



# Trauma Informed Teaching PD: 9/1 Agenda

1. ACEs/Trauma Opening Survey, Discussion, and Video
2. Teacher Behavior Response Analysis
3. Creating a Trauma Informed Learning Environment
4. Student Choice Modifications
5. Trauma Informed Assessment
6. Trauma Informed Writing
7. Trauma Advocacy for ELLs

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1. Define ACEs/Trauma
2. Opener: Video and Opening Survey
3. ACE Study Results
4. Whole Group Discussion (10 Minutes)

### Learning Targets:

1. ACEs and trauma are likely more common in school aged children than they previously realized
2. Teachers will become more aware of the common role that ACEs and trauma play in their students' daily lives
3. Establish rationale for trauma informed teaching as a way to mitigate the impacts of trauma on ELL's academic progress and success

# 1. Trauma and ACEs Agenda/Learning Targets



# Define ACEs or Trauma:

- ACEs: Adverse Childhood Experiences related to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse, violence against family members, living with household members who are substance abusers, mentally ill or suicidal, or who have been imprisoned
- Trauma: Incidents that are unforgettable in a negative manner and can change your perspective on life or the world
- More traumatic events experienced as a child = more likely that person will have health complications as an adult, contributing to an earlier death (Felitti et al., 1998).



# Opener On your own...

- **DIRECTIONS:** Please watch the video found at this [link](#) about push and pull factors for immigrants.
- When you are done, please complete the Opening Survey and be prepared to discuss your answers to the questions.



# ACEs Study Opening Survey

- **DIRECTIONS:** Please complete the ACEs Opening Survey that was sent to your email. Please complete the Google Form based on your own results to the ACEs Study, the video we watched, and the information provided. When you are done, we will come together as a group to discuss.
- **Questions:**
  1. What did you notice, find interesting or learn while taking the ACEs quiz?
  2. What have you learned that has surprised you so far?
  3. How many ACEs did you have before turning 18?
  4. What role do you think ACEs can play in education for children?
  5. What are some reasons immigrant ELLs may have more ACEs?

## ACEs Study Results and Trauma

- More than 50% of the participants experienced at least one ACE in their childhood
- 25% had experienced two or more ACEs during when they were children
- Aragona et al. (2013) found in a study of 391 first generation immigrants that 60% of the participants reported experiencing at least one traumatic event in their lifetime

## Potential Explanation for Immigrant Trauma

- Pre-migration: push factors not limited to being victims of war, torture or separation, living through poverty, natural disasters, violence, and forced labor
- During Migration: family separations, the death of family members, lacking basic needs for survival during the migration, and feelings of complete lack of safety
- Post Migration: hatred, racism, depression, loss of sense of culture, self, and community, as well as language barriers and potentially living in poverty (MSS Committee on Global and Public Health, 2019).

1. What did you notice, find interesting or learn while taking the ACEs quiz?
2. What have you learned that has surprised you so far?
3. How many ACEs did you have before turning 18?
4. What role do you think ACEs can play in education for children?
5. What are some reasons immigrant ELLs may have more ACEs?



## Discussion Questions (10 Minutes)

1. What is trauma informed teaching?
2. How does trauma manifest in class?
3. Teacher Behavior Response Analysis

#### Learning Targets:

1. About behaviors that can be anticipated from students who have experienced ACEs or trauma in their lifetime
2. Potential negative consequences of not addressing traumatic behaviors in a manner that is trauma informed
3. Address problematic behaviors with the goal of minimizing classroom problems, building a relationship with the student, and supporting their social-emotional, and academic progress

## 2. Trauma Manifestations in Class



# Trauma Informed Teaching

- System of considering and understanding the impact trauma has on an individual and using that knowledge to help support them both socially and academically.
- Aware of trauma's severe negative impacts on learner attention span, verbal learning, and short and long term memory processing (Wilson, 2020).
- Having knowledge about trauma and its impacts better allows us to teach students who are traumatized through trauma informed teaching approaches (Ridley et al., 2019).
- Student challenges should be approached in a positive manner where the learner is supported and encouraged and does not feel criticized or discouraged (Ridley et al., 2019).
- Allows the teacher to ensure the student has what they need the next time so that they can be successful in the future (Kostouros et al., 2022).

