Building Trust and Well-Being Through Trauma-Informed Communities

Leader Self-Assessment and Planning Tool

JULY 2020

TEACHING AND LEADING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19 (WEBINAR SERIES)

Introduction

Educators are increasingly aware of the high rates of student exposure to childhood adversity and trauma and the effects on learning. Adverse experiences include family violence; abuse; parent separation or divorce; family mental health and substance use problems or incarceration; and environmental adversities, such as exposure to group and/or community violence, poverty and related stressors, bullying, racism and discrimination, poor health, and involvement with other systems such as child welfare and juvenile justice. School staff may also be directly exposed to a wide range of adverse and potentially traumatic experiences, and they are at risk of experiencing secondary trauma after witnessing the effects of trauma on their students. Experiences related to the COVID-19 crisis add an additional layer of stressors for students, families, and school staff.

In response to this collective trauma, school leaders face unique challenges and opportunities as they work to reopen schools and create school communities that address the intersection between adversity, well-being, and academic success. This handout offers a self-assessment for school leaders that includes an array of trauma-informed strategies for fostering trust, well-being, and resilience for all in the learning environment during these unprecedented times.

Note: The parallel supporting student resilience self-assessment and planning tool for teachers includes classroom strategies for supporting student well-being, and staff can use the educator self-care self-assessment to monitor their own well-being practices.

Defining Our Terms

The following is a review of common terms used in the fields of mental health and education to refer to the prevalence and effects of adversity and trauma on student health and well-being and approaches to addressing these issues in educational settings.

Adverse Childhood Experiences: First defined by the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study, adverse childhood experiences occur before the age of 18 and fall into three main categories: abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction (Felitti et al., 1998). Recently, experts expanded the categories and types of adverse childhood experiences to include additional experiences, such as exposure to group and/or community violence, poverty and related stressors, bullying, racism and discrimination, poor health, and involvement with systems such as child welfare and juvenile justice (Cronholm et al., 2015; Ellis & Deitz, 2017; Wade, Shea, Rubin, & Wood, 2014). Although the terms *adverse childhood experiences* and *trauma* often are used interchangeably, not all adverse childhood experiences may have a traumatic effect.

Trauma: The term *trauma* refers to an event, a series of events, or a set of circumstances that (a) is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening; (b) overwhelms a person's ability to cope; and (c) has adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014). Traumatic experiences come in many forms, including acute events; chronic experiences, such as ongoing exposure to violence; and historical traumas that involve the collective and cumulative trauma experienced by a particular group across generations still suffering its effects (e.g., violent colonization and assimilation policies, slavery, segregation, racism, homophobia, discrimination, and oppression).

Toxic Stress: The term *toxic stress* refers to the strong, frequent, and prolonged activation of a child's stress response system caused by exposure to chronic, severe adversity and trauma without adequate support, such as recurrent abuse, chronic neglect or deprivation, and ongoing exposure to threat and violence within families or communities (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2014).

Resilience: *Resilience* refers to a positive, adaptive response to significant adversity (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015). A person's capacity for resilience is influenced by internal and external assets that strengthen the potential for positive outcomes.

Trauma-Informed Care: The term *trauma-informed care* originated in the behavioral health system and refers to a universal approach to addressing trauma that requires changes to the practices, policies, and culture of an entire organization so that all staff have the awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to support trauma survivors.

Trauma-Informed/Trauma-Sensitive Schools: In some contexts, the term *trauma-informed schools* refers to a multitiered approach to addressing trauma that includes universal and targeted interventions. Some educators have adopted the term *trauma-sensitive schools* or *trauma sensitivity* to refer to a universal approach to addressing trauma that is adopted by all school staff for all students (Cole, Eisner, Gregory, & Ristuccia, 2013; Guarino & Chagnon, 2018).

Social and Emotional Learning: The term *social and emotional learning* (SEL) refers to developing, teaching, or enhancing individuals' interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies, including those competencies that are critical to resilience in the face of adversity, such as emotional regulation and relationship skills. Trauma-informed care for students includes strategies for building students' social and emotional competencies.

Responses to Trauma

The effects of adversity and trauma on students, caregivers, staff, and schools may manifest in a variety of ways that impact trust and community building.

