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Curriculum in Context
Building Resiliency

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This September marked my 19th year in education. Over these years I have been blessed to interact with kindergarteners, 50-somethings and every age in between. No matter the age, all our students have stories to tell, and they have a complex web of context they bring to our classrooms. Sometimes that context is tragic and it can be a source of trauma that affects every aspect of their lives. The theme of this edition is Building Resiliency, and I am excited to include articles from Washington State’s 2016 Teacher of the Year, Whitworth University and University of Washington faculty, and a SPED teacher, newer to the profession, who recounts her experience working with “Andrew” during his tough fifth grade year.

As you read the articles in this edition of Curriculum in Context, you will find two case studies of students who have experienced incredible obstacles in the way of their learning. You will read about the courageous work their teachers embarked upon in efforts to acknowledge their struggles and advocate for them in building resiliency. I hope you ask yourself—as I did many times—if you have had students with problems and challenges like the ones described. Three notable articles in addition to the two case studies round out this fall’s edition:

- Gregory Benner, Laura Allen, Kristi Greenaway Cirignano and Josh Garcia share the groundbreaking work of the Tacoma Whole Child Initiative in their piece, “Sustainable System for Building Resilience: Preliminary Outcomes of the Tacoma Whole Child Initiative.” As part of this article, University of Washington Tacoma faculty, along with district leaders within Tacoma Public Schools (TPS), describe their thoughtful and research-informed 10-year plan to initiate a cultural shift at TPS with the hopes of enacting major behavioral and academic student gains. The premise of the work is grounded in one core underpinning: “TPS believes academic success is predicated in significant measure upon students being able to function effectively socially and emotionally, as well as academically, within its classrooms and buildings.” This article offers a first look at some exciting and hopeful preliminary data.

- Camille Jones, Washington State 2016 Teacher of the Year, introduces how she uses Leah Kuypers’ Zones of Regulation in her classroom. Within her narrative she shares how she has learned valuable lessons from her students and from current articles on the subject of The Zones. She tells her story of how she starts every class session with a greeting and a check-in with each student. She teaches us through her trial and error how important it is to acknowledge our students’ emotional state and provide them with tools so they can function well “on the outside” when not always feeling the best on the inside.

- Finally, Wendy Bleecker, a Whitworth University assistant professor, and Stacy Coronado, a counselor at Paschal Sherman Indian School, have contributed the article, “Weaving Together Native American Language and Social Emotional Learning: Putting the Pieces Back Together.”

This research and writing explores how an integrative approach that involves Native language re-introduction within a social emotional learning and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports framework can help Native children become resilient in the face of generational trauma. Their study examines how curricular interventions and building-wide culture shifts may impact student empathy and student discipline referrals. They found in their small study that incorporation of the Native ways and language has the power to put students on the right path.

The theme of our next journal will focus on innovations in education and/or non-traditional school concepts. Some related topics under this theme that may contribute to the conversation include:

- Innovative school design
- Project-based learning
- Problem-based learning
- Place-based learning
- Experiential learning
- STEAM or STEM education
- Design Thinking
- Inquiry-based education
- Experiential learning

Potential articles submitted for the Learn section should be a current book review between 500 and 750 words and should include the APA reference for the book. Manuscripts for the Teach and Lead sections should be between 850 and 2500 words, focus on either the classroom (i.e., teacher) perspective or the leadership perspective, and include citations written in APA format. Please submit questions or articles for consideration by March 15, 2018 to: Dr. Doreen Keller (dkeller@whitworth.edu)

Doreen Keller, Ed.D., is an assistant professor and the secondary coordinator of the Master in Teaching program at Whitworth University. She joined the Whitworth faculty in 2013. Her areas of specialization include best practices in teacher education, especially classroom management and cultural responsive teaching. Her research interests include place-based education and teacher-candidate edTPA preparedness.
What is resiliency and why is it important?

In today’s world, our students certainly need strategies to recover and cope with hardships. There is no simple answer to ensure every student develops resiliency in every situation. We can, however, challenge ourselves as educators to help our students develop the ability to negotiate their own challenges and to ultimately become more resilient. I am hopeful you will find valuable insights and new learning in this edition of Curriculum in Context.

Marie Verhaar is currently the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning for Tacoma Public Schools. In her 37th year in public education, Marie has served as a classroom teacher, a building principal, and a district level administrator.
Recognizing Trauma and Equipping for Resiliency

by Sureetha E. McCain, Tessa Lauer and Keith Lambert

Formal education begins in a unique context for all learners. It is not atypical for young children to experience fear and uncertainty in their initial classroom experience whether it is in a preschool class or traditional kindergarten setting. In extreme cases, this fear manifests as educational trauma (Cole et al., 2005). Educational trauma occurs when the learning situation triggers an extreme anxiety response on the part of the learner for any reason. Beyond being triggered by the first separation from home that occurs when children start school, educational trauma can occur in a multitude of ways. Educational trauma can be triggered by violence at school, emotional or physical assault, abuse by a peer or adult in the learning environment or more commonly when a child is bullied by peers. Trauma can even be triggered as a result of extreme stress brought on by standardized testing or other school performance expectations. There are multiple forms of treatment that may help ameliorate these types of trauma; some are medical while others are innovative approaches that support the development of resiliency in the learner. It is imperative that educators not only understand trauma exists, but also recognize they have the ability to effectively identify the signs of trauma.

According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) webpage, a traumatic event is defined as “a sudden and unexpected occurrence that causes intense fear and may involve a threat of physical harm or actual physical harm. A traumatic experience may have a profound effect on the physical health, mental health and development of a student” (2016). Educators should respond “by understanding how students experience traumatic events and [being aware of] how students express their lingering distress over the experience” (NCTSN, 2016). The NCTSN emphasizes that younger children tend to display signs of traumatic stress with physical complaints more than older children. Such signals can include body aches or sleeping problems along with behavior changes such as increased irritability, aggression and anger. These signs may occur in conjunction with increased absenteeism that disrupts the educational process.

To suggest a teacher’s job is simply to teach content is to simplify both the art and science of teaching. Students come to our classrooms with unique and complex stories, some more so than others. The task of the teacher is to identify the lock, find the key and open the door so students have the best opportunity for success. The case study below represents an actual student whose identifying information has been changed to protect confidentiality. The case study illustrates how educational trauma can manifest in a specific student.

Case Study

Casey is a fourth-grade female student in a general education classroom with 25 other students. Her test scores indicate she is at grade level in all subjects.

Using a standards-based grading scale her work fluctuates from “1” level work to “4” level work and is not consistently at grade level. Casey struggles with controlling her temper, staying in her personal space and staying on task. Many of these issues stem from her diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS).

