

TRANSCRIPT

What Does Trauma Look Like in Schools?

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[Title Slide]

CAROL ANDERSON

I've had a chance to introduce myself, but I wanted Lillian to be able to have a second to introduce herself. She's by all means my...I'd say, one of my very dear colleagues at the State Office of Education and keeps, by all means—by just her presence there with me—keeps my stress a little bit much down at work, so.

LILLIAN TSOSIE-JENSEN

Thanks! I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you today. For those of you who don't know me—because I see lots of familiar faces in the room—I'm Lillian Tsosie-Jensen. I'm also a specialist here; I'm also here at USOE, here in Salt Lake, at the Utah State Office of Education. Have kind of a very broad background that stems from education, and I have a great passion as a student advocate. Done some work in some mental health fields—related fields—as well as the Pointed Mountains, working with some folks in incarceration, and families. But I have a great love and passion, because of my background and my heritage, to help and support our American Indian/Alaskan Native community, and looking at the historical trauma piece. So I was very...I don't know if the word is *excited*, but it was very nice to hear that correlation piece that you were talking about this morning. We'll talk a little bit about that as we look at our slide presentation.

We don't have a lot of time and, as Carol has said, that our colleagues who were up before us today, and their background is much more astounding than certainly ours. But it's about that partnership, and what does that look like in schools, and how do we move forward; and to be able to braid those services of support for students. And so hopefully, we can kind of add a little bit to the conversation, but I know that a lot that what we had kind of outlined has already been said this morning, and I appreciate that work and coming from that perspective that will help us move forward and collaborate.

CAROL ANDERSON

Okay, thanks. [Slide: *First Steps*] So really, I think one of the first steps is, in creating a trauma-sensitive school, is to help educators—you folks in this room and our colleagues from

other agencies that cross over into our educational field—become aware of the trauma symptoms. And that was part of this morning, was being able to do that—to say, what are those trauma symptoms? How did they look at that? Also part of that was, if you look at the work by Dean Fixsen on implementation science, one of the first phases of implementing any initiative, or having things move forward within a system, is building a common language and knowledge around that topic.

And so, that's when I said, you know, this morning, one of our outcomes was around this. How do you start building that knowledge within our educational systems about trauma, the effects of trauma, the impacts on learning and normal development? [Slide: *Survival Brain vs. Learning Brain*] As I said, our colleagues have done a great job this morning, really kind of talking about what's the survival brain, what are the functioning and that—Susie did a fabulous job of laying that out for us, talking about those systems within the youth we work at.

I think as far as also thinking *the learning brain*, and that being where we focus as education; so much of the work we do, and our outcomes, is around the learning of the students—the testing, the school grades, the annual yearly progress, which, of course, is so important. But I think...as we need to think about it is, as educators, are the students sitting in our classrooms in that learning brain? And if they're not currently in that learning brain, what can we do to help them calm that mind, get into a place that we're learning. I think as we talk—and we hear so much about school reform, educational reform—we're missing a piece if we're not seeing what is the trauma, or what are the students dealing with in our classrooms, and are they in that learning brain? Are they sitting in that desk ready to receive the information that we're wanting to provide them? Are they more so in that survival brain? And do we need to take a step back and say, what can we do as educators within that system to make sure they're ready for those learning moments?

LILLIAN TSOSIE-JENSEN

[Slide: *People Who Have Experienced Trauma Are:*] So this is some information from Samson. I also appreciate some of the Utah data that were shared out this morning. And just looking at the effects of what happens to that early...to individuals—that early childhood trauma—and for those of you who can't see this from way in the back, let me just read a few things to you. Just looking at that trauma, or individuals who have experienced trauma—and some of this is just restated from some of the data information that was talked about this morning—that you're three times more likely to have some kind of serious job problem. So not only does it affect you through your education, but through your lifespan and employment. Three times more likely to experience depression, three times more likely to be absent from work, three times more likely to use antidepressants and medication. As stated earlier, we're probably, here in Utah, that's our largest dataset as far as usage.

