



**Los Angeles Education Partnership  
Trauma Sensitive Schools**

California School-Based Health Alliance Conference

May 1, 2015

Agenda/  
Informational Packet

- Outcomes:**
- Build awareness of Trauma Sensitive Schools approach
  - Increase knowledge of childhood trauma, symptoms and supportive responses at school settings
  - Outline a framework for Trauma Sensitive Schools personalized for your school site(s) and student population needs

**Facilitators:** Erin Browder, Brock Cohen and Lara Kain

***What***

***How***

***Introduction***

Greeting

Inclusion

Attention First/ Like Me

Defining Trauma, Trauma Sensitive Schools

Eye-Contact Partner/  
Table Round Robin

*Our Students and Impact of Childhood Trauma, or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)*

Data/Video/ Sort Activity

BREAK

TSS Framework

Numbered Heads/  
Planning Conversations

Trauma Sensitive Classroom

Video

Debrief and Reflection

Eye-Contact Partner/  
Gots and Wants

## **Our Mission and Our Work**

- Los Angeles Education Partnership is an education nonprofit that works as a collaborative partner in high-poverty communities to foster great schools that support the personal and academic success of children and youth from birth through high school.
- Each year, we serve more than 1,000 educators and 39,000 students plus their families in communities across Los Angeles County.

## **LAEP in Los Angeles Unified School District**

- 11 High Schools
- 3 Middle Schools
- 3 Elementary Schools

## **Student Demographics**

- ≥88% Free and Reduced Lunch
- 91% Latino
- 9% African-American/Asian-American/White/American Indian
- 21% English Learners
- 11% Special Education

## **How does LAEP define Trauma?**

LAEP defines trauma is an umbrella term used to describe the inability of an individual or community to respond in a healthy way (physically, emotionally and mentally) to acute or chronic stress.

*Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)  
Compassionate Schools (2009)*

<http://www.k12.wa.us/CompassionateSchools/Resources.aspx>

## **How does LAEP define a Trauma Sensitive School?**

Trauma sensitive schools acknowledge the prevalence of traumatic occurrence in students' lives & create a flexible framework that provides universal supports, is sensitive to unique needs of students, and is mindful of avoiding re-traumatization.

## **Child Trauma Data**

### National

- More than 25% of American youth experience a serious traumatic event by their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, and many children suffer multiple and repeated traumas.
- After a crisis or traumatic event, a child is at risk of developing traumatic stress. About 25% of victims and witnesses of violence develop PTSD, depression or anxiety disorders.

(National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2011)

### South Los Angeles

- Children age 13 years and under account for 74.5% of the total DCFS caseload. 31.5% of the total DCFS child caseload were children under five years of age.
- The Central Index recorded 3,335 child abuse reports from Los Angeles County in 2012. This represents approximately 40% of the state's total reports.

(Inter-agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect, 2013)

## **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Studies**

**National study –** <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/index.htm>

**California study –**

[https://acestoohigh.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/hiddencrisis\\_report\\_1014.pdf](https://acestoohigh.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/hiddencrisis_report_1014.pdf)

## **ACES ACROSS CALIFORNIA**

ACEs are an unfortunate reality for the majority of Californians - **61.7%** of adults have experienced at least one ACE, and **one in six**, or **16.7%**, California adults have experienced four or more ACEs. The number of Californians who have experienced four or more ACEs is considerably higher than the finding from the original Kaiser study in which 12.5%, or one in eight, of the study participants experienced four or more ACEs.

The most common ACE experienced by California adults is "emotional (or verbal) abuse" with almost 35% of adults indicating that a parent or adult swore, insulted, or put them down during their childhood. The next most prevalent ACEs are "parental separation or divorce", reported by 26.7% of adults, and "substance abuse by a household member", reported by 26.1% of adults.

