

# Part 1

## Supporting Every Student Learning Series

### An Introduction to Trauma Informed Practice in Schools

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Calgary Board of Education

# What's the Buzz?



# The Buzz...

- Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative
- Safe and Supportive Schools
- Compton United School District
- Safe, Healthy and Ready to Learn
- The Every Student Succeeds Act
- BC's Trauma Informed Practice Guide
- Alberta Family Wellness Initiative
- Bill 10: Creating Welcoming, Caring, Respectful and Safe Learning Environments
- Alberta Education: Trauma Informed Practice

# Massachusetts

- 2004 ***Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative***
  - Massachusetts Advocates for Children & Harvard Law School
  - Vol. 1: Helping Traumatized Children Learn (2005)
  - Vol. 2: Helping Traumatized Children Learn: Creating and Advocating for Trauma Sensitive Schools (2013)
- 2014 ***The Safe and Supportive Schools Framework***
  - Enacted into law by the Governor of Massachusetts
  - Creating inclusive learning environments that promotes student well-being and trauma sensitivity

# Compton Unified School District

- **2015 *Federal Class Action Law Suit***
  - Filed against the CUSD on behalf of some students and teachers
  - Complaint argues the school district discriminates against students who have been exposed to multiple traumatic events **by failing to accommodate the neurobiological impacts of exposure** to trauma on a young person's ability to learn

# Compton Unified School District

- Also claims the School District frequently ***punished and excluded*** these children in ways that have made it nearly impossible for them to succeed in school
- The suit demands that CUSD incorporate **proven practices that address trauma**
- In the same way public schools have adapted and evolved in past decades to help students who experience physical or other barriers to learning

# Safe Healthy and Ready to Learn

- May 2015 A *consensus policy report* on children exposed to violence from Futures without Violence was published
- The report was developed in partnership with leaders from the health, education, justice, and child development fields
- A call for *trauma sensitive schools* is one of their major recommendations designed to “promote positive school climates, be trauma sensitive and raise achievement”

# Safe Healthy and Ready to Learn

Endorsements include:

- The School Superintendents Association
- National Education Association
- National Association of School Psychologists
- American Federation of School Administrators
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Secondary School Principals



# The Every Student Succeeds Act

- ❑ Signed by President Obama in December 2015
- ❑ Replacing the controversial 14-year-old *No Child Left Behind* law
- ❑ Includes provisions for trauma informed practices in schools

# The Province of British Columbia

- May 2013 The province published it's Trauma Informed Practice Guide
- This Guide was developed on behalf of the BC Provincial Mental Health and Substance Use Planning Council
- The Guide is *intended to support the translation of trauma-informed principles into practice*

# Alberta Family Wellness Initiative

- Began with the *Building Blocks for a Healthy Future* conference in 2007
- Brought policy makers together with leading experts in brain and child development to talk about the implications of this knowledge for negative health outcomes like addiction
- Additional projects and events have been added to its agenda and broadened its mandate to include knowledge translation and mobilization

# Alberta's Amended School Act

- As of June 1, 2015 amendments to the school act contained in bill 10 come into force
- New responsibilities:
  - ▣ School boards
  - ▣ Parents
  - ▣ Students
- To ensure all students and school staff are provided with...

# Bill 10



## Welcoming, Caring, Respectful & Safe Learning Environments

The environment must be one that respects diversity  
and fosters a sense of belonging.

# Alberta Education

- December 2015 Trauma Informed Practice was launched on AB Education's Website
- "A school-wide focus on trauma-informed practice creates a shared understanding and common language about how to create welcoming, caring, respectful and safe schools."

# That's the Buzz!



# Trauma Informed Practice





# Overview

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- Trauma Informed Practice in Schools
- Quick Review of Trauma, Toxic Stress & Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Snapshot of Research
- Solutions that Work

- Trauma Awareness
- Safety
- Collaboration
- Strengths Based
- Cultural, Historical, Gender Issues