# Trauma Manifestations in Class

## Behavioral Issues:

- Impacts a student's behaviors and behavioral patterns, their level of academic, social, and personal engagement, as well as their overall academic achievement (Kostouros et al., 2022).
- May not respond well to new school rules and routines (Mendenhall et al., 2016).
- Concentration inability, difficulties with learning new information, behaviors that go against socially acceptable or school appropriate actions, and mood swings (Wilbur, 2016).



# Trauma Manifestations in Class



## Concentration and Memory Issues

- Extremely limited concentration spans and memory loss in both the long and short term (Finn, 2010).
- Problems with maintaining focus, learning verbally, and memory challenges (Wilson, 2020).
- Language acquisition is directly impacted by short and long term memory (Finn, 2010).
- Why do you believe this to be significant learning?

# Teacher Behavior Response Analysis

- **DIRECTIONS:** You will be provided flashcards with problematic classroom behaviors on each card that are demonstrated by students who have experienced traumatic events. On the provided handout, participants will write:
  1. The behavior problem
  2. How they would address the behavior issue
  3. The intended result of addressing the behavior in the manner in which they chose
  4. Anticipated student reactions to the teacher's response



Teacher Behavior Analysis #1:  
Cheating on a test

Teacher Behavior Analysis #2: A student with memory loss has to memorize fifty vocabulary words





Teacher Behavior Analysis #3: Student keeps looking out the window when they are supposed to be taking class notes

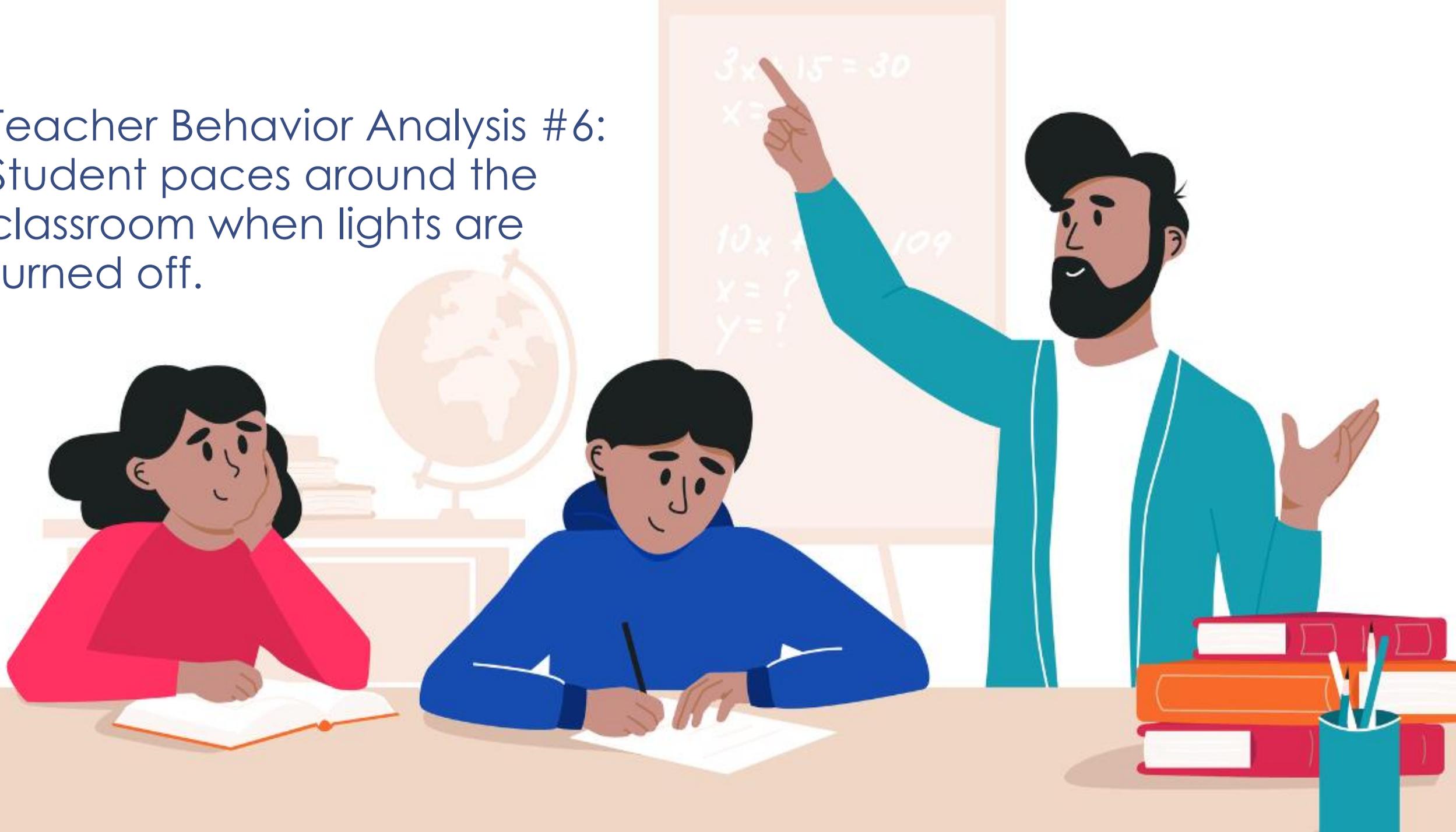
# Teacher Behavior Analysis #4: Student keeps calling out of turn





