



From Evidence to Impact

Advancing School-Based
Mental Health Promotion

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Agenda



**The Promise of
Prevention**



**Evidence-Based
Prevention in Schools**



**Implementation
Challenges
& Opportunities**



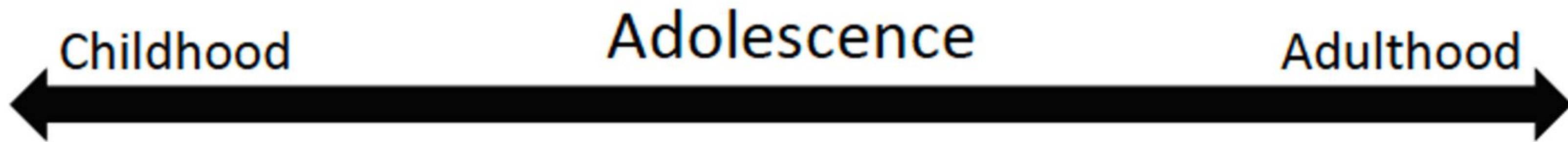
The Promise of Prevention

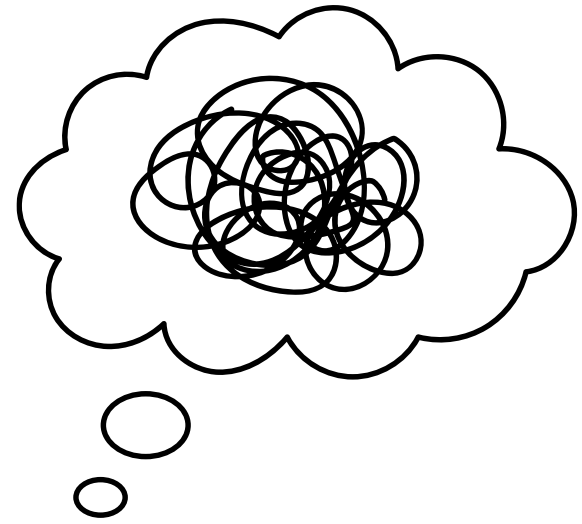


**Young people are amazing humans,
not problems to be fixed.**

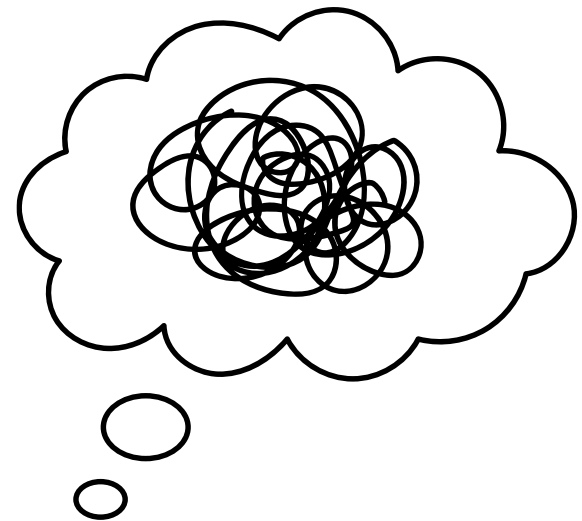
**Adolescence is a time of opportunity
and joy, not just angst.**

“They might be smiling on the outside but probably on the inside they have those things going on at home that just make them break down”





**1 in 7 10-19 year olds
globally has a mental
health condition (14.3%)**

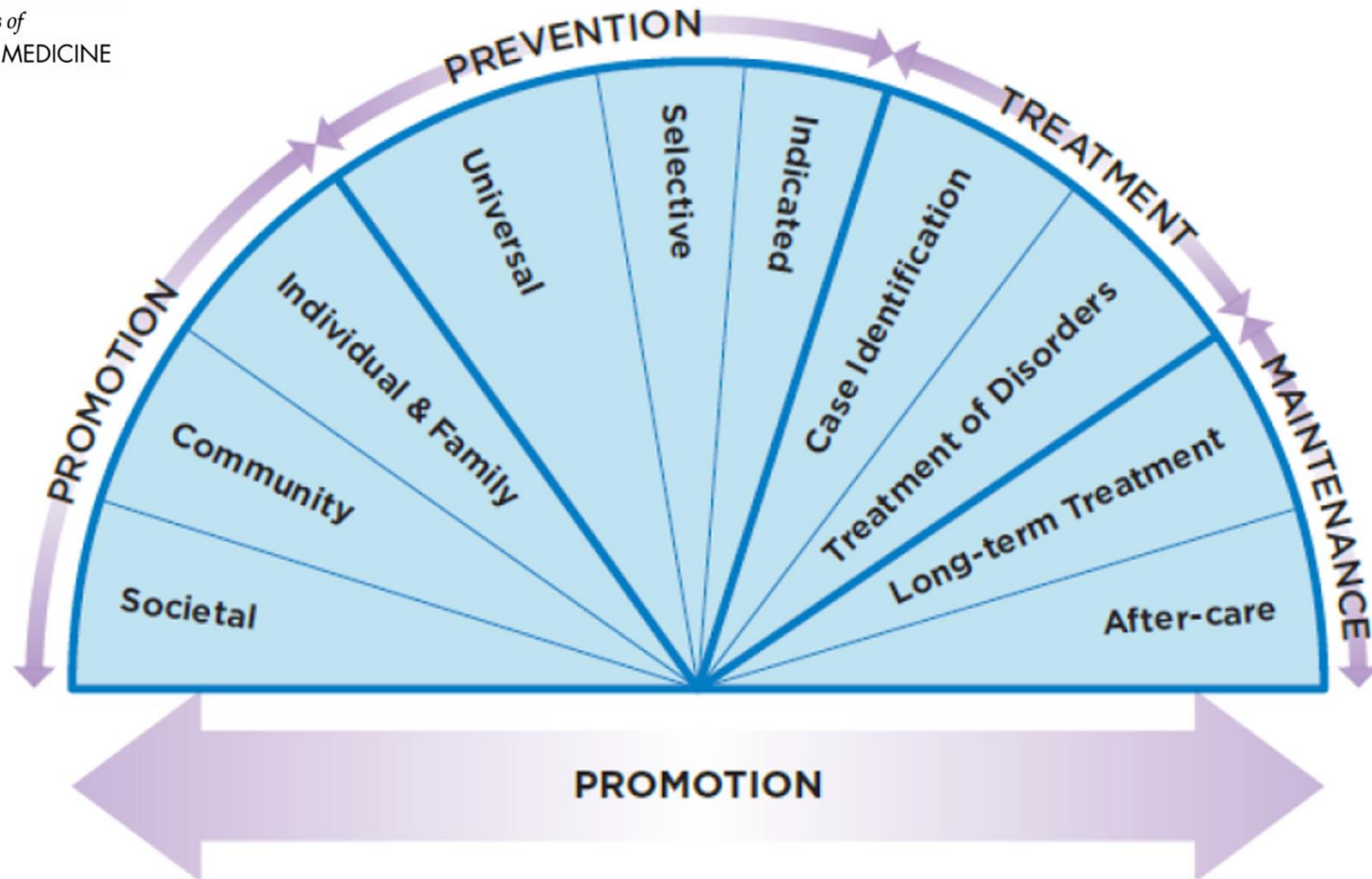


**40% of U.S. high school
students reported
persistent sadness or
hopelessness in 2023**

Adolescent Mental Health: Prevalence & Trends

Why prevention?

