RESILIENCE IMPACT

TRAUMA-INFORMED ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT GUIDE

A tool for assessing areas of strength and growth in your school to assist with creating a plan for becoming more trauma-informed

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Welcome to the Trauma-Informed Organizational Assessment!

I feel passionate about helping you with a process of how to embark on a journey of becoming more trauma-informed because I truly believe that this work must be done at the system level to be sustainable and comprehensive.

7 Reasons Why a Trauma-Informed Organizational Needs Assessment is crucial to your success:

1. Assessment as Intervention.

The work that we are doing is often in response to a crisis situation and carries a sense of urgency. That can often cause schools to jump in and immediately start to implement programming. I would encourage you to consider that assessment is the first stage of intervention and will provide valuable data that will assist you in focusing your work and resources.

2. Starts the Conversation.

Starting with an assessment is an excellent way to start staff thinking and reflecting on current practices in the building.

3. Includes everyone's voice from the beginning.

Being part of the process about decisions helps to motivate staff and helps to develop shared goals and vision.

4. Engages the opposition.

Every building has staff that are reluctant to try new strategies or even seem to enjoy opposing creative initiatives. It is crucial to have those individuals voice's hear and part of the conversation at the beginning. They often will be the ones that will voice what others are thinking and will provide valuable insight.

5. Helps you identify easy wins.

Too often schools are guilty of starting over with new initiatives every year. Your school is already doing some great things and bolstering those areas of strength may give you some early momentum in the work to become trauma-informed.

6. Narrows your focus.

You can't focus on all seven areas and do them all well in your first year of implementation. Completing a needs assessment will help you know where to start.

7. Provides data.

Becoming a trauma-informed school is a process and starting with a needs assessment will provide valuable data and a fidelity tool to measure progress over multiple years.

7 Essential Elements

There are 7 essential elements that work together to create a trauma-informed school:

Trauma & Toxic Stress Prevalence and Impact

All staff understand that trauma and toxic stress responses are necessary patterns of behavior that have kept a child emotionally and physically safe when exposed to adverse experiences. However, the same responses that have been so important in keeping a child safe, have created brain structures that struggle with learning, relationships and regulation. Students and families know how their past experiences may impact their functioning in a culturally and developmentally appropriate manner. All staff believe that healing from trauma occurs within the context of relationship.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Some children will need more support, whether it be with academics, behavior, mental health or physical needs. Schools have a plan of how that support will be provided, appropriate staffing to support students who struggle, interventions that are matched to student need and a system of how to monitor whether progress is being made.

Engaging & Affirming Instruction

Students, staff and families value learning and hold high expectations for student engagement in academic tasks. Instruction is culturally and linguistically relevant and affirming to their life experiences. Social-emotional-behavioral skills are directly and proactively taught by all staff and opportunities for reteaching are provided when students violate expectations for behavior at school.

Reason to Be

Staff are able to find meaning and purpose in their work, they have vision for the future for their students and an internal drive that motivates them to do their work. Staff know the traumatic stories of their students, but are able to separate themselves from their stories to preserve their own emotional health. Students and families have a vision for the future and see school as an important component of making that vision a reality

Protective Factors

One of the most powerful things a school can do to build resilience in students, staff and families is to emphasize the importance of building 6 protective factors: healthy relationships, sleep, nutrition, exercise, mental health, and mindfulness.

Family & Community Engagement

Schools should be a place where all are welcome and feel included. Schools must adopt a belief that the best possibilities exist for their students when families and community partners are an active participant in their school community. Schools realize that their families have their own set of adverse experiences that create challenges and are relentless in their support and engagement of families.

School Climate

Students, staff and families should experience school as a safe place, both physically and emotionally. There should be consistent structure and limits that establish appropriate behavior expectations and a predictable course of action if those expectations are not followed.

The first step in moving towards becoming a school that is trauma-informed is to first consider what your school is already doing to implement these 7 elements. Most schools will have strategies that they are already using that can support their efforts in being a trauma-informed school and it is important to consider how those efforts can be bolstered to build momentum in your schools' journey. By increasing the fidelity and understanding of how these strategies are trauma-informed, the school can use these "quick wins" to build support and a sense of effectiveness in building a school culture that supports the needs of all students.

