Trauma-Informed Education
Behavior

Need Fulfillment Strategies
Students who have experienced trauma may exhibit...
❖ Physical Need Fulfillment Strategies Such As:
  ➢ Inappropriate attempts to meet physical needs (sexual behaviors, poor boundaries, etc.)
  ➢ Hoarding or stealing food, clothing, and/or objects
❖ Emotional/Relational Need Fulfillment Strategies Such As:
  ➢ Exhibiting emotionally demanding behavior (whining, interrupting, acting dramatically)
  ➢ Seeking negative attention
  ➢ Exhibiting poor interpersonal boundaries
  ➢ Attempting to control the environment through lying or manipulating

Healthy ways to meet needs:
• Physical Need Fulfillment Strategies
  Physical needs include everything from needs for food, clothing, and material possessions to needs for physical contact. Below are some ways to meet these needs:
  o Ensure that students will always have access to food at school without stigma
  o Host a clothing drive at school for families who need it
  o Give side hugs, three-second hugs, high fives, etc.
• Emotional/Relational Need Fulfillment Strategies
  o Ensure that students feel welcomed and seen; refrain from ostracizing them for what they have failed to do, such as when they arrive late to school
  o Be mindful of the ratio of positive to negative attention you are giving a student
  o Schoolwide coordinated effort to increase positive relationships for all students
    ▪ For every child, make sure at least one staff interacts positively with them daily
    ▪ Have someone greet students warmly at the door

Reactivity/Impulsivity
Students who have experienced trauma may have...
❖ Underdeveloped problem-solving skills
❖ A tendency to act without thinking
❖ An inability to link cause and effect on their own, making punishments (and rewards) less effective

Ways to set students up for success
• Practice Positive Behavior
  Reward/consequence systems are not always effective with students. As a result, you may have to find alternatives:
  o Give students many chances to be good at something
  o Show students they can succeed by documenting them
  o Acknowledge, both to the student and to other adults, when a student has done something helpful or well
**Aggression**

Students who have experienced trauma may...
- Have difficulty with problem-solving and empathy, resulting in a distorted perception of events
- Use aggression to regain control when they perceive danger

**Ways to better guide emotions:**
- **Give Students Control**
  Giving students choices and responsibility can meet their need for control. Staff can give students:
  - A selection of activities and an active role in leading activities during recess and gym
  - Creativity and autonomy in academic work
  - Classroom jobs/meaningful roles and responsibilities

- **Self-Regulating Techniques**
  In the moment of aggression, self-regulation should be done first. Teach students what each emotion feels like in their body and what they can do when feeling that way. Some approaches include:
  - Putting a peace place/safe place in every classroom
  - Teaching a Social-Emotional Learning curriculum
  - Teaching/engaging in self-regulation activities
    - Drumming, singing, humming, dancing, belly breathing
    - See handout of brain-body healing movements

**Defiance, Withdrawal, or Shutting Down**

Students who have experienced trauma may...
- Fall asleep in class, disengage, dissociate, or just look past you
- Refuse to do anything you say/do anything

**Ways to reengage students:**
- **Time to Regulate**
  It takes a slightly different approach to work with each student. Therefore, the following tips are imprecise. Be consistent in your approach and read every situation with fresh eyes.
  - Consider which part of their brain they are in (survival vs. prefrontal cortex/lizard vs. wizard brain/downstairs vs. upstairs brain)
  - Give them time, checking in when they show signs of calming down
  - Guide students in how to use fingerholds (on brain-body healing movements handout)

**Perfectionism**

Students who have experienced trauma may...
- Attempt flawlessness in their work in order to please authority figures
- Have high criticism for themself and high regard for others’ opinions

**Ways to create a sense of safety:**
- **Support**
  - Support students by letting them know it’s ok to think critically, to grow and learn from mistakes
  - Model and encourage learning from mistakes
  - Let students know they are valued as a whole and imperfect person