**Trauma Informed Care Strategies**

* **Reframe students’ behaviors as *survival strategies* instead of *willful disobedience*.**
* Recognize risk factors (prenatal stress, birth trauma, early hospitalization, abuse, neglect, and trauma) and their contribution to students’ behaviors. Use this information to respond to the underlying *need* of the behavior instead of the behavior itself.
* **Nurture relationships with students and between students.**
* Make eye contact using soft eyes when speaking with students or making a request.
* Encourage healthy positive touch into the routine, such as handshakes, high fives, and fist bumps.
* Take an interest in students’ lives. For example:
* Ask questions.
  + Listen.
  + Recognize emotional states; e.g., when a student looks like they are upset or angry.
  + Have a check-in question at the beginning of each class.
* **Create an environment where students feel safe.**
* Environment should be organized and not overwhelming in terms of lighting, colors, materials.
* Establish/practice routines for classroom procedures; what to do when entering the classroom, how to ask a question.
* Post a classroom schedule and give warnings if it is going to change.
* During daily transitions, provide warnings leading up to the transition.
* *Give undivided attention.* Make eye contact and extend a handshake when students enter the room.
* Offer *choices*, such as allowing students to complete assignments in the order they choose.
* Make *compromises*, such as extending a deadline or allowing more time.
* Practice behavioral *re-dos*, such as having a student “try it again” if they use disrespectful words.
* **Address students’ physiological needs.**
* Allow water bottles and snacks in the classroom.
* Encourage physical movement, such as allowing students to get up and walk around or to stand up while they work.
* **Understand students’ sensory needs and provide tools to accommodate for these needs, such as:**
* Noise-cancelling headphones/soft or natural lighting
* A quiet place to work
* Weighted items (lap pad, blanket, vest, etc.)
* Fidgets (squeeze balls, Velcro under the desk, etc.)
* Bubble gum
* **Practice self-regulation skills.**
* After a cognitively challenging task, practice deep breathing or other self-regulation techniques.
* **Help students identify their level of alertness.**
* Be proactive. Teach skills and behaviors before they are needed or required.
* Practice calming/self-regulation techniques *before* exciting or stimulating activities.
* Help students identify their feelings by using a feeling check during class. “If you are feeling *(insert feeling)* give me a thumbs-up; if not, give me a thumbs-down. If you aren’t sure, you can turn your thumb sideways.”
* Practice labeling emotions and make plans for dealing with them; e.g., have student list three things she can do when she feels *sad/mad/scared/etc.* Practice the plans.
* **Have fun!**
* Students’ brains are primed for learning when they are engaged in a joyful activity.
* Take dance, motor/sensory breaks.