Creating Trauma-Informed Schools: Relevance for English Language Learners

LaTESOL 2018 Conference
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Tulane University
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Presentation Objectives

- Provide some context for the trauma-informed schools “movement”.
- Present rationale for trauma-informed schools, with a focus on ELL students.
- Describe our approach to the work in New Orleans.
What is a Trauma-Informed School?

**Realizes**
Prevalence & Impact of Trauma

**Recognizes**
Signs of Trauma
Need for Learning Supports

**Responds to avoid Re-traumatization**
By integrating principles of trauma-informed care into classroom practices and responding to own needs for self-care

Why Trauma-Informed Schools?

“Over the past decade, neuroscientists have determined how severe and chronic stress in childhood leads to physiological and neurological adaptations in children that affect the way their minds and bodies develop and the way they function in school.”

-- Paul Tough (2016)
The Trauma-Informed Schools Movement

Every Student SUCCEEDS ACT

Trauma & Learning
Impact of Trauma-Informed Schools


Realizes
Prevalence & Impact of Trauma

Recognizes
Signs of Trauma
Need for Learning Supports

Responds to avoid Re-traumatization
By integrating principles of trauma-informed care into classroom practices and responding to own needs for self-care
Trauma

Individual trauma is an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.
Resilience

Resilience refers to an individual’s ability to cope with adversity and adapt to challenges or change. Resilience develops over time and gives an individual the capacity not only to cope with life’s challenges but also to be better prepared for the next stressful situation.
# Prevalence of Trauma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABUSE</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Abuse</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEGLECT</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Neglect</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Neglect</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss of contact with a parent due to separation or divorce</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Mental Illness</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Treated Violently</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarcerated Household Member</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of 17,000 ACE study participants:

- 0 ACEs: 16%
- 1+ ACEs: 64%

64% have at least 1 ACE
# Prevalence of Trauma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban ACE Indicators</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Witnessed Violence</strong></td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How often, if ever did you see or hear someone being beaten up, stabbed, or shot in real life?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Felt Discrimination (Racism)</strong></td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• While you were growing up how often did you feel that you were treated badly or unfairly because of your race or ethnicity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unsafe Neighborhood</strong></td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Did you feel unsafe in your neighborhood? Did the people in your neighborhood look out for each other, stand up for each other and could be trusted?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experienced Bullying</strong></td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How often were you bullied by a peer or classmate?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lived in Foster Care</strong></td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Were you ever in foster care?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Prevalence of Trauma among NOLA Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Percentage (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forced Sexual Activity</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food/Housing Worries</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witnessed Homicide</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry Not Being Loved</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witnessed Assault</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence Worries</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affected by Homicide</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

55% report 3 or more types of exposure

N = 1221 youth participating in IWES’ Believe in Youth! NOLA! program in NOLA schools, community-based organizations, and faith-based organizations.
Prevalence of Trauma among Immigrant Youth

Pre-Migration
- Gang violence
- Abandonment
- Family member murdered
- Abuse by law enforcement

Migration: Transit
- Deprivation
- Accidental injuries
- Sexual or physical abuse
- Family separation

Migration: Settlement
- Detention
- Family separation
- Fear of deportation

Post-migration
- Poverty
- Negative context of reception
- Discrimination
- Fear of deportation
- Language learning & brokering
Rationale for a Trauma-Informed School

**Realizes**
Prevalence & Impact of Trauma

**Recognizes**
Signs of Trauma
Need for Learning Supports

**Responds** to avoid Re-traumatization
By integrating principles of trauma-informed care into classroom practices and responding to own needs for self-care
Neurobiological Impacts of Trauma Exposure
Acute Stress Response

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze
Acute Stress Response

Hippocampus
Regulates memory and emotions.

Prefrontal Cortex
Thinking/logic/what to do/evaluation.

Amygdala
Turns on fight or flight, and stores memories of the event.

Survival Brain
Acute Stress Response

Survival Brain

Thinking Brain

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Thinking/logic/what to do/evaluation.

Hippocampus
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Turns on fight or flight, and stores memories of the event.

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Impacts of Chronic Trauma
Impacts of Chronic Trauma

- **Prefrontal Cortex**: Thinking/logic/what to do/evaluation.
- **Hippocampus**: Regulates memory and emotions.
- **Amygdala**: Turns on fight or flight, and stores memories of the event.

**Thinking Brain**

**Survival Brain**
Biological Adaptations to Chronic Trauma: Hypervigilance

“A highly sensitive stress-response system constantly on the lookout for threats can produce patterns of behavior that are self-defeating in school: fighting, talking back, acting up, and, more subtly, going through each day perpetually wary of connection with peers or teachers.”

