

# Exploring Implementation of Trauma-Engaged Practices in Alaska Schools

In 2019 the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development released *Transforming Schools: A Framework for Trauma-Engaged Practice in Alaska* and supporting resources to help schools address the negative impacts of childhood trauma. To understand how the recommendations in these resources were being implemented in schools across the state, this study used administrative, interview, and survey data to sort schools into three implementation levels (limited, emerging, and high) and identify factors that are correlated with implementation of the resources. Most Alaska schools implemented trauma-engaged practices at an emerging level (the middle level of implementation relative to all study schools). Schools that reported awareness of the resources and schools with higher percentages of students in foster care were associated with higher implementation levels. Implementation level predicted some student outcomes related to school climate and connectedness. Qualitative data from interviews highlighted the need for buy-in, support, and investment to improve the framework’s visibility and practical use in schools.

## Key findings

- **Implementation of trauma-engaged practices varies in Alaska’s schools.** Most schools (63 percent) demonstrated an emerging level of implementation.
- **Schools that reported higher awareness or use of the Trauma-Engaged Schools resources demonstrated a higher level of implementation.**
- **The likelihood of a school being in the emerging or high implementation group increased as the percentage of students in foster care increased.** There is a statistically significant relationship (at  $p < .01$ ) between a higher percentage of students in foster care students in the school and the likelihood of a school being in a higher implementation group.
- **School implementation level significantly predicted student ratings on two subscales of the state’s School Climate and Connectedness Survey.** These were the caring others scale (elementary school students) and the cultural connectedness scale (secondary school students).
- **Interview data highlighted the importance of buy-in and support in achieving high levels of implementation of trauma-engaged practices.** Data emphasized supports and investments (see figure).

