

Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools: First Step Resources
Project GROW: Generating Resilience, Outcomes, and Wellness
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Trauma-Sensitive Schools Defined:

“A trauma-sensitive school is one in which all students feel safe, welcomed and supported” (Cole, Eisner, Gregory, & Ristuccia, 2013).

https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PS_TraumaInformed.pdf

“Once schools understand the educational impacts of trauma, they can become safe, supportive environments where students make the positive connections with adults and peers they might otherwise push away, calm their emotions so they can focus and behave appropriately, and feel confident enough to advance their learning—in other words, schools can make trauma sensitivity a regular part of how the school is run. Trauma sensitivity will look different at each school. However, a shared definition of what it means to be a trauma-sensitive school can bring educators, parents, and policymakers together around a common vision. “ (Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative)

<https://traumasensitiveschools.org/trauma-and-learning/the-solution-trauma-sensitive-schools/>

What Can You Do? Suggestions from Dr. Yackley’s Presentation (drawn from the literature)

1. Be a safe haven (predictability, familiarity, and the “low and slow” approach.
2. Use ATTUNEMENT to build relationships and address dysregulated students.
3. Convey empathy – “You’re not alone.”
4. Remember “Parallel Process” – It’s not about you (but from an earlier/different relationship).
5. FRAME BENIGN INTENTIONS – assume good intentions (or they are doing the best they can given circumstances)
6. Provide the “disconfirming experience” – defy expectations and communicate unconditional positive regard (“you are worthy, capable, and safe and I won’t reject, threaten, or harm you.”
7. YOUR BEHAVIOR MAKES SENSE – Provide psycho-education about trauma responses.
8. “Name it to tame it” (Siegel, D.) – put words to underlying emotions.
9. Know the signs and symptoms of ACEs.
10. Remember the suitcase – don’t forget the “baggage” that comes from early experiences for students and self AND know your buttons.
11. Share control when possible.
12. Identify triggers and provide supports.
13. Convey hope, maintain high expectations, and provide scaffolding.
14. “Speak the unspeakable” – bear witness to traumatic stories and know where to refer.
15. Share what you know about trauma theory with others!

Online Resources:

NCTSN Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators

<https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/u57/2013/child-trauma-toolkit.pdf>
<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/school-personnel>

Trauma Aware Schools

<https://traumaawareschools.org/>

ACEs Connection

<http://www.acesconnection.com/g/aces-in-education>

Adverse Childhood Experiences

<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>

Harvard Center on the Developing Child

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/>

Trauma-Sensitive School Manuals/Guides:

Cole, S.F., Greenwald O'Brien, J., Gadd, M.G., Ristuccia, J., Wallace, D.L., & Gregory, M. (2009). *Helping traumatized children learn: Supportive school environments for children traumatized by family violence*. Massachusetts Advocates for Children, Boston, MA.

Craig, S. (2016). *Trauma-sensitive schools: Learning communities transforming children's lives, K-5*. Teachers College Press: Amsterdam.

Souers, K. & Hall, P. (2016). *Fostering resilient learners: Strategies for creating a trauma-sensitive classroom*. ASCD: Alexandria, VA.

Wolpow, R., Johnson, M.M., Hertel, R., & Kincaid, S.O. (2011). *The heart of learning and teaching: Compassion, resiliency, and academic success*. Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

A Few Books on Trauma-Informed Approaches to Education:

Cozolino, L. (2014). *Attachment-Based Teaching: Creating a Tribal Classroom*. W.W. Norton and Co., NY.

Cozolino, L. (2013). *The Social Neuroscience of Education: Optimizing Attachment & Learning in the Classroom*. W.W Norton & Co., NY.

Olson, K. (2014). *The invisible classroom: Relationships, neuroscience & mindfulness in school*. WW. Norton & Company, Inc., NY.