Over
50%
of youth with
depression do not
receive treatment



NASEM, 2019

The Continuum of Care

RISK FACTORS

PROTECTIVE FACTORS



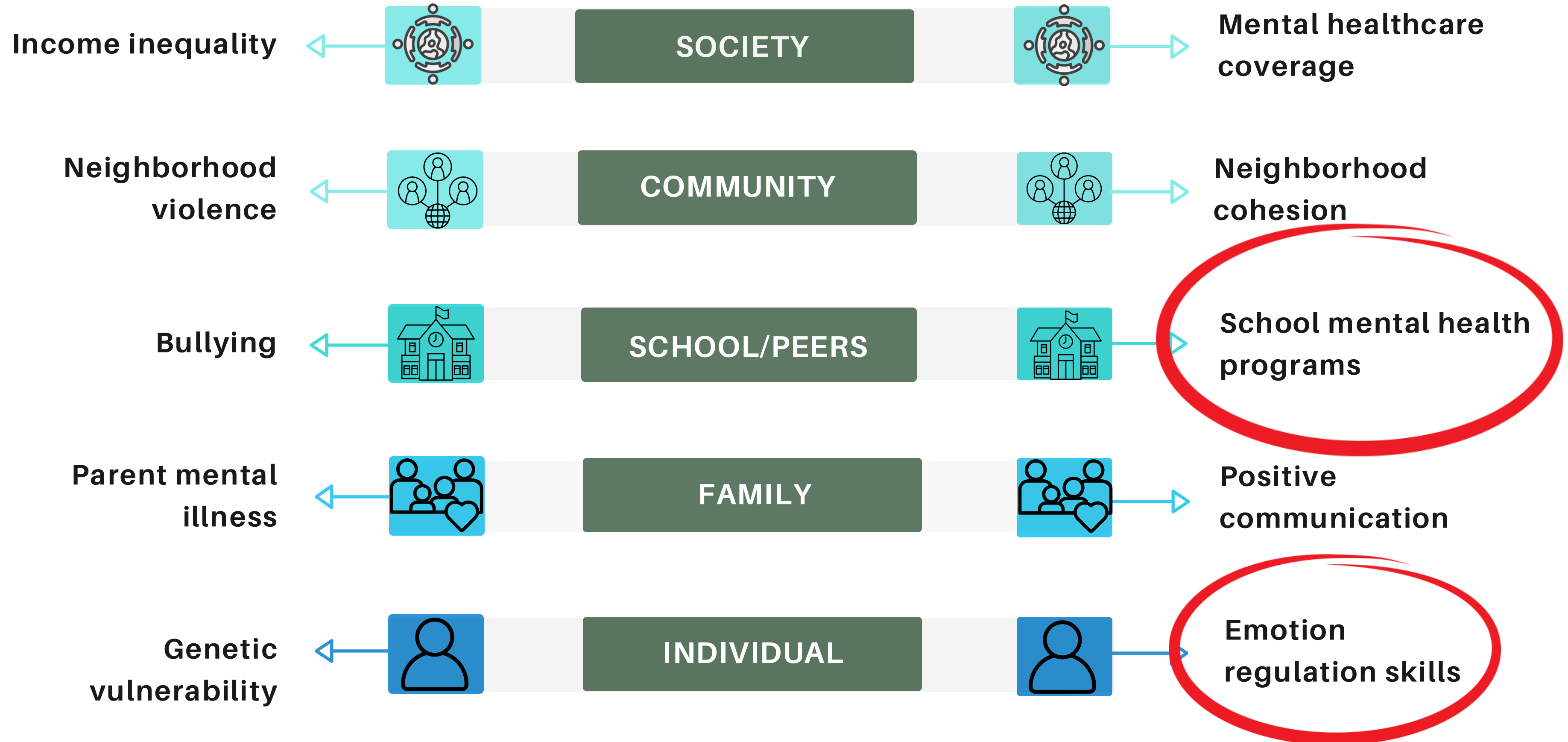
RISK FACTORS

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

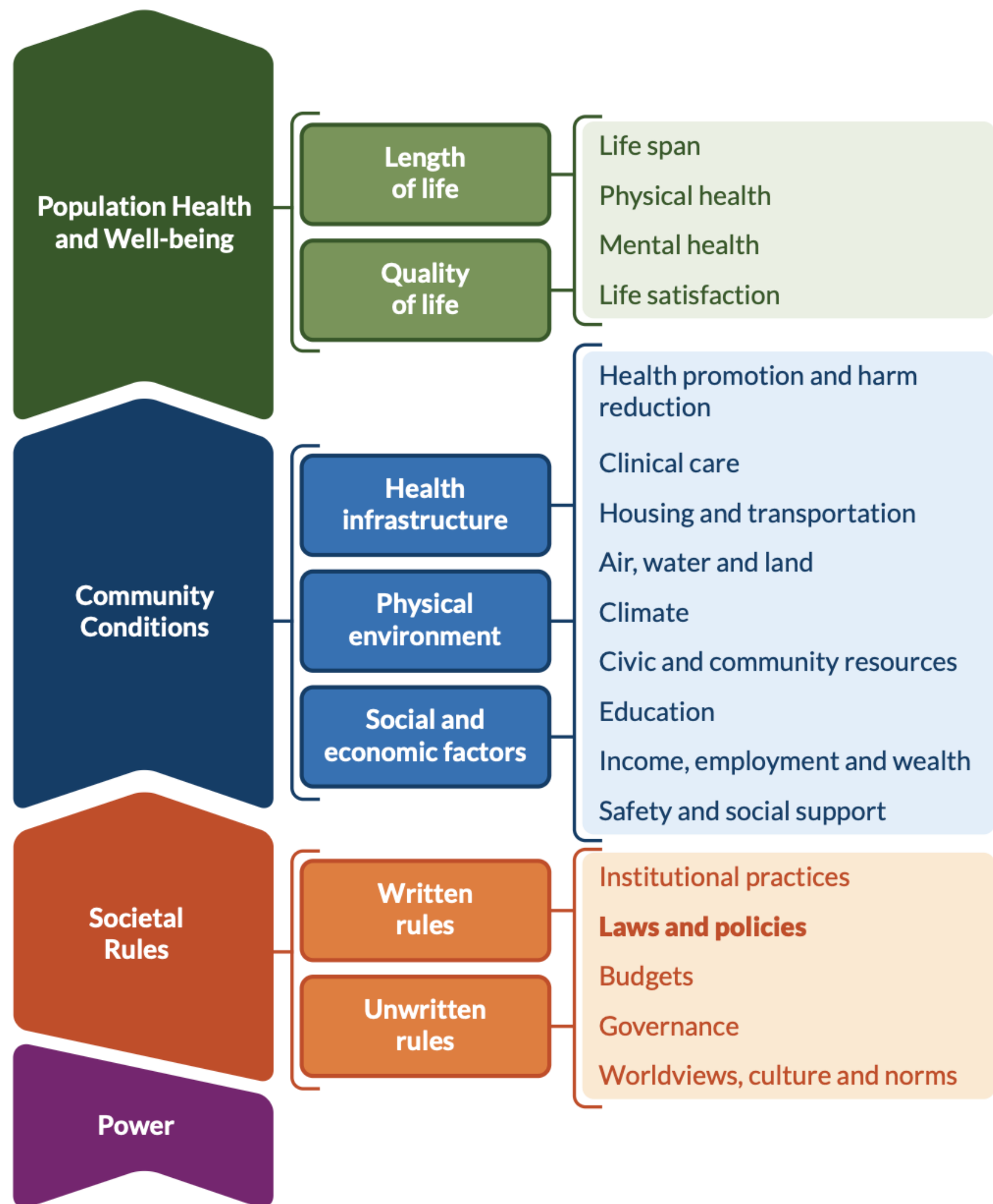


RISK FACTORS

PROTECTIVE FACTORS



Trauma is not equitably distributed



Context matters

21% of Baltimore City
high school students
seriously considered
suicide

16% have made a plan
for how they would
attempt suicide

YRBS data 2022-23;

<https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/ccdpc/Reports/Pages/YRBS-2022-2023.aspx>

Why Schools?

