

Trauma-Informed Schools: What, Why, and How

Foundational Webinar

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THRIVE

CENTER

Staci Holderman

Staci is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counseling Supervisor who has been an advocate for students and families across the state of KY for the past 25+ years. She currently serves as the Director of Mental Health for Nelson County Schools, where she has been instrumental in laying the foundation for the THRIVE Center.



Why are trauma-informed schools important to you and your work?



Our Goals:

1. Reflect on and share our why's
2. Develop our understanding of trauma and its impact
3. Define trauma-informed schools
4. Delve into our roles supporting trauma-informed schools

What is trauma?

“Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced or witnessed by an individual that amount to an overwhelming or life-changing effect on the individual’s well-being.”

Trauma affects people in numerous and individualized ways, such as health complications, distrust of people, institutions, and systems, and an altered view of the world, beliefs, and spirituality.”

-SAMHSA, 2014

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Other Key Definitions


Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are specific experiences occurring during childhood, such as abuse or neglect.

Toxic Stress occurs when an individual “experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity” without adequate support.

Secondary Traumatic Stress is the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another.


Historical Trauma is multigenerational trauma experienced by a specific cultural, racial, or ethnic group.

Racial Trauma refers to the results of experiences of racial discrimination, harassment, violence, and microaggressions.



How does trauma impact our children and youth?



Approximately 50-60% of children and youth in the US will have experienced some type of traumatic experience by the time they reach adulthood.



How does trauma impact our children and youth?


These traumatic events include:

- Psychological, physical, or sexual abuse
- Domestic, community, or school violence
- Neglect
- Sudden or violent loss of a loved one
- Refugee or war experiences
- Military family related stressors
- Physical or sexual assault
- Serious accidents or life-threatening illness



How does trauma impact our children and youth?

Students who have experienced trauma may have:

- Physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, poor appetite, and decline in self-care
 - Intense feelings of fear, anxiety, and concern for safety
 - Difficulty identifying how they are feeling
 - Angry or aggressive outbursts
 - Risk-taking behaviors
 - Trouble trusting adults and peers, reading social cues, and building relationships
 - Difficulty paying attention and learning
 - Time out of the classroom and school absences
 - Suspensions or expulsions
 - Higher referral rates to special education
 - Poor test scores and risk of failing grades
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How does trauma impact us and our staff?

40-75% of school staff and teachers suffer from secondary traumatic stress.

70% of social workers reported symptoms of secondary traumatic stress.


94% of community violence interventionists reported symptoms of secondary traumatic stress.



How does trauma impact us and our staff?

Staff who have experienced trauma (including secondary traumatic stress) may have:

- Increased anxiety, depression
- Reduced energy and focus
- Trouble regulating emotions
- Trouble sleeping
- Feelings of hopelessness, isolation
- Strained personal relationships
- Diminished capacity to maintain positive staff-student and staff-caregiver relationships
- Poor attendance or work performance



How does trauma impact our schools?

High rates of trauma among students and staff can have significant negative effects on school climate, culture, and conditions for learning:

- Increased violence, aggression, and bullying
- Decreased trust, respect, and collaboration
- Reduced sense of safety, belonging, and community
- Lowered academic expectations, motivation, and performance
- Higher rates of absenteeism, dropout, and suspension
- Diminished self-efficacy, resilience, and coping skills
- Increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress



Healing is a collective journey. It takes a village to create a community that supports our best selves and helps us to heal.”

