

Building Trauma-Informed Schools

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American Institutes for Research



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AIR's mission is to conduct and apply the best behavioral and social science research and evaluation towards improving people's lives, with a special emphasis on the disadvantaged and most vulnerable populations.

The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments



Work Includes

- ✓ TA Center for the field as well as specific grantees
- ✓ Safe and Supportive Schools Grants (11 states(2010-2015))
- ✓ Project Prevent (22 local school districts (2014-2018))
- ✓ Website hosts Federal Resource Compendium; State Regulations/Laws on Discipline; State Policies on Bullying Prevention; School Climate Surveys
- ✓ TA –Higher Education (resources, newsletter)
- ✓ High profile products for the field: “Safe Place”; Root Cause Analysis Tool Kit (discipline); Practice Guide for National School Climate Survey; online training modules; archived webinars

Project Prevent Grants

Project Prevent grants to 22 local educational agencies (LEAs) to increase their capacity both to identify, assess, and serve students exposed to pervasive violence, helping to ensure that affected students are offered mental health services for trauma or anxiety; support conflict resolution programs; and implement other school-based violence prevention strategies in order to reduce the likelihood that these students will later commit violent acts.

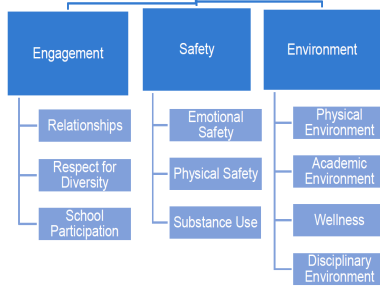
Project Prevent Grants

LEA will offer students: (1) access to school-based counseling services, or referrals to community-based counseling services, for assistance in coping with trauma or anxiety; (2) school-based social and emotional supports for students to help address the effects of violence; (3) conflict resolution and other school-based strategies to prevent future violence; and (4) a safer and improved school environment, which may include, among others, activities to decrease the incidence of harassment, bullying, violence, gang involvement, and substance use.

Safe and Supportive Schools Grants 2010-2015

- **Goals of the grant**
 - Focus on safety
 - Requiring data-driven decision making and transparency
 - Strengthening school districts and improving academic, health, and behavioral outcomes for struggling students
- **GPRA reporting requirements**
 - % of student-reported alcohol use in past 30 days
 - % of student-reported harassment or bullying on school property
 - Improvement or worsening of school safety scores
 - # of suspensions for violence without injury on school property

Safe and Supportive Schools Model

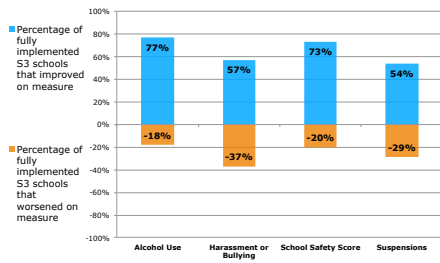


Quick Stats

Grantee	# districts served	# schools served	# students served	% FRPL eligible
1. Arizona	14	26	42,512	56
2. California	26	58	92,798	70
3. Iowa	19	21	17,176	50
4. Kansas	27	30	14,531	41
5. Louisiana	8	42	40,691	63
6. Maryland	12	58	72,500	35
7. Michigan	17	22	11,938	77
8. South Carolina	13	23	20,386	68
9. Tennessee	20	81	72,622	50
10. West Virginia	18	22	12,887	29
11. Wisconsin	19	55	59,364	58
Total	193	438	457,405	Average 54%

What Was the Impact of S3?

• Results for GPRA Measures: Cross-Grantees



Page • 10

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Did S3 work?

- A large majority of schools improved on all GPRA measures
- Within-state findings demonstrated the promise of school climate to affect student outcomes (e.g. student academic achievement, attendance, and disciplinary actions)

"We have come a long way since 2010, especially in persuading people about why school climate is important. People are paying attention to students, and students and staff are excited about being in school. We started with a focus on safety, and ended with high levels of engagement and improved relationships."

Page • 11

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School Climate: What is it?

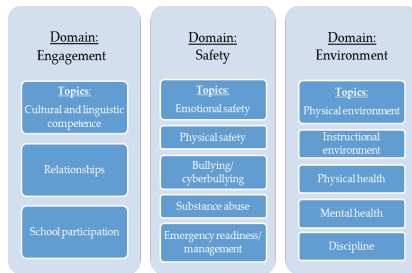
- Reflects how members of the school community experience a school
- Includes factors that serve as conditions for learning
- Fosters social, physical, and emotional safety
- Provides support that enables students and staff to realize high behavioral and academic standards
- Encourages and maintains respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community.

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Two New Resources

- ED's new school climate resources include :
 - **Online school climate survey portal**—the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) that includes survey download and data reporting features
 - Web-based **School Climate Improvement Resource Package** to enable school climate survey use, data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and implementation of local school climate improvement processes
 - **ED Press Release:**
<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/department-education-releases-resources-improving-school-climate>

OSHS School Climate Model



- Middle grade (5-8) students
- High school students
- Parents / Guardians
- Teachers
- Non-instructional staff (including principals)
- Can be administered at school, district, or state level.
- Allows for the local storage of data, accessible only to authorized users.
- Multiple surveys (i.e., students, instructional staff, non-instructional staff, and parents/guardians) can be open at the same time
- During data collection, administrators can see how many respondents have finished the survey using the "survey status reports" feature.

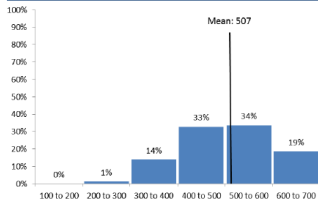
- Includes reporting tool for providing
 - item-level frequencies
 - domain-level scores and topic-level sub-scores.
- Reporting tool can compare scores by school, grade level, race, and gender.
- Scores can be compared to national benchmarks.