Within each of the seven elements explained above, there are 4 essential questions that we have identified that will be answered within the organizational assessment to determine the focus of your plan for becoming more trauma-informed.

Trauma prevalence and impact:

1. Do students, staff and families know about the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences and the impact it has on cognitive and behavioral development?

2. Private logic of student: When a student behavior occurs, is the private logic of that student considered? Do school staff seek to understand the interaction from the perspective of the child?

3. Compassion for those with a different story than our own: How do we respond differently to staff, students and families when we know that they likely have had adverse childhood experiences as part of their story?

4. Regulation: Do **o**pportunities exist for students to learn and practice regulation of emotions and modulation of behaviors**?**

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support:

1. MTSS for Academics: When students struggle academically**,** are there well-defined systems of support available that guide how staff and families will provide support?

2. PBIS Tier 1: Are staff implementing Tier 1 interventions that support all students? Examples: 4 to 1, positive greeting at the door, morning meeting, peace corner,

3. PBIS Tier 2 & 3: When students struggle emotionally and behaviorally**,** are there well-defined systems of support available that guide how staff and families will provide support?

4. Data based decision making: Are there systems that identify students in need of support early? Is an appropriate intervention identified that matches the student need? Is progress monitoring in place? Are interventions working?

Engaging & Affirming Instruction

1. Student voice & choice: Do students have voice and choice to make decisions that impact them throughout their school day?

2. Culturally Responsive: Are instructional practices responsive and affirming to the cultures of students and families?

3. Universal Social-emotional learning: Are universal social-emotional skills being addressed through direct instruction?

4. Behavior Expectations: Are behavioral expectations taught proactively and retaught when expectations are not met?

Reason to Be:

1. Purpose & meaning in work (staff): Do staff feel a sense of calling and/or passion for their work?
2. Future orientation (students): Do students have an understanding that present learning impacts their future goal attainment?
3. Shared vision: Are there shared vision, goal and strategies that the school staff are collectively working to accomplish?
4. Trauma stewardship/self-care (staff): Do staff recognize the impact their work has on their own well-being and actively seek to care for themselves and colleagues?

Protective Factors:

1. Belonging: Do staff, students and families feel a sense of belonging and positive connection?
2. Sleep, exercise & nutrition: Are students and staff getting recommended amounts of sleep, exercise and nutrition as needed for their development?
3. Mental health: Is there access to trauma-competent services for prevention, early intervention, treatment, and crisis intervention from mental health providers?
4. Mindfulness: Is mindfulness being taught, practiced and encouraged as a way to build resilience in the school day?

Family & Community Engagement:

1. Family Engagement: Does the school create strong school-family bonds that support learning in a culturally relevant manner?
2. Family Connection: Do families feel connected to the school and support their child's learning?
3. Community Partnerships that support learning: Does the school have strong collaboratively partner with community agencies that foster learning?
4. Partnerships with community agencies that meet student and family needs: Does the school have strong collaboratively partner with community agencies that meet student and family needs?

School Climate:

1. Well-defined/Consistent Behavior Expectations: Are behavior expectations well-defined and consistent across school settings?
2. Physical Environment: Is the physical school enviroment safe, welcoming, well-kept and clean?
3. Safe & Predictable: Does the school have routines and practices that are predictable and promote a sense of safety?
4. Behavior Response: Is there a system-wide plan for how to respond to student behaviors in a consistent and restorative manner?

Needs assessment process:

1. Share the process with your building leaders and explain the process to them.

2. Schedule a short staff meeting to provide an overview of the process, what will be expected of staff and a timeline.

3. If possible, use someone that is externally located to complete the interviews and observations for the organizational assessment. When you are in the daily activities of the school, it can sometimes be hard to extricate from the student and staff dynamics to be objective. Some options for the person to fill this role could be a district level administrator or coach, a PBIS coach or behavior specialist from another site or an outside consultant.

4. Determine how data will be collected from students, parents and staff. Use of surveys is encouraged.

5. Schedule interviews with stakeholders

6. Conduct observations in multiple settings: classroom, lunchroom, beginning and end of day, recess, and hallway.

7. Identify themes in observations, interviews and surveys.

8. Share themes with building administration team or leadership team and together score the assessment tool.

I hope that you found this a helpful tool as you begin your journey to be a trauma-informed school. Do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions you have at **denise@resilienceimpact.com**.