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Pivotal Perceptions: A Phenomenological Exploration of Trauma-Informed Practices in an Urban School

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Pivotal Perceptions: A Phenomenological Exploration of Trauma-Informed Practices in an Urban School

Abstract

This phenomenological study sought to examine the experiences of teachers in an urban K-8 school after a system-wide whole school implementation of trauma-informed practices. The practices teachers implemented in their classrooms that aligned with their personal perceptions of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy were explored. Additionally, the personal and professional barriers to implementation were also investigated. Identified practical strategies at both the elementary and middle school levels included establishing and maintaining relational trust and classroom community, actively teaching emotional regulation skills, and teaching and reinforcing rituals, routines and expectations throughout the school year. Lack of confidence and previous personal assumptions and mental models arose as being the main personal barriers to implementation, whereas a negative work climate, a need for effective leadership, more purposeful implementation with check-ins and additional system level concerns (such as time constraints and teacher turnover) were identified as professional barriers. As a result of this study, five essential domains emerged as being essential to the successful implementation of trauma-informed practices. These domains included 1) Relational Trust and Classroom Community and Culture; 2) Emotional and Physical Regulation; 3) System-Level Support: Purposeful Implementation; 4) System-Level Support: Backgrounds and Teacher Coaching; and 5) Accountability with Compassion. Outcome implications of this study were outlined using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological model.

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Marni Choice-Hermosillo

June 2020

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study sought to examine the experiences of teachers in an

urban K-8 school after a system-wide whole school implementation of trauma-informed

practices. The practices teachers implemented in their classrooms that aligned with their

personal perceptions of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy were explored.

Additionally, the personal and professional barriers to implementation were also

investigated. Identified practical strategies at both the elementary and middle school

levels included establishing and maintaining relational trust and classroom community,

actively teaching emotional regulation skills, and teaching and reinforcing rituals,

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purposeful implementation with check-ins and additional system level concerns (such as

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Children have not changed. Childhood has. The children around us are merely reflecting the challenging, sometimes scary changes in their environment and world. – Barbara Oehlberg, Making It Better

Background

As a veteran school psychologist, this quote has resonated with me for years. Not only did I see the changes in my students that I worked with on a daily basis, I also felt the ramifications of the evolving world with my two children. Although my children have never personally experienced an acute traumatic event by definition, they have had to grow up in a world that does not always feel safe. While one of my children naturally has the ability to cope with the world around her, the other one struggles and has had to learn how to adapt and live in a world that doesn't always make him feel safe and loved. He and I talk openly and almost every conversation has the end goal of moving him a little farther towards being able to independently access his own personal coping skills. With my students at school, I frequently engaged in similar conversations, but because I didn't have the opportunity to see them every day, these conversations weren't as impactful. As a result, I reflected on ways in which I could make a bigger difference in all students' lives.

During the 2017 – 2018 school year, the school district in which I was employed passed a Board of Education resolution due to the significant increase in behavioral difficulties experienced by teachers in multiple different schools. The Board realized that more and more of our students came to school lacking the ability to cope with their day to day homelife and struggling to deal with the stress of overwhelming trauma. Members of the Board noticed this phenomenon at all socioeconomic levels, in all cultures, at all grade levels and ages, and in all settings. As a response to this, they passed a resolution that focuses on the gradual implementation of trauma-informed practices within all district sponsored schools. This resolution states that all schools will work in a strategic, culturally-responsive, strength-based preventative way to best meet the needs of their diverse students, families, and educators. They also made it known that this movement would actively try to mitigate the impact of trauma on the social-emotional and academic growth of every student.

Prior to and concurrently with this resolution being passed, I was employed as part of a three-person team to disseminate professional development trainings in trauma-informed practices to as many school buildings as possible. These professional development trainings were based on current neuroscience research and resulting theory that focused on the importance of having a trauma-informed approach or practice in schools. Over the course of the school year, my team provided professional development training for the full-time teaching staff and administration in approximately 80 different school buildings (approximately 2,400 teachers and other full-time professionals and

departments trained). This included traditional elementary, middle and high school buildings, as well as schools identified as charters.

Throughout the course of the year, while nearly every school and every individual who participated in our trainings indicated that professional development in trauma-informed practices was a highly relevant practice (according to brief exit surveys taken at the end of each training), I observed differences in the demeanor, participation, and involvement of each school faculty. While there did not seem to be any correlation with the age of students taught in each school (for example elementary schools versus high schools) or the physical presence of the administration during the trainings, there was a noticeable difference in the questioning and level of personal reflection with the educators in a few of the schools. The majority of school buildings appeared to have a collective philosophy. They found relevance in being able to identify students of trauma or engage in trauma-informed practices, but struggled to hear the deeper message being conveyed. The majority of the teaching staff who were present in the professional development trainings questioned our focus on the universal and prevention-based nature of the interventions and appeared to be concerned with the lack of strong disciplinary actions associated with the practice. Many of these educators wanted to know how they could react to behavioral difficulties, rather than how they could prevent the issues in the first place.

On the other hand, there were a handful of schools who had a completely different philosophy of trauma-informed practices from the start. The educators in these schools strived to find a deeper understanding of how they could personally change their own

practice to prevent maladaptive behavior and better meet the needs of their students. They were also less focused on the consequences for inappropriate behavior and understood the importance of using natural consequences and restorative practices to repair the harm done. The question arose, why was there such a stark difference in faculty perceptions and understandings in certain schools when all other variables seemed to be constant?

For the 2018 – 2019 school year, I have been employed at an urban K-8 school as a Dean of Student Services. My main focus in this position is to initiate and oversee a system-wide change and begin the first year of implementation of trauma-informed practices over the course of the school year. As a part of my employment in this building:

1. I introduced the theory and practical aspects of trauma-informed practices (the school did not participate in the professional development sessions during the last school year).

2. I guided leadership on how to integrate trauma-informed practices into the school culture, all data-based decision-making teams, as well as the Unified Improvement Plan.

3. I brought in district employed trainers to provide professional development in trauma- informed practices and other related skill building professional development, such as restorative practices.

4. I provided coaching and support to teachers, administration and mental health staff throughout the school year.

5. I researched empirically validated measurements and facilitated the use of surveys (student and teacher) to determine effectiveness of the interventions implemented.

6. I assisted the leadership team in analyzation of data to brainstorm and determine next steps.

The action plan for implementation was based off of Knoster's (1991) model for complex change. For more information on the year-long plan that was implemented, see Appendix A.

Trauma-Informed Practices

The notion of trauma-informed practices or TIP has evolved over the past 30 years and is now being applied in a wide variety of settings including mental health, substance-abuse treatment facilities, child welfare systems, criminal justice institutions and more recently, schools (Wilson et al., 2013). This urge to establish trauma sensitive environments reflects a national movement to create classrooms and school-wide systems that are sensitive to youth who have been exposed to chronic stress or traumatic events, as well as youth who may be vulnerable to trauma. Additionally, the strength of this movement was given a catalytic push when President Obama reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA) in 2015. While this legislation is not new, the wording directs schools to ensure that environments are safe and healthy for all and suggests the use of trauma-informed approaches to support this endeavor (Section 4108).

Concurrently with legislature supporting the use of trauma-informed practices, education stakeholders also began to gain a deeper understanding and sensitivity towards the prevalence of exposure to chronic stress and trauma (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck & Hamby, 2015). According to recent statistics published in December 2017 through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), more than two thirds of school aged children report having to endure at least one traumatic event by the age of 16. Additionally, more than half of US families (54%) report having to live through some type of disaster and media has played a significant part in bringing attention to traumatic experiences through endless coverage of school and community violence, outcomes of terrorist acts and natural disasters (Tishelman, Haney, Greenwald O'Brien & Blaustein, 2010).

With this knowledge of the pervasiveness of trauma and chronic stress in current US youth, school-based professionals, policy makers and district level leaders are beginning to understand how profound the impact of trauma or chronic stress can be on school-based functioning. Traumatic events or prolonged exposure to chronic stress can impact self-regulation skills, perceptions of safety, the ability to trust and form relationships, academic aptitude, and physical health (Tishelman et al., 2010). Furthermore, traumatic experiences may directly affect memory, social and emotional development, language acquisition and general healthy brain development which can interfere with mastery and acquisition of new skills (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015). Students struggling with the ramifications of traumatic experiences may attend school with the best of intentions and frequently hope to succeed at the day's tasks.

However, despite their best efforts, they may engage in defiant behavior or become frustrated with the demands of school or be unable to realize their own personal success by the end of the school day (Cole et al., 2005). The need for all school-based professionals to understand the connections between impaired learning, academic achievement, and impaired social-emotional functioning that can be attributed to experiencing trauma or chronic stress is a foremost concern for school leaders (Wong, 2008). As a result, the idea of creating trauma-informed schools has begun to take root in individual buildings and through district wide initiatives (Chafouleas, Johnson, Overstreet & Santos, 2016). However, as with any system-level change, the process is not easy and is likely to be interrupted by a multitude of roadblocks.

The Role of Schools in Trauma-Informed Practices

Schools play a major role in improving educational outcomes for all students throughout their childhood, especially those who have endured trauma. Implementing trauma-informed practices in educational settings can assist in creating environments where traumatized students can feel safe and successful (Cole et al., 2005; Wolpow et al., 2009). Additionally, the classroom is often the most stable and consistent location in a trauma-affected student's life and can help to mitigate the feelings of distrust and lack of safety (Perry & Daniels, 2016). However, translating the theory and research of trauma-informed education to practical application within the schools is challenging. While the list of barriers to successful execution of any systems level change can be lengthy, implementation of trauma-informed practices requires buy-in from administrators, disciplinary policies that are restorative for students, effective and integrated staff

professional development, and strong relationships between school staff and mental health professionals (Oehlberg, 2008).

Implementation Science

Successfully translating research into practice in schools has become an increasing concern for educators, especially given the demands a typical school professional has to juggle (Forman et al., 2013). Interventions implemented in natural contexts have notoriously unpredictable outcomes. This holds true for both small scale interventions and systems level change that involves an entire school building (Forman et al., 2013). Estimates in the business world suggest that there is an approximate 70 percent failure rate when it comes to systemic changes in an organization. Many researchers believe that the success rate in schools is similar (Maurer, 2010). As a result, researchers across disciplines including, medicine, business, education, psychology, anthropology, and public health have contributed to furthering an area of research known as implementation science. Implementation science has been defined as the study and application of methods to promote the systematic execution of evidence-based practices into professional practice (Eccles & Mittman, 2006). Additionally, implementation science also strives to address major barriers to success. This includes identification and comprehension of the systematic road blocks that may or may not impede effective implementation (Forman et al., 2013).

According to the implementation science literature, success in an organizational context can be attributed to several factors including characteristics of the organization (e.g., positive work climate, organizational openness to change, organizational ability to

have a shared vision and decision making, effective leadership styles, and administration support), characteristics of the new program or practice, and characteristics of the implementer including the mental models and feelings of self-efficacy that a teacher may bring into their professional practice (Duffy, 2014; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Forman & Barakat, 2011).

Domitrovich et al. (2010), a leading researcher in implementation science, developed a model which is consistent with a social-ecological framework (Atkins et al., 1998; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This multilevel model is hypothesized to either directly or indirectly impact the implementation quality of school-based interventions (of which trauma-informed practices can be considered). The framework takes into consideration the influences of macro-level factors (federal, state and district policies and barriers), school-level factors, and individual-level factors.

Problem Statement

With the exception of a few outliers, current research on trauma-informed practices either focuses on the success of specific well-funded programs that provide structured practices in order to support whole school adoption, such as the Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools or HEARTS model (Dorado et al., 2016) or on the effectiveness of specific interventions that focus on repairing and teaching skills to students who have been impacted by traumatic events in their lives (Brunzell et al., 2016). The few pilot studies or dissertations that do focus on the implementation of trauma-informed practices within a school are more concentrated on the efficacy of interventions used within a multi-tiered system of support (Reinbergs &

Fefer, 2018) or the value of professional development when introducing trauma-informed practices into a school (Vanderwegen et al., 2013).

Additionally, there is a wealth of research and literature on organizational change, paradigm shifts, and an individual's mental models as it pertains to large scale system change and resistance. There seems to be a scarcity of literature with regards to how these two areas intersect and why simply implementing trauma-informed practices as a system wide change may fail. More specifically, there is a dearth of research that solely focuses on identifying the factors that lead teachers to adopt or unfortunately, resist implementation of trauma-informed practices into their classrooms. It is this lack of research that I will be addressing in this study.

Schools are frequently pressured to reform educational practice by federal and state mandates (Zimmerman, 2005). Since there are many factors that influence implementation of reform it is crucial for stakeholders to understand the reasons why reform may or may not have been adopted. Answering this question provides insight into the difficulties that surround systems level change and is the first step to overcoming resistance to change in schools (Duke, 2004). The overarching goal of this study will be a phenomenological exploration of the experience of teachers in an urban K-8 school building after a year of implementing trauma-informed practices. Precisely, I will examine teachers' perceptions of personal and professional barriers to change after a systemwide shift and implementation of this evidence-based practice. Furthermore, this study will also explore a teaching staff's process of moving from trauma-informed practice research and theory to practical application.

Research Questions

There are three central and interrelated research questions for this qualitative study.

- What practices do teachers implement in their classrooms according to their personal perceptions of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy?

- What personal barriers impact teachers' implementation of trauma-informed practices within their classrooms?

- What professional or organizational barriers impact implementation of trauma-informed practices within a school building?

Theoretical Frameworks

There are two main theories that guided the development for this study and provided a framework. While the history of trauma theory dates back to the early 19th century, more recent research documented by van der Kolk (2005) suggests the likelihood of a developmental trauma theory specifically seen in children (Ringel, 2012). In 2005, van der Kolk surmised that children who have been exposed to one or more traumas over the course of their lives may develop maladaptive coping strategies and reactions that could persist and affect their daily lives well after the traumatic event has ended (Ringel, 2012). Traumatic reactions could include intense and prolonged emotions, depressive symptoms, anxiety, behavioral changes, difficulties with regulating their emotions, difficulty forming secure attachments, regression or loss of previously acquired skills, attention difficulties, academic weaknesses and somatic complaints (van der Kolk, 2005). As can be expected, schools have seen the ramifications of these concerns and have attempted to address learning and behavioral dilemmas repeatedly

over the last decade with traditional educational strategies and minimal success. The

field of education, from preschool through teacher training, must not ignore the issue of

traumatic stress if schools are to meet the needs of their students (Oehlberg, 2008). In an

attempt to meet this need, the theory of Trauma-informed care evolved. Adapted by

SAHMSA and widely recognized as being the guiding framework for the current practice

in the schools, the six core principals of trauma-informed care include ensuring the

emotional and physical safety of all individuals within a building, maintaining

trustworthiness, relationships and transparency, allowing for peer support and

collaboration, giving voice and choice to individuals and ensuring that cultural, historical

and gender issues are addressed (SAMHSA, 2014).

In addition to the overarching foundation of trauma theory, Bronfenbrenner's

ecological theory also influences this study. This theory states that human development

and behavior is the product between multiple different interacting systems

(Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). As a person develops and grows throughout their lives,

they are not only influenced by their own unique biological characteristics, but also by

the family system, school, community and larger social system that surrounds them

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This environment forms their own personal ecosystem that is

comprised of five distinct levels, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem,

macrosystem and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner's ecological

theory also attributes healthy development to one's ability to adapt to meet the ever-

changing demands of one's role in an ecosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For children,

this often means adjusting their behavior to meet the demands of different environments,

including classroom communities, home life, socialization in all settings and fitting in with a community outside of school. For students who have experienced trauma or are living in a constant state of stress, this flexibility and adaptation can become extraordinarily difficult (Crosby, 2015). Youth are at greater risk of developing maladaptive coping skills when elements of their ecosystem are compromised. For example, a child's resiliency to childhood trauma is often contingent upon microfactors, such as support from care givers, mesofactors, such as the responses to behavioral challenges from their teachers and macrofactors, such as traumatic events seen on television or on social media (Crosby, 2015). The exosystem does not directly interact with the student, but has indirect influence by affecting the child's microsystems (for example, school policies, teacher access to professional development). Finally, the chronosystem refers to the individual's development throughout their life and the influence events have on this development. One can hypothesize that an individual's ecosystem could provide the framework for the development of one's personal mental models, which are the ingrained assumptions and generalizations that influence how we understand the world. An educator's personal mental models often exert significant influence on behavior and attitude of and can become a significant barrier to change (Senge, 1990).

Definition of Terms

Trauma: The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines the trauma framework as "the experiences that cause intense physical and psychological stress reactions. It can refer to a single event, multiple events, or a set

of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically and emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's physical, social, emotional, or spiritual wellbeing" (SAMHSA, 2014).

Implementation barriers: Although there is no single commonly used definition, in general, implementation barriers can be defined as variables that obstruct efforts to implement an intervention, often reducing its impact (Durlack and DuPre, 2008, Forman et al., 2009, Klingner et al., 2003).

Chronic/Toxic stress: "strong, frequent, or prolonged activation of the body's stress response systems in the absence of the buffering protection of a supportive, adult relationship" (Shonkoff et al., 2012, p. e236).

Trauma-Informed Practices: According to SAMHSA's, trauma-informed practices include the implementation of the following into an organization: individuals realize the widespread impact of trauma and understand the potential path for recovery; individuals recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma; individuals, as well as the organization, respond by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices and individuals seek to actively resist re-traumatization (SAMHSA, 2014).

Implementation Science: Implementation science is the study of methods that influence the integration of evidence-based interventions into practice settings (Bauer et al., 2015).

Mental Models: Deeply ingrained assumptions and generalizations that influence how we understand the world (Senge, 1990). In education, an individual's mental models exert significant influence on the behavior and attitude of an educator.

