Supporting Through an Equitable Trauma-Informed Lens

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Mission

*The mission of the **Department of Education** is to ensure that every learner has access to a world-class education system that academically prepares children and adults to succeed as productive citizens. Further, the Department seeks to establish a culture that is committed to improving opportunities throughout the commonwealth by ensuring that technical support, resources, and optimal learning environments are available for all students, whether children or adults.*

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Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to:
  - Define trauma and trauma-informed approaches using PA school code
  - Identify Considerations for supporting students and staff using equitable, trauma-informed lens
  - Identify actions that staff can take to support students and other staff members

Acronyms Used During Training

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender & Questioning (LGBTQ)
- Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)
- School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System (SHAPE)
- Social-emotional learning (SEL)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

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Trauma Definition: Act 18 of 2019

1. Exposure to an event, series of events or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotional harmful or threatening.

2. Lasting adverse effects

3. Creates significant difficulty in cognitive functioning and physical, social, emotional, mental or spiritual well-being.

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What is a Trauma-Informed Approach?

1. Includes a school-wide approach to education and a classroom-based approach to student learning
2. Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma
3. Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, professional learning, procedures and practices
4. Purposes of recognizing the presence and onset of trauma, resisting the reoccurrence of trauma and promoting resiliency tailored to a school entity's culture, climate and demographics and the community as a whole.

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Types Of Trauma

- **Natural disasters:** Hurricanes, fires, floods, pandemic, tornados

- **Human-caused disasters**: Accidents, wars, environmental disasters, acts of terrorism

- **Community violence:** Robberies, shootings, assault, gang-related violence, hate crimes, group trauma affecting a particular community

- **School violence:** Threats, fights, school shootings, bullying, loss of a student or staff member

Guarino and Chagnon, 2018

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Types Of Trauma

- **Family trauma:** Abuse, neglect, experiencing or witnessing domestic violence, incarceration of family members, family substance abuse, family mental health needs, family medical needs, sudden or expected loss of a loved one

- **Refugee and Immigrant trauma:** Exposure to war, political violence, torture, forced displacement, migration and acculturation stressors, fears of deportation

- **Medical trauma:** Pain, injury and serious illness, invasive medical procedures or treatments

- **Poverty:** Lack of resources, support networks, or mobility, financial stressors; homelessness

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Types Of Trauma

Historical trauma: "The cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma" – Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart

Examples of historical trauma:

- American Indian and Alaska Native communities
- Communities of color
- Holocaust survivors
- Japanese-American survivors of internment camps
- LGBTQ communities

Guarino and Chagnon, 2018

Types Of Trauma

Racial trauma: Potentially traumatic experiences resulting from direct experiences of racial harassment, witnessing racial violence toward others, and experiencing discrimination and institutional racism

