



Becoming a Trauma-Sensitive School

A Video Discussion Guide

Introduction

We are thrilled to share with you TLPI's new video, *Becoming a Trauma-Sensitive School*. The video highlights Salem Academy Charter School and its journey to create a trauma-sensitive, safe and supportive school. The 12-minute overview is for educators and others who want to learn more about the process and how to engage in this critical work.

This Video Discussion Guide will help you generate and lead thought-provoking conversations about the creation of trauma-sensitive schools at the middle/high school level. Below, you will find the definition and core attributes of a trauma sensitive school, as well as several questions that are sure to spark an energizing and engaging discussion around trauma, its impact on learning, and the importance of creating trauma-sensitive schools.

Please visit www.traumasensitiveschools.org for additional information, to join our learning community, and to download TLPI's publications, *Helping Traumatized Children Learn, Volumes 1 and 2*

What is a Trauma-Sensitive School?

A trauma-sensitive school is one in which all students feel **safe, welcomed, supported** and **empowered** to participate fully in all the school has to offer. Addressing trauma's impact on learning, including trauma from racism and other structural inequities, on a school-wide basis is at the center of its educational mission. It is a place where an ongoing inquiry-based process allows for the necessary teamwork, coordination, creativity and sharing of responsibility for all students, and where continuous learning is for educators as well as students.

Core Attributes of a Trauma-Sensitive School

- School leadership and staff **share an understanding of trauma's impact on learning** and the need for a **whole-school approach**.
- The school **supports all students to feel safe** physically, socially, emotionally and academically.
- The school **addresses students' needs in holistic ways**, including their relationships, self-regulation, academic competence, and physical and emotional well-being.
- The school **explicitly connects students to the school community** and provides multiple opportunities to practice skills.
- The school **embraces teamwork** and staff share responsibility for all students
- Leadership and staff **anticipate and adapt** to the ever-changing needs of students



Becoming a Trauma-Sensitive School

A Video Discussion Guide

Highlighted in the video are the ways in which this school embraces parent engagement and student voice to help guide their efforts to create a vibrant learning community where all staff work together to create a school that embodies the values of safety, trusting relationships, connection, equity, belonging, and adaptability.

We invite you to use the questions below to guide your conversation:

1. What are your initial thoughts after watching the video?
2. What is your understanding of trauma-sensitive schools?
3. For schools to embody trauma-sensitivity, a deep understanding of the prevalence and impact of trauma on learning, relationships and behavior must be shared by the whole faculty/staff. How has your school approached creating this shared understanding? What else could your school do?
4. Trauma-sensitivity requires a whole school effort. How is this reflected in this video? What did you notice about the scenes in the hallways, schoolyard, and the cafeteria?
5. What whole school efforts are already in place at your school? Did you see anything else in the video that struck you as possibly effective for your school?
6. How is student connection reflected in the video?
7. A core attribute of a trauma-sensitive school is that the school **supports all students to feel safe** physically, socially, emotionally and academically. How is safety reflected in the video?
8. How do you see educators addressing student issues/needs holistically?
9. A trauma-sensitive school is a school that is characterized by teamwork, coordination, creativity and a sharing of responsibility for all students. How is this reflected in the video? How does your school currently embody these characteristics?
10. The students and administrators in the video speak about the ways in which this school has incorporated student voice into their work to create a trauma-sensitive school. What might this look like in your school?
11. What insights or new knowledge did you gain from this video? How might you use this knowledge in your own work? How might your school use this knowledge?