

Strategies to Create a Trauma-Informed School

Key Areas	What does this look like in a trauma-informed school?	Strategies	Comments/Ideas
			For Teachers & Instructional Aides
Academics	<p>Classroom instruction is differentiated to allow students impacted by trauma to achieve academically consistent with their age and grade level.</p> <p>Additional support is provided for students who are not successful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance expectations for students with flexibility. • Address skill deficits with interventions. • Provide instruction using a variety of methods. Present and process information in a variety of ways. • Use varied cueing methods to allow students to learn and recall material more easily. • Provide students with choices in instructional activities. • Provide frequent opportunities for students to demonstrate success. • Provide and repeat instructions in short, clear sequences. 	
			For Teachers
Assessment & Screening	<p>Assessment and screening is focused on understanding, teaching and supporting students' behavior, both proactively and reactively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a variety of academic assessment methods to allow students to demonstrate knowledge. • Implement screenings in a professional and safe manner. • Create parameters and procedures for implementing screenings and sharing information. • Formally evaluate students who continue to struggle, despite interventions. Utilize IEP and 504 teams, as indicated. • With parent consent, refer students to community-based organizations when students' needs are beyond what the school can meet. 	

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Behavioral Supports	<p>Behavior is taught and supported to ensure students impacted by trauma are not triggered by situations or consequences that are perceived as aversive.</p> <p>Positive behavioral supports are provided to students in ways that nurture relationships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on students' strengths and interests to teach better behavior. • Create opportunities for students to make choices during the school day. • Establish and maintain predictable routines and transitions in the classroom and school. • Display and review schedules consistently. • Foreshadow changes, including new people and places, so students can predict what will happen next. • Establish and maintain consistent expectations for students. • Teach the reasoning behind the expectations and rules. • Remove stimuli in the environment that lead to inappropriate behavior. • Help students to understand how their behavior affects other people. • Utilize natural consequences that are logically related to the misbehavior. • Balance accountability with an understanding of behavior prompted by trauma. • Anticipate challenging times for students and provide additional support. For instance, create supplemental plans for new experiences (e.g., field trip) • Learn student triggers and how to avoid them. Recognize verbal and nonverbal early warning signs of students. • Minimize triggers for students when setting limits. • Avoid engaging in a power struggle with students when they act out. • Address behavior issues as learning opportunities and teachable moments. 	

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<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; transform: rotate(-90deg); transform-origin: center;">Behavioral Supports</div>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize “Time In” rather than “Time Out”. • Provide positive supports for students who act out. Avoid use of exclusionary discipline (e.g., detention, suspension, expulsion). • Create behavioral plans that 1) are based upon an understanding of the meaning and function of a student’s behavior and 2) clearly articulate accommodations, behavioral supports and other services, and actions to take (and not take) if a trauma reaction is triggered. 	
			For Teachers
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; transform: rotate(-90deg); transform-origin: center;">Cognitive Skills</div>	<p>Cognitive skills are taught so students impacted by trauma are able to think about (rather than emotionally respond to) triggers and challenging situations.</p> <p>Staff understand the impact of trauma on the uneven acquisition, retention and performance of cognitive skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach problem-solving skills, social skills, relaxation techniques, and emotional literacy. • Teach cause and effect relationships. • Emphasize sequences of events. • Prepare students to begin cognitive and academic tasks. See section on Emotional and Physiological Regulation. 	

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			For FEC and Counselors
<div data-bbox="113 516 237 837" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> Community Partnerships </div>	<p>Partnerships exist between the school and community services to ensure students impacted by trauma access needed supports.</p> <p>Services to students in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems are coordinated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop reciprocal partnerships with community partners. Value the roles and perspectives of all engaged to promote synergy vs. prescription. • Identify community service providers with strong backgrounds working with children and adolescents impacted by trauma. • Actively recruit community partners to participate in trainings and special events. • With parent consent, communicate with community partners to coordinate school and community plans for specific students. Utilize Coordinated Services Planning to bring all involved parties to the table for needs assessment, asset mapping, and strategic planning for both individual students and programs. • Develop common understandings between school and community partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shared language for student challenges - Focus on wellness rather than pathology - Collaborate asset mapping and needs assessment - Synergistic services that reduce duplication and facilitate compatibility - Value of diversity in problem-solving - Shared sense of ownership of needs and assets 	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear goals, assigned leadership, and a strategic plan designed to meet the needs of children and families to eliminate barriers to learning. 	
For School Administrators			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;">Crisis Prevention & Response</div>	<p>Staff are trained in and utilize skills to prevent and address crisis.</p> <p>Responses avoid creating further trauma for students. Staff understand their responsibility to interact with students in ways that reduce the likelihood of triggering a trauma response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a crisis plan that includes strategies to address behavioral incidents. A team meets regularly to review crisis responses and make adjustments, if necessary. • Plan ahead for how challenging behavior will be addressed. • See sections on Behavioral Supports and Emotional and Physiological Regulation for strategies to avoid triggering a trauma response by a student. 	
For School Administrators			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;">Educator Capacity</div>	<p>School staff receive training and support to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how trauma impacts students and their learning • Learn and apply classroom and school-wide practices that support student success • Understand how their own experiences and students' trauma impacts them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model emotional control for and respectful relationships with students. • Educate staff about how trauma impacts children and learning, including new staff at the beginning of each school year. • Educate staff about secondary trauma, including how to recognize and manage it. • Encourage staff to participate in self-care activities in their work and personal lives. • Sponsor staff wellness activities. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about self-care to address those needs 		
			For All
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> Emotional & Physiological Regulation </div>	<p>School staff model emotional regulation by interacting with adults and students in a respectful manner.</p> <p>Staff teach strategies to help students identify and name feelings, modulate responses, and behave in a manner appropriate to the classroom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coach students to identify triggers that set off their “fight or flight” response. Teach conflict management skills. Teach grounding and focusing skills, including movement, stretching, relaxation techniques and activities. Provide opportunities at scheduled times each day. Create a “calm box” with small items that students may choose to hold or keep close to help them feel more comfortable. Provide “calm zones” or safe places for students to seek out by choice to help regulate their emotions. Help students understand how to identify and process feelings (allow students to calm down before doing this). Use analogies to describe emotions and triggers. Use journals, art and poetry to allow students to express feelings. Prepare students before doing something that might cause a reaction (e.g., turning out the lights, making a loud noise). 	