EDSCLS Reporting

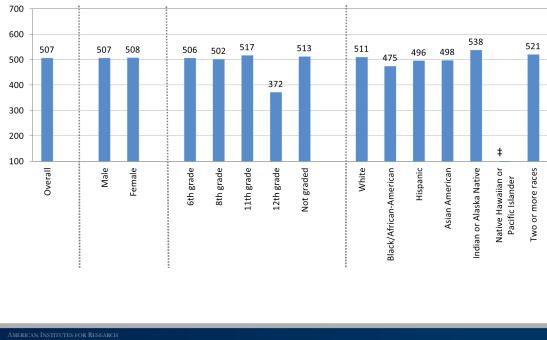


EDSCLS Reporting

Figure 2. Percentage distribution and mean of discipline scale score distribution: Spring 2015



EDSCLS Reporting



Building Trauma-Informed Schools



Please share one learning goal for attending today's session.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package



NCSSLE Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package

- Understanding Trauma and Its Impact**
 - Navigable PDF.
 - Designed for all school staff (e.g., teachers, administrators, student services and support staff)
 - Slides and script for an introduction to presentation that can be used by leaders for professional development.
- Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools**
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Page • 25

Safe Supportive Learning
Engagement | Safety | Environment

Today



- 1 Types and prevalence of trauma
- 2 Why are schools addressing trauma?
- 3 What are trauma-sensitive schools?
- 4 How do you become a trauma-informed school?

Page • 26

Safe Supportive Learning
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Types and Prevalence of Trauma

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What is Trauma?

An experience that is perceived as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening, overwhelms our ability to cope, and causes intense reactions such as fear, helplessness, and loss of control.



- **Natural Disasters:** Hurricanes, fires, floods
- **Human Caused Disasters:** accidents, wars, displacement
- **Terrorism**
- **Community Violence:** robberies, shootings, assaults
- **School Violence:** threats, shootings, bullying
- **Interpersonal Violence:** abuse, neglect, domestic violence
- **Poverty**
- **Homelessness**
- **Sudden or anticipated loss of loved one**



Historical Trauma: The collective and cumulative trauma experienced by a particular group across generations still suffering the effects.

Examples include: violent colonization, dislocation, and assimilation policies like forced placement in boarding schools; and experiences of slavery, segregation, racism and discrimination. The effects of trauma may continue to impact communities in the form of issues such as violence, substance abuse, mental health issues, mistrust of systems, including schools, the need for self-protection, and feelings of low self-worth or aggression.

Types and Prevalence of Trauma



Racial Trauma or Race-based Traumatic Stress: Potentially traumatic experiences related to race may include:

- Direct experiences of racial harassment including threats of harm or injury and being humiliated;
- Witnessing racial violence towards others such as hate crimes, violence by law enforcement;
- Experiencing discrimination and institutional racism. Includes “racial microaggressions” – brief, everyday verbal or behavioral exchanges that intentionally or unintentionally communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial messages or insults. Examples: racial slurs, being followed in a store, communications that convey rudeness and demean a person’s racial identity, exchanges that negate or deny thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of a person of color (Sue, 2007).

Types and Prevalence of Trauma



Complex Trauma: The term complex trauma refers to trauma that: 1) begins in childhood during key stages of development; 2) continues over time; 3) often occurs within a child’s family where their primary caretaker is either a source of threat or unable to support, nurture, or protect a child from threat; and 4) leads to immediate and long-term difficulties in many areas. Examples include chronic interpersonal violence in the form of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse or witnessing domestic violence, as well as ongoing neglect and other forms of violent victimization or loss without adequate adult support to manage these experiences.

This type of trauma has particularly negative effects on relationship-building, behavior, and learning in school.

Types and Prevalence of Trauma



Activity: Prevalence of trauma

Types and Prevalence of Trauma



- In community samples, more than two thirds of children in the U.S. report experiencing a traumatic event by age 16, such as a serious accident, natural disaster, or experiencing or witnessing violence.
- Approximately two out of three children have been exposed to violence, crime, and abuse in their homes or communities.
- 49% of youth experienced two or more types of victimization.
- More than 1 in 10 youth report 5 or more direct exposures to violence.

Types and Prevalence of Trauma



Certain groups of youth are higher risk of trauma exposure due to historical factors and/or current life experiences.

- Youth of color ages 12 to 19 are victims of violent crime more than their white peers.
- Youth of color are
 - 3x more likely to be victims of a robbery.
 - 5x more likely to be victims of a homicide.
- Youth of color living in poverty are at increased risk for trauma, particularly violent trauma.
- African American youth living in urban, low-income communities are more at risk of exposure to violence than any other population in the United States.

Types and Prevalence of Trauma



- American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) children are at 2.5 times greater risk of experiencing trauma than their peers.
- Adolescent Latinas are at 1.5 times greater risk of exposure to trauma than their peers.
- Other groups at increased risk of trauma exposure include children and adolescents with disabilities, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) youth, refugee youth, and youth living in poverty.

Poll



How would you describe your level of awareness of the rates and types of trauma in the lives of the students in your schools?

- High level of awareness
- Moderate level of awareness
- Very little awareness

Poll



How would you describe your school's awareness of the rates and types of trauma in the lives of the students among school staff?

- High level of awareness
- Moderate level of awareness
- Very little awareness

Discussion: Types of trauma



What types of trauma are most common among the students and families in your school?

Why are schools addressing trauma?



Why are schools addressing trauma?