Self-efficacy: "Self-efficacy refers to people's judgements about their capability to perform particular tasks. Task-related self-efficacy increases the effort and persistence towards challenging tasks; therefore, increasing the likelihood that they will be completed" (Barling & Beattie, 1983, as cited in Axtell & Parker, 2003, p. 114).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In establishing the relevance of this study and positioning it in the context of existing research, it will be helpful to examine research related to several different topics. First, I will further define trauma, briefly touching on the neuroscience fueling trauma-informed practices and how it impacts students and school systems. Then I will elaborate on the trauma-informed practices movement, including the general recommendations of categories to focus on during implementation. I will also review the literature on organizational change theories including implementation science as it pertains to systems level changes in schools. This will include identified professional and personal barriers that often impact implementation. Finally, I will summarize the conclusions of the two dissertations identified to align closest to my study.

Trauma

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines trauma as the response to an event or series of events that cause intense physical and psychological stress reactions (SAMHSA, 2014). The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (n.d.) utilizes the phrase acute traumatic event to describe single event traumas, such as severe accidents, gang violence, school shootings, natural disasters or one-time incidents of physical or sexual assault. Complex trauma may occur when there

are several exposures to one or more combined forms of traumatic events (Cook et al., 2005). Chronic traumatic events are defined as incidents that are repeated, ongoing or occur over a long period of time. Examples of these events could be ongoing physical or sexual abuse, domestic or political violence, and emotional or verbal abuse (NCTSN, 2009). Historical trauma is a compilation of potentially traumatic events associated with a larger group or population that is often seen over several generations and can be cumulative (Brave Heart et al., 2011).

Although poverty may increase the likelihood of trauma, poverty is not seen as a form of trauma (Sours & Hall, 2016). However, trauma may be exacerbated by events that are often linked to poverty, such as the unemployment of a caregiver, food insecurities, living in crowded or unsafe conditions, homelessness, lack of resources to take are of basic needs or exposure to violence. Each one of these events in and of themselves can cause feelings of overwhelming stress for children and their adult caregivers and can lead to chronic stress or trauma. Furthermore, although gender, race or ethnicity is not a form of trauma, certain individuals may be more likely to experience it due to perceived or real injustices and prejudices (Sours & Hall., 2016).

Trauma results in people feeling powerless and lacking control (Sitler, 2009), feeling fearful and unsafe, being unable to cope and feeling a deep sense of shame (Blaustein, 2013). Trauma responses can occur when an individual directly experiences trauma, witnesses another individual's trauma, or simply learns about traumatic events (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). However, trauma is in the "eye of the beholder" and it is

the perception and response to an event or series of events and not necessarily the actual event (Souers & Hall, 2016).

Finally, a toxic stress response can occur when an individual experiences prolonged and frequent traumatic events without having adequate support or coping skills. This continuous activation of the body's stress response system may disrupt the development of the brain (Center on the Developing Child, 2016). Toxic stress and/or trauma can have a dramatic impact on a student's learning, worldview and long-term health outcomes.

Prevalence of Trauma

The strength of the trauma movement is a direct result of the growing awareness of the prevalence of exposure to potentially traumatic events among children and adolescents. Additionally, over the course of the last few years stakeholders have deepened their understanding of the neurological, biological and developmental impact of trauma (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuc, & Hamby, 2015). In 1995, the Centers for the Disease Control and Prevention partnered with Kaiser Permanente to conduct a large-scale investigation of the long-term effects of traumatic events or adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on health outcomes throughout an individual's lifespan (Felitti, et al., 1998). The researchers concluded that ACEs were more common than originally thought and were seen across all socio-economic levels, and within all races and genders. It was also discovered that as the number of ACEs increase for each individual, the individual's risk for negative health outcomes and premature death also increases.

Students in the United States experience trauma or chronic stress at an alarming rate (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016, Holmes et al., 2015; Jaycox et al., 2006). More current statistics taken in 2017 documented that nearly 35 million US children ages 0 – 17 or 43.8% of the entire nationwide population have experienced at least one type of childhood trauma (National Survey of Children's Health, 2017). Other national survey data has documented higher rates of exposure. Of the reported 53.4% of youth who experienced adverse family events, the average rate of exposures was 2.1 (Porche, Costello, & Rosen-Reynoso, 2016). Finally, Blodgett and Lanigan spearheaded a series of studies from 2010 – 2015 addressing ACEs exposure and the impact on academic success in schools. The following results were documented:

- In a random sample of 2101 elementary aged children with known ACEs exposure, 22% of students had 2 or more ACEs and as ACEs increased, there was an increased risk for academic failure, chronic attendance problems, persistent behavior problems and poor reported health outcomes (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018).

- Based on a parental report in a voluntary sample of 1066 children enrolled in an urban Head Start program, 55% of children experienced two or more ACEs and 25% experienced four or more ACEs. Children with four or more ACEs were rated as being significantly delayed on cognitive and social/emotional development indicators both at enrollment and one year after enrollment (Blodgett, 2014).

- In a high-risk population of 5443 children serviced in student support programs in Washington State, 81% of students reported having two or more ACEs. Students with four or more ACEs were five times more likely to have poor attendance, three times more likely to have behavioral problems and 6.5 times more likely to have an identified behavioral health problem (Blodgett, 2012).

Impact of Trauma on Development and Behavior

Childhood trauma negatively impacts brain architecture during critical stages of brain development (Bloom & Farragher, 2013; Perry, 2001). There are three critical developmental pathways which can be thwarted by a traumatic experience. These include the maturation of specific brain structures at particular ages, the physiologic and neuroendocrinologic responses of the body (fight, flight or freeze responses) and the capacity to coordinate cognition, emotional regulation and behavior through one's prefrontal cortex (van der Kolk, 2005). The brain can be severely altered by trauma and it views traumatic events as a threat to its primary function of survival.

Complex trauma and stress have a profound impact on the developing human brain. This particular type of trauma (although other types can also have the same effect) has been associated with structural changes in brain development (Gabowitz et al., 2008). When compared to a typically developing brain, neuroimaging studies have identified differences in the brains of complex trauma victims (Gabowitz et al., 2008). Some of the differences include smaller total brain volume, smaller prefrontal cortexes and larger (or more active) lateral ventricles and brain stem functioning (which is often associated with the fight, flight or freeze response) (Gabowitz et al., 2008). Furthermore, neuroimaging

studies have also shown that there is a dysfunction of mirror neurons (neurons that help

"mimic" the actions of others) in the brain (Gabowitz et al., 2008). This has clear

implications on the social/emotional functioning of children, as mirror neurons help

people relate to and connect with other individuals (Keysers, Thioux & Gazzola, 2011).

Additionally, this type of brain dysfunction, may result in reduced capacity for self-

regulation, stress management, empathy and/or the development of the prefrontal cortex

(Oehlberg, 2008).

Although the response to traumatic incidents may vary among individuals, trauma

may interfere with students' ability to relax and concentrate (stay in their prefrontal

cortex) and can change their perceptions of the future (Sitler, 2009). Additionally,

traumatized students may exhibit impulsive behaviors, struggle to fall or stay asleep, have

explosive outbursts or emotions that are highly intense, and show hypovigilance (under

responsive) or hypervigilance (over responsive) when reacting to sensory stimulation

(Sitler, 2009). They also may engage in self-harming behaviors, exhibit inattentiveness

or an inability to sustain their attention or become verbally and physically aggressive

(Sitler, 2009). Yet, it is important to note that traumatized individuals are largely

unaware of the feelings and motivations behind their behaviors and often do not

consciously choose to exhibit their behaviors (Bloom & Farragher, 2013). Nevertheless,

due to antiquated discipline policies, traumatized students are often punished in school

because their behaviors are misinterpreted by educators as being demanding, difficult,

dishonest and/or manipulative (Blaustein, 2013). According to the Children's Defense

Fund (2015), punitive discipline practices to punish a student who has experienced

trauma or chronic stress for their behaviors is similar to becoming angry with a sick child for having a fever.

Trauma-Informed Practices

While the literature emphasizes the importance of implementing trauma-informed practices through a multi-tiered system of support, for the purposes of this study, I will focus on the universal or prevention levels of implementation.

The prevalence of trauma in the population, as well as the confirmed connection between healthy social/emotional development and academic success and the recent advances in neuroimaging of the brain of traumatized individuals makes a strong case for implementation of trauma-informed practices in the school system (SAMHSA, 2014). Schools can play a major role in improving the educational outcomes for students who have experienced trauma or chronic stress. Schools also have a significant impact on youth well-being and are often the most common place for mental health services and social/emotional skill building (Farmer, Burns, Phillips, Angold & Costello, 2003). Implementing trauma-informed practices in educational settings can assist in creating environments where traumatized students can feel safe and be successful (Cole et al., 2005; Wolpow et al., 2009). Furthermore, creating trauma-informed schools can improve student performance and behavior, school climate, student retention and teacher satisfaction (Oehlberg, 2008).

In trauma-informed schools, all individuals build a basic understanding of trauma and how it affects student learning and behavior in the school environment (Cole et al., 2013; SAMHSA, 2014). SAMHSA (2014) states that a trauma-informed system is one

that (1) understands the widespread impact of trauma and the potential paths to recovery; (2) recognizes the implication of trauma from a systems perspective; and (3) integrates trauma knowledge into policies, procedures and practices in an effort to create a supportive environment that is intent on not re-traumatizing its members. While there are many programs and practices that focus on implementing school-wide trauma-informed approaches (to a varying degree of success), there are six key domains that are consistent amongst all of them (Guarino & Chagnon, 2018; Fallot & Harris, 2009). These are as follows:

- **Staff development**. The highlight of this domain is that staff need to have basic training of trauma and its impact on students and staff. Staff development needs to include ongoing learning and coaching in trauma-informed practices to support implementation and outcomes in academics, behavioral support and family, caregiver and community partnerships. Additionally, staff need to receive ongoing professional learning in evidence-based practices that will support students with problem-solving, cognitive skills, emotional regulation and executive functioning skills. They also should be trained in strategies to de-escalate and defuse situations and restorative practices as a discipline practice in order to build empathy and repair potential harm. Finally, self-care is an essential component of trauma-informed practices.

- **Creating a safe and secure environment.** All adults must be responsible for creating and maintaining a physically, socially and emotionally safe learning environment. Building relationships among staff and students is the foundation of this domain. All interactions between students and adults create healing and build

resiliency skills. Attention is given more as a means to build relationships rather than to correct or punish unwanted behavior. All crisis responses integrate trauma-informed strategies and strive to avoid re-traumatization.

- **Assessing need and providing appropriate supports**. This domain requires that all school-based teams, assessments and interventions consider the potential impact of trauma and respond accordingly. This area also emphasizes the importance of measuring and progress monitoring a school's ongoing implementation of trauma-informed approaches.

- **Building strong social and emotional skills.** Universal strategies are implemented to model, teach and practice self-regulation, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making. Emphasis is on problem solving and emotional regulation skills (these are most often determined to be areas of weakness for students of trauma). Students are also taught how to identify and process their emotions.

- **Voice, choice and collaboration.** Students, families and caregivers are given a voice to express their concerns in a safe environment. The school builds trusting relationships with families and caregivers. Family voice is integral in developing school policies and procedures and student voice and choice is integrated into classroom policies and procedures.

- **Policies and procedures.** Existing policies and procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that they adhere to core trauma-informed principles. Discipline,

communication and safety procedures reflect an understanding of trauma and are consistent with beliefs, principles and values.

Paradigm Shift

In order to implement trauma-informed practices in schools, we need to acknowledge that organizational changes are needed to support a paradigm shift and resulting alteration in practice for all members of a school community. For more than a century, the American education system has been influenced by an Industrial-Age paradigm that controls how school systems are designed, organized and run (Duffy, 2014). This mindset has been very influential in guiding how teachers teach (teachers are the authority figures in a classroom and they are controlling the dissemination of knowledge upon the students), how kids learn (students are in school because they want to learn from their teachers and have an innate respect for their teachers), how school systems interact with their external environments and how educators' approach and adopt change (Duffy, 2014). For years, educators have developed attitudes and mindsets that are often based on their own experiences in education. These mindsets are very resistant to change.

As noted previously, the environment that children are living in has caused their needs to change and we can no longer educate them using the Industrial Age model. The new paradigm of teaching and learning (sometimes referred to as the Knowledge Age model) has a vastly different approach and is built on the belief that each student deserves a learning experience that is tailored to his or her personal learning needs, interests and abilities (Duffy, 2014). Furthermore, related to staff development and self-care, this

paradigm also believes that adults working in a school system deserve a work life that is motivating and satisfying and that provides opportunities for professional growth and development and empowers them to make appropriate decisions about their work. Additionally, school systems should be prevention-based and opportunity-seeking, rather than crisis-reacting (Duffy, 2014).

The literature on systemic change frequently includes information on mental models which can be helpful when trying to understand why change can be difficult. Johnson-Laird (1983) believed that people construct cognitive representations of what they learn and what they think they know. Senge (1990) described mental models as "deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action" (p. 8). In school systems, we observe established mental models preventing educators from change not only because of the mental models being ingrained in their psyche, but also due to the anxiety and lack of self-efficacy that often comes with change.

Implementation Science

Implementation is often described as the process of putting a practice or a program in place (Forman et al., 2013). Other definitions have emphasized addressing major "bottlenecks" or barriers that impede effective implementation. Implementation science has investigated a multitude of issues including the influences on the professional behaviors of practitioners, strategies for improving implementation (including how organizations can improve support efforts), implementation measurement methods and implementation research design (Eccles & Mittman, 2006; Fogarty International Center

2010; Payne & Eckert, 2010). Implementation barriers reveal the challenges and complexities one is likely to encounter when engaging in any type of implementation. Recently, several systematic reviews of intervention research have attempted to advance and organize barriers into categories that resemble an ecological framework (Durlak & Dupre, 2008; Domitrovich et al., 2008; Fixsen et al., 2005). These ecological frameworks include variables at the macro, organizational and individual levels. According to Feldstein and Glasgow (2008), the four categories of variables to consider when promoting implementation success in schools are as follows: (a) external environmental factors (legislative mandates, district policies); (b) implementation and sustainability infrastructure (technical assistance, training and implementation support); (c) perceptions of the intervention or intervention characteristics (perceived ease of use or effectiveness and feelings of self-efficacy); and (d) organizational and participant characteristics (administrative leadership, climate of organization, skills and mental models of the person implementing). For the purposes of this investigation, the remainder of the literature review will focus on perceptions of the intervention and intervention characteristics, and organizational barriers (professional) and personal barriers (participant).

Intervention Perceptions and Characteristics

In a review of the literature on intervention perceptions and characteristics, Rogers (2003) indicated that interventions that are perceived as being better than what currently exists in an organization are more likely to be implemented. Additionally, programs that are compatible with the values and needs of the individual have a greater

likelihood of being adopted (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Long, Hagermoser-Sanetti, Collier-Meek, Gallucci, Altschaefl & Kratochwill, 2016). Furthermore, innovation compatibility with overall vision (both at the district and the school level) can also be highly influential in whether it is implemented or not (Durlak & DuPre, 2008).

Professional and Organizational Barriers to Change

Organizational barriers largely center on leadership, climate and resources necessary for successful implementation (Durlak & DuPre, 2008, Kam, Greenberg & Walls, 2003; Stith et al., 2006). These barriers relate to the specific characteristics of the school where the implementation occurs. According to Durlak & DuPre (2008), several aspects of organizational functioning can have an impact on implementation success. These are as follows: (a) positive work climate (staff perceptions about morale, support, trust, collegiality and conflict resolution); (b) organizational openness to change and shared decision making; (c) effective (frequent and open) communication mechanisms. This includes effective communication practices to inform all members of an organization of events and decisions that may impact them, as well as communication practices that are in place when a conflict needs to be resolved or there are disagreements. (d) effective procedures and structures are in place so work tasks can be accomplished and completed; (e) effective leadership and administration support; (f) the existence of a program champion; and (g) the extent to which the innovation is rewarded, supported and expected (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Other reviewers of the implementation literature have indicated that a monitoring and feedback system (Fixsen et al., 2005; Greenhalgh et al., 2004), linking an organizational reward to intervention implementation (Fixsen et al.,

2005; Klein & Sorra, 1996) and lack of adequate support from key stakeholders (Kincaid et al., 2007) can all be barriers to success.

Domitrovich et al. (2008) emphasizes the importance of understanding the organizational context of the school in which an intervention or a prevention program is being implemented. The researchers in this article summarize several possible factors that could influence the quality of implementation or even contribute to overall resistance (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Interventions that align directly with a school's vision or are easily integrated into overall policy and practices are more likely to be implemented with fidelity and sustained over time (Payne et al., 2006). Additionally, the involvement of the teachers in decision-making, both at the pre-implementation stage, as well as during implementation decreases resistance to change and increases overall buy-in (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Similar to the construct in the research identified above (Durlak & DuPre, 2008), school culture, climate and organizational health is a third identified factor. Culture influences the way things are done in a school and reflects the norms, values and shared beliefs of a faculty (Domitrovich et al., 2008). School culture is important to consider given that working environments that are less bureaucratic tend to have staff who are more supportive of change (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Finally, administrative leadership characteristics can significantly influence implementation fidelity (Payne et al., 2006). School administrators can help transform schools and often have a significant impact on the successful implementation of an intervention (Payne et al., 2006). Teachers often indicate that strong administrative support for a system-wide change or evidence-based practice occurs when leaders within the school actively participate in the

planning, implementation and assessment of the program (Domitrovich et al., 2008).

They can also increase implementation by holding teachers accountable and requiring

that staff allocate time to implement all aspects of the program (Domitrovich et al.,

2008).

