

PBIS & Trauma-Informed Schools

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What is Trauma?

Trauma refers to extreme or chronic stress that overwhelms a person's ability to cope and results in feeling vulnerable, helpless, and afraid.

- Can result from one event or a series of events
- Event(s) may be witnessed or experienced directly
- Experience is subjective
- Often interferes with relationships, self regulation, and fundamental beliefs about oneself, others, and one's place in the world

WI Department of Public Instruction Trauma-Sensitive Schools Resources

http://ssp.wi.gov/ssp_mhtrauma

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are an indicator of trauma.

In 2010, a survey entitled the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) given to adults in 10 states and Washington D.C. asked participants to identify adverse childhood experiences from their own life.

ACEs were defined and separated into 2 categories: Abuse & Household Challenges

Source: https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/ace_brfss.html

Adverse Childhood Experiences Defined

•Abuse

Emotional abuse: A parent or other adult in your home ever swore at you, insulted you, or put you down.

Physical abuse: A parent or other adult in your home ever hit, beat, kicked or physically hurt you.

Sexual abuse: An adult or person at least 5 years older ever touched you in a sexual way, or tried to make you touch their body in a sexual way, or attempted to have sex with you.

•Household Challenges

Intimate partner violence: Parents or adults in home ever slapped, hit, kicked, punched or beat each other up.

Household substance abuse: A household member was a problem drinker or alcoholic or used street drugs or abused prescription medications.

Household mental illness: A household member was depressed or mentally ill or a household member attempted suicide.

Parental separation or divorce: Parents were ever separated or divorced.

Incarcerated household member: A household member went to prison.

Prevalence of Trauma

ACE Score Prevalence for Participants Completing the ACE Module on the 2010 BRFSS.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey ACE Module Data, 2010*. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S.

Number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE Score)	Women Percent (N =32,539)	Men Percent (N =21,245)	Total Percent (N =53,784)
0	40.0%	41.4%	40.7%
1	22.4%	24.9%	23.6%
2	13.4%	13.2%	13.3%
3	8.0%	8.1%	8.1%
4 or more	16.2%	12.4%	14.3%

Trauma in Michigan

According to a 2013 fact sheet published by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, approximately 62% of Michigan adults reported experiencing at least one ACE.

15.2% reported experiencing four or more ACEs.

Michigan adults who reported four or more ACEs were approximately four times more likely to report poor mental health and depression than adults who reported no ACEs.

Black adults reported a higher prevalence of ACEs than white adults.

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/MIBRFSS_Surveillance_Brief_Mar_2015_Vol9No2_FINAL_491078_7.pdf

Effects of Trauma on Students

We know that traumatic experiences negatively affect students' behavior and educational outcomes.

“Every day, children enter their classrooms bringing backpacks, pencils, and paper—and their unique views of the world. Every child has his or her own expectations and insights, formed from experiences at home, in the community, and at school. When children witness violence between their adult caregivers or experience abuse or neglect, they can enter the classroom believing that the world is an unpredictable and threatening place.”

Helping Traumatized Children Learn. Massachusetts Advocates for Children, 2005.

Effects of Trauma on Students

Trauma experiences are linked to:

- A heightened state of alert/anxiety or a persistent fear for one's safety

- Poorer memory

- Difficulty processing information

- Attention problems

- Poor problem-solving ability

- Low self-esteem

- Feelings of hopelessness

- Problems with emotional regulation

- Aggression

- Agitation

- Withdrawn behavior

Trauma & Behavior

- Behavior is the language of trauma, especially for children
 - Most children lack the language skills to describe how they are feeling, so behavior is their expression
 - Most expressive behaviors used by these children are considered “negative”
 - Reactive, impulsive, aggressive, withdrawn, defiant
 - Other behaviors – perfectionistic, lack of trust in adult & peer relationships
 - Many of the most challenging behaviors are strategies that have helped the child to survive abusive or neglectful situations & have been generalized to other environments (e.g., school)

Trauma & Behavior

Chronic trauma can impair the development of a child's ability to regulate their emotions and control impulsive and externalizing behaviors.

Reactions can be triggered in children if they feel like they are being provoked or if something reminds them of their trauma. Feeling a loss of control or sensory stimuli can trigger a trauma response.

Some children internalize their trauma and may demonstrate social withdrawal or perfectionism.

When misbehavior occurs, a trauma-informed perspective considers, “What has happened to you and how can I help?” instead of “What is wrong with you?”

