



Fall 2022 Conference, Day 1, Session 5: Topic #4 Overview: Special Topics

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What is trauma?

According to Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, it defines trauma is "an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically and emotionally harmful; or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being" (SAMHSA, 2012)

2. How does trauma impact our students?

Trauma impacts the development of the brain, especially when that trauma is experienced in childhood. Youth with disability experience higher rates of traumatic events than their non-disabled peers. Trauma can impact emotional self-regulation.

3. What are some misunderstandings about trauma experiences?

Not all trauma experiences come with extreme events or abuse. Some examples of trauma: the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, social isolation and dealing with ill or the death of family members or others throughout the pandemic.

4. Does trauma affect behaviors?

Yes, trauma often affects behavior, and the individual who shows challenging behaviors often experiences trauma. Some problematic behaviors included disrupting school settings, property destruction, noncompliance, aggression, or escape behaviors. Challenging behaviors exhibited by the students might even look like mental health disorders, such as obsessive behavior, paranoia, or schizophrenia

5. What is PTSD?

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, it is abbreviated for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. PTSD is a disorder that develops in some people who have experienced a shocking, scary, or dangerous event.

6. What is Trauma-informed?



Being trauma-informed is not a specific set of actions but a set of services, supports, and principles rooted in empathy. Changing our perspective about how we look at the situation and behaviors helps decrease an individual's problematic or challenging behaviors in the classroom setting. It helps us to understand and shift our focus from "what's wrong with you?" to "what happened to you?"

7. What are the typical disciplinary responses?

It is an action by an adult that is not a direct response to a student engaging in a behavior that the adult does not want, and the result is that the adult will give a disciplinary response. Most of the time, the typical disciplinary response is to provide the students with something they do not want or something we believe will discourage them from doing that in the future. Typically, the disciplinary responses involve punishment or office referrals like in-school and out-of-school suspensions and do not involve teaching new or replacement behaviors.

8. What are punitive discipline practices?

- Zero tolerance: gun possession, bodily violence, drug and alcohol offenses, dress code, and "defiance."
- Exclusionary practices: suspension, expulsion, and non-public/ alternative settings
- Punishment: detention, repeated writing, corporal/ physical (repeated exercises, hitting/spanking, etc.), missed recess, corporal punishments, physical punishment (let students run laps or do push-ups).
- Mandatory counseling, public shaming, and tribal practices.

9. What are restorative discipline practices?

Restorative practices is a continuum of interventions and strategies that are both proactive and responsive" (Osincup, 2022, p. 1) which comes from the more formal and reactive framework of Restorative Justice. These strategies include proactive steps, like building relationships, trust, and a sense of community, and reactive steps like managing conflicts, handling misbehavior, restoring relationships, and repairing any harm done. Restorative practices were based on tribal practices and have been included in MTSS and PBIS.

10. What are zero-tolerance policies?

Zero-tolerance policies still exist in some places. It is considered a fear-based policy that was implemented to address gun violence and "super predators.



11. What are the pros and cons of zero-tolerance policies?

- Pros: may be required by law, aim to keep kids safer, reduces favoritism, and prepares children for the real world.
- Cons: Can lack common sense as may apply to harmless items, don't improve school safety, students banned from school face risks at home without supervision, and expose children to legal charges for minor offenses.

12. What is broken windows theory?

The theory comes from criminology, and it was introduced into the school system and many school codes of conduct a couple of decades ago. It is a theory of policing and life policing or discipline policy. This theory aims to identify and target the less severe and disruptive behaviors, and it will naturally help decrease the more serious behavior.

13. What are the other issues with zero tolerance and punitive school discipline, and how it affects students and specifically students who exhibit trauma?

Increasing policing in schools can lead to the school-to-prison pipeline: We mainly focus on punishment and retaliation instead of focusing on teaching new skills that the student needs. Punitive school discipline has disproportionately affected students of color with disabilities. Students suspended or expelled for a discretionary violation are nearly three times more likely to contact the juvenile justice system the following year. There is a lack of due process.

14. What is the impact of typical discipline policies?

Students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to drop out of school, be less likely to enroll in higher education, and be more likely to have continuing contact with the justice system. Another impact may be an increased reliance on School Resources Officers and the juvenile justice system.