As a part of a qualitative case study, Vanderwegen et al. (2013) uncovered the

overall theme of "Leadership Matters" when creating a safe and supportive trauma-

sensitive learning environment. Vanderwegen et al. (2013) noted that the principal's

ability to build strong relationships with her staff, her students and the community

provides the foundation for her ability to create a safe, supportive and nurturing learning

environment that is trauma informed. The analysis of the case study reflected the

importance that is often given to principal leadership in the literature. Marzano, Waters,

and McNulty (2005) state that the principal's leadership sets the tone of the school.

Similar to this, Gomez-Lee (2017) investigated the leadership practices that foster

trauma-informed practices in the schools. As a part of this case study, Gomez-Lee

identified the critical role that the principal plays in the creation, implementation and

sustainability of the trauma-informed school (2017). More specifically, data analysis

identified that the relationship building capabilities a principal may possess, as well as

their willingness to consistently model the behaviors that were desired on a day to day

basis were essential in securing buy in and implementation fidelity (Gomez-Lee, 2017).

Personal Barriers to Change

The individual classroom teacher is seen as being the primary implementor for

most universal interventions. As such, understanding the behavior, perceptions and

assumptions of the individual teacher (ie. mental models) is a key variable in

implementation (Fogarty International Center, 2010). Literature suggests that an

implementer's lack of buy-in can be a major barrier to success (Kincaid et al., 2007),

whereas implementer enthusiasm and willingness to learn about the intervention support

is associated with the opposite (Forman et al., 2009). Skill proficiency, which is

described as having the knowledge and the capacity to carry out the required activities of

the intervention along with a prior understanding of the intervention (Bosworth et al.,

1999) is also an essential component for implementation (Forman & Barakat, 2011). For

example, teachers asked to implement an evidence-based program were more successful

in completing program components and meeting the objectives if they had prior

experience with the subject matter (Dusenbury et al., 2005). In contrast, lack of teaching

skill has been reported as a common barrier to implementation in schools (Forman et al.,

2009; Klingner et al., 2003). Self-efficacy, or an individual's confidence in being able to

implement the program is also seen as being a deciding factor in implementation (Forman

et al., 2009; Henderson et al., 2006). Research indicates that higher levels of

implementer self-efficacy are associated with stronger implementation (Forman et al.,

2009; Henderson et al., 2006). Domitrovich et al. (2008) added that school staff often

vary widely in their education, skills and experience which can influence attitudes.

Additionally, there are few teacher training programs that focus on classroom

management, social/emotional learning or prevention programs (Greenberg, Pomerance,

& Walsh, 2011). Any lack of skill in these areas can become a barrier to change (Forman

et al., 2009; Klingner et al., 2003). Finally, Domitrovich et al. (2008) posits that stress,

depression, and professional burnout (with or without a strong school culture to help

mitigate) can reduce implementation fidelity.

Table 1 outlines implementation barriers to success as it pertains to this particular

study.

Table 1

Possible Implementation Barriers

Professional Barriers	Personal Barriers
• Administrative Leadership • Positive School Climate and Culture • Alignment with School Policy and Vision • Shared Decision-Making • Effective Communication Mechanisms • Effective Procedures and Structures • Existence of a Program Champion • Procedures to Ensure Accountability • Monitoring and Feedback System • Lack of adequate support from key stakeholders	• Implementer buy-in • Skill Proficiency • Self-efficacy • Lack of experience • Personal mental models and assumptions • Perceived effectiveness • Perceived need

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Rationale for Qualitative Inquiry

This study investigated how teachers interpreted and integrated trauma-informed practices into their classroom and the personal and professional barriers that influenced implementation. Given that my research questions were focused on the experiences, attitudes, perceptions and resulting actions of individuals, which are all variables that cannot be easily measured through quantitative measures, I chose to use a qualitative approach for this inquiry.

According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is appropriate to use when variables are present that cannot be easily measured through quantitative methods. Furthermore, qualitative methods are beneficial when the researcher plans to explore a problem in a way that provides a complex and detailed understanding (Creswell, 2013). While there is an abundance of research on barriers to organizational change, there is a scarcity of research on how this may specifically pertain to the implementation of trauma-informed practices. Since this was the first investigation of its kind to date, a complex and detailed understanding of the problem will be beneficial to drive next steps in academic research and provide a framework of success for day to day application in schools. Qualitative research is also beneficial when trying to empower individuals to share their own stories (Creswell, 2013). Throughout the qualitative research process, the

participant is given space to become the expert in an experience (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). As school reform is often met with varying degrees of resistance (Zimmerman, 2005), investigating and giving voice to educators to determine personal experiences as they work through their willingness or unwillingness to change can give insight into why an initiative may or may not be successful.

Additionally, Creswell (2013) states that researchers naturally bring their own personal beliefs and assumptions into their work. Not only do these assumptions influence the questions asked, the theoretical frameworks used, and the analysis of data, but they can also influence the methodology chosen for the study (Creswell, 2013). It is important to divulge the assumptions and belief system of the researcher so that readers can better comprehend the reasons why a decision may have been made within a study, as well as to gain a deeper understanding of possible limitations (Creswell, 2013).

A qualitative approach became the most appropriate method for this study given that I hold the ontological assumption that nature consists of multiple realities that are viewed differently by individuals. In my own personal practice, I have experienced this phenomenon when observing the differing ways in which various individuals (students and adults alike) interpret and respond to events within the course of a school day. More often than not I could hypothesize that the variability in reaction was due to personal perceptions of and assumptions regarding the events in question. As it pertains to this investigation, the assumption was that the different realities of teachers were likely to influence the implementation and practical application of trauma-informed practices. As

multiple realities are often lost in quantitative methodology, which seeks to determine absolutes, a qualitative inquiry naturally became the better choice.

I also followed the axiological perspective that all research and interpretation is intertwined in our own personal value systems and biases (Creswell, 2013). As a result, although one can do their best to acknowledge their values and biases, they will always be present in some way. Qualitative inquiry allows for researcher bias to be acknowledged through a personal positionality statement (Creswell, 2013). This statement allows the reader to understand the researcher's background and personal assumptions and extrapolate the extent to which they inform the interpretation of the study (Creswell, 2013).

Finally, I supported the epistemological perspective that knowledge can be better understood through the subjective experiences of people (Creswell, 2013). However, in order to fully understand this experience, I believed that it was essential to establish deep feelings of trust. Therefore, I engaged in a set of three qualitative interviews that allowed the participants to describe their experiences in depth. Through active and empathetic listening techniques, I was able to facilitate the complex understanding of the issue and nurture the relationship between researcher and participant.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a method of inquiry that allows the researcher to systematically study and learn about an experience that is typically difficult to observe or measure (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). In phenomenology, the fundamental concern is with the phenomenon and attempting to understand the essence of it (Wilding &

Whiteford, 2005). This orientation provides the means through which to explore and illuminate the experience in all of its complexity (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). Succinctly, the word phenomenology in Greek means to "bring to light" which becomes the overarching goal of a phenomenological investigation; to bring the complex understanding of an experience to light (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology has been influenced significantly by the work of German philosophers, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and Martin Heiddeger (1889–1976). Husserl is credited with originating transcendental phenomenology, which seeks to obtain the meaning of a phenomenon through rich, thick description procured from those who have personally experienced the phenomenon (van Manen, 2014). Husserl believed that phenomenology should be an orientation without assumptions and researchers should completely suspend their judgements and bias in a process called *epoche* (van Manen, 2014). *Epoche*, or bracketing is an attempt by the investigator to completely set aside presuppositions so that the phenomenon can be viewed through unbiased transcendental eyes (Moustakas, 1994). In the eyes of Moustakas, transcendental means that in which everything is "perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (Moustakas, 1994).

Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl, extended Husserl's ideas to form his own version of phenomenology (Spiegelberg, 1960). Although Husserl stressed the importance of epoche, Heidegger believed that such a "transcendental" act is impossible (van Manen, 2014). Instead of setting aside all beliefs, attitudes and assumptions, in Heideggerian phenomenology, one acknowledges their own particular understanding and background that is brought to the investigation (Hasselkus, 1997). Although all attempts

are made to see the research phenomenon with fresh eyes and understandings, there is a realization that the researcher cannot fully set aside their entire being and "transcend" (Hasselkus, 1997). Heidegger believed that how one sees the world depends on how one has interpreted it (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005).

While I do believe that this may be an ultimate goal to strive towards, the question is whether it is truly possible for a researcher to completely bracket out experiences and assumptions. I personally identify with Heideggarian's hermeneutic phenomenology in which there is an innate understanding that previous experiences and assumptions can never be truly "transcended" (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005).

Over the course of one school year, I was charged with implementing trauma-informed practices into a K-8 school in an urban city. Throughout the school year, I worked closely with the teachers in this K-8 in multiple capacities and developed assumptions and presuppositions about their practices. As a result, it was essential to not only engage in multiple instances of member checking to ensure the capture of experiences of participants, but also to actively set aside any hypotheses or bias that may have been brought into interviewing and analysis.

Research Questions

This phenomenological study explored the experiences of teachers in an urban K-8 school in the first year of trauma-informed practices implementation. Three central and interrelated research questions guided the study.

What practices do teachers implement in their classrooms according to personal perceptions of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy?

What personal barriers impact teachers' implementation of trauma-informed

practices within their classrooms?

What professional or organizational barriers impact implementation of trauma-

informed practices within a school system?

Data Collection

Setting: The setting for the research was an urban K-8 school in Northeast

Denver. There were 576 students enrolled at this school with 91.5% of the student

population receiving free or reduced lunch. The population was 96.7% Hispanic, .08%

Black, .03% White and .005% Asian. One principal, one assistant principal, two deans,

and three mental health providers (school psychologist, social worker and school

counselor) were included in the 49 full time teaching staff. Demographics of the teaching

population are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographics of Teacher Population in Urban K-8 School

49 Full Time Teachers				
Female	82.5%	Male	17.5%	
Ethnicities				
White	Hispanic	Black	Asian	Multi-Race
50.9%	33.3%	7.0%	5.3%	3.5%
Age of Teaching Staff				
20 – 29 years	30 – 39 years	40 – 49 years	50 – 59 years	60 or older
40.4%	26.3%	15.8%	10.5%	7%
Longevity of Teaching Staff in the Building				
Over 4 years	2 – 4 years	Under 2 years		
40.4%	8.8%	22.8%		

Sample: Between six and nine participants were sought for this inquiry. The inclusionary criteria to participate was based on the following: (a) individuals must have been licensed teachers who worked full time in the building and were employed at the school the entire academic year, (b) individuals must have attended the majority of the trainings throughout the school year related to trauma-informed practices, (c) individuals must have voluntarily committed to being interviewed as part of the study, and (d) individuals must have been available to meet over the summer at a location off campus. Unfortunately, there were several teachers who did not meet the inclusionary criteria and

were unable to participate in the study. Additionally, due to ethical reasons and conflicts of interest, any individual who I personally evaluated was also excluded from participating. This included all three mental health providers, the school nurse and all three special education teachers. All individuals in an administration role were also excluded.

Recruitment: Immediately upon receiving Institutional Review Board approval, all full-time faculty members who met the inclusionary criteria were emailed (see Appendix D). This email outlined the purpose of the study, the anticipated time commitment over the summer, the compensation ($30 VISA gift card) and the inclusionary criteria required. The email also stressed that participation in this study was completely voluntary and all identified teachers who received the email had the option of participating or not without ramifications.

Of the 28 emails sent out, ten individuals volunteered to participate. Incidentally, five of these individuals taught elementary aged students and five taught middle school. One of the middle school teachers wanted to participate, but was unsure if he would be able to do so due to the fact that he was going to be traveling out of the state much of the summer. However, it was mutually decided that interviews for this participant would be conducted via Zoom video conferencing. The number of volunteers represented 36% of the faculty who met the inclusionary criteria and was evenly split amongst middle school and elementary school. Although I did not have a participant who identified as black, demographics of my sample was similar to the overall demographics of the teaching population at the urban K-8. My participant sample was 70% White, Non-Hispanic

individuals; 20% Hispanic; 10% Asian; 20% male; and 80% female. Participant

demographics are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Race	Gender	Highest Educational Attainment	Total years teaching
Elementary School Teachers					
Julie	21 - 29	Hispanic	Female	Bachelors	0 - 2 years
Nina	21 - 29	White, Non-Hispanic	Female	Bachelors	2 - 5 years
Eva	30 - 39	Hispanic	Female	Masters	5 - 10 years
Jenn	30 - 39	White, Non-Hispanic	Female	Masters	11 - 15 years
T. Bone	50 - 59	White, Non-Hispanic	Female	Masters	21 - 25 years
Bob	21 - 29	White, Non-Hispanic	Male	Masters	2 - 5 years
Bubba	30 - 39	White, Non-Hispanic	Male	Bachelors	5 - 10 years
Lolie	30 - 39	Asian	Female	PhD	5 - 10 years
Molly	30 - 39	White, Non-Hispanic	Female	Masters	5 - 10 years
Penny	40 - 49	White, Non-Hispanic	Female	Masters	21 - 25 years

Interviews: According to Moustakas (1994), interviewing is the primary method

of data collection in phenomenology. Interviewing is an informal and interactive process

using open-ended dialogue (Creswell, 2013). While questions can be structured,

flexibility and variations of questions are not uncommon depending on the route that the

interview takes, as well as the willingness of the participant to divulge experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Relationships and trust are essential in an interview and it should be the ultimate goal of the researcher to ensure that trust is established and maintained (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, perceptions about differences in status, power, background and ideology can also impact the quality and depth of the interview and should be acknowledged and accommodated for prior to engaging in any interviews (Mears, 2009).

For the purposes of this study, a three-part interview was used. In-depth interviews allowed me to really listen to what the participant had to say using their own voice and not only learn about the phenomenon in question, but also investigate past experiences and situations. This type of interviewing was particularly helpful to investigate personal barriers to implementation. All interviews with the exception of one were conducted in person at a location, day and time of the participant's choosing during the summer break. This ensured that interviews were conducted in a neutral location and mitigated possible power differentials. One participant chose to be interviewed exclusively via Zoom video conferencing due to his travel schedule. Interviews typically lasted between 20 and 75 minutes. All three interviews were completed by the end of July and before the next school year commenced. Spacing between the interviews varied and ranged from five days between interviews to a few weeks. Prior to the first interview, each participant was asked to complete a short demographic form (see Appendix E). The brief demographics included how long the individual had been in education, how long the individual had been employed at the school, and their

educational status. This demographic data helped to ensure that the sample accurately represented the overall school population. Open ended questions were used in an effort to obtain rich, comprehensive descriptions of all three research questions, as well as the essence of the phenomenon being studied. Consent to audio-record interviews was also solicited from each participant prior to beginning the course of interviews and each interview was recorded with a main and backup recorder.

Approximately three days prior to each scheduled interview, participants received the questions for each interview. While several of the participants read the questions and prepared their responses before their interview, only one individual arrived at the interview with notes that she wanted to make sure she covered (T. Bone). The second interview began with a pictorial representation activity in which participants were asked to draw a picture or create an image that embodied what trauma-informed practices meant to them. All participants participated in the activity and one individual, Bob, completed his pictorial activity prior to the interview and sent it via email so he could discuss it during the interview. At the conclusion of all the interviews, transcriptions were completed by the researcher and sent to each participant for them to review or edit. Of the ten participants, five responded to the transcription email. All individuals who responded indicated that they were satisfied with the transcription accuracy and validity of their lived experience.

Pilot Study: In order to test the feasibility of the main study, ensure that the methods and ideas worked in practice, test out interview questions for possible bias, and determine if any additional ethical considerations arise, I embarked on a small-scale pilot

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study. This pilot study spanned a seven-week time frame prior to the initiation of the main study. A pilot study can provide researchers with an opportunity to make adjustments and revisions in the main study (Sampson, 2004). Furthermore, a pilot study may uncover any unforeseen ethical or methodological issues, such as the sampling procedure or the interview question sequence prior to the main study (Sampson, 2004). This allows the researcher an opportunity to resolve certain issues that may otherwise hinder the main project (Sampson, 2004).

For the purposes of the pilot study, one teacher was recruited with the pseudonym of Reagan. The individual was able to participate in the pilot study due to not meeting all of the inclusionary criteria that were established during sampling for the main study. Specifically, the pilot study participant was a late hire (approximately two months after the start of the school year) and was unable to attend all of the required professional development sessions that would have made her eligible for the main study.

This was Reagan's first experience teaching and she was employed as a middle school language arts teacher at the urban K-8 school. Reagan identified herself as being Hispanic and white and between the age range of 21 - 29 years of age. She recently obtained a Bachelor's degree. Each interview was held in Reagan's classroom at the end of the school day during her planning period. During each interview, there were usually two or three student helpers (8th grade students) cleaning Reagan's classroom. Interviews were held approximately one week apart and Reagan was given the questions approximately one day prior to each interview. Interviews were audio recorded using two different devices (in case of one device faltering during the interview) and each

interview was transcribed by the researcher prior to the next interview. Interview transcripts were given to Reagan one to two days prior to the next interview. While she was given the opportunity to question, clarify or strike out any part of the transcript, Reagan did not choose to do so. All three interviews were completed and transcribed by week 4 of the pilot study. The last three weeks were reserved for determining procedural amendments, rewriting interview questions and conducting brief data analysis.

While the pilot study did not illuminate any problems with overall procedures, there were concerns with the initial interview questions which led to several of them being rewritten or eliminated and additional questions being added to ensure that all three research questions were addressed adequately. Through researcher reflection, peer debriefing and brief memoing, it was determined that several of the questions may inadvertently have been written without effectively engaging in bracketing. As mentioned earlier, bracketing occurs when a researcher puts aside past knowledge, judgments and assumptions about the experience in order to reduce limitations and uncover the true experience of the phenomenon (Vagle et al., 2018). See Appendix F for a table that outlines the initially planned interview questions, as well as the changes made to them after the pilot study was conducted.