Effects of adversity and trauma	
Students	Physical symptoms (headaches, stomachaches, and decline in self-care); intense feelings of fear, anxiety, and concern for safety; difficulty identifying and controlling feelings; more impulsive or risk-taking behavior; difficulty focusing, concentrating, and engaging in learning; increased risk of failing; trouble forming or maintaining relationships others; increased absences; more suspensions and expulsions; and higher referrals to special education.
Caregivers	Difficulty focusing and managing emotions; less patience and tolerance for daily stressors; difficulty balancing work and home life while supporting student learning at home; worry about family members, job stability, and economic security; general mistrust of school staff and the education system; difficulty connecting with school staff, especially if caregivers do not feel like valued and respected members of the school community; feelings of embarrassment, shame, fear, or guilt about their child's behaviors or needs that may trigger reminders of other traumas or negative school experiences; and mental health and/or substance use issues.
Staff	Increased worry, fear, anxiety, anger, frustration, and loss; increased physical complaints and difficulties with sleep or appetite; difficulty connecting with others, including students and colleagues; feeling easily impatient or frustrated with others; trouble concentrating and maintaining focus; and constant worries about what is happening in families and communities.
Schools	Students more likely to escalate and struggle with difficult behaviors; adults increasingly are crisis driven, reactive, and punitive to maintain control; it is difficult to maintain a safe environment that is most conductive to learning; and schools risk retraumatizing students by creating situations that mirror or replicate other traumas (e.g., harsh and punitive discipline, disrespectful interactions, chaotic environments).

Key Resilience Factors

Common factors associated with resilience in the face of adversity and trauma include the following:

- Adaptable, caring, and supportive relationships

- A sense of mastery over life circumstances

- Strong executive function and self-regulation skills

- Safe and supportive environments

- Affirming faith or cultural traditions

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being

Instructions

This self-assessment tool includes a range of practices that school leaders may consider integrating to build trust and foster well-being for all in the learning environment. The strategies in this self-assessment are designed to align and integrate efforts related to trauma-informed care, SEL, and equity that are critical for addressing adversity and fostering resilience in school communities. Many of these efforts require intensive, long-term support to fully realize, and ongoing support will be needed from all in the school community to support this vision.

Assessment practices are grouped by common core areas related to trauma-informed community building and include (a) education, mindset, and instruction; (b) safety; (c) emotional regulation and well-being; (d) relationships; and (e) systems and structures.

Core assessment areas	
Education, Mindset, and Instruction	Includes strategies for supporting educator knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs that help promote a safe, respectful, engaging and equitable instructional environment.
Safety	Includes strategies for ensuring physical safety (being free from harm), emotional safety (feeling seen, heard, and respected), and identity safety (being appreciated for who you are). This includes how student behavior is addressed.
Emotional Regulation and Well-Being	Includes strategies for helping students and staff become aware of their emotional states, manage their emotional responses, and verbalize how they are feeling. This also includes strategies for supporting student mental health needs.
Relationships	Includes strategies for fostering a culture of connection and partnership among staff, among students, and between educators and students and families, along with ensuring choice, control, and empowerment for all in the school community.
Systems and Structures	Includes strategies for creating the infrastructure for supporting well-being and community.

Take some time to complete the self-assessment, using the following scale to identify the extent to which these strategies are currently incorporated in your school:

1 = We never do this.

2 = We rarely do this.

3 = We do this sometimes (e.g., occasionally/with some staff).

4 = We do this often (e.g., frequently/regularly).

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Education, Mindset, and Instruction*

Please rate on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: ALL STAFF	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Educate all staff (certified and noncertified) on the types and effects of trauma, including racial and historical trauma.	1	2	3	4
Educate all staff on the unique experiences and risk for trauma among particular groups of students and staff (e.g., the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning community; communities of color, refugee communities).	1	2	3	4
Educate all staff on key factors associated with resilience and social and emotional well-being across the life span.	1	2	3	4
Educate all staff about systemic racism and implicit bias.	1	2	3	4
Educate all staff on the effects of secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma.	1	2	3	4
Educate all staff on understanding their signs of stress and developing positive coping strategies.	1	2	3	4
Provide training and ongoing support to assist staff in integrating trauma-informed practices.	1	2	3	4
Provide training and ongoing support related to building social and emotional competencies for students and staff.	1	2	3	4
Provide training and ongoing support related to culturally responsive practices.	1	2	3	4
Provide training and ongoing support on positive discipline practices, such as restorative practices.	1	2	3	4
Provide training and ongoing support on student-centered practices, such as collaborative problem solving.	1	2	3	4
Provide family engagement training for staff (e.g., helping parents understand child data; informing parents of their rights; giving parent feedback on child needs; helping families support learning at home; promoting child development, learning, and wellness).	1	2	3	4
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: LEADER-SPECIFIC	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Often**
Provide training on social and emotional competencies for principals and other school leaders.	1	2	3	4
Provide training on emotional intelligence for school leaders.	1	2	3	4
Provide training on systems thinking for school leaders.	1	2	3	4
Provide training for school leaders on how to support staff in adopting new practices.	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Education, Mindset, and Instruction*