Guarino and Chagnon, 2018

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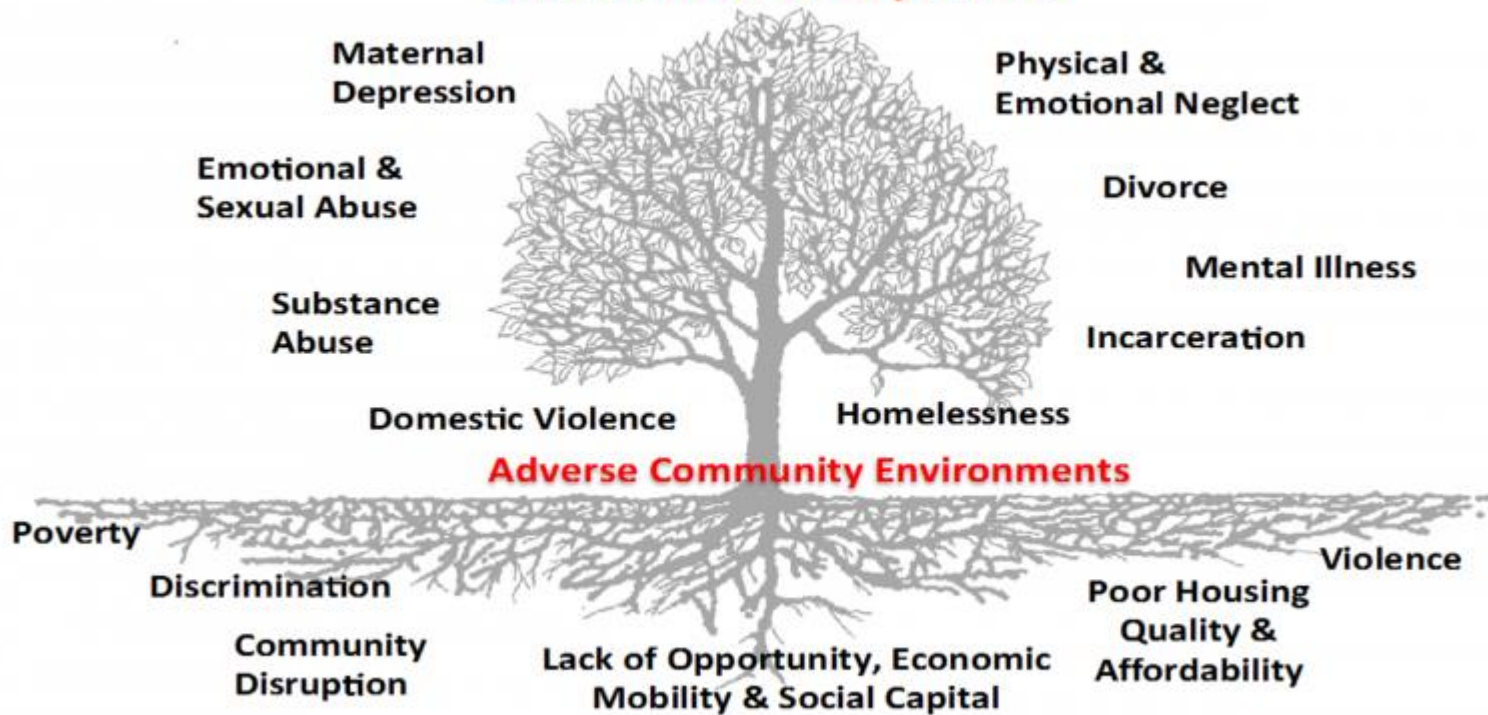DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Prevalence Of Childhood Trauma

Groups at increased risk of exposure to trauma:

- Youth of color ages 12 to 19

- African American youth living in urban, low-income communities

- American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and youth

- Children and youth with disabilities

- Refugees

- Children and youth who are homeless and living in poverty

- LGBTQ children and youth

Guarino and Chagnon, 2018

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The Pair of ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Maternal Depression

Physical & Emotional Neglect

Emotional & Sexual Abuse

Divorce

Mental Illness

Substance Abuse

Incarceration

Domestic Violence

Homelessness

Adverse Community Environments

Poverty

Violence

Discrimination

Poor Housing Quality & Affordability

Community Disruption

Lack of Opportunity, Economic Mobility & Social Capital

Ellis, W., Dietz, W. (2017) A New Framework for Addressing Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences: The Building Community Resilience (BCR) Model. Academic Pediatrics. 17 (2017) pp. S86-S93. DOI information: 10.1016/j.acap.2016.12.011

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Complex Trauma

The term **complex trauma** refers to exposure to multiple traumatic events from an early age, **and** the immediate and long-term effects of these experiences over development.