Teacher Behavior Analysis #5: Student frequently gets up and leaves classroom without asking permission.

Teacher Behavior Analysis #6:  
Student paces around the  
classroom when lights are  
turned off.



1. Why is it important?
2. Review Classroom Actions for teachers

## Learning Targets

1. The importance of a trauma informed classroom
2. Some actions seem appropriate in any classroom, but actually could be very harmful in a trauma informed environment

# 3. Creating a Trauma Informed Classroom Environment



# The Importance of Creating a Safe and Comfortable Learning Environment

- A safe and comfortable learning environment is central to trauma informed teaching (Khatri, 2016)
- Teachers often take actions in class that seem neutral but can actually be very harmful towards the wellbeing of a traumatized ELL
- ELLs who have experienced trauma need to feel comfortable and supported when learning and using English
- It encourages ELLs to take risks when learning English which continues to support language expression and acquisition (Hanus, 2016)
- A safe learning environment increases students comfort, allowing them to better learn because their behaviors and memory are not as negatively impacted. When the ELL feels grounded and safe, they will feel more comfortable to ask questions in class in order to support their own learning.



# Creating a Trauma Informed Classroom Environment

- **DIRECTIONS:** You will be shown pictures or text of normal classroom actions that are taken by teachers. For each one displayed, raise your right hand if you feel that the action is a safe one to take in a classroom that has students who have experienced trauma. You will then be called upon to explain and rationalize why the action is reasonable in a trauma informed classroom. If you deem the action as unsafe for students with ACEs or trauma, please raise your left hand and be prepared to explain why you feel the action may not be advisable in a trauma informed classroom.