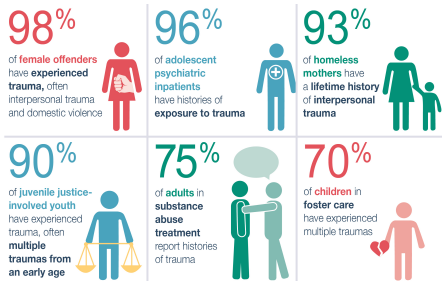
Video: *Through Our Eyes: Children, Violence, and Trauma*

<https://youtu.be/z8vZxDa2KPM>

Page • 41



Trauma: A Public Health Issue



Sources: Green, Miranda, Daroswella, & Siddique, 2005; Havens, Gadine, Diamond, Wei, & Cloitre, 2012; Hayes, Zonneville, & Bessuk, 2013; Abram, Tapin, Charles, Longworth, McClellan, & Dulcan, 2004; Dierkhising, Ko, Woods-Jaeger, Briggs, Lee, Pynoos, 2013; SAMHSA/CSAT, 2000; Gresson, Briggs, Kistel, Loyne, Ake, Ko... & Fairbank, 2011

Factors that Influence Prevalence and Impact of Trauma

- **Individual factors** – age, biophysical state, mental health, temperament, education, gender, coping style, social economic status, cognitive and maturational development.
- **Interpersonal factors** – family, peer interactions, parent/family mental health, parents' history of trauma, social network.
- **Cultural factors** – historical and current experiences of collective trauma among various cultural groups, collective or individualistic norms, cultural subsystem norms.
- **Community, school, organizational factors** – neighborhood quality, quality of school system, work environment, quality and accessibility of social services, community socioeconomic status, employment rates.
- **Societal factors** – laws, state and federal economic and social policies, media, societal norms, judicial system.
- **Period of time in history** – societal attitudes, changes to understanding about trauma.


Goal: Trauma-Informed Systems

Systems that *recognize* the impact of trauma and *promote* resilience and healing




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Why are schools addressing trauma?



1. The impact of unaddressed trauma on schools is significant.
2. There is increased risk of harm to all when trauma is overlooked.
3. Schools play a critical role in fostering resilience.


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Why are schools addressing trauma?



Impact of unaddressed trauma on:

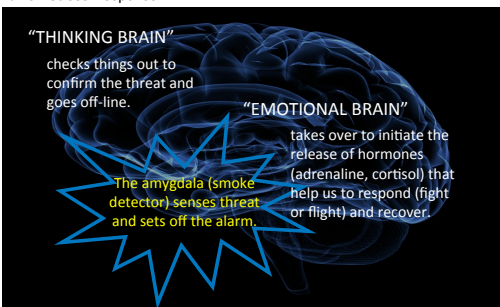
- Youth
- Families
- Staff
- Schools

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on students



Human Stress Response



Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on students



- Fear, anxiety, and worry about continued danger
- Intense mood swings, irritability, and aggression
- Feelings of sadness, guilt, shame, anger, responsibility, embarrassment
- Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches, change in eating/sleeping)
- Concern about how others will view them
- Decline in school performance
- Increased risk-taking (alcohol/drug use, fights, self-harm)
- Increased thoughts/comments about death or dying
- Withdrawal from family, peers, activities

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on students

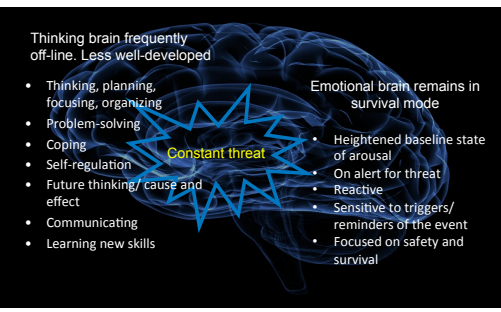


Triggers: Reminders of past traumatic experiences that automatically cause the body to react as if the traumatic event is happening again in that moment.

- Loud noises
- Physical touch
- Authority figures
- Hand or body gestures that appear threatening
- Changes in routine
- Confusing or chaotic environments
- Emergency vehicles or personnel
- Anniversary times
- Loss

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on students



Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on students



- **Relationships:** Difficulty trusting others and forming safe, healthy relationships.
- **Emotional Regulation:** Difficulty identifying, expressing, and managing feelings. Always on alert for threat.
- **Behavior:** Easily set off by others or the environment (especially if reminded of previous trauma). Responses are extreme ranging from aggression to withdrawal. Trouble following rules or guidelines; reactive towards authority figures.

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on students



- **Cognition:** More difficulties with activities related to learning. Traumatized youth have poorer academic performance, increased risk of failing, poorer test scores, and higher rates of referral to special education.
- **Dissociation:** Disconnection from the present moment as a way to manage overwhelming stress. Blocking out difficult thoughts and feelings often means blocking out most feelings, including positive emotions.
- **Self-Concept and Future Orientation:** Low self-esteem and poor self-image are common. Lacking a sense of hope and control over the future making goal setting seem pointless.

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on students



- Physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, and decline in self-care.
- Intense feelings of fear, anxiety, and concern for their safety throughout the school day.
- Difficulty identifying and controlling feelings while at school.
- Angry or aggressive outbursts in the classroom or other school spaces.
- Desire to withdraw from peers and teachers.
- Difficulty paying attention and learning.
- Trouble building positive relationships with peers and school staff.
- More time out of class.
- Increased absences.
- Increased risk of failing, poor test scores.
- More likely to be suspended or expelled for behavioral issues.
- Higher rates of referral to special education.

