

TRAUMA SENSITIVE SCHOOLS

JANUARY 2018



Our need for Trauma Sensitive Schools

Many children in the Schenectady City School District are exposed to traumatic events, also referred to as **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**, which can affect learning and behavior at a young age, but also have significant long range effects that are often felt throughout a lifetime.

ACEs include, but are not limited to, physical or sexual abuse, abandonment or neglect, emotional abuse, physical neglect, violence, parent treated violently, substance misuse in the household, parent separation or divorce, incarceration of a household member and economic distress/poverty.

Immediate symptoms might include jumpiness, intrusive thoughts, interrupted sleep and nightmares, anger and moodiness and social withdrawal - all of which can interfere with a child's concentration and memory.

Chronic exposure to trauma can significantly impair learning and cause physical and emotional distress affecting a child's attention, memory and cognition. Some children are unable to focus, organize or process information, problem-solve or plan. Many students who experience ACEs come to school with feelings of frustration, worry and anxiety. In the classroom, this might also present itself, or be interpreted, as poor behavior.

It doesn't stop there. ACEs, if unidentified and unaddressed, can eventually lead to dropping out of school, poor decision-making and eventually joblessness and poverty and are strongly related to the development and prevalence of a wide range of health problems throughout a person's lifespan, including those associated with substance misuse.

Our work is to ensure that race, economics and disability no longer serve as predictors of student achievement.

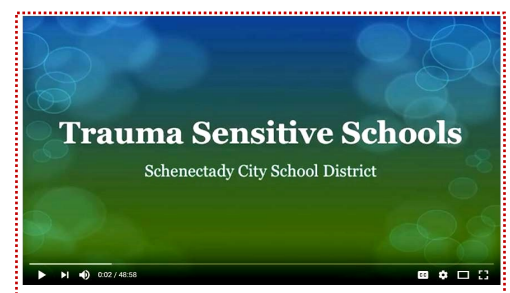


In a Trauma Sensitive School, our thinking shifts from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What’s happened to you?”

How we respond makes all the difference.

It's quite evident that identifying children who are experiencing ACEs can have a significant impact on critical health issues now and their quality of life as adults.

We know that we have many students who experience ACEs. As a district we are committed to understanding, recognizing and responding to children who are impacted by trauma and have taken steps toward developing trauma sensitive environments.



[Please Watch this Video](#)

Our plan

Over the last year, we have taken strides toward becoming better trauma informed and developing trauma-sensitive practices. We have formed a core team as well as building teams across the district to guide and implement the work that needs to be done. We began a tiered and turn-key training approach and are committed to ensuring that all members of our district are aware of our efforts and plans and receive the training that is necessary to be trauma informed and sensitive to our students as well as one others' needs.

TSS Core Team

To begin, the district formed a 15-member core team, consisting of central office administrators, principals, social workers, behavioral specialists and an instructional coach— to create the framework, timeline for district-wide implementation and guidance for the work that is underway and ahead of us.

Building Teams

Each school formed 8-14 member building implementation teams - to identify training needs, provide school culture assessments, conduct book clubs and events, communicate district activities to the school and serve as TSS ambassadors in the building. While TSS building teams vary slightly from school to schools, most consist of teachers, paraprofessionals, clinicians, parent liaisons and cafeteria staff.

Building Level Implementation Team Leaders

Three building team members from each school were identified to serve as building leaders—forming the larger group of 50. This team is responsible for attending trainings, participating in monthly districtwide meetings facilitated by the core team, communicating updates and strategies to the school level, organizing and leading building level TSS meetings and problem solving barriers to implementation of a TSS plan.

Training

Core team members attended system level trainings on TSS last school year—including the ACE Symposium in May and *Beyond Consequences National TSS Conference* in St. Louis in June.

Building team leaders attended turn key training at the TSS Summer Institute in July 2017. They were responsible for taking information and tools back to their schools and providing turn-key training to all staff. Team leaders were also required to read the book, [Trauma Sensitive Schools](#).



Each school now has a building plan that includes many ideas that were presented and shared at the July TSS Institute. All school members should be informed of the building plan and play a role in the shift.

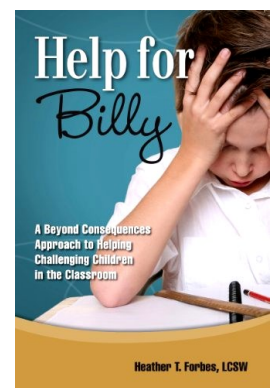
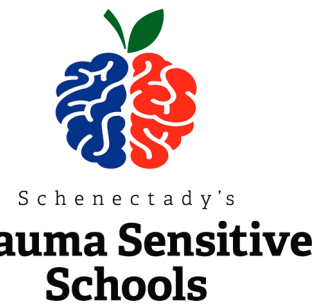
New staff was trained on TSS at new teacher orientation.

There is a plan for all staff, as well as newly inducted staff , to receive ongoing training on trauma sensitivity as it pertains to your role in the district.