And it kind of goes on; the individual in the video this morning talked about his use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs related to his blocks of memory; that he wanted to block out his trauma experience of youth. And then look at the largest piece of this, where it talks about 15 times more likely to complete suicide. So we've been working a lot at the state office; we have Cathy Davis here with us as well—our Suicide Prevention Specialist. Cathy, will you just raise

your hand? Yeah, so if you get an opportunity, maybe to make some connections with her—folks that don't know her or work with her. We also have Vern Larson, there in the back, that has done a lot through the years. Vern, will you raise your hand, too? Just looking at the prevention efforts that we've tried to...again, braiding our services and support for students, and being able to provide the opportunity to support you in the educational field, because that's really what we're looking at. So I thought this was kind of some interesting information in the graphic.

[Slide: *The Trauma Tree*] The other piece—this was taken from the work of Lindsay Kenny, and looking at some trauma pieces. And what I like about this—she has related work that I'm not going to go into—but what I liked about it is those connection pieces as we look at what is the bulk in what is going on. And it's those events, whether that be in early childhood, some time through their lifespan, and even as a young adult as that brain is developing. And even as adults, we know that we could have some kind of life events that affect our emotions, and they then sometimes develop into symptoms, and they limit our belief systems.

And I'm going to stop there for a minute, because I...I want to have just a thought there on *limiting your belief systems*. So as we build on what was already talked about this morning, and looking at the students that we serve. And they come to us in all shapes and sizes, and their background, and their life experience. And as they're developing, there's a lot of self-doubt in that identity piece. And I really like what was said earlier about, not what's *wrong* with this child or student, but what *happened*. And what is the root causes behind this. And that's what this is about today, is recognizing those pieces so that we can then move forward and look at those support services for students.

[Slide: Illustration] Cathy, myself, and Carol, we do a lot of presentations at some of the conferences around the trauma piece, but recently we've done a lot in *cutting*, and that background, and how that emotional trauma is kind of some of the root causes behind the cutting behaviors that we're seeing in our schools. And so I added this slide more as a visual of what lies underneath. That those dark shadows within our students' lives are sometimes much bigger than we see, but they show up in behaviors. And what are those behaviors that we're seeing in our school. Well, that's maybe where we want to spend our time and our focus, because you're all very aware of what those behaviors are, and looking at what shows up.

[Slide: *Youth Trauma: School and Classroom Behaviors*] And I'm going to have Carol talk a little bit more about this. The one thing I think is very interesting...as we see a lot of those negative behaviors, look at the very last item here. Right? We don't always look at that; there's a lot of data and research, when we start talking about what we call at-risk, at-need students, and then our high-achieving students, their profiles look very, very similar, right? So, Carol.

CAROL ANDERSON

As I said, some of these have already been covered. But just kind of wanted to run through them with you and maybe just put the...what does this look like in our classrooms or our educational settings? Reactively or impulsive; I have a lot of people say, "Well, they just don't think before they do their behaviors; they just do them." I see that a lot; I see a lot of

aggression in schools, unfortunately—a lot of physical aggression; defiance. I hear a lot of, “Well we...they just won’t follow our directions; they don’t do what we ask them to do; they’re just defiant, withdrawn.”

I think the way to think about some of the first three bullets there are more so, maybe, the externalizing-type behaviors. I think in education we’re really good at picking up those externalizing behaviors, because they’re the ones that stop our teaching, right? We’ve really worked all day and we’ve got this great lesson, or we’ve got this great science lab, and we’re going to, you know, get the kids through this. Well, it’s those behaviors that stop that learning. We forget, as Lillian said, to kind of think about some of those internalizing behaviors; as educators, we need to become a little more aware of both sides of that. There’s the externalizing behaviors that are very easy to see—they’re the ones that stop our teaching, that disrupt our classrooms. But what are those internalizing behaviors, for as Lillian mentioned, both group of kids—the ones that seem to be more at risk, and also those real high-achieving kids. Lack of motivation, and then we talked about perfectionism, uh, perfectionism.