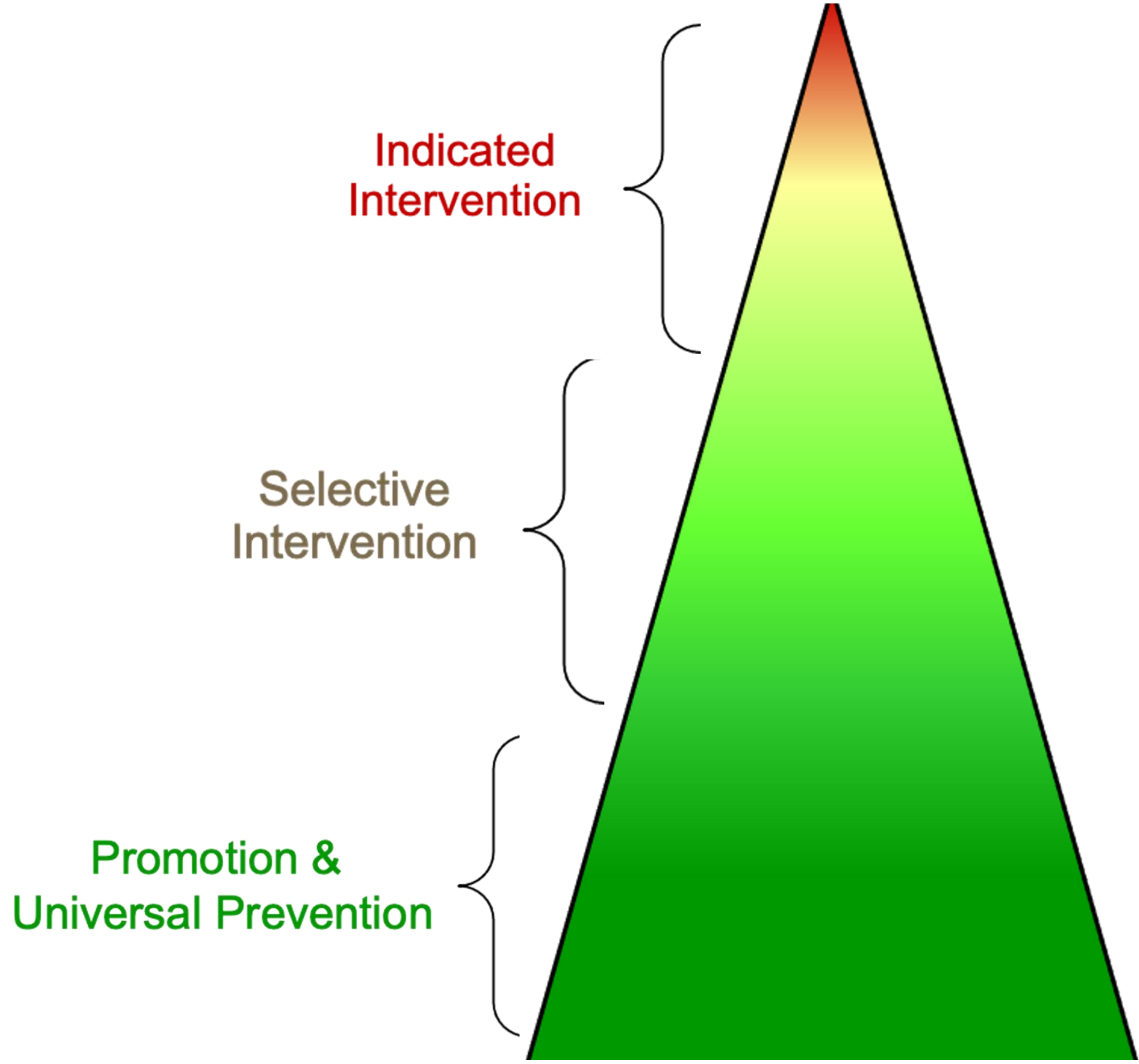


**Youth spend
most of their
time in schools**

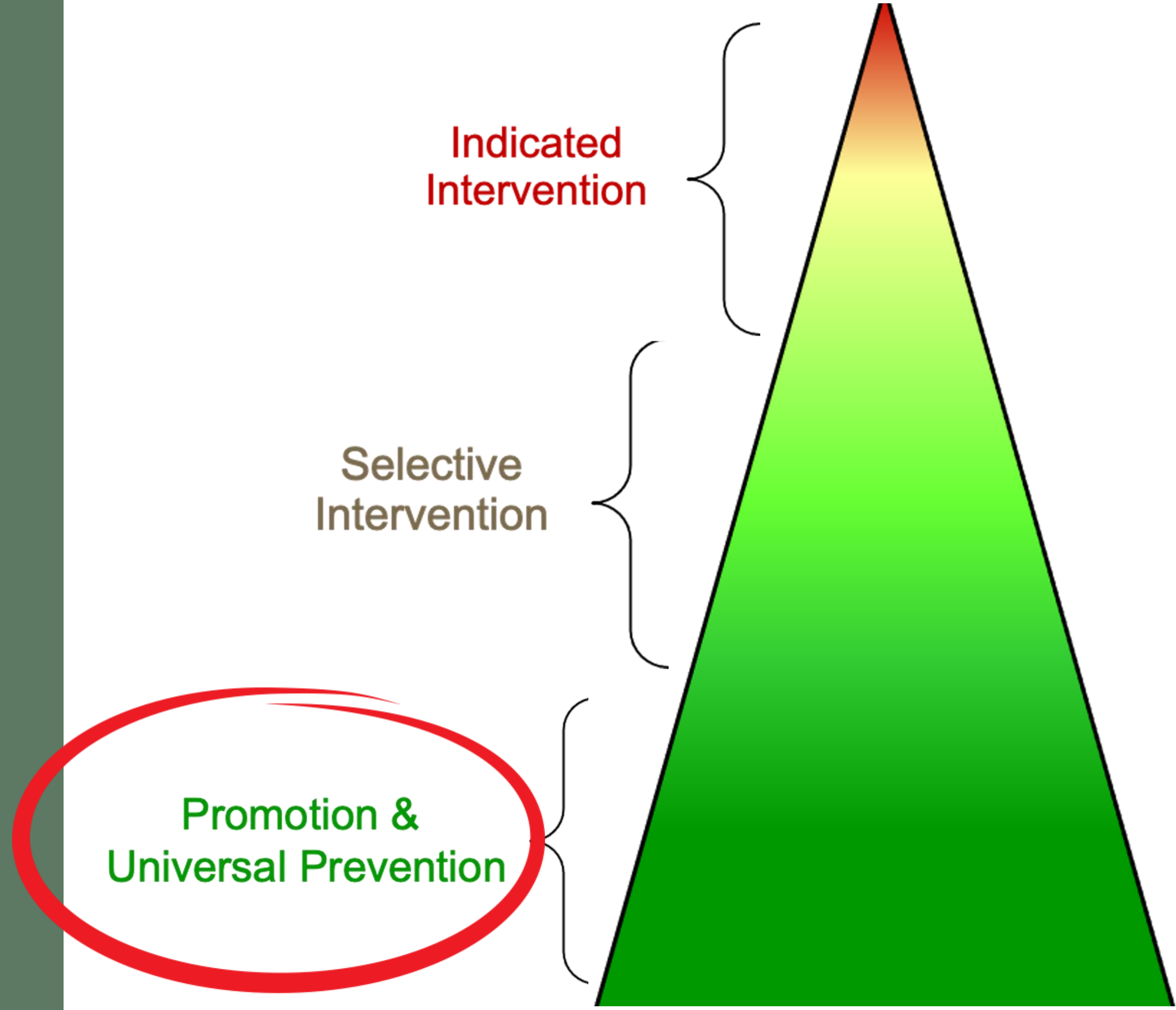
**Potential for
intervention
integration into
school curricula
& climate**