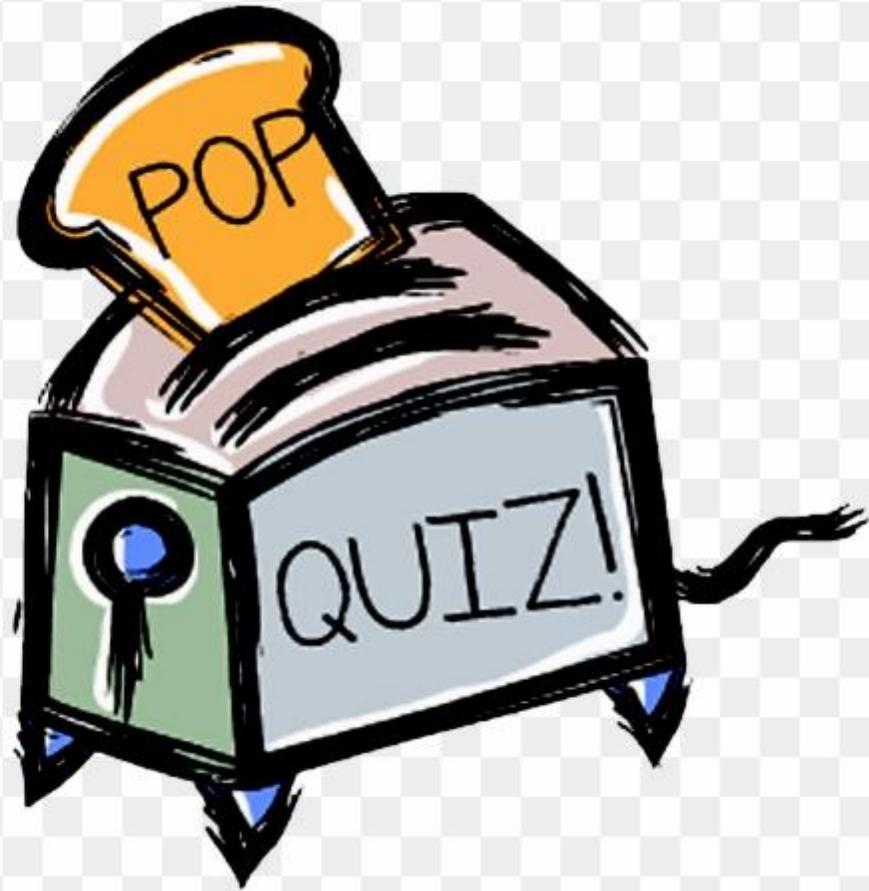
# Class Schedule: Good Practice

## Rationale:

- Surprise classroom activities, especially those with a grade attached can lead to trauma responses (Khatri, 2016)
- posting a daily agenda on the board to review before class, it establishes routine and also lets students know if a major change is coming to the typical classroom structure (Cole et al., 2005).

## Suggestions/Strategies:

- Put the daily classroom agenda in the same place every day
- Consider both daily and weekly agendas
- Utilize agendas for academic content, language demands, and activities to be completed
- Establish and follow a classroom routine that students can expect on a day to day basis
- Follow the daily agenda and classroom routine as often as possible



# Pop Quiz: Bad Practice

## Rationale:

- Surprise classroom activities, especially those with a grade attached can lead to trauma responses (Khatri, 2016)



## Suggestions/Strategies:

- Announce Quizzes in advance with plenty of time for students to prepare
- Remind students about the assessment on a daily basis
- Avoid surprise classroom activities in any scenario if possible
- If a pop quiz must be given, identify that for students on the daily agenda

Students pick where they sit on a  
weekly basis

# Flexible Seating: Good Practice

## Rationale:

- Creating a learning environment that is safe and comfortable for ELLs who have experienced trauma, as well as the knowledge of how to do so is a central principal of trauma informed teaching (Kostouros et al., 2022)
- ELLs who were forced to leave their country may have experienced spaces that are very tight and allow little movement (*Torture and Second Language Acquisition*, 1995).
- Small, tight, or unorganized classrooms, or being forced to stay in the same place for extended periods of time may serve as stressors or triggers of trauma for students (Khatri, 2016)
- Organize classroom furniture like chairs desks, couches, and others so they can be easily moved to other locations of the classroom without creating major disruption (Khatri, 2016)

## Suggestions/Strategies:

- Announce Quizzes in advance with plenty of time for students to prepare
- Remind students about the assessment on a daily basis
- Avoid surprise classroom activities in any scenario if possible
- If a pop quiz must be given, identify that for students on the daily agenda



# Class Movie: Bad Practice

## Rationale:

- Surprise classroom activities, especially those with a grade attached can lead to trauma responses (Khatri, 2016)
- ELLs who were forced to leave their country may have experienced imprisonment, in spaces that are void of light (*Torture and Second Language Acquisition*, 1995)
- Experiencing dark classrooms may serve as stressors or triggers of trauma for students (Khatri, 2016)
- Potential trauma triggers include school areas that are not lit, as well as bright lights or loud noises (BCME, 2022)