Using Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports to Help Schools Become More Trauma-Sensitive. Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction

PBIS & Trauma-Informed Schools: They Work Together

“Often, school administrators and staff initially view trauma-informed approaches as an additional activity to be added to an already overwhelming agenda of requirements. However, most trauma-informed practices can be infused into already establishing teaching methods and school practices, and usually will make classroom management, teaching, and disciplinary practices easier and more effective.” Resler, 2017

PBIS & Trauma-Informed Schools

ACEs and traumatic experiences are not new, though there is growing research on the impact of trauma on students.

Schools implementing PBIS are well-positioned to provide trauma-informed strategies for students at every tier of intervention.

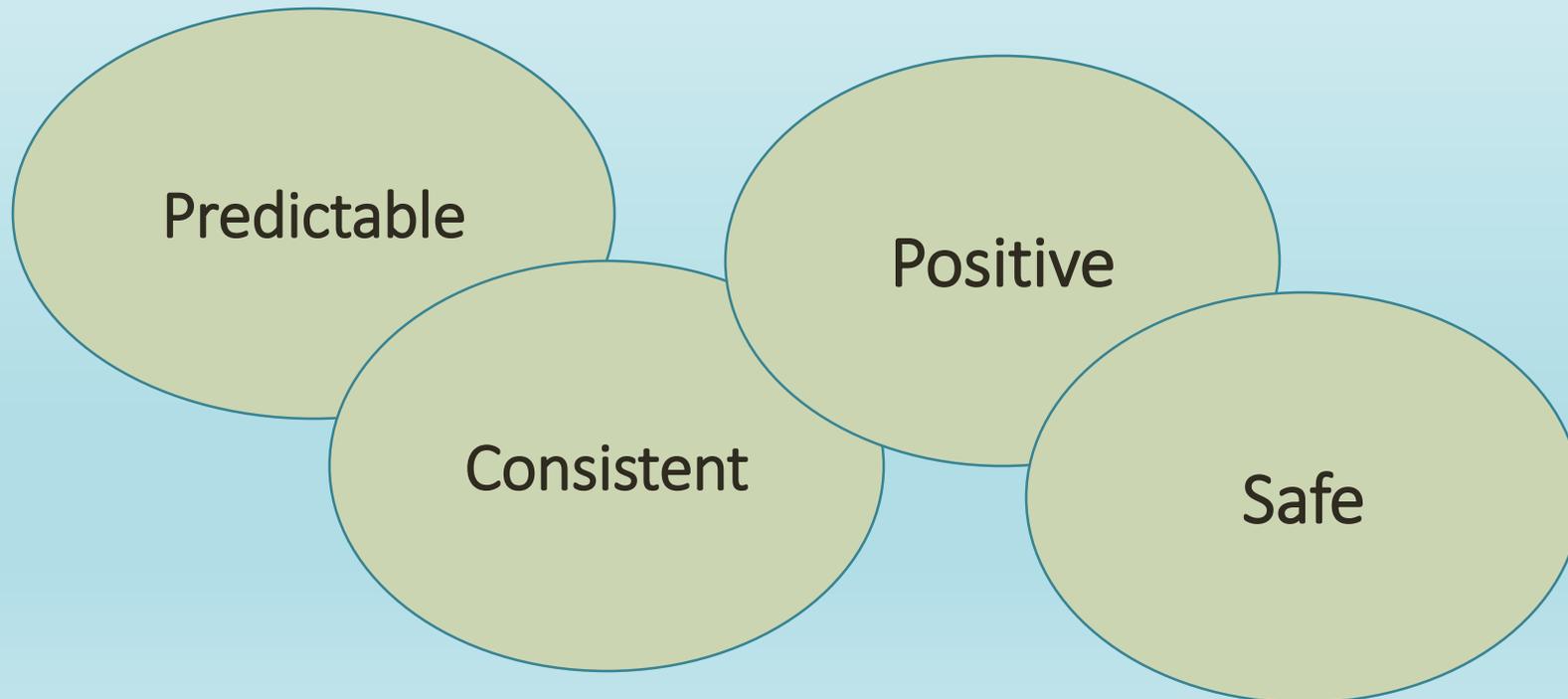
Students who have experienced trauma need safe, predictable environments and need caring relationships with adults.



Why use the PBIS framework for Trauma-Informed Schools?

The fundamental purpose of PBIS is to make schools more effective & equitable learning environments.

Rob Horner, Co-Director of the OSEP Technical Assistance Center for PBIS



Advantages of a PBIS Framework

Promotes effective decision making

Improves climate & learning environment

Changes adult behavior

Reduces punitive approaches (ODRs and suspensions)

Fosters positive relationships

Improves student academic performance

Consider how these benefits can positively impact students who have experienced trauma.

