

# IN THAT NUMBER REPORT CREATING TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOLS

In 2020, through funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies relaunched the In That Number campaign as a social marketing campaign focusing on key sectors; criminal justice, education, and healthcare. Through research with representatives from all sectors, the following Call-To-Action was chosen to create better outcomes for our youth and make New Orleans more trauma-informed:

**ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN NEW ORLEANS SHOULD HAVE FULL-TIME, LICENSED MENTAL HEALTH STAFF THAT RECEIVE ONGOING TRAINING TO BE TRAUMA-INFORMED.**

The following report provides recommendations on how a school system can become trauma-informed.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOL?

According to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard, trauma-informed care is:

***“care and services characterized by an understanding that problematic behaviors may need to be addressed as a result of the ACEs or other traumatic experiences someone has experienced, as opposed to addressing them as simply willful and/or punishable actions.”***

Trauma-informed approaches benefit everyone from students - no matter their ACE score - to teachers to the community. At IWES we also believe that a trauma-informed approach, inclusive of restorative practices, can stem the school-to-prison pipeline and keep youth from entering our criminal justice system.

Louisiana does not have a statewide policy defining what a trauma-informed school should look like, but one can look to other states, districts, and schools for guidance. A trauma-informed school is about prioritizing the health and wellbeing of students and staff. It is based on a systems-change approach and requires the dedication and compassion of leadership and staff, alike.



# ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOL SYSTEM\*

1. Identifying & assessing traumatic stress
2. Addressing & treating traumatic stress
3. Teaching trauma education & awareness
4. Having partnerships with students & families
5. Creating a trauma-informed learning environment (social/emotional skills and wellness)
6. Being culturally responsive
7. Integrating emergency management & crisis response
8. Understanding & addressing staff self-care & secondary traumatic stress
9. Evaluating & revising school discipline policies & practices
10. Collaborating across systems & establishing community partnerships

The following steps are the foundation (Tier 1) for a trauma-informed school:

## step 1:

Universal training for all leadership and staff

- establish a shared definition of what it means to be trauma-informed
- bring in outside trainers for support so that they can bring an evidence-based program to your school, and during the implementation they can provide support and guidance, as well as evaluate progress
- provide ongoing training, particularly for teachers, leadership and mental health professionals on trauma-specific interventions, implicit bias and leadership

## step 2:

Creation of a Health and Wellbeing Team

- this team will represent staff of all kinds, from teachers to administration to social workers and librarians. They will help to lead, support and evaluate the impact and progress toward becoming a more trauma-informed school.

## step 3:

Policy change to reflect trauma-informed values

- often, this includes a shift in disciplinary policy from one that is exclusionary and punitive to one that is restorative, inclusionary and healing
- evaluation is crucial to understand the impact that is being made and guide decision-making

\*Peterson, Sarah. "Essential Elements." *The National Child Traumatic Stress Network*

national child traumatic stress network's  
trauma-informed care for schools model

# SCHOOL

## **tier 3: intensive support**

### **KEY STRATEGIES**

intensive individual and family treatment, trauma-specific treatment

### **KEY PARTNERSHIPS**

school community, community mental health organizations, families

## **tier 2: early intervention/identifying students & staff who need resources**

### **KEY STRATEGIES**

screening students, group interventions (CBT, STS support), threat assessment, peer support

### **KEY PARTNERSHIPS**

school community, community mental health organizations, families

## **tier 1: creating a safe environment & promoting healthy & successful students**

### **KEY STRATEGIES**

promoting positive school climate, emergency management, psychological first aid, bullying prevention, STS education, general wellness support & education

### **KEY PARTNERSHIPS**

school community (admin, teachers, counselors, coaches, nurses), community mental health organizations, law enforcement, youth development organizations, advocacy groups, families

# RESOURCES

## National

[CDC'S Veto Violence](#)  
[Center for Adolescent Studies](#)  
[Echo Training](#)  
[International Trauma Training Institute](#)  
[Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development](#)  
[National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)  
[Post Institute](#)  
[Starr Commonwealth](#)  
[Trauma Learning and Policy Initiative](#)  
[University at Buffalo: Buffalo Center for Social Research](#)

## Louisiana

[Center for Resilience](#)  
[Center for Restorative Approaches](#)  
[Crossroads NOLA](#)  
[Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies](#)  
[Navigate NOLA](#)  
[New Orleans Youth Alliance](#)  
[Partners for Family Health - Louisiana](#)  
[Project Fleur-De-Lis](#)  
[Project Peaceful Warriors](#)  
[Safe Schools NOLA](#)

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## case study: Social Emotional Learning: WE-CAN! Play at Foundation Preparatory Academy

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is skill-building apart from academic instruction designed to help students better understand their emotions, work together to set and achieve goals, feel and show empathy for others, and establish and maintain positive relationships. In 2017, following buy-in from school leaders, IWES partnered with Foundation Prep to implement WE-CAN! Play, an SEL program with a play-based approach, with the entire student body. IWES trained educators and school staff in trauma-informed practices and provided coaching, feedback and support throughout the year. During the intervention IWES analyzed data from the Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) administered to teachers, who responded to items measuring students' emotional and relational conduct and hyperactivity, and how these behaviors impacted their classroom management or environment. Through this process, students identified with the highest behavioral health needs were referred to Tier 2/3 services. Analysis of SDQ data from the '18 - '19 school year shows a steady decrease in disruptive behavior in all classrooms.

**For more information about WE-CAN! Play, contact [jgreen@iwesnola.org](mailto:jgreen@iwesnola.org).**


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## INSTITUTE OF WOMEN & ETHNIC STUDIES

Founded in 1993, IWES is a national non-profit health organization that creates initiatives to heal communities, especially those facing adversity. IWES works in the following areas: Resilience; Emotional/Physical Well-Being; Youth Development; and Sexual Health.

## RWJF CULTURE OF HEALTH LEADERS

Culture of Health Leaders is a leadership development opportunity for people working in every field and profession who want to use their influence to advance health and equity. Culture of Health Leaders is a program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, co-led by the National Collaborative for Health Equity and CommonHealth ACTION.

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