Research-Based, Trauma-Responsive Education Practices Webinar

March 28, 2019

Chat Pod Questions

1. Are there any curricula in existence that you would recommend?

Amy Lansing Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of California San Diego
- There is no single "gold standard" curriculum at this stage, and I am not aware of any consensus on 'trauma-related curriculum' for students—education or psychoeducation as opposed to identification and services, for example. Keep in mind that policies are designed to assist schools in developing and maintaining supportive learning environments that are not exclusively focused on identifying and treating students, so the policies help all learners—regardless of their background.
- For schools and agencies to support their staff, I advocate for a systematic approach that 1) promotes buy-in at every level (e.g., students, staff) from the beginning; 2) evaluates school health and needs; 3) establishes a common, trauma-informed language and then builds on skills (beginning with core trainings, and then supplemental training, while providing the core trainings for any new staff in an ongoing manner); and 4) uses metrics to collect data tracking change and progress over time.
- By the end of 2017, only 11 states had developed initiatives (not necessarily programming or curriculum) related to trauma-informed approaches, with about seven states passing legislation by 2018. See here. Visit NASBE's website, which provides an online library of currently existing state statutory and regulatory language related to trauma-informed policies; student health; and the Whole School, Whole Community, and Whole Child model – just click on your state: http://statepolicies.nasbe.org/health?mc_cid=b5cdb0259c&mc_eid=36a7bec664.

Kathleen Guarino, LMHC, Senior Technical Assistance Consultant, American Institutes for Research
- There are several frameworks/curricula for adopting a trauma-sensitive approach that have emerged over the past decade. The following are examples that focus on school-wide strategies:
  - Guarino, K., & Chagnon, E. (2018). *Trauma-sensitive schools training package.* Washington, DC: National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. Retrieved from https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/trauma-sensitive-schools-training-package
  - Cole, S. F., Eisner, A., Gregory, M., & Ristuccia, J. (2013). *Creating and advocating for trauma-sensitive schools.* Massachusetts Advocates for Children. Retrieved from http://www.traumasensitiveschools.org
  - Wolpow, R., Johnson, M. M., Hertel, R., & Kincaid, S. (2009). *The heart of learning and teaching: Compassion, resiliency, and academic success.* Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Compassionate Schools. Retrieved from http://www.k12.wa.us/compassionateschools/pubdocs/TheHeartofLearningandTeaching.pdf
  - Downey, L. (2007). *Calmer classrooms: A guide to working with traumatised children.* Victoria, Australia: State of Victoria, Commission for Children and Young People. Retrieved from https://www.acesconnection.com/g/aces-in-education/clip/calmer-classrooms-a-guide-to-working-with-traumatised-children-pdf

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Schools Committee. (2017). *Creating, supporting, and sustaining trauma-informed schools: A system framework.* Los Angeles, CA, and Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress. Retrieved from https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//creating_supporting_sustaining_trauma_informed_schools_a_systems_framework.pdf
  - National Child Traumatic Stress Network Schools Committee. (2008). *Child trauma toolkit for educators.* Los Angeles, CA & Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress. Retrieved from https://www.nctsn.org/resources/child-trauma-toolkit-educators
  - University of California San Francisco Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS) Program: https://hearts.ucsf.edu/program-overview
  - Wisconsin's Trauma-Sensitive Schools Initiative: https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/trauma