Trauma  
Informed  
Practice

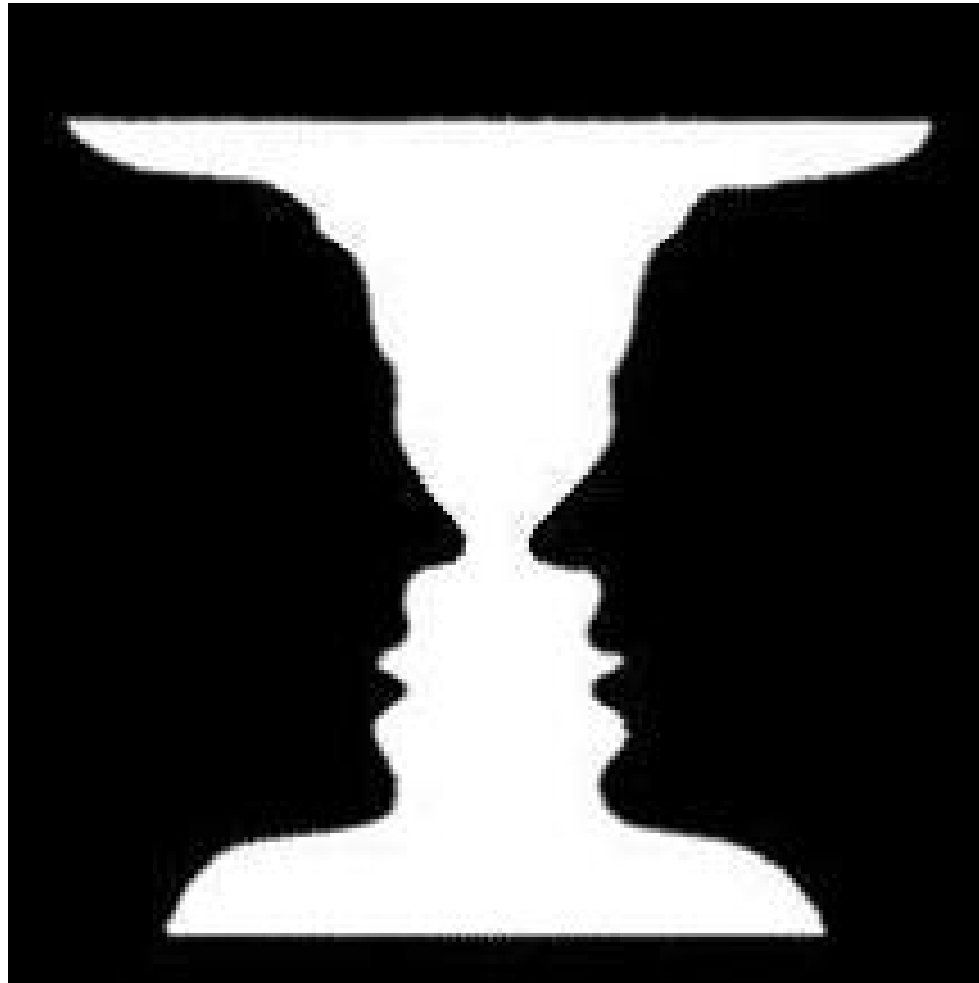


- Treating trauma through therapeutic interventions involving practitioners with specialist skills

Trauma  
Specific  
Interventions



# Shifting the Paradigm



# Trauma Informed Practice

Provides a new paradigm under which the basic premise for organizing and delivering services is transformed from

*“What is wrong with you?”*

to

*“What has happened to you?”*

# Becoming Trauma Informed...

- ❑ Involves a gradual integration of trauma concepts and trauma sensitive responses into daily practice
- ❑ What it looks like to become “trauma-informed” can vary across settings
- ❑ Sometimes creates an organizational culture shift

# TIP in Schools

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**Trauma Informed  
Practice meets the  
ART & SCIENCE of  
good teaching  
Practice**

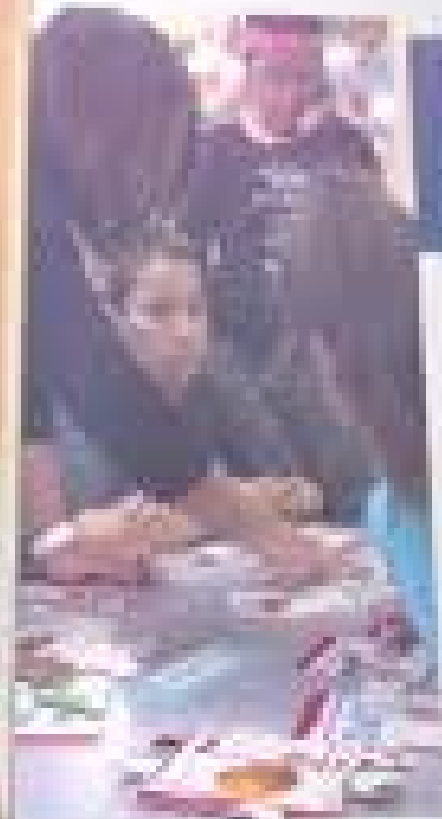
# Trauma Lens

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Funded by the Government of Alberta