Please rate on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.

TRAUMA EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Educate students about trauma, its effects on the brain and body, and stress management techniques.	1	2	3	4
Develop a common language across your school community for talking about the brain and nervous system to help students and staff articulate which part of their brain and nervous system they may be operating from at a given time. [Examples: for younger students, you may talk about the upstairs/downstairs brain; for older students you may talk about the thinking/emotional brain or the calm system and the stress system. You may assign colors to different nervous system states, such as red for fight or flight, blue for freeze or shut down, and green for calm and connected.]	1	2	3	4
Educate caregivers about stress and trauma and their effects, stress management techniques, and how you are working to support student well-being (e.g., newsletters, resources, in-person or virtual presentations on the topic, ways that parents can support well-being practices at home).	1	2	3	4
Provide caregivers with strategies related to proactive, SEL techniques that can be incorporated or practiced at home.	1	2	3	4
Communicate your vision for student well-being to community partners and ensure those partners have a similar approach to supporting students.	1	2	3	4
TRAUMA-INFORMED MINDSET	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Support staff in adopting a trauma-informed mindset. [Consider examples of core beliefs associated with a trauma-informed mindset. Spend time exploring these and other core beliefs with your staff and addressing areas with staff disagreement or issues with buy-in. • Attending to student and staff social and emotional well-being is necessary for academic success. • Students do well if they can (versus if they want to). • Relationships are central to student success. • Behavior is communication (e.g., unsolved problems, unmet needs, lagging skills). • We cannot reward/punish students into being regulated. • Solutions-focused (versus punishment oriented) approaches to addressing student behavior are best. • Equity is about ensuring that all needs are met versus treating all students the same.	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Education, Mindset, and Instruction* Please rate on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
Check your assumptions and mental talk about students and their behaviors (e.g., noticing negative thoughts, assumptions, and biases).	1	2	3	4
Avoid negative labels (e.g., disengaged, uninterested, lazy, unmotivated, doesn't care) that do not take into account the stress that students and families are experiencing and model positive talk for staff.	1	2	3	4
Help school staff recognize their own negative assumptions or tendency toward negative labels as examples arise (ensure this is done either without giving a specific example or in private to avoid embarrassing or shaming staff).	1	2	3	4
TRAUMA-INFORMED INSTRUCTION	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Often**
Assist teachers in setting consistent classroom norms that explicitly include a commitment to supporting academic success and well-being and seeing and honoring the identity and experiences of all students and staff.	1	2	3	4
Encourage teachers and staff to focus on SEL and related regulation and well-being practices during instructional time.	1	2	3	4
Encourage staff to ask colleagues, students, and their families how to make the virtual classroom more welcoming to students.	1	2	3	4
Plan for how to maintain alternate educational programming if returning in the fall is not possible or if some students must remain at home because of compromised immune systems or other risk factors.	1	2	3	4
Encourage staff to consider ways to incorporate relevant student experiences during this time (COVID, racism, other related stressors) into instruction.	1	2	3	4
STAFF SUPPORT	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Often**
Assist staff in practicing new skills incrementally to avoid overwhelm (e.g., institute a "practice-of-the-month," support grade-level or department teams in trying out the same practice for a period of time and offer each other support).	1	2	3	4
Integrate language and topics related to trauma, trauma-informed practice, and well-being into regular communication (e.g., newsletters, staff meetings).	1	2	3	4
Encourage and model a growth mindset with staff as they gain new knowledge and try out new skills.	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Education, Mindset, and Instruction*

Please rate on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.