- ◆ **Secretaries** have received TSS training as part of professional development last year.
- ◆ **Operations and maintenance staff** will receive TSS training at an upcoming professional development session.
- ◆ **Paraprofessional** TSS training is currently being planned.

Book Study

The book, [Help for Billy](#) was given to all staff to read. Book studies are taking place in various locations throughout the district. If you would like to participate in a book study, please contact your TSS building leader.



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Activities and Collaborations Taking Place Across the District to Develop and Support Trauma Sensitive Schools

- ◆ Restorative Circles as a method of resolving conflict
- ◆ Mindfulness in the school routine
- ◆ Sensory Rooms as calm spaces
- ◆ Book Studies
- ◆ Turn Around Rooms for De-Escalation
- ◆ Infusion of strategies in elementary literacy centers (TSS theme)
- ◆ Restorative Questions & Reflections In the Classroom
- ◆ Social Emotional Curriculum infused in class schedule
- ◆ Crisis Response Planning
- ◆ Family and Staff Engagement in TSS Work
- ◆ Partnerships around TSS
- ◆ Community Collaboration with Mental Health Providers
- ◆ Professional Development within the school
- ◆ School Staff Collaboration and Planning on TSS Initiatives
- ◆ Collaboration of work with efforts to address disproportionate student outcomes (TAC-D Work)
- ◆ Building wide planning to address compassion, fatigue & burn out
- ◆ Support Groups for Staff
- ◆ Development of Measurement Tool for Plan Evaluation



School Based Diversion

Research indicates that youth with unmet behavioral and mental health needs are likely to come in contact with the juvenile justice system.

School Based Diversion is an alternative pathway and therapeutic approach strategically designed to help keep kids in school, improve outcomes, and ensure that students receive interventions and treatment planning instead of being suspended or arrested.

Many of the children who are suspended from school and/or arrested have diagnosable behavioral health conditions. Through diversion, we work to identify the root cause of student behavior and provide interventions and trauma informed treatment addressing behavioral health needs.

It requires a team approach and parent participation. Youth diagnostic screenings and assessments are administered to determine clinical needs. An emergency response team, consisting of the parents, student, principal, social worker or counselor, parent advocate and pupil personnel service administrator, collaborate to develop a plan which includes one or more interventions. Before a child can return to school, treatment progress is monitored, and harm repair is underway by means of abeyance.

Of the 141 students who participated in diversion in 2016-17, 78 completed their intervention program. Consequently, 95 percent of the students who completed diversion did not have another serious behavior incident. The 63 students who did not complete their intervention program either needed more time or did not follow-through with the plan.

Over the first 15 weeks of this school year, the total number of incidents is much lower than the total number of incidents during same period in 2016-17. There were a total of 61 serious behavior incidents during the first 15 weeks of the 2017-18 School Year compared to 98 incidents during the first 15 weeks of 2016-17. Of the 61 this year, 45 students have opted for diversion.

Restorative Practices

address misbehavior and harm in a way that:

- ◆ Strengthens relationships
- ◆ Focuses on harm done rather than only on rule-breaking
- ◆ Give voice to the person harmed
- ◆ Engages in collaborative problem-solving
- ◆ Empowers change and growth
- ◆ Enhances responsibility

Elevator Pitch

We recognize that many students in Schenectady schools have been affected by trauma—otherwise known as Adverse Childhood experiences (ACEs) - and the impact of these experiences have not only on learning but on overall health and quality of life many years down the road.

In order to make sure every Schenectady child is learning, we must help them in the ways that they need help and teach the whole child.

It's important that we have an understanding and awareness of the role that we play in promoting resiliency, recognizing signs and symptoms of trauma, and integrating this into our procedures and practices.

Creating trauma informed schools is about **building a culture** in which all recognize indicators of trauma, the impact that trauma has and how to offer support to children, parents and staff who are affected.

With a trauma informed approach, educators must **shift thinking** around student behavior and make efforts to connect with students to better understand the reasons behind behavior.

Instead of asking a child what's wrong with you, we should be asking what happened to you. The focus needs to be on getting mental health needs met.

There are many activities and collaborations in place across the district.

The training of all staff on trauma sensitivity and the importance of self-care continues to be underway.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Childhood experiences have a tremendous impact on future violence victimization and perpetration.

Economic hardship is one of the most common ACEs.

⇒ The work
⇒ Why its important
⇒ Why you care

Self-Care

Any educator who works with traumatized children is vulnerable to the effects of trauma. You can develop compassion fatigue from exposure to trauma through the children with whom you work.

It's important that you attend to your own self care.

- Guard against your work becoming the only activity that defines who you are.
- Keep perspective by spending time with children who are not experiencing traumatic stress.
- Be sure to eat well, exercise, engage in fun activities, take a break during the day and find time to self-reflect.
- Mindful Identity and Connection (meditation)

IGNACIO 's Self Care Plan!



If you have questions about Trauma Sensitive Schools, please contact Andrea Tote, District Director of Pupil Personnel Services.