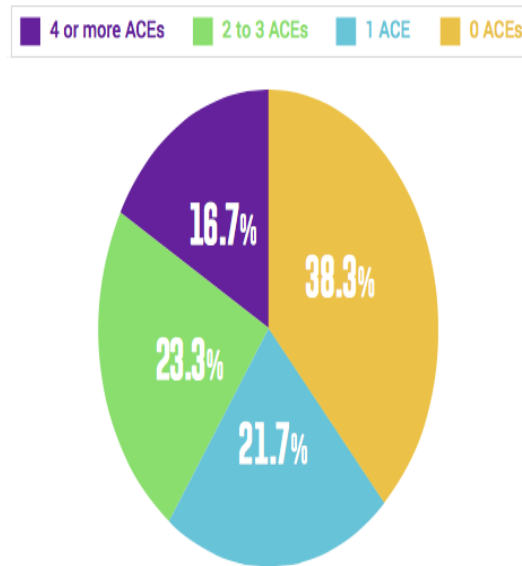


Figure 3: Prevalence of number of ACEs among California adults

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### **ACEs at School**

#### Possible Childhood Trauma Symptoms

- School Absenteeism —tardies & truancy
- Dysregulated eating (under & overeating)
- Smoking
- Suicide attempts
- Illicit drug use & substance abuse
- Multiple sexual partners
- Self-injurious behaviors (e.g., cutting)

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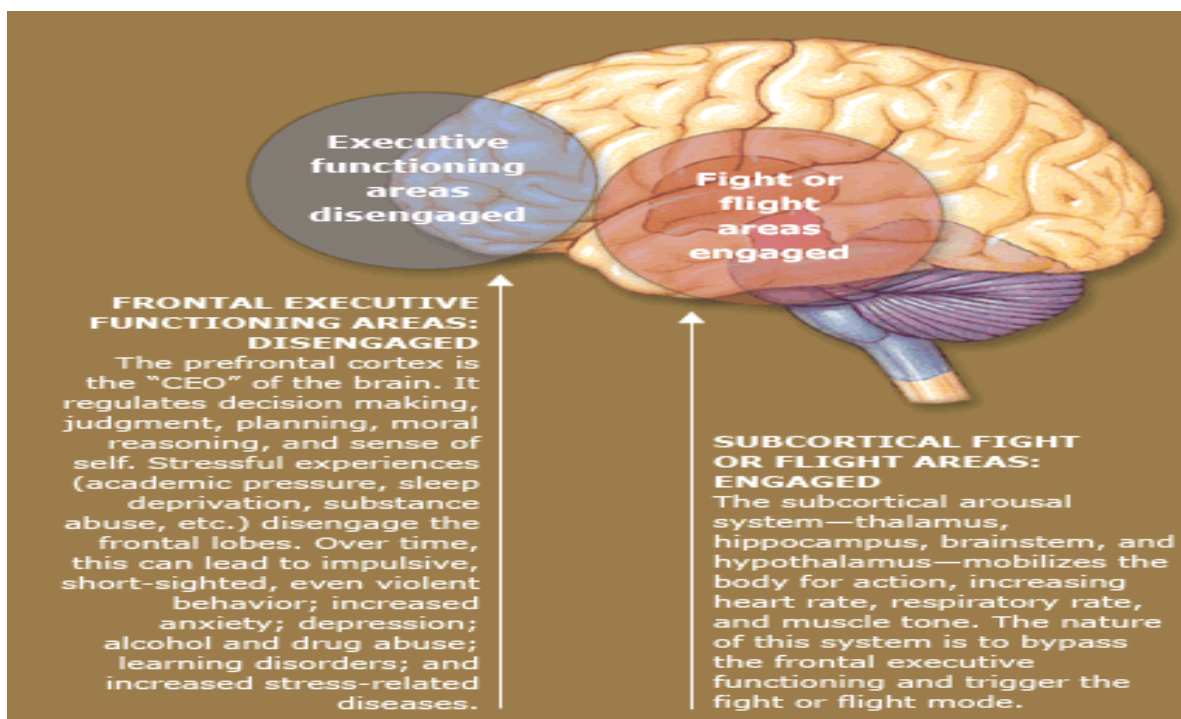
## ACEs and School Performance Data