Provide opportunities for teachers to come together virtually and talk openly, in a confidential space, about their most challenging students—to brainstorm strategies that will work during this time and lay the groundwork for a successful return to school.	1	2	3	4
Encourage and support flexibility in this new learning environment (e.g., being open to trying new things; managing expectations of yourself and of staff, students, and families).	1	2	3	4
Adjust leave policies to allow staff to stay at home because of sick family members and support staff who may have been exposed at work and now have to stay at home.	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Safety*

Please rate on a scale of 1 (never) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.

PHYSICAL SAFETY	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Prioritize the physical safety of the entire school community when making decisions related to reopening the school or holding any in-person events.	1	2	3	4
Ensure the physical safety of all staff by following the latest public health recommendations related to hygiene and protective equipment, minimizing exposure as much as possible.	1	2	3	4
Ensure that any staff on the school grounds or conducting school business are provided with the equipment, policies, and enforcement tools they need to maximize their physical safety.	1	2	3	4
Designate safe spaces inside and outside the classroom for students to self-regulate when experiencing behavioral and emotional challenges.	1	2	3	4
Ensure that staff consistently employ de-escalation strategies, such as breathing exercises, grounding techniques, and calming spaces, to prevent and minimize behavioral escalation and risk of physical harm.	1	2	3	4
Actively address all instances bullying and/or violence that happen at school.	1	2	3	4
Train school resource officers on trauma, trauma-informed practice, implicit bias, and culturally responsive practice.	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Safety* Please rate on a scale of 1 (never) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
Ensure that school resource officers are not called unnecessarily for punitive responses to student behaviors.	1	2	3	4
Integrate school resource officers into nonpunitive school activities to increase trust.	1	2	3	4
EMOTIONAL SAFETY	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Often**
Be aware of the possible fear and concerns for students and staff in returning to school during the time of COVID-19.	1	2	3	4
Set clear norms and agreements for your school community; review these norms and agreements regularly (whether virtually or in person).	1	2	3	4
Ensure that staff and students participate in developing school norms.	1	2	3	4
Ensure that norms reflect the school's commitment to nonviolence; equity; compassion; and student voice, choice, and well-being.	1	2	3	4
Set clear expectations for online behavior as it relates to safety and respect and establish clear consequences for cruelty and bullying online, including race-based bullying.	1	2	3	4
Establish clear and consistent rituals and routines for the school community (e.g., how the day begins and ends, clear structures during the day).	1	2	3	4
Establish practices to create a welcoming environment for staff and students both virtually and in person (e.g., how all are greeted, how you engage with each other throughout the day).	1	2	3	4
Ensure that all communication with students and families is personal, warm, and respectful.	1	2	3	4
Incorporate culturally relevant signs, posters, and other visual materials within the school environment.	1	2	3	4
Consider cultural factors when meeting with families (e.g., how to greet, what topics may be difficult to address, cultural norms, values, practices, and experiences with the education system).	1	2	3	4
Identify and minimize procedures and practices that may be "triggering" for students who have experienced trauma (i.e., situations, circumstances, or responses that leave students feeling helpless, vulnerable, or out of control).	1	2	3	4
Identify and minimize procedures and practices that may be "triggering" for parents who have experienced trauma. Considerations include protecting confidentiality, giving parents	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Safety*			
Please rate on a scale of 1 (never) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.			
advance notice of what will be discussed at a meeting, offering choices for how a meeting is conducted, recognizing signs of distress during conversations, and giving parents a chance to regroup or reschedule to finish the conversation.			
Ensure student expectations are clear and enforced consistently. [Note: Having consistent expectations does not preclude being flexible and compassionate and providing individualized assistance to help students build the necessary skills to meet those expectations.]	1	2	3	4
Employ behavior management strategies that are relational and focused on student and staff regulation.	1	2	3	4
Establish consequences that are nonpunitive and aim to support students in learning new behavioral skills or at least provide clear pathways for appeal. Consider students' life experiences and the potential for retraumatization when applying consequences.	1	2	3	4
Use a collaborative approach when identifying consequences/ solutions for behavior (students, teachers, support staff, administrators) once students and adults are calm.	1	2	3	4
Integrate a restorative practices approach for assisting students in repairing harm caused by their behavior.	1	2	3	4
Offer supportive services to students who require frequent disciplinary actions to address underlying causes of their behavior. Ensure that COVID-19-specific challenges are considered, including the family's economic and health-care situation.	1	2	3	4
IDENTITY SAFETY	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Often**
Provide support and guidance for staff to engage in conversations about how race, gender, socioeconomic status, and other important identities are sources of both stress and strength for students and staff.	1	2	3	4
Actively seek to address inequities experienced by students representing various cultural groups within the school by encouraging staff to act as advocates for students' needs and to become particularly attuned to the most vulnerable student needs.	1	2	3	4
Actively seek to address inequities experienced by staff of various cultural groups with the school.	1	2	3	4
Work to ensure equity of voice across staff of various cultural groups.	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Safety* Please rate on a scale of 1 (never) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
Work to ensure equity of voice across staff in different roles in the school (e.g., certified, noncertified).	1	2	3	4
Check your assumptions and biases about students and student behaviors.	1	2	3	4
Incorporate materials and references that are culturally relevant to students.	1	2	3	4
Demonstrate respect in day-to-day communications (e.g., correctly pronouncing and spelling names, using preferred pronouns, being curious about and honoring students' cultural stories and experiences).	1	2	3	4
Be aware of and respond to the presence and impact of historical and systemic racism on students and staff and the presence of race-based trauma.	1	2	3	4
Establish safe, trusting, and caring environments where students feel safe taking risks in being themselves and sharing their experiences.	1	2	3	4
Convey respect for cultural differences in communication styles, language, values, experiences with authority figures, and perceptions of safety.	1	2	3	4
Explore how students can be part of addressing racial, identity, and social justice issues that are most relevant to your school community.	1	2	3	4
Actively address "microaggressions" related to race, gender, sexual orientation, or other factors (for students and staff). Microaggressions are brief, everyday verbal or behavioral exchanges that intentionally or unintentionally communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial messages or insults. Examples of microaggressions include the following: - Consistently mispronouncing (or spelling) a student's name - Making assumptions about a student's intelligence based on race or ethnicity - Insulting, diminishing, or disregarding a student's cultural background and experiences - Using textbooks and curricula that reflect White, upper-class experiences and overlook experiences of other student groups Microaggressions related to sexual orientation or gender identity may include the following: - Using the term *gay* to describe something negative - Derogatory looks or comments about someone's gender identity or expression	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Safety* Please rate on a scale of 1 (never) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
• Being told not to "flaunt" one's sexuality • Teachers not enforcing bullying or discrimination policies • Not using preferred pronouns				