# THE SUPPORTING EVERY STUDENT LEARNING SERIES



## **Brain Development**

Dr. Nicole Sherren

## **The Effects of Bullying on Children**

Dr. Tracy Vaillancourt

## **Supporting Refugee Students**

Roxanne Felix-Mah, Kathleen Jensen, Christine Oliver



# Key Concepts

Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University

Brain Architecture

Serve & Return

Toxic Stress

Executive Functions  
&  
Self Regulation

Resilience

# Trauma

- Trauma may arise from single or repeated adverse events that can interfere with a person's ability to cope or to integrate the experience.
- It is an experience of (or witnessing) of real or perceived threat to life, bodily integrity and/or sense of self.
- The impacts of traumatic experiences can be cumulative across the lifespan.

# Domains of Impairment



1. Attachment
2. Biology: Brain & Body
3. Affect Regulation
4. Dissociation
5. Behavioural Control
6. Cognition: Thinking & Learning
7. Self Concept

# Multiple Layers Lead to Complex Outcomes

- ❑ Expectations of harm (from the world and from others)
- ❑ Difficulty forming relationships
- ❑ Difficulty managing, understanding, and regulating feelings and behavior
- ❑ Damaged sense of self/fragmented sense of self
- ❑ Developmental deficits (problem-solving, agency, imagination, academic performance, etc.)

# What This Looks Like in Schools

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- ❑ Avoid or withdraw
- ❑ Become overly clingy and needy
- ❑ Appear manipulative and controlling
- ❑ Engage in avoidance behaviors
- ❑ Become confrontative and hostile
- ❑ Complain of sickness

# Common Labels

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- ❑ Oppositional
- ❑ Manipulative
- ❑ Unmotivated
- ❑ Antisocial
- ❑ Defiant
- ❑ Withdrawn
- ❑ Aggressive

# CHRONIC TRAUMA



## EMOTIONAL

Terror/fear  
Sadness Shock  
Loss of pleasure from activities  
Despair Emotional numbing  
Hypersensitivity Helplessness  
Depression Irritability  
Guilt Grief  
Phobias Anger



## INTERPERSONAL & BEHAVIORAL

Aggression  
Regression in behavior  
Crying easily Risk taking  
Social withdrawal Change in eating patterns  
Alienation Avoiding trauma reminders Tantrums  
School impairment Refusal to go back to school  
Increased relationship conflict  
Vocational impairment  
Isolation



## PHYSICAL

Sleep disturbance  
Startle response  
Somatic complaints  
Insomnia Impaired immune response  
Gastrointestinal problems  
Decreased appetite  
Hyperarousal  
Decreased libido  
Headaches  
Fatigue



## COGNITIVE

Worry  
Nightmares  
Disbelief Confusion  
Memory impairment  
Impaired concentration Impaired decision making ability  
Self blame Decreased self-efficacy  
Decreased self-esteem Distortion  
Intrusive thoughts/memories



# AFFECTS THE WHOLE YOUTH

# The Body's Alarm System

**In order to protect itself the body  
responds in 1 of 3 ways**

**Fight or Flight or Freeze**





# Survival Response in Schools

## Fight

- ▣ hyperactivity, verbal aggression, oppositional behavior, limit testing, physical aggression, “bouncing off the walls”

## Flight

- ▣ Withdrawal, escaping, running away, self-isolation, avoidance

## Freeze

- ▣ Stilling, watchfulness, looking dazed, daydreaming, forgetfulness, over compliance, shutting down emotionally



**POSITIVE**

Brief increases in heart rate,  
mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

**TOLERABLE**

Serious, temporary stress responses,  
buffered by supportive relationships.

***TOXIC***

Prolonged activation of stress  
response systems in the absence  
of protective relationships.

ACEs are

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ADVERSE  
CHILDHOOD  
EXPERIENCES

# The ACE Study Indicates



Adverse childhood experiences are the **most *basic and long-lasting* cause** of health risk behaviors, mental illness, social malfunction, disease, disability, death, and healthcare costs.

