

Principles of Equity-Centered Trauma-Informed Education

PRINCIPLE 1: ANTIRACIST, ANTIOPPRESSION

Trauma-informed education is antiracist and against all forms of oppression.

Key understanding:

Racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, transphobia, and all forms of oppression cause trauma. Inequity in schools causes trauma.

Task of equity-centered trauma-informed education:

Begin by examining and understanding how oppression harms students within our schools. End the school conditions and practices that cause trauma.

PRINCIPLE 2: ASSET BASED

Trauma-informed education is asset based and doesn't attempt to fix kids, because kids are not broken. Instead, it addresses the conditions, systems, and structures that harm kids.

Key understanding:

Children have an inherent capacity to survive, thrive, and heal. Trauma is a normal response to threat, so there's nothing to fix about trauma-affected children. Instead, we fix the inequities that cause and worsen trauma, and we build systems of support.

Task of equity-centered trauma-informed education:

Create equitable school environments that are safe and affirming. Rid ourselves of any savior mentality that causes us to discount the agency and self-determination of students.

PRINCIPLE 3: SYSTEMS ORIENTED

Trauma-informed education is a full ecosystem, not a list of strategies.

Key understanding:

Classroom practice, institutional culture and norms, and systems-level policy are all interconnected, and sustained equity requires change at all levels. Students need an entire trauma-informed environment, not just a trauma-informed teacher.

Task of equity-centered trauma-informed education:

Implement trauma-informed practices across an entire school, as well as districtwide and state-wide education systems. Change policy as well as classroom practice.

PRINCIPLE 4: HUMAN CENTERED

Trauma-informed education means centering our shared humanity.

Key understanding:

Dehumanization causes trauma. Educational equity isn't actually equity if it rests on dehumanizing attitudes and policies. Healing requires being fully human, with all of the mess and complexity that entails. Standardization and depersonalization are antithetical to human-centered education.

Task of equity-centered trauma-informed education:

Rid schools of dehumanizing practices and policies. Resist one-size-fits-all and zero-tolerance approaches. Don't allow a focus on the trauma to cause us to lose sight of the person.

PRINCIPLE 5: UNIVERSAL AND PROACTIVE

Trauma-informed education is a universal approach, implemented proactively.

Key understanding:

Identifying and labeling "trauma kids" causes inequity and creates further marginalization. Trauma-informed practices benefit all students, and the best time to implement them is before trauma has occurred.

Task of equity-centered trauma-informed education:

Don't wait for a tragedy to provide trauma-informed education. Avoid approaches that label or sort children. Pair proactive strategies with responsive supports, and eliminate barriers to access.

PRINCIPLE 6: SOCIAL JUSTICE FOCUSED

Trauma-informed education aims to create a trauma-free world.

Key understanding:

Responding to trauma that has already happened isn't enough. Ending current harm is a good first step. The ultimate goal of trauma-informed education is to not need trauma-informed education.

Task of equity-centered trauma-informed education:

Don't view equity and social justice as strategies to reduce disparities or lower suspension rates. Instead, keep perspective on the larger goal of creating a more just world and working for collective liberation from oppression.

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