Experimental Research on SWPBIS

Bradshaw, C.P., Koth, C.W. (2009). Altering school climate through school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 17*(2), 100-115.

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Freeman, J., Simonsen, B., McCoach D.B., Sugai, G., Lombardi, A., & Horner, (submitted) Implementing school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports on Academic, Attendance, and Behavior Outcomes in High Schools.

SWPBIS Experimentally Related to:

1. Reduction in **problem behavior**
2. Increased **academic performance**
3. Increased **attendance**
4. Improved perception of **safety**
5. Reduction in **bullying behaviors**
6. Improved **organizational efficiency**
7. Reduction in **staff turnover**
8. Increased perception of **teacher efficacy**
9. Improved **Social Emotional competence**

PBIS & The Need for Safety

“The school setting can be a battleground in which traumatized children’s assumptions of the world as a dangerous place sabotage their ability to develop constructive relationships with nurturing adults.” *Helping Traumatized Children Learn. Massachusetts Advocates for Children, 2005.*

Children who have experienced trauma struggle to feel safe and struggle to trust.

Safety is a **core component** of PBIS and positive relationships are a core component of PBIS interventions.

Blending PBIS with Trauma-Informed Practices

Basic foundation for PBIS: Promoting Respect, Responsibility, & Safety.

The goal of PBIS is to create and teach uniform behavioral expectations, provide safe and predictable environments, and provide support for students at the Tier 1 (universal), Tier 2 (targeted), and Tier 3 (intensive) level.

The goal of Trauma-Informed Schools is to create safe environments and appropriate supports for students who have experienced trauma.

Staff training is an integral part of both PBIS and Trauma-Informed Schools.

Both require whole school and team-based work, driven by data.

Components of a Trauma-Informed School

School staff create an environment where all children feel safe.

Student trauma is addressed by a school-wide approach, not in a singular program.

School staff explicitly make children feel like a part of the school community with multiple opportunities to practice newly developing social and behavioral skills.

School staff are aware of what is happening within the halls of the school as well as outside of the school and can respond quickly to escalating trauma.

Suspension and expulsions are a last resort. Alternatives to suspension are implemented.

Resler, 2017

How do these align with a PBIS framework?

Components of a Trauma-Informed Classroom

Always empower, never disempower: Classroom discipline is necessary, but should be done in a way that is delivered calmly, and is respectful, consistent, and non-violent.

Maintain high expectations, reasonable limits, and consistent routines.

Provide unconditional positive regard.

Be a relationship coach. Help students develop social skills and support positive peer and adult relationships. Increase pro-social connections.