## Suggestions/Strategies:

- Still watch movies in class, but make students aware that will be happening
- Preview the movie for students so they know what to expect and if any content will be disturbing
- Students who are not comfortable watching the film or experience a trauma response during it can be given a pass to leave
- Refrain from turning the lights off during the film and carefully make a film choice based on what is known about students in class



# Fire Drill



# Unannounced Emergency Drills: Bad Practice

## Rationale:

- Unannounced school emergency drills and bright lights or loud noises that should also be avoided as much as possible (BCME, 2022)
- Lack of light, tight spaces, inability to move around, and general discomfort may all be trauma responses for a traumatized student during a school emergency drill

## Suggestions/Strategies:

- Announce to students that they will be having an emergency drill
- Frequently remind students of protocols to follow in emergency drills
- Bring ear muffs, headphones, or ear plugs for students to use

1. Benefits of Offering Student Choice
2. Rationale for Student Choice
3. The 3 Aspects of Student Choice
4. Classroom Choice Modification Activity

### Learning Targets:

1. Knowledge about the benefits of offering student choice
2. Various dimensions of education that offer student choice
3. Make actual modifications to seating charts, class assignments, and class assessments

# 4. Utilizing Classroom Choice



# Benefits of offering student choice

- Increases student engagement and better meets immediate student needs (Lee & Hannafin, 2016; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017)
- Students who perceived that teachers gave students more independence and choice described greater levels of intrinsic motivation for academic work (Patall et al., 2012)
- Students also had increased levels of enjoyment and interest in the academic work, and were thus more likely to complete it
- Students scored higher on unit tests when being given choices between two homework assignments of the same difficulty. (Patall et al., 2012)
- Hanewicz et al., (2017), E. Lee & Hannafin, (2016) agree that giving student choice makes them more responsible for their own learning
- ELLs being responsible for their own learning though student choice can lead to reduced trauma responses and an increase in intrinsic motivation (Hanewicz et al., 2017; Lee & Hannafin, 2016; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017).

# Rationale for Offering Student Choice

- The traditional schooling model takes interest, motivation, and enjoyment out of the learning process
- Students practice with content, eventually learning it, before being expected to demonstrate mastery of content on an assessment. For the student, this reinforces the importance and pressure of the assessment
- When the ELL takes the assessment they feel that pressure which causes anxiety and potential trauma responses, making it nearly impossible for the student to remember or demonstrate what they learned (Hanewicz et al., 2017; Haynes & Macleod-Johnstone, 2017)
- Reduced trauma responses and an increased sense of personal motivation to succeed academically and with language allows the student to better learn despite the traumatic experiences they have lived through

# The three aspects of student choice

- Seating arrangement: The seat they choose may make them feel more comfortable and safe in the classroom which is going to promote academic success (Hitchcock et al., 2021)
- Homework/classwork: ELLs should have choices about the type of assignment they complete and the way in which it is completed, (Hanewicz et al., 2017; Lee & Hannafin, 2016)
- Assessment: Allow students to identify what grade they would like to achieve and then have the teacher show students the options for how they can achieve the desired grade through the work the student completes. In this cafeteria model, ELLs can choose what “meals” or assignments they desire to complete from the cafeteria. Then they work toward their desired grade based on the guidelines and expectations set by the teacher (Hanewicz et al., 2017)

# Classroom Choice Modification Activity

- **DIRECTIONS:** Bring a copy of your class seating chart, a classwork assignment, and a unit assessment. Please brainstorm modifications for each in a manner that offers student choice. For the class seating chart, please brainstorm and take notes on a creative way to offer students a choice on where they sit in class.
- Next, brainstorm and take notes on a way to modify one aspect of a classwork or homework assignment so that it offers more student choice, allowing students multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge of the target content.
- Lastly in the activity, participants will brainstorm and take notes about concepts for modifying student assessment in a variety of manners, allowing for students to demonstrate the desired content in the manner that works best for them. Be prepared to share before moving on.



