Introduction to Trauma-Sensitive Schools

Joint Legislative Brunch
1-27-18
What is trauma?

Trauma is a response to a perceived threat to survival or emotional well-being of an individual or large group, such as a community or a culture.

Trauma leads to adverse brain, bodily and psychological changes that damage self, relational and spiritual development and impair living, learning and working.

*Definition from Monroe County ACCESS Research to Practice Subcommittee, 2011*
ACEs: the Original Study

**Facts**
- Collaboration between the Center for Disease Control (CDC) & Kaiser Permanente
- Sample > 17,000
- 10 yes or no questions
- Continual monitoring through morbidity & mortality data
- Replicated nationally & internationally

**Findings**
- Prevalence of trauma
- Correlation of childhood stress & negative outcomes
- The importance of Resilience
What are the ACEs?

Before the age of 18 did you experience...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abuse</th>
<th>Neglect</th>
<th>Household Dysfunction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Mental Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Incarcerated Relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mother Treated Violently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Divorce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.acestudy.org

www.rwjf.org
As ACEs Increase so does Risk…
What if You’re Still Under 18?
How many kids are we talking about?

Distribution by ACES Total Score Category

- No ACES Flags: 30% (438)
- 1 ACES Flag: 16% (236)
- 2 ACES Flags: 12% (173)
- 3 ACES Flags: 17% (251)
- 4 or More ACES Flags: 25% (366)

ACES Total Score Category

- Green
- Blue
- Purple
- Orange
- Red
The Accumulation of ACEs

Observing the pattern of distribution provides clues around the clustering of ACEs and indications of what questions might want to consider.
ACEs and School Performance

Students dealing with trauma are:

- 2.5 x more likely to fail a grade
- Score lower on standardized assessments
- Have more receptive & expressive language difficulties
- Are suspended or expelled more often
- Are designated to special education more frequently

A Dose-Response Relationship

“The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success” by Ray Wolpow, et. al. (2009)
The Academic Impact

Students were asked to identify their average grades over the last 12 months.

- 73% of those who reported receiving Mostly F's have experienced 3 or more ACEs.
So why does this happen?

Understanding short and long-term responses to stress
When we Sense Danger...
Frontal Cortex: Thinking Brain

Limbic System: Emotional Brain

Reptilian Brain: Instinctive Brain
Trauma and the Brain: Early Childhood
Trauma and Social Location

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Historical Trauma/Embodiment

Early Death

Disease, Disability, and Social Problems

Adoption of Health-risk Behaviours

Social, Emotional, & Cognitive Impairment

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Early Death

Burden of disease, distress, criminalization, stigmatization

Coping

Allostatic Load, Disrupted Neurological Development

Complex Trauma/ACE

Social Conditions/ Local Context

Generational Embodiment/Historical Trauma

RYSE 2015

What are all these stressors?

Defining trauma, complex trauma, and toxic stress
Trauma and Adversity

Complex Trauma
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Severe neglect
- Abandonment
- Emotional/psychological abuse
- Domestic violence

Toxic Stress
- Poverty
- Racism
- Microaggressions
- Discrimination
- Disparities
- Community Violence

Trauma
- Accidents
- Natural/Man made Disaster
- Serious illness
Complex trauma leads to complex outcomes

- Expectations of harm (particularly in the context of relationship)
- Difficulty forming relationship
- Difficulty understanding, managing and regulating feeling and behavior
- Damaged sense of self
- Developmental challenges
  - Problem-solving
  - Imagination
  - Academic performance
What can we do?

The number one resiliency factor for a youth experiencing trauma is the presence and support of an unconditionally caring adult.
Does our interpretation matter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation A</th>
<th>Interpretation B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defiant, oppositional, non-compliant</td>
<td>May value autonomy, may feel unsafe. May be in fight mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncooperative, resistant, over-sensitive</td>
<td>May feel overwhelmed or unsafe. May be in flight mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive, unmotivated, compliant, doesn’t care</td>
<td>May not trust their responses will impact receiver, may feel unsafe. May be in freeze mode</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And our interpretations guide our behaviors, words, and interventions.
Creating the conditions to shift the balance…
How to Become Trauma Informed

- Acknowledges the prevalence of traumatic events and toxic stress in students’ lives
- Creates a flexible framework that provides universal supports and is sensitive to the unique needs of students
- Mindful of avoiding re-traumatization

NOTE: Trauma Informed Care is NOT a program – It is an ongoing process that is unique to the strengths and needs of each school/district and community
Core Values of Trauma-Informed Care

- **Safety**
  Ensuring physical and emotional safety

- **Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues**
  Working to address cultural stereotypes and biases, offering gender responsive services, leveraging the healing value of traditional cultural connections, and recognizing and addressing historical trauma.

- **Trustworthiness & Transparency**
  Maximizing trustworthiness, making tasks clear, and maintaining appropriate boundaries

- **Empowerment, Voice, and Choice**
  Prioritizing developmentally appropriate choice and control for the participant

- **Collaboration & Mutuality**
  Maximizing collaboration and sharing of power with the participant

- **Peer support and mutual self-help**
  Understanding peer support as integral to building trust, safety, and empowerment

Source: Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration
What Does it Look Like?

Applying Trauma-Responsive Approaches
Essential elements of a Trauma Sensitive School

- Trauma Responsive School
  - Shared understanding
  - Supports all students to feel safe
  - Address students’ needs holistically
  - Explicitly connects students to the school community
  - Embraces teamwork & shared responsibility
  - Anticipate & adapt to ever-changing needs

Source: Helping Traumatized Children Learn 2, 2013
How to become a trauma responsive school

- Leadership
- Trauma Champions/Steering Committee
- Assessment
- Professional Development
  - Training
  - Academic and nonacademic strategies
  - Ongoing coaching and mentoring
- Practice Change
  - Policies, procedures, and protocols
  - Continuous Quality Improvement
Essential Questions – Creating the Vision

1. Why do we feel an urgency to become a TRS
2. How do we know we are ready to create a TR action plan
3. What actions will address staff priorities & help us become a TRS
4. How do we know we are becoming a TRS

Source: Helping Traumatized Children Learn – Vol. 2
Today, I can...

✓ Greet all of my students by name
✓ Call parents/caregivers to share good news
✓ Learn about the community and cultures that surround our school
✓ Practice curiosity when faced with challenging behaviors
✓ Make sure that the youth I work with know I care about them “No Matter What”
✓ Be clear with myself and youth I serve about my role and relationship with them
✓ Listen and pay attention without judgment
Want to Learn More?

- Restorative practices/justice
- Affective Statements
- Emotional First-Aid
- Reflective Listening
- Motivational Interviewing
- Nonviolent Communication ®
- Sanctuary Model ®
- ARC Model (Attachment, Regulation, Competence)
- Response to Intervention (RTI)
- Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS)
Thoughts & Questions
Resources


• Dr. Nadine Burke TED Talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=950vJ3dNk

• Rachel Yehuda’s interview on OnBeing: http://www.onbeing.org/program/rachel-yehuda-how-trauma-and-resilience-cross-generations/7786

• CDC site on ACE Study: https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/

• ARC Model: http://www.traumacenter.org/research/ascot.php

• National Center for Trauma-Informed Care: http://www.samhsa.gov/nctic

• Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators: www.NCTSN.org

• Helping Traumatized Children Learn: http://traumasensitiveschools.org

• The Heart of Learning and Teaching: www.www.k12.wa.us./CompassionateSchools/Resource.aspx