Creating Trauma Sensitive Schools – Environments Where Students and Staff Thrive

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Pause, listen, breathe.
Framework for Developing Trauma Sensitive Schools

1. ACES/Trauma Sensitive Schools 101
2. Develop Guiding Values for Trauma Sensitive Schools
3. Brief introduction of SEL & MH in MTSS/PBIS framework
4. Importance of Alignment & Implementation with district initiatives
5. Reflective Consultation and Conversation
6. Self Assessment of SEL practices/interventions at each tier
7. Using Response to Intervention, progress monitoring and fidelity checks
8. Importance of Self Care
Early Adversity Increases Physical, Mental, Behavioral Problems, Scientists Report

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Kaiser Permanente Study
Over 17,000 study participants

The ACE Study confirms, with scientific evidence, that adversity early in life increases physical, mental and behavioral problems later in life.

HUMAN NERVOUS SYSTEM

Nervous system orchestrates body functions & perceptions

Neuroscience helps us understand why ACES are so powerful

Brain
Spinal Cord
Peripheral Nerves
Single Nerve Cell
Different Stress Responses

- **Positive stress response**
  - Normal and essential part of health development
  - Brief increases in heart rate and mild elevations in hormone levels

- **Tolerable stress response**
  - Activates body’s alert system to greater degree
  - If activation is time-limited and buffered by relationships with adults who can help child adapt – this can be ok

- **Toxic stress response**
  - Strong, frequent and/or prolonged adversity
  - This type of response can disrupt typical brain and neural development
Harvard Video on Toxic Stress

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVwFkcOZHJw&feature=youtu.be
We adapt to our environment

Experience gets wired into our biology

ADAPTATIONS VS EXPECTATIONS

When biology collides with social expectations we run into trouble
Toxic Stress and Adversity: Affects Physiology and Perception

- Research has found a change in RESTING heart rates
- Some of these students are “wired” to be on HIGH ALERT!!
- Constantly on “threat assessment” - impact on social awareness
- Their bodies “learn to” go into “fight/flight/freeze” very quickly
- Perception Example - Faces study
- Understanding what they might be perceiving is real even if different than your “reality”

Mindfully Aware
Body is relaxed, breathing is steady, heart rate is normal. Higher level brain functioning is optimal.

Cautious
High Alert
Fight, Flight or Freeze

Developed by Dr. Michael Thomas, NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center
BIOLOGICAL RESPONSES

Behavior, affect, attitude, and capacities may not be “choices”-

They may be **normal biological adaptations** to toxic stress and adversity during development.

Not: *What’s wrong with you?*

But: *What happened to you?*
Reflection Time

• What is something that stood out of you in the first part of this talk?

• Is there a situation or student that you view differently now?

• How have you already modified your practice and interactions to align with this paradigm shift?
Adverse Childhood Experiences ARE COMMON

**Household Dysfunction**
- Substance Abuse: 27%
- Parental Sep/Divorce: 23%
- Mental Illness: 17%
- Battered Mothers: 13%
- Criminal Behavior: 6%

**Neglect**
- Emotional: 15%
- Physical: 10%

**Abuse**
- Emotional: 11%
- Physical: 28%
- Sexual: 21%

TOTAL 10 ACEs

ACE Score = Number of ACE Categories

ACE Scores Reliably Predict Challenges During the Life Course
ACEs in Minnesota: Minnesota Student Survey
ACE Score + Past 30 Day Use

Minneapolis 8th, 9th, and 11th Graders Reporting Any Past 30 Day Alcohol Use, by ACE Score, 2013

ACE Score | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---
Percentage | 10.9% | 20.6% | 27.6% | 34.6% | 41.3% | 50.9% | 56.1% | 73.3%

ACE Score + Suicide

Minneapolis 8th, 9th, and 11th Graders Reporting Past Year Suicidal Ideation and Attempts, by ACE Score, 2013

ACE Score | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---
Percentage
Seriously considered suicide in the last year
Actually attempted suicide in the last year

4.5% 3.0% 4.4% 7.2% 10.8% 13.0% 12.1% 24.4%
56.0% 63.4% 67.8%
ACE Score + Mental Health

6 Key Elements

1. Adults must *adaptively* change behaviors, assumptions and beliefs.
2. Much of what we need to create trauma-sensitive schools already exists.
3. All school staff need to be involved in the professional development and reflection process.