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Emotional Regulation and Well-Being* Please rate on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
EMOTIONAL REGULATION	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Often**
Support staff in adopting a lesson-planning structure that supports emotional regulation (including self-awareness and self-management practices). [Consider the following three-part model from the Collaborative for Academical, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) that includes a welcoming opening ritual, regulatory strategies throughout the lesson, and an optimistic closure.]	1	2	3	4
Support staff in using grounding techniques that help students calm down and re-regulate when necessary (e.g., belly breathing, body scans and muscle relaxation, journaling, music, rhythm and movement, settling minute, calming images).	1	2	3	4
Integrate activities for supporting emotional regulation into staff meetings and encourage staff practice in smaller team meetings.	1	2	3	4
Integrate activities for supporting emotional regulation in larger school rituals and routines (during morning announcements, before leaving school, at the beginning and end of schoolwide gatherings).	1	2	3	4
Support staff in identifying the situations and student and staff responses that trigger their own emotional dysregulation.	1	2	3	4
Support staff in practicing awareness and regulation techniques for themselves throughout the school day (e.g., mindful breathing, body scans, compassion exercises).	1	2	3	4
Consider instituting a process for supporting staff at moments of overwhelm (e.g., a tap in/tap out system where teachers can access more immediate support if they need space or an opportunity to care for themselves and re-regulate in the moment.	1	2	3	4
EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Often**
Celebrate successes in your school community regularly.	1	2	3	4
Find ways to incorporate schoolwide activities that cultivate positive emotions.	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Emotional Regulation and Well-Being* Please rate on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
Incorporate regular opportunities for practicing gratitude within the school community.	1	2	3	4
Develop plans for assisting students in transitioning from the previous school year into the next, including allowing students to spend some time in their former classrooms to celebrate accomplishments, honor their efforts during the time of virtual learning, and transition to their next grade level.	1	2	3	4
Incorporate formal strategies for assessing for staff burnout and secondary trauma.	1	2	3	4
Provide peer supports to assist with stress management (e.g., teacher circles, check-ins specific to emotional well-being).	1	2	3	4
Identify and distribute resources for staff who may need additional screening, assessment, and/or treatment for stress, mental health issues, or secondary traumatic stress symptoms.	1	2	3	4
Check in with your staff both collectively and individually. Encourage them to take time to manage their stress and take care of themselves and their families.	1	2	3	4
Support staff in developing individual wellness plans to refer to throughout the year.	1	2	3	4
Share community resources with teachers that support family well-being (e.g., food and housing) and encourage them to share concerns about families with the school administration.	1	2	3	4
Normalize stress and mention ways that mental health professionals can help children or caregivers cope with that stress when communicating with families. List symptoms that children and families could be experiencing.	1	2	3	4
Work with your school mental health staff to develop a list of mental health resources that families can access from their homes. This list should include a suicide hotline, a disaster distress hotline, a domestic violence hotline, school mental health staff available by phone or video, and community mental health resources.	1	2	3	4
Ensure that all staff receive training to identify reactions of trauma and mental health and know the procedures for linking a student to additional supports.	1	2	3	4
Ensure school assessments (e.g., educational, functional, behavioral, psychological) consider the history of trauma and potential effects on learning, behavior, test results, and diagnosis.	1	2	3	4
Ensure the assessment process that engages students and families through varied lenses, including family strengths, capacities, cultural heritage, and extended family resources.	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Emotional Regulation and Well-Being*