Guarino and Chagnon, 2018

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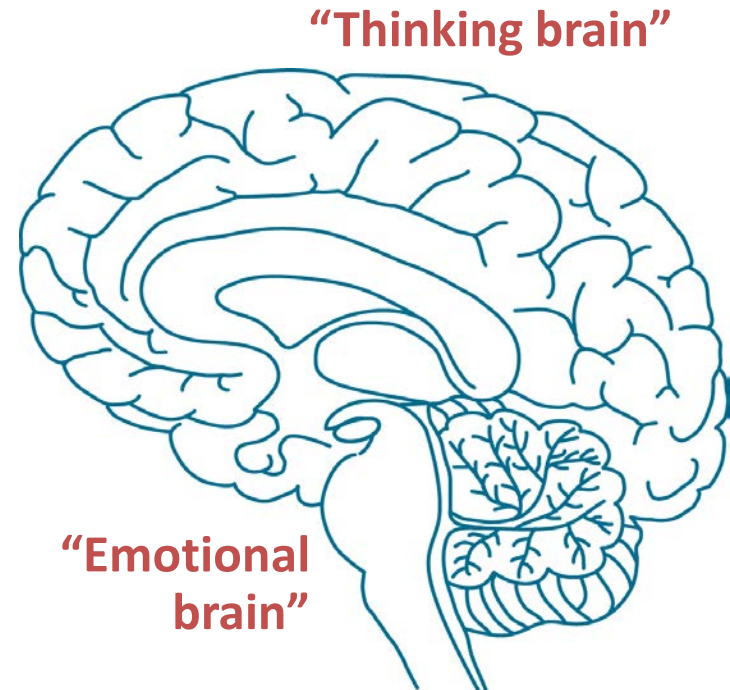DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Stress Response System

1. The amygdala senses threat and sets off the alarm.
2. Thinking brain assesses the situation.
3. Thinking brain goes off-line. Emotional brain activates fight or flight response.
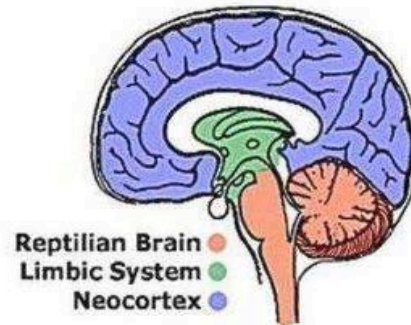4. Thinking brain helps shut off the alarm and helps us to calm down.

"Thinking brain"

"Emotional brain"

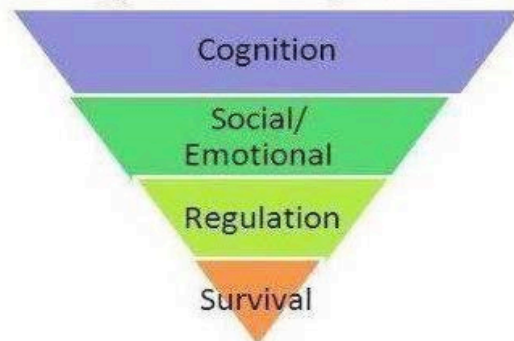pennsylvania
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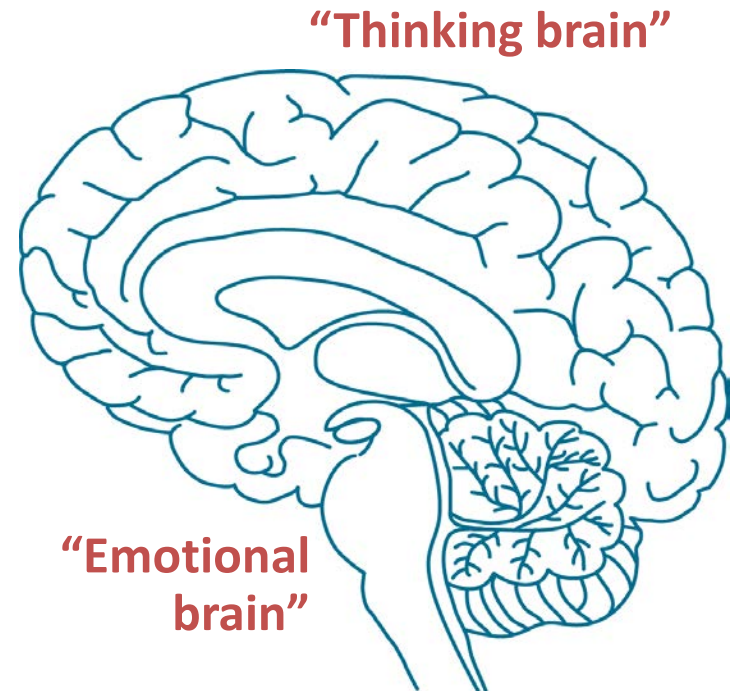
The Stress Response System

- An experience becomes TRAUMATIC when it overwhelms our system for responding to stress.