In addition to the amendments and eliminations highlighted above, 14 questions were added to ensure that all research questions were adequately addressed and that all interview questions elicited rich descriptions. Furthermore, a creative activity was also added to the second interview to reduce the likelihood of interviews becoming stale or boring. Visual methods are often beneficial when trying to facilitate participant

engagement (Pain, 2012). Additionally, adding this activity also provided an opportunity for triangulation, or the combination of additional methodological practices to increase rigor and validity (Creswell, 2013). Collecting data from additional methods is a strategy that adds richness and complexity to research (Denzin, 2012). Furthermore, visual methods are often thought to influence data richness due to the thought and reflection needed by participants when planning and executing visual artefacts (Guillemin & Drew, 2010). A matrix that outlines which research question each question addresses can be found in Appendix G.

In addition to the interview question changes, procedural considerations were also taken into account. During the pilot, it was noticed that the participant stopped comprehensively explaining what she meant or fully describing stories. As a result, the prompt read before each interview was changed to remind the participant to fully describe and explain everything. Additionally, it was determined that it was important to interview each participant in an environment where there were no known distractions.

Final Interview Structure: Moustakas (1994) postulates that social conversations and other thoughtful activities are essential when establishing trust. Furthermore, trust is a foundational concept that allows for deep, meaningful conversations (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, the first interview began with rapport building questions to establish an atmosphere of trust. These questions focused on each individual's road to becoming a teacher including their personal experiences growing up in K-12 schools and how those experiences may have influenced who they are today. The remainder of the interview consisted of questions that were designed to investigate

all three research questions. Specific stories were encouraged and each participant was reassured that all student names would be changed to ensure confidentiality. Interview one was consistently the longest interview of the sequence and ranged from approximately 50 to 70 minutes. See Appendix H for the first interview protocol.

The purpose of the second interview was to clarify experiences shared at the first interview, to unearth any insights inspired by the first interview, and to further explore untouched areas and research questions. The second interview began with a pictorial representation activity which provided an opportunity for participants to express themselves in something other than a verbal format and added an additional layer of richness and meaning to the data. It also proved to be helpful in giving further insight into each participant's lived experience and triangulation of data. In data triangulation, multiple and different sources or methods are used to provide additional evidence of overall themes and perspectives of an individual's lived experience (Creswell, 2013).

At the beginning of the interview, each participant was invited to create a pictorial representation of what trauma-informed practices meant to them using colored pencils, pens and blank paper. Individuals were free to express themselves in any manner that they chose (pictures or words or a combination of both) and were given as much time as they needed to complete the picture. After each picture was completed, each participant was asked to describe their picture. Audio recording devices were turned on once each participant began describing their picture. If individuals wanted to add anything to their picture during the course of the interview, they were given the liberty to do so.

After each participant finished describing their pictorial representation, they were given an opportunity to clarify and/or add to their stories and experiences discussed during the first interview. After all clarifications and questions were answered, the second part of the interview sequence was started. This interview was designed to build on the questions in the first interview and delve a little deeper into each participant's experience. This interview ranged from approximately 25 to 50 minutes. See Appendix I for the second interview protocol.

The third interview was designed to follow up on any previously untouched areas and attempt to ensure saturation of data. Saturation of data is defined as the point where a researcher can state that they have gathered enough information to be able to fully describe an experience or develop a model (Creswell, 2013). This interview began with a reflection and opportunity for participants to share their thoughts and feelings on any of the questions asked during the previous two interviews. It then moved into a series of questions that restated several themes from previous interviews. During this interview, several participants answered the questions in a manner that referred back to previous interviews (for example, "as I stated in the first interview" or "I believe I answered this in the second interview, but I'll add on to what I said previously") which suggested that data saturation was achieved. This interview was the shortest of the sequence and lasted between 20 – 40 minutes. The protocol for the third interview can be found in Appendix I.

Data Analysis

While there are no universally-accepted data analysis procedural steps in

phenomenology, I have chosen to draw from the six research activities van Manen (1990)

presents as a part of hermeneutic phenomenology. I focused primarily on reflection of

essential themes that characterize the phenomenon and description of each teacher's lived

experience over the course of the school year through experiential and thematic writing

(van Manen, 1990). Thematic analysis, which is defined as a method for identifying,

analyzing and reporting patterns within data, guided analysis for the pictorial

representation activity (Braun & Clarke, 2008).

Determining Essential Themes

Creswell suggests that the researcher review the transcribed interviews multiple

times in their entirety to immerse themselves in the details in order to obtain a sense of

the interview as a whole prior to breaking it into parts (2013). After engaging in this first

step of data analysis, I embarked upon Moustakas's (1994) process of horizonalization.

Horizonalization is defined as the process of going through interview transcripts to

highlight significant statements, sentences or quotes that provide an understanding of

how the participant experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). While I did not use

empirical or transcendental phenomenology for this inquiry, the process of

horizonalization proved to be helpful in reducing the sheer volume of data gathered

through 30 interviews.

For the next step in data analysis, I leaned heavily on Lichtman's *Three C's of*

Data Analysis model (Lichtman, 2013). In her model, Lichtman outlines the

transformation of data into codes, then into categories, and finally into concepts (themes or domains) (2013). The first step of this model involves initial coding, where the researcher identifies a word, a phrase or the respondent's own words with the sole purpose of moving from a large amount of raw data to an overarching summary or category (Lichtman, 2013). The next step is to revisit initial coding which involves collapsing and/or renaming codes to reduce redundancy (Lichtman, 2013). In the third step, researchers further refine data and begin to organize the codes into categories (Lichtman, 2013). During this stage, codes can be identified as being major topics while other codes can be grouped under a subset of a major topic (Lichtman, 2013). Step four and five involve modifying the initial list of categories, combining categories, determining the importance of each category and again removing redundancies (Lichtman, 2013). This stage is often completed while rereading transcripts (Lichtman, 2013). The final step is to identify key concepts that reflect the overall meaning and lived experience in a succinct manner (Lichtman, 2013).

Drawing from the practices outlined by both Lichtman (2013) and Moustakas (1994), I reduced the data into essential themes or domains. The following overarching domains were determined: relational trust and classroom community and culture; emotional and physical regulation; system-level support: purposeful implementation; system-level support: backgrounds and teacher coaching; and accountability with compassion. Lichtman's model is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Three Cs of Data Analysis: Codes, Categories, Concepts (Lichtman, 2013)
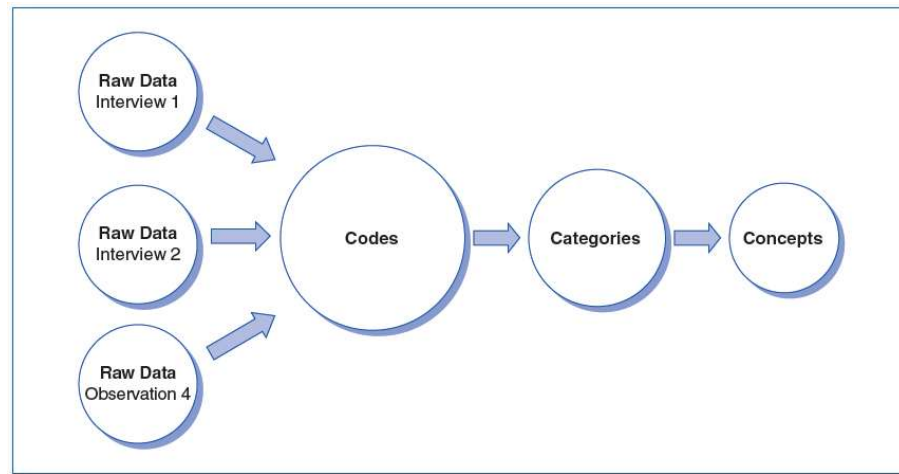
Pictorial Representation Analysis

Thematic analysis loosely guided analysis for each participant's pictorial representation. According to Braun and Clarke, there are typically six phases of thematic analysis (2006). Phase one involves familiarizing oneself with the data and noting down initial ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Phases two and three involve generating initial codes and then revising and collapsing the codes into potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During phases four and five, the researcher reviews possible themes and further defines and names them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, during phase six, the researcher completes a final analysis and produces the write up of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As it pertains to this inquiry, I began analysis by familiarizing myself with each picture immediately after it was created (phase one). While initial impressions were noted during phase one, all pictorial representation analysis was paused until after essential themes were developed from the interview data. Once the five essential themes

were finalized, I returned to pictorial representation analysis and engaged in phase four of thematic analysis. During this phase, pictorial representations were analyzed to determine how each pictorial representation aligned with the essential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, I engaged in phase five of thematic analysis to ensure that I was in complete agreement of how each picture embodied each theme or sub-theme. Phase six, or the write-up of analysis was incorporated into each participant's narrative and then sent to each participant for member checking.

Experiential and Thematic Writing

Van Manen (2016) suggests that phenomenology cannot be separated from the practice of writing. In this type of research, writing is not merely the final step in the research process, but rather an integral part of the research and analysis. Through the process of writing a narrative of each participant's interviews, the researcher was able to bring each individual's story and lived experience to life.

As a part of this process, there were three writing phases. The first phase took place after the process of horizonalization. During this phase, my goal was to characterize the overall essence of what the participant shared. Thematic draft writing which van Manen (2016) characterizes as summarizing the themes that identify the heart or essence of the phenomenon was used. During this stage, I also triangulated identified themes through each participant's pictorial representation. After each summary was written and edited, the summary was emailed to each participant in an attempt to solicit feedback, clarify questions and engage in the process of member checking. When member checking, the researcher solicits each participant's view of the credibility of

findings and interpretations (Creswell, 2013). It is considered to be the most critical technique for establishing credibility, and in turn validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All summary statements were emailed out over a break in the subsequent school year during a time when participants may have had more time to read and respond. Of the ten participants, five replied to the email and all five indicated that the thematic summary accurately depicted what they felt they wanted to convey during the interview process.

The second phase of writing consisted of adding experiential narratives into each summary. During experiential writing, the researcher begins to weave anecdotes, stories, examples and images that embody the phenomenon through the perspective of the participant (van Manen, 2016). The third phase of writing involved editing redundancies.

Summary

This study used qualitative phenomenology to investigate the experiences, attitudes, perceptions and barriers of successful trauma-informed practices implementation at the conclusion of a school year. Participants were elementary or middle school teachers in an urban K-8 school who met inclusionary criteria. Data was collected primarily through a series of three interviews; however, a drawing activity was incorporated into the second interview to provide an additional layer of richness and meaning. Data was analyzed primarily through reflection of essential themes, as well as experiential and thematic writing.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This study investigated how teachers interpreted and integrated trauma-informed practices into their classroom. Furthermore, this study also explored the personal and professional barriers that influenced implementation. Given that research questions were focused on the experiences, attitudes, perceptions and resulting actions of individuals, which are all variables that cannot be easily measured through quantitative measures, a qualitative, phenomenological approach was chosen for this inquiry. The research questions that anchored the research are as follows:

What practices do teachers implement in their classrooms according to personal perceptions of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy?

What personal barriers impact teachers' implementation of trauma-informed practices within their classrooms?

What professional or organizational barriers impact implementation of trauma-informed practices within a school system?

Chapter four presents findings that emerged from a series of three interviews with ten participants who were all members of the teaching faculty at an urban K-8 school. All ten of the participants met inclusionary criteria of having taught at the K-8 for the entire school year and participated in all activities that were part of the trauma-informed practices initiative in the school. The semi-structured interview protocol provided a

rich opportunity for participants to share their thoughts, experiences and important takeaways. Topics explored included practical aspects of trauma-informed practices, perceived barriers, and essential components for effective implementation. To add rigor, complexity and richness to the inquiry, an additional pictorial representation activity was incorporated into the interview protocol. Providing an opportunity for participants to express themselves in something other than a verbal format proved to be helpful in giving further insight into each participant's lived experience. Additionally, this also provided an opportunity for triangulation of data. In data triangulation, multiple and different sources or methods are used to provide additional evidence of overall themes and perspectives of an individual's lived experience (Creswell, 2013).

Throughout the entirety of analysis, theme reflection based on each participant's data became an important part of the overall picture. However, when the data was examined as a whole, it started to paint an everchanging picture of what trauma-informed practices could look like depending on the perspective of the individual. This picture reminded me of the view one sees when looking through a simple kaleidoscope.

According to Merriam-Webster, a kaleidoscope is an instrument based on multiple reflections (n.d.). It forms several images all depending on the angle in which it is viewed (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Each image or pattern can be altered simply by an individual changing the perspective by rotating the tube (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). This metaphor of the kaleidoscope can be applied to each participant's story. Each individual's lived experience depended on how they viewed trauma-informed practices (or held their kaleidoscope) according to their own personal perspectives and

backgrounds, as well as how often their view shifted (or how often they rotated their own personal kaleidoscope).

Throughout the remainder of this chapter, the stories and lived experiences of study participants will be shared to paint a picture of the essential emerging themes, answer research questions and relate how each individual may have viewed the kaleidoscope of trauma-informed practices.

Participant Narratives

Generating multi-page summaries of participant stories is one component of the interpretive writing process in phenomenology research according to Crist and Tanner (2002). Doing so gives voice to the lived experiences of each individual and helps foster a deeper connection to lives, perspectives and stories. Additionally, each narrative also gives insight into the manner in which each participant may have viewed the trauma-informed practices kaleidoscope.

Elementary School Teachers

Julie.

Julie is a Hispanic female between the ages of 21 – 29. She holds a Bachelor's degree and has always been fascinated by the field of education. Julie's dad had to drop out of school in sixth grade to start working and as a result, instilled in her the value of education. Her junior year of high school, Julie completed a teacher cadet program and worked with fifth graders every afternoon after school. It was hard work, but Julie fell in love with teaching as a result of the experience. Additionally, Julie did not see a great deal of diversity in her teachers growing up and felt called to the vocation so that she

could teach those who were familiar with her culture and her first language of Spanish. This is Julie's first year teaching. At the urban K-8, Julie partnered with one of her colleagues and taught an English-speaking fourth grade in the morning and a Spanish-speaking fourth grade in the afternoon.

Over the course of the three interviews, Julie spoke a great deal about the importance of relational trust, consistency and expectations when implementing trauma-informed practices. She also believed that building a caring and welcoming classroom community was essential to ensuring that students feel safe. She noted that building relationships was the hardest thing she had to do since there were so many students in her classroom who were already escalated by the school experience. However, with consistency and lots of love and trust, Julie was able to see all of her students grow and become more successful students. Vulnerability, which for the purposes of this inquiry is defined as allowing oneself to be seen as willing to take risks and make mistakes (Brown, 2012), was a reoccurring theme in Julie's lived experience. She also described several practical strategies that she found to be effective.

Julie felt quite supported as she implemented trauma-informed practices this past school year and noted that her instructional coach was instrumental in helping her to see how she could better implement some of the strategies. Julie disclosed that she felt as if she could use more active skill building and practice in this area so she would feel more confident in challenging situations.

Julie's pictorial representation (Figure 2) focused on the importance of community. She noted that feeling a sense of community was essential when

implementing trauma-informed practices and that this community should be fluid

amongst all environments.

Figure 2

Julie's Pictorial Representation
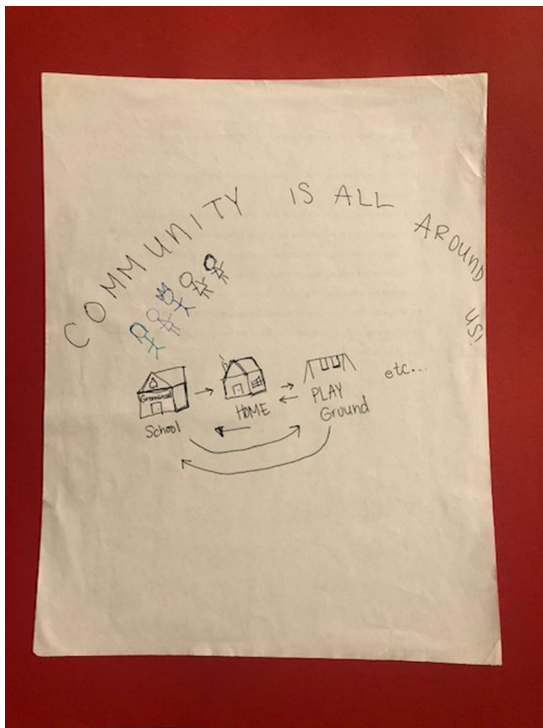
Eva.

Eva is a kindergarten teacher for Spanish-speaking students at the urban K-8 and

is a Hispanic female between the ages of 30 – 39. Eva holds a master's degree and has

been teaching for several years (5 – 10 years). This is her first year of teaching at the

urban K-8; however, she has been teaching in the same district as the urban K-8 for

approximately 4 years.

Eva grew up in Nogales, Arizona. Spanish was Eva's first language and she

spoke that language exclusively with her peers and family, but only received instruction

in school in English. Eva noted that she struggled a lot in school because she was an English language learner and felt like she had several unsupportive teachers growing up. When Eva was a senior in high school, one of her teachers even exclaimed that he was surprised that Eva had not dropped out of school already. As a result of her experiences growing up, Eva felt drawn to the field of education and decided to become a teacher.

Even though Eva felt like she was blessed with a very easy class this past school year, she was fully invested in trauma-informed practices. Throughout the interview sequence, Eva touched on the importance of self-care as an educator. She also discussed the importance of having time to process and reflect on her days with her colleagues, the importance of having opportunities to receive coaching support, and how essential it is for her to have a team available to help her action plan through difficult situations. Eva also focused a great deal on the importance of establishing a safe community atmosphere in her classroom where all students of all grades could have a voice.