— Shawna Murray-Browne

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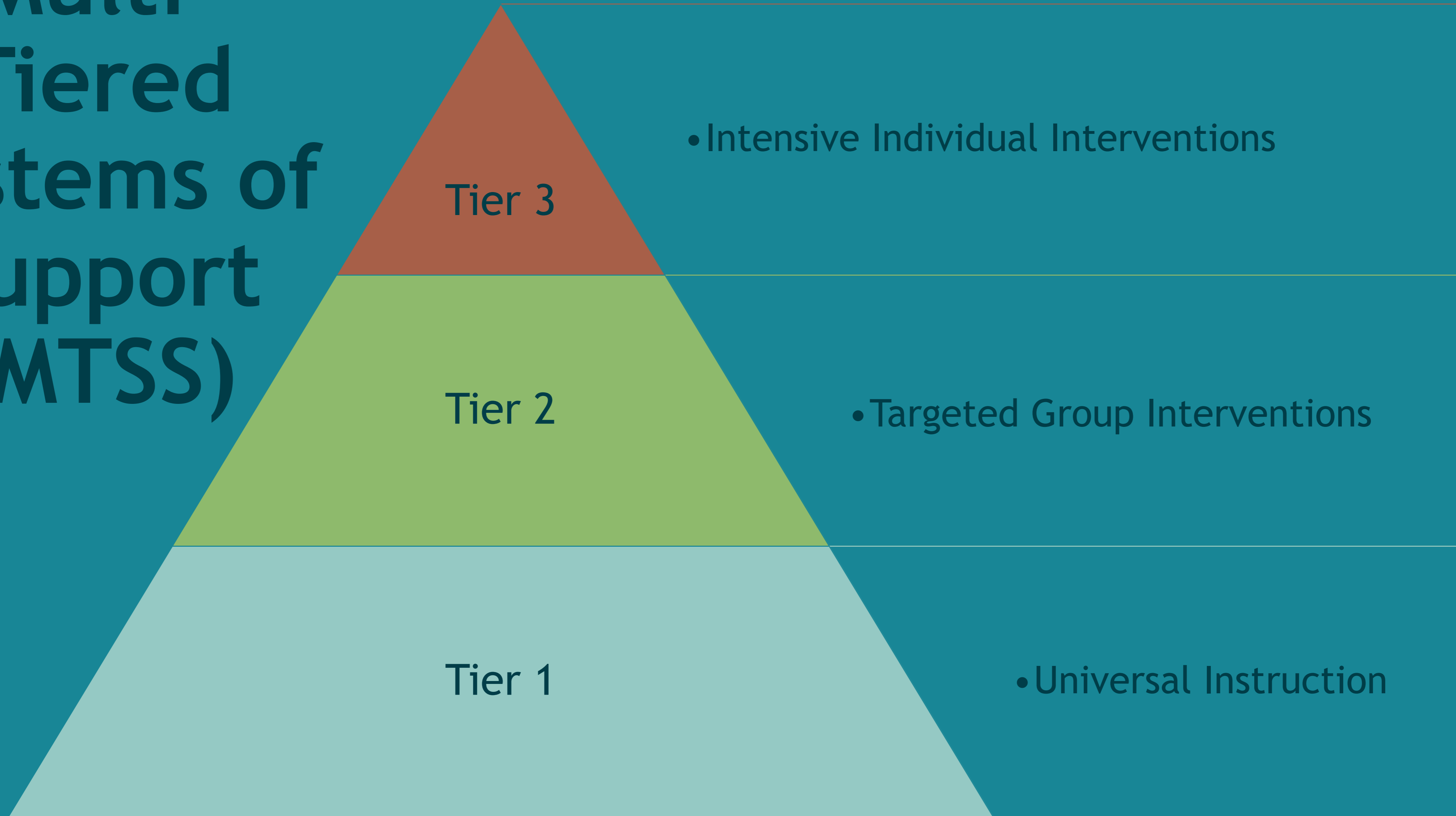
Trauma-Informed Schools

“Trauma-informed schools are places that provide safe and supportive environments for children to learn and educators to work. They infuse the science about trauma and its impacts into daily practice, program design, policy creation and implementation, and the culture of the school.