1. Why Trauma Informed Assessment?
2. Trauma Informed Feedback
3. Assessment as Windows Activity

### Learning Targets:

1. Expose participants to the assessment as windows not doors philosophy
2. Provide knowledge about strategies to form assessment in that way

# 5. Trauma Informed Assessment



## Standard Assessment Consequences:

- ELLs feel pressure, stress, and anxiety for the assessment which causes anxiety and potential trauma responses. This makes it nearly impossible for the student to remember or demonstrate what they learned on the assessment (Hanewicz et al., 2017; Haynes & Macleod-Johnstone, 2017)
- RESULT: Student does not maximize their full academic potential which can lead to behavioral issues, increased academic challenges, lack of interest, motivation, and enjoyment out of the learning process, possibly inhibiting language development

## Trauma Informed Assessment Benefits:

- Use assessment to demonstrate what a student can do, rather than what they cannot
- Rather than assessment being doors to ELLs, teachers can celebrate with students all that they achieved and have learned since initiating the new learning (Rousseau, 2018)
- Allows students to go over their learning and value and appreciate the learning and progress they made which supports future learning (Hitchcock et al., 2021).

# Trauma Informed Feedback

- For a struggling ELL who gets much of the assessment wrong, going over everything they got wrong is going to overwhelm the student and make them feel incapable
- These feelings can lead to trauma responses, mental and emotional exhaustion, which lowers the ELLs ability to take in, process, and properly use the given feedback (Hitchcock et al., 2021)
- Faez and Karas (2020) surveyed 42 pre-service teachers observing the best practices in TESOL. 36 teachers noted their host teachers providing appropriate and prompt feedback, which was the second most commonly identified strategy
- Due to the importance and the effect feedback and grading can have on an ELL, careful care and consideration should be given to each individual student's grade and feedback (Hitchcock et al., 2021)
- Teachers may need to place more value on student relationships when grading and giving feedback
- Allow for flexible due dates in order to prioritize relationships (Karakaya, 2020)
- Provide students the opportunity to make corrections and turn their work in again in order to receive a new grade (Robinson et al., 2020)

# Assessment as Windows Activity

- **DIRECTIONS:** Please watch the TED Talk from Nikki Adeli called [“What Standardized Tests Don’t Measure”](#). After watching the TED Talk, be prepared to discuss the philosophy of utilizing assessment as windows, rather than doors.
- The other portion of the discussion will be about ways in which an assessment can be reframed so that it reflects the progress students are making, rather than reflecting what students do not know. Please think of an assessment you have already developed and brainstorm ways that the assessment can be reframed in the assessment as windows manner.

1. Trauma Informed Writing Activity
2. Video and Discuss
3. Importance of Trauma Informed Writing
4. Giving Feedback for Trauma Informed Writing

### Learning Targets:

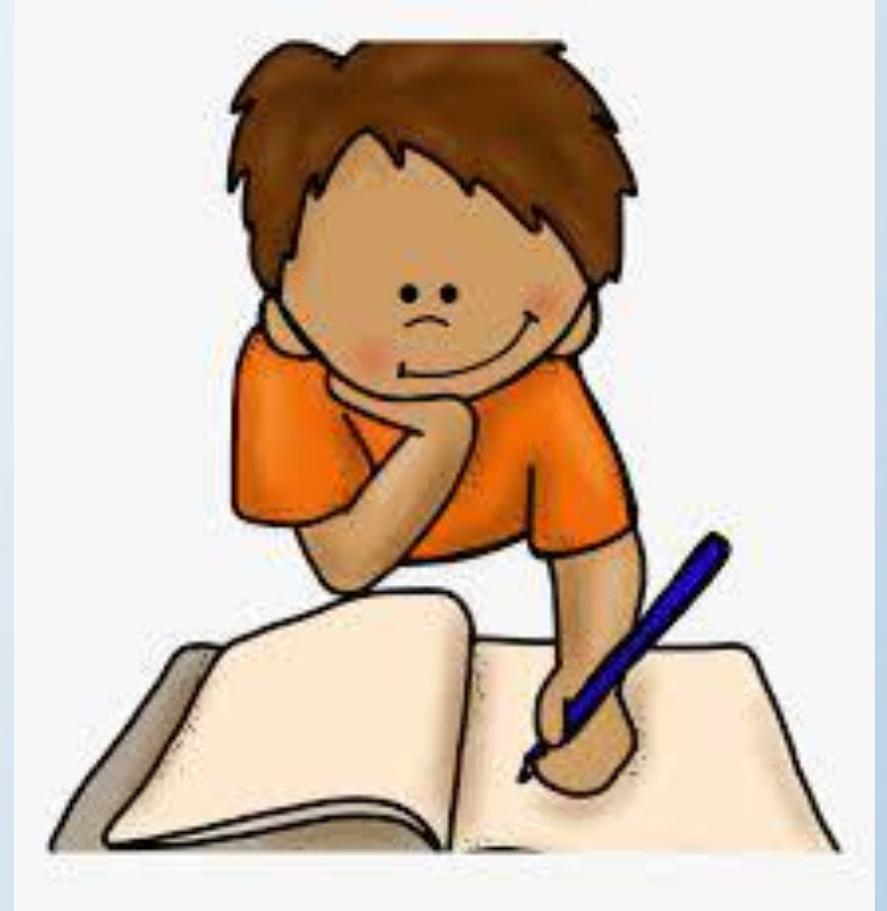
1. Expose teachers to the benefits of sustained expressive writing
2. How writing can be used by ELLs to heal from ACEs and trauma