[Slide: *A Wicked Twisted Road*] I kind of refer to it...one of my favorite country music bands is Reckless Kelly out of Stanley, Idaho. They have a song called *The Wicked Twisted Road*, and when I listened to that lyrics one day, I thought, “Wow, that’s the pathway those kids talked.” It was mentioned earlier about the...the lifespan, or the projection, and I see this so often in schools; it’s so easy to map. There’s typically a lack of school success, a decline in school motivation and engagement, unmet needs—both physical health, mental health—kind of back to just that Maslow’s Hierarchy. You know, we can’t have the kids achieving at their top level if we’re dealing with “where am I staying tonight, where’s my parents, where is my food”—those kinds of things. We kind of go into the truancy issues, because if you’re not engaged in school, you’re not feeling successful in something, what you typically do then is become truant.

When we say truancy, we first think of the “Oh, that’s the secondary kid sloughing classes,” but we forget, truancy issues are also in our elementary schools. It’s the withdrawn, the not engaged, the—as I kind of say a visual of it, the coat or sweatshirt over the head, and the head down on the desk. To me, that’s a truancy issue in our elementary settings; a sign of that. By all means, if they are truant, they’re not out doing community service, as we know. They’re most likely engaging in dangerous behaviors; those dangerous behaviors then typically lead to court involvement. We see a lot of dropout at this point. The risk behaviors that they’re engaging in can also lead to accidental death.

As Lillian said, there’s a high risk of suicide at that point. And then, as we’ve also kind of talked about, that long-term family dysfunction, the generational—this goes from generation to generation. So often, when I have to sit with parents in school settings because their children are struggling, I say, “Well, tell me a little bit about your school history, and what you did in school.” And so often it was much like what they’re seeing in their own children. So I think it’s that...as educators, how do we break that wicked twisted road, where do we step in with our interventions and be aware of what students need in order for them to achieve at their highest level. Okay, yeah.

LILLIAN TSOSIE-JENSEN

We're kind of tag-teaming here, too, and trying not to be redundant with what was said earlier. One thing that Carol brought up was the truancy issue, and as we look at that—I don't know if some of you were able to attend a summit that WestEd helped support this fall on absenteeism. And looking at the dataset there, because as we look at the students that we have in our schools, what is that attendance rate; what is the data? You know, when I go out and I do my school visits, the number one question that I'm asking is, "What is your demographics? Who are those children and those students that are within your school?" So as you look at that dataset, look beyond the demographics, but to also look at the attendance rate, the graduation rate. I mean, this is all data that you can look at and do correlation studies.

Many of our school counselors now are doing data projects and gap analysis, and I gotta say, kudos to them. They are doing amazing things in the field. Those...they have developed a data mindset, because they know that they have to look at targeted interventions to be able to provide these wraparound and support services for our students. So when you start looking at the academic, and building that bridge to what are the behavioral needs, we need to look at that dataset and look at the attendance rate, because we know that if our children are not in school—our students are not in school—they're certainly not going to be getting the education that they need. And then I think, you know, kind of to echo what was said in the back earlier is that, as we look at Maslow's Hierarchy of needs is that, yeah, sometimes when our kids show up, that they may be deficient in the way of maybe not having breakfast. So what are those basic needs, and what do we need to do in wraparound supports in our school to be able to provide that foundation to help our students be successful. So it's all correlated, and then the question becomes, you know, what are those next steps, which we'll kind of talk about right in the end.