-- Paul Tough, 2016
Hypervigilance in the Classroom

• **Difficulty managing emotions**
  • Unpredictable emotional reactions.
  • Easily frustrated, overwhelmed.
  • Difficulty calming themselves.

• **Dissociation**
  • Spacing out, daydreaming.
  • Not paying attention.

• **Difficulty managing behaviors**
  • Lack impulse control.
  • Easily “set off.”

• **Problems with cognition**
  • Difficulty problem solving.
  • Trouble thinking through consequences.
  • Learning & memory problems.
## Hypervigilance in the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognition</th>
<th>Learning and memory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizing narrative material sequentially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehension</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language and Communication</th>
<th>Social/emotional communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taking other’s perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning and retrieving new verbal information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executive Functioning</th>
<th>Anticipating consequences, cause/effect relationships</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goal setting (act vs. plan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impulse Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Biological Adaptations to Chronic Trauma: Trauma Triggers

Possible Triggers

- Yelling or Fighting
- Isolation
- Physical Touch
- Loud Noises
- Unexpected Changes
- Shame and Failure
- Time of Year (anniversaries)
# Trauma Triggers in the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fight</th>
<th>Flight</th>
<th>Freeze</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Acting out</td>
<td>• Withdrawing</td>
<td>• Zoning out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being aggressive</td>
<td>• Fleeing the classroom</td>
<td>• Refusing to answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exhibiting defiance</td>
<td>• Seeming to sleep</td>
<td>• Staring blankly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being hyperactive</td>
<td>• Avoiding others</td>
<td>• Freezing in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Arguing</td>
<td>• Hiding or wandering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Screaming/yelling</td>
<td>• Becoming disengaged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Long-term Outcomes of Chronic Trauma

“...kids with three or more adverse childhood experiences had 3x the rate of academic failure, 5x the rate of severe attendance problems, 6x the rate of school behavior problems, and 4x the rate of poor health compared with children with no known trauma.”

Percent of Students with One or More Academic Concerns by ACE Exposure

- 34% No Known Events
- 54% 1 Event
- 71% 2 Events
- 80% 3+ Events

Stevens (2012)
How can schools...

*Respond* to avoid *Re-traumatization*
Frameworks for Trauma-Informed Schools

SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach

Prepared by SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative
July 2014
NOLA FOR LIFE
Mayor’s Office—Police Department—Health Department

Chris Gunther, Project Director & Site Coordinator
National Forum for Youth Violence Prevention

School Partners

- Prep for College
- Crocker College Prep
- SUCCESS Preparatory Academy
- G.W. Carver Collegiate Academy
- KIPP: Believe Primary
- The New Orleans Charter Science & Mathematics High School

Collaborative Faculty

- Children’s Bureau of New Orleans
- Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies
- LPHI Louisiana Public Health Institute
- Metropolitan Human Services District
- Project Fleur-de-lis
- Tulane University

Nat’l Consultants

- Risking Connection®
### Stacy Overstreet & Courtney Baker, Principal Investigators
Kathleen Whalen, Project Director

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<th>School Partners</th>
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<th>Nat’l Consultants</th>
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<tr>
<td>Samuel J. Green Charter School</td>
<td>Tulane University</td>
<td>Pamela Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Ashe Charter School</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trauma Sensitive Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillis Wheatley Community School</td>
<td></td>
<td>Al Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firstline at Live Oak</td>
<td></td>
<td>VCU Clark-Hill Institute for Positive Youth Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schaumburg Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sarah Owens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SciTech Academy</td>
<td></td>
<td>University of Missouri</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Key Principles of Trauma Informed Schools

- Safety
- Transparency & Trustworthiness
- Collaboration and Mutuality
- Empowerment, Voice, & Choice
- Peer Support
- Cultural Humility

SAMHSA (2014)
Questions or comments?
Thanks to Partners & Collaborators

- Children’s Bureau of New Orleans: Paulette Carter
- Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies: Denese Shervington & Lisa Richardson
- Louisiana Public Health Institute: Taslim van Hattum, Kristie Bardell, Caitlin Canfield
- Project Fleur-de-lis: Laura Danna
- Strategies for Youth Development: Kathleen Whalen
- New Orleans Health Department
- Metropolitan Human Services District
- G.W. Carver Collegiate Academy
- KIPP Believe Primary Academy
- Lawrence D. Crocker College Prep
- New Orleans Charter Science & Mathematics High School
- Success Preparatory Academy
- FirstLine Charter Management Organization
- ReNEW Charter Management Organization