# 6. Trauma Informed Writing



# Trauma Informed Writing Activity

- **DIRECTIONS:** Take five minutes to free write about your biggest stressors, anxieties, or challenges you are facing in your life, personally or professionally. Once the five minutes are up, be prepared to discuss how the writing felt.



# Trauma Informed Discussion

- **DIRECTIONS:** Please watch the video about expressive writing on your own [here](#). After the video, please be prepared to discuss how completing the expressive writing made you feel.



# Importance of Trauma Informed Writing

- When students feel safe in the classroom and a supportive, comfortable, and trusting relationship with their teacher, students may disclose an important life event to their teacher they have not told anyone else
- Pennebaker (1997) demonstrated positive physical and psychological health benefits when engaging in sustained writing about traumatic experiences
- 106 students were assigned to either write about a negative emotional moment or a neutral moment in their lives. Students who wrote about the negative emotional moment reported that their negative mood decreased more than the group who was writing about a neutral life experience (Soliday et al., 2004)
- In a different study, participants were directed to either write about a traumatic event emotionally or factually for three consecutive days for five weeks. After the five weeks trauma symptoms decreased more in the participants who wrote about the traumatic event through an emotional lens (Hirai et al., 2012)

# What to do with the writing?

- Like any classwork assignment, there is not only value in completing the assignment but also in the feedback that comes with it
- Mental health benefits that come with writing about trauma, but only in cases in which there is follow up to the writing and the student is able to develop new learnings or discoveries about the traumatic event (Littrell, 2009)
- Writing is important but more important is the necessity of talking and thinking about the writing to experience new learnings, thoughts, and emotions surrounding the traumatic experience (Murray, 2002)
- Murray claims people who write about traumatic events without attempting to deal with meaning or emotions experience poorer health than those who are able to form new ideas and conclusions about their trauma

1. Importance of Advocacy
2. Trauma Advocacy Activity

### Learning Targets:

1. Resources that are available to them to support ELLs
2. How they can use the available resources to them and the community
3. How to best advocate and support ELLs who may be struggling due to ACEs or trauma

# 7. Advocacy for Traumatized ELLs



# Importance of Advocacy for Traumatized ELLs

- ELLs who have experienced trauma need trusted teachers to serve as advocates to inform other professionals about their unique background and strategies to effectively work with the student
- More than 50% of students with parents who are immigrants live in low-income housing. When students are living in an area that is low income, it is likely the school is low income (Louie, 2016)
- ELLs are less likely to obtain information that is critical to their success than those of their native speaking peers (McCall-Perez, 2000)
- Because often mental health appointments are paid for out of pocket, proper mental health care services are only available to higher income families (Rapfogel, 2022)



# Trauma Advocacy Activity

- **DIRECTIONS:** Analyze the school scenario, and then describe how you would utilize each potential support staff in the building, as well as outside resources that may be able to provide support to ELLs who are struggling in school due to ACEs and trauma.