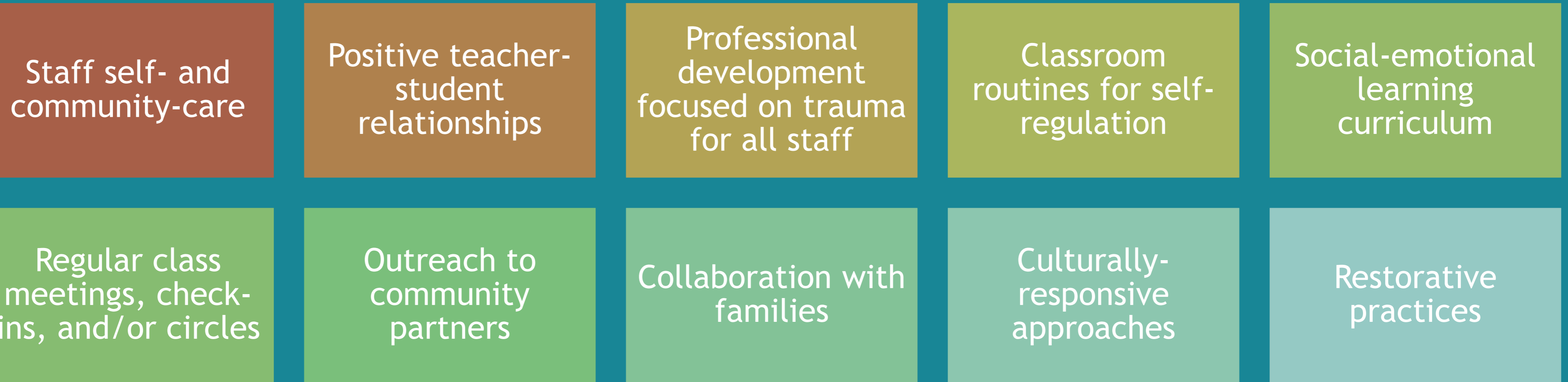
A trauma-informed school is not simply a school where staff know about trauma, or a school where there is a therapeutic classroom or additional counseling staff.

A trauma-informed school fundamentally has changed the way it works to promote healthy, resilient educators and learners capable of disrupting the cycle of trauma in their lives and communities and creating more equitable outcomes.”

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)



Tier 1:



Tier 2:



Tier 3:



A teacher with glasses and a blue shirt is smiling and giving a high-five to a young boy in a classroom. The boy is wearing a white shirt and a green vest. Other students are visible in the background, some sitting at desks. The scene is set in a classroom with a chalkboard and a whiteboard.

Positive Relationships

One positive relationship with an adult in school can mean

- improved academic outcomes,
- reduced rates of bullying,
- enhanced social-emotional skills,
- a greater sense of belonging, and
- reduced effects of trauma.

A photograph of a male teacher with glasses and a blue shirt giving a high-five to a young student in a classroom. The teacher is smiling and holding a piece of paper. Other students are visible in the background, some sitting at desks. The image has a semi-transparent dark overlay.

Positive Relationships

Relationship Mapping

1. Map Connections
2. Action Plan
3. Build Relationships

A photograph of a male teacher with glasses and a blue shirt giving a high-five to a young student in a classroom. The teacher is smiling and holding a piece of paper. Other students are visible in the background, some also giving high-fives. The scene is set in a classroom with a chalkboard and whiteboard.

Positive Relationships

Action Plan Strategies

1. Get to know them
2. Let them get to know you
3. Spend quality time
4. Show you care

Family Engagement

Research shows that family engagement is closely linked to

- improved student behavior,
- higher academic achievement, and
- enhanced social skills.

Family Engagement

1. Identify barriers to engagement. (What is getting in the way?)
2. Identify facilitators to engagement. (What's working? Who are our champions and connectors?)
3. Use strategies to support engagement.

Family Engagement

Identify barriers to engagement. (What is getting in the way?)



Family Engagement

Identify facilitators to engagement. (What's working?)



Family Engagement

Use strategies to support engagement.



Tier 3 Interventions



Staff Self-Care and Community-Care

Self-care is defined as taking care of oneself to achieve, maintain, and promote optimal health and well-being. Practices can include good sleep hygiene, proper nutrition and exercise, rest and relaxation, and much more.

Rooted in collectivist beliefs, **community care** focuses on the connections, intentional actions, and efforts to mobilize individuals to support one another. This can include peer support, healing circles, and much more.

Staff Self-Care and Community-Care

Eight Dimensions of well-being:

1. Emotional
2. Physical
3. Occupational
4. Social
5. Spiritual
6. Intellectual
7. Environmental
8. Financial

School-Community Partnerships

Studies show these partnerships can lead to:

1. Stronger social and emotional skills development,
2. Enhanced student engagement,
3. Improved academic outcomes,
4. Enriched communication, and
5. Better coordination of and access to needed resources.

School-Community Partnerships

Strategies can include:

1. Capacity-building / skill-building training
2. Coaching and mentoring
3. Facilitation
4. Mental health supports
5. Coordination and collaboration
6. Holistic, wrap-around services

School



Community





**Remember
your why.**



Thank You!

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