For her pictorial representation (Figure 3), Eva chose to list words that she felt best represented trauma-informed practices and what they meant to her. She included the following words: collaboration, student voice, inclusion, community (classroom community and school community), self-awareness, teamwork, welcome, Culturally Linguistic and Diverse Education (CLD Education), opportunity, unity, and open mindedness. When describing her picture, Eva elaborated on the reasons why she put each of the words on her picture and especially emphasized how important it was for her students to feel a sense of belonging. She believes that if students feel like they belong in a classroom and have a strong sense of community at school, then whenever something is

going on at home, at least they can feel loved and supported by the teacher and the other classmates when at school.

Figure 3

Eva's Pictorial Representation
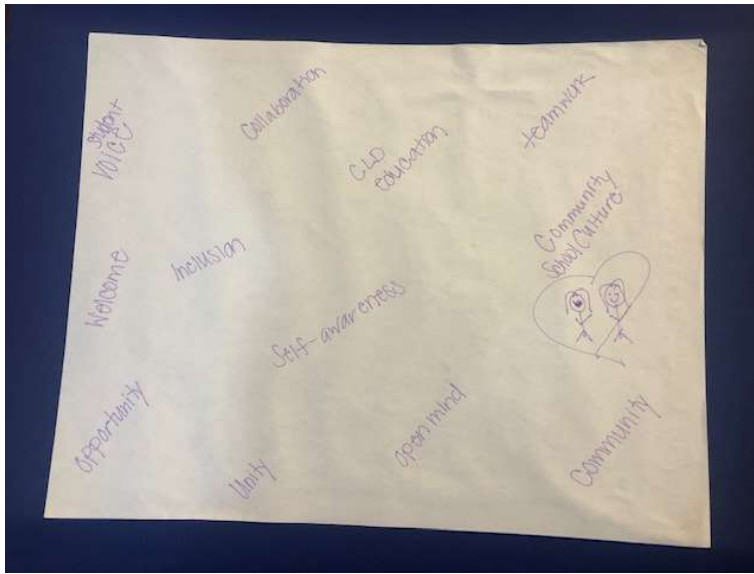
Jenn.

At the urban K-8 school, Jenn is employed as a half-time intervention teacher for the elementary school and a half-time instructional coach and evaluator. Prior to this role, Jenn taught fifth grade for the urban K-8. She has been a bilingual (Spanish/English) educator at this school for the last 12 years and has a total of 15 years of teaching experience. Jenn identifies as a White, Non-Hispanic female between the ages of 30 – 39.

Jenn knew she wanted to pursue teaching ever since she was a little girl. She is a teaching legacy as her mother was a teacher. Jenn believed her mother's vocation, as well as her own personal experience in Detroit Public Schools, influenced who she has

become as an adult and the profession she ultimately pursued. Although Jenn was very successful academically, she really struggled with social connections and regulating her own emotions. However, the connections that she made with the adults in her elementary school still stick with her and she can still actively name the people who played a big role in her success. As a result, Jenn's life passion is to give back to the children who need love and connection the most.

Jenn's interviews were rich with stories outlining the effectiveness of trauma-informed practices. She enthusiastically talked about current student successes that she attributed to the practice and related her knowledge gained over the course of the school year to previous school experiences when she was teaching fifth grade.

Jenn also focused a great deal on the practical strategies of trauma-informed practices and the effectiveness of certain classroom tools. She was vocal about being purposeful in the implementation of trauma-informed practices and adamantly accentuated the importance of implementing trauma-informed practices in a manner that aligns with underlying theory while remaining authentic to the teaching style and personality of the educator.

When describing her pictorial representation (Figure 4), Jenn narrated that she chose to draw eyes as a focal point as a way to symbolize the need to fully "see" an individual or a community. She then surrounded the eyes with a heart to represent the importance of concentrating on the heart of a person or a community. Finally, she added a drawing of a brain to stress the importance of understanding the fight, flight and freeze response when working with people of all ages. Lastly, Jenn believed that it is also

essential to build on each individual's strengths (represented by a muscle and a brick wall) rather than focus on weaknesses.

Figure 4

Jenn's Pictorial Representation

T. Bone.

T. Bone taught a fourth/fifth grade split class at the urban K-8 and had been employed at the school for the past two years. She has 26 years of experience teaching and has worked in a couple of different school districts in the area. T. Bone identifies herself as being a White, non-Hispanic female between the ages of 50 – 59. She holds a Master's degree.

T. Bone originally attended college for political science and sociology. She spent five years working for an insurance company after graduation and eventually decided that she was in the wrong vocation. T. Bone grew up in a family of educators and believed that her next step should be to return to school to obtain her Master's degree in Education.

One of the strongest themes noted in T. Bone's story was the importance of establishing relational trust with students. She told a heartfelt and highly emotional story about establishing a strong, trusting relationship with one of her students who revealed that she had been sexually assaulted for the past two years. T. Bone immediately jumped into action, reported the allegation and the student was placed in a safe environment as a result. This event was life altering for T. Bone and clearly strengthened her confidence in the effectiveness of trauma-informed practices.

In addition, T. Bone emphasized the importance of consistency and talked about how she built a mindfulness practice into her daily schedule with the students. While this practice was new for the students, by the end of the school year she honestly believed that the kids enjoyed it and looked forward to it every day. T. Bone also mentioned that she felt the system-wide vision of implementing trauma-informed practices held her accountable. However, she would have liked more frequent opportunities for check-ins and time to reflect with her colleagues.

T. Bone's pictorial representation focused a great deal on the idea of safety (Figure 5). She believed schools should strive for obtaining a high level of relational trust and safety for students so that they can thrive and be protected from the "outside world".

Figure 5

T. Bone's Pictorial Representation
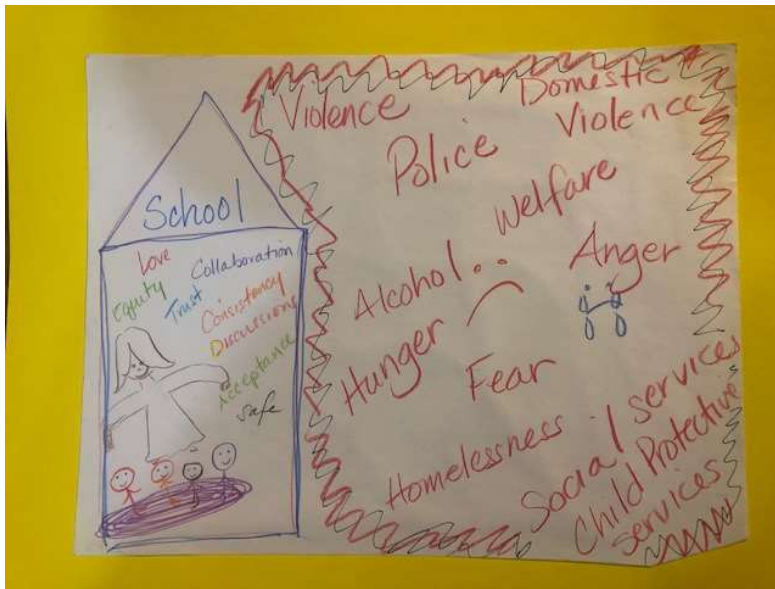
Nina.

Nina is a White, Non-Hispanic, second-grade teacher at urban K-8. She is

between the ages of 20 – 29 and has been teaching for five years. Nina is currently

working on obtaining her master's degree. From a very young age, Nina knew that she

always wanted to be a teacher and entered into college in Wisconsin with that ultimate

goal in mind. However, Wisconsin was "too small" for her and after two years, Nina

transferred to a college in Chicago where she completed her degree in urban education.

Nina believes that her passion for urban education grew out of the field work that she

engaged in on the south and west sides of Chicago. Nina also noted that that her personal

experiences growing up in Des Moines also contributed to her current vocational path.

Nina highly believes in the vision of trauma-informed practices and described

several students who benefited greatly from this practice in her classroom. She also

described multiple practical strategies that she personally implemented within her classroom including mindfulness, morning meetings, yoga, regulation strategies, problem solving skills, community building activities and de-escalation strategies. Nina opted to develop her own materials that she used to teach social/emotional learning stating that the felt she could meet the needs of her students in a more authentic manner without a scripted curriculum.

Nina was a strong advocate for implementing trauma-informed practices using a systems-level approach and frequently mentioned this as being an obstacle for effective implementation this past school year. She believed that she was often in her own personal classroom "bubble" this past school year and rarely was supported by leadership. She also became quite frustrated by disciplinary actions of the administration for challenging behaviors that she felt re-traumatized the students. Nina also suggested the use of non-negotiable practices to assist with teacher accountability and to help trauma-informed practices become more practical and concrete.

When describing her pictorial representation (represented in Figure 6), Nina noted how important it was to put students in the middle with all of the supports pointing towards the students. She also discussed the importance of valuing other people's perspectives and teaching them how to problem solve and highly believed in the necessity of classrooms being safe spaces for students. She also was quite passionate about teaching emotional regulation skills and noted the importance of checking one's own personal biases frequently.

Figure 6

Nina's Pictorial Representation
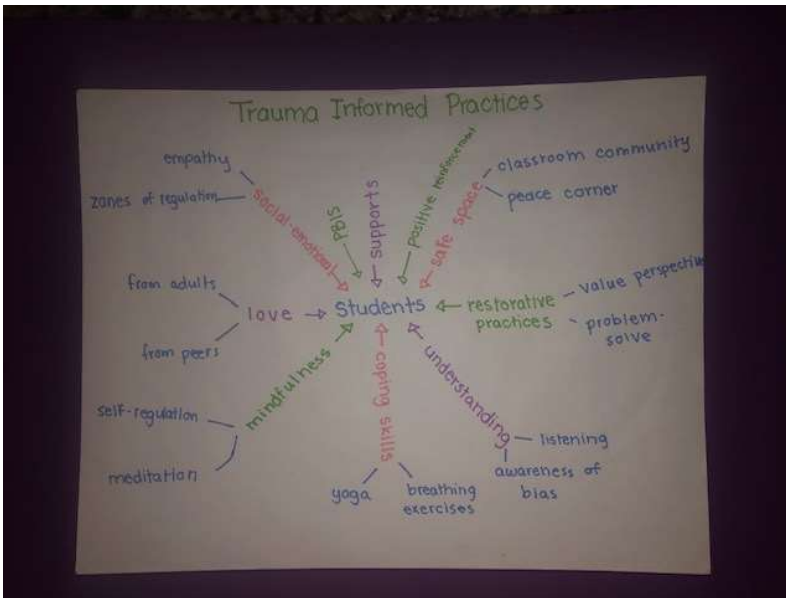
Middle School Teachers

Bubba.

Bubba is a white, non-Hispanic male with degrees in government, international politics and foreign language. He became a teacher through an alternative licensing program and has been employed at the urban K-8 for the past 5 years as a bilingual educator. Bubba describes himself as a 12-year old in a 35-year old body and believes that his sense of humor and child-like interests are a benefit to him as a teacher of middle school students. For the past few school years, he has taught sixth grade math at the urban K-8.

Bubba grew up in an affluent suburb outside of Philadelphia. As a student, Bubba enjoyed academic success and was able to engage in educational and leadership opportunities, such as student council, People to People and student ambassadors. He

also was able to participate in a program where he lived in Spain with a family for a few weeks and then in exchange, a student from that family came to the United States to live with him. In college, Bubba completed an internship at an after-school program for Spanish-speaking students and started to explore the idea of becoming an educator. In 2010, Bubba signed up to be a substitute teacher and after a year, enrolled in a program to obtain his alternative teaching licensure. Bubba has been highly appreciative of the educational opportunities that he had growing up and believes that if it weren't for them, he wouldn't be where he is today.

Bubba emphasized the importance of relational trust throughout all three of his interviews and illustrated his point by telling a story about a recent interaction with an elementary leveled student from the urban K-8. Bubba engaged this student in casual conversation and asked him about his previous school year and his teacher. This student exclaimed that he loved this past school year and his teacher was "absolutely the best". When Bubba probed a little further, this student elaborated on events throughout the school year that highlighted how much this student loved his teacher and the relational trust that she had established with him and her class as a whole. Concurrently, Bubba also reflected on how difficult he felt it was to establish this level of relational trust in a middle school environment when he only had a short amount of time with the majority of his students due to the classroom structure. An additional component noted in Bubba's transcripts was the importance of establishing strong relationships with the families of his students. Bubba highly believed in the power of home visits to connect with his students on a deeper level.

Another overarching theme throughout Bubba's interviews was the necessity of having a strong team to provide support to educators when implementing trauma-informed practices. Bubba valued being able to collaborate with others on his team, as well as those with more specialized training, such as special educators and mental health providers. This team approach will be highly beneficial to Bubba as he continues to gain confidence in his ability to implement trauma-informed practices more effectively.

Finally, Bubba passionately described several ideas on how to implement trauma-informed practices with purpose and how to overcome the barriers that he felt throughout the course of the school year. Bubba believes that if a school is going to have the vision of becoming trauma-informed (which he believed was an effective practice), then it needs to be a focus for everything that is done in the school. This means that theory, knowledge and concepts should be revisited frequently, time should be allotted for reflection and processing in teams, and practical strategies should be incorporated into coaching conversations as much as possible.

Bubba's pictorial representation (Figure 7) was a comic strip and emphasized the team approach to trauma-informed practices. Additionally, when describing his picture, Bubba also discussed the importance of educators to be able to regulate their own emotions before addressing students and to consistently practice patience.

Figure 7

Bubba's Pictorial Representation
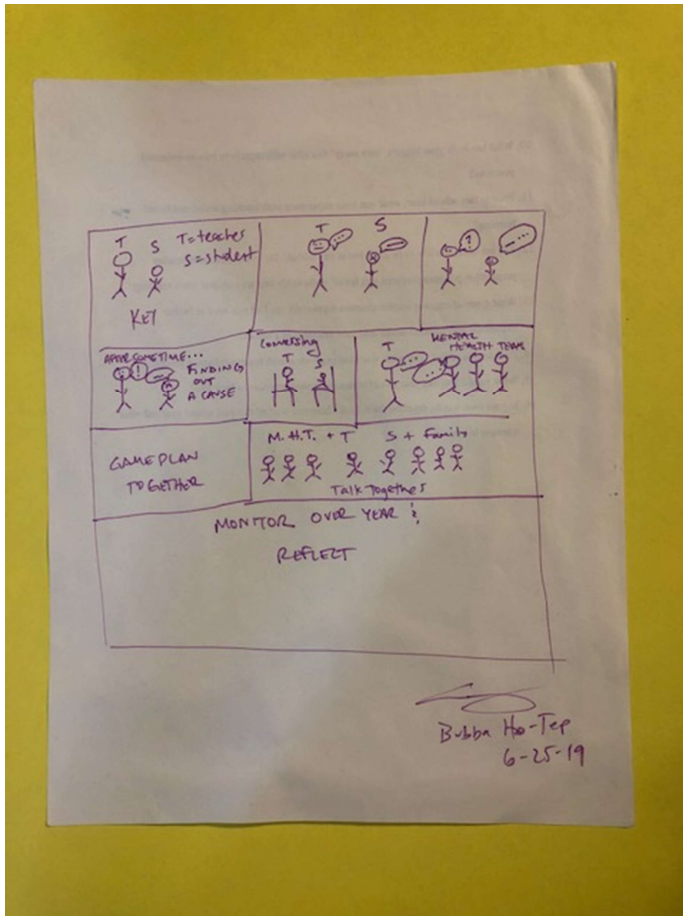
Penny.

Penny is a veteran teacher at the urban K-8 school. She has been teaching for 26 years and has been employed at the urban K-8 as a teacher for over 16 years. Penny identifies as a White, Non-Hispanic female between the ages of 40 – 49 with a Master's degree. At the urban K-8 school, Penny is a half-time gifted and talented teacher for middle school students and a half-time instructional coach and evaluator for other teachers in the building. While the half-time instructional coach and evaluator role was

new for her this school year, Penny has been the gifted and talented teacher at the urban K-8 for several years.

Penny started out in computer software sales in Chicago when she was in her 20s, but quickly realized that computer software was not her calling. Deep down Penny knew that she had a desire to work with children. When she was presented with the opportunity to shadow one of her good friends who was a teacher in Chicago, she eagerly accepted. That experience was positive and solidified Penny's next decision to enroll in graduate school to pursue a degree in education. After graduating from graduate school, Penny was hired as a teacher in an elementary school. She disclosed that she struggled significantly her first year of teaching, but also indicated that she had learned a great deal. She also believed that she had learned a lot of strategies over her entire career of teaching and felt like this knowledge assisted her in implementing trauma-informed practices more effectively.

The majority of Penny's experiences of trauma-informed practices over the course of the school year were told from her perspective of being a veteran teacher, as well as an instructional coach and evaluator. She frequently mused about how she would coach and guide new teachers to implement trauma-informed practices in a more effective manner. Penny believed that relationships were critical with trauma-informed practices and reiterated multiple times that if students don't like the teacher as an individual, they immediately lose trust. However, if they feel like you authentically listen to them and are ultimately there to support them, then they will work. She also highly believed in establishing relational trust between herself and the families of her students.

There were a few obstacles and barriers that hindered effective implementation of trauma-informed practices according to Penny's perspective. These barriers included inconsistent support from leadership, punitive discipline practices and a lack of overall support with challenging students. That being said, Penny believed in the vision of trauma-informed practices and was pleased with the purposeful manner in which it was rolled out in her school. She believed that the use of data and allowing the staff to have a voice in certain aspects of the implementation was quite effective.

As Penny described her pictorial representation (Figure 8), she again highlighted how important trauma-informed practices and community building were to trauma-informed practices. Additionally, Penny also emphasized the idea of ensuring equity for all students, engaging in self-care whenever possible, and the idea of acknowledging each individual as a whole.