CAROL ANDERSON

Thanks, Lillian; those were important points. Our schools are very data rich; we just have to get, as Lillian said, in that mindset to pull that data and use it to identify those students at an earlier point, and to match them with an intervention that can help them move forward. [Slide: *Useful Trauma Resources for Educators*] I think these are two very useful resources for educators around trauma, and they are the right price for us, because they're free; we love that in education, right? Free resources. If you just Google these, they're easy to find; they're downloadable. The first edition is *Helping Traumatized Children Learn*. This is a report on policies, and maybe more so, our policy agenda. I think often at times we forget that we do some exclusionary practices in school that might not be helpful. We have suspensions; we have "go to the counselor," "go to the principal," go here, go there. That we forget that maybe some of those exclusionary practices and policies that we have in place could be hindering and not helping. So I think this first one really kind of lays out—the first monograph lays out—we need to look at our policies, our procedures, our practices that we do in education to make sure that we're not retraumatizing; that we're not excluding, that we're including; that we're making them feel welcome, safe, secure, and connected to that school environment.

The next edition of this was *Creating and Advocating for Trauma-Sensitive Schools*, and I think this is a really important one. And this is kind of getting down to the “Okay, let’s, you know... where does the rubber meet the road, and what can we do along these lines?” So I encourage you to look up these two resources, and as you go back to your school settings, share them with your colleagues, share them with your administrators, and start some of these very important discussions around having trauma-informed schools in the state of Utah.

[Slide: *Teaching & Supporting Students*] The first is teaching and supporting students. I’ll just go through this quickly; it’s just some quick bullet points on, okay, what can you go back, maybe tomorrow, and start looking at—well, not tomorrow, because it’s...don’t go back tomorrow and do it—Monday, that you can start doing in your schools. We heard about, you know, help regulate those emotions in order to master social skills and academic skills, so what are those emotional regulation things that we can teach with students. By all means, still maintain a high academic standards for them. Help students feel safe; I think that is such an important one—that students feel safe and secure in our buildings, supported and connected to the educators around them.

Manage behavior and set limits—we’ve done a lot in our state around positive behavior supports and interventions in our schools. That’s the first foundation of PBIS, is setting behavioral standards and limits for students across all settings, all staff. If you are not familiar with that work and where to maybe access some of that, please come see either myself or Lillian at lunch, and we can definitely help you answer some of those questions. We need to look at reducing bullying and harassment in our schools.

Help students have a sense of agency. Build on their strengths, that the “what”...I think, too often we focus on what are they doing wrong, what are they doing wrong, but we forget there’s strengths in all of our students, and we go from those strengths to help build that resiliency, make them feel successful. Back to that wicked twisted road, that was the first one—the lack of success. We need to say, let’s start with your strengths, build from your strengths so you can get a sense of success at a stronger pace.

Understand the connection between behavior and emotions; it’s not just that they’re throwing the book, it’s the *why* are they throwing the book. What’s that underlining emotion there? What’s the connection between those two, back to, kind of the covert, and internalizing and externalizing behaviors, and really avoid the labels. I think too often we start saying, “Well, they’re just *that*, or the student’s *this*, or they’re *this*,” that we forget there’s underlying root causes to some of those types of behaviors. Anything you want to add there? Okay, good. Okay, I know we’re trying to get through this, because I...some of this has already being covered, as we talked about, and I know you’re hungry.

[Slide: *In a Trauma-Sensitive School: Adults*] In a trauma-sensitive school, this is what the adults need to really look and focus—and all this information comes from those two monographs that I shared with you just a moment ago—is share an understanding; support all students to feel safe; address students’ needs in a holistic way. Connect students to the school community—those connections—and feeling like they are supported by the adults; there is an adult in the building that cares for them. That they have peers that they can turn to; they have

peer groups that are so important to them. Embrace teamwork. We can't do this work alone; you really need to look at the...if you're an individual here, and you're the only one within your school sitting here, you need to go back and rally the troops. Dave, you know, gave you some resources this morning around AVA [the Academy on Violence and Abuse] starting the discussions. The clip I shared with you this morning is accessible, we can help you get access to that; those two resources that I shared with you. And then also just looking at the adaptation of that—how to kind of do that, and put it into place in your schools.

