

Supplemental Material

Monique Williams, MA

Consulting & Training

Beginnings Family Enrichment

www.beginningsfamilyenrichment.com



Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools: Key Implications for School Administrators

Developed for the
Virginia Department of
Education

Agenda

What is Trauma?

- Define Trauma
 - **Activity:** Children who experience Trauma, National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
 - Video: Children, Violence, and Trauma: Intervention in Schools, **Office of Victims of Crime**

Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships

- Toxic Stress
 - Video: *Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development*, Harvard University
 - **Insight:** Trigger Responses & the Brain
- Brain Development
 - **Insight:** Arousal Relaxation Theory
 - **Insight:** The Competent Giant
- Observations in Preschool, Elementary, Middle, and High School Students

Resiliency & Role of Schools in Responding to Trauma

- The 4's: Key Assumptions in a Trauma-Informed Response
- Fundamental Principles of Trauma Sensitive Schools

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Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

- Fundamental Principles of Trauma Sensitive Schools
 - **Activity:** Examining Student Profiles & School-based Responses
- Trauma-Sensitive Schools in the US
 - Video: *Paper Tigers*
- Establishing a Steering Committee
- Developing an Action Plan
 - *Helping Traumatized Children Learn Flexible Framework*
 - Integrative Practices & Strategies

Self-Care

Wrap-up & Questions

Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

Ricky, a three-year-old boy, cries inconsolably when his mother drops him off at school in the morning. His teachers thought his crying would stop when he became more comfortable in the classroom; however, he continues to cry every day and does not interact with his teachers or play with his peers. Ricky also has a speech delay and gets very upset when the other students are loud or when his daily routine is interrupted. One day the teacher asked Ricky to talk about his drawing, and he said, “Daddy hurt mommy.” Ricky’s mother was later observed to have a black eye and bruises that were consistent with assault.

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Alexa, a four-year-old girl, has been kicked out of two other preschools and is about to be expelled from her current school. She curses at teachers, hits, kicks, and scratches other students, and bangs her head on the table when she is frustrated. Alexa's behaviors are most difficult when transitioning from one activity to another. When the teacher meets with Alexa's father, the father reports that Alexa's mother uses drugs, that Alexa has seen her mother arrested by the police, and that Alexa's mother often does not come home at night.

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Amy is a third grader and has always been a model student. Today, her teacher brought her to the school nurse, complaining that she was not paying attention or completing her work. Quiet and withdrawn in the nurse's office, Amy eventually said, "May I tell you something?" She then proceeded to talk about seeing her cat hit and killed by a car. She was both sad and frightened, couldn't make sense out of what had happened, and was having nightmares.

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John is constantly in trouble at school, and appears to have significant problems grasping fourth grade material. His mother describes the violence that is pervasive in both their home and neighborhood. She reports that John has witnessed his father repeatedly beating her, and has been a victim himself of his father's rages. During first grade he was placed in foster care. John has also seen gun violence in his neighborhood.

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Trent is constantly getting into fights at school and appears to have significant problems understanding and completing his work. Trent was removed from his home in third grade and placed with his paternal grandmother. When contacted by the teacher about his problems in school, his grandmother explains that prior to coming to live with her, Trent lived in a community ridden with gang violence. His father was part of a gang and Trent used to see gun battles among gang members in his neighborhood. The grandmother also admits that Trent's father was very aggressive and may have physically abused Trent when he was younger.

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Nicole's teacher noticed that the tenth grader, who had previously been a very outgoing and popular student, suddenly appeared quiet, withdrawn, and "spaced out" during class. When the teacher approached her after class, Nicole reluctantly admitted that she had been forced to have sex on a date the previous week.

She was very embarrassed about the experience and had not told anyone because she felt guilty and was afraid of what would happen.

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Daniel has become increasingly aggressive and confrontational in school. He talks throughout class time and has difficulty staying “on task.” When approached by the teacher, his mother describes the constant neighborhood violence that Daniel is exposed to. He has witnessed a gun battle among gang members in the neighborhood and his mother suspects that he is in a gang. She is worried that he may be using drugs and alcohol. The mother also admits that during fifth grade, Daniel was placed in foster care due to physical abuse by his father and constant domestic violence in the home.

Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

Action Plan: Flexible Framework

1. **Leadership by school and district administrators to create** the infrastructure and culture to promote trauma-sensitive school environments
2. **Professional development and skill building for all school** staff, including leaders, in areas that enhance the school's capacity to create supportive school environments
3. **Access to resources and services, such as mental health** and other resources, that help students participate fully in the school community and help adults create a whole-school environment that engages all students
4. **Academic and nonacademic strategies that enable all** children to learn
5. **Policies, procedures, and protocols that sustain the** critical elements of a trauma-sensitive school
6. **Collaboration with families that actively engages them** in all aspects of their children's education, helps them feel welcome at school, and understands the important roles they play

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Action Plan: Flexible Framework

1. **Leadership:** What role does school and/or district leadership play in implementation?
2. **Professional Development:** What professional development is necessary for implementation?
3. **Access to Resources & Services:** What resources, supports, or services need to be in place for students, families, and/or staff?
4. **Academic & Nonacademic Strategies:** What classroom strategies—both academic and nonacademic—support implementation?
5. **Policies & Procedures:** What policies, procedures, or protocols do we need to review, revise, and/or develop?
6. **Collaboration with Families:** What do we need to do to ensure that families are active partners in helping with implementation?