When the school year began, Casey’s teachers were aware of her diagnosis. Casey has attended the same school for the past three years, so the school is well acquainted with her background. Casey’s mother also met with the fourth-grade teachers to discuss Casey’s 504 plan, Casey’s home life and what to prepare for in the classroom. Casey’s mother mentioned that Casey tends to struggle much more at home than at school. Casey found success in the second grade especially, and since then, school has been enjoyable for her. She doesn’t see home as a place to work, however, and becomes very angry when she must complete homework or do chores. Casey’s mother worries that she will start to dislike school as well, manifesting the same behavior as she does at home. The teacher’s goal is to maintain the enjoyment Casey has found in school while also supporting her learning. Previously Casey used a five-levels of escalation scale to help her stay on task and keep her calm when she felt her temper escalating. The teachers decided, with the help of Casey’s mother, to avoid using the scale unless Casey started to show signs of needing it again.

A conversation between Casey and her teacher gave more background regarding her school difficulties that extended beyond her FAS diagnosis. During silent sustained reading, the teacher noticed a picture next to Casey, which she used as a bookmark. The picture was of a girl with the same hair color as Casey, who appeared to be 12 or 13 years old.

“You that is a picture of, Casey?”
“Who is that’s my sister, Kate.”
“That’s nice! You look so similar. Is that her picture from school?”

“Yeah, she mailed it to me because she lives so far away. I only get to see her like maybe once a year or less sometimes, but she always sends me her picture.”

“Wow, that must be hard not to be with her very often. But it’s nice that you have that picture to see her every day! Do you have other siblings?”

“Yeah, I miss her sometimes but she’s also annoying, but I love her so much. I have five siblings, but none of us live together because we were all adopted when we were just kids, so I don’t see any of them very often.”

“Wow! That’s hard for me to imagine. It must be really nice when you do get to see them. I know how happy I am when I get to see my brothers.”

“Yep!”
Casey did not seem sad when she explained her family to the teacher. She talked about it as if she had told the story many times. The short conversation between Casey and her teacher added another dimension to Casey’s problem behaviors. Being separated at a young age from her parents and five siblings on top of being diagnosed with FAS could have combined to cause some of the trauma behaviors Casey displayed.

After two weeks in the classroom, when the teachers began to teach from the curriculum rather than teaching classroom procedures, Casey began exhibiting problem behaviors. The most common occurrence was off-task behavior. Several times per week, Casey would be sitting at her desk, seemingly paying attention, but really reading her book in her lap. After several verbal redirections, the teacher confiscated the book, promising to return it once Casey had finished her work or when the class was over. At this point, Casey put her hood over her head, put her head in her lap, and refused to move. To reduce similar occurrences, the teacher discussed with Casey that she was to place her book on the teacher’s desk before any lessons began and she could retrieve it once she completed her work and showed the teacher.

Casey struggled with writing lessons; she would often rush through the directions and her work. As a result, her work was often incomplete or unacceptable and needed revision. These instances would trigger Casey’s temper, causing her to shut down, put her hood on her head as an escape and refuse to do her work. While Casey’s teacher wanted to make school enjoyable for Casey, she also needed to ensure that Casey was completing her work and learning. During one instance the teacher pointed out the revisions that needed to be made to Casey’s writing and prompted her several times to complete her work. Casey took her hood off, slammed her hand on her desk and yelled, “I hate this class, and I hate writing!” She stomped to the corner, put her hood all the way over her face and began to cry. To address what happened the teacher met with Casey over lunch once Casey had de-escalated. Casey was then able to finish her work.

After two months of school, the teacher began addressing Casey’s problem behaviors daily as they increased in frequency. During nearly every lesson Casey would take her book from the teacher’s desk to read before her work was finished. She would often yell at other students for humming, tapping a pencil or not walking fast enough. Work time in the classroom often led to Casey yelling and putting her hood over her face or it ended in tears and frustration with little to no work completed. However, Casey maintained good relationships with her peers and showed acceptable behaviors during lunch and recess.

The teachers decided that it was necessary to reintroduce Casey’s five levels of escalation scale. The five levels were printed on a card which Casey kept on her desk. The levels were: 1. I am happy, I am able to focus and work and I feel good right now; 2. I am a little less happy, but I’m still under control; 3. I am getting angry and need to think about how to de-escalate; 4. I am angry, I cannot focus, I need a break; and 5. I need to leave the room to get myself under control again. The teacher used this scale to check in with Casey’s emotional state. Every so often, the teacher walked by Casey’s desk to ask where she was on the scale. Casey could also raise her hand if she was a level three or above to let the teacher know that she was escalating. If Casey reached a level four or five—or the teacher reached a level four or five with Casey—Casey would take a break or find a way to de-escalate before she exhibited her problem behaviors.

Casey had not abused the system in the past to get out of work. Instead, the scale helped her continue to enjoy and find success in school. After reintroducing the scale, several days went by with increased success for Casey. There were still instances of her problem behaviors, but she began to take responsibility for how she was feeling. With increased recognition of her emotional state, Casey was better able to self-regulate and develop the resilience needed to succeed in school.

Casey’s story is common among educational settings throughout the country, and as educators we must continually ask what our response should be to helping students like Casey become resilient and equipped for success.

**Responses to Students in Trauma**

Many children today experience complex versus situational trauma. Dorado and Zakrzewski (2013) note that, “children who live in under-resourced communities where domestic and neighborhood violence, racial discrimination, and poverty are more prevalent can develop post trauma difficulties after experiencing what is known as complex trauma” (para 5). Complex trauma is defined as repeated or prolonged exposure to events that are trauma inducing. Bullying is the most common cause of school-based trauma, and in these scenarios students have the potential to be both perpetrators and victims. Many strategies appear in the literature that can help educators equip students with the tools they need to process their trauma and build resiliency. These include self-recognition of feelings, use of predictable transitions, and self-expression through art.

**Self-recognition of Feelings**

The first step in effective response is to recognize that a child is going into survival mode. This could take the form of fight, flight or freeze. These biological reactions are important strategies to combat trauma although they are not always a functional behavior in school settings. Dorado and Zakrzewski encourage adults to help the child regain a sense of control and agency by acknowledging their feelings, listening to their experiences and helping them choose a response that will support their feelings of safety (2013).

**Predictable Transitions**

Another strategy that supports resiliency development is the use of predictable transitions. Whether teachers choose to play music, ring a bell or use something else to signal a transition is about to occur, routines help students anticipate a change and reduce negative responses. If a child does act out it is important to respond with a private redirection that maintains the child’s dignity. Resiliency develops more easily in environments where children feel safe, respected and cared for by peers and their teacher.

