

# Trauma Informed Schooling

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Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly half of all children in the United States had experienced a traumatic event, also known as an Adverse Childhood Event (ACE). ACEs describe various forms of traumatic experiences such as abuse, homelessness, poverty, and household dysfunction. Although the pandemic is not yet formally defined as an ACE, several consequences of the pandemic, illness, family instability, and learning disruptions are. These consequences magnified a cluster of inequity, disproportionately targeting Black and Brown families. This can be attributed to discriminatory practices that continue to isolate Black, Brown, and low income communities from equity and justice. The lasting implications of the pandemic on children should not be underestimated.

Studies help us understand that trauma wreaks havoc on a young brain by diminishing concentration, memory, decision making skills, and mental health. Children with trauma are trapped in a fight or flight state, which influences how they form relationships, build social and emotional skills, and learn. This creates a cycle of trauma that takes hold in communities, particularly Black and Brown ones. Black children are reported to have more ACE's than any other racial group after racism is added as a root cause of trauma. The pervasiveness of ACEs in the United States indicates most educators will encounter students with trauma in their classrooms. Trauma-informed practices contextualizes student behavior, and useful tools in creating the safe and high quality learning environment that every child deserves. Schools are not inherently safe spaces, but educators can transform them in places where all students can thrive.

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Trauma informed schooling is a route to ensuring all students have access to spaces that nurture their well-being and development. We can advocate for trauma informed schooling in several ways:

- Pressure school districts to provide funding to increase the number of mental health counselors in schools.
- Pressure the Department of Education to adopt culturally-responsive sustaining education as a broad policy in schools through legislation like the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
- Encourage schools to adopt positive discipline and restorative practices.
- Reimplementation of civil rights guidance from the Department of Education.

Ready to demand better for and with students? Visit [www.letachild.org](http://www.letachild.org) and get involved.

