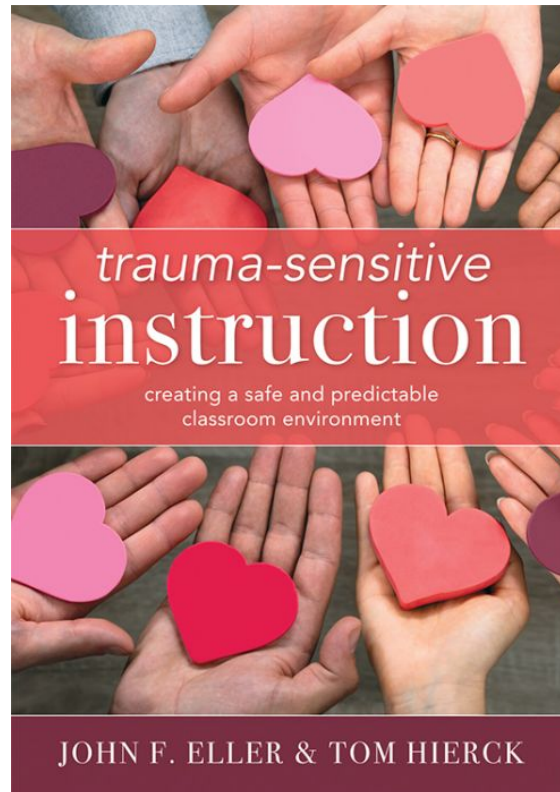


Implementing Trauma-informed Practices to Build  
Stability and Staff/Student Resilience  
September 28, 2021



Presented by:  
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## Opening, Introductions, Session Overview

Childhood trauma can set the tone for difficulties in school. Kathleen Fitzgerald Rice and Betsy McAlister Groves (2005) offer the following definition of trauma. “Trauma is an exceptional experience in which powerful and dangerous events overwhelm a person’s capacity to cope” (p. 3). The preceding definition contains key descriptors that communicate the impact of trauma, including exceptional, powerful, dangerous, and overwhelm. All these terms taken together convey the sense that some of our students’ experiences are well outside the boundaries of normal.

### Self-reflection activity

In order to set the stage for your learning, please complete the following self-reflection:

- What do you know or what have you heard related to trauma-sensitive schools/districts?

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- What do you want to know or hope to learn related to trauma-sensitive schools/districts?

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## The Original ACES Study

In the late 1990s, scientists began to examine the effects of childhood trauma on adult health. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Department of Preventative Medicine in San Diego conducted a collaborative research study (CDC, 2020a) that examined approximately 17,000 subjects identified as middle class adults. Participants received a survey, which included a list of ten traumatic events. They were asked to rate which events they experienced before age eighteen. These traumatic events were called *adverse childhood experiences* (ACEs).

Background and findings

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New or current traumatic experiences potentially faced by our students

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Implications related to our own trauma experiences

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Implications for our teachers

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Implications for our students

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## The Original ACEs Questionnaire

<b>Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Questionnaire</b> Please review the following questions. Respond <i>yes</i> if this situation happened to you during your childhood (up to age eighteen) or <i>no</i> if it did not.
<p><b>1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often . . .</b>                      Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you?                      Or                      Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?                      NO ____ YES ____</p>
<p><b>2. Did a parent or another adult in the household often . . .</b>                      Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?                      Or                      Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?                      NO ____ YES ____</p>
<p><b>3. Did an adult or a person at least five years older than you ever . . .</b>                      Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?                      Or                      Try to or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal sex with you?                      NO ____ YES ____</p>
<p><b>4. Did you often feel that . . .</b>                      No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?                      Or                      Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?                      NO ____ YES ____</p>
<p><b>5. Did you often feel that . . .</b>                      You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you?                      Or                      Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?                      NO ____ YES ____</p>
<p><b>6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced?</b>                      NO ____ YES ____</p>

<p><b>7. Was your mother or stepmother . . .</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Sometimes often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Or</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Every repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NO ____ YES ____</p>
<p><b>8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or used street drugs?</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">NO ____ YES ____</p>
<p><b>9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">NO ____ YES ____</p>
<p><b>10. Did a household member go to prison?</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">NO ____ YES ____</p>
<p><b>Your ACEs Score</b></p> <p>For all of the yes responses, score each one as a +1. Total up all of your + 1 scores. That number is your ACEs score.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TOTAL YES RESPONSES: ____</p>

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020a.*

**Figure 1.1: Adverse childhood experience (ACE) questionnaire.**

## The Importance of Attitude and Mindset in Working with Trauma

Focus on these key areas as we begin:

- The power and importance of attitude and mindset when working with trauma-impacted staff and students
- How to change traditional responses to behavior
- Strategies to stay calm and focused when dealing with emotional outbursts

After participating in the session on Mindset, please reflect on the following:

- What did you learn about the power of mindset?

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- How can you use what you learned to positively impact your work place?

