Trauma-Sensitive Classrooms in General Education Settings

Christy Berger
Christy Gauss
Dr. Brandie Oliver
Agenda

• What is trauma?
• Trauma Sensitive Classroom
• Social-Emotional Learning “the foundation”
• Strategies for the classroom
• MTSS connection
What is Trauma?

- **Exposure** to an event that threatens or harms the physical or emotional integrity of the individual or someone close to the individual.
- Overwhelms the person’s ability to respond in a healthy way (physically, emotionally, and/or mentally).
- Creates significant difficulty in functioning. For our children and youth it can have a significant **impact** on their social, emotional, and cognitive development, including their ability to self-regulate and learn.
Types of Trauma

- **Acute trauma**: The response to a one-time event
- **Complex/developmental trauma**: Exposure to multiple traumatic events
  - Often of an invasive and interpersonal nature
  - Wide-ranging
  - Causing long term impact
  - *National Child Traumatic Stress Network*

- **Historical/generational trauma**: A constellation of characteristics associated with massive cumulative group trauma across generations. *Brave Heart, M.Y.H. (1999)*
Under Perceived Threat, the Brain Downshifts

- When stress builds, our brains literally downshift.
  - FIGHT
  - FLIGHT
  - FREEZE
Trauma: Stress-Response

Positive
Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels

Tolerable
Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships

Toxic
Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships
Toxic Stress: Acute vs. Chronic
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

- Term comes from a 1998 Study of 17,000 Participants
- Definition
- ACE Study: Findings and Implications
- Hope: “What is predictable is preventable.” Dr. Robert Anda
ACEs: Exposure to...

- Emotional, Physical, and Sexual Abuse
- Emotional or Physical Neglect
- Domestic Violence
- Caregiver Substance Abuse
- Caregiver Mental Illness
- Parent Separation or Divorce
- Incarceration of a Parent

- Death or loss of loved one
- Life threatening illness in a caregiver or faced by a child
- Bullying/Social Exclusion or Isolation
- Community violence
- Natural Disasters
- Economic Hardship/Poverty
- Being a “Young Caregiver”
- Microaggressions/micro-inequities
ACES: Indiana Birth to 17

- 0 ACES: 54%
- 1 ACES: 23%
- 2+ ACES: 23%

2016 National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH).
Prevalence of ACEs in Students

13 of every 30 students in a classroom experience toxic stress from 3 or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Source: Washington State Family Policy Council

Indiana Department of Education
Stressed brains do not learn the same as brains that feel safe, can emotionally regulate, and feel connection. Simply stated, stressed brains don’t learn the same way.

Because these stressors either go unrecognized or there is a lack of knowledge about their effects on learning and behavior, students dealing with adversity and stress are often identified or mislabeled as having behavior, discipline, and/or learning issues in a school setting.
51% of children with 4+ ACE scores had learning and behavior problems in school. Compared with only 3% of children with NO ACE score.

ACES are the best predictor of poor health and second best predictor of academic failure.

(Burke et al, 2011)
Resilience: A Definition

The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant stress. It is the counterbalance of trauma.
Three Pillars of Trauma Informed Care

- Safety, Connection and Assurance of Well Being
- Emotional and Behavioral Regulation
- Personal Agency, Social Skills and Academics

Three Domains for Schools, and Other Youth Organizations
## Trauma Informed Principles

A school where **all** students feel safe, welcomed, and supported

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fallot &amp; Harris, 2001</th>
<th>Sanctuary Model (Rivard, Bloom, McCorkle, &amp; Abramovitz, 2005)</th>
<th>SAMHSA Six Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Growth &amp; Change</td>
<td>Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>Trustworthiness &amp; Transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>Non-Violence</td>
<td>Peer Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
<td>Collaboration &amp; Mutuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Social Learning</td>
<td>Empowerment, voice and choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open Communication</td>
<td>Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trauma-Responsive Educator Development

ADVOCACY & OUTREACH
Practices and models trauma responsive education; uses data to help educate others and share message; works as a change agent to help ensure ALL students become successful learners.

SKILLS & STRATEGIES
Implement social-emotional learning practices, restorative practices, relationship skills at foundation of learning, strength-based classroom-management skills, mindfulness, educational neuroscience strategies, etc.

AWARENESS
Provide continuous opportunities for professional development in cultural responsiveness, equity and access practices, provide intentional time for reflective practice, exploration of implicit bias, understands the value of trust and rapport in learning, empowers students in the learning process, etc.

KNOWLEDGE
Start with sharing foundational knowledge and information on trauma, impact of trauma on learning and behavior, educational neuroscience, data, how to use results from universal screenings, etc.

Trauma Responsive Educator Development
Developed by Dr. Brandie Oliver, Butler University, 2018
Complex Issue

- Importance of empathy
- Multi-faceted approach
- Multiple perspectives

Understanding Neglect & Abuse: Looking Through 3 Lenses

Attachment

Trauma

Child Development
Social-emotional learning (SEL) provides the structure and process for adults and students to develop fundamental social and emotional competencies and experiences to:

➔ understand and manage emotions,
➔ set and achieve positive goals,
➔ feel and show empathy for others,
➔ establish and maintain positive relationships,
➔ make responsible decisions,
➔ develop a positive self-image, and
➔ learn from mistakes and overcome challenges.
SEL Core Competencies

**Self-Management**
- Regulating one's emotions
- Managing stress
- Self-control
- Self-motivation
- Stress management
- Setting and achieving goals

**Self-Awareness**
- Labeling one's feelings
- Relating feelings and thoughts to behavior
- Accurate self-assessment of strengths and challenges
- Self-efficacy
- Optimism

**Social Awareness**
- Perspective taking
- Empathy
- Respecting diversity
- Understanding social and ethical norms of behavior
- Recognizing family, school, and community supports

**Relationship Skills**
- Building relationships with diverse individuals and groups
- Communicating clearly
- Working cooperatively
- Resolving conflicts
- Seeking help

**Social & Emotional Learning**

**Responsible Decision-Making**
- Considering the well-being of self and others
- Recognizing one's responsibility to behave ethically
- Basing decisions on safety, social and ethical considerations
- Evaluating realistic consequences of various actions
- Making constructive, safe choices for self, relationships and school

Sources: CASEL, Acknowledge Alliance
Why SEL In Schools?

SEL Promotes Success in School & Life

Inputs/Approaches
- SEL Skills Instruction:
  - Self-awareness
  - Self-management
  - Social awareness
  - Relationship skills
  - Responsible decision-making

Positive Learning Climate & Instructional Strategies
- Safe, Caring
- Well-managed
- Engaging
- Cooperative
- Supportive
- High Expectations

Short-term Outcomes
- Greater Attachment, Engagement and Commitment to School
- Less Risky Behavior, More Positive Development

Long-term Outcomes
- Greater Success in School, Work, and Life
The research base for SEL is strong, with a long history of rigorous studies, longitudinal follow-ups and multiple replications finding desired behavioral and academic outcomes. (Over 200 studies)

**Attitudes**
- Stronger sense of community
- Higher academic motivation and educational aspirations
- Better understanding of consequences of behavior
- Better ability to cope with school stressors
- Increased positive attitudes toward school and learning

**Behaviors**
- Participate in class more
- Demonstrate more pro-social behavior
- Have fewer absences and improved attendance
- Show reductions in aggression and disruptions
- Are on track to graduate and are less likely to drop out

**School Performance**
- Improved math, literacy, and social studies skills
- Higher achievement test scores (+14%) and grades (+11%)
- Improved learning-to-learn skills
- Better problem solving and planning ability
- Use of higher level reasoning strategies
- Improvements in reading comprehension

(Durlak et al., 2011)
Implementing SEL: Important Planning Tool

S.A.F.E.
S: Sequenced
Thoughtful, coordinated, programming and lessons allowing skills to be taught in meaningful and developmentally appropriate ways.

A: Active
Interventions need to be engaging and allow students ample time to practice new behaviors. Interactive activities (e.g., art, movement, group discussion, multimedia) are not only effective for skill retention but also match the developmental level, as it is critical to ensure programming activities are culturally responsive.

F: Focused
Students need adequate time and resources to learn and development academic enablers. Students need time to practice and educators that model these behaviors.

E: Explicit
Before beginning any activity, school counselors should clearly state (a) what will happen during the session, (b) what they expect students to learn, and (c) what behaviors they wish students will demonstrate following the lesson including evaluation measures to accompany the effectiveness of the lesson (or unit).

Reference: (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011)
What Do You Think About Adding Mindset & Resilience to Social-Emotional Standards?