Please rate on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.

Ensure individualized plans include a place for addressing trauma-related issues, such as triggers, necessary accommodations and helpful adult responses, and trauma-related supports.	1	2	3	4
Consider working with school mental health and/or community partners with expertise in trauma to explore ways to identify students who may be experiencing mental health and trauma symptoms associated with COVID-19.	1	2	3	4
Consider using cultural insiders to assist in explaining available mental health services and address potential stigma related to accessing these services.	1	2	3	4
Provide and/or contract with providers who provide culturally relevant and responsive mental health services.	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Relationships*

Please rate on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.

STAFF	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Create opportunities for staff to connect with one another, through peer check-ins or using professional development time to reflect and process.	1	2	3	4
Begin and end staff and/or team/department meetings with an opportunity for connecting ("being human"). This may involve a temperature check, regulation activities, or staff/teams/departments taking turns leading the group through an opening or closing ritual that they develop.	1	2	3	4
Create opportunities for staff to share their cultures with each other.	1	2	3	4
Recognize and help staff identify their strengths.	1	2	3	4
Provide opportunities for staff to share gratitude for each other.	1	2	3	4
Promote a culture where staff can be open about challenges and able to ask for help.	1	2	3	4
Ensure staff receive adequate supervision and support.	1	2	3	4
Provide opportunities for peer mentorship for staff, particularly those who are newer to the field.	1	2	3	4
Develop a shared process for decision making that incorporates staff feedback and voice.	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Relationships* Please rate on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
Ensure staff feedback on reentry plans.	1	2	3	4
Provide opportunities for staff members to give input into policies and procedures.	1	2	3	4
Ensure that staff input can be provided without negative repercussions.	1	2	3	4
STUDENTS	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Often**
Support teachers in fostering developmental relationships with students. (Refer to the Developmental Relationships Framework.)	1	2	3	4
Assist teachers in identifying student strengths with students and building on them throughout the year.	1	2	3	4
Assist staff in using online tools to build community when in a virtual space (e.g., Flipgrid or Seesaw—allow students to share photos and videos that classmates can watch and comment on).	1	2	3	4
Consider ways that staff can learn more about students' cultures and systems of belief and create opportunities for students to share their stories.	1	2	3	4
Provide ways to support student expression (e.g., art, music, videos).	1	2	3	4
Support staff in conducting virtual or in-person community-building check-in circles (e.g., morning meetings).	1	2	3	4
Encourage staff to attend to equity of voice, ensuring that all student voices are heard and reflected in community-building activities at the classroom level.	1	2	3	4
Lead a relationship mapping session with colleagues (in-person or virtually) to identify adult connections among students and to target staff to support (see virtual resource).	1	2	3	4
Establish a process for repairing relationships when connections are disrupted between students and adults or peers (this includes adults owning their missteps when they arise).	1	2	3	4
Support staff in gathering student input regularly about what is working, what is not working, and what might work better (in person and in a virtual space).	1	2	3	4
Assist staff in using a collaborative problem-solving approach with students (see https://youtu.be/zuoPZkFcLVs for an example).	1	2	3	4
Institute formal processes for assessing student engagement.	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Relationships* Please rate on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
Examine engagement data for patterns among students who are or are not feeling a sense of connection and belonging within the school community.	1	2	3	4
Ensure student voice in all efforts related to well-being and equity efforts in the school (e.g., presence on committees, feedback gathered on particular topics).	1	2	3	4
Consider equitable representation related to student voice and participation in leadership positions in the school. Identify any disproportionality related to representation within the school community.	1	2	3	4
Find ways to say goodbye to students as they end their year (virtual meetings, virtual journals to share memories and gratitude, postcards).	1	2	3	4
Explore ways to assist staff in welcoming students back for the upcoming year (e.g., virtual meet-and-greets, welcome letters or postcards, a getting-to-know-you questionnaire).	1	2	3	4
FAMILIES	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Often**
Recognize the types of potentially traumatic experiences that families have and may continue to face that impact their engagement with the school community.	1	2	3	4
Identify patterns in family participation and engagement with the school community and identify those families who are less engaged.	1	2	3	4
Identify potential barriers for families who are less engaged with the school community and ways to address those barriers.	1	2	3	4
Use a cultural insider to help bridge gaps in engagement.	1	2	3	4
Develop formal processes for continuous improvement related to student and family engagement (e.g., family satisfaction, assessments of quality of relationships, discussion of screenings and assessments, number of professional development activities with family engagement focus, changes in family engagement practices).	1	2	3	4
Ensure that all families feel welcome in the school.	1	2	3	4
Learn about families' backgrounds, cultures, and goals for their children.	1	2	3	4
Include families as partners in all decision making related to student plans and services (e.g., use family group or team decision-making approaches).	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being:
Relationships
Please rate on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.