- There are also a range of trauma-specific interventions (Tier 2/3) for addressing the trauma-related mental health needs of particular students or groups of students that have been developed specifically for use in schools. These include the following:
  - **Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS)** is a skills-based group intervention that is aimed at relieving symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and general anxiety among children exposed to multiple forms of trauma (Jaycox, Stein, & Amaya-Jackson, 2009; National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.).
  - **Bounce Back** is a cognitive-behavioral, skills-based, group intervention aimed at relieving symptoms of child traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and functional impairment among elementary school children (ages 5–11) who have been exposed to traumatic events. Developed as an adaptation for elementary-aged students of the Cognitive-Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) program, Bounce Back contains many of the same therapeutic elements but is designed with added elements and engagement activities and more parental involvement to be developmentally appropriate for 5–11-year-olds (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.).
  - **Support for Students Exposed to Trauma (SSET)** is a cognitive-behavioral, skills-based support group aimed at relieving symptoms of child traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and functional impairment among middle school children (ages 10–16) who have been exposed to traumatic events. Developed as an adaptation of the CBITS program, SSET contains many of the same therapeutic elements but is designed to be implemented by school staff members without clinical training, including school teachers or counselors, with back-up clinical support (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.).
  - **Multimodality Trauma Treatment-Focused Coping or Trauma-Focused Coping in Schools (TFC)** is a skills-oriented, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) approach for children exposed to single-incident trauma; it targets posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and collateral symptoms. It is designed as a peer-mediating group intervention in schools (Jaycox et al., 2009; National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.).
  - **Trauma and Grief-Focused Group Therapy for Adolescents (TGCT-A)** is a manualized group or individual intervention for trauma-exposed or traumatically bereaved older children and adolescents that can be implemented in schools (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, n.d.).

- In addition to the interventions highlighted here, there are numerous therapeutic interventions for child trauma that can be implemented at an individual level. The National Child Traumatic Stress network (www.nctsn.org) offers guidance for mental health professionals related to quality trauma-informed screening and assessment tools and treatment interventions.

References

Jaycox, L. H., Stein, B. D., & Amaya-Jackson, L. (2009). School-based treatment for children and adolescents. In E. B. Foa, T. M. Keane, M. J. Friedman, & J. A. Cohen (Eds.), *Effective treatments for PTSD: Practice guidelines from the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (2nd ed.*) (pp. 327–345). New York: Guilford.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (n.d.). *Treatments that work.* Retrieved from https://www.nctsn.org/treatments-and-practices/treatments-that-work/interventions

2. **How can we get this information to more campuses? Can we use the data and information in our trainings with teachers and administrators? How do we infuse this in all of our work?**

Amy Lansing Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of California San Diego
- As each school chooses to approach becoming trauma informed, remember that single trainings or web-based only trainings are useful, but absolutely do not replace opportunities to richly dialogue in collaborative ways with experts, the entire school, and their community partners. Nothing beats these in-person interactions and opportunities to learn and problem-solve together.

Kathleen Guarino, LMHC, Senior Technical Assistance Consultant, American Institutes for Research
- Integrating information about trauma and its effects and trauma-sensitive educational practices within curricula for educators in training programs at colleges and universities is an important proactive strategy.
- Finding ways to gather data on the experiences and needs of the students in your schools and districts is an important component of universal trauma-sensitivity. Schools gather data about exposure to different types of traumatic events as part of national surveys, such as the youth risk behavior survey. You may also gather data regarding the rates of trauma exposure in the communities served by the school. All of the contextual information helps make the case to teachers and administrators about why addressing trauma is important. There are also national statistics about rates of violence and trauma that may be useful.
- Ideally, schools move towards integrating a trauma-sensitive approach into all aspects of how the school operates, including the following:
  - Making education about trauma and its effects a routine part of onboarding for staff and part of regular staff meeting discussions.
  - Focusing on creating safe and respectful school environments.
  - Recognizing and reducing trauma-related triggers in the school environment and eliminating potentially retraumatizing practices, such as harsh or punitive responses.
  - Considering trauma in all assessment protocol and behavior plans.
  - Embedding a commitment to youth and family voice, choice, and empowerment.
  - Addressing the secondary effects on educators that can occur when working with trauma survivors.
  - Ensuring that policies, procedures, and protocols align with a trauma-sensitive approach.
- Trauma sensitivity does not need to be viewed as an additional, separate initiative, but rather as an important additional component. Schools benefit from considering how trauma-sensitive practices align with existing efforts, such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), restorative practices, or other efforts related to ensuring a positive school climate. Sample strategies include aligning or combining school teams with shared goals (e.g., climate teams, school improvement teams, PBIS teams, trauma-sensitive work groups); developing a shared vision; and aligning professional development activities.