Domitrovich et al., 2010; Masten et al., 2003; Atkins et al., 2010

Multi-Tiered System of Supports



Multi-Tiered System of Supports





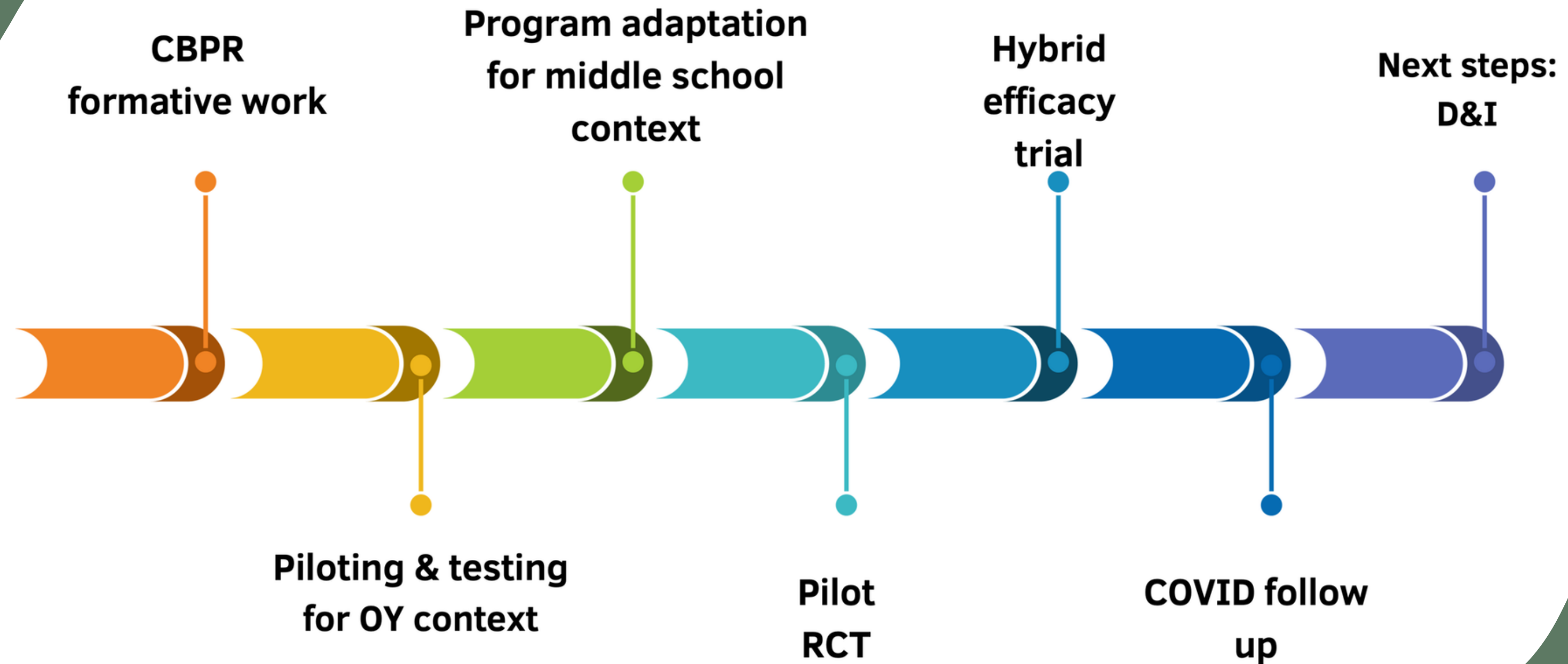
Evidence-Based Prevention in Schools

**SPARCS (Structured
Psychotherapy for
Adolescents Responding to
Chronic Stress)**



**RAP (Relax, Aware, Personal
Rating) Club**

Adaptation & Testing of the RAP Club Intervention



Arnold et al., 2020; Arnold et al., 2021; Mance et al., 2010; Mendelson et al., 2015;
Mendelson et al., 2020; Mendelson et al., 2025; Tandon, Mendelson, & Mance, 2011

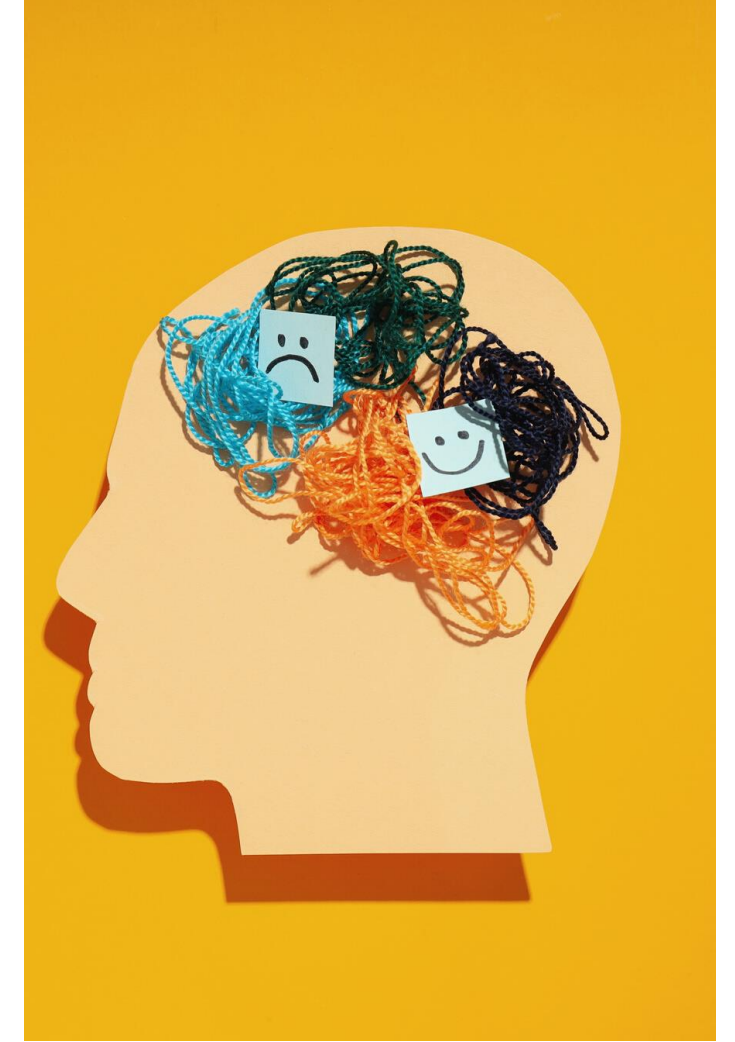
Intervention Core Components



Mindfulness



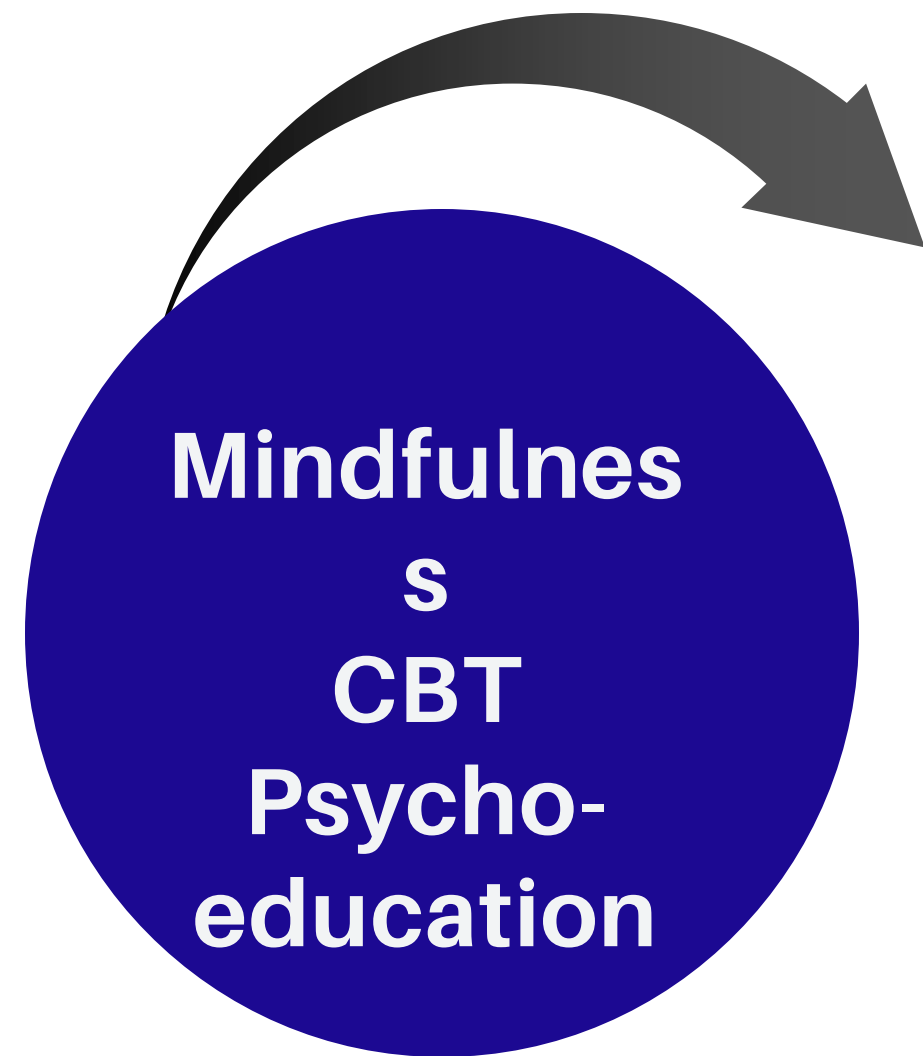
**Cognitive Behavioral
Skills**



Psychoeducation

Intervention Change Pathway

**Program
Core Components**



**Enhanced
Protective
Factors**



**Improved Student
Mental Health**



Wong , Colasante, & Malti, 2023; Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema,
& Schweitzer, 2010; Hofmann, Sawyer, & Witt, 2010; Butler et al., 2006; Broderick & Jennings, 2023

Project POWER

Promoting Options for Wellness and Emotion Regulation

Hybrid Type 1 mixed methods trial

RAP Club vs. active control health education program (Healthy Topics)

8th graders at 29 Baltimore City public schools (n = 631)

