

Education Demonstration Project

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Education Demonstration Project

- The Education Demonstration Project (Project) is a cross-systems collaborative effort to draw critical attention to the education needs of youth touched by the child welfare system.
- Project Partners include:
 - Casey Family Programs
 - Delaware Family Court
 - Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families
 - Brandywine School District
 - Woodbridge School District
 - Office of the Child Advocate
 - Department of Education

Project Vision

- Promote positive educational outcomes for youth in the child welfare system by making improvements at both the system and practice levels.
- Cross-systems collaboration and data exchange to inform potential practice changes aimed at improving education experiences and outcomes.

Child Welfare and Trauma

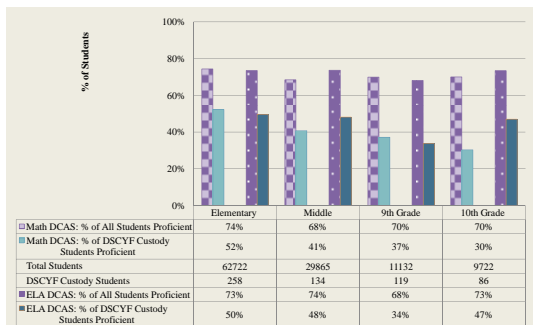
Children in the child welfare system almost by definition have suffered trauma, often multiple traumatic events, and 50-75% exhibit behaviors or symptoms that need mental health treatment as a result of that trauma.

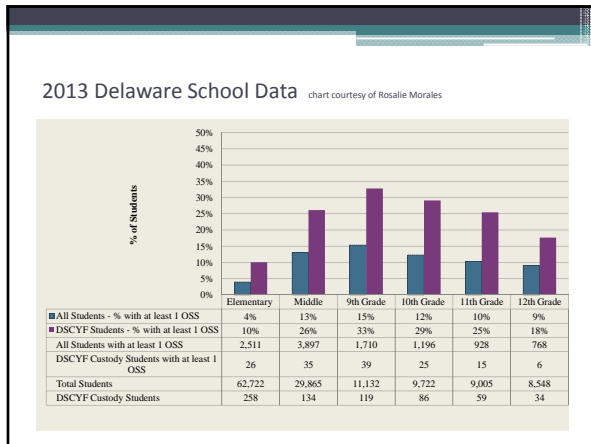
Sources: Landsverk, Burns, Stambaugh, & Rolls Reutz (2009). Psychosocial Interventions for Children and Adolescents in Foster Care: Review of Research Literature. *Child Welfare*, 89 (1), 49-69.

How Does Trauma Impact Learning

- If a student is experiencing stress, he/she may be unable to process verbal/nonverbal and written academic information.
- He/she may have a limited ability to understand or respond to classroom instructions or explanations or to retrieve information on demand.
- Severe stress and the release of stress hormones can “turn off” the pre-frontal lobe of the cerebral cortex which influences abstract thinking, language, decision-making, working memory and attention.

2013 Delaware School Data chart courtesy of Rosalie Morales





Compassionate Schools

- The poor educational outcomes for youth in care helped inform the Project partners' decision to work with the Compassionate Schools approach to trauma and helping students find success in the classroom.

- The counterbalance of trauma is resiliency.
- Resiliency is the ability of an individual to withstand and rebound from stress.
- Most of the characteristics associated with resiliency and the coping skills needed to adapt to stressors can be learned and supported.

Resiliency

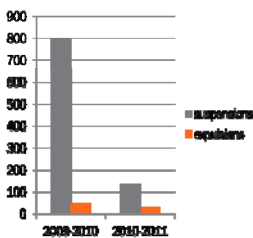
Resilient youth share:

- Self-esteem and self confidence;
- Sense of self-efficacy - a belief in their ability to affect their own lives;
- A range of social, problem solving approaches;
- One significant adult;
- External support system.

A Compassionate School promotes an infrastructure in schools that:

- Raises awareness of the effects of trauma and adversity in the lives of children and their families;
- Utilizes data to employ strategies that mitigate the negative effects of trauma and adversity;
- Creates a context for positive change in the school climate and culture to achieve an optimal learning environment for all students; and
- Makes teaching more enjoyable.