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on students

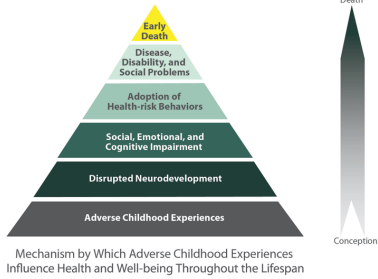


- Youth victimization increases likelihood of becoming a perpetrator of violent crimes including intimate partner violence; drug use; and property crimes.
- 90% of juvenile justice-involved youth have experienced trauma, often multiple traumas from an early age.
- 96% of adolescent psychiatric inpatients have histories of exposure to trauma.
- More than 70% of adolescents in substance abuse treatment have a history of trauma exposure.

Why are schools addressing trauma? Impact of trauma on students



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study



Discussion: Trauma and students



- How you see trauma affecting students in your schools?
- How is student trauma currently addressed?

Why are schools addressing trauma? Impact of trauma on parents



Parents with histories of and/or current exposure to trauma are at increased risk for a number of challenges including:

- Substance abuse, depression, and PTSD.
- Negative or unsafe interpersonal patterns such as abuse, neglect, and domestic violence that become the source of trauma for youth.
- Difficulty trusting others and building relationships with community providers and educators, which impacts their child's ability to trust other adults.
- Feelings of embarrassment, shame, fear, or guilt about getting outside support for their children that may result in negative interactions with providers/educators.
- Mistrust of systems that have contributed to traumatic experiences.

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on parents



Consider current societal and institutional factors and inequalities that increase risk of trauma. For example, among families of color:

- A disproportionate number of children and families live in poverty.
- Living in poverty is accompanied by stressors that can be traumatic and can increase risk for multiple exposures to trauma, particularly violent trauma.
- Ongoing experiences of racial trauma/Race-based traumatic stress impact communities and families.
- There is a lack of culturally-competent services.
- Mistrust in social institutions (schools, education, government) impacts help-seeking.

Discussion: Trauma and parents



- **How do you see trauma affecting parents and guardians of students in your schools?**
- **How do you support parents/guardians who experience trauma?**

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on school staff



Direct exposure to trauma: School staff may be directly exposed to trauma in their families, communities or on the job (e.g., threat of violence, assault, witnessing violence in school, such as a school shooting or loss of a student or colleague).

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

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on school staff



Secondary Traumatic Stress / Compassion Fatigue: The presence of post-trauma symptoms caused by at least one indirect exposure to traumatic material.

- Increased anxiety and concern about safety.
- Intrusive, negative thoughts and images related to their students' traumatic stories.
- Fatigue and physical complaints.
- Feeling numb or detached from students and colleagues.
- Diminished concentration and difficulty with decision making.
- Desire to physically or emotionally withdraw or avoid people or situations that trigger difficult thoughts and emotions.

Page • 61

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on school staff



Vicarious Trauma: Changes in a helpers inner experience over time as a result of working with traumatized groups. Includes alterations in how people view themselves, others, and the world.

- Increased difficulty leaving work at work.
- Irritability with co-workers and students.
- Diminished energy and patience.
- Feeling powerless or hopeless about students and the work.
- Poorer work performance.
- Doubts about capabilities and impact.
- Questions about the meaning/purpose of the work.

Page • 62

Discussion: Trauma and staff



- **How do you see trauma affecting school staff (including your own experiences)?**
- **What support is available to staff who have experienced trauma, either directly or indirectly?**
- **What follow-up is available for staff?**
- **What is your role in that support?**

Page • 63

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on schools



Impact of trauma on school culture and conditions for learning



- Students exposed to trauma are more likely to escalate and act out.
- Adults may become increasingly crisis-driven, reactive, and punitive to maintain control.
- Difficult to maintain a safe environment most conducive to learning.

Page • 64

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Risk for harm



- Adults may misunderstand, mislabel, or misdiagnose student behaviors.
- Schools risk re-traumatizing students by creating environments and situations that mirror or replicate other trauma that students have experienced (e.g., harsh, punitive discipline, disrespectful interactions, chaotic environments).

Page • 65

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Benefits



Resilience: Positive, adaptive response to significant adversity.

Schools can protect children from the negative impact of stress.

Protective factors that buffer the impact of stress include:

- Healthy, supportive relationships with caring adults.
- Learning environments that are safe, engaging, and supportive.
- Strong social and emotional skills such as problem-solving, self-awareness, self-regulation, and relationship skills that can be supported in school settings.

Page • 66

Why are schools addressing trauma? Benefits



Schools that are addressing trauma universally report positive effects for students and schools that include:

- Decrease in office referrals.
- Drop in suspensions.
- Improvements in test scores.

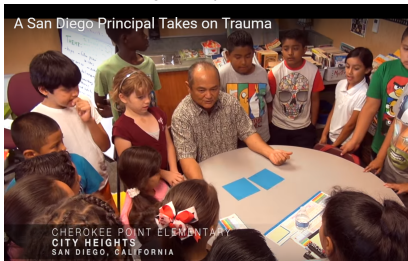
What are trauma-sensitive schools?



What are trauma-sensitive schools?



5 minute video: *A San Diego Principal Takes on Trauma*



<https://youtu.be/dcvQb9e-VLI>

What are trauma-sensitive schools?



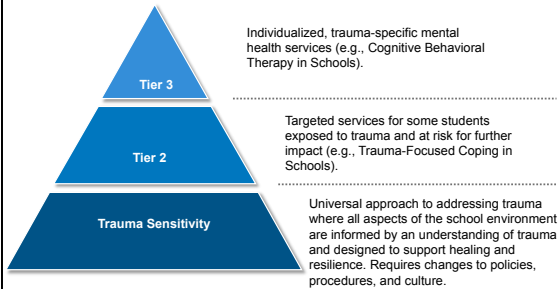
"A trauma-sensitive school is one in which all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported, and where addressing trauma's impact on learning on a school-wide basis is at the center of its educational mission."