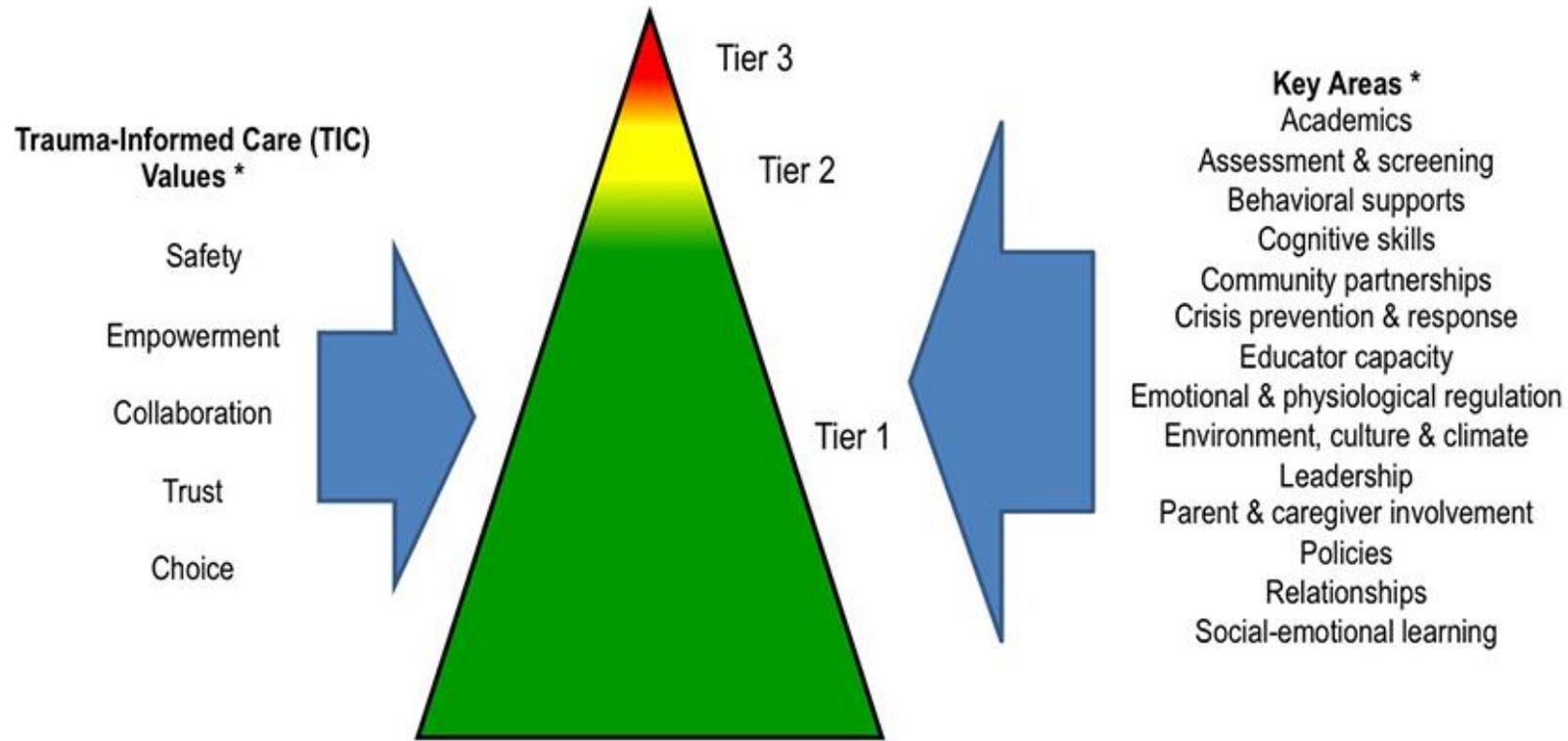
Wolpow, et al, 2016

PBIS & Trauma-Informed: Effective & Affective

“Effective teaching and methodologies focus on both the **effective** and the **affective**, requiring instructors to embed instruction with compassionate qualities of the heart, such as courage, commitment, belief and intuitive understanding. Compassionate teachers model by example the conviction that life make sense despite the inevitable adversities that each of us encounters.” Wolpow et al, 2016

How does a PBIS framework allow for the effective and affective methodologies to be addressed?

Using the PBIS Framework to Support the Learning of Students Affected by Trauma



Tier 1 – Universal strategies & instruction for all students

Tier 2 – Additional supports for students with milder symptoms of trauma or in high-risk groups

Tier 3 – Intensive & ongoing interventions for students deeply impacted by trauma

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

TIC Values are from Fallot & Harris, Community Connections, www.ccdc1.org

PBIS & Trauma-Informed Strategies: Tier 1/Universal Supports

PBIS

Teaching Expectations (School-Wide Behavior Matrix)

Developing Major & Minor Infractions

School-Wide Rewards and Consequences

Voice Level Expectations

PBIS Clubs

Active Supervision

Classroom Management Support

Classroom Calming Kits

4 to 1

Student Voice

Trauma-Informed

Consistent, predictable environments

Teach how to manage/regulate emotions

Consistent response to behavior

Calm environments

Opportunities for positive peer connections/engagement with school

Creating safe spaces for learning and taking breaks

Embed trauma-informed strategies into your matrix

Develop positive relationships

Provide choices/Appropriate control to the student

Teaching Matrix		INCORPORATE Trauma Informed Strategies						
		All Settings	Halls	Playgrounds	Classroom	Library/ Comput	Assembly	Bus
Expectations	Respect	Be on t O		have a plan.	Use your words Use safe hands			Watch for our stop.
	Safe	Be on t. Hands/feet to self. Help/share with others.	Use normal voice volume. Walk to right.	Share equipment. Include others.	Self Check Use Calming Strategy	Whisper. Return books.	Listen/watc h. Use appropriate applause.	voice Stay in your seat.
	Responsible	Recy		ent in garb can.	Ask for help Connect with Safe Person	Push in chairs. Treat books carefully.	Pick up. Treat chairs carefully.	Wipe your feet.

1. Expectations

2. NATURAL CONTEXT (Locations)

3. Rules or Specific Behaviors

PBIS & Trauma-Informed: Tier 1 Classroom Strategies

1. Personal Greetings
2. High Rates of Positive Acknowledgments
3. Having a “Break” Option

Adult Behaviors that Add to Power Struggles

Responding quickly

Trying to convince

Threatening

Increasing consequences

Having the interaction in the presence of others

Remaining in the interaction too long

Getting angry, being sarcastic

Putting the student down

Consider how a student who has experienced trauma might react to an adult demonstrating these behaviors.