# Advocacy Scenario # 1:

- Your new student who is an ELL has been in the class for two weeks. Despite the school routine and continually going over the expectation for behaviors and class rules, the student still stands up and paces around the room when you are trying to teach. When you pose questions to the class, the student shouts things out that are not related to the topic of learning or question.



# The Science Teacher

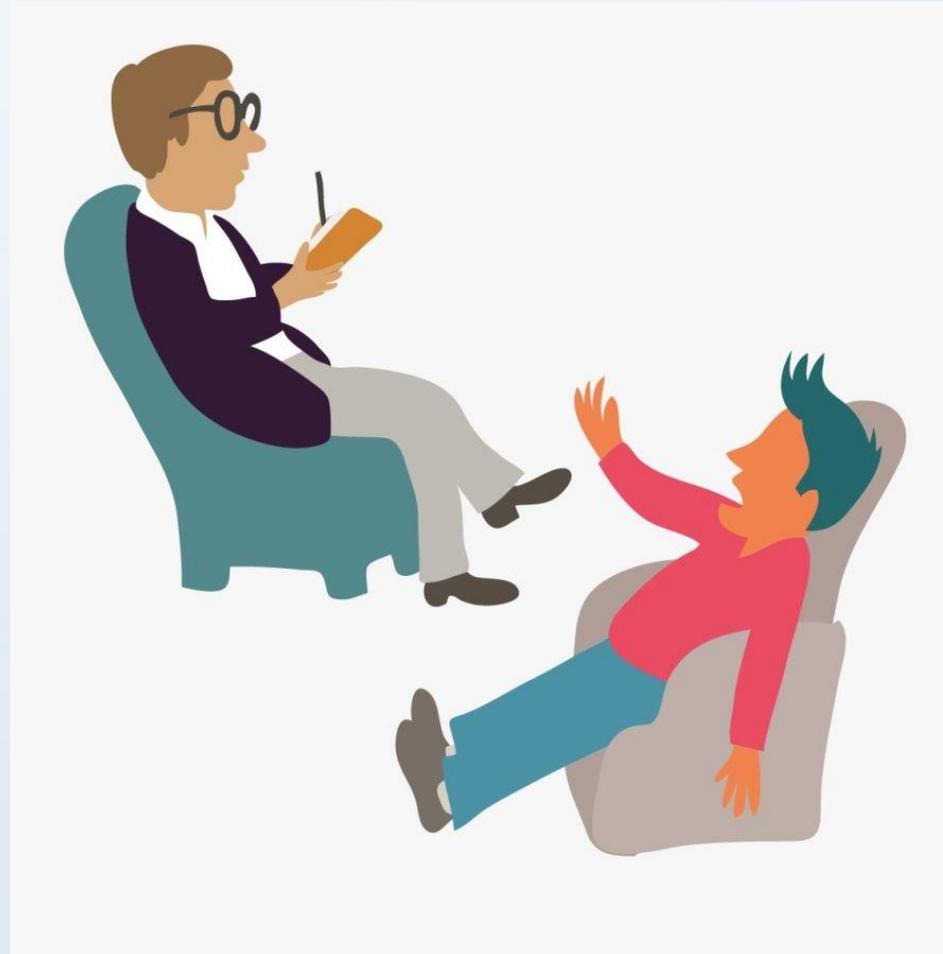


# The Principal



# The Family

# The School Psychologist



# Closing Activity Directions:

- Please complete the closing survey sent to your email in which you respond to the following questions:
  1. What questions do you have for me?
  2. What concerns do you have with implementing trauma informed teaching practices in your own classroom?
  3. How do you feel about the practicality of trauma informed teaching?
  4. If you were to implement these practices into your own, what would you first start with?
  5. What would you anticipate being the easiest thing to transition to in a trauma informed teaching environment? What do you feel would be the most challenging thing?
  6. What were two of your most important takeaways about trauma informed teaching?
  7. What two trauma informed teaching strategies would you be most willing to implement into your own practice?

# References

- Provided on a handout for you to take with you!