

TRAUMA-INFORMED
PLAN

METCALFE COUNTY
SCHOOL DISTRICT

JUNE 2024

VISION

The vision for the Metcalfe County School District in the area of trauma awareness mirrors that of the state of Kentucky ensuring every student is empowered and equipped to pursue a successful future. We in Metcalfe County know that a successful future goes beyond the classroom and takes into consideration the whole child. With many students, we must address their social, emotional and physical needs before we can be successful at meeting their educational needs. Once the needs of the whole child are being met, then we are truly preparing them for a successful future.

ENHANCING TRAUMA AWARENESS

In order to enhance trauma awareness throughout the school community, the Metcalfe County School District will develop a support team at each individual school within the district, as well as a team at the Central Office. Each team will have a shared focus and an understanding of trauma. It is imperative that all individuals involved understand the impact trauma can have on the school community, but they also need to understand their role as a school in responding to the community and individual-level trauma incident. Schools must develop a commitment to implementing and sustaining trauma-sensitive, trauma-responsive, and trauma-informed practices. The teams must also be aware of the effect trauma exposure will have on the school staff and be prepared to handle those needs as well.

Both our school-level and mental health counselors will work together in the educating and training of the trauma-informed teams. Each school's team will need to be taught the appropriate procedures in dealing with students affected by trauma. Team members will need to be able to identify and assist students whose learning, behavior, or relationships have been impacted by trauma. Team members will need to provide training, guidance and assistance to

other school personnel in recognizing signs of trauma exposure. There also need to be intervention strategies developed to support students who have experienced trauma. Because many students will try to mask the impact of trauma, it is important for the adults to wear a “trauma lens” to understand the source(s) of challenging school behavior and performance. Early intervention is critical to interrupting the consequences that can follow traumatic childhood experiences.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Each of these teams will be given training on the components of being a trauma-informed district. Each team will learn to follow the four “R’s” to conceptualize trauma. In addition, each school will need to incorporate the following into their policies and procedures used to deal with students in all situations. The four “R’s” consist of:

Readize – Schools must be able to realize the impact trauma can have on the individual and school, plus understand the potential pathways to recover from trauma.

Recognize – Individuals within the schools need to be trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma on all the individuals who may be involved.

Respond – Each school will need to be able to integrate knowledge they have obtained about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices for each individual school. Because we are a small district, there needs to be a

streamline of the policies and procedures so that all schools follow similar guidelines.

Resist Re-traumatization – All schools need to have procedures in place to ensure help is offered for those involved in the trauma and the school does not place the individual(s) in a position to be re-traumatized after the event.

Overall, the mission ensures all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported at school. Addressing trauma's impact on learning is at the center of the educational mission and requires teamwork, coordination and sharing of responsibilities for all students to succeed. The district must also provide continuous learning opportunities for the adults involved with this team as well.

ASSESSING THE SCHOOL CLIMATE

In order to fully serve the needs of all students in the district, we must first find out where we have been lacking. Currently, every school in the district uses a program called S.T.O.P., a bullying reporting and information gathering program.

Another method our district uses to gather valuable information is the use of the Student Voice Survey. This is no longer mandatory through the Kentucky Department of Education but our administration saw the value in continuing the survey. Presently there are questions on the survey dealing with the safety of our schools and the communication between teachers and students. Since this survey is administered in the spring semester of each school year, we are in the process of designing a new section of questions that will target our effectiveness in dealing

with student trauma. It is our mission to ensure all students, regardless of race, gender or economic status be provided the services needed to be successful. By gathering information from students in grades elementary through high school, we will be able to see areas of weakness and address them accordingly.

COLLABORATION

So many times, trauma incidents happen outside the school day. If there is not a notification system involving the school administration, the incidents may go unnoticed for long periods of time, resulting in damaging effects on the students. By having quick notice of a traumatic situation, the school system can make contact with the student/family and possibly alter those negative effects on the student.

The Kentucky State Police participate in a program called Handle with Care. This program is simple: law enforcement officers at a scene of a crime or accident identify school aged children who have been exposed to trauma and send a notification to the child's school. The information provided is limited to the name of the child, age of the child, and the school of attendance. This information is sent prior to the next day's attendance, giving school administration the ability to prepare for the situation. The main premise behind the program is to mitigate the negative impact trauma can have on children. If the teachers and administration are aware of the situation, misbehavior can be handled with love and compassion instead of punishment. It also allows the school to call in more highly professionally trained individuals if needed.

In Metcalfe County, we are very fortunate to participate in the Handle with Care program with the Kentucky State Police. Every school counselor, principal, and select district

administrators are on the contact list for our county, and thus far the service has worked very well. Once this notification becomes a standard practice with all of the local police, as well as Kentucky State Police, Metcalfe County Schools will be one step closer to meeting the needs of all of our students who experience trauma.

SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Metcalfe County is a very rural area and unfortunately we suffer from a relatively high poverty rate. Many of our students qualify for free/reduced lunch, so much so that all of our schools qualify to offer free breakfast and lunch to all students. While we are not short on pride, we are sometimes short on resources for the “extra” stuff that is needed.

Without the assistance of several organizations, our students would do without a lot more. Our Family Resource Centers and Youth Service Centers never fail to come through when there is a need. These organizations work endless hours pulling together programs and services our students need to be successful. They have their ears out there listening to what is happening and if a family is in need, they are there. Whether it be food, clothing, a bed, help with electric bills – this group goes above and beyond to eliminate stress from the students in this county.

Our school system also works closely with a program called Community Education. This program helps provide parents with the necessary resources to help their children be successful in school. During the past couple of years, parents have needed a tremendous amount of help with Covid and virtual learning. This program has been critical in eliminating some of the trauma that has been felt by many families in our county.

We are also fortunate to have a contract with Lifeskills, Inc. for in-school counseling services, as well as The Oaks. This program helps remove some of the stress from the family

because the child can be seen during the school day as opposed to having to be transported to the Lifeskills office afterschool. When a family is struggling financially, affording gas for counseling is not high on the list of priorities. By making this service easily accessible, we have more students who continue with the counseling services following a traumatic incident.

CONCLUSION

While our school system may not be the richest district in the state, when our students suffer from trauma, we become one big family and work together to try to make the sting of the horrible situation just a bit less. Whether we call in one or all of these organizations, take up donations from teachers/students or just sit with the student/family, we do all we can to make the effects of trauma a little bit better. At some point in life, we all suffer trauma, but to suffer it as a child without someone to turn to can have a permanent effect on the child. As educators, it is not only our job to teach our content to students; it is our job to help shape them into the adults they will become. Teachers spend many hours with our kids and can have a positive or negative impact on the students. We should all strive for the positive side of everything and make the world a better place to live.