Trauma Sensitive Approaches for Home & School
Video 3 Fact Sheet: Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools

Schools using multi-tiered systems of supports (ex.: Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports/VTSS) recognize the importance of strengthening academic, social-emotional, and behavioral skills, so that children and youth are ready to meet high expectations at school, at home and in the community.

Academic
Social Emotional
Behavioral

What is Social-Emotional Competence? *1

There are five core skills critical to a child's social emotional growth:

- **Self-awareness** – the ability to recognize your emotions and understand the link between thoughts, emotions and behaviors
- **Self-management** – the ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts and behaviors
- **Social awareness** – the ability to understand other's perspectives and demonstrate empathy.
- **Relationship skills** – the ability to build and maintain healthy relationships
- **Responsible decision making** – the ability to make positive choice in behavior and interactions with others

Core Trauma-Informed Care Values *2

- **Safety** – Ensuring physical, emotional, behavioral and academic safety. Remember a student's perception of safety is what matters to them. Predictability and routine can contribute to a sense of safety.
- **Trustworthiness** – Conveying honesty and truthfulness. Examples of adults behaviors that show trustworthiness to students include being reliable and consistent, making tasks clear, and maintaining appropriate boundaries. Everyone must be treated with dignity and respect.
- **Choice** – Maximizing student and family choice. Student choices and a sense of control. For persons impacted by trauma who have lost control, having even small choices can feel reassuring and empowering. At school, opportunities for choice and shared decision-making can be integrated into academic and non-academic activities.
- **Collaboration** – Partnering of adults and students to solve problems and share power. Educators can help students and families be aware of and take opportunities to collaborate. Collaboration between school staff is especially critical in trauma-sensitive schools.
- **Empowerment** – Ensuring students recognize they are capable of change and they have opportunities to practice and be acknowledged for using problem solving skills. Schools empower by meaningfully including families and students in decision-making; adopting a strengths-based perspective that recognizes capabilities of all students; and embedding skill development throughout the school day.

School/Family Collaboration is Key

- Share positive information with each other, in addition to concerns/problems
- Focus on child and family strengths
- Meaningfully engage families in school decision-making
- Open communication
- Listen to families; Build trust
- Keep all communications respectful and child-focused
- Reserve judgment re: parenting or teaching approaches

Social Emotional Competencies Can Help Children *3

Social emotional competencies help children:

- Persist during challenging tasks
- Ask for help when needed
- Consider the consequences of their actions

Children who are taught social-emotional skills experience greater educational, career and relationship success.

Strategies

- Consider needed social, emotional, behavioral and academic supports
- Establish feelings of safety to support relationships
- Show genuine interest to build trust and strengthen relationships
- Maintain trust to support learning and understanding
- Let emotions calm before engaging the student
- Give choice in the school day to support empowerment
- Give voice and choice to promote trust and empowerment
- Foster open communication between home and school
- Build on student strengths
- Offer supports to families to build resiliency

Restorative Practices *4

Restorative practices promotes inclusiveness, relationship-building, and problem-solving through the use of circles for teaching conflict resolution. In contrast to traditional, reactive punishments which rarely teach new skills, schools using restorative practices encourage students to reflect on and take responsibility for their actions and take steps to repair and harm they may have caused. Restorative practices help students and teachers develop stronger relationships through a deeper sense of understanding and empathy for one another.

*1 Cite: CASEL.org
*2 Cites: Fallot & Harris (2009); Daniel & Black, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2017)
*3 Cite: CASEL.org
*4 Cite: NEA/AFT Restorative Practices Working Group, 2014

Videos are available at www.FormedFamiliesForward.org.