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## Student DNA

In building strong relationships with students, we need to identify what is good about them and what makes them special. In order to assist with this identification, teachers can engage in the DNA activity. DNA stands for: Dreams, Needs, & Abilities.

In the DNA Activity, teachers identify the following:

The **Dreams** of the child:

The **Needs** of the child:

The **Abilities** of the child:

They then use this information to **Build on Gifts or Assets**

Consider how the DNA activity could be used in the scenario with Mr. Garcia in his work with trauma-impacted students.

*Mr. Garcia, a fifth-grade teacher, has three to four students in his classroom whom he suspects are living in traumatic conditions. These students regularly come to school in dirty clothes and smelling like smoke. They keep to themselves and don't seem to be making a lot of friends in the classroom. Rather than judging them and writing them off as unimportant, poor performers, or troubled, Mr. Garcia decides to reach out and build relationships with them.*

How could Mr. Garcia use the DNA Process to identify the assets these student bring rather than focusing on the negative aspects about them?

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## Application of DNA to your teaching

Select one student you have worked with recently. Using the space below, identify their DNA:

- Dreams

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- Needs

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- Abilities

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Now that you've identified this student's DNA, how can you use this information to build a better relationship?

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How could you use the DNA process with other students?

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## Temporary Suspension of Opinion

Temporary suspension of opinion allows us as teachers to suspend our comments and actions while we seek to understand the student or students we are talking with at the time. Temporary suspension of opinion is a great skill because it reduces the potential that the student is going to think that we are judgmental and truly interested in understanding them.

In our experiences, teacher typically progress through three levels as they practice suspension of opinion.

1. Listening Level- Practicing temporary suspension of opinion lets us be better, more focused listeners.
2. Diagnostic level- Once we are better able to listen, we can use the information we gather to design possible interventions for the conversation or student. For example, as we listen, we may decide that it's better for us to continue to listen and try to understand the situation rather than try to step-in and do something.
3. Emotional level- At this highest level of temporary suspension of opinion, we can recognize that we may be being manipulated or "drawn into" a situation. We can keep ourselves from getting taken emotional hostage or react to a situation.

### 3 Levels of Temporary Suspension of Opinion

#### 1. Listening Level

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#### 2. Diagnostic Level

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#### 3. Emotional Level

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## ***Paraphrasing/Reflecting***

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**Paraphrasing statements** help you to summarize the conversation or major points discussed in a conversation to let the student know they are being heard. Paraphrasing statements allow you to rephrase what the other person told you and help summarize their thoughts and perspectives. Here are some examples of paraphrasing statements:

<b>Paraphrasing Statements</b>
"I feel you are saying that you don't understand."
"It seems to me that you are confused."
"I hear you saying that you have three issues with my comments."
"You appear to me to be angry."
"I hear you saying you want . . ."

**Reflecting statements** are like paraphrasing statements but more direct and clear. Many teachers feel they are more effective than paraphrasing statements because they may better respond to student emotions. Below are several types of reflecting statements. They fit into 3 major areas of themes.

**Content:** Returning what the sender told you in a slightly different form than it was said to you.

- "You shared the three main . . ."
- "Your major concerns are . . ."
- "You said . . ."

**Emotion:** Reflecting back the emotion you perceive the sender is feeling.

- "This is very upsetting to you . . ."
- "You are feeling stress . . ."
- "You are frustrated by . . ."

**Inferential:** Providing the other person a stream of content you've received and combined together to assist the sender in seeing the whole picture.

- "Your three major points are . . ."
- "The first idea you shared was . . . The second . . ."
- "In general you have . . ."

Adapted from Eller J., and Carlson, H., (2009)

## Identifying Potential Learning Problem Areas

### Physical Space Assessment

- List the suspected trauma areas that may be impacting your students.
- List the processes or procedures in the learning environment that seem to trigger undesirable behaviors.
- What evidence do you have that makes you think these processes or procedures are triggering problems?
- Discuss changes in the processes or procedures that you think would help make your learning environment more trauma sensitive.
- What is your timeline for making these changes? What resources will you need in order to make these changes?

## Parent and Family Engagement

In this session, we'll focus on building relationships with, and engaging parents and families of, trauma-impacted students. Be prepared to focus on the following:

- The importance of building relationships with parents and families of students in trauma
- The differences between parent and family involvement and parent and family engagement
- How to build positive, nonjudgment relationships with parents and families
- Various factors that affect parent and family engagement in school, such as educational and cultural backgrounds
- Strategies for increasing parent and family engagement

Students with engaged parents are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades or test scores (American Psychological Association, 2014a)
- Graduate from high school and attend post-secondary education (Grand Rapids Public School District, 2020)
- Develop self-confidence and motivation in the classroom (Wairimu, Macharia, & Muiru, 2016)
- Possess better social skills and exhibit improved classroom behavior (Waterford.org, 2018)

They are also less likely to:

- Have low self-esteem (Waterford.org, 2018)
- Need redirection in the classroom (Sheldon & Jung, 2015)
- Develop behavioral issues (Waterford.org, 2018)

Figure 6.1-Insert if appropriate

Figure 6.2

B. Hudnall Stamm and Matthew Friedman (2000) suggest that “there is substantial diversity in the way societies view and treat survivors of adversity.” The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2017a) identifies six steps for educators to consider as they deal with race and trauma.