Minnesota 8th, 9th, and 11th Graders Reporting Having Significant Problems in the Last 12 Months with Feeling Very Trapped, Lonely, Sad, Blue, Depressed, or Hopeless About the Future, by ACE Score, 2013

- 18.6% for ACE Score 0
- 36.3% for ACE Score 1
- 50.8% for ACE Score 2
- 59.9% for ACE Score 3
- 70.3% for ACE Score 4+
6 Key Elements

4. School leaders must create an environment where it is safe for adults to share & reflect on beliefs and practices.

5. Focus on student engagement with positive school wide plans linked with positive classroom engagement.

6. High quality, relevant instruction to engage students is essential for learning.

Resilience is common and... arises from ...normal rather than extraordinary human capabilities, relationships, and resources.

In other words, resilience emerges from ordinary magic.

— Ann Masten, 2009
What we don’t know – can help us understand

• "Kid 1: I wish my teacher would know, my dad is in jail and I haven’t seen him in years.”
• Kid 2: I wish my teacher would know, I don't always eat dinner because my mom works and I don’t know how to work the stove.
• Kid 3: I wish my teacher would know, my sister sleeps in the same bed as me and sometimes she wets the bed and that’s why I smell funny.
• Kid 4: I wish my teacher would know that I don't always have sneakers for gym class because my brothers and I share one pair.
• Kid 5: I wish my teacher would know I like coming to school because it's quiet here, not like my house with all the yelling.

Lauren Ley, Popsugar US; “Teachers Asks Her Students What They Wished She Knew…” 10/9/2017

Guiding Values for Trauma-Sensitive Schools

• Repeated messages and experiences are vital to creating a cultural and climate that promotes and nurtures resilience
• Collaboratively school need to develop values and guiding principles
• WI Dept. of Public Instruction created these values:
  • Safety
  • Empowerment
  • Collaboration
  • Trust
  • Choice

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Compassionate instruction and discipline principles

- Always empower, never disempower
- Provide unconditional positive regard
- Maintain high expectations
- Check assumptions, observe and question
- Be a relationship coach
- Provide guided opportunities for helpful participation

From *The Heart of Teaching and Learning*
Kids do that best they can....(Dr. Ross Green)

• Dr. Ross Green has a fundamental belief
  • Kids are doing the best that they can
  • Where they have problems there are lagging skills

• As staff in child serving agencies – if a child has a lagging skill, I believe we have a duty to help teach that student the skill(s) to be successful – not just consequence them

Examples of Resilience Programs/Practices

• MindUP, Yoga Calm and Zones of Regulation
• Prevention and early intervention groups using evidence based curriculums
• Universal Social Emotional Learning (e.g., Second Step)
• Skill building groups
• Responsive Classroom
• Restorative Practices
• Positive Relationships are an evidence based practice
Differentiated Relationships

Importance of Restorative Practices

• Typical punitive punishment
  • Doesn’t teach new skills
  • Can be isolating and destructive developing nurturing relationships

• Restorative Practices
  • “Fix It” tickets
  • Opportunities to repair and make amends
  • These practices send the “meta message” – “I made a mistake but I can fix it”
  • And if I can fix it – there is HOPE
EVERY OPPORTUNITY

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxyxywShewI

Positive Relationships Beat ACES

* Schools, classrooms, and educators can help promote and strengthen resiliency by ensuring that school is: nurturing, stable and engaging.

* Positive, healthy relationships with students and other school staff are the key to creating and sustaining resilient and healing environment.
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