



OREGON EXAMPLE

In Oregon, several schools have been working to create trauma informed practices. Gladstone school district has been focused on creating a culture of care in K-8 by shifting instructional and disciplinary practices. A trauma informed approach first has teachers connect with students with empathy and the reasons behind the child's behavior. Based on evidence from schools like Gladstone the legislature funded a pilot project to identify elements of a high school trauma-informed approach to education, mental health, and intervention strategies. The pilot project is funded through 2019.

WHY WAS THE STRATEGY CHOSEN?

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have a huge impact on the learning and lives of individuals. Addressing trauma early in life through trauma informed practices can improve outcomes for individuals. House Bill 4002 (2016) directed the Chief Education Office to implement trauma-informed approaches in schools. This pilot project is in the exploration stage of Implementation Science (see [National Implementation Research Network](#)).

Trauma-Informed Practices in Schools

TARGETED INDICATORS

READING AT GRADE LEVEL BY 3RD GRADE

ATTENDANCE RATE

ACADEMIC FAILURE

REDUCTION IN SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

DESCRIPTION OF THE STRATEGY

Students are impacted profoundly by traumatic experiences, which affect their attendance and likelihood to graduate. A trauma-informed approach to education is designed to be a community response to support these students and their families. This includes policies and practices that create safe school environments and professional learning regarding the signs and symptoms of trauma, promote resiliency and wellness among students, their families, and staff, and reduce re-traumatization.

Indicators of trauma:

- Difficulty focusing on schoolwork, projects or conversations
- Academic failure
- Peer rejection, social isolation
- Regression
- Behavioral concerns, including: temper, aggression, anger, attention seeking, anxiety, fearful, startles easily, social withdrawal
- Chronic health problems (headaches, stomachaches, depression and anxiety)

Trauma-informed schools understand the impacts of trauma on students, family and staff and become safe, supportive environments where all members of the school community have positive connections and can focus on skills necessary to improve learning. Schools can:

- Create physically and psychologically safe environments for all staff and students
- Realize both the widespread impact of trauma and the role of schools in promoting resiliency
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in students, family, and staff
- Integrate knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices
- Resist re-traumatization of students and staff and foster resiliency



EVIDENCE THE STRATEGY IS EFFECTIVE

There is no consensus on a definitive approach for trauma-sensitive or trauma-informed school practices. To date, the majority of research publications on trauma-informed practices in schools are promising findings from program evaluations of trauma-informed schools, including reduction in suspension and expulsion (Stevens, 2012). Evidence supporting trauma-informed approaches (specifically at the organizational level) in other fields, like medicine and child welfare, show promising results like engagement and retention, staff and client safety, staff development and increased supportive environments. A substantial body of evidence demonstrates that trauma-specific interventions produce superior results compared to standard care (see the National Child Traumatic Stress Network's summary of 'Treatments that Work').

FUNDING OF THE STRATEGY

House Bill 4002 (2016) provided \$500,000 total: \$50,000 for each technical assistance provider and \$200,000 to each pilot school.

Senate Bill 5516A (2017), directed the Chief Education Office to continue the Trauma Informed Pilot Study by providing educators with professional development on strategies that decrease rates of school absenteeism among students by using trauma-informed approaches in schools.

THE STRATEGY IS WORKING IN OREGON

The primary activities occurring at both pilot sites include: (1) professional development activities for ALL staff; (2) examination and alignment of existing school programs (e.g., PBIS/EBIS, AVID, Restorative Justice) and school system and structure to support trauma-informed implementation; and (3) use of a cohort-based approach to disseminate trauma-informed practices among school staff.

Year 1: All staff receive training and establish communication channels. A full-time Trauma-informed School Coordinator is hired to help align existing systems, structures, and programs, and plan pilot goals and activities for Years 2 and 3.

Year 2: Pilot sites establish cohorts to develop and translate locally-driven trauma-informed strategies using rapid learning cycles. On-going support and resources for staff are provided, and student and family engagement plans are developed. Policies, procedures, programs, and services are reviewed with community service partners to be more trauma-informed.

Year 3: A final report of findings will be produced and submitted to the Legislature by October 2019. Replicable elements of the study and sample implementation tools (i.e., Resource Maps, Environmental Assessment Plans, Family and Student Engagement Plans, and training and education materials) will be shared with key partners and available online.

To learn more about the pilot study, please go to <http://education.oregon.gov/trauma-informed-pilot/>

LINKS TO RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

ACEs Overview:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/capt/practicing-effective-prevention/prevention-behavioral-health/adverse-childhood-experiences>

CDC-Keiser ACE Study:

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html>

The Flexible Framework - Trauma Sensitive Schools:

<https://traumasensitiveschools.org/trauma-and-learning/the-flexible-framework/>

Wisconsin Department of Instruction - Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools to Improve Learning:

<https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/trauma>

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL):

<https://casel.org/>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s Trauma-informed Approach:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions>

Stevens, J. E. (2012). "Lincoln H.S. in Walla Walla, WA tries new approach to school discipline—Suspensions drop 85%."

<http://ACEstoohigh.com/2012/04/23/lincoln-high-school-in-walla-walia-wa-tries-new-approach-to-school-discipline-expulsions-drop-85/>

Trauma Sensitive School Checklist:

[http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/trauma%20sensitive%20school%20checklist%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/trauma%20sensitive%20school%20checklist%20(1).pdf)

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS

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For more information, visit www.oregon.gov/ode.