TIPPS
Trauma-Informed Programs & Practices for Schools

Our 10 Core Pillars
Our model of a trauma-informed school is based upon 10 core pillars:

1 | Ensure Safe Communities

Safe and nurturing environments establish a secure base for children. When students feel safe and cared for at school, they perform better on academic tasks and are less likely to become frustrated or angry when they encounter challenges.

2 | Increase Awareness of Trauma

Understanding the signs and symptoms of trauma in students is essential to help them heal and become resilient to the adversities they encounter. Awareness leads to insights that deepen empathy and compassion.

3 | Increase Awareness of Biases

Implicit bias and stereotypes can affect student achievement and undermine efforts to strengthen relationships and build community. For students to feel safe and secure, school professionals must learn about and counteract implicit biases, particularly about student performance and conduct.
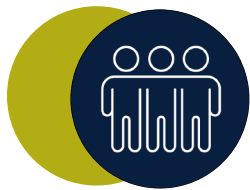
4 | Build Community

Strong communities rest on foundations of safety, trust, compassion, and respect for differences. To build community, school professionals must actively and consistently work to strengthen relationships, support and empower students, and be more responsive to the needs of all students.

5 | Develop Positive Relationships

In trauma-informed schools, students and adults feel appreciated and valued for who they are and what they bring to the school community. To model positive relationships, school professionals must understand how their own actions affect others and avoid practices that undermine students' confidence.

6 | Reduce Punitive Discipline

The use of punitive discipline—such as calling students out—can undermine students' self-confidence and motivation to learn. Measures such as suspension can worsen behavior and increase the likelihood of even more problematic outcomes for some students. Skillful de-escalation of conflict and use of restorative practices are alternatives to punitive discipline that also help students strengthen self-regulation and conflict resolution skills.

7 | Communicate & Reinforce Expectations

Setting high yet achievable goals for students motivates performance and builds self-efficacy. Students are more likely to perform well when they are expected to do well and made to feel like their goals are within reach. If rules and expectations are unclear or poorly and inconsistently enforced, teaching and learning will suffer.

8 | Avoid Deficit Thinking

Students can internalize deficit language, which undermines their self-confidence and motivation to learn. Communicating clear, positive, affirming messages that reflect confidence in students' abilities and a desire to see them succeed are fundamental to building and maintaining strong relationships and healthy school communities.

9 | Incorporate Social-Emotional Skills

Trauma-informed schools incorporate teaching about social–emotional skills and positive coping to promote resilience. These include critical thinking and problem-solving skills. School professionals must be competent at modeling these skills for their students.

10 | Create Supports

Although school- or system-wide practices that support all students should be the foundation of trauma-informed schools, additional interventions should be available to students who need more support. The effective use of selective interventions for students requires schools to develop protocols for assessing and quickly acting on student issues and concerns. Partnering with community agencies to provide wraparound services can bring needed expertise into schools.

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
TRAUMA-INFORMED PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES FOR SCHOOLS
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN