CREATING TRAUMA SENSITIVE CLASSROOMS

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ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

• Adverse Childhood Experiences [ACEs], are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). May include experiences such as violence, abuse, or neglect; witnessing violence in the home; and having a family member attempt or die by suicide. Also included are aspects of the child’s environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding such as growing up in a household with substance misuse, mental health problems, or instability due to parental separation or incarceration of a parent, sibling, or other member of the household.

• Adverse Childhood Experiences have been linked to
  o Risky health behaviors
  o Chronic health conditions
  o Low life potential
  o Early death
Sources of trauma:

- School violence
- Bullying/Cyberbullying
- Accident
- Natural Disaster
- Community violence
- Fires
- Homelessness
- Serious illness
- Combat injury of a loved one
- Abuse
- Crime
- Neglect
- Loss of a loved one
- Violence within the family
- Living in or escaping from a war zone
- Economic stress/poverty
- Act of terrorism
- Injury
THE STATUS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

• Many teachers are working in toxic situations leading to feelings of depression and anxiety which often leads to high turnover rates.

• How did we get here?
  • Mental health issues?
  • Zero tolerance policies?
  • High-stakes testing?
  • Budget cuts? Overcrowded classrooms?
  • Teacher quality … are they prepared to handle our vulnerable students?
Lots of kids come to school with invisible backpacks weighted with struggles. Stress, worry, fear, anxiety, trauma, unmet physical needs, loneliness, anger, sadness, and hopelessness can make them so heavy; too heavy for learning to happen. Notice and love them instead.

— Bethany Hill
PRINCIPAL
Figure 2. Maslow's schema refigured to include justice as a basic human need.
* American public schools expelled over 111,000 students
* Retention, expulsion and suspensions have all been associated with negative outcomes

If these interventions were effective, we wouldn’t be losing teachers at the current rate

https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/indicator_RDA.asp
Most educators have received very minimal training on how to recognize and/or handle students with socio-emotional, and behavioral challenges.
WHY TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE?

- Attention to childhood trauma and the need for trauma informed care has contributed to emerging discourse in schools related to:
  - Teacher Quality - teaching practices
  - Climate Issues - schoolwide or classroom
  - Trauma-related in-service and pre-service teacher preparation
TRAUMA SENSITIVE CLASSROOMS

- Bruce Perry - the Brain of the child will become exactly what the child is exposed to.
- Teachers must be able to recognize even the most subtle warning signals in order to help students deal with trauma
- Trauma informed instruction is vital to success in the 21st century classroom
FOCUS OF MY RESEARCH

- To examine developmental effects of trauma and ramifications on the school/classroom [peers, teachers and other professionals]
- Examine classroom/school-based interventions and their effectiveness with students with adverse childhood experiences
- Examine specific organizational supports and self-care actions/strategies to support teachers working with students who have had adverse childhood experiences