3. **Please explain what culturally responsive is and what it's not. Would like info on culturally responsive interactions.**

Amy Lansing Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of California San Diego

• At the broadest level, I think about culturally responsive practices as interactions and mindsets that are open, accepting, and curious about how others live and think, while not making assumptions about any one individual's buy-in to a particular culture because of their gender, race, or other characteristics. Not everyone embraces the culture you might "automatically assign" to them. Instead of assuming, ask sensitive and thoughtful questions, embrace the surrounding community, invite students to share (including things like "What do you wish people understood about you? Your family? Your community?") and foster creative input ("If you could create your own culture, what would it look like?").

• Cultural responsiveness also means being aware of characteristics you have that might trigger others, your own implicit and explicit biases, and institutionalized prejudices and systemic barriers that are faced by a variety of populations based on race, ethnicity, gender/gender identity, religion (or lack thereof), sexual orientation, health or disability status, and so on. Acknowledge the elephants in the room and be prepared to advocate for openness and acceptance!

• There are a lot of resources available. One NCCRESt resource, *Becoming Culturally Responsive Educators: Rethinking Teacher Education Pedagogy* (https://www.champaignschools.org/sites/default/files/Teacher_Ed_Brief.pdf), is good for administrators and also has a table on page 7 (reproduced from Schmitz, 1999) that lays out five core guidelines for developing a culturally responsive curriculum.

• Culturally responsive teaching tips for different age groups can be found at the following links:
    – https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2016/culturally-responsive-strategies
    – https://www.schoology.com/blog/culturally-responsive-teaching-16-ways-integrate-it-your-classroom
    – https://www.prodigygame.com/blog/culturally-responsive-teaching/#list
    – https://www.prodigygame.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/Culturally-Responsive-Teaching-Strategies-and-Examples.pdf

Tammie Causey-Konaté, Ph.D., Deputy Director, Southeast Comprehensive Center at American Institutes for Research

• Culturally responsive practices are a collection of best teaching practices designed to enhance the academic success of groups of students who have been historically unsuccessful in general education settings. Culturally responsive practices are grounded in social justice education and typically work within the classroom as a site for social change. The two researchers who developed the foundation for this work are Geneva Gay (with Gay focusing initially on curriculum and then on teaching) and Gloria Ladson-Billings (honing in on students' cultural referents as a mechanism for imparting knowledge, skills, and attitudes for social, emotional, and political empowerment). Ladson-Billings (1995) recognized culturally responsive teaching as a "pedagogy of opposition" that provides students with opportunities, dispositions, and tools for experiencing individual and collective empowerment, choosing to achieve academic success, developing and maintaining cultural competence, and developing a critical consciousness, through which they are enabled to challenge and dismantle systems that produce and sustain social inequities. In this model, students' interactions with culturally responsive practitioners are empowering to students; engaging of their perspectives, cultural knowledge, experiences, and contributions; validating of every learner's culture; socially, emotionally, and politically comprehensive in their approach to teaching the whole child; transformative of schools and societies; emancipatory and liberating from oppressive educational practices and ideologies; humanistic (cognizant of ethical, social, and political effects); and normative and ethical (examining mainstream policies and practices that favor one racial or ethnic group over

another) (Gay, 2018). For educators to develop and implement practices and pedagogies that are culturally responsive, they must work to recognize, dismantle, and eliminate deficit perspectives of learners and their communities; interrogate educational opportunities, resources, and practices through an equity lens—enabling them to recognize the extent to which learners have access to them and to appreciate how different forms of knowledge affect teaching and learning; discover the importance of culture and difference to humanity; and connect their pedagogy with the context(s) in which they are teaching (Gay, 2013).

• With regard to what culturally responsive practices are and are not, I have tried to provide some guidance that is grounded primarily in the work of Ladson-Billings (2006, 1995):