**Self-expression through Art**

For many children, self-control and resiliency begin to develop once they can fully express their traumatic experiences with others. Art education is showing promise as an approach that supports children’s ability to constructively share their trauma experiences. Whether it is through paint, clay or other mediums, art can help children tell their stories. According to Hyungsook Kim, “art education programs can play an important role in presenting devastating effects of trauma by fostering resilience through art...understanding that the trauma associated with school violence [and trauma] can inform art education and foster resilience in youth” (2015, p. 196). The author goes on to state that:
Since the healing process takes time, and the effects of trauma may reappear at different contexts in a student's life, educators must be deliberate in responding to students' reactions to school violence and provide students with healthy strategies for healing that trauma (pg. 197). Art education is proving to be an effective approach in helping children acknowledge their past experiences and identify pathways to move forward from their trauma. Researchers note that resiliency helps children face their fears and constructively work to solve their problems. These children are more likely to be optimistic for the future and to develop flexible thinking and behaviors that support pro-social adaptation. Resilient children also have greater self-esteem and a higher tolerance for stressful situations because of their ability to self-regulate and problem solve (Haglund, Cooper, Southwick, & Charney, 2007; Ibeagha, Balogun & Adejuwon 2004).

**Harnessing the Power of Resiliency**

Most children experience some life stressors between childhood and adulthood. However, a 1995 study found that one-half to two-thirds of children who may have been at risk from these experiences at one point were also able to overcome their circumstances and adapt successfully (Benard, 1995). Benard further notes that those individuals who do successfully transcend their circumstances have certain characteristics in common that foster individual strengths. These characteristics allow an individual to experience resiliency (1995).

There are seven traits of resilience that can support success in children’s educational and non-educational lives. These are: insight, independence, relationships, initiative, creativity, humor and morality (as cited in Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). There are also five key protective factors that in concert with the seven traits of resilient people can safeguard a child from the harmful effects of trauma. These are: family, school, the community, peers and individual disposition (Oswald, Johnson, & Howard, 2003). Specifically, Oswald et al. (2003) note that resilient children have stable relationships with their peers, well-developed problem-solving skills, realistic future plans, and a positive sense of being able to achieve and deal effectively with tasks. They also have experience with success in one or more areas of their lives, they are able to communicate effectively, they have a strong attachment with at least one adult and they take responsibility for themselves and their behavior. Teachers have the potential to help children gain all five of these protective factors and, in doing so, develop the resiliency needed to deal with life proactively (Leahy, 2012).

Teachers can provide instruction and practice for skills such as social competence, problem solving ability, mastery, and identification of purpose and future goal setting (Luthar, et. al, 2000). Leahy (2012) notes that teachers who provide consistency in expectations and routine, a supportive relationship and celebrate success help students develop resiliency traits. In addition, classroom teachers who model and instruct students on problem-solving skills, coping strategies and behaviors that support and maintain a caring community can significantly reduce a child’s negative trauma response (Leahy, 2012).

**Conclusion**

Casey’s use of the five levels of escalation scale demonstrated teacher’s care and concern. The teacher took the time to learn Casey’s story. She instituted regular routines in the classroom and communicated a belief in Casey’s abilities. She maintained high expectations for her success and supported her ability to learn to self-regulate her emotions and manage them constructively. The teacher ensured that Casey maintained positive peer relationships even early on when Casey was struggling. The teacher also provided instruction on how to request and take a break to breathe or to take time to walk and move to reduce stress with physical activity. Casey was given clear messages about what constructive problem-solving looked like in the classroom and was given permission to use those strategies independently. The teacher also ensured that Casey knew she was safe and cared for in the classroom by not embarrassing her or expressing frustration or anger with Casey’s behaviors. In sum, the teacher built the protective factors into the environment that Casey needed to develop resiliency to stress.

This case study provides one illustration of how classroom teachers can help students develop resiliency behaviors that will support their success throughout their lives. Whether teachers use some or all of the suggestions found in the body of resiliency research to increase their students’ success, the message is clear that teachers have the opportunity to manage the negative impacts that trauma can have on children by providing the positive, structured environment children need in conjunction with intentional lessons in social communication, goal setting, emotional self-regulation and constructive problem-solving that empower resilient children.

**References**


Sureetha McCain graduated from Whitworth University in December, 2016. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education and minored in reading instruction, special education, and psychology. Sureetha is currently employed as a second-grade teacher in the Bellevue School District.

Keith spent the first 20 years of his career serving in a variety of roles from middle school teacher, vice-principal, principal and finally as an assistant superintendent before arriving at Whitworth University. His current role is Assistant Professor of Education and Director of Student Teaching for Whitworth’s undergraduate teacher education program. Keith also has the honor of serving as a board member for WSASCD as the Higher Ed. Representative.

Tessa grew up in Coeur d’Alene, ID, blessed with the incredible support of family. From the time she was six years old, Tessa knew she wanted to become a teacher, and in the spring of 2017 she graduated from Whitworth University in education. She is currently a teaching 7th and 8th grade social studies at Canfield Middle School in Coeur d’Alene, ID.District.
Moving from Woodinville, Washington—a town with many affluent, well-educated prominent families—to Chelan, Washington, a small tourist town in the middle of the Cascades was one of the most exciting and challenging adjustments I have experienced in my short teaching career. The students in Chelan are not particularly racially diverse; according to OSPI, one-half of its students are white while one-third are Latino. There does exist a stark division between families who have lived in and own most of the town and those families who live on the outskirts of the lakeside life, however. Three years ago the disparity between socioeconomic class was not only obvious, it was present every day. Students whose families worked in the orchard or for the fruit packing facilities were often cast aside with the belief that due to lack of family education, money and an overall privileged life they were not capable of hard things in life or at school. “Andrew” was no exception to this division throughout our elementary school.

Andrew moved from an urban town in California where he had lived most of his life, to Chelan during the summer before fourth grade. His mother, a high school diploma recipient, was his number one advocate. The pair moved into a small, nearly condemnable packing shed that resembled a mini-storage facility. They were on the outskirts of town; they had no internet nor any consistent cellular reception. Leaving all of her family behind, Andrew’s mom realized this was an opportunity to start Andrew’s school experience over. He was held back in first grade and spent nearly his entire primary career out of the classroom. He was constantly ostracized and sent to the hallways for blunting, demanding attention from peers or not complying with adult directions.

Fortunately for Andrew, when he enrolled in Chelan, he was placed in a classroom with a teacher who was able to make connections, both academically and socially. This made all the difference as Souers and Hall note in their article Fostering resilient learners: Strategies for creating a trauma-sensitive classroom: “We know that teacher quality is the number one factor determining student success” (2016, pg. 35). By putting Andrew into a classroom with a teacher who appreciated him for who he was, he started to feel as though he belonged without the school community. This sense of belonging is one of the most important factors when working with students who have faced severe trauma. Noticing that Andrew was significantly behind academically, his teacher went to bat for him to be tested for special education. Knowing that Andrew had been suspended for behaviors, it was difficult to prove that the reason he was behind was due to a specific learning disability. After several weeks of debate, his teacher succeeded in getting him tested. Finally, Andrew was going to have additional help in reading, writing and mathematics.