[Slide: Vision Diagram] I think the next thing is really looking at this, and this is really a vision for trauma-sensitive schools. As I said, if you look at the implementation science, you first build the common language. Then you'd move to, "Okay, what's our mission, or our common vision, around what we need to do in schools?" "Why do we feel an urgency to become a trauma-sensitive school?" is really that first question of sitting down with that approach of looking at the school setting. "How do we know we are ready to create a trauma-sensitive action plan?" And that monograph has that action plan in for you—steps for you to take in saying, "Okay, what's going to be our action plan in doing this? What actions will address staff and help us become a trauma-sensitive school?" So engaging your staff: this has to be a whole school approach. It can't be a one-man show. Even though sometimes we think we're invincible in education, we need to kind of look at that whole school approach.

"How do we know we are becoming a trauma-sensitive school?" So kind of then saying, "We've identified what we want to do, we've looked at some of the causes; we have a plan in place. Now the next step is, like, after putting those in place, how are we doing with that?" So I mean, you should kind of look at this...this is just really a health model—identify the problem, what are you going to do about it, what intervention are you going to put in place, and then go back and say, "Now, did we achieve what we're needing to achieve there?"

LILLIAN TSOSIE-JENSEN

[Slide: *Trauma Lens*] So, you know, a lot of times, I think, in a school setting, when we start to look at the responses or behaviors of children—and regrettably, sometimes putting labels on them—we believe that it becomes more of a mental health issue. And we look at wraparound support services—and that's not to say that that needs to be done, because it certainly does. But I want to...if there's one thing that I can leave you with today, is that the clinical interventions for behaviors for trauma are alone not enough. And I think that's the message that we need to carry; that the information that was shared out this morning is so valuable; that's the foundation. But also what was said was...I loved that definition of resiliency—it was a quick word, which was *connectiveness*. That those kids who walk your hallways need to feel connected to someone. We are human beings; we need that touch. We need to be recognized; our children need to feel connected.

So we are a part of the solution; we are a part of helping kids feel connected. And I've got to tell you that you're making more of a difference than you believe, and I've got to just share a very quick story. I was at a professional development, and it was actually about licensing. And I was up at the front of the room, and I was kind of doing a tag-team. And there was a gentleman over at the door that kept kind of going, "Okay, can you come over; can you come

over?” And I’m like, “Okay.” And I thought, you know, maybe there was an emergency; maybe he needed something. He pulls me out the hallway. He says, “You don’t know me; you will not remember me, but I went to X High School where you were a teacher,” and I said, “Oh.” He says, “I will never forget one day when I was feeling very, very low and walking down the hallway. I was not one of your students; you did not know me. But you approached me, and you made me feel like I mattered, because you reached out to me and you checked on me.” And I was so...I was speechless. And he was right; I didn’t remember this student, and he was not one...student in my classroom. But just a few small words made this individual feel connected.

So when we ask ourselves as educators, “What do we do? We’re not mental health providers.” But guess what? We can create a trauma-sensitive school. We can create an environment where our kids feel connected; it’s that resiliency piece. So we are that bridge; we need—and this was said earlier—that we need to make sure that we’re working together. So if I could leave you with a few things...I don’t know; did you want to read a few of the items on here, Carol?

CAROL ANDERSON

No, go ahead.

LILLIAN TSOSIE-JENSEN

That lens—again, this comes from the literature that Carol had sent...put up for you. And just some closing pieces as far as what we can do in schools. And it is that whole school approach, where we’re building those bridges, and it’s that whole school approach that requires more than just the awareness of the trauma impact for learning. But looking at those bridges—and it’s everyone’s responsibility to be a part of a schoolwide change, and understanding and responding to what those supports look like. And this is from the top up and the bottom...excuse me, the top down and the bottom up. And lastly, all children can learn in a trauma-sensitive school, because they have positive connections to others and sense of safety throughout the entire school.