Mendelson et al., 2020



Program Delivery & Training Model



**1 Year School
Partnership**

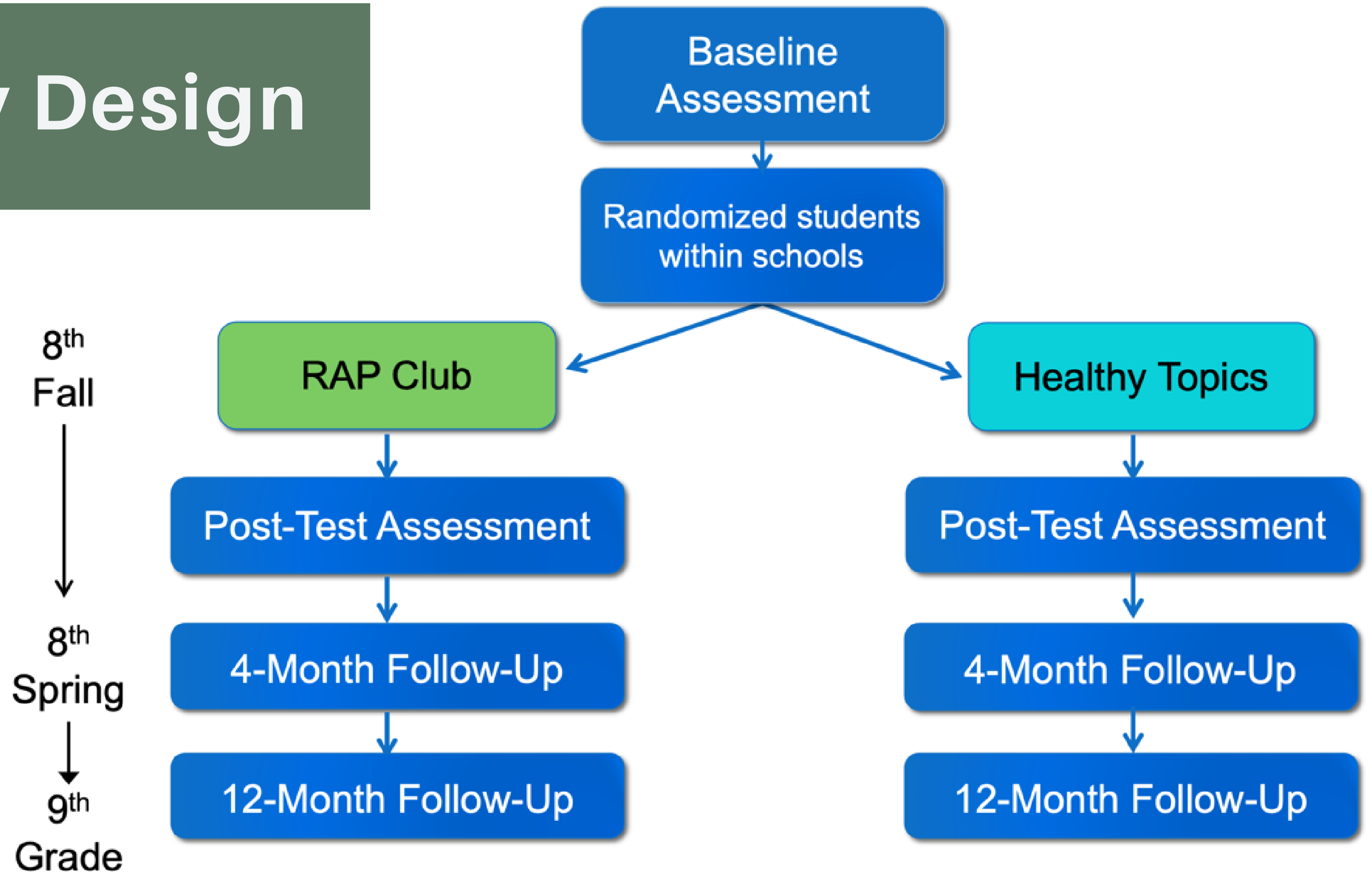


**Program Delivery
by Study Team**



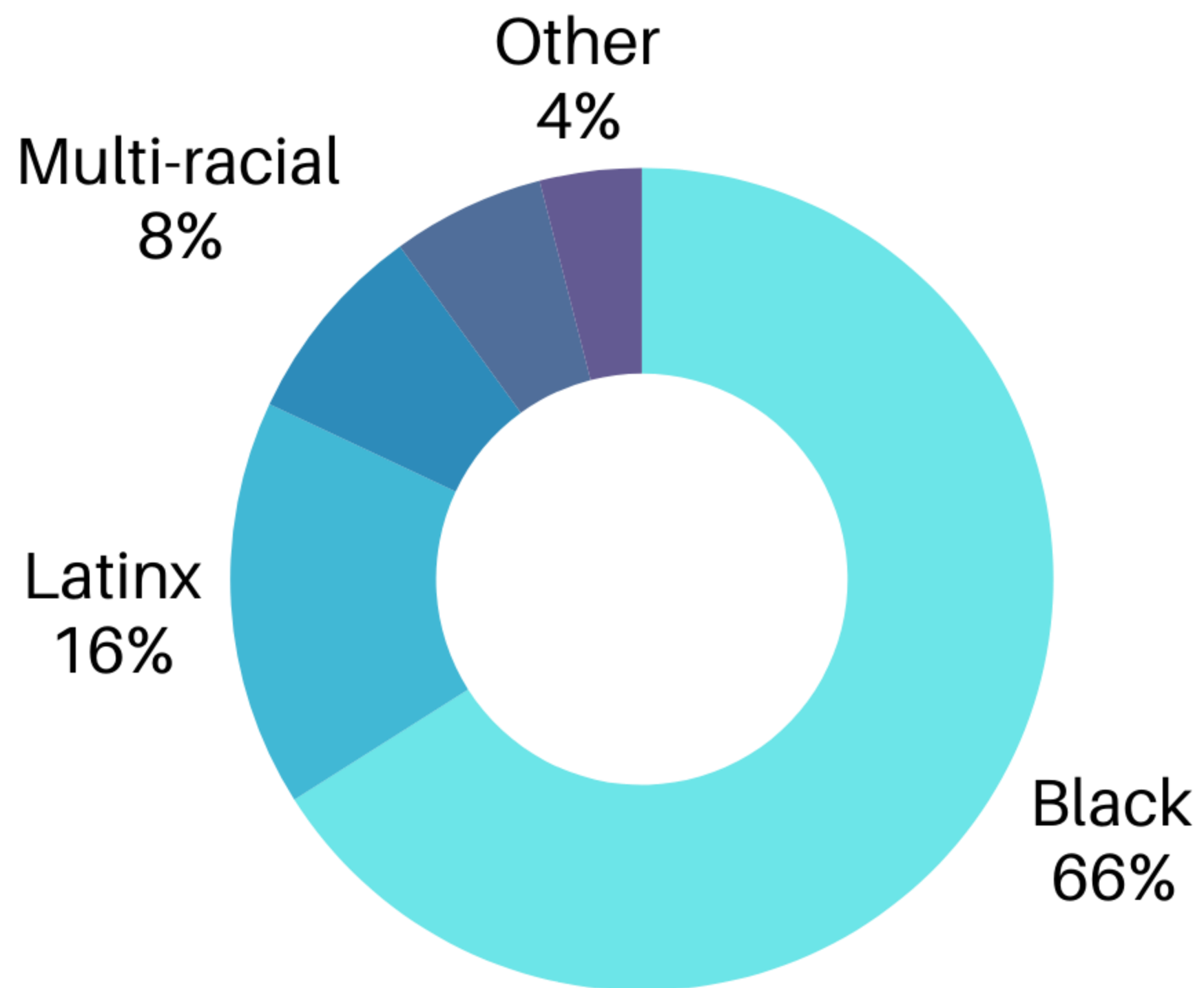
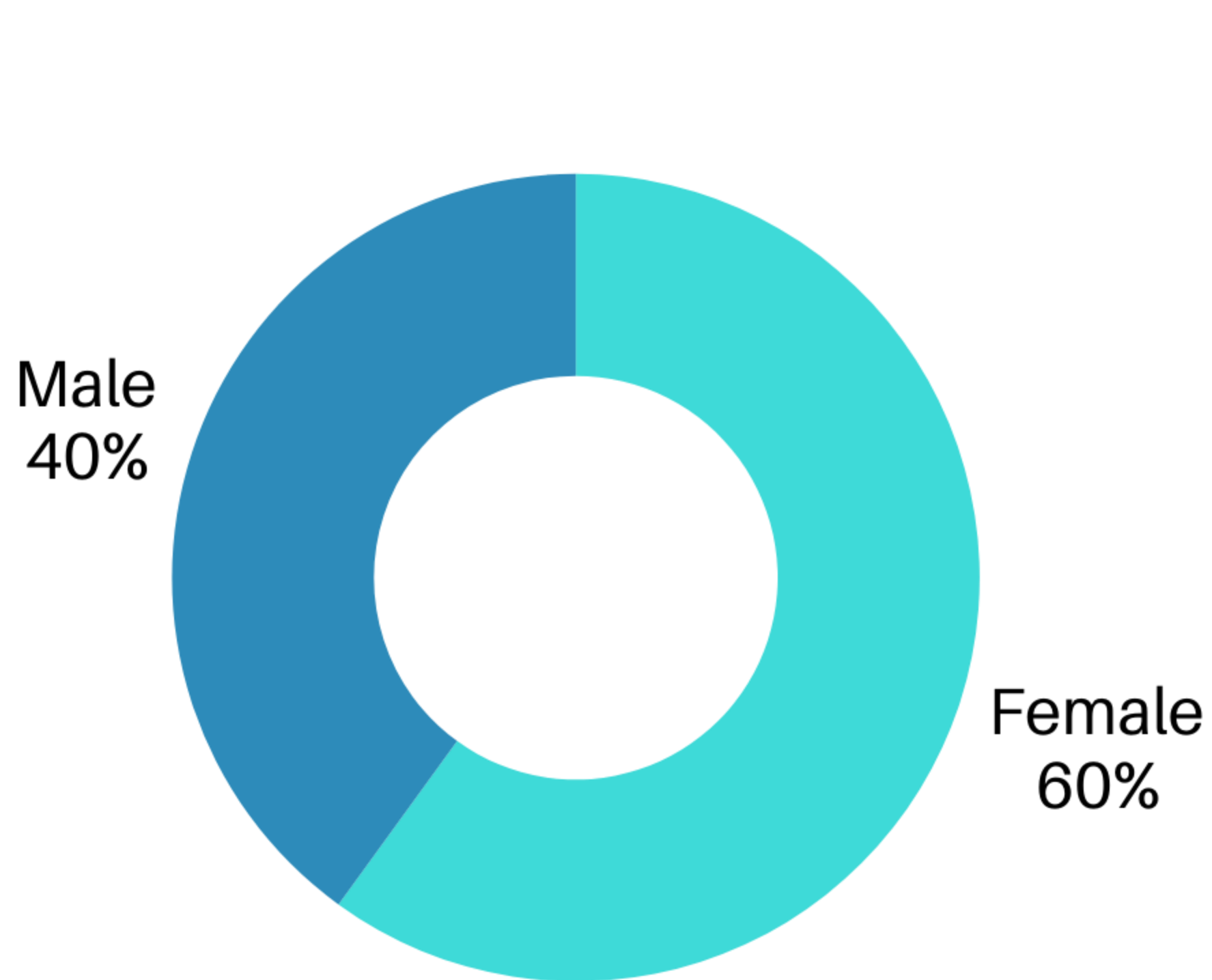
**School Personnel
Training**