Adult Behaviors that Reduce Power Struggles

Simple directive, choices

Predetermined consequences

Listening

Being brief and direct

Private discussion

Walking away

Conveying calmness: lower your voice, strategic pause, sitting down next to the student as opposed to standing over.

Validate and label the student's emotions

(e.g., "Linda, you seem angry/frustrated/annoyed, tell me what's going on.")

How might a student who has experienced trauma react if an adult addresses him/her in these ways?

PBIS & Trauma-Informed Strategies: Tier 2

“Research has shown that if children have a constant and secure relationship with an adult, they can better regulate their stress response systems during traumatic events. Therefore, a sensitive and responsive teacher, counselor, caregiver, and/or school professional can be a powerful buffer against the negative neurological impacts of stress hormone exposure.” National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2005/2014

Consider the Tier 2 strategies that help students foster positive adult relationships.

PBIS & Trauma-Informed Strategies: Tier 2/Targeted Supports

PBIS

Check In/Check Out

Mentoring

Take A Break/Calming Kits

Home-School Plans

Active Supervision

PBIS Clubs

Trauma-Informed

Developing strong, consistent relationships

Creating safe spaces for expressing emotions/thoughts

Creating spaces and consistent procedures for breaks

Calming kits/mindfulness

Emotional regulation activities

The Power of a Caring Adult

Celebrate: Celebrate the achievements and failures of children. Show them that they are competent, loved, and valued.

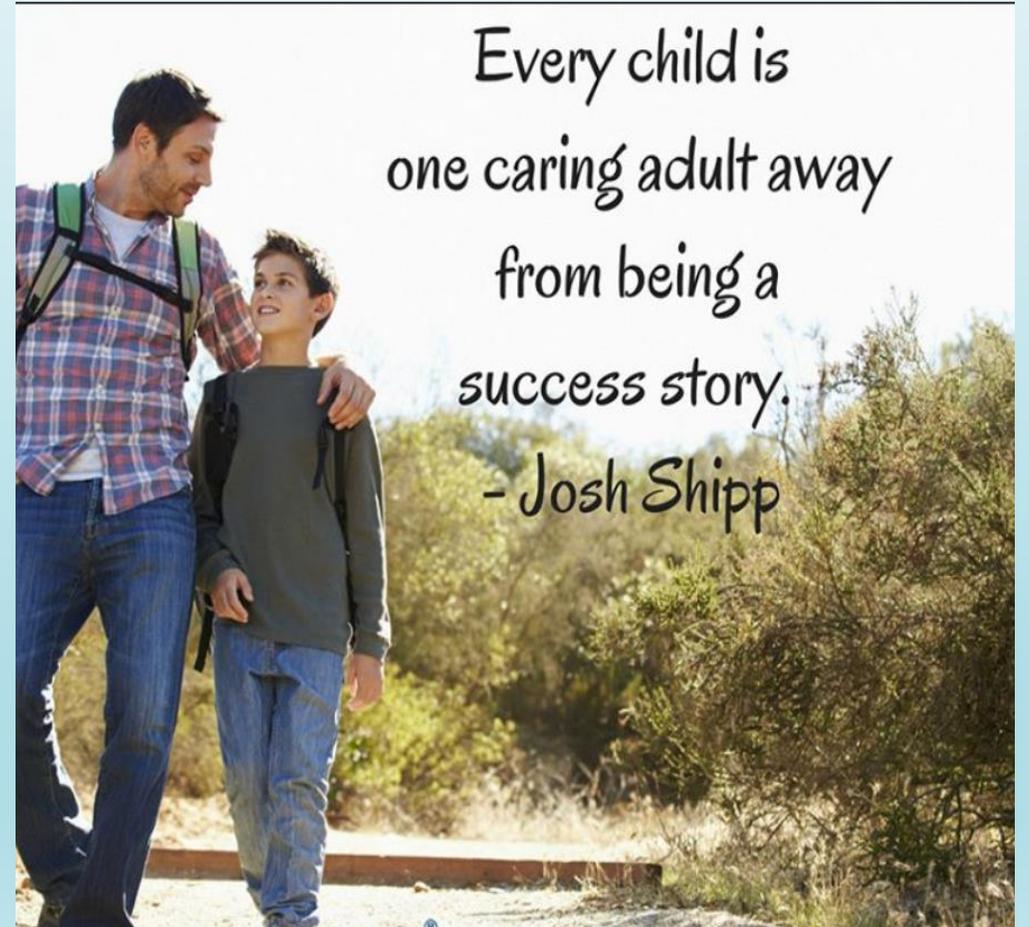
Comfort: Offer a constant compassionate, reassuring presence and demonstrate your commitment through repetition.