**SELF-AWARENESS**
- What are my thoughts & feelings?
- How do I express my thoughts & feelings in a respectful manner?

**SOCIAL AWARENESS**
- How do I understand the thoughts & feelings of others?
- How do I show empathy and care for others?
- How can I demonstrate acceptance and support for all diverse backgrounds & cultures?

**SELF-MANAGEMENT**
- How do I set and achieve goals (personal & academic)?
- What strategies do I use to recognize my emotions and control my impulses?
- How do I manage stress in a healthy manner?

**RELATIONSHIP SKILLS**
- How can I communicate effectively with others?
- How do I stop to view the perspectives of others?
- How do I resolve conflict with others?
- What strategies do I use to seek help from others when I need it?

**RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING**
- What consequences will my actions have on myself and others?
- How do my choices align with my values & goals?
- How can I solve problems in a productive way?

**GROWTH MINDSET/RESILIENCE**
- How can I view mistakes as a learning opportunity?
- How is working hard connected to my success?
- What strategies do I use when things don't go my way (what if I fail)?

Social Emotional Learning: The 6th Element?

Developed by Dr. Brandle Oliver, Butler University (2017)
Remember car trips like this?
Then we found out...

- Failure to wear a seat belt contributes to more fatalities than any other single traffic safety-related behavior.
- **63% of people killed in accidents** are not wearing seat belts.
- Wearing a seat belt is still the single most effective thing we can do to save lives and reduce injuries on America's roadways.
- On average, inpatient hospital care costs for an unbelted crash victim are 50 percent higher than those for a belted crash victim.
- …among countless other facts…
So, we change our habits (most of us anyway), and now even buckle up our pets.
So what’s my point?
Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.

- Maya Angelou

We DO Have New Information...So Now?
Strategy Sharing

A Few Strategies
Addressing: Emotional Awareness

Emotional awareness is the ability to recognize and make sense of not just your own emotions, but also those of others.

FEELINGS CHECK

Physically, I feel…

Mentally, I feel…

Emotionally I feel…
Addressing: Relationship Skills
Strategy: I-Messages
Addressing: Connection, Relationship Building

**2 X 10 Method**

2 minutes for 10 days

**Who:** Select 1-2 students that find yourself having difficulty connecting with or you don’t know much about

**When:** Before class; after class; at lunch; any time that you can find these two minutes for 10 consecutive days

**What** will you talk about? Ask open-ended questions to learn about the student. Do not ask about your class content but about the student. Work to learn more about the student’s story.

Take a strength-based approach, stay positive, and SMILE! Even if the student is slow to engage, stay persistent and stay on the 10-day course.
### My 5 Senses

Observe your surroundings and use your 5 senses to practice being in the here and now. If you really look, you may notice things that have gone unnoticed.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>![Eye]</td>
<td>![Ear]</td>
<td>![Nose]</td>
<td>![Tongue]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>![Hand]</td>
<td>![Foot]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>![Ear]</td>
<td>![Nose]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>![Hand]</td>
<td>![Foot]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>![Eye]</td>
<td>![Ear]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The practice of **paying attention on purpose** in the present moment **without judgment**.

-Jon Kabat-Zinn

- Being aware of our senses is an important element of mindfulness.
Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Supporting the WHOLE child
Examples of tiered Interventions for SEL

For all students

Develop a trauma-sensitive school environment
Develop a positive school climate
Positive Behavior Intervention Supports
Social & Emotional Learning curriculum
Social & Emotional Learning special rotation
Universal screening
Examples of tiered Interventions for SEL

For some students
- Analyze root causes of behavior
- Provide small-group support on specific skill for students in need
- Use restorative interventions
- Peace Walk
- Provide structured interventions for students
- Mentor/Mentee program

For a few students
- Create individualized behavioral support plans
- Provide referrals for outside community mental health partners
- One on one skill development
- Work with Systems of Care for wrap-around services
MTSS is FLEXIBLE, FLUID, and RESPONSIVE to the student’s progress

Core + Supplemental + Intensive Individual Instruction

Effective if there is progress towards benchmark and/or progress monitoring goals.
1. Where is the student performing now?
2. Where do we want him to be?
3. How long do we have to get him there?
4. What supports has he received?
5. What resources will move him at that rate?
Contacts:

Christy Berger  CBerger@doe.in.gov
Christy Gauss  Jcgauss@indiana.edu
Dr. Brandie Oliver  Bmoliver@butler.edu