# 10 types of childhood trauma measured in the ACE Study

- ▣ Five are personal
  - physical abuse
  - verbal abuse
  - sexual abuse
  - physical neglect
  - emotional neglect
- ▣ Five are related to other family members:
  - a parent who's an alcoholic
  - a mother who's a victim of domestic violence,
  - a family member in jail
  - a family member diagnosed with a mental illness
  - and the disappearance of a parent through divorce, death or abandonment
- ▣ Each type of trauma counts as one

# ACE Study

- ❑ 17,000 HMO Members (routine health screening)
- ❑ 80% white
- ❑ 74% attended college
- ❑ Average age 57
- ❑ 63% of the people who participated in the study had experienced at least one category of childhood trauma
- ❑ Over 20% experienced 3 or more categories of trauma

# Results of the ACE Study

Number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE Score)	
0	36.1
1	26
2	15.9
3	9.5
4 or more	12.5

# Alberta ACE Survey


Demonstrated  
ACEs are common

Strong associations  
between childhood  
trauma and increased  
risk for poor health  
outcomes in adulthood

1/2 of Alberta  
Adults experienced  
family dysfunction.

Almost 1/3 of  
Albertan adults  
experienced abuse





**Children's health,  
behavior, ability to  
learn, and core  
biology are  
directly affected by  
adverse and  
traumatic  
experiences.**



# Spokane ACEs and School Success Study Summary

- ❑ 10 elementary buildings in four districts
- ❑ 2,101 Students randomly selected and reviewed in Grades K-6
- ❑ Teachers reported factually what they knew about ACEs exposure, academic challenges, and chronic health concerns
- ❑ Suspensions were not reported

# Academic Problems

- ❑ Failing to meet grade expectations in one or more core subjects
- ❑ Attendance problems severe enough to interfere with academic success
- ❑ School behaviors severe enough to interfere with academic success

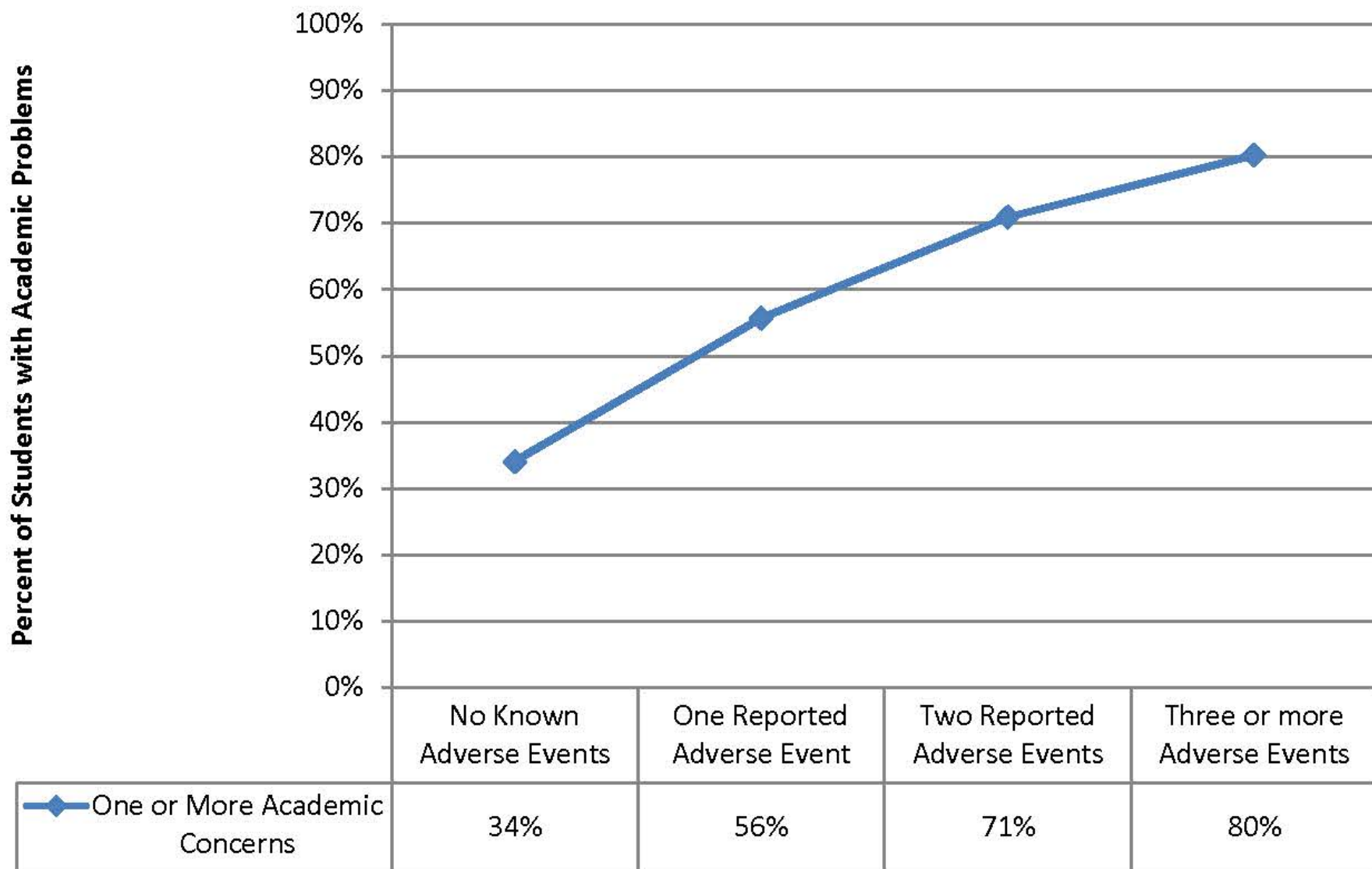
# Odds for Academic & Health Problems with Increasing ACEs