What culturally responsive practices are and are not

Culturally responsive practices …	Culturally responsive practices do not …
Focus on providing students access to subject matter, skills, and educational opportunities to help them navigate between home, school, and society (Ladson-Billings, 2006).	Focus only on learners' performance related to short-term academic achievements, scripted curricula, or standardized tests.
Structure learning opportunities for students to recognize and honor their own and others' cultural beliefs and traditions (Ladson-Billings, 2006).	Situate learners' culture and lived experience as distant, separate from, and unlikely to inform school-related learning experiences.
Challenge teachers to examine their conceptions of self and others so they can work to address issues of bias and privilege (Ladson-Billings, 1995).	Take for granted that educators have done the self-work to critically examine their conceptions of self and others relative to their teaching practices.
Require teachers to facilitate the development of their and students' critical consciousness of and social action for dismantling of systems that produce and sustain social inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995).	Exempt educators from assumption of responsibility in recognizing and addressing educational inequities.
Are sensitive to cultural differences, and integrate culture naturally into curriculum, instruction, assessment, and classroom management (Ladson-Billings, 1995).	Lump all learners together as the same, while ignoring their cultural particularities.

References

Gay, G. (2013). Teaching to and through cultural diversity. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *43*, 48–70.

Gay, G. (2018). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Third Edition. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, *32*, 465–491.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). "Yes, but how do we do it?" Practicing culturally relevant pedagogy. In J. G. Landsman & C. W. Lewis (Eds.), *White teachers diverse class-rooms: Creating inclusive schools, building on students' diversity, and providing true educational equity* (pp. 33–46). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

4. **Particularly interested in any info or known experts in Native American population.**

Amy Lansing Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of California San Diego
- I have included some additional resources for your consideration (see attached document for links). You will also find a presentation and transcript for *Addressing Toxic Stress and Trauma in Native Communities: The Promise of Tribal Home Visiting* at https://peerta.acf.hhs.gov/content/addressing-toxic-stress-and-trauma-native-communities-promise-tribal-home-visiting
- I recommend visiting http://www.icctc.org/, as they have trainings coming up in August and September. Directly from their website:

  > The *Indian Country Child Trauma Center (ICCTC)* was established to develop trauma-related treatment protocols, outreach materials, and service delivery guidelines specifically designed for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and their families. The ICCTC was originally funded by the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in 2004 with the goal to develop and deliver training, technical assistance, program development, and resources on trauma informed care to tribal communities.

- Finally, there is a link to a *Child Welfare* journal volume that has some useful trauma-informed articles. On page 30 you will find *Native Families Impacted by Historical Trauma and the Role of the Child Welfare Worker*. While this journal is geared towards child welfare and social workers, it does have a lot of useful background information. The volume is also available from the National Native Children's Trauma Center: https://cascw.umn.edu/portfolio-items/winter-2013-cw360/

Kathleen Guarino, LMHC, Senior Technical Assistance Consultant, American Institutes for Research
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Conversations about Historical Trauma: https://www.nctsn.org/resources/conversations-about-historical-trauma-part-one

5. **How do we make sure that trauma is being considered when assigning readings and developing curricula?**

Amy Lansing Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of California San Diego
- I am hesitant to recommend specific readings or curricula for students because there is not a clear gold standard, and most require purchase. Some useful things to build into your own curriculum are opportunities for empowerment (see answer below) and resiliency building. Resilience is not a trait you are born with, but rather a skill that is developed. There are many ways to collaboratively build resilience, including anticipating possible triggers, identifying emotions, having an action plan specific for each student that is developed when they enroll in your school (and includes the student's input on what coping methods they may already have), and using "cool spots" or other safe spaces that a student can choose to use when they are feeling overwhelmed.
- Build in positive primers, brain breaks or special moments to your class, especially when they help with transitions at the beginning and end of class (e.g., have 2–3 students say something they are grateful for, or give a moment of breathing and silence to get everyone in the mindset to learn—perhaps with a little mantra they can say silently: "I am present. I am open to learn. I can leave everything else behind for now.").
- *How to Lead Healing Art Activities With Kids* includes upcoming webinars, a 1-minute creative expression reflection, art extension activities and techniques, grief resources, and caregiver guides. They have free resources as well as some reasonably priced training opportunities. https://www.artwithheart.org/learn/

- Also, be aware that some experiential exercises have the potential to be retraumatizing. A recent example in the news of a poorly thought through activity had teachers re-enacting the slave trade in the classroom (with games that included "going back to the plantation" when students lost points)! It may seem obvious to everyone here, but this is not a healthy approach. In contrast, readings can be handled more sensitively and examining artifacts or other types of experiential learning can be useful with planning and input from stakeholders.