Cole et al., 2013

What are trauma-sensitive schools?



Multi-Tiered Approach

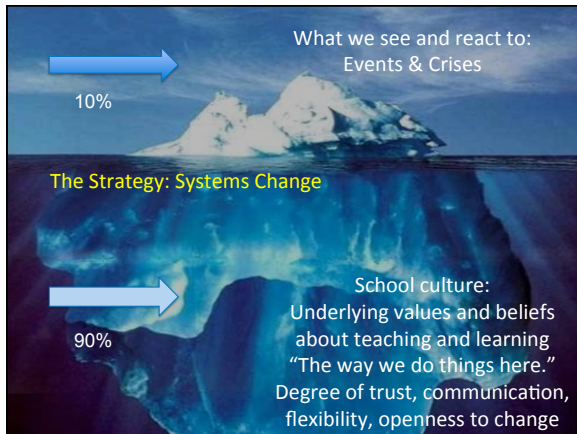


What are trauma-sensitive schools



A universal approach


- Ensures support for all.
- Enhances the identification of students who need additional services.
- Creates an environment more likely to support and sustain Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions (e.g., therapeutic supports, counseling).
- Supports and adds to other efforts with shared principles and complementary practices (e.g., restorative practices, positive behavioral supports, social and emotional learning, school emergency planning).



What are trauma-sensitive schools?
Core principles



Core principles of trauma-sensitive schools




Change the outcome


Change the culture

- Understand trauma and its impact.
- Believe that healing for students happens in safe, supportive, positive relationships among and between staff, students, and families.
- Ensure physical and emotional safety.
- Support choice, control, and empowerment for students, staff, and families.
- Strive for cultural competence.
- View students holistically.
- Use a collaborative approach across staff, and between staff and students and families.

Page • 74




Discussion: Core principles



Which core principles of a trauma-sensitive school are easiest to uphold day-to-day?

- Understand trauma and its impact.
- Believe that healing for students happens in safe, supportive, positive relationships among and between staff, students, and families.
- Ensure physical and emotional safety.
- Support choice, control, and empowerment for students, staff, and families.
- Strive for culture competence.
- View students holistically.
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Page • 75



Discussion: Core principles



Which core principles of a trauma-sensitive school are the most difficult to uphold day-to-day?

- Understand trauma and its impact.
- Believe that healing for students happens in safe, supportive, positive relationships among and between staff, students, and families.
- Ensure physical and emotional safety.
- Support choice, control, and empowerment for students, staff, and families.
- Strive for culture competence.
- View students holistically.
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Page • 76

What are trauma-sensitive schools?



Shifting perspectives from traditional to trauma-sensitive

Traditional Perspective

- Students' challenging behaviors are the result of individual deficits (e.g., what's wrong with you?)
- Understands difficult student behaviors as purposeful and personal.
- Focuses on changing the individual to "fix" the problem.
- Adults need to uphold authority and control with students and families.
- Punitive discipline works.
- Support for students exposed to trauma is provided by counseling professionals.

Trauma-Sensitive Perspective

- Students' challenging behaviors may be ways of coping with a traumatic experiences.
- Understands difficult student behaviors may be automatic responses to stress.
- Focuses on changing the environment to support the individual.
- Adults need to offer flexibility and choice to students and families.
- Positive reinforcement works.
- Support for students exposed to trauma is the shared responsibility of all staff.

Page • 77

What are trauma-sensitive schools?



Scenario: Comparing perspectives

Scenario: Joseph, a student, arrives to school late and looks unkempt and tired. When he enters his first period class, he puts his head down on the desk. The teacher asks him to sit up and respond to a math problem she has put on the board. He refuses to comply with her request. He gets out of his seat, kicks over the trash can and a chair, curses at his teacher, and slams the door behind him as he leaves the classroom without permission.

Page • 78

Poll



How difficult is it for a school to shift from a traditional to a trauma-sensitive perspective?

- Very difficult.
- Somewhat difficult.
- Not difficult at all.

What are trauma-sensitive schools?



Activity: What do you give up? What do you gain? (administrators, teachers, support staff)

Traditional Perspective

- Student's challenging behaviors are the result of individual deficits (e.g., what's wrong with you?)
- Understands difficult student behaviors as purposeful and personal.
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Trauma-Sensitive Perspective

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- Understands difficult student behaviors may be automatic responses to stress.
- Focuses on changing the environment.
- Adults need to offer flexibility and choice to students and families.
- Positive reinforcement works.
- Support for students exposed to trauma is the shared responsibility of all staff.

Poll



Where is your school in the process of becoming "trauma-informed"?

- Concept is very new
- Student services staff are aware but has not spread to entire school.
- School staff have received some training, there is interest by administration, no formal plan or structural changes have been implemented.
- All staff have received training. School has developed a plan for adoption and made progress in implementing trauma-sensitive practices school-wide.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?





What would schools look like if trauma sensitivity was standard practice?



A vision without a plan is just a dream.
A plan without a vision is just drudgery.
But a vision with a plan can change the world.

World Resources Institute (WRI), 2000

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?
Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package



NCCSLE Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package

Understanding Trauma and Its Impact

- Navigable PDF.
- Designed for all school staff (e.g., teachers, administrators, student services and support staff)
- Slides and script for an introduction to presentation that can be used by leaders for professional development.

Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools

- Online, self-paced module.
- Designed for school leaders.
- Offers leaders a vision for what universal trauma-sensitivity looks like and a process for implementing this approach.

Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools

- Online, self-paced module.
- Designed for all staff (e.g., teachers, administrators, student services and support staff)
- Offers specific strategies for how staff in different roles can help to build a trauma-sensitive school using activities and discussion questions.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?
Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools Module



Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools Module

Prepare

- Build knowledge.
- Establish infrastructure.
- Assess readiness.

Imagine

- Envision your trauma-sensitive school.
- Use framework to organize your vision across 6 key domains.

Align

- Align with other approaches (e.g., PBIS, restorative practices, social emotional learning, emergency planning).
- Integrate efforts.
- Revisit readiness.

Sustain

- Evaluate impact.
- Adjust to changing needs of the school community based on student population and types of trauma experienced.
- Sustain systemic changes.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?
Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools Module



Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools Module

Prepare

- Build knowledge.
- Establish working group.
- Assess readiness.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



Training & Buy-In: Leadership

- Leadership receives training on trauma and its impact on students, staff, and schools; core principles and practices of trauma-sensitive schools; and a process for adopting this approach.
- Leadership makes an informed decision about moving forward.



How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



Training & Buy-In: Staff

- General trauma training is provided to all staff.
- Staff in different roles attend.



How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



Trauma Work Group

- Formal structure to support the process
- Multidisciplinary
- Represents the larger school community



How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



Sustained Leadership Engagement

- Participate in trainings and discussions
- Voice a commitment to trauma-sensitivity
- Attend work group meetings
- Support programmatic changes
- Provide necessary resources for full staff engagement

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



Sample readiness questions for group discussion

Readiness = Motivation x General capacity x Specific capacity

- How is a trauma-sensitive approach different than what is already in place universally to support students?
- To what extent does trauma sensitivity add value to existing practices and approaches?
- How difficult will it be to implement a trauma-sensitive approach school-wide?
- How well does the school currently operate?
- How supportive is the leadership to trying new things?
- How receptive is school staff to change?
- What knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed to become a trauma-sensitive school?
- Who in the school will lead the process and champion trauma-sensitivity?

Discussion: Readiness



How ready do you believe your school or district is to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach?

- Very ready. The investment of time, resources, and energy is there.
- Somewhat ready. People see the need and want to invest but are not at the point where they have organized themselves around a process.
- Not ready. More work is needed to see the value and be willing to invest in the process.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools Module

Prepare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build knowledge.• Establish infrastructure.• Assess readiness.
Imagine	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Envision your trauma-sensitive school.• Use framework to organize your vision across 6 key domains.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



Six core domains of trauma sensitivity

- 1 Support Staff Development
- 2 Create a Safe and Supportive Environment
- 3 Assess Needs and Provide Services
- 4 Build Social and Emotional Skills
- 5 Collaborate with Students and Families
- 6 Adapt Policies and Procedures

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



1 Support Staff Development

- All staff has a baseline understanding of trauma and its impact on students and staff.
- Staff engages in ongoing learning about trauma sensitive practices.
- Staff may be assessed for knowledge and use of trauma-sensitive practices.

2 Create a Safe and Supportive Environment


- Adults keep all areas of the school building safe, and staff looks for and minimizes potential triggers in the environment.
- Daily routines at potentially stressful times such as the start of the school day or during transitions support a sense of calm and connection.
- All crises intervention and prevention practices integrate trauma sensitivity.
- School reflects culturally relevant norms and practices of students within school's routine.

3 Assess Needs and Provide Services

- All school-based screening and assessments consider the potential impact of trauma.
- Assessment practices themselves are trauma-informed.
- All plans consider ways to address trauma.
- All students have access to trauma-specific services if needed.

4 Build Social and Emotional Skills

- Schools integrate universal strategies to teach and model for students how to regulate emotions and behave in prosocial ways.
- Students learn about how stress and traumatic stress affect them through a formal curriculum.
- Families can access this curriculum as well.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 

5 Collaborate with Students and Families

- Students and families are given a voice to express concerns.
- Students and families have choices when interaction with school staff.
- Schools work in partnership with students and families.
- Schools work with students and families to maintain a trauma-sensitive approach.

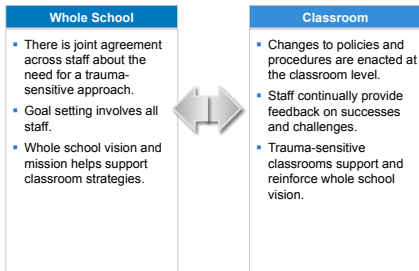
How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 


6 Adapt Policies and Procedures

- Discipline, communication, and safety procedures reflect an understanding of trauma.
- Policies and practices are reviewed regularly to ensure full alignment with the mission and goals of a trauma-sensitive school.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 


Linking vision and practice: Trauma-sensitive classrooms and schools



How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 


Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools Module

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Page • 103 


How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 


PBIS	Trauma-Sensitivity
Tier 3: Functional Behavioral Assessments and individualized plans and supports.	Tier 3: School provides or connects to trauma-specific mental health services. Trauma-related factors are considered in individual plans.
Tier 2: Behavioral and academic skill development groups.	Tier 2: Group-level skills-building considers trauma and its impact and resilience-building.
Tier 1: Creating a positive school culture, teaching social skills, positively reinforcing prosocial behaviors, structuring the environment to prevent undesirable behaviors.	Tier 1: Training all staff on trauma and its impact, ensuring policies and practices uphold core principles of safety, choice, and empowerment that support positive school culture. Identifying and minimizing trauma-related triggers that could result in problem behaviors. Considering trauma in all assessments, plans, and skills-building.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 

Goals:

- Integrating teams and professional development.
- Incorporating trauma-informed goals, practices and monitoring into existing school-wide PBIS assessments, surveys, and evaluation tools.