Over the course of his fourth grade year, Andrew was often sent to the principal’s office, once again missing much of his core academic time in the general education setting. Most of the time his outbursts and impulsivity at recess sent him into an aggressive downward spiral in which he swore at adults and became physical with students. Regardless of his special education support his fourth grade year seemed to be the repeat of his academic career up to that point. No matter what Andrew did or did not do, it seemed as though he could not get ahead of the game. As a student who lived far from the lake the divide between other students and Andrew became more obvious; his uphill battle illustrates what Jensen discusses in his writing: “Poverty also raises the odds for children’s social maladjustments and behavior problems” (2016, p. 10). Even though his mother worked diligently to equip Andrew with the newest trend in shoes and clothes, it seemed as though he could not eliminate the divide between the lakeside life children and himself. Acting out of impulse and strong emotions which struggled to control cast him out of the fifth grade peer group.

Fifth grade was the first year that the new principal, and I, the special education teacher, met Andrew. His smile was unforgettable as he was truly able to grin from ear to ear. During our first meeting in the stairway, I knew this student may be my most challenging yet. After reading about his levels of performance, I realized that not only was he behind, but he did not even know all of his letters and their corresponding sounds. He also struggled producing thoughts and writing them down. Andrew loved mathematics and he prided himself on knowing nearly all of his multiplication facts, a necessity in fifth grade. Knowing this, I emphasized his knowledge and expertise in math so he would feel successful in an academic area. Socially, Andrew did not know how to appropriately gain peer attention, join in a group or collaboratively work or play with others. Not only did he struggle with academics; his social emotional skills lagged behind his peers’ as well.

During the first few weeks of school Andrew demonstrated external behaviors such as blunting, name-calling and physical aggression. These outbursts took place on the playground, with specialists, in general classes and in small groups. One late fall day, Andrew was taunted by another fifth grader in his class. The student chastised him for being dumb, unable to work at a fifth grade standard. Andrew responded with physical force by pushing the student to the ground. Due to the other student’s parental request, it was recommended that Andrew change classes to ensure a safer environment for the other child. Once again, Andrew’s reputation preceded him. Not only did the students consider him a bully, his entire fifth grade class became aware of his actions once he was moved. His teachers began to fear him, and he started to feel like he was not safe, welcomed or that he belonged with the rest of his peers.

After the change in classes, Andrew’s angry outbursts became a more regular occurrence. He was often the student asked to sit out during specialists because he could not be kind to others; but, why would he? Everyone already labeled him a bully, a mean kid, and stupid. Just as most students do, he rose to the label and became the child that everyone, even teachers, feared.
Andrew often sought solace within the special education classroom where he felt safe and felt he could freely say what he needed. As his teacher, I told him he could speak freely, saying whatever it was he needed to say without repercussion, so long as other students were not around. Together—student and teacher—we learned how to bond, be real, and have difficult, authentic conversations about the situations and problems he faced. Much of the time, Andrew would swear as he angrily spoke about feeling unwanted by peers and adults. As promised, he could speak his mind without consequence. This student merely imitated his speech from surroundings including that of his mother’s abusive, live-in boyfriend.

As our relationship grew, Andrew made it a point to check in and out with me daily. If I happened to be in a meeting, he would meet with another team member who also made him feel safe, wanted and heard. Andrew was not only able to speak freely with me, but also with another adult he could trust. Over the course of several months, Andrew became dependent on his check ins and connections with both myself and another intervention teacher.

Then came December; it was one week before Christmas vacation, a time when behaviors are already escalated, and it quickly became one of the most strenuous weeks of my teaching career. Andrew was outside, throwing snowballs, similar to the rest of his classmates. Another student began to taunt Andrew, knowing that if he did so, Andrew would return the favor with physical force. Just as expected, Andrew threw the student down into the snow, burying his head into a snowbank. As Souers and Hall state, “behaviors that are disruptive and often inappropriate are simply manifestations of what their bodies have been trained to do, survive” (2016, pg. 31). This is exactly what Andrew’s brain was triggered to do—survive by fighting. Immediately he was whisked away into the administration office. Due to his impulsivity and lack of foresight, Andrew bought into the bait and was once again labeled as “that bad kid.” Word quickly spread, furthering his division between himself and his fifth grade peers.

Due to previous altercations Andrew was suspended one week before his two-week vacation. As soon as his suspension was announced the principal and I were forced to call the one person he did not want to disappoint, his mother. Unfortunately, due to the time of year and lack of money, her phone had been shut off. Andrew’s circumstances, high impulsivity and lack of coping skills had once again gotten the best of him.

The principal and I moved quickly in efforts to get Andrew into the car, trying to preserve his dignity and respect as Andrew could not hold back his tears of disappointment in himself. Unable to bring himself to get into the car, Andrew walked around the playground, fearful of what his mother may say, “Please do not make me go. My mom is going to be so mad and sad.” Knowing that the student had only two options to ride home—one in a police car and the other with us—we convinced him that we were there to help him, create a plan and continue to love and support him.

Eventually Andrew got into the car. The short five-minute ride to the outskirts of town ended up being one the longest drives. Andrew, continuously fighting back his tears, begged and pleaded to go into the house independently of the principal and me. We both looked at each other confused wondering why he would be so opposed to allowing us into his house to speak with his mother. The principal drove down the long driveway lined with garbage and dirt finally pulling up to a tiny building that looked as if it should be condemned. Once the car was stopped Andrew abruptly ran out of the vehicle frantically crying and pounding on the door.

Seconds later, it opened and we were invited in.

Not surprisingly, his mother was disappointed in his actions. His Christmas break would be spent completing homework and doing chores in their tiny, 200-square-foot home with no bedrooms, no door on the bathroom and no windows. His bed was blocked off by a blanket, which barely hung from the decaying ceiling. Andrew’s mother asked what happened; Andrew admitted he hit another student. Disgruntled and disheartened, the principal and I left, walking outside to the car. As soon as we shut the door, the tears were unstoppable. Knowing that Andrew was not the only victim or perpetrator in this situation was the hardest pill to swallow. Unfortunately for Andrew the parent of the other student knew parental rights and how to advocate for her son, leaving him suspended, cast aside again, only this time with a temporary student safety plan.

After Christmas break Andrew returned to school and became a one-on-one student in the special education room where we spent most of our time together. Andrew began the work again to be a part of his fifth grade classroom. In order to do so, he needed to prove he was able to handle emotion without physical aggression. He was asked to participate in recess and lunch with a younger grade level in order for him to remain away from the other student in fifth grade. Although Andrew loathed the idea of not being with his peers, it quickly became apparent that he rose to the occasion, becoming a positive role model to younger students. Once the team realized that he enjoyed working with younger students we knew that we had to place him in the role of a tutor in the bilingual classroom. This opportunity would give him a chance to feel that he mattered and belonged within our school community.

Regardless of his behavior, Andrew spent every afternoon in the kindergarten class reading with and helping the students with their mathematics problems. This role model scenario was never taken away as this was crucial in getting him to feel accomplished, wanted and successful. The kinders clung to him giving high fives and fist bumps every opportunity they could. Andrew’s smile started to come back.