Figure 8

Penny's Pictorial Representation
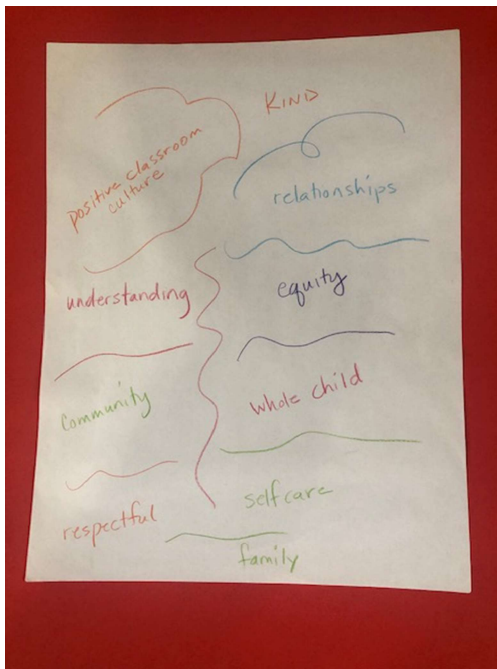
Bob.

Bob is a White, Non-Hispanic male who teaches math at urban K-8. He is

between the ages of 21 – 29 and has a master's degree. Bob just finished his third year of

teaching and has only taught at the urban K-8. Bob disclosed that he didn't get his

teaching degree in college, but instead minored in education with a major in political

science. He was very interested in educational policy and noticed that a lot of individuals

who focus on policy do not have any practical classroom experience. As a result, Bob

decided to do an Americorp program where he was working in a classroom, but not

teaching to see if he really wanted to go into the teaching field or not. However, Bob fell

in love with teaching in a way that he didn't anticipate. He then completed a one-year

teaching residency program that was based in a school in the district where he currently

works. He felt like it was important to do his residency in an environment where he would have the ability to work with the student population where he felt most the comfortable.

Bob grew up in an upper middle class suburb of Boston. Even though Bob was successful in school, he didn't really enjoy it. Bob disclosed that the demographics of the school where he personally attended and the resources afforded to it are vastly different from the school where he works. Overall, he believes that there is inequality in how education is delivered. This is what drove him into the classroom in the first place. Bob divulged that he was a very quiet student and has had to really push himself into asserting his own personality in his own classroom.

Bob believes that trauma-informed practices is a very effective approach to take and talked about several different takeaways that can be attributed to the importance of setting expectations and routine, establishing relational trust, regulating one's own emotions and tone of voice and holding kids accountable, but in a way that is compassionate and trauma-informed. Bob recognizes that his own personal experiences growing up are different then the experiences of the students at urban K-8 and he constantly reminds himself that he may not know the context or life story of every student in this class.

Bob also focused a great deal on trauma-informed practices as a way of reframing what teachers would typically think of as a behavior issue and acknowledged that there is a learning curve in really understanding how to apply these practices in the school. He also realized that trauma-informed practices is not necessarily something that's going to

immediately fix every problem and it needs to be revisited frequently. Being authentic to oneself as an individual is a very important aspect of trauma-informed practices in Bob's eyes. He passionately believes that authenticity is an essential aspect to teaching anything in the classroom, especially when teaching middle school students. He noted that his students immediately sensed when he was not fully invested in what he was teaching.

Bob believed that although he was able to effectively implement trauma-informed practices in his classroom, one of the biggest barriers that he noticed was the lack of school-wide vision that permeated everything. He believed it would have been more successful if it was a little bit more uprooted in coaching and in performance evaluations.

Bob's pictorial representation of what trauma-informed practices meant to him was depicted in a word collage (Figure 9). He indicated that he wrote down words that immediately came to him as encompassing the idea. He also disclosed that he purposefully wrote down the word "assumptions" and then crossed the word out as a way to symbolize the importance of setting aside bias and assumptions in order to adapt to a new way of thinking.

Figure 9

Bob's Pictorial Representation

Lolie.

Lolie is an Asian female who grew up in China. She is between the ages of 30 – 39. English is Lolie's second language and her native language is Mandarin Chinese. She has been teaching for several years (between 5 – 10); however, this is the first year of teaching for Lolie in her current school district and at the urban K-8 school. Lolie first began teaching in the United States in 2015 at a charter school. She is an eighth-grade math teacher at the urban K-8.

Lolie disclosed that she did not originally plan to be a teacher, but while she was in college in China she was asked to be a substitute English teacher at a vocational university. She jumped at the opportunity and experienced great success in this position. After graduating from college, Lolie moved on to get her master's degree and was

employed at a local college in China to teach English. Approximately two years after taking that role, new policy emerged stating that in order to become a tenured teacher or professor at the college level professors would need to obtain a PhD. After one more year of teaching at the college in China, Lolie decided to return to graduate school, but this time, in the United States. Lolie received her PhD in curriculum and instruction, met her husband and settled down. She can't imagine returning to China at this point in her life.

Lolie grew up in a society that is very different from the United States and she believes that her personal experiences in China heavily influenced her professional practices as a teacher, as well as her implementation of trauma-informed practices. She frequently equated her understanding of trauma-informed practices to an individual experiencing "culture shock" (the feeling of fear and uncertainty whenever immersed in a new culture with a new language). As a result, Lolie often talked a lot about how difficult this past school year was for her and expressed that her confidence in implementation of trauma-informed practices was at a four or five (on a ten-point scale with ten being the highest). However, she was excited to start the new school year with a new understanding and practical ideas to try.

Lolie's lived experience of trauma-informed practice focused mostly on the overall vision and reasons why this practice can be so successful, as well as the importance of establishing connections and relational trust with her students. Lolie shared several stories to support the effectiveness of relational trust. Additionally, she also talked about the need for a school-wide systemic change to support this mindset shift

with coaching support and frequent opportunities to discuss and reflect on trauma-informed practices with her colleagues.

Lolie drew a Buddha like image as her pictorial representation of trauma-informed practices (Figure 10). She believed that trauma-informed practice can lead students and teachers to feel a sense of calmness in their lives. Lolie also emphasized that trauma-informed practice is beneficial to both students and teachers. She wrote on the side of her Buddha drawing, "Buddha, a trusted, calm and stable source for students and myself"; "Peace of mind"; and "Relieved after helping students and keeping myself calm". Although Lolie did not talk explicitly about the importance of self-regulation, her pictorial representation suggests that for her, self-regulation is also a strong component of trauma-informed practices.

Figure 10

Lolie's Pictorial Representation
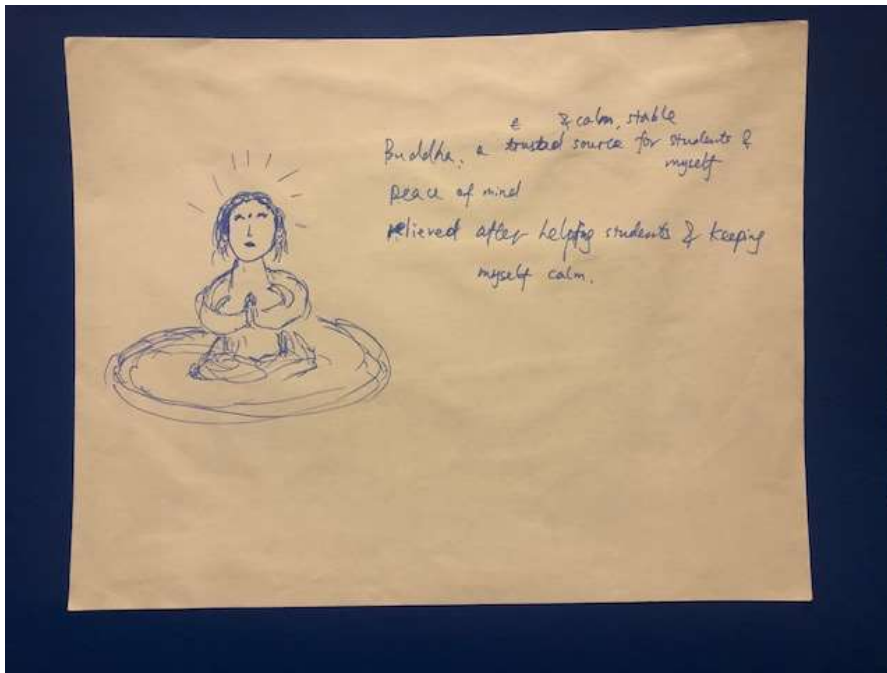
Molly.

Molly categorized herself in the 30 – 39 age range and is a white, non-Hispanic

female. She has been teaching for 10 years and has been employed at the urban K-8 for

the last four years. Molly has a master's degree in journalism and was first hired by a

school district in Colorado as a communications specialist. When that position was

eliminated, she returned to working in higher education public relations and media

marketing. Molly never anticipated going into teaching; however, her love of being with

students and personal service eventually led her to the path of teaching. Molly stated that

her teacher preparation program did not prepare her for teaching in her current school

district because the demographics and needs of the students were significantly different

from her practicum experiences. She is considered to be a teaching legacy as her mother

is a lifetime educator who originally started out her career in school counseling and then moved into being an assistant principal and then a principal. At the urban K-8, Molly taught journalism to middle school (6 – 8th) students.

Molly's understanding and lived experience of trauma-informed practices focused mainly on the importance of expectations and routine, relational trust, ensuring that students feel like they are a part of a community in the classroom and striving to find ways to give all students a voice. Molly believed that trauma-informed practices is, "probably the most important thing that one can teach or that one can do in their classroom above and beyond any curriculum or instruction". She saw great success using this approach and even wrote a story about a student who she struggled with over the course of the year. This story focused on how a relationship with a student evolved after modeling vulnerability (willing to take risks and make mistakes) and establishing relational trust. According to Molly, more traditional education approaches "do not recognize the students as individuals or the humanity of a classroom experience."

For her, the barriers to implementation focused mostly on the lack of coaching or administration support. Molly indicated that her school was a very individualistic community rather than being team or school/community-based (which she felt was a barrier to her success in implementation). She discussed the importance of ensuring that all individuals in the building feel supported and valued in their work as individuals. She continued on to say that if administration is not taking a trauma-informed practice approach to supporting their staff, then educators will struggle to fully take a trauma-informed practice approach to supporting their students. Molly also believed that her

school did not have a flexible mindset. She noted that there appeared to be a strong emphasis on following the rules and struggled with the belief that schools have a tendency to run in a very traditional manner; however, students typically do not process when students do not typically process in this way. Molly also believed that self-care is essential to this work; however, it is important to not just talk about self-care with teachers, it actually needs to be supported and encouraged.

Molly's pictorial representation of trauma-informed practices focused mostly on classroom space and environment and providing a space where students feel welcome and a part of the community. She also discussed how important it was for students to be able to express themselves in a variety of ways. Molly's pictorial representation can be found in Figure 11.

Figure 11

Molly's Pictorial Representation
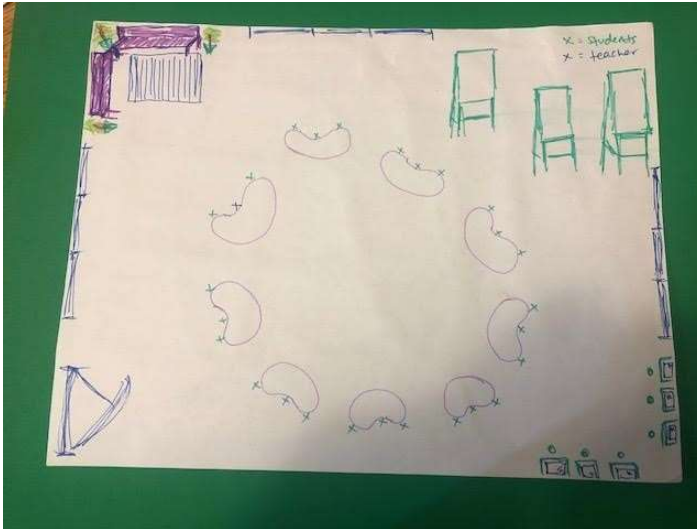
Identification of Themes

Lichtman's model (2013), the *Three Cs of Data Analysis* was used as the primary mode of analysis. According to this model, a researcher first engages in initial coding through careful reading of each transcript (Lichtman, 2013). Step two of this model involves revisiting the initial codes, renaming them and reducing redundancies (Lichtman, 2013). As I embarked on this initial step of analysis, I found myself naturally coding larger chunks of information while concurrently modifying codes and reducing redundancies as I read through each interview transcript. As such, codes were reviewed and revised in a fluid manner throughout the entire coding process as opposed to engaging in two distinct steps. After the initial analysis, each transcript was read again to ensure that each one of the codes accurately represented what I felt each piece of data was trying to convey. As a result of this process, 32 unique codes were identified. The

third step of Lichtman's model is to further organize the data and develop an initial list of categories and the fourth step is to modify and further refine the categories (2013). Again, I engaged in both step three and four in a fluid and circular manner as I believed it was more authentic to my own personal style, as well as the process as a whole. During step five of Lichtman's model, categories are revisited to remove redundancies and identify critical elements (2013). Through this progression, 12 categories were developed and clear overarching themes began to emerge. Relational trust appeared to be a strong overarching theme in the majority of interview transcripts. Additionally, finding ways to authentically meet the needs of students in a way that makes sense to the teacher was also seen as being a reoccurring theme. Table 4 outlines the initial codes and categories identified, in no particular order.

Table 4

Initial codes and categories according to Lichtman's (2013) Three Cs of Data Analysis

Initial Codes	Identified Categories
• Supportive Relationship and investment in teachers • Consistency • Expectations and Routine • Relational Trust • Community/Welcomed/Voice	• Relational Trust • Classroom Community • Trauma-informed practices checklists • Practical strategies • Self-reflection • Authenticity

Initial Codes	Identified Categories
• Vulnerability (willing to take risks and make mistakes)	• Its not about you
• Effective Practice	• Social Emotional Skill Building
• Backgrounds	• System Level Support
• Practical Strategies	• Vision
• Mindset Shift	• Mental models and meeting teachers where they are at
• Professional Barriers	• Accountability with Compassion
• Leadership Barriers	
• Self-Care	
• Meaningful Work	
• Authenticity	
• Teacher Accountability	
• Accountability with Compassion	
• Importance of Self-Regulation	
• Time to process/reflect/collaborate	
• Safe Space	
• Never really done	
• Team Approach	
• Trauma-informed practices preparation	

Initial Codes	Identified Categories
• Revisiting TIP Frequently	
• Purposeful Implementation	
• Personal Barriers	
• Vision	
• Students need consequences	
• Meeting teachers where they are at	
• Family Trust	
• Don't take it personally	
• Checklists!	

The sixth and final step of Lichtman's model is to identify key concepts that reflect the overall meaning of all data collected in a succinct manner (2013). This involves moving from categories to overarching themes or domains (Lichtman, 2013). According to van Manen, it is essential to distinguish between themes that are able to describe the phenomenon with accuracy and those that may be incidentally related (1990). He believed that the essential quality of a theme is critical to the phenomenon and without it, the phenomenon is unable to truly be understood (van Manen, 1990). In other words, themes or domains are indispensable aspects of the phenomenon being studied (van Manen, 1990). As it relates to this particular inquiry, the five essential domains identified were: Relational Trust and Classroom Community and Culture; Emotional and Physical Regulation; System Level Support: Purposeful Implementation;

System-Level Support: Backgrounds and Teacher Coaching; and Accountability with

Compassion. Table 5 outlines each domain and the codes that were determined to align

with each area. Figure 12 provides an overarching visual of the five domains.

Table 5

Identified Domains and the Codes each Domain Encompasses

Domain	Codes	
Relational Trust and Classroom Community and Culture	• Relational Trust • Community/Welcomed Voice • Vulnerability (willing to take risks and make mistakes) • Authenticity	• Safe Space • Never Really Done • Family Trust • Checklists!
Emotional and Physical Regulation	• Consistency • Expectations and Routine • Importance of Self-Regulation	• Don't take it personally • Regulation for Students • Self-Care
Systems Level Support: Purposeful Implementation	• Vision • Effective Practice • Professional Barriers • Supportive Relationship and Investment in Teachers	• Meaningful Work • Teacher Accountability • Team Approach • Leadership Barriers
Systems Level Support: Backgrounds and Teacher Coaching	• Backgrounds • Mindset Shift • Time to Process/Reflect/Collaborate	• Meeting Teachers where they are at
Accountability with Compassion	• Consequences • Avoid Re-traumatization • Effective De-Escalation	

Figure 12

Trauma-Informed Practices Implementation Model
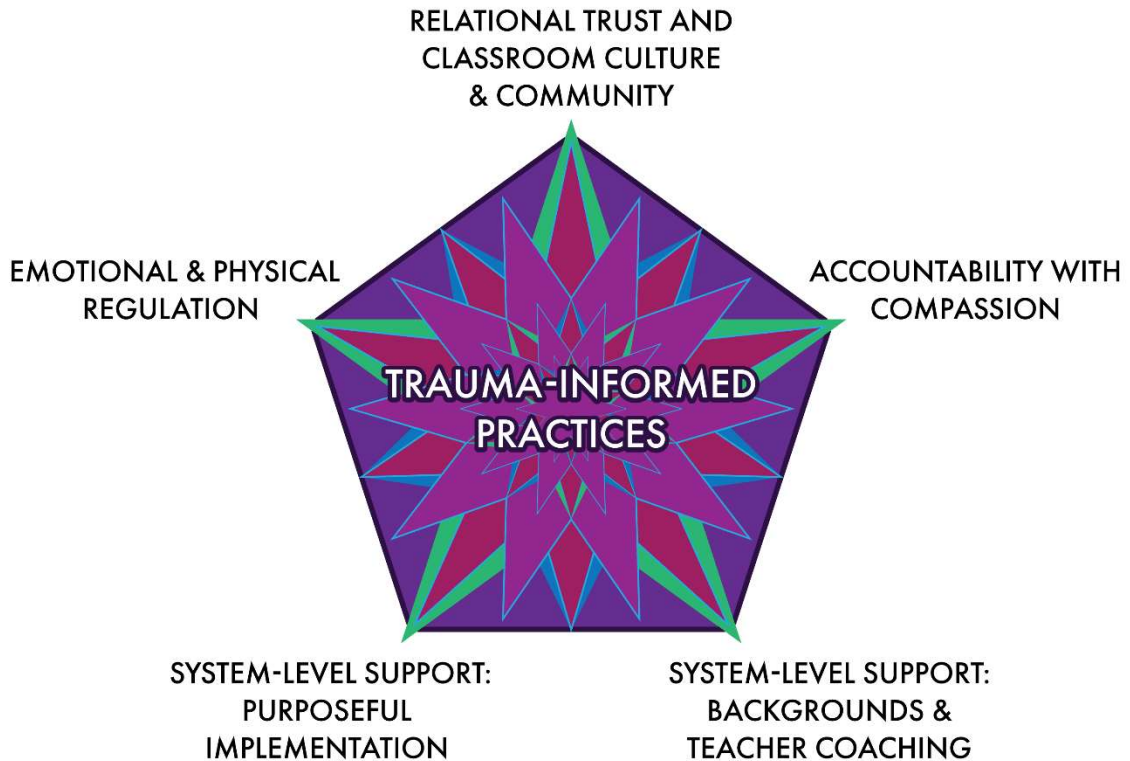
Essential Domain: Relational Trust and Classroom Culture and Community

Relational Trust and Classroom Culture and Community emerged as being one of the main components of trauma-informed practices at the urban K-8. Participant stories and experiences related to this domain centered around the importance of establishing relational trust, which can be construed as the feeling of connection that is developed through respect and trust between individuals. Additionally, this domain also encompassed participant ideas on the essential component of creating and maintaining a strong classroom community and culture.

