Trauma-Informed Education: Establishing a Culture of Care for Students Impacted by the Foster Care System

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Meet Your Presenters

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- Education
- Housing
- Economic Mobility
Training Goals

Understand **trauma** and its impact on student development

Employ **effective educational practices** for students impacted by foster care and trauma

Obtain knowledge and tools to create environments that promote **student success and wellbeing**
The Opportunity Before Us

- **Commitment to deeper learning** for positive, meaningful culture change for all

- **Designing structures, practices and policies** that are trauma-informed and student-centered

- **Creating impactful engagement and spaces** to establish a culture of care and belonging
"Create a comprehensive support ecosystem for foster youth."

- CO Memo December 2022

"[The CO] strongly encourages colleges to take a student-centered approach in the implementation by focusing on shifting [the] burden of navigation, application and coordination from students to institutions, ensuring students’ receipt of necessary services and support, and strengthening students’ sense of unconditional belonging within our institutions."

"[The CO] strongly recommends that the districts and colleges design local implementation with a bias towards increasing access and removing student friction points."

"Develop, mature and redesign student interactions in ways that shift burdens from students to institutions and strengthen unconditional belonging."
Foster Care Experiences

- Abuse and/or neglect
- Removal from home
- Separation from family/siblings
- Instability: multiple placements
- Frequent changes in school
Trauma

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) defines trauma as:

An intense, recurring, and/or prolonged event or events that threatens or causes harm to an individual's emotional and/or physical well-being.
## What Roles Does Trauma Play?

1. It is estimated that 90% of youth in foster care have experienced at least one traumatic event.

2. Abuse and/or neglect inflicted by a primary caregiver has a pervasive impact on attachment, identity formation, and the ability to think, learn, and concentrate.

3. Experiencing trauma initiates the stress response cycle (aka “fight, flight, or freeze”). With repeated traumatic exposure, this response can be stuck “on.”
Chronic Exposure to Traumatic Events

- Results in more suspensions & expulsions
- Leads to more school absences and increases the possibility of dropping out.
- Lowers students’ academic performance
- Fundamentally impacts a child’s reading ability.
- Interferes with effective problem solving and planning.
- Adversely affects memory & cognition
- Results in overwhelming feelings of frustration & anxiety
- Reduces a child’s ability to focus, organize, and process information.
Taneil on College Experiences
Disproportionate Impact: What Makes Foster Youth Students Different?

- Developmental trauma & mental health
- Academic & relationship disruptions
- Institutionalization
- Family privilege and skill gaps
- Food and housing insecurity
- Intersectionality
What do we do?
Trauma Informed Care

- Recognize trauma and understand its impact
- Create safe environments (and relationships!) to support learning
- Practice effective self-management
- Support programmatic and institutional efforts
5 Principles for a Trauma Informed Environment

- Safety
- Choice
- Empowerment
- Collaboration
- Trustworthiness
Relationship-Based Practices

Power Sharing

- **Respect me:** Take students’ perspectives and ideas seriously
- **Include me:** Involve students in decisions that impact them
- **Collaborate with me:** Work with students to solve problems and reach goals
- **Create opportunities for me to lead:** Offer support and encouragement

Transparent Communication

- Share information on the **what, how, and why** to improve students’ understanding
Relationship-Based Practices

Unconditional Positive Regard
- Treat students as innately worthy of respect
- Understand they’re more than their behavior
- Accept they’re doing their best, without judgment

Safety/Trust
- Show care for students’ well-being
- Respect boundaries
- Be mindful of nonverbal cues
- Empower students to make decisions
Behaviors that Transform

Start with students being heard

Involve challenging your students

Involves persistence over time

Requires you to be real

Work with and through crisis
Taneil on Relationship-Based Practices
“The energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.” – Brené Brown
Schlossberg’s Transition Theory

- **Transition**: any event, or non event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles.

- **3 types of transitions to consider**: Anticipated, Unanticipated, and Non-event transitions.

- **4 S’s**: factors that influence a person’s ability to cope with a transition
  - Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies
4S’s of Student Support

**Situation**
What is happening? What is the student’s perception of the change (positive, negative, or neutral)?

**Self**
Who the student is (Identity)? What is their optimism level? How do they deal with ambiguity and adversity?

**Support**
Who are the people and what are the assets that strengthen and encourage the student?

**Strategies**
What coping mechanisms and behaviors does the student use to manage their transition?
1. Create welcoming environments that meet students’ needs and validates their experiences

2. Think beyond institutions of higher learning and focusing on deeper learning

3. Build intentional relationships with students and campus stakeholders

4. Develop trauma-informed policies and practices to better support students and their access to resources
“Changing how we see people changes people.”

—Robyn Gobbel
Pledge to Scholars

I pledge to...
• Take a student-centered approach
• Listen with sensitivity and understanding
• Prioritize connection and support
• Create opportunities for leadership
• Be a safe person they can trust
• Strengthen unconditional belonging
• Practice relentless hope
• Measure success by every healing interaction
Resources & References

Contact Us:
For more information on the training or resources, please contact info@JBAY.org