Listen: Actively listen to children then help them identify their emotions and feelings as well as healthy strategies to problem solve and cope.

Collaborate: Commit to listening, trusting, sharing and working together with children.

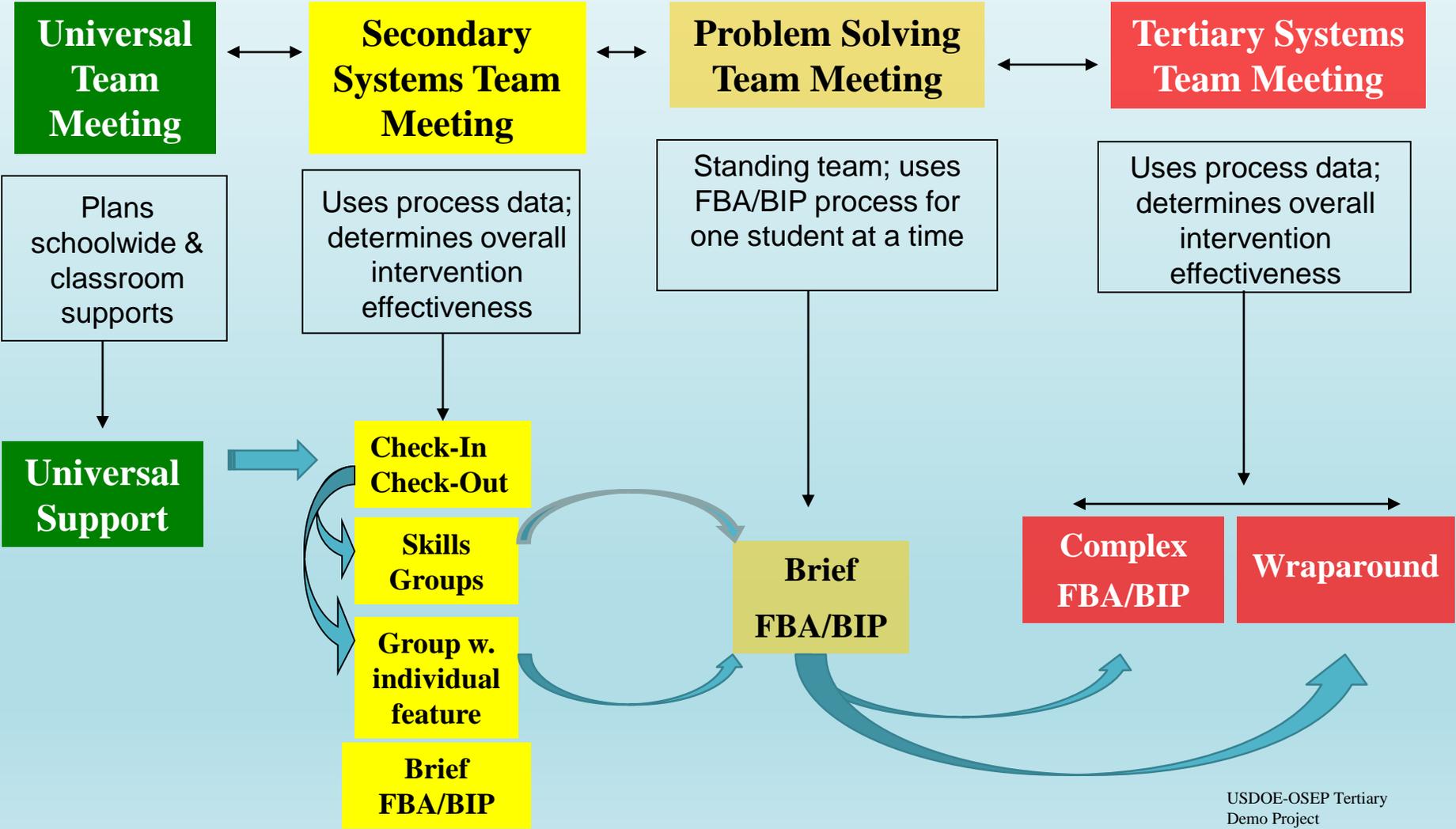
Inspire: Use your words to provide children with a sense of power, control and competency. Convey optimism about what children could achieve.