- The emotional brain continues to sound the alarm and send messages to fight or flee, even after the threat has passed.

"Thinking brain"

"Emotional brain"

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Trauma & Brain Development

Reptilian Brain ●
Limbic System ●
Neocortex ●

Typical Development
- Cognition
- Social/Emotional
- Regulation
- Survival

Developmental Trauma
- Cognition
- Social/Emotional
- Regulation
- Survival

Adapted from Holt & Jordan, Ohio Dept. of Education

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Impact of Trauma on Staff

Secondary traumatic stress: The emotional distress that results when an individual hears about the traumatic experiences of another individual. Distress may result from hearing someone's trauma stories, seeing high levels of distress in the aftermath of a traumatic event, needing to retell a student's story, and/or seeing photos or images related to the trauma.

Vicarious trauma: The cumulative effects of secondary exposure to trauma and involves the internal changes in staff members who engage empathetically with students affected by students. Vicarious trauma is used interchangeably with secondary traumatic stress.

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Impact of Trauma on Staff

- **Increased anxiety**
- **Reduced energy and focus**
- **Trouble regulating emotions**
- **Difficulty managing responses** to students and parents
- **Diminished capacity to maintain positive** teacher-student and teacher-parent **relationships**
- **Poor attendance or work performance**

Compassion Satisfaction & Compassion Fatigue
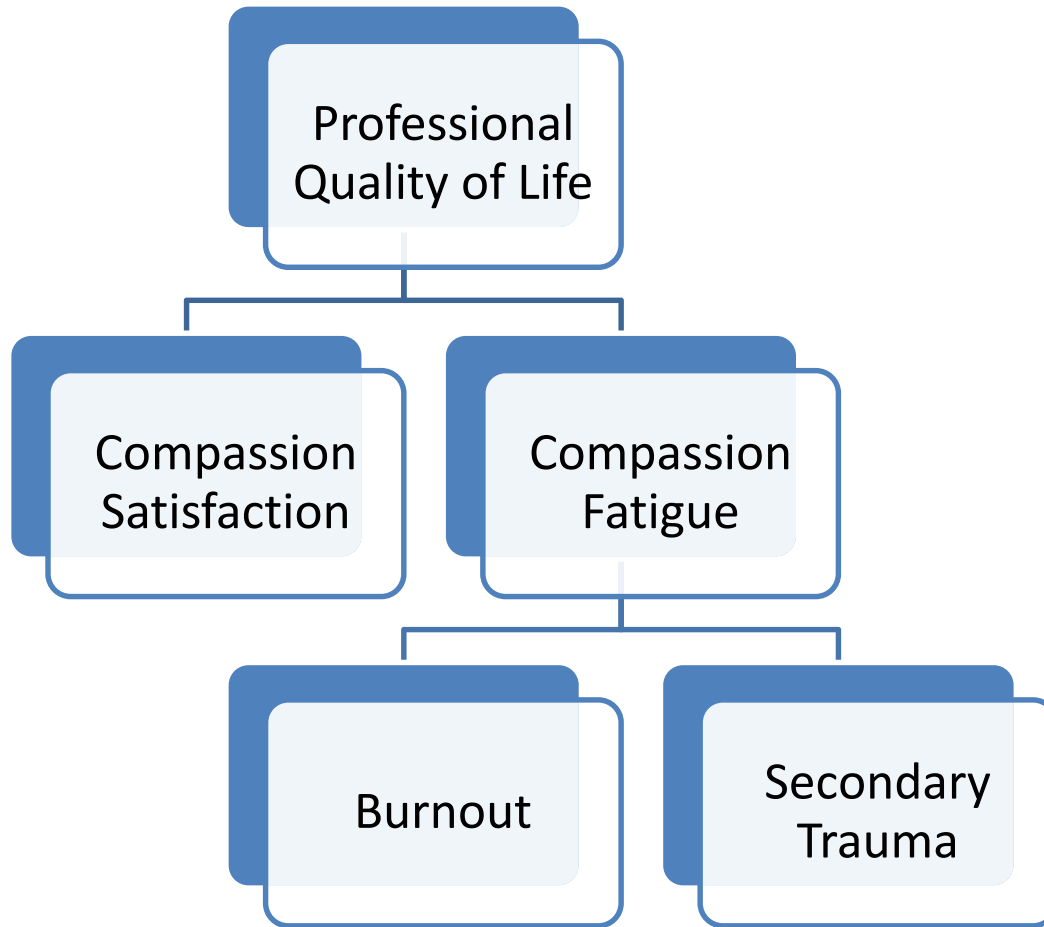
(https://proqol.org/ProQol_Test.html)