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Relational Trust and Classroom Culture and Community

All ten participants mentioned multiple aspects of this domain throughout their interviews; however, Molly, a middle school journalism teacher saw relational trust as being the crux and foundation of trauma-informed practices:

> First and foremost, trauma-informed is about building relationships with the kids and getting to know them and really making the school and the classroom a safe and welcoming environment for them…you need to continue to go back to getting to know the kids, going to their sporting events, participating in clubs and activities and keeping them on your radar all of the time. Whether it is five minutes or ten minutes or once a week - anything that is going to make sure that it is not just done at the beginning of the year, but carried through daily. (Molly)

Penny, a middle school gifted and talented enrichment teacher also believed that relational trust was essential when implementing trauma-informed practices and a classroom culture. She added the following as it pertained to middle school students:

> I feel like trauma-informed practices emphasizes and encourages relationships more so than anything. I find with my middle schoolers especially, if they don't like you and feel like there is no relationship and you don't care about them, then you are dead in the water. If they like you and feel like you listen to them and are there to support them, then they will hands down work with you. (Penny)

Both Bubba and Bob, middle school math teachers, touched on how building connections with students in the classroom could relate to academic growth and success. Bubba told a story about a recent interaction with an elementary-aged student:

I was doing summer school this past summer and I talked to a kid who told me

about his fourth-grade teacher the year before. I asked him if he liked her. He

said, "Like, she was the best teacher I've ever had. She was the best." And I was

like, "wow, I really want to pass this information on to your teacher if I get the

chance. What was one cool thing you did in the class?" He said, "we got to

celebrate her birthday". I was like, "Oh, what'd you do for that?" He said "the

class got to have a party and it was amazing." It was so cool to hear his story and

know that his teacher had such a huge impact on that student. Her kids really

loved her and I know for a fact that her academic scores were pretty darn good,

too. There is probably a correlation between the two. (Bubba)

Bob also believed that there was a connection between academics and relationships and

how the two can interact under the umbrella of trauma-informed practices:

So if we want the academic work to look better, we have to show the kids that we

care about them. I think that in many ways, that's what trauma-informed practice

is. Its like a way of showing care and taking care of kids in a school and helping

them navigate their trauma or their emotional struggles. Kids won't produce

work for anyone they don't like. (Bob)

However, building relationships is not as easy as it seems according to several

participants. Both Jenn, an elementary intervention teacher and teacher leader, and Julie,

a fourth-grade teacher, passionately emphasized that although it is essential to build

relationships with students, building strong relationships with students can be

challenging. According to Jenn:

At my school, you have to know how to build relationships and how to engage the students and that can be really hard. We have students who are disengaged because of trauma at home and students who have been traumatized by their previous school experience. That is part of being a teacher at my school, you have to really know how to build relational trust and how to engage the kids in a compassionate way. I think the teachers who are the most successful are the ones who can make relationships with the kids. (Jenn)

Jenn continued on to explain how she has seen teachers struggle to build relationships with their students and how much it affected their classroom culture, behavior management and ultimately, their academic success. While gazing reflectively off into the distance during the interview, Julie explained how, as a brand new teacher, she had to change the way that she interacted with her class.

Building relationships was one of the hardest things I could do. I know there were students who I clicked with immediately and then there were other kids who would put up walls and they just had this perception that teachers are bad and teachers are not there for me. All year it was like breaking through the cracks and being like, I'm here for you. I don't care if we are always fighting. At the end of the day, I will be here for you. I had this aha moment early on in the school year when a parent reached out to me and said, my kid doesn't want to come to school. I knew that it wasn't the academics that they were struggling with, it was his relationship with me. (Julie)

Nina discussed the importance of consistency when building relationships even when there are challenges.

> I had one student who was very hesitant to build relationships with anybody. It took a lot of consistent practice. He like to tell me that he hated me and wanted a new teacher for Christmas. I often had to say, it's alright, I'm still going to be here for you and support you and love you, even if you want a new teacher for Christmas. You are stuck with me! I think just being there even in the moments when they are trying to push you away and not getting angry at them for that and saying over an over again, I still care about you makes a difference. He went from I hate school and you to climbing all over me and giving me hugs and telling me how much he loved me. With some, its going to be more challenging to build those relationships and they are going to show resistance, but in the long run, if you are there for them and show them that you are supportive, no matter what, then you will build a relationship with them. (Nina)

She continued on to connect the idea of relational trust and community to the support that can be found in a well-functioning family or a team.

> I refer to my students like we are a family and a team. We work together, we support each other and when one of us is failing, that affects all of us. And like if one of us is going great, then that affects all of us. It goes both ways. I very much preface the entire classroom experience as we are a team; we work together and we are all here to support you. (Nina)

Vulnerability

While there were several practical ideas discussed, one of the more impactful implementation aspects of this domain focused on the idea of vulnerability. More specifically, several participants elaborated on the importance of showing their own personal vulnerability in their classrooms in order to establish trust and strengthen relationships with their students. According to Dr. Brené Brown, vulnerability is defined as uncertainty, risk, emotional exposure and the willingness to make mistakes (2012). She further describes it as the source of hope, accountability, empathy, authenticity and trust. (Brown, 2012). Jenn named vulnerability as being one of the ways she turns to whenever she needs to create relational trust and classroom culture.

> My classroom culture is usually based around honesty, vulnerability and humor. I establish classroom culture by allowing myself to be vulnerable in the classroom and really putting myself out there and making sure students see me as human and as a part of the classroom culture, not the structure of it, but just another component of it, if you will. (Jenn)

Julie, Bob and Molly all voiced success stories about encounters with students this past school year that were clear turning points in how they interpreted trauma-informed practices and their use of vulnerability. According to Bob:

> There was this kid who had a reputation for blowing up at teachers pretty often. While he hadn't done that with me prior, one time, he was so angry with me that he cursed me out and left the classroom. However, we were able to have a really good restorative conversation about it afterwards. I allowed myself to be

vulnerable and acknowledged what I had done wrong and he acknowledged what he had done wrong. I try to always be really honest with kids and treat them as equal human beings. However, that vulnerability I think that paid off for me because he was able to have a conversation with me and see that I was treating him with respect. That was a takeaway for me. (Bob)

Julie's story was similar.

I was advised this past school year to apologize to a student who was clearly escalated by something that I did. I needed to go up to him and say, I'm sorry that happened between us. What can I do to better the situation? I think that was a clear Aha moment for me because I never would have apologized for my behavior before. I told him that I was sorry that I raised my voice and I was frustrated in the moment. The student was like, "oh, she's actually human and not just a robot". He knew from then on that his teacher can also make mistakes. That really helped our relationship. (Julie)

Molly told a story about a student she struggled with at the beginning of the school year.

I really struggled with this student at the beginning of the school year. About half way through the year, we had this really pivotal conversation. I showed some vulnerability and opened up about some of the stuff that I had faced in my life and then he shared stuff he had faced in his life and we gained a deeper understanding and sympathy for each other. Things just like skyrocketed after that and were so much better. (Molly)

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Finally, while several of the pictorial representations noted relationships and community building, Julie's pictorial representation (Figure 13) related directly to this domain as her picture embodied the idea of having a strong community at school and at home.

Figure 13

Julie's Pictorial Representation

Molly's picture (Figure 14) also related to this domain and was focused on the importance of creating a safe community within the classroom where everyone felt safe and welcomed.

Figure 14

Molly's Pictorial Representation
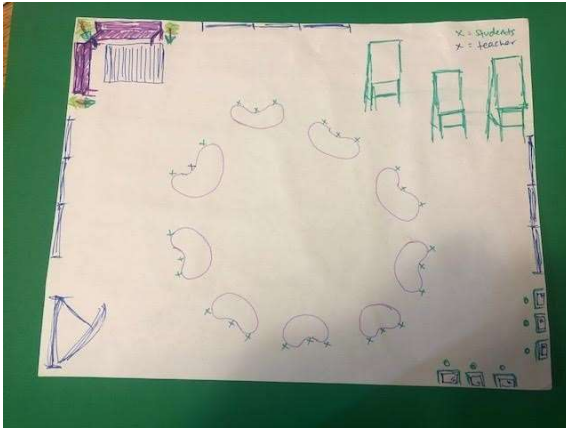
In summary, the essential theme of Relational Trust and Classroom Culture and Community emerged through the stories and lived experiences of all ten participants. It is consistent with the trauma-informed practices key domain of creating a safe and secure environment consistently found in literature (Guarino & Chagnon, 2018; Fallot & Harris, 2009). This domain outlined the need for adults to create and maintain a physically, socially and emotionally safe learning environment through building relationships and classroom community (Guarino & Chagnon, 2018; Fallot & Harris, 2009). However, not expressed in the literature is the essential component of vulnerability as it pertains to Brown's (2012) definition. Several participants told stories that emphasized the benefits of this component and how it became a turning point in changing the way that they interacted with students.

Essential Domain: Emotional and Physical Regulation

Emotional and Physical Regulation was the second theme that emerged as being essential to the effective implementation of trauma-informed practices. Participant

stories and experiences were divided primarily into two different categories. The first

addressed the importance of actively teaching students social-emotional learning skills

(specifically emotional regulation skills). Whereas the second category outlined the

essential component of teachers being able to engage in their own self-regulation and

self-care.

Teaching Emotional Regulation in the Classroom

According to Bob, a middle school math teacher, there is value in teaching

students social-emotional learning skills, even in a seventh-grade math class. He strived

to find creative ways to weave this type of learning into his daily instruction.

> I think that there is real value in teaching social-emotional learning a little bit
>
> more explicitly and having kids think through their emotions in a little bit more
>
> depth and consider some things that they might not have otherwise with regards to
>
> how their emotional regulation and experiences might influence their school day
>
> and their academics. (Bob)

Bubba, a sixth-grade math teacher, agreed with Bob's sentiment in the value of teaching

social-emotional learning skills, but really struggled to find the time to teach it outside of

his "advisement" period, which was essentially a small amount of time that was

considered separate from a student's academic day. Bubba was able to connect with only

7 students during his advisement period.

Social-emotional instruction was easier to fit into daily practice in the elementary

school of the urban K-8. Julie, a fourth-grade teacher, spent a great deal of the first

semester this past school year trying to figure out what social-emotional skills her students needed.

> The vast majority of my classroom behaviors started between September and November. That was when I saw a lot of strong personalities emerge. I would have students constantly walking out of my classroom or fighting. I had to figure out what skills they were missing and what was making them peak (escalate) and then once I figured that out, I could work on preventing them from peaking in the first place. (Julie)

Throughout the school year, Julie was able to determine that many of her students lacked emotional regulation skills. While Julie did not use a specific curriculum to teach this important skill, she did actively teach the skill in a way that was effective and authentic to whom she was as a teacher.

> We did a lot of breathing sessions to kind of help us with de-escalation. I would model out loud and practice whenever I was getting frustrated using out loud self-talk. I would be like, "Hey, I'm going to do some lazy eight breathing exercises because I'm getting a little overwhelmed right now". The kids would be like, "what are you doing?" and then some of them would actually do it with me. I think telling kids to do a strategy is one thing, but when they saw me doing it myself, it became much more effective. (Julie)

Nina also preferred teaching emotional regulation skills in a manner that was authentic to her as a teacher.

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A lot of what I do in my classroom is mindfulness. So every single day, my class comes in and we meditate for like a minute or two. I'll often narrate and say something like, "we are going to take a minute to just think about ourselves. This is a time to block everything out and think about where you are at right now. What emotions are you feeling? If you are feeling angry or frustrated, what strategies can you use to help you get back to the place where you are able to learn? And then we practice a ton of breathing exercises. We practice yoga. We talk about a ton of different strategies that they can use to deescalate themselves or bring themselves back to a level of calm where they are ready to learn. (Nina)

Nina saw this practice as being highly effective over the course of the school year and especially beneficial whenever a student in her classroom started to escalate.

Those ended up being effective strategies. You see someone start to escalate and can validate their feelings and help them to regulate their emotions. I would usually say, "I can tell you are getting frustrated, here are your options. You can do rainbow breaths; you can twist and turn etc." We practiced these strategies over and over again and constantly talked about ways to get out of the "dip" as I would call it. So it was easier for kids to access these strategies whenever they were in an escalated state. (Nina)

Even though Jenn was working as an intervention teacher this past school year (rather than a classroom teacher), she also saw the benefits of teaching her students how to regulate themselves, even when in small groups.

I did mindfulness every day when fourth grade got in from lunch and I had five of them in a small group setting. It was something I could do that was quick and easy and would totally chill them out after lunch. Eventually, the students started to look forward to it and even started to say, "we need to do this to calm ourselves down and get our brains ready for learning". They also missed it whenever I tried to skip it due to time constraints. (Jenn)

Finally, Eva, a Spanish kindergarten teacher, talked about the importance of implementing a peace corner to help kids regulate themselves.

I think having a peace corner for kids to take their time if they need it is very important. It really helped with emotional regulation. Sometimes kids arrived first thing in the morning really emotional, like something was bothering them, but they weren't ready to work through it yet. I had the routine that they could go to my peace corner and practices some of the regulation strategies that I had put into place until they were ready to work through it. I found it to be really helpful. (Eva)

Self-Regulation and Self-Care

All ten of the participants discussed the importance of being able to personally regulate their own emotions. At the middle school level, Penny's advice to new teachers was to figure out ways to remain consistently calm even when faced with challenging situations.

It is so important to not let the kids push your buttons. Kids are going to test you and its important to remember how to react. Don't get into a power struggle with

them. If it is really something that bothers you, have them step out of the

classroom. Try to maintain that positive relationship. You don't have to let

things go, just address whatever is going on respectfully and keep your cool.

(Penny)

Bubba reiterated this sentiment in a very similar manner.

My advice to new teachers would be to take a breath before you react to whatever

the issue is. I would say that if something happens in the middle of instructional

time, really just make a mental note of it and focus on it in a one on one

opportunity rather than in front of the whole class. Especially since you don't

know what that kid is feeling…when I know a kid is escalating and is starting to

affect others, I take a breath and try to assess the situation as quickly as possible

and know that I'll need to come back to it in a smaller setting without the whole

class. (Bubba)

At the elementary school level, T. Bone, a fourth/fifth grade teacher at the urban K-8,

believed that self-regulation was the foundation for trauma-informed practices.

I see trauma-informed practices as kind of how you approach a situation, you

know, how you would approach a situation by staying calm and making a child

feel safe. (T. Bone)

Nina also acknowledged the importance of approaching situations with a calm demeanor,

especially as it relates to students with a trauma history.

All teachers get angry at a certain point, you know, and end up raising their voice.

That always makes it worse and oftentimes it just isn't worth it. You know it

because as soon as you are escalated, you experience a high and your high

becomes contagious and starts to amp up the kids. Extreme calm has always been

something that benefited me in so many situations, especially with those kids who

have experienced trauma and probably deal with that at home. Getting escalated

just is not effective and it doesn't work. (Nina)

With a smile of remembrance on his face, Bob brought up a specific story about learning

how to balance a sense of urgency with keeping himself regulated and his voice at a level

that was neutral.

I noticed that without meaning to, when I would flip back to my slightly more

punitive, yelling based classroom management, it would set a specific student off.

There were a few times when she said to me, "Mister, you are yelling all of the

time, I don't like it". Some of that was just me having a deep, loud voice and

trying to get across a sense of urgency, but other times I think there were some

times when I was overloaded emotionally trying to get my point across and let

myself get angry with the kids. When she told me that, it made me think about

how I need to pay more attention to how I use my voice in the classroom and

what kind of reaction it might get out of the students. And then I had to figure out

how to create a sense of urgency with regard to academics without upsetting kids

by screaming at them. (Bob)

Finally, several participants touched on the importance of engaging in self-care in

order to ensure that they show up every day being the best teacher they can be and have

the ability to regulate their own emotions. Eva believes her own personal self-care has evolved over the course of her teaching years.