One morning, it was apparent that Andrew was struggling to cope with emotions and school work. Noticing this, I paused during our lesson to ask what was bothering him, as, “We are the ones who have to adapt in what and how we teach” (Jensen, 2016, pg. 11). Deflection was one of his many strong suits when coping with a heavy emotion so he asked what I was feeling. Knowing that we were honest, real, and up front with each other, I shared my story. I described the reason why I teach special education. The story depicted my young cousin, broken from a divorce, cast aside by his father for having a learning disability and never feeling as though his life mattered. My cousin’s sad story included suicide attempts, gang violence, and eventually an addiction to heroin. The look on Andrew’s face is one that I will not forget. “Andrew, if I can help you realize that you matter, are important, and can do hard things, then my job is complete.” He responded with a silent sigh. Followed by the statement, “So you don’t just teach reading and writing, you teach life, kind of like a life coach.” I smiled, nodded my head and said, “exactly.”

Andrew continued his one-on-one setting within my classroom as he felt safe, cared for and a sense of belonging. His check in and check out’s with me and other staff members were essential to his success. Andrew was permitted to not only be himself but speak freely as this is how he knew how to communicate, swearing and all. Regardless of his actions, he knew that every day was a new day, filled with grace and forgiveness. Providing him with a positive mentorship experience also aided in his success at the end of fifth grade.
Eventually, the student safety plan was gone. Andrew began to feel more successful in his school community as a kinder teacher, recycling helper and friend to myself and other staff members. Slowly his smile began to come back, once again overtaking his whole face from ear to ear.

References
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Jessica Huber is a highly qualified special education teacher with her master's degree in special education. She is serving her fifth year in special education. Miss Huber is passionate about working with students who have emotional-behavioral needs.
Sustainable System for Building Resilience: Preliminary Outcomes of the Tacoma Whole Child Initiative

by Gregory J. Benner, Laura Allen, Kristi Greenaway Cirignano, & Joshua J. Garcia

Introduction

The Tacoma Whole Child Initiative (TWCI) is a decade-long blueprint for sustainable, citywide change. To be successful, citywide sustainable change must embrace a common vision, common language and common experiences to bridge the contrasting structures, environments and scopes of work. Using data, shared goals and aligned supports ensures that every youth is safe, supported, engaged, healthy and challenged.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is foundational to comprehensive and sustainable change. The lives of youth are transformed when they move through and live in safe, equitable, welcoming and effective school, home and community environments. The lives of educators, caregivers and families are transformed when they work and live in these environments. Stated differently, SEL competencies include: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making (See: www.casel.org/). SEL is the youth version of emotional intelligence in adults. Indeed, SEL is the foundation of sustainable comprehensive culture transformation. To examine the impact of TWCI on youth resilience, we explored four questions: 1) How has the social and emotional health of Tacoma youth improved; 2) How much has school attendance improved; 3) How have student, parent and staff perceptions of school climate improved; and 4) How have teacher beliefs about youth behavior changed since the start of TWCI? We begin with a look at Tacoma Public Schools student population demographics followed by an overview of the history and promise of TWCI and a deeper description of the model.

Population

Tacoma Public Schools serves approximately 30,000 students. Table 1 presents the demographic information of Tacoma Public Schools as of May 2015. Specifically, male students accounted for 51% (n=14,919) and female students represent 49% (n=14,335). The ethnic characteristics break down as follows: White (12,287, 42%), African American (5,558, 19%), Hispanic (5,266, 18%), Pacific Islander (878, 3%), Asian (2,925, 10%), and multiracial accounted for about 6%. Approximately 64% (n=18,723) of the population received free and reduced-price meals, and 14% of the students were eligible for special education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14,919</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14,335</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2,925</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>878</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black / African American</td>
<td>5,558</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic / Latino of any race(s)</td>
<td>5,266</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>12,287</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>1,755</td>
<td>6</td>
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| **Special Programs**             |     |     |
| Free or Reduced-Price Meals      | 18,723 | 64  |
| Special Education                | 4,095  | 14  |
| Transitional Bilingual           | 2,925  | 10  |
| Section 504                      | 585    | 2   |
| Foster Care                      | 293    | 1   |

Table 1. Tacoma Public Schools Demographic Information (N=29,254, May 2015)
The Tacoma Whole Child Initiative (TWCI) Model

In the first year we designed and built accountability systems that continue to evolve today. Additionally and just as critical we designed the TWCI model at the district level. At the school level, we began to build leadership capacity, measured readiness, gathered baseline assessments and selected the first cohort of schools to start the process based on their measured readiness. The focus was on principals as leaders of change. Successful development of cross-discipline, building-level teams to address implementation, fidelity and problem solving was also a focus. In the second year the first cohort of schools (13 schools total, including 11 elementary schools, one middle school and one high school) developed Tier 1 (or universal) supports including clear, consistent and positive behavioral expectations. Strategies to reinforce positive behavior, a rewards system to acknowledge students meeting behavioral expectations and a system for collecting behavioral data to drive decision making was also developed. Moreover, building leadership teams led the effort in their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to increase classroom engagement and climate using Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), SEL, restorative practices and high-yield engagement strategies. Thus, in the first two years there was an established clear alignment of systems, data and practices among district, building and grade-level or content area PLC leadership teams.

The goal by the end of the fourth year was for the two remaining cohorts of schools to have Tier I whole child supports (i.e., PBIS, SEL, equity pedagogy, engagement strategies, trauma-sensitive practices) in place. Concurrent with this work we were designing and implementing the necessary Tier II and III social and emotional supports, the behavioral and academic screening tools and multi-tiered academic supports. All of the work is grounded in each school’s data and continuous improvement principles geared to whole-system change and long-term sustainability of that change.

Results

To examine the impact of TWCI on youth resilience, we explored four questions: 1) How has the social and emotional health of Tacoma youth improved; 2) How much has school attendance improved; 3) How have student, parent and staff perceptions of school climate improved; and 4) How have teacher beliefs about youth behavior changed since the start of TWCI?

How has the social and emotional health of Tacoma youth improved?

Students’ social emotional outcomes continued to improve in the past year. We measured social and emotional health using two validated tools: 1) Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS; Drummond, 1994) and 2) Student Internalizing Behavior Screener (SIBS; Cook et al., 2011). The overall percentage of students with healthy social emotional wellbeing increased 16% from 57% in spring 2015 to 73% in fall 2017.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Spring 2015</th>
<th>Fall 2017</th>
<th>Change</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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How much has school attendance improved?

The unexcused absence and tardy rate has improved substantially since implementation of TWCI. For example, the number of students without chronic absences (defined by 15.5 or more) improved 10% from 86% in the 2014-2015 school year to 96% in the 2015-2016 school year (see infographics below). The overall percentage of students without chronic tardies increased by 5.4%, from 88.1% during 2014-2015 to 93.5% in 2015-2016.

How have student, parent and staff perceptions of school climate improved?