Lead with family strengths when addressing student challenges and developing plans.	1	2	3	4
Set mutually satisfactory goals that families can be part of achieving.	1	2	3	4
Consider how to conduct meetings in trauma-sensitive ways (who leads, how the room is arranged, what signals are given regarding whether student and family voice is valued).	1	2	3	4
Consider cultural factors when meeting with families (e.g., how to greet, what topics may be difficult to address, cultural norms, values, practices, and experiences with the education system).	1	2	3	4
Gather feedback from families on reentry plans, including concerns for the new school year.	1	2	3	4
Include families in the planning and implementation of schoolwide efforts related to addressing trauma and supporting well-being (e.g., trauma-informed practice, SEL, equity).	1	2	3	4
Provide opportunities for families to give input into policies and procedures.	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being:
Systems and Structures
Please rate on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.

SYSTEMS & STRUCTURES	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Formally acknowledge the types of trauma (individual, family, community, societal) that students and staff in your school community experience (e.g., COVID-19, racism, violence, other experiences/events that may be specific to your school community context).	1	2	3	4
Articulate a commitment to understanding the effects of adversity and trauma on students, caregivers, staff, and schools and supporting the social and emotional well-being of all in the school community (e.g., incorporate into mission and vision).	1	2	3	4
Make the connection between a focus on trauma-informed practice, SEL, and culturally responsive and equitable learning conditions.	1	2	3	4
Allocate resources to support efforts needed to create a trauma-informed and resilience-oriented school community.	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Systems and Structures* Please rate on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
Ensure that your school's reentry plan reflects a commitment to equity, trauma-informed practice, and social and emotional well-being and learning for all in the school community.	1	2	3	4
Review student data for inequities in academic performance, disciplinary actions, and student engagement and experiences of school. Find opportunities for all staff to be engaged in some way in this review and discussion of data.	1	2	3	4
Avoid using data to make generalizations or assign labels to students.	1	2	3	4
Develop a formal process for reviewing policies and procedures to identify and address standard practices that may adversely and disproportionately impact specific groups of students and exacerbate traumatic stress or loss reactions.	1	2	3	4
Identify existing structures (or create new structures) for supporting ongoing efforts to address trauma and support student and staff social and emotional well-being (e.g., school climate or improvement teams, teams focused on equity, reentry teams).	1	2	3	4
Ensure that systems and structures are in place for regularly gathering staff input and feedback on school systems and structures, a chance to participate in decision making about the creation of systems and structures, and a chance to inform outcomes.	1	2	3	4
Ensure that emergency response protocols are clear and minimize the risk for traumatizing or retraumatizing students.	1	2	3	4
Provide clear, concise, accurate and timely communication to the entire school community, which increases predictability, a sense of control, and feelings of safety for others.	1	2	3	4
Maintain clear channels of communication between administrators and staff.	1	2	3	4
Maintain clear channels of communication between instructional staff and student support staff.	1	2	3	4
Communicate in the language of the home, establish multilanguage hotlines, and translate materials for families.	1	2	3	4
Use a cultural insider to help bridge cultural gaps in communication.	1	2	3	4
Set clear expectations for staff related to their roles and responsibilities where new ways of teaching and learning, particularly in a virtual space, are involved.	1	2	3	4
Ensure that the expectations of staff related to trauma-informed and SEL practices are aligned with performance expectations.	1	2	3	4

