

Trauma is a distressing event or set of experiences that can have immediate and long-term impacts on a child’s mental and physical health. Trauma is common in children and can result from abuse or neglect, community or family violence, stressors of poverty, and bullying.

25% of children in Oakland have experienced two or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

Up to 18% of children in California and 25% of children in Oakland¹ have experienced two or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), a way of measuring traumatic events. Long-term exposure to trauma can develop into what is known as “toxic stress,” the extreme or frequent activation of the body’s stress response. This form of trauma can have major impacts on physical, social, and emotional wellbeing. Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable, as toxic stress can cause fundamental changes to brain structure and can dramatically alter the ability to learn and interact with others.

Making Classrooms Trauma-Informed

At the California School-Based Health Alliance (CSHA), we are working to identify best practices for trauma-informed, healing-centered, and resilience-focused work in schools and school-based health centers in California. With longstanding relationships and investment in both West Contra Costa County and Alameda County, CSHA is working with schools in these two districts to test and identify best practices in supporting young people who are impacted by trauma. CSHA is working with Oakland Unified School District to support thirteen school-based health centers serving ten Oakland middle schools to increase trauma screenings and interventions, improve school culture and climate, and identify strategies to maximize Medi-Cal billing and future funding opportunities to continue this work for our students. One of the schools in this program is Frick Impact Academy, who is shifting their school culture and climate through wellness programming.



Frick Impact Academy 2018 School Dashboard



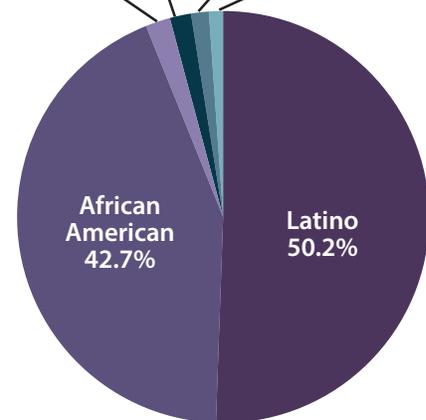
227
 students
 enrolled



93%
 eligible for
 free & reduced
 price meals

Demographics - Race/Ethnicity

Pacific Islander 1.8% Filipino 1.3%
 Mixed 1.8% White 0.9%



¹Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health. Adverse Childhood Experiences Among Oakland and California Youth (factsheet). Accessed from www.acesconnection.org.

Trauma-Informed School Spotlight: Practices for Mindful Students and Staff

At Frick Impact Academy, mornings start with a reminder to set specific intentions for the day. Each day is assigned a theme (Mindful Monday, Tune-in Tuesday, Wellness Wednesday, Thankful Thursday, and Forgiveness Friday) to encourage students to practice some mindfulness, and start the day with a guiding theme.

On Forgiveness Fridays, Lance McGee, Wellness Consultant on campus, guides students and staff through a mindful moment to encourage them to forgive themselves or others to be more at peace. Wellness Wednesdays promote taking care of yourself and others around you. Throughout each school day, mindfulness is integrated into many other aspects of a student's or teacher's experience. For students, classrooms may have a Peace Corner, which is a space for students to go when they notice they are starting to feel activated. The spaces are often equipped with a number of toys or activities to help them reset and refresh before joining the class again. Students may be led through some additional mindfulness activities in transitions between activities or classes.



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Teachers at Frick Impact Academy are trained in trauma-informed practices at the beginning of the school year, with refresher trainings scheduled throughout the year and as needed or requested by staff or the administrative team. As a result, teachers may not only offer a variety of mindfulness activities with their students, but may have their own mindfulness practice to help them reduce stress or likelihood of burnout. Currently 20-25 teachers, including the school principal, participate in check-in meetings with Mr. McGee. During these sessions, Mr. McGee offers a comfortable, loving, and safe space for teachers to process, talk, and practice, all in a former gym office converted and redecorated into a wellness space for school staff.



Frick staff are seeing the benefits of these sessions, and the power of the support that Mr. McGee offers. Many of the teachers at Frick Impact Academy this year were new, first-year teachers, and both teachers and the administrative team have expressed gratitude to Mr. McGee for how he has helped with teacher retention through his coaching and thoughtfulness.

How Did This Work Begin?

Mr. McGee, with the support of Alinya Charron, Program Director for East Bay Agency for Children (EBAC), spent the last three years weaving trauma-informed practices and mindfulness into Frick Impact Academy's culture and day-to-day experience for students and teachers. They will admit that it is an ongoing process with more work still to be done, but are happy with the progress so far. Since they began, there has been a noticeable shift in school culture that anyone walking through the doors can feel.

This was not a new partnership, as EBAC and Frick Impact Academy had been working together for some time to build out school-based health care services for their student body. At the beginning of the effort to integrate trauma-informed practices, the school also welcomed a new principal, Ms. De Tie. One of the first steps was to build a relationship with her. All three and their collective investment in wellness at Frick created time throughout the year for staff trainings, with a special training during orientation, two physical spaces for teachers, other school staff, families, and students to find calm and peace during meetings or breaks, and routines for the school community to advance their own mindfulness and trauma-informed practices.

What are some recommendations, resources, or tips to bring this to my school community?

Preparation

- Leverage current community partnerships to find a person/people who can hold wellness support with you at your school, from finding funding, to determining the needs of the students, to offering respective services.
- Immediately engage your school administrative team to ensure they are invested in this work, too. They may have ideas on who can lead, or how to get this work started.

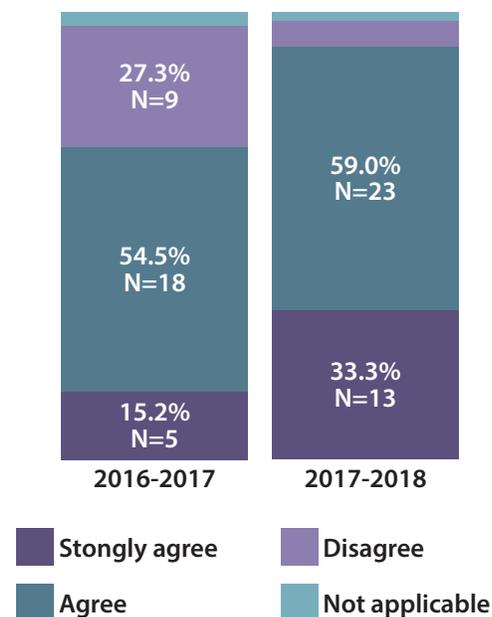
Getting started

- Get on the professional development calendar for your school staff early, to have a training before school begins, and consistently throughout the year. Make space for training, refreshers, and flexible time to continue broadening skillsets
- Build authentic relationships with the administration team. What are their hopes for this type of work? What is their honest capacity and desire to buy into wellness and mindfulness on their campus? How can you work together to make this a success?
- Ideally, funding will be secure before the work begins, so that principals and administrative teams can focus their time in making space for this work, and encouraging their staff to learn about and access these opportunities.

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Frick Impact Academy Staff Survey

"I know how to de-escalate a student using a trauma-informed approach"



Frick Impact Academy School Suspension Rates