1. Learn about the impacts of history and systemic racism.
2. Create and support safe and brave environments.
3. Model and support honesty and authenticity.
4. Honor the impacts of history and systemic racism.
5. Encourage and empower students as leaders.
6. Care for yourself.

## Planning for Productive Parent Relationships

Use this template to plan and implement ideas to develop better relationships with a family or families in your classroom.

1. What kind of relationship(s) do you currently have with the parent(s) of your student(s)?

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2. What kind of relationship do you want to have with the parent(s) of your students or student?

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3. What kind of relationship do you think the parent(s) of your student/students want to have with you?

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4. What are some ways you might be able to meet their needs & develop a productive relationship?

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5. How can you avoid judging the parents?

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6. How might you assess the relationship in order to build an even better one?

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## School-Based, Trauma-Informed Care

<b>DOES:</b>	<b>DOES NOT:</b>
Require all staff to be trained to understand trauma, symptoms, and its impact.	Require or encourage staff to dig deeply into the causes or sources of stress and trauma.
Recognize the importance of staff' ability to develop their own social and emotional competencies. A trauma-informed school will encourage and support staff as they become aware of their own biases that may interfere with developing healthy, supportive relationships with students. Staff must consistently practice and model self-regulation.	Assume that adult behavior and mindset have little or no impact on student development and behavior.
Emphasize the development of students' resiliency through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Supportive adult relationships</li> <li>o Self-efficacy and perceived control</li> <li>o Adaptive skills and the ability to self-regulate</li> <li>o Sense of self-value and feeling they have something to offer others.</li> </ul>	Equate student achievement and success with proficiency in every characteristic of resiliency or social emotional competency. Students will have these in varying degrees and that's okay (Fixed versus Growth mindsets).
Understand that every behavior has an underlying meaning.	Require a "problem" to exist before students have access to trauma-informed services.
Prioritize the development of social and emotional competencies that foster resilience.	Insist or imply a student with signs of stress or trauma will "get over it." Honor and validate the student's experience.
Promote and foster school-wide connectedness and the development of supportive adult relationships.	Encourage a "just don't do it" approach to discipline.
Create safety through routines, structure, predictability, and equity.	Forgo opportunities for consistency even when faced with conflict, change, or stress.
Utilize restorative disciplinary practices that keep a student in school and work to rebuild damaged relationships and understand the motivation of the behavior.	Punish most behaviors by excluding a student from class, school, or extracurriculars.

## Closing/Summary

In conclusion, we would like to offer these five reminders as you continue to work and grow as trauma-sensitive educators.

1. **Work together:** A strong, committed team will overcome challenges a talented group of individuals never can. A team, built on collaboration, becomes an unstoppable force. “As part of the collaborative team, you’re either getting better at your job or helping someone else get better” (Williams & Hierck, 2015, p. 53).
2. **Keep a routine:** Research has consistently shown that routines can play an important role in mental health (Arlinghaus & Johnston, 2018). We’ve heard from many colleagues that during the pandemic, routines have helped keep them grounded and reduced the mental load brought on by needing to make too many decisions.
3. **Keep talking:** An extension of number 1 is to make sure you have a buddy system on staff. Having regular check-ins with colleagues (and committing to checking in regularly) gives you another person to lean on and share the load with. Being part of a trauma-sensitive school means having an open environment where everyone is willing to help everyone, and where educators know that they can talk to other colleagues throughout the school.
4. **Remember the students:** As difficult and challenging as the pandemic has been, always remember your calling. You have been asked to do so much during this time and have shone admirably. Use the tools in this book as touchstones to reconnect to the reason you became an educator in the first place—to make a difference.
5. **Put on your own mask first:** Self-care can’t be at the bottom of your to-do list. There’s a reason why flight attendants advise you to put on your own oxygen mask first. It’s okay to think of self-care as health care and ensure you are healthy and able to take on the role. Equally important—if your own mental wellness is flagging, seek help from a professional. It’s not a sign of weakness and will go a long way to ensuring you can be strong in the face of these unprecedented times.

## Planning the Next Steps in your Trauma-informed Journey

In this professional development session, you learned several ideas and strategies that you can implement to help your teaching become more “trauma-informed.” Please take a few minutes to reflect on the following:

1. What practices or processes from the session do you want to integrate into your role?

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2. What current practices or processes do you want to stop doing?

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3. What current practices or ideas do you want to continue doing?

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4. What benefits or positive results do you think you’ll see as a result of your implementation of trauma-sensitive approach?

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5. What difficulties or potential problems might you encounter as you move forward on your implementation of trauma-sensitive approach?

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