Study Design

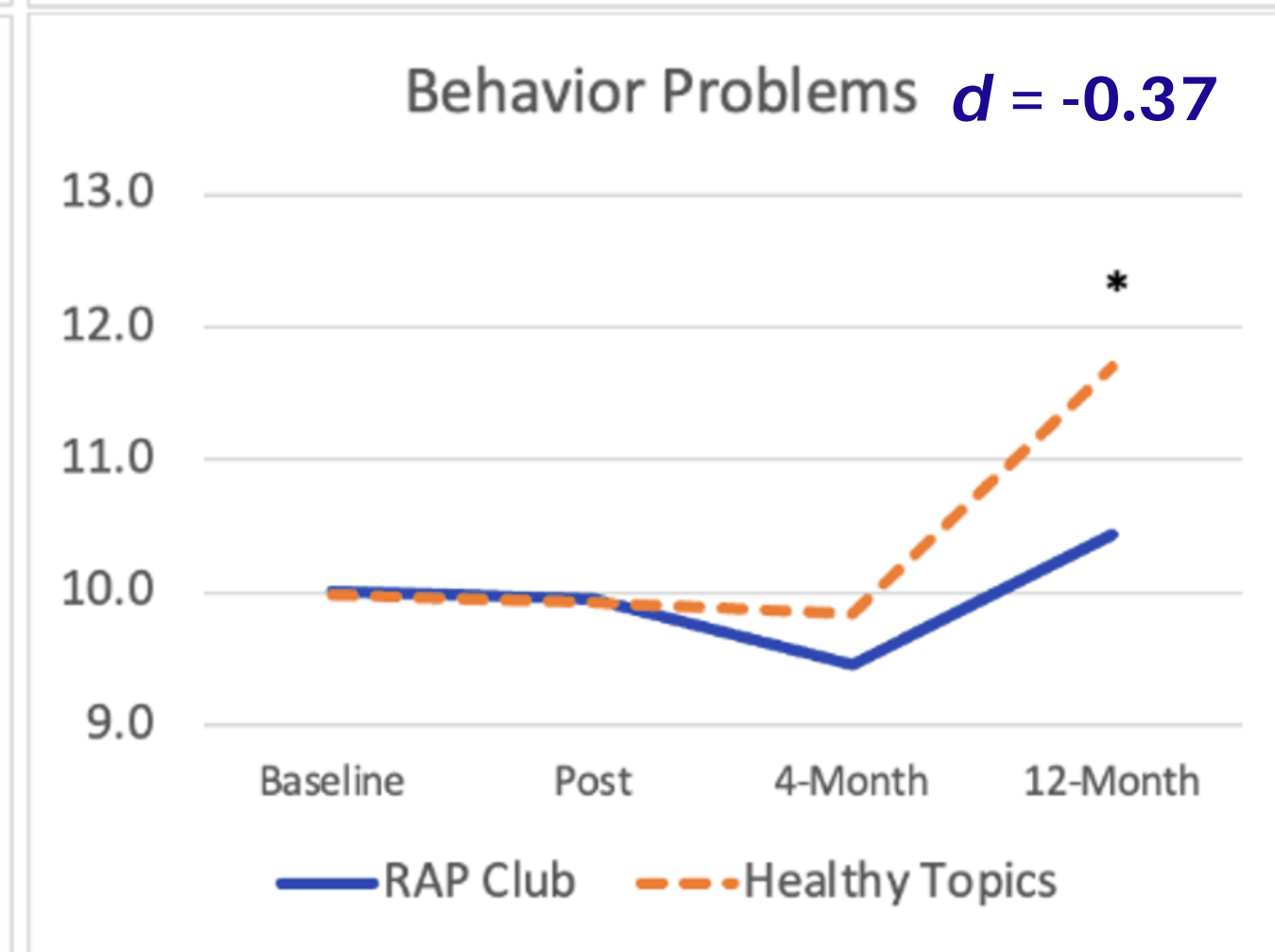
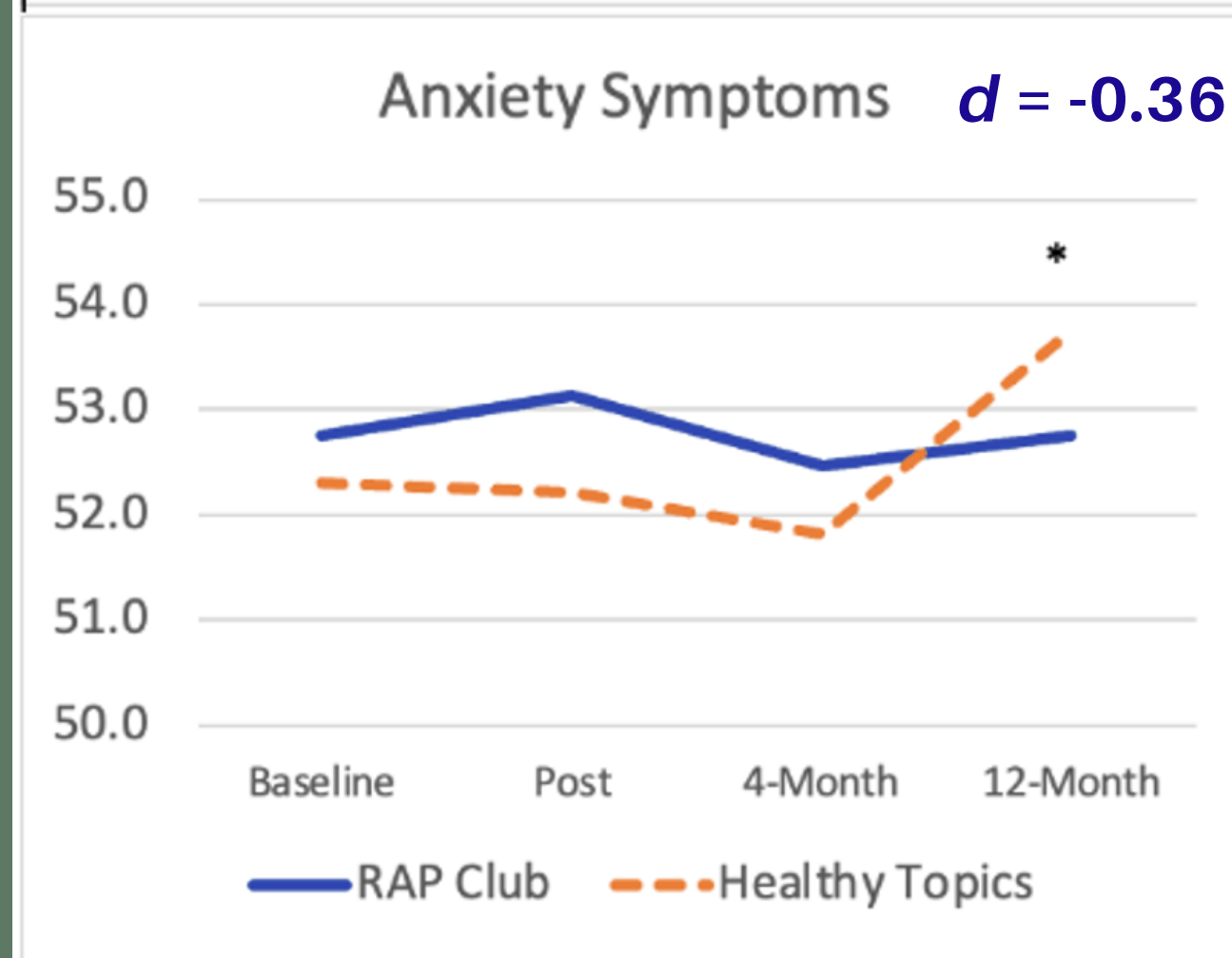