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<div data-bbox="105 272 256 467" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Environment, Culture and Climate</div> <div data-bbox="105 526 256 786" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Environment, Culture & Climate</div>	<p>People in the school community share beliefs and priorities that recognize the prevalence and impact of trauma in students' lives and create a flexible framework to respond to student needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and provide a welcoming and physically and emotionally safe environment. • Train staff in culturally responsive practices. • Learn and value the cultural history of students and their families. • Learn and honor the historical trauma of students and their families. • Utilize equitable classroom practices. • Consider the sensory impact of the physical environment. Remove stimuli that may lead to inappropriate behavior. • Use and model non-violent communication. • Implement bullying prevention activities. Respond promptly and effectively to bullying incidents. 	
			For School Administrators
<div data-bbox="138 1185 214 1383" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Leadership</div>	<p>School leaders support a compassionate school structure and provide access to professional development for all staff on various subjects (i.e., trauma, adversity, brain research, self-care, community partnerships).</p> <p>Community partners are encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for all staff (including school administrators) to learn about how trauma can affect students and their ability to learn, as well as strategies to support those students' learning. • Build efforts to incorporate trauma-informed practices into the school improvement plan. • Model trauma-informed interactions with staff. • Provide program support for teachers to develop and refine specific strategies for students. • Assist teachers and families to develop shared relationships. 	

			For FEC and Counselors
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> Parent & Caregiver Involvement </div>	<p>Parents and caregivers are a respected and respectful part of the school community. The school respects the family dynamics, experiences, and culture and honors parents and caregivers as experts on their children.</p> <p>Parents and caregivers help create educational plans for their children and are an integral part of the decision-making process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to develop trauma-informed partnerships with the home by helping parents and caregivers become an integral part of the school community.. • Engage parents and caregivers through brochures, websites, email, phone calls, postcards, etc. throughout the school year. • Encourage families to take on leadership and outreach roles with other parents. • Respect the privacy and confidentiality of families with students who have been affected by trauma. • Build trusting relationships with families. Be friendly, reliable, consistently caring, and predictable. • Designate a pupil services professional or other staff member to be a liaison to families. • Include adult family members in the development of school plans for their children, including identifying behavior patterns, triggers and effective strategies. • Collaborate to repair broken caregiver and school relationships. 	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: auto;"> Policies </div>	<p>District and school policies and procedures reflect an understanding of trauma and adversity as it relates to student behavior and learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review policies and procedures with the <i>Review Tool for School Policies, Protocols, Procedures & Documents</i>. Modify any that include practices or protocols that are not trauma-informed. • Develop strategies other than suspension and expulsion to hold students responsible for their behavior. 	For School and DO Administrators

		<p>Consequences should be formative and logical, not punitive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to eliminate the need for exclusionary discipline and “Zero Tolerance” or “Three Strike” policies. • Educate the school board about how trauma impacts children and learning. Work with the school board to modify policies, as needed. 	
			For All
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; transform: rotate(-90deg); transform-origin: center;">Relationships</div>	<p>The connection between staff and students and families is recognized as an essential component for learning.</p> <p>Behavioral supports are provided in ways that nurture relationships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create safe, supportive and affirming relationships with students and families. • Become attuned to students by being an observer of their non-verbal cues. Consistently provide a caring and supportive response to cues. Be sensitive to changes in students and remain flexible. • Provide praise that is concrete and specific in a neutral tone. Acknowledge good decisions and choices but avoid general compliments (e.g., “You are a nice boy”). • Help students take responsibility for misbehavior in ways that will repair and maintain relationships. • Provide opportunities for and encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities related to their interests and strengths. • Build relationships with students that are not based upon academics. • Help students identify supports within the school. Help students understand that pupil services professionals are accessible and approachable. • Provide in-school mentors. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use daily check-in with students (e.g. Check-In, Check-Out). • Encourage friendships in each classroom, especially for students who are isolated or struggling. 	
			For Teachers, Instructional Aides and Counselors
Social-Emotional Learning	<p>Schools embed social and emotional skill building in all learning activities.</p> <p>Students impacted by trauma learn skills to manage their social and emotional challenges.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom instruction is provided to help students develop social-emotional skills, including stress and conflict management, problem-solving and decision-making. • Social-academic instruction groups (SAIGs) focused on social-emotional skills are provided to students who need additional time to learn these skills. 	