Changing Minds, Healing Gestures



3-Tiered System of Support

Necessary Conversations (Teams)



PBIS & Trauma-Informed Strategies: Tier 3/Intensive Supports

PBIS

FBA
PBIS plan (BIP)
EIP/Crisis Support Team
School-based Wraparound Process
Regular Data-Driven Behavior Reviews
Strong, Trusting Relationships Between Home and School
Alternatives to Suspension

Trauma-Informed

Reducing triggers
Providing consistent adult support
Integrating CMH/mental health supports & family within school-based wraparound process
Consistent team working with student/family
Developing trust within strong relationships
Alternatives to Suspension

Integrating Mental Health Support: Use the Wraparound Process

Students identified as needing Tier 3 supports have complex needs, and are often involved with mental health agencies.

School-based wraparound is a process that allows schools to identify and collaborate with a student's system of support, including mental health systems.

Wraparound meetings are regularly scheduled, solution-focused, and data-driven.

“The wraparound team creates a context where effective behavioral and other interventions are more likely to have the desired results. This happens by building a motivated team of people who are close to the student and work together through a solution-focused approach.” -Lucille Eber

Building Resilience



“ The counterbalance of trauma is resiliency, the ability of an individual or community to withstand and rebound from stress.”

Wolpow, et. al., 2016

Building Resilience

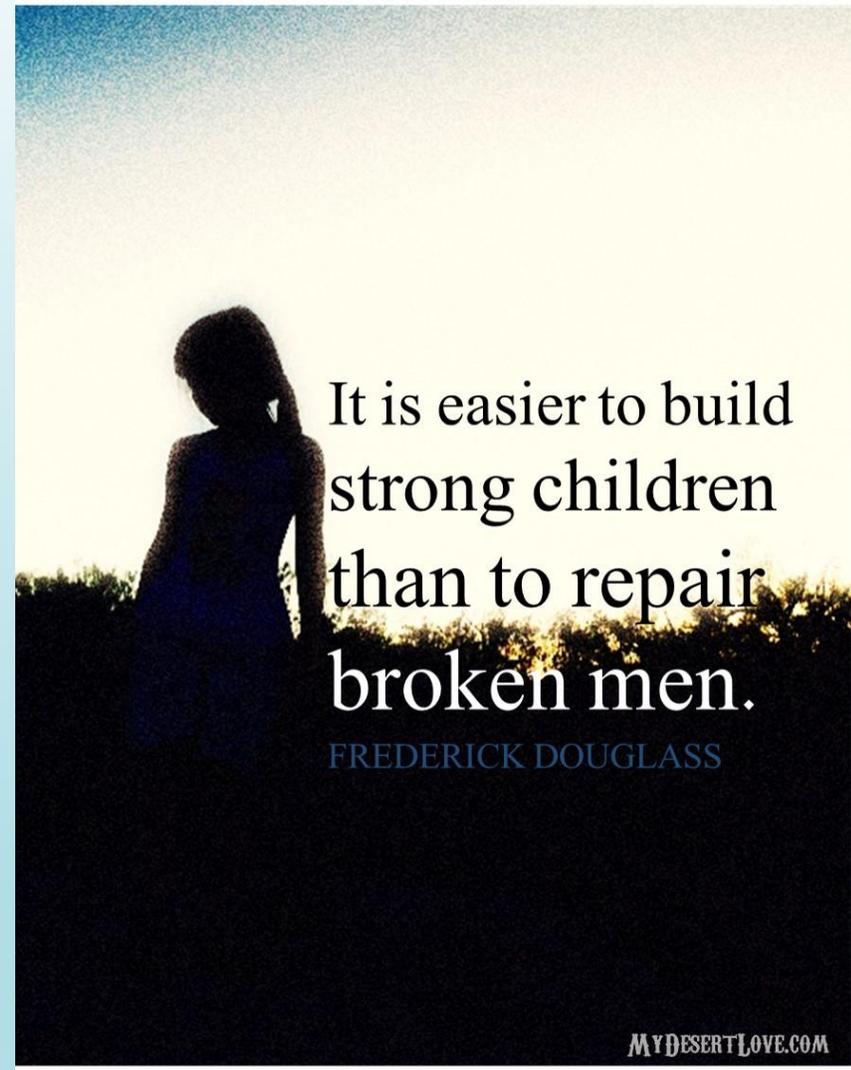
We know that PBIS promotes a positive school culture and climate using evidence-based practices.

Children are resilient and can rise above even the most difficult of circumstances when given the right support and environment.

A PBIS school is the type of environment that can provide many opportunities for students from every kind of experience to learn, grow, and flourish.