	Academic Failure	Severe Attendance Problems	Severe School Behaviour Concerns	Frequent Reported Poor Health
Three or More ACEs	2.9	4.9	6.1	3.9
Two ACEs	2.5	2.6	4.3	2.4
One ACE	1.5	2.2	2.4	2.3
No Known ACES	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

# What Do We know About Students with ACEs?

- Compared with children with no ACEs, kids with three or more ACEs were:
  - ▣ 3 times more likely to fail
  - ▣ 5 times more likely to have severe attendance problems
  - ▣ 6 times more likely to have severe behavior problems
  - ▣ 4 times more likely to have self-reports of poor health

## Percent of Students with One or More Academic Concerns by ACE Exposure



# Students with ACEs

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- ❑ Are much more likely to be referred for discipline
- ❑ Are significantly more likely to be suspended
- ❑ Experience more lates and absent days
- ❑ Have far less career aspirations and goals

# Solutions that work!

**Teachers and administrators in schools that developed trauma plans describe implementing many changes, big and small, that quickly led to measurable success – including a dramatically reduced number of suspensions and increased test scores.**


*Addressing Childhood Trauma in DC Schools*



# PAPER TIGERS

**One High School's Unlikely Success Story**

James Redford & Karen Pritzker



The average  
ACE score  
for the teens  
at Lincoln  
High is 4.5

# Staff Embraced Two Key Concepts





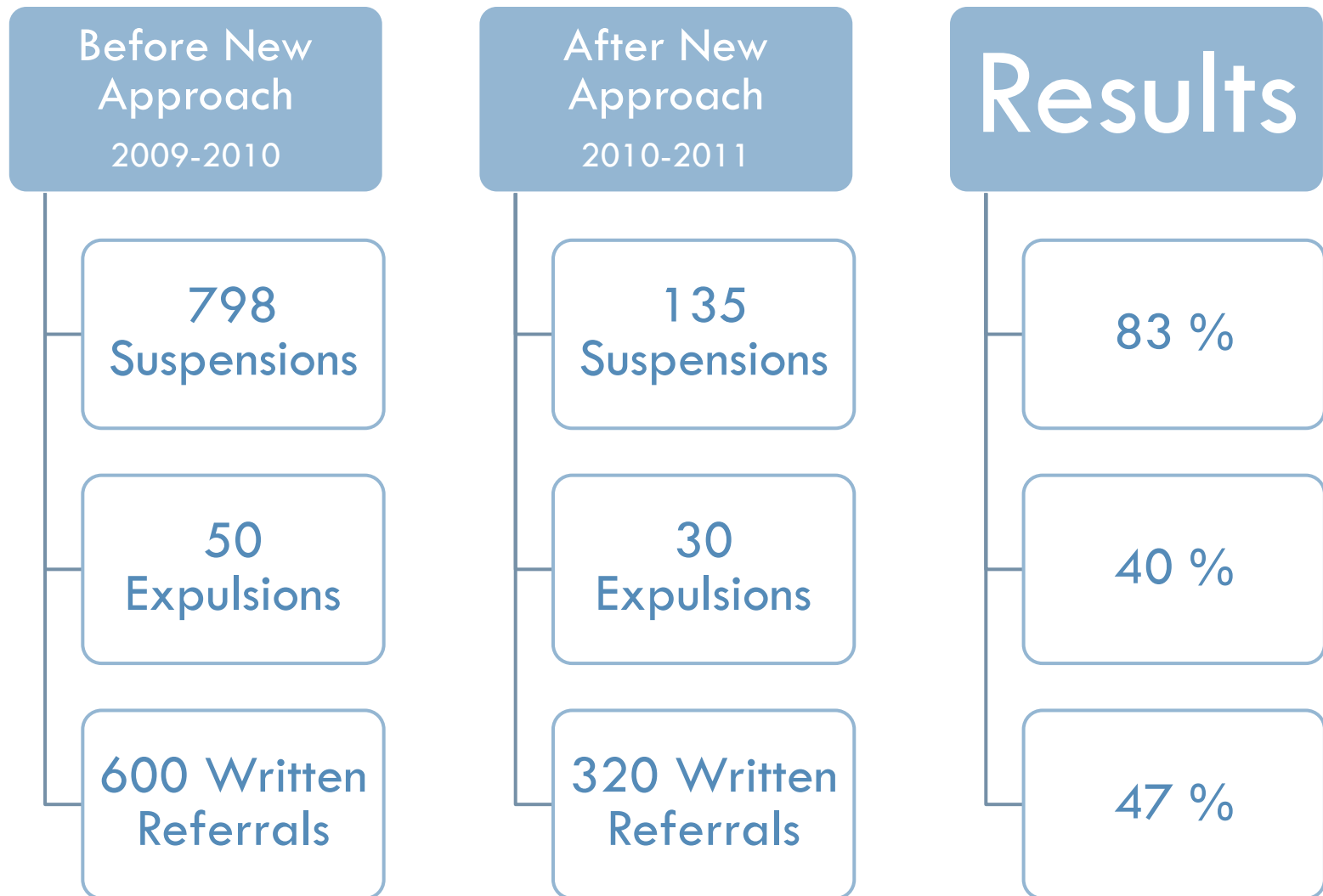
#1

Toxic stress prevents kids  
from learning

#2

Moving from a punitive  
approach to a supportive,  
educational approach  
changes behavior