Leader Self-Assessment for Building Trust and Well-Being: *Systems and Structures* Please rate on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) how often you incorporate the following strategies.				
Identify a community of peers/mentors who can support school leaders in their efforts to address trauma and support student and staff social and emotional well-being and growth.	1	2	3	4

Follow-Up Questions to Consider

1. What was the process of filling out the assessment like for you?

    _____

    _____

    _____

2. Were you surprised by any of your responses? If so, which ones?

    _____

    _____

    _____

3. In what areas are you strongest? Where is there room for growth?

    _____

    _____

    _____

School Well-Being Plan

Use this template to consider what you are already doing and what you would like to do to further support well-being and community in your school. Based on your responses to the self-assessment, list one to two things in each area that you already do regularly and one to two things that you would like to try out or do more of to support trauma-informed community building. Then choose a few things from your list that you can make a commitment to integrating into your school reopening plans.

Area	Already Do	Would Like to Do
EDUCATION, MINDSET, AND INSTRUCTION		
SAFETY		
EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND WELL-BEING		
RELATIONSHIPS		
SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES		

Committed to Integrating

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Resources

- [CASEL CARES: SEL Resources During COVID-19](). Includes webinars and tips for navigating adult and student social and emotional needs in response to COVID-19.

- [From Response to Reopening: State Efforts to Elevate Social and Emotional Learning During the Pandemic](). Brief developed by CASEL with recommendations for states to support SEL as schools reopen.

- [Creating, Supporting, and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework](). Developed by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and includes a framework and strategies for adopting a schoolwide trauma-informed approach.

- [Trauma-Informed School Strategies During COVID-19](). Developed by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and includes strategies for supporting trauma-informed practice in schools in response to COVID-19.

- [Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package](). Toolkit from the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments that offers a framework and process for adopting a universal, trauma-sensitive approach and includes online modules and resources for training staff.

- [Trauma-Informed SEL Toolkit](). Developed by Transforming Education to explore the intersection between trauma-informed practice and SEL.

- [A Trauma-Informed Approach to Teaching Through Coronavirus](). Developed by Teaching Tolerance staff in response to COVID-19 and teaching in a virtual space.

- [Priority for Trauma-Sensitive Remote Learning: Keeping Connections Strong](). Developed by the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative.

- [SEL as a Lever for Equity](). CASEL webpage with research articles, resources, and access to a webinar series related to the intersection between SEL, equity, and social justice.

- [Responding to Trauma Through Policies That Create Supportive Learning Environments](). Developed by Child Trends and includes policy-level considerations for adopting trauma-informed practices in schools.

- [SEL 3 Signature Practices Playbook: A Tool That Supports Systemic SEL](). Developed by CASEL and includes SEL strategies for integration into daily instruction.

- [Search Institute](). Offers tools, including a tool for identifying student strengths, for creating relationships using its developmental relationship framework.

- [Collaborative Problem Solving](). YouTube video of a Ted talk that discusses the shift to a collaborative problem-solving approach.

- [Virtual Relationship Mapping (Grades 6–12)](). From the Harvard Graduate School of Education and includes an adapted strategy and lesson plans for virtual relationship mapping exercises with staff.

- [Stories from the Field: Cultivating Relationships Through Administrator Actions](). Developed by Transforming Education and includes strategies for fostering relationships between administrators and staff.

- [mondaycampaigns.org](). Public health initiative that promotes behavior change with a focus on health on Mondays. Includes free resources for supporting mindfulness practices to start the week, such as the "Destress Monday" resources that include a resource packet specific to schools.

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