



Trauma-sensitive Schools Require Whole School Transformation and Support

We believe supporting students who suffer from childhood trauma requires whole school involvement and transformation. All school employs play a crucial role in supporting students impacted by childhood trauma.

The National Survey of Children's Health found that nearly 35 million children in the United States have been affected by at least one or more types of serious childhood trauma. Building resilience in children impacted by childhood trauma requires whole school support and transformation. School-wide paid professional development opportunities, collaboration and team building are essential in creating a trauma-sensitive school.

Ask

Encourage school districts to be inclusive of all school employees when transitioning to become trauma-sensitive schools. Utilize school support professionals as partners in supporting students suffering from trauma. At a minimum, all school employees should receive paid professional development that reinforces the skills and knowledge needed to positively interact and support students dealing with trauma. School districts should institute whole school collaboration teams when developing support models and other resources that address childhood trauma.

Key Points

- School districts that are inclusive of all school employees reinforce a collaborative share in the vision of supporting students impacted by trauma. Around the country, many school employees use their own resources, time and personal funds to support students dealing with trauma. They are often the silent partner in this whole school movement. Being inclusive of all school employees ensures shared accountability, vision and support.
- Addressing the issue of childhood trauma in public school requires whole school transformation. To successfully support students suffering from trauma, all school employees should be included in paid professional development that reinforces their knowledge and skills around childhood trauma and provide opportunities to learn effective ways to strengthen resilience. It is impossible to have whole school transformation when only half of the workforce receive paid professional development.
- Students dealing with ongoing trauma often rely on the many facets of their school community to supply what they are not receiving after school hours. All school employees play a vital role in offering support and resources. As such, all employees should be included when developing communication and action plans, support models and other trauma sensitive supports and resources. The support of a student impacted by trauma does not stop inside of a classroom. Support continues in the cafeteria, on the playground, in the hallways, in the school office and even on the school bus.
- School communities that engage in shared leadership, vision and accountability around supporting students suffering from childhood trauma have a higher percentage of success. For school

employees to support student's emotional and academic needs on a continuous basis, self-care is an essential professional need. This necessitates creating a school environment where all employees feel supported and safe.

Background

NEA believes that by supporting the whole child, students will come to school ready to learn and to meet academic challenges that reinforce the development of life skills, mental stimulation and student learning. When schools become trauma sensitive, they are in essence making a decision to ensure that all students are receiving the supports they need to succeed.

Nearly 35 million children in the United States have been affected by at least one or more types of serious childhood trauma. Research shows that youth who have experienced trauma are at a significantly higher risk for impairments across various cognitive functions that directly affect their ability to learn. The greater the number of adverse childhood experiences, the lower the chance a youth will care about engaging and succeeding in school.

Although awareness of the impact childhood trauma has on youths and education is growing around the United States, studies show education communities still have a long way to go. ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) awareness and engagement on a national level is imperative to ensure students are healthy, safe, engaged and supported so that they are ready to learn. Trauma-sensitive schools allow educators the opportunity to collaborate in a way that supports a student's mental and physical health so that learning can occur. School communities that engage in paid professional development, practice and support for all school employees create a culture that builds resilience for all students. Trauma-sensitive focus on education fosters a school climate where students feel safe and confident in their ability to learn, can differentiate between trauma induced behavior and appropriate behavior, and connect with adults and peers in a positive manner.