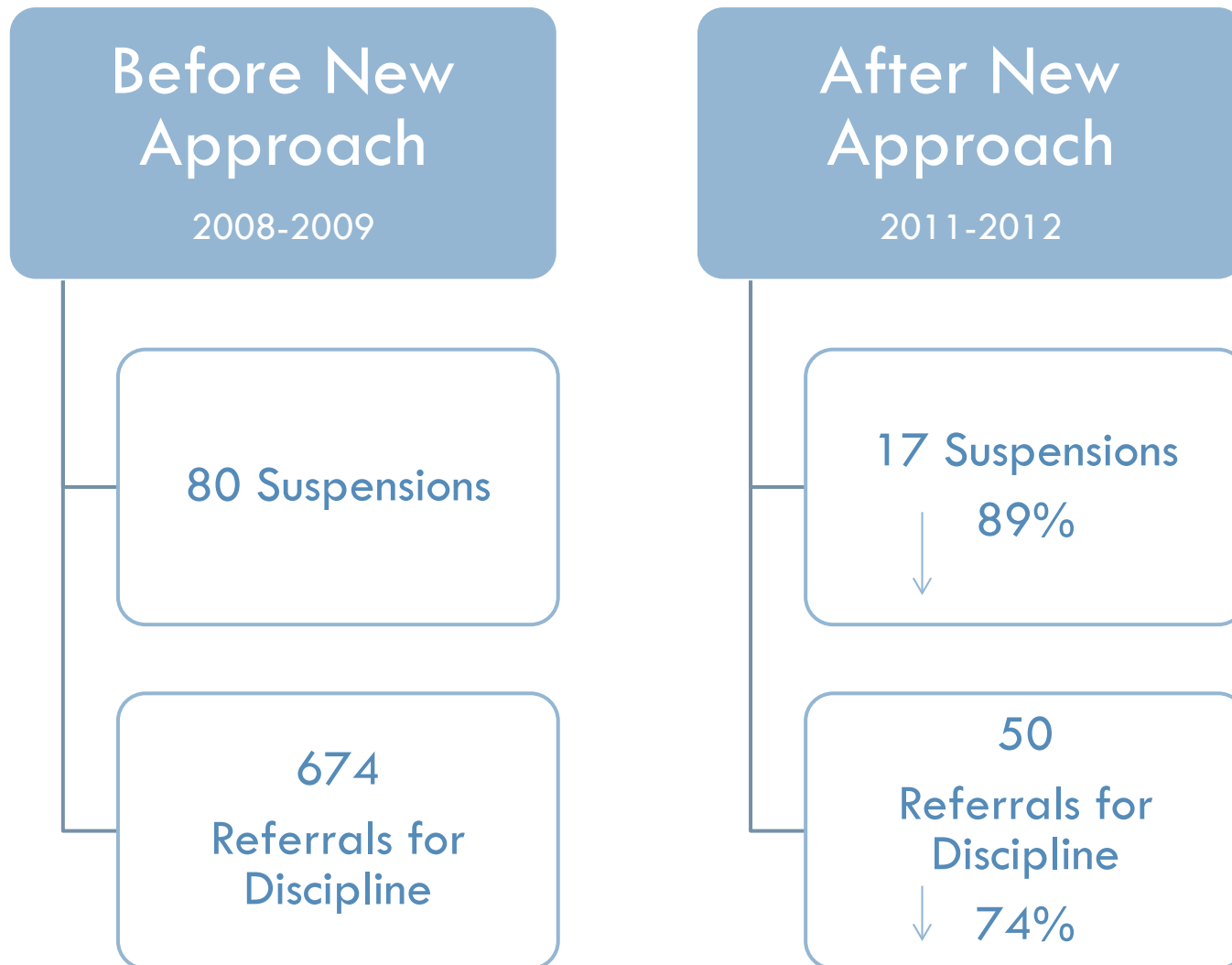
# Lincoln High School



# School Practices that Increased Learning

- Safety – Teachers provided an increased sense of safety to decrease trauma triggers and provided emotionally safe spaces
- Hope, teamwork, compassion & respect were expressed
- More ‘conversations that mattered’ between staff and students took place
- Greater learning occurred and was sustained by students’ own reinforcement of different skills and new normative relations

# El Dorado Elementary School, SFO



# Metropolitan Business Academy

## New Haven, CT

### Results

- Suspensions dropped by two-thirds

### Results

- College enrollment increased from 48% to 70 % in just two years



# New York City



The Partnership for Children reports its schools have seen improvements in safety and attendance, as well as significant increases in reading and math scores.

# Trauma Sensitive Schools

- Respondents across the Board agreed that TSSI was not a conventional initiative; it is not some sort of new pedagogical technique or new curriculum. It is understood as a paradigm shift.
- Understanding the impact of trauma on learning, and applying trauma-informed practices involves a shift in the way educators and educational staff think about students and student behaviour.

# CBE Principal

“This is not just common sense. It is about intentionally recognizing how someone else’s experience (student, parent, educator) shapes their behaviour and emotions in any given context.”

# CBE Principal

“TIP goes hand in hand with the inclusive education policy. If every child every day experiences a trauma-sensitive learning environment, then they are going to meet their academic potential.”

# CBE Assistant Principal

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“I’ve been in the education business a long time and in many different capacities, and this (trauma informed practice) is it for these kids. This is the way to meet their needs so that they can learn.”

# Elementary School Resource Teacher

“This is exactly what we needed here. Our school was described as a chronic stress environment and it felt like everything we were doing was so self-defeating...TIP has helped us to shift our entire mindset and to look at things in a different perspective... By doing this work together as a staff we will increase student achievement and retain staff. It won't be as hard every day for everybody.”

# Introduction to PART 2

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- Trauma Sensitive Schools
- Key Principles of a Trauma Informed Approach
- A Flexible Framework
- Approaches to Guide Practice
- School Approaches
- Lessons Learned

# End Part 1

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