Personal Care and Wellness

Individual ⟷ System

Individual
- Mind
- Body
- Spirit
- Strength

System
- Colleague relationships
- Organizational compassion
- Community collaboration

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Trauma-Informed Care Values

- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Collaboration & Mutuality
- Empowerment, Choice & Voice
- Cultural Sensitivity

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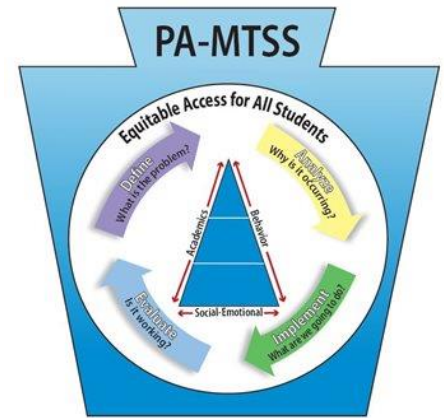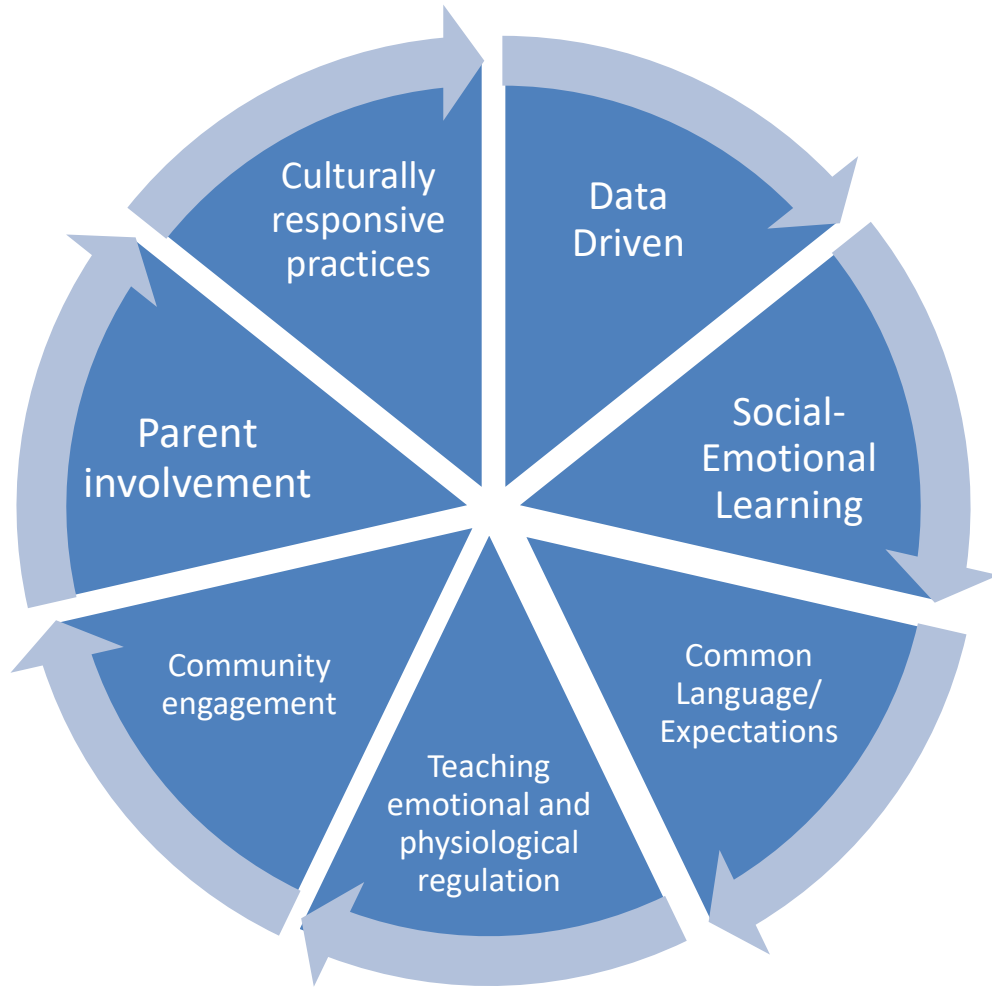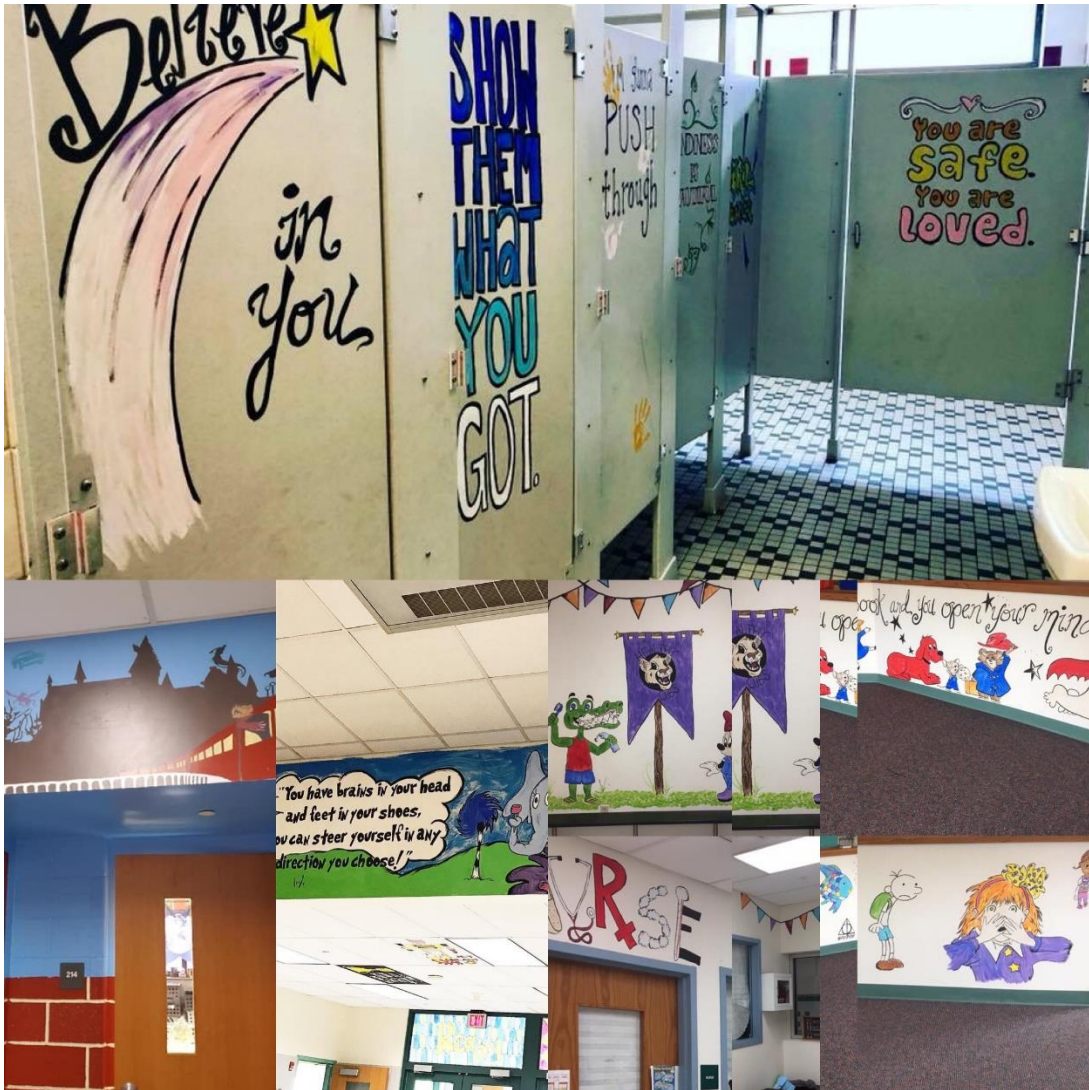