We wanted to know whether TWCI improved students’, parents’ and teachers’ perceptions about school climate and parent-school partnerships (see Table 2). Positive climates set the stage for building relationships and resilience. Overall, significant changes from the perspectives of students, parents and teachers were found across features of a healthy school climate (i.e., diversity, effective communication and engagement). As indicated in Table 2, youth voiced that significant improvements have been made to all areas of school climate—Diversity (up by 6% from prior to TWCI), Effective Communication (up by 7%) and Engagement (up by 8%). Parents also perceived significant improvements on all areas of school climate—Diversity (up by 6% from prior to TWCI), Effective Communication (up by 5%) and Engagement (up by 5%). Staff also perceived significant improvements in all areas of school climate—Diversity (up by 13% prior to TWCI) and Engagement (up by 14%). Thus, school climate has significantly improved from the perspectives of youth, parents, and staff since TWCI.

How has school safety improved?

Table 2 illustrates how the perceptions about school safety have been consistently improved across students, parents and educators after TWCI was introduced. Specifically, 66.6% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the school environment was safe, which increased by about 8% compared to 2013 (58.9%).

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Meanwhile, parents also experienced a positive change as over 85% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the school safety statement, which increased by almost 10% compared to 2013 (76.4%). For educators, the percentage climbed from 69.3% to 78.6%. Thus, school safety has significantly improved from the perspectives of youth, parents, and staff since TWCI.

How have teacher beliefs about youth behavior changed since the start of TWCI?

Educator (teachers, staff and school clinicians) beliefs about behavior significantly changed in a positive way through TWCI professional learning supports. Educators perceived their working relationships with students in increasingly positive ways. They also improved their knowledge about school-wide tiered support systems. More importantly, educators took ownership of the instructional approach to behavior and perceived teaching positive learning behavior as part of their responsibility. The infographics below highlight some statements that reflected these changes in educators’ beliefs.

93% of the participants agree or strongly agree that “all students are entitled to positive interaction with me”, compared to only 4% before TWCI implementation.

91% of the participants agree or strongly agree that “I can prevent most behavioral problems through proactive practices”, compared to only 3.9% in pretest.

9% of the participants agree or strongly agree that “teaching students how to behave appropriately at school is the parents’ or students’ responsibility, not mine”, whereas prior to TWCI it was 79%.

Table 2. School Climate and Safety Survey Outcomes

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<tr>
<td>Feeling About Safety</td>
<td>69.3%</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Diversity</td>
<td>80.8%</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>80.7%</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>65.9%</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>83.1%</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Discussion

Our data indicate that the social and emotional health of students has improved overall. Student, parent and staff perceptions of school climate and safety continue to significantly rise each year. Resilience is built in safe and supportive learning environments. Attendance has significantly improved and the percentage of students with chronic absences and chronic tardiness continues to decline as well. Students want to come to healthy, safe, supportive, engaging and challenging school environments. Moreover, the hearts of educators continue to change as evidenced by dramatic changes in educator beliefs about student behavior, trauma and social emotional wellbeing. Educators will not change their practices to support the whole child unless their hearts are changed first. Tacoma educators understand the “why” for sustained implementation of whole child practices and push to continually improve.

In this context, TWCI equips educators with knowledge and skills to deliver high-quality instruction and maintain an engaging, safe, healthy and challenging learning environment (Benner, Nelson, Ralston, & Mooney, 2010; Carey, 2004; Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, NIH, DHHS, 2001; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). The TPS-UWT partnership is backed by actionable implementation science findings and strategies, change management strategies and concrete tools to support effective implementation (Blase, Kiser, & Van Dyke, 2013; Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Odom, 2009; Penuel, Fishman, Cheng, & Sabelli, 2011; Wandersman, Chien, & Katz, 2012). Together with the schools and the Tacoma community, TWCI creates unprecedented support for the whole child by addressing, connecting and harmonizing academic, social and emotional stability. Long after the 10-year plan has concluded, schools will be able to maintain focus on building resilience and developing the whole child.

References


Dr. Joshua J. Garcia is the Deputy Superintendent of the Tacoma Public Schools. His work for multiple measures, results, and supporting the Whole Child has been recognized Nationally.

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Kristi Greenaway Cirignano

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Laura Allen

Laura Allen

Laura Allen

Dr. Joshua J. Garcia is the Deputy Superintendent of the Tacoma Public Schools. His work for multiple measures, results, and supporting the Whole Child has been recognized Nationally.

Joshua J. Garcia

Joshua J. Garcia
Some lessons you only need to learn once. For me, it was the day I learned how chronic stress affects kids. It was 2010. I was student teaching in a third grade classroom. “Lorenzo” didn’t show up for school and, to be honest, I was kind of happy. He was always so lazy. Day after day, he sat in his desk doing little. He rarely smiled or played with the other kids. Talk to me? Forget it. I was tired of trying to motivate him all the time. The day Lorenzo was absent felt like a day off. And then I learned my lesson one day when the counselor came down to talk to my mentor teacher and me. She told us that immigration officials raided Lorenzo’s home in the middle of the night. His father had been deported, hauled off right in front of him. As if I were in a movie, I suddenly saw the past several months flash backward through my mind, but in a different light. His head on the desk, his droopy eyes, his guarded smile. This was not lazy; it was heartache, anxiety and stress. I never called a kid lazy again. In the years since, I have had many more students like Lorenzo. I’ve learned that chronic stress often looks like withdrawal (Jensen, 2009). I have learned strategies to help my students cope with a world they cannot control.

The Zones of Regulation

One of the tools that has helped my students most is Leah Kuypers’ Zones of Regulation (http://www.zonesofregulation.com/). The Zones, for short, gives students a framework to understand, communicate about and manage their emotions to fit a given environment.

The Green Zone

The green zone is the optimal state for learning. When we are in the green zone, we are calm, focused, alert, safe and content. We are ready to listen, collaborate, take risks and grow. In my class the green zone looks like a mass of cardboard and hot glue. It sounds like a student saying, “Excuse me, but I disagree with that because…” It feels like a tongue stuck out in concentration.

The Yellow Zone

In the yellow zone we start to lose control of our emotions. We are distracted from our learning. I tell students that we are in the yellow zone when we are “a little bit” of something. A little hyper, anxious or frustrated. Even hungry. Yellow zone emotions are like a warning light, begging us to slow down before we lose control altogether. In my class the yellow zone looks like a furrowed brow or a wiggly bum. It sounds like a quick shout, “No! That’s mine!” It feels like a cheerful squeal of discovery and success.

The Red Zone

In the red zone all emotional regulation is gone. Whether we are explosively angry, frozen with fear or manically happy, this zone calls for a time out. Full stop. Learning doesn’t happen in the red zone. In my class the red zone looks like running. It sounds like the crash of a desk, angrily shoved. It feels like a mirror reflecting these extreme emotions onto anyone in the area.
The day after I read that article, “Antonio”, a second grader, came to class in the blue zone. He told me he was sad because his little brother was in the hospital. I comforted him quickly then suggested he find a strategy from our poster to help him get to the green zone for class time. All seemed well. About five minutes later I noticed him sitting at a desk set off from the rest of the class, one usually used for students struggling to work in proximity to others. As I continued teaching and called on him to join our conversation, he suddenly broke out in uncontrollable sobs.