- Ask your community for input and suggestions! Have family members come in and participate or read something meaningful to them. This does require some preparation with those community members to make sure that nothing traumatizing or inappropriate happens, but this is a great way to develop a true partnership with your families.

- From a whole-school approach, make sure to reframe student behaviors (move from "what is wrong with this student" to "what might have happened to this student"; recognize symptoms as the coping mechanisms that they are) and remove zero-tolerance policies.

Kathleen Guarino, LMHC, Senior Technical Assistance Consultant, American Institutes for Research
- Some possible strategies for considering trauma when assigning readings and developing curricula include the following:
    - Review assigned readings or existing curricula for potential bias and to determine if the material is disrespectful, dismissive, or disempowering to particular student groups. Using materials that perpetuate prejudice also perpetuates trauma.
    - Consider aspects of the material that could be triggering for students exposed to trauma and determine whether additional preparation is needed for students who may need help coping with particular topics.
    - Consider how educational information about stress, adversity, resilience, and coping could be integrated into readings and curricula to prevent and mitigate the effects of trauma on students. Many students who have experienced trauma will not rise to the level of Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions, but would benefit from education and skill-building related to coping with stress.

6. Would prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol, or a difficult delivery, be considered trauma?

Amy Lansing Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of California San Diego
- While these experiences are not likely to be considered emotionally traumatic events in the traditional sense, these are absolutely adversities that can impact the brain. Data from very carefully selected samples in studies designed to examine the impact of low birth weight, premature birth, anoxic episodes during delivery, or exposure to maternal smoking during pregnancy have similar findings in terms of mental health concerns (e.g., higher rates of ADD, ADHD, bipolar disorder), behavioral difficulties (e.g., oppositional, aggressive, hyperactive behaviors) and cognitive challenges (e.g., executive dysfunction) to what we see in Juvenile Justice–engaged youth who have been exposed to a wide range of trauma and adversity. As I mentioned in the webinar, even sleep deprivation can mimic the impact of the ≥4 ACE threshold that increases morbidity and mortality in a dose-response fashion. So prenatal and perinatal experiences, sleep deprivation, ACEs, poverty, and other traumas or adversities can all impact the brain.

- Fortunately, neurodevelopment is protracted, and neuroplasticity means that there are many opportunities to catch up on developmental delays if we create positive and safe learning environments for our students.

7. **Given that most teaching experiences function on models of compliance and retraumatize children through experiences of powerlessness, what do you point teachers to for alternative models that offer children power?**

Amy Lansing Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of California San Diego

- Any and all opportunities that allow students to shine in their own way can be empowering. Providing opportunities for students to help each other, teach each other something, or share their culture can go a long way toward empowering students. Remember: do not put students on the spot. Don't call on them to do something they are not prepared for in front of their peers. Rather, provide scaffolding at the beginning of the year and let them know that you value their input, knowledge, and experiences, and that each student will have opportunities to help their fellow classmates. What that looks like for each student will vary based on age, skills, the type of class being taught, and so on. Get the students' input on this: You do not have to come up with everything. Empower the students by asking them what they might like to contribute. Some students may struggle significantly with this, so be prepared to ask questions and help brainstorm. Some brainstorming can certainly happen as a group activity!

- There are some great tips available at https://www.teachthought.com/the-future-of-learning/50-ways-empower-students-connected-world/ and https://www.edutopia.org/blog/empower-students-adora-svitak.

- It is also helpful to get feedback from students, allowing them to learn how to articulate what they understand (e.g., explain in their own words what they believe an assignment is about, and what they think they are supposed to do), and then ask them if they have any other ideas about how to demonstrate their knowledge! This is richly informative for the teachers as well, in terms of identifying new and creative ways of demonstrating knowledge, seeing skills or strengths they may have been unaware of, and finding out if students REALLY understand what they are being asked to do. It can be enlightening for everyone.

Kathleen Guarino, LMHC, Senior Technical Assistance Consultant, American Institutes for Research

- There are strategies and activities related to collaborating with students and families to promote voice, choice, and empowerment within the *Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package*: https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/trauma-sensitive-schools-training-package