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Trauma-Informed Care Values

- Safety
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- **Cultural Sensitivity**

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Linking to an Equitable MTSS

School Climate

School Climate and Trauma

- A positive school climate is the product of a school's attention to:

  – Fostering physical and emotional safety

  – Promoting supportive and equitable social, academic and disciplinary environments

  – Encouraging and maintaining respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community

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The perception of a positive school climate, though beneficial for all students, may be even more beneficial for students at risk of negative outcomes.

(Jones, Berg & Osher, 2018; Loukas, 2007)

Positive Learning Climates Online and at Home

https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/Pages/PositiveLearningClimates.aspx

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Safety/Wellness Online and at Home

- Maintain norms and routines
- Provide age/role appropriate information to caregivers and youth
    - COVID-19
    - Online safety and digital citizenship
    - Safe sibling supervision
    - Parent resources to support child development
- Ensure safe homes and workspaces
- Attend to physical & emotional safety

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Support Strategies for Children & Families

- Physical supports
  - Food and other services
  - Exercise and wellness
  - Technology/Connectivity
- Mental and behavioral health
  - Self-care routines for adults
  - Provide developmentally appropriate information and support
  - Use online platforms for social connection
  - Conduct periodic check-ins with students who have known needs

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Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Strategies

- Adult modeling and promoting SEL at home

- Mindfulness or SEL videos

- Practicing SEL skills remotely

Gestures that can heal

- Celebrate
- Comfort
- Listen
- Collaborate
- Inspire

(https://changingmindsnow.org/healing)

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A Safe, Stable, and Supportive Relationship with a Caring Adult

(Cuervo Tilson, 2018, NCTSN, 2003)

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Strategies for a Trauma-Informed Mindset

Shifting to a Trauma-Informed Mindset	
Traditional View	**Trauma Informed View**
Focusing on solely on academic performance of students in the classroom	Viewing students from a whole person perspective, including their life outside of the classroom
Challenging behaviors deserve immediate punishment	Challenging behaviors can indicate other issues and should be explored further
Using jargon and acronyms with students and parents/guardians	Using language that everyone can understand

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Strategies for a Trauma-Informed Mindset

Shifting to a Trauma-Informed Mindset	
Traditional View	Trauma Informed View
Teachers and administrators should be authoritarian in nature	Focusing on creating a collaborative environment where students are provided options and empowered to make choices
Zero tolerance policies	Listening to the student and attempting to understand the situation better
Using labels and diagnosis when referring to a student	Reframe the behavior/situation to identify strengths
Student has anger management issues	Student is using non-adaptive responses to get their needs met
Student is uncontrollable and choosing to act out	Student has difficulty self-regulating and may have been triggered

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Strategies for a Trauma-Informed Mindset

Level of Intensity	Trauma-Informed Practices
Prevention & Skill Building (Tier 1)	• School policies, culture, and climate establish a physically and emotionally safe environment and expect prompt intervention for behaviors that are inconsistent with this standard • Adults model emotional regulation • Prioritizing empowerment, self-advocacy and skill building • Consistency with routines • Focus on relationship building • Decisions and power are shared with families, staff, and students • Recognize importance of culture in all aspects of learning • Diversifying instructional content • Focus on relationship skills, social awareness, responsible decision-making, self-management, and self-awareness