When I finally got him calmed down, he explained more. His little brother had been in the hospital for a week, accompanied by both mom and dad. Antonio was being cared for by Grandma. He was lonely, sad and very worried about his brother. My mind went instantly to that article. All the zones are OK. It is not about changing a student’s internal state but changing the way they regulate their exterior actions to fit the environment around them. How dare I tell this little boy to get to the green zone. Sadness cannot be just cast off. That kind of brotherly love should be commended not discouraged. I learned my lesson. Now I teach students the difference between the way they act on the outside and how they feel on the inside. I teach them that all zones are OK. We talk about appropriate times to show each zone on the outside and that our strategies are meant to help them do their job, no matter how their insides are feeling.

I wish I could go back and teach this lesson to little Lorenzo. I wish I could give him this tool to talk about his feelings to show him that all The Zones are OK. I saw him last winter at a high school basketball game. Today he is a junior. That gives me hope. It tells me he learned these skills somewhere. He learned to show the green zone on the outside. He learned to be resilient. He stayed in school.

References


Camille Jones

Camille Jones is the 2017 Washington State Teacher of the Year. She teaches kindergarten through third grade STEAM Schoolwide Enrichment in Quincy, WA. In this highly capable program model, Camille seeks and develops the strengths in all students knowing that many students are capable of more than we know. Find her on Twitter @farmtableteach, or on the web.
Presents:
Trauma Informed Practice Summit
Featuring Kristin Souers

Friday, January 19, 2018
Kent Phoenix Academy
11000 SE 264th Street, Kent, WA

For Registration Information Visit: www.wsascd.org

Trauma Informed Practice Summit Intended Learning Outcomes:

- Participants will deepen their understanding of the prevalence of childhood trauma and the impact of trauma and toxic stress on learning and development.
- Participants will explore multiple strategies for education staff and community members to utilize with children with (known and unknown) trauma histories – helping to sustain learning-ready states.
- Participants will collaborate to identify best practices associated with trauma-informed care that they can implement into their workplace settings.
- Participants will reflect on how this information impacts their role and their overall health, collecting several suggestions for self-care and self-awareness.

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Tacoma Public Schools

YOU LEARN. YOU TEACH. NOW LEAD.
Tears of frustration, explosive anger, feelings of hurt and emotional withdrawal. Because of childhood exposure to complex trauma, today’s schools are frequently bombarded with emotional behaviors and often have little understanding and/or knowledge about how to intervene. Sadly, there are numerous examples of Native American children who struggle with complex and historical trauma across America. Experiences of complex trauma have negatively affected their educational pursuits, reflected in low achievement and lack of post educational engagement. As a result of this disproportionality, this population also suffers within the juvenile justice systems at greater rates in comparison to other children of color (Demmert, 2001).

The History

Gerald B. “Subiya” Miller, a Skokomish Spiritual Leader once stated, “Don’t teach the children all the same thing. If you do that, then they think they don’t need each other and the world will fall apart” (Miller, 1989). Subiya’s vision for children to be educated in mind and spirit through traditional knowledge and language is a shared vision throughout Native communities. Government-run boarding schools began operating between 1879 and 1978 and contributed to the perpetuation of the loss of Native American language, cultural practices and religious freedom. Tragically this lack of critical knowledge and understanding dreadfully added to the stripping away of the social, emotional and spiritual well being of yesterday’s and today’s Native American learners (Annamma, Morrison & Jackson, 2014; The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, 2008).

Furthermore, current research now provides a biological link between experiences of complex trauma and its interference with learning in the classroom. Neuro-biological science can now explain how experiences of complex trauma trigger the flight, flight and freeze mechanisms within a child’s brain, disallowing the child to access their pre-frontal cortex, the locality in the child’s brain where learning takes place (Forbes, 2012; The National Scientific Counsel on the Developing Child, 2010). Amazingly, the spiritual connection that Indigenous people have for one another has provided the necessary resiliency needed for survival of the genocide of their culture, language and religion for seven generations.

Despite this resiliency, a tremendous amount of work and repair still needs to be accomplished. Schools must learn how to tap into the brains of young children who experience significant adverse childhood experiences (ACES) and “rewire” brain responses to support learning in the classroom. Although not a new concept in education, teaching social and emotional skills to children as both behavioral interventions and/or integrated within teaching strategies and curriculum is crucial. Teaching social and emotional skills proves effective in improving not only the child’s self-concept and social skills, but academic performance as well (Durlack, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Gullotta, 2015).

Additionally, researchers have begun looking at the impact of language revitalization and preservation and its effect on behaviors that contribute to the achievement gap (Lipka, 2002). For Native American children, combining Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) with culture and the recovery of their first language is a logical first step. Based on this information and with great determination one courageous school counselor recently explored this challenge.

The School

Located on the Colville Indian Reservation and facing a tranquil valley surrounded by northern desert landscape and rocky hills, Paschal-Sherman Indian School’s (PSIS) circular walls open their wings to a new hope. The land in which the school stands is known in the Salish language as “Skwant,” the English translation meaning “water falling from rocks.” Here the hope of resilience and healing begins for 120 children. In 1978 the Colville Tribes assumed control of St. Mary’s Mission and renamed it Paschal-Sherman Indian School (PSIS). Today, PSIS has begun creating its own mission. Drawing from her knowledge and past boarding school experience, PSIS’s counselor understands and lives out Native American spirituality. She also knows well elements of SEL that are contained in the traditional language, cultural practices, customs and ceremonies. Using Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) as a framework, the PSIS’s counselor began combining strategies of SEL, Native language preservation and revitalization curriculum school wide.

The Work

Paschal-Sherman Indian School’s vision reflects that of the tribal community: “our children are the keepers of culture, speakers of our language and leaders of our future.” The language of people is a guide to the expectations and values of a society. The Native language of tribal people is a guide to the morals and ways in which they interact with one another and nature. Focusing on fourth, seventh and eighth graders, the PSIS’s counselor collaborated with the school’s language instructor to introduce SEL curriculum, teaching the curriculum through her students’ first language, the Salish dialect N’selexcin. While utilizing the Salish class, key words, vocabulary and lessons were introduced. This strategy of teaching language and SEL concepts simultaneously is significant and holds a dual purpose. As it reinforces language development and teaches social and emotional learning concepts, it connects SEL with the student’s Native culture and customs. To measure gains in each student's level of empathy, The Bryant Empathy Likert Scale was administered both pre and post intervention. Students were exposed to N’selexcin vocabulary that either was descriptive of empathy or contained empathetic responses to situations.

