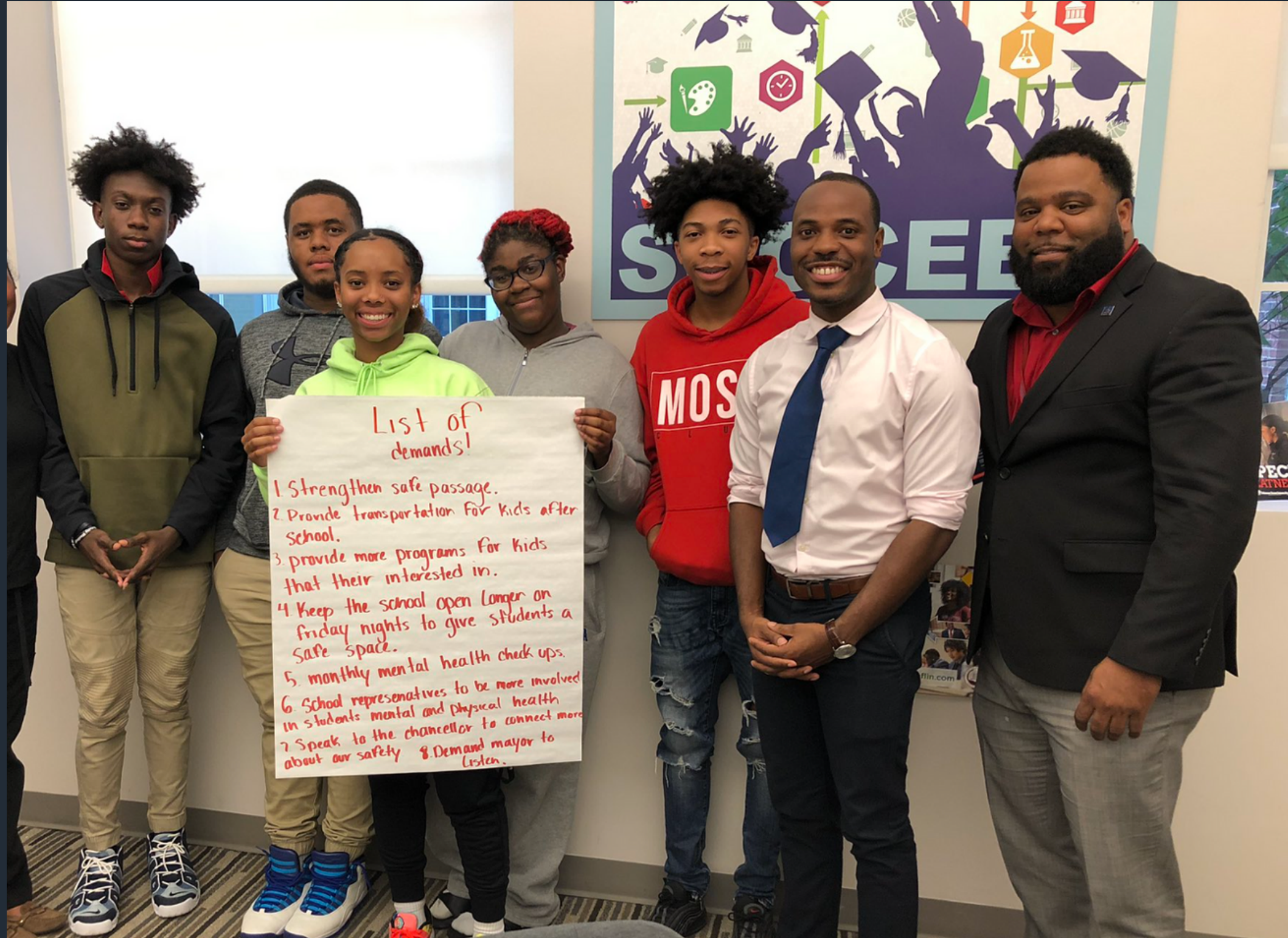
These [@AnacostiaHigh](#) students were grieving the death of a friend lost to gun violence.

Puts it into perspective.

Here's a snippet of our thought-provoking conversation.

[@wusa9](#) [@SchoolPsychLife](#) [@willhaith](#)
[@dcpublicschools](#)











MONITOR and measure impact

HOW TO MONITOR AND MEASURE IMPACT



Panorama



PANAS



ODR



Goal Tracker



PRACTICES over programs



STRENGTH-BASED PRACTICES TO PROMOTE YOUTH WELL-BEING



Universal Prevention

PBIS (maybe...), Bully Prevention, SEL



Targeted Interventions

Head Start, Emotional/ Behavioral Support



Identify signs and symptoms



3 Good Things



Check-in/check-out



Restorative convos



Social clubs & activities



Pathways to MH supports



Direct/indirect services



Share resources



**“ We must shift
from what's
wrong to what's
strong!**

–Dr. Byron McClure

“**All children have strengths. It's up to us to identify them.**”

–Dr. Kelsie Reed



THANK YOU!

Contact Us:



www.hackingdeficitthinking.com



info@hackingdeficitthinking.com



[@hackingdeficits](#); [@schoolpsychlife](#); [@drkelsiereed](#)



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