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Strategies for a Trauma-Informed Mindset

School Culture and Infrastructure (Tier 1- Universal)	• Strategic planning to integrate trauma-sensitive principles and strategies into a PBIS framework. (i.e., the acronym matrix could include safety, empathy , or using kind words to name a few). • Support whole-school strategies for integrating trauma knowledge and trauma-informed principles in classrooms and throughout the school • Support whole-school approaches to crisis, discipline, and behavioral management that are aligned with trauma-sensitive principles • Support universal practices related to cultural awareness and responsiveness • Support universal programs for social and emotional learning in key areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision making • Review policies (e.g., school discipline policies) to ensure they reflect an understanding of the role of trauma in student behaviors. • Develop community partnerships. • Support school staff and administrators in identifying and implementing individual and school wide strategies to support staff self-care • Evaluate these efforts on an ongoing basis

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Strategies for a Trauma-Informed Mindset

Staff Training	**E**ducate staff about:
	• Trauma and its effect on students, staff, and schools
	• Mental health and trauma-related mental health challenges
	• Cultural variations in responses to trauma
	• Self-care and how to identify traumatic stress in self and others
	• Strategies to create a school environment that models emotional regulation and caring behavior.
	• How to strengthen the relationships with staff, students, and families
	• How to identify and access outside resources for ongoing support for both staff and students who have experienced trauma.
	• How to provide classroom instruction on social-emotional learning (SEL) skills, mental health, suicide prevention, and bullying prevention.
	• How to model and support inclusion

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Resources When Working with Families

- PA Department of Education: Homeless Education
- PA Department of Education: Refugee Education Program
- Adaptation Guidelines for Serving Latino Children and Families Affected by Trauma
- A Social Worker's Tool Kit for Working with Immigrant Families: Healing the Damage: Trauma and Immigrant Families in the Child Welfare System
- Select National Child Traumatic Stress Network Resources Related to Traumatic Separation and Refugee & Immigrant Trauma
- Supporting the Education of Immigrant Students Experiencing Homelessness
- Supporting Undocumented Youth: Resource Guide
- Transcending Violence: Emerging Models for Trauma Healing in Refugee Communities
- Trauma Informed Care for Children Exposed to Violence: Tips for Agencies Working with Immigrant Families

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Resources: Secondary Traumatic Stress

- [Compassion resilience toolkit for school leaders and staff](#)
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Resources for Secondary Traumatic Stress](#)
- [Office of Justice Programs: Vicarious Trauma Toolkit](#)
- [Professional Quality of Life Measure](#)
- [Trauma Sensitive Schools Package: Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care Packet](#)

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Resources

- [Adverse Childhood Experience Resources](#)
- [Childhood Trauma: Changing Minds](#)
- [Equity in PBIS](#)
- [National Association of School Psychologists: Trauma Sensitive Schools](#)
- [National Center for Cultural Competence](#)
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators](#)
- [PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency : Model Trauma Informed Plan](#)
- [PA Dept. of Education Safe Schools Website](#)
- [PA Department of Education – Equity and Inclusion](#)
- [PA Dept. of Education School Climate Survey](#)

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Resources

- [PA Department of Education: Trauma Informed Practices in Schools Resources](#)
- [PA Department of Education – Pennsylvania Career Ready Skills](#)
- [PA Department of Education – SEL Best Practice Resources](#)
- [PA Youth Survey](#)
- [Responding to Hate and Bias At School](#) – Teaching Tolerance
- [SHAPE System](#)
- [Trauma Informed Oregon: Road Map to Trauma Informed Care](#)
- [Trauma Informed School Resources: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Washington](#)
- [Trauma Responsive Schools Implementation Assessment (TRS-IA)](#)

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For more information on resources or education related to Trauma Informed Practices please visit PDE's website at www.education.pa.gov or contact Dr. Milakovic

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