Page • 105 

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 

Restorative Practices

Restorative Practices is an alternative response to crime, harm, or misconduct that brings together all those involved in conflicts in a way (the methods vary) that help people address harms, assume responsibility, move past shame and guilt, work things out to everyone's satisfaction, and **build stronger and healthier relationships with each other.**

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 

Besides attending to the needs of the victims, restorative practices usually generates some level of personal change for all of those involved:

- Greater sense of understanding
- Compassion
- Increase of self- respect
- Increase of respect for others




How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 

Intersection: Restorative Practices and Trauma-Sensitivity

Share similar core principles

- Ensuring emotional and physical safety
- Supporting choice, control, and empowerment
- Ensuring cultural awareness
- Using a collaborative, strengths-based approach
- Viewing relationships as central to health and healing

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 

Goals:

- Considering a restorative approach to school discipline.
- Integrating trauma education to inform restorative dialogue and circles.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 

Intersection: Emergency Planning and Trauma-Sensitivity

- Trauma sensitivity establishes a foundation for emergency responses.
- Trauma sensitivity aligns with and informs High Quality Emergency Operations Plans.
- Trauma sensitivity supports healing and restoration after an emergency.

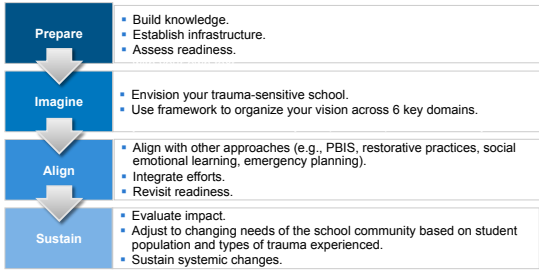
Discussion: Alignment 

- **How are trauma-related practices currently aligned with other initiatives?**
- **What could you do to support further alignment in your role?**

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools Module



How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



Evaluate impact


- Include hard (changes to formal procedures or policies) and soft (school culture, staff mental models) components of systems change
- Quantitative changes to assess systems change may be collected through focus groups and interviews with staff, students, and families, observations of how things have changed, and case examples
- Quantitative data may be collected through methods such as surveys, record and document reviews, and existing measures such as time on learning, academic achievement, and parent involvement, and through the use of formal measures like student engagement or climate scales

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



Respond to Changing Needs

- Monitor goals, gather feedback from staff so work group can make adjustments
- Continually assess staff motivation, capacity, and student/family characteristics

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 

Sustain systems change

- Work group maintains standing meetings to maintain momentum.
- Staff receives regular updates on progress to maintain engagement and buy-in.
- The school builds relationships with community partners who can support staff training and provide services as needed.
- Key staff in different roles educate the community about this new approach.
- The school participates in a community of practice for trauma-sensitivity.

Discussion: Your Role 

- How could you use this roadmap in your work with schools?
- Where might you begin?

Discussion: Your Role 

Brainstorming how you can help build a trauma-informed school.

1 Support Staff Development

- All staff has a baseline understanding of trauma and its impact on students and staff.
- Staff engages in ongoing learning about trauma sensitive practices.
- Staff may be assessed for knowledge and use of trauma-sensitive practices.

How can you support these goals in your role?

2 Create a Safe and Supportive Environment


- Adults keep all areas of the school building safe, and staff looks for and minimizes potential triggers in the environment.
- Daily routines at potentially stressful times such as the start of the school day or during transitions support a sense of calm and connection.
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How can you support these goals in your role?

3 Assess Needs and Provide Services

- All school-based screening and assessments consider the potential impact of trauma.
- Assessment practices themselves are trauma informed.
- All plans consider ways to address trauma.
- Provide or connect students to trauma-specific services.

How can you support these goals in your role?

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 

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- Students learn about how stress and traumatic stress affect them through a formal curriculum.
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How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 

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- Students and families are given a voice to express concerns.
- Students and families have choices when interaction with school staff.
- Schools work in partnership with students and families.
- Schools work with students and families to maintain a trauma-sensitive approach.

How can you support these goals in your role?

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 

6 Adapt Policies and Procedures

- Discipline, communication, and safety procedures reflect an understanding of trauma.
- Policies and practices are reviewed regularly to ensure full alignment with the mission and goals of a trauma-sensitive school.

How can you support these goals in your role?



What can you do?



What can you do?

- Maintain knowledge of trauma and its impact and trauma-informed care.
- Request/participate in additional training on trauma to support your work.
- Recognize signs and symptoms of traumatic stress in children and families.
- Recognize practices that may trigger or exacerbate trauma symptoms for students and families.
- Adjust practices to align with core principles of trauma-informed care (e.g., safety, choice and control, integration).
- Recognize symptoms of secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma.

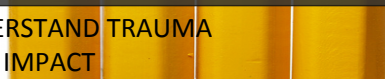
**UNDERSTAND TRAUMA
& ITS IMPACT**




What can you do?

- Consider trauma in all school-based evaluations or assessments and related impact on learning, behavior, testing results, diagnoses.
- Include a place for trauma-related considerations in all individualized plans (triggers, trauma responses, trauma-related supports).
- Be aware of youth and cultural variations in PTSD symptoms.
- Incorporate evidence-based Tier 2 and Tier 3 trauma interventions.
- Incorporate opportunities for skill-building to support resilience (self-regulation, coping, attachment) in your work with students.
- Educate children and families about trauma its impact.
- Educate school staff about trauma and its impact (trainings, informal consultation, team meetings, student review/pre-referral meetings).
- Support whole-school strategies for integrating trauma knowledge and trauma-informed principles in classrooms and throughout the school.