Children who experience trauma:

- 2.5x more likely to fail a grade in school
- Score lower on standardized achievement tests
- More likely to have struggles in receptive & expressive language
- Suspended & expelled more often
- More frequently placed in special education

(The National Traumatic Stress Network, 2008)

### Trauma's Impact on the Brain



(<http://www.brainharmonycenter.com/brain-stress.html>)

## **Trauma Sensitive Schools can alleviate symptoms of ACEs...**

While adverse childhood experiences can have lifelong consequences, research has shown that development of resiliency in children can mitigate the harmful effects to children's health and development associated with toxic stress.

*Protective factors that foster resiliency can be cultivated at the school level.*

1. (Clervil, Guarino, DeCandia, & Beach, 2013; Haskett, Nears, Ward, & McPherson, 2006; Roy, Carli, & Sarchiapone, 2011)

2. (Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair, & Lehr, 2004; Henry, Tolan, Gorman-Smith, & Schoeny, 2012; Miller, Fenty, Scott, Park, & Lee, 2011; Park & Lynch, 2014; Thurlow, Christenson, Sinclair, & Evelo, 1997).

## **Steps to Create a Trauma-Sensitive School**

### **1. Engage Stakeholders**

- Administrative direction & commitment
- Connect with on-site champions
- Mental Health Services in your local school district
- Priority for school improvement
- Necessary resources allocated
- Tie into existing, related initiatives (e.g., RtI/PBIS)

### **2. Perform Assessment**

- School culture and climate from all stakeholders
- Student Survey—Resiliency, Culture, etc.
- Strengths/needs
- Current programs & strategies
- Gaps in services
- Policy & procedures
- Resources

### **3. Review Literature**

- Model Implementation
  - Massachusetts Advocates of Children <http://www.massadvocates.org/order-book.php>
  - Washington State The Heart of Learning and Teaching <http://www.k12.wa.us/CompassionateSchools/HeartofLearning.aspx>
  - Creating Sanctuary in Schools by Sandra Bloom [http://www.sanctuaryweb.com/PDFs\\_new/Bloom%20Sanctuary%20in%20the%20Classroom.pdf](http://www.sanctuaryweb.com/PDFs_new/Bloom%20Sanctuary%20in%20the%20Classroom.pdf)
  - Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators [http://rems.ed.gov/docs/NCTSN\\_ChildTraumaToolkitForEducators.pdf](http://rems.ed.gov/docs/NCTSN_ChildTraumaToolkitForEducators.pdf)
  - Calmer Classrooms: A Guide to Working with Traumatized Children [http://www.cryp.vic.gov.au/childsafetycommissioner/downloads/calmer\\_classrooms.pdf](http://www.cryp.vic.gov.au/childsafetycommissioner/downloads/calmer_classrooms.pdf)
  - Making SPACE for Learning: Trauma-Informed Practice in Schools <http://www.childhood.org.au/~media/Files/Fundraising%20files/Fundraising%20resource%20files/Making%20space%20for%20learning%20ACF.ashx>
  - Visit or consult with schools that are trauma-sensitive

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#### **4. Provide Training**

- Additional training to encourage...
  - Relationships that enhance:
    - Learning
    - Attention
    - Affection
    - Attunement
- Classroom strategies to establish ...
  - Safety
  - Empowerment
  - Collaboration
  - Choice
  - Trust
  - Understanding the dynamics of interpersonal, community & historical violence

