

EDUCATIONALLY RECLAIMING THROW-AWAY KIDS: TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING STUDENTS



May 22, 2015

FSM 4th Annual Summit, Lansing, MI

Today's Presenters

- **Shantel Crosby, LMSW**
 - **PhD Candidate, Wayne State University School of Social Work**

- **Beverly A. Baroni, Ph.D., LMSW**
 - **Principal, Clara B. Ford Academy**

- **Angelique Day, Ph.D.**
 - **Assistant Professor, Wayne State University School of Social Work**



School of Social Work

Clara B. Ford Academy



School of Social Work
Challenging Minds, Leading Change, Transforming Lives

What is Clara B. Ford Academy & Who Do We Serve?

- Second Chance high school (grades 9-12)
- All female, court-involved students



What is Trauma?

Trauma:

“Results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.” (SAMHSA, 2012)

Complex Trauma:

Exposure to multiple or chronic and prolonged developmentally adverse traumatic events

Foster Care & Trauma

- Youth in foster care demonstrate high levels of complex trauma (Greeson et al., 2011) and have PTSD rates 20% higher than same-age peers
- Over 21% of foster care alumni have PTSD, a rate higher than that of war veterans (Pecora et al., 2005)



How has trauma impacted YOU as a student?

How has it impacted the students you serve?

Impact of Trauma on Educational Well-Being

- Achieving school success requires that student be able to:
 - Concentrate and memorize
 - Organize and comprehend
 - Self-regulate behaviors

- Childhood trauma has been associated with:
 - Emotional impairments, mental illness, & substance abuse
 - Behavioral issues (e.g., self-harm, delinquency)
 - Social problems (e.g., attachment, interpersonal problems)
 - Physical health problems (e.g., brain development)

Impact of Trauma on Academic Outcomes

- Trauma also impedes a child's ability to:
 - Communicate
 - Form positive peer and adult relationships
 - Establish appropriate boundaries
 - Cognitively processing information

(Wolpow et al., 2009)

- Court-involved students experience:
 - Lower GPAs, scores on standardized achievement tests, and high school graduation rates
 - More school absences, suspensions/ expulsions, school failure
 - Assignment to special education services with greater frequency than peers

Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach

- Personal philosophy
 - ▣ Mental health background as Social Worker, clinical, and school
 - ▣ Schools are dual service delivery systems

- Traditional discipline does not work in long run
 - ▣ Power and control has short-term benefits
 - ▣ Displayed student behaviors are often misinterpreted by staff
 - ▣ Need to teach life skills

- Increase academic achievement

- Enhance collaboration between outside agencies and schools

Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach (cont.)



- Administrative support
- Collaboration and support from school officials and management company
- Networking & using resources
- Hiring mental health-trained paraprofessionals

Getting the Students' Perspectives...



- We asked female, court-involved, students to describe the:
 - Behaviors that court-involved youth see displayed in the school setting
 - Childhood experiences that may impact these behaviors
 - Ways that school staff can improve the learning environment

Student Perspectives: Behaviors that Students Observed in the Classroom

Anger Emotions

“Like the kids, they come to school mad and it completely ruins your day cause they take their anger out on you.”

Anger Actions

“It don’t even depend on who the person is—it’s just that the one person says something out the way—you automatically get mad and you wanna just attack them.”

Student Perspectives: Causes of Observed Student Behavior

Environmental Influences

“...other people [students] have attitudes and it kind of combines with your attitude, cause you’re in the classroom full of kids that got attitudes, so it’s even worse...it’s like, well I’m going to make my attitude more bigger than everybody else’s and then you start acting out and everything.”

Triggers

“We were in social studies class one day and we were listening to songs to help us write a poem and just listening to this one verse brought back everything and I just put my head down on my desk and bawled my eyes out.”

Student Perspectives: Student Suggestions to Improve School Environment

Encourage Respect of Others

“just treat the kids with respect, help them when they need help, and basically that’s it.”

Improve Behavior Management to Enhance Student Engagement

“I think it’s more about just having consistency because there’s some kids that will try to bend the rules...some of the teachers don’t know how to handle that...or they don’t want to handle it, or they just let [the student] do their own thing so [the teacher] can get through with class”

Getting Perspectives from Teachers/Staff...



- We asked teachers and school staff to describe:
 - ▣ Their challenges and needs for working with court-involved students
 - ▣ Their perspective on how trauma-informed training has impacted their work with students

What Did Teachers/Staff Say They Needed?

Before the intervention:

“I’d like to learn some strategies for how to deal with students who have attachment issues, and trauma, and what are some ways that usually work with them, and just have a bigger bag of tricks.”

