Building a Trauma-Informed Nation
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Executive Director, TASH
Behavior is *Communication*!

The kids who need the most love will ask for it in the most unloving of ways.

Lemon Lime Adventures
Main Points

• A high percentage of the nation’s children experience trauma during their school years (25-68%)

• Aversive/ coercive school environments can traumatize and re-traumatize children

• Aversive/ coercive school environments can re-traumatize those in the education workforce who have experienced trauma, and

• We Can Change This!
What Experiences Cause Trauma?

• Natural Disasters
• Forced Displacement
• War / Terrorism
• Emotional, Physical, or Sexual Abuse or Assault
• Serious Accident or Illness /Medical Procedure
• Victim or Witness of Violence (Domestic, Community, School, Interpersonal)

Adapted from National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2008 www.ecmhc.org/tutorials/trauma
What Causes Trauma at School?

- Systematic segregation of students with disabilities from an early age (Harvey, K. (2012). *Trauma-Informed Behavioral Interventions*. Washington, DC. AAIDD)
- Bullying, ridicule
- “Tracking” – low expectations
- Culturally insensitive/ unresponsive
- Use of harsh disciplinary practices
- Restraint and seclusion – witnessing or experiencing
Call to End Aversive Responses to Behavior – 1990

Clearly, the time has come for limiting the use of stimuli and procedures that are painful, damaging, and dehumanizing.

Family Activism
Joint Guidance – ED and DOJ

• The Departments strongly support schools in their efforts to create and maintain safe and orderly educational environments that allow our nation’s students to learn and thrive. Many schools have adopted comprehensive, appropriate, and effective programs demonstrated to: (1) reduce disruption and misconduct; (2) support and reinforce positive behavior and character development; and (3) help students succeed.

http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201401-title-vi.html
Joint Guidance, cont.

• Studies have suggested a correlation between exclusionary discipline policies and practices and an array of serious educational, economic, and social problems, including school avoidance and diminished educational engagement;\(^9\) decreased academic achievement;\(^10\) increased behavior problems;\(^11\) increased likelihood of dropping out;\(^12\) substance abuse;\(^13\) and involvement with juvenile justice systems.\(^14\)
Students subjected to seclusion, by disability status (IDEA)

- Students enrolled in public schools:
  - 88% with disabilities
  - 42% without disabilities

- Students subjected to seclusion:
  - 58% with disabilities
  - 12% without disabilities

Students subjected to physical restraint, by disability status (IDEA)

- Students enrolled in public schools:
  - 12% with disabilities
  - 88% without disabilities

- Students subjected to physical restraint:
  - 75% with disabilities
  - 25% without disabilities

Students with disabilities subjected to mechanical restraint, by race/ethnicity

### Staff Reasons Stated for Using Restraint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Staff Reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Noncompliance</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Leaving Assigned Area</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Disrespect</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Property Misuse</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Disrupting Class</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Physical Aggression</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Threats</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Horseplay</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Harassment</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Staff Reasons Stated for Using Seclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Staff Reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Leaving Assigned Area</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Noncompliance</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Disrupting Class</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Property Misuse</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Disrespect</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Physical Aggression</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Harassment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Threats</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which Students are Restrained and Secluded?

- **75%**: students with disabilities (12% of overall student population – mostly with labels ID/D; ADHD; ASD; EBD)

- TASH survey:
  - **69%**: 6-10 years old
  - **65%**: Segregated classroom setting
  - **50%**: Non-verbal or difficult to understand
  - **93%**: Emotionally traumatized
  - **66%**: Parents rarely (27.4) or never (39) contacted
Brianna, Grade 2

One morning, I got mad and said I wasn’t going to school. When you have problems with talking, you just say “no” in the loudest and easiest way possible. I have friends and I know children who have just fought back. **Violence by children with severe disabilities is almost always in response to abuse.**
I wish my teacher knew how much I miss my dad because he got deported to Mexico when I was 3 years old and I haven't seen him in 6 years. I wish my teacher knew.
Restraint and Seclusion: Hear Our Stories

http://stophurtingkids.com/the-film/

TASH’s educational work on prevention of restraint and seclusion is supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, www.samhsa.gov
The Goal of School

College and Career Ready!!
Academic and behavioral success!
Impact of Trauma

**On Behavior**
- Anxious, withdrawn
- Difficulty with impulse control
- Impaired short term memory
- Confusion, disorientation
- Acting out
- On edge
- Day dreaming

**On Learning**
- Impaired concentration, memory
- Intrusive thoughts
- Interrupted sleep
- Executive functioning deficits (goal setting, organizing, planning, etc.)
- Poor relationships with school staff
- Abnormally high levels of stress hormones.
Trauma Informed Practices in a School Setting

• Shift in thinking and practice.
• Understanding of how trauma impacts the individual
• Understanding symptoms as attempts to cope
• Avoidance of retraumatization

The kids who need the most love will ask for it in the most unloving of ways.

