Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports

Trauma Sensitive Environments
What We Will Know and Do

• Understand what a trauma sensitive classroom/school looks like

• Explore some strategies to make your classroom/school trauma sensitive

• Discuss discipline strategies that support students who have been impacted by trauma
What this look like

“A trauma-sensitive school is a safe and respectful environment that enables students to build caring relationships with adults and peers, self-regulate their emotions and behaviors, and succeed academically, while supporting their physical health and well-being.”

(from the Trauma Sensitive Checklist)
In Virginia, 19% of children have experienced two or more ACES (Voices of Virginia Fact Sheet)

Trauma-sensitive environments are best practice for all students
Trauma Sensitive Care Values

- Safety
- Empowerment
- Collaboration
- Trust
- Choice
Create safe learning environments

- encourage and value student voice
- make learning fun and rigorous
  - share fun facts and anecdotal info
  - have students create plays, songs/raps, etc. around content
- communicate mistakes are okay; learning through trial and error
- share with students when you make mistakes
Develop Relationships

• Share who you are and your goals for working with students

• Get to know student’s interests, dreams, and gifts by having 1:1 conferences with students.
  – use bulletin board space to share student’s work, dreams or something about them
Empower Students

• use language that gives students a sense of accomplishment

• use growth mindset...”not yet”

• have high expectations for all students

• make yourself available to help students reach their goals

• give students responsibilities/”jobs”
Use Positive Language

• communicate by telling students what you want them to do

• reframe student’s negative language
  – When a student says “I can’t”, ask “what have you done so far?” or “Let’s hear what you are thinking, maybe that is where you are stuck.”

• Praise for effort and perseverance
Establish Routines and Procedures

• post daily agendas

• teach students procedures around sharpening pencils, collecting homework, transitioning to activities, etc.

• create “call backs” or signals to gain class attention
Be Consistent

- consequences for inappropriate behavior are clearly communicated and applied fairly

- students are encouraged to share if they feel they are not treated fairly
Discussion

Think about what you already do to create trauma sensitive environments.

What you can be more intentional about doing so that all students feel safe and supported?
School discipline practices are positive, respectful, and restorative

Retraumatizing practices are avoided (e.g., harsh, punitive approaches, isolation and disconnection from the community)

Communication procedures include respecting confidentiality, being aware of triggers for students and caregivers, focusing on how issues are addressed and information is shared
Negative Effects of Suspension

“Frequent out-of-school suspension does not produce better learning environments, deter future misbehavior, or stimulate effective parental involvement.”

https://all4ed.org/reports-factsheets/climatechange2/
Policies and Practices that Work for Students

- School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS)
- Restorative Justice
- Social-Emotional Learning
- Using Early-Warning Indicator Systems to Identify and Respond to Discipline Issues
Creating a school-wide system

- Proactive with clearly stated expectations
- Expectations are understood by all
- Expectations are taught and retaught
- Acknowledgement for meeting expectations at a 5:1 ratio
- Supports are increased when student doesn’t respond
- Data is monitored and decisions are based on data
Focus Prevention

- look for patterns of behavior
- identify triggers
- identify early warning signs of escalation
- develop a plan to support the student
Change Mindset

• “what happened to you” instead of “what’s wrong with you”

• assume students are doing the best they can

• avoid “criminalizing” children
Avoid Exclusionary Discipline

- Implement restorative practices
- Utilize ISS as an opportunity to work with the student to identify supports and alternative responses/behaviors
Link to Mental Health Professionals

- Refer to School Psychologist, School Counselor or School Social Worker for support

- Refer to community providers to provide therapy and wrap-around services
Virginia’s Model Code of Conduct

- Updated 2019
- Prevention focus
- Tiered systems
- Social-Emotional skills
- Restorative questions
- Leveled responses
## Trauma Sensitive Schools Action Plan - Phase 1 Template

Vision is your "why" the work is necessary. Current state of school community environment relates to the current level of understanding of Trauma Sensitive philosophy and practices. The Goal is a broad statement of what your team hopes to accomplish. Objectives explain strategies that are more specific for achieving the goal. Action steps are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely (SMART). Action steps have a defined start and end, person (people) responsible, and a way to measure success. Teams should plan regular check-ins throughout the school year to follow up on their action plans. Once tasks have been completed, additional objectives could be added.

Team Vision: .................................................................

Current state of school community environment: .................................................................

Goal of Phase 1: .................................................................

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<th>Key Objective</th>
<th>Action Steps</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
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