When students are supported to manage their emotions, they can better manage their behavior.

A PBIS school is the right environment to provide “shelter from the storm” for students affected by trauma.



It is easier to build
strong children
than to repair
broken men.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

MYDESERTLOVE.COM

Building Resilience: Example of a Trauma-Informed Break Strategy

Clara B. Ford Academy in Dearborn Heights is a public charter school that educates female, court-involved students. The majority of the students have experienced some type of trauma.

The Monarch Room is a space within the school created as a resource to support students needing time to de-escalate and refocus, especially when experiencing a trauma response.

A two and a half year study of 719 students enrolled at Clara B. Ford showed that Monarch Room use significantly decreased the use of suspension and expulsion. The room received more 9th grade referrals than any other grade, significant because 9th grade success is correlated to future graduation rates.

Day, 2016

Working Together...Food for Thought

School-wide PBIS is a system, a *framework*, that trauma-informed strategies fit into easily.

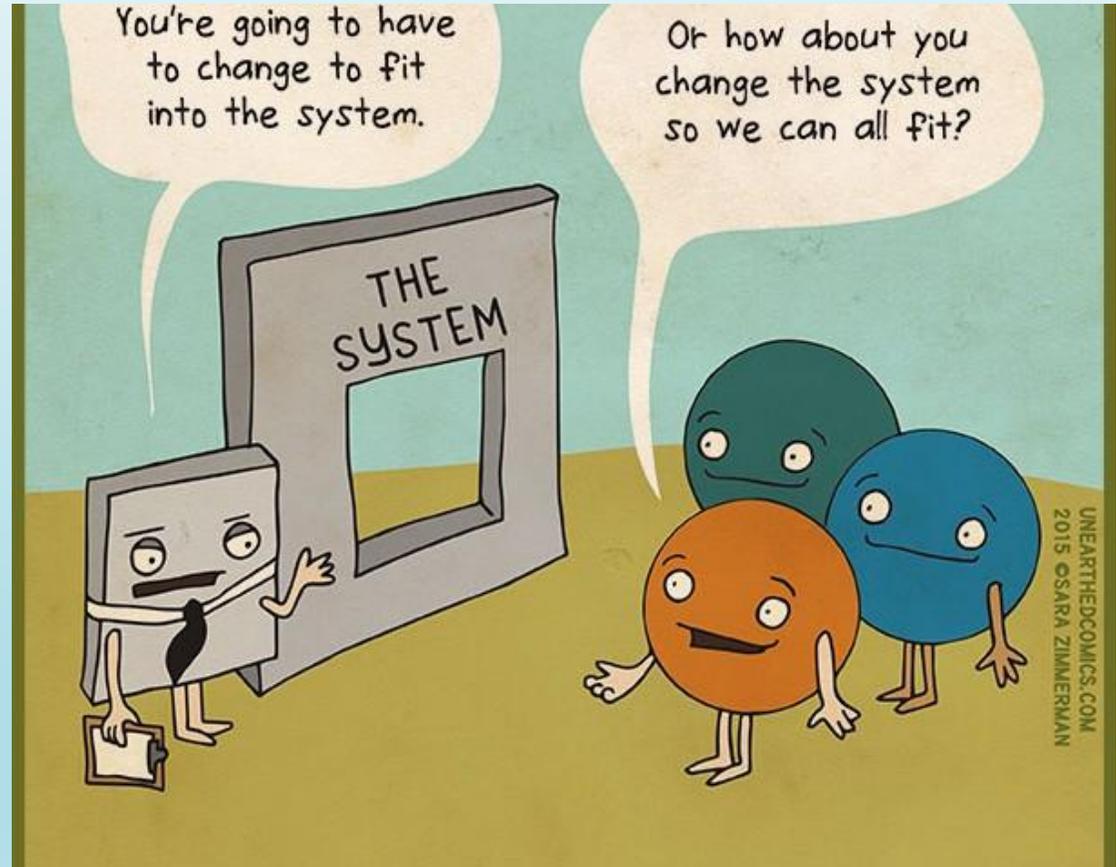
Consider what trauma-informed strategies your school could incorporate into the existing three tiers of intervention. You may already be doing this!

Remember, PBIS already promotes safety, predictability, and strong, positive relationships at every tier which provide students who have experienced trauma **exactly what they need to thrive.**



Finally, It Takes a *System*...to Change a System

Anything that is going to effect real change in an existing system, must also be implemented systematically. PBIS provides the framework necessary to provide trauma-informed strategies to all students who need them.



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- Centers for Disease Control https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/cestudy/ace_brfss.html