#### **5. Implement Classroom Strategies**

- Safety
  - Clear & consistent rules for managing behavior & setting limits
  - Accommodations to meet individual strengths & needs
  - Predictable structure, relationships, & environment
  - Reduce bullying & harassment
  - Use seclusion/restraint only as a last resort
- Trust
  - Relationship with the educator based on...
    - Unconditional positive regard for all students
    - Checking assumptions, observing & questioning
    - Being a relationship coach
- Empowerment:
  - Embed socio-emotional curriculum into instruction
  - Help students identify their academic strengths and needs
  - Coping skills—knowing what to do when “feeling” challenged by academic content or engagement techniques
  - Self-regulation skills
  - Provide guided opportunities for meaningful participation
  - Maintaining high behavioral & academic expectations
  - Build on strengths
  - Build competency
- Collaboration:
  - School Staff
  - Teacher teams
  - Classroom consultation

- Students
- Family

Family education

Family training & support

- Community

Community referrals

Wrap around services

Community/external partnerships

Professional partnerships

- Choice:
  - School staff/teacher works with students to create self-care plan to address triggers
  - Identify triggers
  - Eliminate trigger or create coping strategies to deal with triggers
- Collaborative Problem Solving (Lost at School - Greene, R.)
- Giving choices & alternatives
  - “Comfort zones”
  - Safe & acceptable expression of feelings
- Provide choice and modifications within classroom instruction and lesson activities

## 6. Self-Care for School Professionals

- Understanding “Burnout”
  - Compassion
    - ↓
  - Empathy
    - ↓
  - Vicarious/Secondary Trauma
    - ↓
  - Compassion Fatigue
    - ↓
  - Burnout
- Emotional Skills Instruction
- e.g. How emotional skills affect teaching and learning
- Mindfulness Training/ Stress Reduction
- Compassion Building Activities
- Guided Reflections on Caring for Oneself and Others



## **Planning Conversation Guide**

**Directions:** As you consider the steps to create a Trauma Sensitive School, explore some of the ways in which you might prepare for taking initial steps. Partner A will ask Partner B the questions, and then switch seats and switch roles. Later, you'll record your own answers to these questions.

- 1. Context.** How does the topic of Trauma Sensitive Schools or classrooms connect to your work? Within the scope of your work, where might you be able to influence (or encourage) a Trauma Sensitive approach? What might be some challenges to begin this work?
- 2. Goal.** What is/are your goal(s) related to Trauma Sensitive School(s)?
- 3. Crafting a Focus Question.** What is your goal for working on building a Trauma Sensitive School, classroom, or culture?
- 4. Establish Personal Learning Focus.** How will you know if you were successful in meeting this goal? What do you expect to learn about yourself as you embark on creating an awareness of Trauma Sensitive Schools?
- 5. Reflect on Coaching.** In what ways has this conversation supported your learning?

\*Adapted from Costa, A.L and Garmston, R.J. (2012) *Cognitive Coaching Seminars® Foundations Training Learning Guide, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition*

## Resources

- Toolkit <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mhtrauma.html>
- Treatment and Adaptation Services Center, Resiliency, Hope, and Wellness in Schools <http://traumaawareschools.org>
- Center for Youth Wellness <http://centerforyouthwellness.org>

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- *Helping Traumatized Children Learn*, Massachusetts Advocates for Children 2005
- Jennings, P., Frank, J., Snowberg, K., Coccia, M., & Greenberg, M. (2013). Improving classroom learning environments by Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE): Results of a randomized controlled trial. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 28(4), 374-390.
- National Center for Trauma Informed Care <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/nctic/>
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network <http://www.nctsnet.org>
- *The Heart of Learning and Teaching Compassion, Resiliency & Academic Success*, Wolpow, Ray; Johnson, Mona M.; Hertel, Ron; Kincaid, Susan O. 2009
- *Understanding Traumatic Stress in Children* Bassuk, M.D., Ellen L.: Konnath LICSW, Kristina, Volk MA., Katherine T.
- WBEZ. This American Life. (2012, September 14) 474: *Back to School*. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ak7o9nxpWD4>

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