The Results

Outcomes were positive and hopeful. Gains in student behavior were no surprise for the PSIS’s school counselor. Results of the empathy questionnaire indicated that the fourth grade class made an eight-point improvement in its knowledge of emotional awareness and empathy.
Possible variables influencing these scores include the mood and developmental age of the students while taking the questionnaire and the unique cultural differences of PSIS’s student population. Because PSIS is a small, rural school, only 38 students participated in the study. Further research is recommended using greater numbers of students in order to increase reliability and generalize the results for other Native American youth populations.

Discipline data was also examined both pre and post intervention. Fourth grade data reflected a reduction of six office referrals for non-compliance, one office referral for theft and vandalism, and two office referrals for obscene language. Seventh grade data reflected a decrease of one office referral for fighting, six office referrals for non-compliance, and one office referral for theft and vandalism. Similarly, eighth grade data demonstrated a decrease of one office referral for fighting as well as one office referral for theft and vandalism. Although positive results were found, it is also important to note that this study was conducted over a six-week period. Jones and Bouffard point out (2012), “Like academic skills, social and emotional skills develop over time and in a continuously staged fashion so they must be continuously developed. Even more than academic skills, they must develop in the context of daily life as social challenges and other teaching opportunities arise” (p. 3). Therefore, it is important to surmise that if implementation of SEL curriculum, language preservation and culture were woven into each student’s day and taught over the entire school year, results may prove even stronger.

As this study suggests, the incorporation of Native American language, SEL, and cultural programming can be an effective strategy in remediation of the achievement gap for Native American children. Additionally, SEL strategies have proven effective in mitigating the effects of complex trauma, “rewiring” the brain and improving academic achievement. As colonization and cultural suppression continue to contribute to the experiences of complex trauma and the achievement gap of today’s Native children, effective interventions must be employed. Improving behavior, academic performance and a child’s self-concept through the implementation of SEL in combination with language and culture is certainly worthy of further studies. The time for re-directing the negative trajectory for Native American youth is now.

References


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Stacy is an enrolled member of the Federally recognized tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation. She worked 25 years in Child Protection as a Social Worker III, for the Colville Confederated Tribes and State of Washington Department of Social and Health Services before becoming employed at Paschal Sherman Indian School as the School Counselor three years ago. She specializes in Indian Child Welfare and advocacy for Native American youth and families.

Wendy Bleecker currently serves as an Assistant Professor and Director for the School Counseling and Social and Behavioral Health Programs at Whitworth University. She has dedicated her career to supporting children who struggle within the education and juvenile justice systems. Her areas of interest and expertise include reducing disproportionality for students of color, complex trauma and social and emotional learning.

WASHINGTTON STATE ASCD AWARDS PROGRAM

THE WHOLE CHILD AWARD
Recognizes a school that exemplifies one or more of the five tenets of The Whole Child Initiative: Healthy, Safe, Engaged, Supported, and Challenged. The Whole Child School Award recipient will receive $500, sponsored by SHAPE WA.

THE OUTSTANDING YOUNG EDUCATOR
Recognizes an emerging educational leader, 40 years of age or younger, who demonstrates exemplary practices with the education community. The recipient of the OYEA will receive $1,000, sponsored by McGraw Hill Education Group.

Nomination forms have been simplified and all applications will be reviewed by a selection committee to determine which educator and school should receive recognition. Awards will be presented at a WSASCD event or a venue within the award recipient’s school district or Educational Service District.

Nomination applications will be accepted: February 3, 2018 and ends April 14, 2018
Please visit www.wsascd.org for nomination applications.
As you begin a new school year with students and colleagues, I hope that you find this issue of Curriculum in Context on Building Resiliency inspiring. We know as teachers and school staff, you have the power to nurture and change lives. Many children will return to school and enter your classroom from summer vacation with stresses and emotional pain as a result of traumatic experiences. We know students who come to school in distress have difficulty focusing and making adequate academic and social progress. Resiliency is something that you can teach and help students develop so they can learn skills to cope and begin to thrive. Educators constantly face challenges, and those who are well prepared and informed tend to be more active agents of change in the classroom and as leaders, which in turn makes a great impact on student outcomes.

In June, Washington State ASCD partnered with Kaiser Permanente to host Kristin Souers, a mental health counselor/consultant. She shared her work surrounding trauma informed practice. Educators left the one-day summit equipped with a deeper understanding of the prevalence of childhood trauma and the impact that trauma and toxic stress has on learning and development. Kristin shared research on brain development, self-care and self-awareness strategies to implement with students and colleagues. She engaged educators to reflect on their current practices and reminded educators of the impact of their role in supporting students who have endured childhood trauma. Kristin Souers was well received and we are pleased to have her present trauma informed practice this fall; please see details below:

Join WSASCD and Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington, for Trauma Informed Practice with Kristin Souers, on October 27, 2017 at Whitworth University. Register by visiting www.wsascd.org

As you plan for professional learning for yourself, your school or district, remember that educators continue to be models of hope and resilience for our students. WSASCD has partnered with various school districts through the years to bring quality professional learning to different areas of our state. If you have an interest in partnering or have a professional learning idea, please contact me at carrielamascd@gmail.com. Thank you for your dedication to students in Washington State!
Spring Edition: March 15, 2018

Theme: Innovative Approaches to School and Learning

The spring issue of *Curriculum in Context* will focus on innovations in education and/or non-traditional school concepts. How are educators using engaging strategies that are project-, problem- or place-based? How are schools rethinking the idea of what it means to educate? How are hundred-years-old traditional conceptions of schools being challenged? How are we helping our students to cultivate vital 21st century skills such as critical thinking and the ability to collaborate, work independently and learn from feedback? These questions exemplify some but not all of the important pieces that may signify writing for this theme. Related topics under this theme that may contribute to the conversation include:

- Innovative school design
- Project-based learning
- Problem-based learning
- Place-based learning
- STEAM or STEM education
- Design Thinking
- Inquiry-based education
- Experiential learning

John Dewey in 1938 and Paulo Freire in 1970 published thoughts on re-imagining what it means to educate. Dewey argued for a "progressive" approach to education because he criticized the "traditional", which he likened to the "acquisition of what already is incorporated in books and in the heads of the elders" (19). Both writers argued that for critical thinking to happen in the classroom, a democratic framework must be in place so that students feel empowered to explore, to enter in discussion and debate, to experience that which speaks to where they are. Further, Freire contended that, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world and with each other" (2000, p. 72).

Pockets of classrooms and schools all over Washington State are challenging the traditional notion of schooling. WS ASCD readers would like to learn from these examples. *Curriculum in Context* is accepting articles that address Innovative Approaches to School and Learning. Please consider submitting a manuscript on this topic to Dr. Doreen Keller (dkeller@whitworth.edu). Potential articles submitted for the *Learn* section should be a current book review between 500 and 750 words and should include the APA reference for the book. Manuscripts for the *Teach and Lead* sections should be between 850 and 2500 words, focus on either the classroom (i.e., teacher) perspective or the leadership perspective, and include citations written in APA format.

References