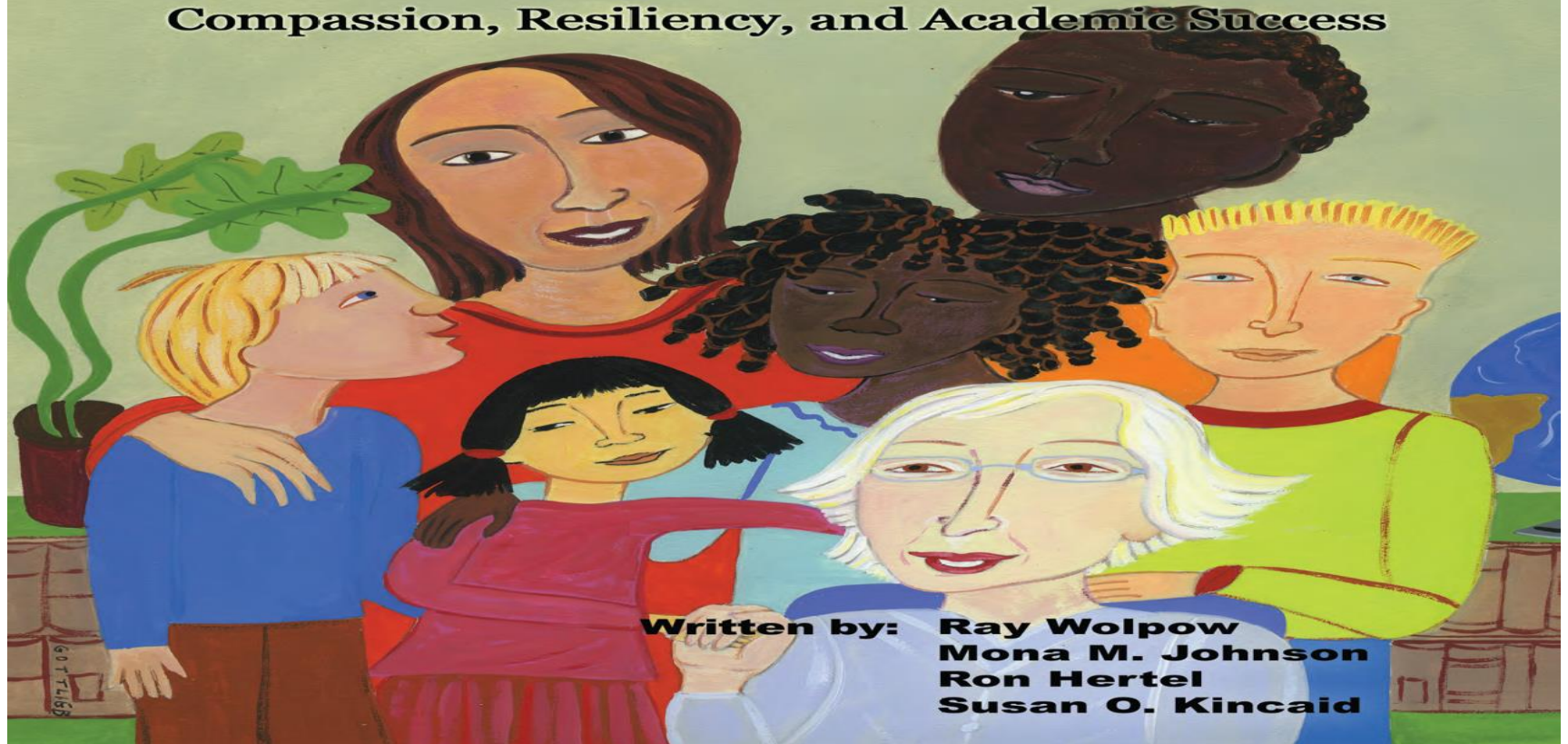
“I’m a teacher, I don’t have training for psychology or social work...but the kids almost expect that from you, especially in an environment like this... It’s difficult, it’s hard to find that balance without that training.”



Does this sound familiar OR surprising?

Trauma-Informed Teaching Curriculum

The Heart of Learning and Teaching: **Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success**



**Written by: Ray Wolpov
Mona M. Johnson
Ron Hertel
Susan O. Kincaid**

How Were Teachers/Staff Impacted by the Intervention?

After the intervention:

“I learned that the trauma that our students have experienced affects—has an effect on their learning, and you have to be conscious of that while teaching...it has to be trauma informed, it has to be gentle teaching, you have to keep that trauma part in the front.”

“...sometimes the lesson is secondary to how a student is feeling, how a student is able to cope with what they’re dealing with that day...so it [the training] allowed me to feel more comfortable taking time out to build relationships... instead of just coming in and saying ‘OK we’re going to learn, learn, learn today’.”

Making Your Mark

- Classroom-Based Academic Strategies
 - ▣ Creating a safe learning environment
 - ▣ Social skills development
 - ▣ Self-awareness and self-regulation
 - ▣ Use of varied academic teaching strategies

- Review Policies, Procedures, & Protocols
 - ▣ Discipline policy of the school and standards of behavior
 - ▣ Communication
 - ▣ Compliance
 - ▣ Collaboration with the community

Making Your Mark (cont.)

- Professional Development
 - Emphasize strong youth-adult relationships
 - Develop and share skills and strategies
 - Identify outside resources and supports
 - Consider using a trauma-informed training curriculum
 - Prepare and recruit trauma-informed learning facilitators
 - Hire administrators and staff with mental health training

Trauma-Informed Resources

- Treatment and Trauma-Informed Care

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/responding/trauma.cfm>

- Collaboration with Schools

https://www.childwelfare.gov/management/practice_improvement/collaboration/schools.cfm

- Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative

<http://traumasensitiveschools.org/>

- The Heart of Learning and Teaching (digital text)

<https://www.k12.wa.us/compassionateschools/pubdocs/TheHeartofLearningandTeaching.pdf>

- Wayne State University Transition to Independence Program

<http://www.tipwaynestate.org/>

- *Supporting Brain Development in Traumatized Children and Youth (text)*

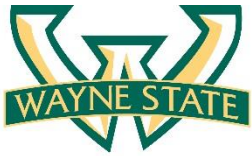
- *Understanding the Effects of Maltreatment on the Brain (text)*

- *What is Child Welfare? A Guide for Educators (text)*

Questions or Comments



Contact Information



School of Social Work

Shantel Crosby, LMSW
PhD Candidate
School of Social Work
Wayne State University
ez6321@wayne.edu

Clara B. Ford Academy

Beverly A. Baroni Ph.D., LMSW
Principal
Clara B. Ford Academy
313.436.0020

beverly-Baroni@cbfacademy.com



School of Social Work
Challenging Minds, Leading Change, Transforming Lives

Angelique Day, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
School of Social Work
Wayne State University
313-577-4407

angelique.day@wayne.edu