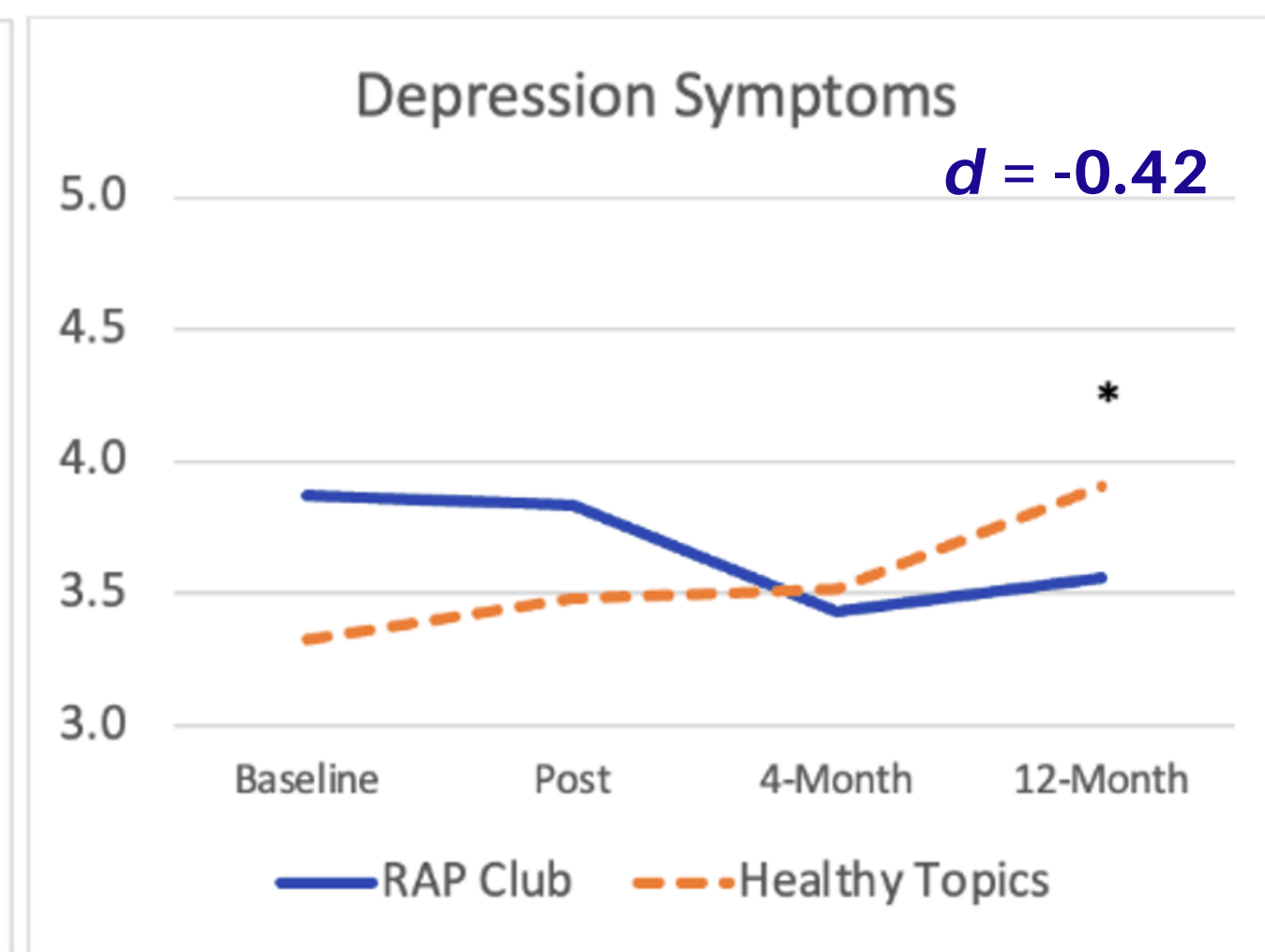
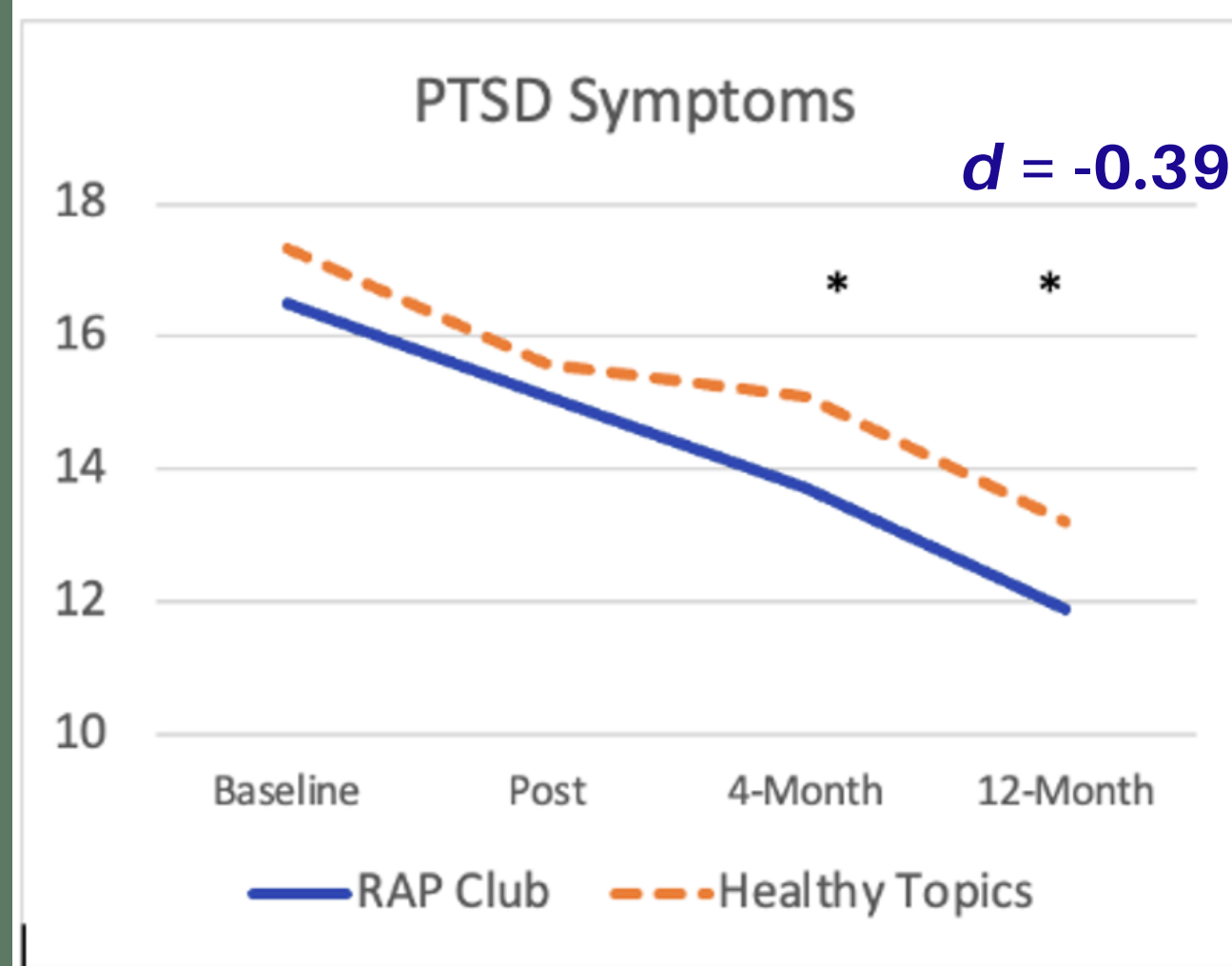