Lemon Lime Adventures

TASH
Multi-tiered Systems of Support

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a

- systemic,
- continuous-improvement framework in which
- data-based problem-solving and decision making is practiced across
- all levels of the educational system for
- supporting students
Tier I: Universal Instruction (All Students)

Tier II: Targeted Interventions (Some Students)

Tier III: Intensive Interventions (Few Students)
Using the PBIS Framework to Support the Learning of Students Affected by Trauma

Tier 1 – Universal strategies & instruction for all students
Tier 2 – Additional supports for students with milder symptoms of trauma or in high-risk groups
Tier 3 – Intensive & ongoing interventions for students deeply impacted by trauma

* TIC Values & Key Areas apply across all 3 tiers of the PBIS Framework.

TIC Values are from Fallot & Harris, Community Connections, www.cdc.cdc.org

http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspww_mhtrauma
Avoiding Re-Traumatization

• Help teachers understand that children may not be able to express their suffering in ways that adults can understand.
• Emphasize the importance of helping children feel safe.
• Create support systems for teachers to develop classroom strategies for addressing the needs of traumatized children.
• Adapt school curricula and procedures to respond to the needs of traumatized children.
• Develop protocols for early identification and services before children are at risk for discipline or school failure

What works – Systems Approach

• Administrators must embrace their roles as leaders of the culture of a school
• Teachers need training and support
• Systems must be culturally responsive and engage families
• Teachers need TIME for planning and collaboration
• Each child needs to be known and understood – this takes time but prevents many problems
What Works – Systems Approach

• A quality MTSS system includes a combination of PBIS, Behavioral Instruction, and Trauma-Informed Practices, integrated together, to develop the culture necessary for children and adults to thrive

• Students with behavioral manifestation of disability learn best in inclusive classrooms where other children can model expectations
What Works – Systems Approach

• Use of Data – helps identify children who are struggling
• Early identification – children either withdraw or act out when experiencing trauma
• A pro-active vs. reactive approach; TEACH children how to behave and how to cope
  – Children can exhibit behaviors that are a manifestation of the disability
  – Many children need behavioral instruction in order to live up to behavioral expectations
What Works? Time to Implement!

https://www.deming.org/theman/theories/pdsacyle
What Works? Understanding the Nature of Behavior (VS. Control)

Ask – What happened to you? Or, why did you do that?

NOT – what is wrong with you?

To HEAL – children need:

• Safety
• Empowerment
• Connection
Challenging Behavior Communicates....

- Pain or discomfort
- Frustration
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Threatened

Help develop communication skills!

- Doesn’t understand
- Distrust
- Desire for something
- Need for stimulation

Find out “why?”
All Behavior Has a Purpose

• Behavior doesn’t *just happen for no reason at all*
• There are always reasons for challenging behaviors, even if we do not know what they are right now.
• **Q:** What purpose does the behavior serve for the individual?
School Successes

http://tash.org/blog/2012/07/12/recap-of-senate-help-committee-hearing-on-restraint-seclusion/

Montgomery County Schools (SW Virginia)

• Commitment to create a different culture, and end use of aversive strategies
• Took on a process for change
• Developed shared vision and structure
• Vision: inclusive, positive classroom environments
Montgomery Schools – Change Structure

Staff training *emphasis* on prevention

- **Inclusive** classes, modeling from classmates
- **Effective** evidence-based practices: PBIS, including FBAs and BIPs
- PLANNING for each student; more in-depth support to those who needed it
- Coaching from in-house PBIS expert
- Data-based decision making
“Inside these walls....
We discover through the power of positive reinforcement each child will find success.”

http://centennial.coe.lehigh.edu/
Centennial School Outcomes

- AY 1997-98: 1,064 restraints, No data on seclusion

- AY 1998-99: 327 restraints, 15,744 minutes of seclusion

- AY 1999-2000 to 2011
  - 0 restraints
  - 0 minutes of seclusion
At the School Level -- Keys to Success

• Leader commitment to change – there are no bad kids! Behavior is communication!

• Staff buy-in, facilitated through education and communication; set goals together

• Support from skilled external (university) or internal staff
Keys to Success (cont.)

- All-staff training on the nature of trauma, PBIS theory, and practical steps for implementation

- Implement new practices – communicate with students and parents, share goals of change and their role

- Early intervention! First three years of school – help develop successful strategies for later years

- Continue training – offer teachers “just-in-time” coaching and problem solving
What is Possible?

https://vimeo.com/55655036

Video about Thaysa Lumingkewas, an 8-year-old girl. This film highlights the power of presuming competence, differentiated instruction and augmentative and alternative communication.

Thaysa has autism and thrives at Maple Wood Elementary School in Somersworth, NH. The school has implemented Response to Intervention (RII), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
Other Resources

• [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)

• Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-wide Positive Behavior Support,


• [http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw_mhtrauma](http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw_mhtrauma)
http://stophurtingkids.com
Film, resources, state-by-state analysis

Join the Campaign at stophurtingkids.com

STO
P
HURTING
KIDS

The Campaign to End Restraint and Seclusion Abuse in Schools
Webinar Series, Sept. 24 – Oct. 22

Creating School Cultures Where All Students Thrive
A Series for Education Leaders
3:30-5 EDT, Thursdays, 9/24-10/22

Webinar Series Co-hosted By:
TASH
National Association of Elementary School Principals
Ask Yourself:

• What is the person trying to communicate?
• What is another way that he or she can communicate this to others?
• What can s/he do to get their wants and needs met in socially appropriate ways?
Nelson Mandela:

There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.
Thank you!

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