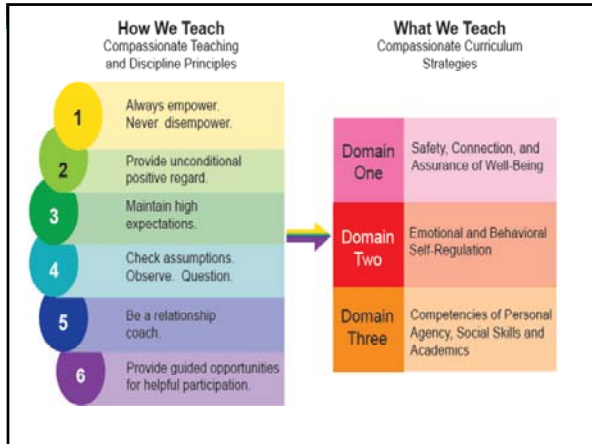
Why Compassionate Schools?



- Lincoln High School Walla Walla, WA
- 2009-2010 (Before new approach)
 - 798 suspensions (days students were out of school)
 - 50 expulsions
- 2010-2011 (After new approach)
 - 135 suspensions (days students were out of school)
 - 30 expulsions

Building Relationships – the cornerstone of Compassionate Schools

- Traumatic events make it difficult for children to trust. They make it difficult to feel worthy, take initiative, and form relationships.
- What helps children thrive is an adult who treats them with simple sustained kindness - an adult who can empathize with the challenges they face moving between home and school.



Six principles of compassionate instruction and discipline for the classroom that foster resiliency.

- Always Empower, Never Dis-empower. Be firm in addressing student misconduct, but avoid a controlling method that might resemble the behaviors of perpetrators of violence (yelling, belittling words, aggressive movements, etc).
- Provide Unconditional Positive Regard in a safe and caring environment.
- Maintain High Expectations, reasonable limits, and consistent routines. Limits are best when they are immediate, related, age-appropriate, proportional and delivered in a calm and respectful voice.
- Check your own personal assumptions, make observations instead of assumptions, and question – but be sure to be prepared to listen.

Six principles continued:

- Be a Relationship Coach. Play a role in managing relationships between students. Think of bullying. By helping students feel safe and supported, they can put more energy and focus into learning. Increase connections – a bond with 1 adult can increase a child's resiliency.
- Provide Guided Opportunities for Helpful Participation. **Providing guided opportunities for participation is an important principle of compassionate teaching.** When teachers offer meaningful participation opportunities, it gives students an opportunity to be heard, to make choices, to have responsibilities, to belong, and to engage in problem solving. Such opportunities can provide solace, create mutual trust, and affirm the self-worth of those involved.

Domain One – Safety, Connection and Assurance

- Because students affected by trauma often struggle with persistent levels of fear, don't trust adults and have difficulty forming relationships, teachers need to help students feel safe, both emotionally and physically.
- Routines and planned transitions help provide predictability, reducing stress and potential danger.
- Providing calm zones for students to decompress help students feel safe.
- Teachers can help students identify triggers (external, internal, or a combination of both) that set off "fight-flight-fright" behaviors that distract them from learning. Students can learn to remove the trigger stimuli, or respond to those stimuli differently.

Domain Two – Improving Self-Regulation

- A student's ability to identify and express emotions may be lacking.
- The manual demonstrates how to use analogies to describe emotions and triggers. (i.e. "angry as an exploding volcano") If a student knows what sets off his/her alarm, he/she can do something about it.
- Calming exercises including yoga, breathing, and relaxation techniques.
- Listen, and teach students to listen with empathy. Acknowledge, show empathy, maintain good eye contact, open available posture and consider asking follow up questions.

Domain Three – Rebuild Competencies in Social and Academic Skills

- Students need support to improve abilities to interact in socially acceptable ways.
- The manual provides ideas to teach assertiveness skills to students, distinguishing aggressiveness from passivity. It includes the lesson of learning to assert oneself with words, rather than in physical ways.

District Collaborative

- Working to imbed the Compassionate Schools approach into Delaware's school districts, the Demonstration Project constructed a district collaborative, which includes six middle schools from six Delaware school districts across the state.
- Those districts are: Appoquinimink, Brandywine, Caesar Rodney, Christina, Colonial and Woodbridge.
- The collaborative began in December 2014.
- The schools will have a full day of training with Ron Hertel, and then will continue to partner with Mr. Hertel during 2015 to support their work towards building Compassionate Schools.
- Ultimately, it is the hope of the Demonstration Project to support implementation of Compassionate schools statewide in all districts.

THE END

Thank you for listening and for all you do to support Delaware's youth.