So I appreciate the words that were said today, and I know that there’s a lot of work to do. But I also know there’s a lot of folks willing to put forth the effort and to work in behalf of our students. So I appreciate all that’s been said today.

CAROL ANDERSON

Thank you. As I informed you this morning, the morning part of our day would be awareness of trauma—building a common language, understanding a platform together. This afternoon will be steps in the right direction. So what are some of those resources in our community? What are some educators doing outside of our state? I’m so happy to have people that have been willing to travel in and say, you know, “This is what we’re doing; this is what we’ve been able to achieve.” And so before we go to lunch, I just wanted to kind of show—this is some steps in the right direction—share this little clip with you on an example of an intervention that these folks will share with us this afternoon after lunch.

[VIDEO: *Steps in the Right Direction*]

Student 1: Almost every single class have, like, a pass to go to the Wellness Center and come over here, from your teacher permission, you don't just get up and walk out the class. You ask your teacher, "Can I take a break for a few minutes?" Then you go to the Wellness Center.

Student 2: Every time when a kid is frustrated, they come into the Wellness Center and sign in; it's like, you have to do the date, their names, and then their grade. Then you circle how are you feeling, if you come in the Wellness Center mad or frustrated. When they leave, they sign how are they feeling—still sad, in the middle, or happy. If you're really having a strong feeling, you go talk to Ms. Kelsey or Jen. The Calm It Down sign-in sheet is where people sign in to go over there to that section to calm down. The Calm It Down Corner is for relaxing and to do things fun if you're feeling upset, and then you lay down if you want—if you're feeling kind of sick or something.

Student 3: I had to ask my teacher if I could go to the Wellness Center for anger, and I walked through the door and then...right now I feel peaceful. When your minutes are up, we get back to work.

Student 2: Some kids get very mad, and then to the point where they can get really mad and hurt somebody; we'll come to the Wellness Center and talk it out.

Student 1: The next step will be the Talk It Out Corner. So this is the Talk It Out Corner, where if you have like...usually they don't let kids talk it out unless it's an adult in the really comfy chair.

Student 2: The teachers have their restorative card, so that if Ms. Kelsey or Ms. Jen are busy, all the teachers have to do is grab the card and then try to solve the problem.

Student 1: It's important so the kids don't have to have conflict with each other and so the kids won't just, like, keep on arguing.

Student 2: Show example for the younger kids, because they get into lots of arguments.

Student 1: And I like being a role model, because helping kids not being dangerous and help them be safe. Over here we have We Work It Out Together. We got two tables—this is the table when, like, kids sit down and there's always a teacher in this blue chair. And these kids that have the problems, they all work it out together. If somebody's talking, we know better to have, like, one like listen to them, and have their eyes looking right at the person who's talking.

Student 2: And we use this table for lunch buddies. It's where we have one teacher here and then we have, like, a group of friends, and we just have lunch together.

Student 1: We have a girls' group, saying, like, it's like a group of kindergarteners or upper graders; like they have groups of...they have boys...a group of boys sometimes, and groups of girls, and they're like....

Student 2: There's some groups of boys *and* girls.

Student 1: Yeah, and they like...they play games together; they appreciate each other, and they always say how are their feelings. And if, like, one of them is feeling kind of sad, the whole group will talk it out with them. It makes me feel proud and happy when they stick up for people, or when they like to tell people to calm down; it makes me feel happy.

Student 2: We know that we're going to have somebody, like, that will listen.

Students 1 and 2: This is the end of our tour of the Wellness Center.

[End video]

CAROL ANDERSON

Kids always say it so much better than us adults, don't they? So with that, enjoy your lunch. Please be ready to come back together at 12:45 for our afternoon. Thank you.