Foundation for Becoming a Trauma Responsive School

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Pause, listen, breathe.
Foundational Beliefs

* Central Nervous System’s main job is to help us adapt to stay alive.
* Constantly being on threat assessment can alter our physiology and perceptions
* What is repeatedly experienced is what gets WIRED into our brains and physiology.
* This is where “hope” lies for schools - we can intentionally CHOOSE what “repeated experiences” we want our students to have.
* “Misbehavior” often occurs when survival adaptations clash with social expectations
Developing Trauma Sensitive Schools

• Exposure and awareness building regarding impact of ACEs
• Develop trauma-informed beliefs, assumptions and attitudes collectively
• Ongoing professional development, group and individual reflection and discussion
• Alignment of current policies, practices and programs that support trauma sensitive environments
• Safe environment for staff to practice trauma sensitive approaches and get support and coaching without any performance implications
• Availability and encouragement of self care

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.
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.

Trauma and Learning

Children who do not feel safe live in a state of emergency. Their energy is consumed by crisis, making it impossible for them to focus on learning.

Who is traumatized?

ANSWER: Both

From “Too Scared to Learn” by Jenny Horsman, 2000
**Insights**

* Traumatized children’s behavior can be perplexing.

* Prompted by internal states not fully understood by the children themselves, traumatized children can be ambivalent, unpredictable and demanding.

* “It is critical to underscore that traumatized children’s most demanding behavior often originates in feelings of vulnerability.”

*(Helping Traumatized Children Learn, p. 32-33)*

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**Paradigm Shift**

- Trauma is a sensory, rather than cognitive experience.
- Use strategies that restore a sense of safety and renewed sense of empowerment and control in the face of fear and uncertainty generated by the incident.
- Reduction of the arousal level is critical to the restoration of pre-trauma cognitive processes, learning functions, behavior and performance.
Reflective Consultation and Conversation

• On a monthly basis, schools should engage in active reflection exercises:
  • What is working well and what should you continue doing?
  • What might you like to change?
  • What supports do you need to make these changes?
  • Commit to meeting on a regular basis to reflect on progress and discuss successes and challenges.

• Various structures exist to host these regular reflections:
  • Staff meetings
  • Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
  • Expert consultant or staff/peer lead discussions

• Document the interventions and strategies that are working at your school.

Self-Care is a priority and necessity - not a luxury - in the work that we do.
Importance of Self Care and Safe Environment for Adults to Experiment

• Taking care of ourselves is critical for us being our best and modeling our best for students and families and colleagues
• Self care must not be seen as a luxury but rather an ethical duty and essential part of our job
• Building leaders should promote and actively model self-care and create an environment where self-care is valued
• School leaders must create an environment where it is safe for adults to share & reflect on beliefs and practices

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
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

Trauma Informed Schools PDF
In other words, resilience emerges from ordinary magic.

— Ann Masten, 2009

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

WI Tools to Guide Consultation

Policy, Practice and Protocol Review Checklist

Self Assessment Tool
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
Brief Introduction of SEL in MTSS/PBIS

School(s) should implement social emotional learning (SEL) and mental health programs, interventions and strategies that will address the needs of ALL students.

Schools should have programs, interventions and strategies at each tier so that ALL students get the support they need when they need it.
WI – Trauma Informed Values in PBIS

Using the PBIS Framework to Support the Learning of Students Affected by Trauma

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) Values *
- Safety
- Empowerment
- Collaboration
- Trust
- Choice

Tier 1 – Universal strategies & instruction for all students
Tier 2 – Additional supports for students with milder symptoms of trauma or in high-risk groups
Tier 3 – Intensive & ongoing interventions for students deeply impacted by trauma

* TIC Values & Key Areas apply across all 3 tiers of the PBIS Framework.

TIC Values are from Fallot & Harris, Community Connections, www.cccct.org

Continuum of Behavioral and Mental Health Services at Jenny Lind Elementary

Teacher
- Interventions in classroom supported by Psych
- Reviewed in MTSS
- Can be both academic and behavioral

Behavior Dean
- Supports classrooms upon request.
- Gives breaks to kids that need them.
- Helps mediate conflicts when they occur.
- Partner with SSW if patterns persist.

School Social Worker
- Facilitate IEPs and DP needs
- Manage transportation
- Manage and support HHM
- Complete bully investigations and assess/support mental health crisis
- Partner with teachers to facilitate student plans
- Lead student groups

School Psych
- Complete on SPED evals.
- Complete informal FBAs
- Support/Facilitate MTSS
- Guide/consult with teachers through behavioral and academic interventions
- Assist/Respond to crisis and crisis recovery

SEL Social Worker
- Support SSWs
- Lead SEL PD
- Directly train teachers on mental health patterns and needs.
- Work with teachers to create ongoing classroom accommodations
- Complete crisis assessments
- Facilitate mental health groups/
- Individual work with students
- Partner with parents for ongoing mental health needs

Washburn Therapist
- See students on an individual basis
- Students seen with and without insurance
- Meet with 14-18 students at a time
- Services last 9-12 months
- See students weekly.
- Consult with teachers and families.
Importance of Attachment

• Healthy attachment is typically developed through the emotional bond between the child & primary caregiver. It is through this relationship that we learn to:
  – Regulate emotions, behavior and thinking - “self soothe”
  – Develop trust in others and believe the world is a predictable place
  – Freely explore our environment
  – Understand ourselves & others
  – Understand that we can impact the world around us

Adapted with permission from Nic Dibble - WI DPI
Self Assessment of SEL practices/interventions at each tier

- Schools should conduct a self assessment/inventory of the social emotional learning (SEL) and mental health (MH) practices, interventions and programs they have at each of the 3 tiers.
- Starting with the practices, interventions and programs you have, ask: Are they being used appropriately and they being implemented with fidelity?
- Identify the gaps at each tier.
- Go slowly with learning and implementing new interventions to build confidence and to know what works at your school.
- Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a great resource for evidence-based practices.

Classroom Strategies to establish: SAFETY

- Listen to students’ history without judging.
- Provide clear and consistent rules for supporting positive behavior and setting limits.
- Provide accommodations to meet individual strengths and needs.
- Create and support a predictable structure, relationships, and the environment.
- Reduce bullying and harassment.
- Use seclusion/restraint teams only as a last resort.
Classroom Strategies to Establish Empowerment

* View problems as coping strategies.
* Focus on helping students to build skills.
* Emphasize strengths more than weaknesses.
* Help students to understand that their choices and opinions matter.
* Support me in feeling more confident and hopeful in my future.

Classroom Strategies to Establish Collaboration

* Policies that declare relationships as a value.
* Teachers and helping professionals in the school want to know more about the student, his/her history, and current life circumstances.
* Goal is to learn from the students and their families rather than being the “expert.”
Classroom Strategies to Establish TRUST

Relationship with the educator based on...

* Unconditional positive regard for all students
* Checking assumptions, observing & questioning
* Being a relationship coach
* Knowing students will “test” the relationship and yet remaining consistent

Classroom Strategies to Establish CHOICE

* Avoid a “one size fits all” approach.
* Provide authentic choices for students to make.
* Make the students’ thoughts matter.
* Respect the choices I make.
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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