**UNDERSTAND TRAUMA
& ITS IMPACT**



How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

Children and Youth

- Re-experiencing: (Time skew – mis-sequencing events when recalling; Belief there were signs to predict; Posttraumatic play, reenactment in play, drawings, verbally – incorporate aspects of trauma into daily lives)
- Avoidance
- Changes in arousal
- Negative changes in beliefs and mood

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 

Co-occurring Disorders

- Major depression
- Substance abuse
- Anxiety disorders (separation anxiety, panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder)

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school? 

Children may be misdiagnosed with depression, ADHD, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, anxiety disorder, and reactive attachment disorder.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT): Skills development (affect regulation, safety), parent inclusion in therapy when possible, recognizing and connecting with other systems around the child.

Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS): Strongest evidence of success specifically tailored for use in schools.

Trauma-Focused Coping in Schools (Multimodality Trauma Treatment): Skills-oriented cognitive behavioral treatment group for single incident trauma. Designed as a group intervention in schools.

Psychological First Aid for Schools (PFA-S): Evidence-informed approach for assisting children, adolescents, adults, and families in the aftermath of a school crisis, disaster, or terrorism event.



How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

www.nctsn.org/

National Center for PTSD

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov>

International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies

<https://www.istss.org>



What can you do?

- Support a safe physical environment in your space in in broader school building.
- Ensure your space is well-monitored and support safety monitoring throughout the school.
- Observe no-tolerance policies for bullying and violence.
- Meetings, sessions, assessments with students and caregivers are conducted in trauma-informed manner.
- Establish clear expectations.
- Plan ahead for changes when possible.
- Use respectful language and tone with children and parents.
- Be consistent in your responses.

ENSURE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY

What can you do?

- Anticipate potential triggers/challenges for children and caregivers.
- Look to reduce potential triggers or re-traumatizing situations.
- Include trauma triggers and responses in individual crisis prevention plans.
- Ensure crisis intervention strategies and disciplinary responses are trauma-informed (use of grounding techniques, non-shaming, supportive, repairing, restorative).
- Support whole-school approaches to crisis, discipline, and behavior management that are aligned with trauma-informed principles.
- Support school to identify and reduce potential triggers or retraumatizing practices to prevent future crises.

ENSURE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY

What can you do?

- Maintain a family-driven focus that encourages caregiver involvement.
- Offer students and caregivers options whenever possible.
- Ensure flexibility around scheduling meetings.
- Monitor parent engagement and understanding during interactions/meetings.
- Support caregiver control and choice during meetings.
- Communicate clearly, honestly, and respectfully.
- Engage in shared decision-making and participatory planning.
- Seek regular input from students and caregivers.
- Anticipate potential triggers and minimize ahead of time.
- Minimize retraumatizing practices (confidentiality considerations, filing)

SUPPORT CHOICE, CONTROL & EMPOWERMENT

What can you do?

- Understand that social and cultural realities can influence a child and family's risk for, experience of, and recovery from trauma.
- Consider cultural differences in response to trauma and experiences with the mental health and educational systems.
- Consider historical and racial trauma (trauma experienced by family members, ancestors, and current impact on child and family).
- Assess for trauma in country of origin and resettlement and acculturation stress.

STRIVE FOR CULTURAL COMPETENCE

What can you do?


- Work with qualified interpreters.
- Consider cultural factors when engaging students and caregivers.
- Recognize that strong cultural identity can contribute to resilience.
- Provide and/or refer students to therapeutic services that are culturally specific.
- Incorporate culturally relevant materials.
- Be aware of your own cultural attitudes, values, and beliefs and how these influence on your work.
- Supporting whole-school cultural awareness – bring to the conversation.

STRIVE FOR CULTURAL COMPETENCE

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Cultural Context & PTSD

- Western diagnosis
- May exhibit symptoms that don't fit the current criteria (somatic/body symptoms)
- Assessment and treatment may not be adapted for diverse groups



What can you do?

- Understanding the relationship between family, school, and community factors and student health and well-being.
- Integrating strategies to build social and emotional skills into interventions with trauma survivors.
- Support universal programs for social and emotional learning in key areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making.

VIEW STUDENTS HOLISTICALLY

What can you do?

- Develop a consistent process for partnering with students and families (decision-making, input, feedback).
- Consider ways to create a culture of partnership and support among staff across roles.
- Engage in cross-training on trauma and its impact across mental health and education systems.
- Support whole-school trauma-informed practices via training and consultation.
- Work with school teams to integrate a trauma-informed approach with other initiatives or frameworks (e.g., PBIS).

USE A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

What can you do?

- Nurture strengths.
- Offer praise to children and families.
- Facilitate positive attachment relationships with students, caregivers, and staff.
- Provide skills-building that fosters healthy relationships and connection to the larger school community.
- Establish and maintain relationships across staff and partner agencies.

**BELIEVE THAT HEALING HAPPENS
IN RELATIONSHIP**

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



Activity: Barriers to Change


How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?
Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package



NCSSLE *Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package*

Understanding Trauma and Its Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Navigable PDF.▪ Designed for all school staff (e.g., teachers, administrators, student services and support staff)▪ Slides and script for an introduction to presentation that can be used by leaders for professional development.
Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Online, self-paced module.▪ Designed for school leaders.▪ Offers leaders a vision for what universal trauma-sensitivity looks like and a process for implementing this approach.
Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Online, self-paced module.▪ Designed for all staff (e.g., teachers, administrators, student services and support staff)▪ Offers specific strategies for how staff in different roles can help to build a trauma-sensitive school using activities and discussion questions.

Page • 142



Safe Supportive Learning
Engagement | Safety | Environment


Thank You!



For more information, please contact:
Kathleen Guarino, LMHC
kguarino@air.org

Visit the NCSSLE website at
<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov>

Page • 143



Safe Supportive Learning
Engagement | Safety | Environment