Sample Characteristics



Mental Health Outcomes



* $p < 0.05$



Student Perspectives

"I been dealing with stress way better."--Boy

"I feel like RAP changed my depression. Depression went away from me."--Girl

"I learned a lot on how to think per the situation, before I act, and it's never a good idea just to use your rage to influence your actions."--Boy

"I've become way more open with people."--Girl

"When you learn your feelings, you kind of find like inner peace."--Boy

SCHOOL PERSONNEL PERSPECTIVES

"I loved the groups... We need it, because there's just so many things working against them... They're turning to the wrong sources for answers, you know?... My kids just need that constant reinforcement on... how to handle issues and problems, and it's not to revert to violence."

--Principal

"When I'm comparing the students that participated in RAP with the students who did not, I feel I like they are able to better adapt to the craziness... they have learned some sort of way to deal with it."

*--School
Counselor*

IN SUMMARY



A universal trauma-informed approach improved student mental health across the critical transition into high school



Importance of longitudinal follow up data collection



Even small universal effect sizes can have significant population health benefits





Implementation Challenges & Opportunities



The good news...

**Promotion, prevention,
& early intervention
can support positive
student mental health**



The challenge...

**How to move effective
strategies sustainably
into schools**

**Only 14% of research
innovations are
implemented in real-
world settings**

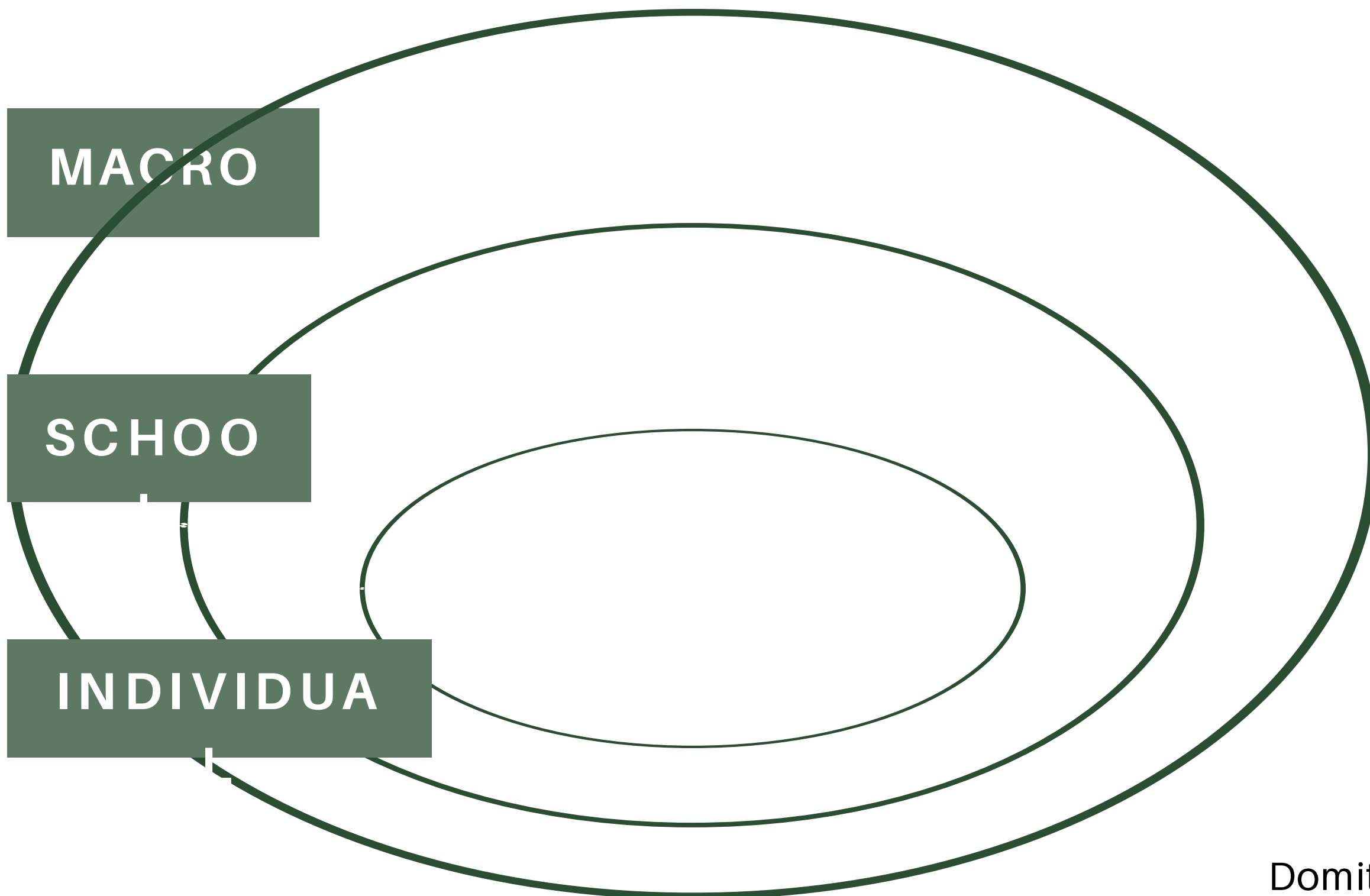
**Most schools do not
offer evidence-based
mental health
interventions**



Hoover, 2018; Lyon & Bruns, 2019; Powers, Bowen, & Bowen, 2010

Factors That Affect Implementation

OF SCHOOL-BASED INTERVENTIONS



Domitrovich et al., 2008



**Program delivery
by study
team**



**Program delivery
by school
personnel**



Individual- Level Factors: Implementers

Intervention Perceptions & Attitudes

Psychological & Professional Characteristics

Hybrid Type 2 Trial

	Supervision Level (Standard vs. Enhanced)	
Facilitator Training (Mental Health Training vs. No Mental Health Training)	Standard + MH Training	Enhanced + No MH Training
	Standard + MH Training	Enhanced + No MH Training

Random assignment of schools to different conditions

For each condition, test:

- **Effectiveness**
- **Cost, cost effectiveness, fidelity, feasibility, & acceptability**
- **School & student characteristics as moderators**



**School-Level
Factors**

**Mission/Policy
Alignment**

School Leadership



RAP Club Implementation Menu

Tools to Support Schools

User-friendly data on
effectiveness, costs,
and fit for different
types of schools and
students



**Macro-Level
Factors**

**Policies That
Support Prevention/
Promotion**

**Funding
Structures**

Promoting Mental Health at Schools (PROMEHS)

- Universal approach
- SEL, resilience, & prevention of mental health problems
- Nine partners from 7 European countries



**Focus on implementation
from start of intervention
development**

**Address factors at
multiple social ecological
levels**

One size does not fit all

**Key
Takeaways**





“We want to utilize every possible tool or program we can think of that’s going to... give our young people a fighting change to save their lives.”

--Baltimore City Public School
principal

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