> I've learned the importance of not reacting or engaging in power struggles and how I need to give myself a break from time to time in order to not engage. Just like the kids need time away, so do teachers. There were definitely times when I had to put myself first because if I didn't, then I wasn't going to be the best teacher and that wasn't fair to the kids. So I had to gather myself and then come back to them a day later. (Eva)

Jenn passionately expressed how difficult the teaching vocation is and how important it is to take care of oneself. According to Jenn:

> I don't think educators or anyone who works at a school could survive without having multiple people that they could talk to. Its just too much and there is an emotional load that you take on and carry and you have to find ways to work through it so that you can sleep at night and then get up and do it again the next day. (Jenn)

Molly talked about personal strategies that she felt were helpful, especially during specific times of the school year.

> One of my ways of processing and taking care of myself is to write. I also have a counselor who I talk to frequently. I think that every teacher, maybe even every adult needs a therapist! My mom is also an educator so if I'm really frustrated or mad, she's the best person to talk to. It's so helpful to have a venting partner,

especially during critical times in the school year when you are exhausted and

worn out. (Molly)

While several of the pictorial representations touched on the importance of social-

emotional learning and teaching student's emotional regulation skills, Lolie's pictorial

representation completely embodied the idea of personal self-regulation. Lolie equated

the foundation of trauma-informed practices to the calmness of Buddha (Figure 15).

Figure 15

Lolie's Pictorial Representation
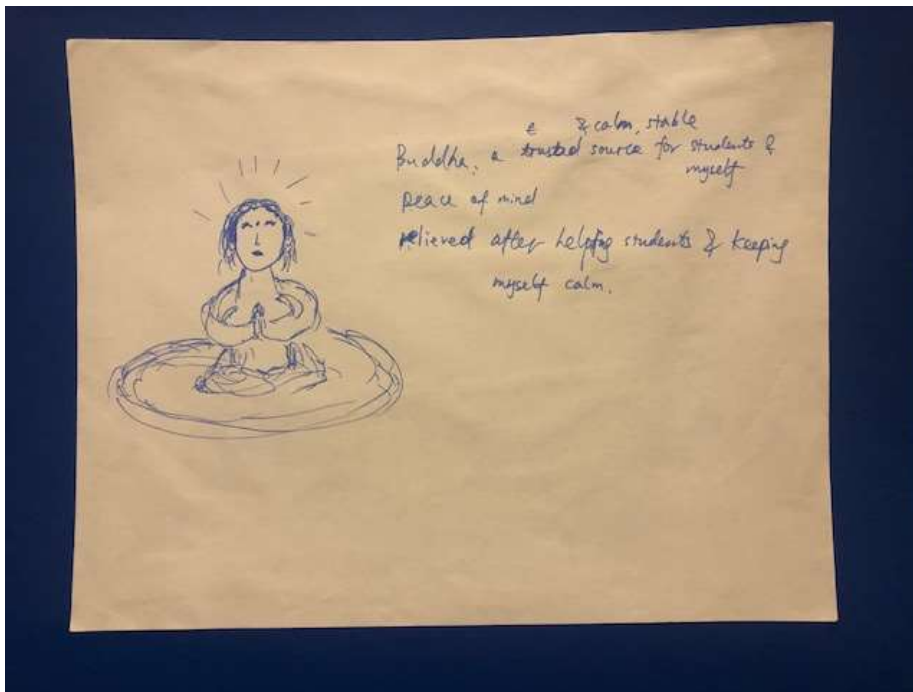
In summary, the essential domain of Emotional and Physical Regulation was

present in the lived experiences and specific stories of all ten participants. This domain

was consistent with the essential principal of building strong social and emotional skills

often found in the literature. According to this literature, emphasis is often on problem

solving and emotional regulation skills as this is the area most often determined to be

areas of weakness for students of trauma (Guarino & Chagnon, 2018; Fallot & Harris, 2009). An additional component that was revealed in the current inquiry revolved around the importance of teachers being able to regulate their own emotions.

Essential Domain: Systems Level Support: Purposeful Implementation

When any system level change is implemented into an organization, certain factors need to be taken into consideration to ensure success (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Payne et al. (2006) emphasized the importance of aligning interventions directly with a school's or individual's overall vision so that they are more easily integrated and more likely to be successful. An additional aspect of organizational functioning that can have an impact on implementation success according to Durlak and DuPre (2008) is the extent to which the innovation is rewarded, supported and expected. Other reviewers of implementation literature indicated that a monitoring and feedback system is essential to ensure success (Fixsen et al., 2005; Greenhalgh et al., 2004). All three of these areas were identified in the data as being essential components of this domain.

Vision and Effectiveness of Trauma-Informed Practices

All ten participants believed in the vision and effectiveness of trauma-informed practices and enthusiastically implemented it to the best of their ability. Eva supported trauma-informed practices because she believed it helped teachers to connect better with their students. Lolie was incredibly aware of how many of her students have had to endure trauma, tragedies or in her words, "shocking experiences" which facilitated her confidence in the movement. Molly passionately exclaimed in one of her interviews that the practice was "probably the most important thing that she would teach or that she

could do in her classroom above and beyond any curriculum or instruction that she may try to implement" and Bob believed that the practice has the strong potential to effectively meet the diverse needs of all of his students.

> I mean every kid, every day, every year is coming in with a totally unique set of challenges and, you know, behaviors and emotions and awareness of their emotions and it's an everchanging kind of thing. Generationally too, with technology and you know, just the things that are happening in the world around kids these days. It's a really effective way to meet their needs. (Bob)

A few participants elaborated on specific success stories that clearly contributed to their confidence in its effectiveness. Jenn narrated a story about a particular student with challenging behaviors and low academic achievement.

> I worked with one student last year who I believe is a prime example of a student needing trauma-informed practices. She was highly impacted by moving from school to school. We knew that her family life wasn't all that great and child services was involved. We knew that she had something going on with anxiety and attention. She happened to be with an amazing teacher who was all in on trauma-informed practices. She also connected with a few other teachers who were also all in on trauma-informed practices. She had four people who loved her unconditionally, were there for her and tried really hard not to re-traumatize her and always respond in a trauma-informed practices manner. We saw this student go from having these total meltdowns and panic attacks complete with screaming and crying and not caring about academics to learning how to self-regulate,

learning how to talk things out with her peers and have these really emotional

conversations. Not only did she learn how to self-regulate, but she also learned

how to take her learned skills and help another student apply them. And then she

started caring about learning and we saw tons of growth from her. Once she felt

safe and secure and loved at school and began to figure out how to handle her

emotions, she started flourishing. (Jenn)

Nina also told a story about a particular student who benefited from trauma-informed

practices.

I had one student this past school year who I'd say was definitely a trauma-

informed practices success story. For a good portion of the school year, this one

particular student would sit down in the middle of the floor, no matter if we were

in the hallway, in the classroom or specials whenever he became dysregulated and

frustrated. He would sit on the floor and scream bloody murder at the top of his

lungs, screaming and crying and wouldn't move. He just stuck there in his

crying, screaming bubble. He started off doing this almost daily! I consistently

implemented trauma-informed practices and taught emotional regulation skills

every day. At the beginning of the year, he would just stay put and not move, but

by the end of the year, I would give him his options and he would look at me

crying, but a minute later he would make his way into the peace corner and calm

himself down. It was definitely a success, but it took practice and time to get him

there. (Nina)

Finally, Bubba told a story that chronicled his own personal takeaway on the importance of trauma-informed practices and how it altered his teaching style.

> I never realized all the multitudes of issues someone can actually have and the teacher may not know about it. I feel when I learned about a student who had his cousin shot and killed earlier in the year, it really pushed me to understand that there are some times when I might want to interact with a student differently than I normally would because I don't 100% know the whole picture for the child. (Bubba)

Trauma-Informed Practices Supported and Expected (Teacher Accountability)

Several participants were thankful that they were asked to implement trauma-informed practices at their school. Molly summed this up best by saying, "Having trauma-informed practices be the theme of the year this year reinforced me as an educator that I need to keep doing what I naturally do and just expand it." In addition, Eva believed that the school wide focus held her accountable and guided her to implement things she never would have otherwise.   The purposeful implementation in which the practice was rolled out was also noted to be beneficial by many participants, but concurrently with this idea, some wanted it to be revisited more frequently and integrated into everything that they did. According to Bubba:

> If we are going to have the vision of putting social, emotional and trauma-informed practices first because it is a district wide or school wide focus, then let's make that the big focus in everything that we do. We should put aside 5 or

10 minutes at the beginning of every faculty meeting to learn something new

associated with it and then from time to time be given the chance to really share in

small groups and reflect on our learning. I'd also love to be able to talk about this

during data driven conversations. We really need to revisit this frequently.

(Bubba)

Bob echoed a similar sentiment and added the idea of how to improve teacher

accountability.

I think it needs to be a programmatic focus of the school and hopefully the district

too. I think there should be more structured time to talk about it. There should be

dedicated time to collaborating with other teachers. While I enjoy extra time to

lesson plan, I would have also liked some of that time to be structured around how

to better meet the needs of my students using trauma-informed practices. I also

believe that this should have been part of my observation cycle or coaching cycle

to figure out how I could better implement it. I know that it wasn't explicitly

written into my district's performance evaluation framework, but we should still

be able to set goals to improve our practice in this area and then receive feedback

on how we are doing with those things. (Bob)

Jenn advocated for the idea of putting together a checklist to help make the movement

more practical and even more focused. She believed a checklist would also help with

improving teacher accountability. T. Bone loved the fact that it was supported and

encouraged this past school year, but expressed wanting to have more frequent activities

and professional development so that she could learn and integrate more into her daily

practice. Whereas, Penny had a slightly different perspective and was particularly

excited that this movement was rolled out in a purposeful manner and supported by data.

> I've been teaching for a long time and feel like it is something that has always
>
> been there, you know, positive relationship building and stuff, but I think this year
>
> it was more purposeful and focused. I loved that data was taken. I think that was
>
> the first time that we actually had data. That was so interesting to see. It also
>
> made it hit home for me. (Penny)

The Importance of Having a Team Approach

The last piece of System-Wide Implementation: Purposeful Implementation

revealed a desire to have a team supporting teachers as they embark upon universal

implementation. In their book, The Trauma-Informed School, Sporleder and Forbes

(2016) touch on the importance of having a team of professionals to help with overall

implementation and challenging situations. Jenn also believed that a trauma-informed

practices team could be helpful.

> We really need to have a trauma-informed practices team. We need to have
>
> teachers on that team along with administration and mental health and we need to
>
> listen to those teachers and their perspectives.   (Jenn)

While her school did not necessarily have a set team to help her with trauma-informed

practices, Nina noted that she felt very fortunate and supported by her teammates and felt

compelled to advocate for an actual team next year.

> I've been very fortunate. There are a lot of really wonderful teachers at my
>
> school and the relationships I have with them have been quite supportive. If a kid

is walking out of my classroom screaming, my teammate across the hall has her head out the door exclaiming, how's it going? I feel like they are a huge support system for me and vice versa. However, this needs to be a school-wide thing. I think as teachers we often feel very isolated because we are the only adult in our room a lot of the time. A trauma-informed practices team would really help with providing me the support that I may need. (Nina)

Penny summed this up nicely with her statement.

I feel like sometimes as a teacher you feel like you, like you want to just handle everything by yourself. And of course, we try, you know, but sometimes its just not feasible. Like I don't know what to do. I've exhausted everything I can possibly do and then you become frustrated and upset or angry with the kid. Well someone needs to help out because once the teacher is at their wits end, ignoring the problem and just trying to keep them in your room or let the run around is just not going to cut it. We really need a team approach where we can utilize resources and get the support we need. It's critical. (Penny)

Bubba's pictorial representation focused entirely on the necessity of having a team approach when implementing trauma-informed practices (Figure 16). In his comic strip, Bubba drew a step by step scenario of what a team approach could look like. When explaining his picture, Bubba emphasized that he knew he didn't have all of the skills in order to effectively meet the needs of all of his students and really valued being able to collaborate with a team.

Figure 16

Bubba's Pictorial Representation
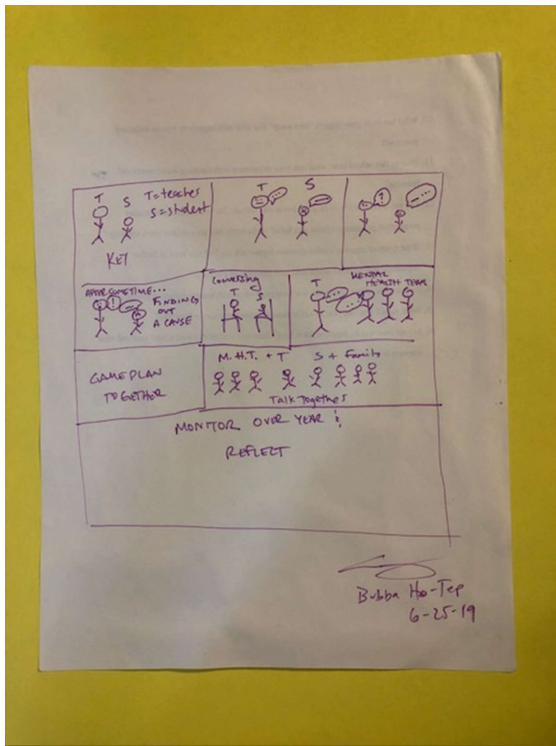
In summary, participant experiences over the course of the school year reflected confidence and trust in the overall vision of trauma-informed practices. Several participants narrated personal stories that they believed strengthened their confidence in the effectiveness of trauma-informed practices. Additionally, many liked the purposeful manner in which they received training and support, but also had practical ideas on what they needed in order to further their own personal understanding of the practice. A few participants also expressed ideas on the essential component of teacher accountability and what they felt needed to happen in order for the practice to truly be integrated into their professional work. Finally, the importance of having a team approach to assist with day

to day, as well as challenging situations also emerged. All of these areas have been documented in the literature as essential components of implementation science.

Essential Domain: System-Level Support: Backgrounds and Teacher Coaching

According to Senge (1990), mental models are an individual's deeply ingrained assumptions and generalizations that influence how that person interprets day to day occurrences. As noted in the literature, a teacher's mental models are often seen as key variables in the success of any intervention or system level change (Fogarty International Center, 2010).   Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory posits that an individual's personal perceptions and assumptions are determined throughout a lifetime and often develop as a result of interactions within several different systems (1979). This often includes family dynamics, educational system, the community, life experiences, and the larger social system that surrounds them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). While participant mental models did not seem to hinder implementation completely, background experiences, teacher preparation programs and prior educational experiences were frequently discussed as being influential and led to the development of this domain.

As a way to mitigate possible barriers to implementation, several teachers expressed a desire to have a higher level of coaching support. While coaching is typically considered a way to improve overall teacher practice and lift academic achievement, the data in this inquiry reflected a clear desire to receive one-on-one coaching in the area of trauma-informed practices in order to broaden understanding and assist with implementation. According to the literature on instructional coaching, teachers who were able to work with a coach for three consecutive years implemented new

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strategies and practices at a higher frequency than those who did not, were willing to take

risks with new approaches, had a better understanding of their students' needs, and felt

more capable of modifying their practice to meet those needs (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008;

Vanderburg & Stephens, 2009). Instructional coaching has a proven track record with

providing schools with ongoing learning opportunities that are relevant to the needs of

the students and improve a teacher's professional practice (Musanti & Pence, 2010).

Behavioral or social/emotional coaching could very well be the missing piece that is

needed to foster a deeper understanding of trauma-informed practices and challenge

possible assumptions and generalizations.

Teacher Backgrounds

In his testimony, Bubba discussed how his Eastern Coast upbringing and his own

personal trauma influenced his initial impressions of the practice. He then touched on

how these impressions changed through his lived experience over the course of the

school year.

> I know myself personally being from the East Coast. I'm very upfront and frank
>
> and, "What's the problem?" Let's fix it and move on. I also have trauma from
>
> my parents divorcing when I was two. They don't talk to each other. I was an
>
> only child. Family dynamics were not the best and I was left at home a lot. I
>
> mean we all have issues, right? However, one thing I learned over the course of
>
> the year was when a kid pushed my buttons to slow down, pause for a second, and
>
> say to myself, "I know there is something up and it's okay, just take a breath.
>
> You are not going to get anywhere if you stay aggressive." (Bubba)

Nina believed that her experiences growing up and interacting with people who were very different from herself influenced her life choices and foundational understanding of trauma-informed practices. Julie told a story about a student she encountered in her teacher residency program and discussed how impactful this experience was to her.

> I did a teaching program with refugee students. They had many different issues that I wasn't even aware of. Their home and their family were ripped away from them because of war. I had a student that year who found out that her country was being bombed. So, she just kept thinking back to when she was in that country and thinking about losing her family. She would constantly cry. They were first graders and the teacher would be like, its fine, just ignore her. She has to learn to deal with it and she's doing it for attention. I was in a classroom where no one spoke English or Spanish so I couldn't fall back on either of my languages. They were all from Asian cultures so we couldn't really communicate. I didn't agree with the teacher's way of dealing with the situation. I think I took a lot away from that particular experience that led to my understanding of trauma-informed practices this year. (Julie)

Lolie, who grew up in China, was quite reflective as she talked about how her own personal experiences growing up in an educational system were very different from the one where she currently worked. This contributed to feelings of fear and anxiety, much like one feels when experiencing culture shock.

> My own personal experiences growing up in China were definitely very different. People in China value education a great deal and we have a very robust, I could

even say, sometimes too rigorous, educational system – especially in K-12.

Everyone believes that if you want to lead a successful life, then you have to

study really hard and be a good student and find a way to get a good job, and go

to college. My friends and I were really, really serious about our education in K-

12. We respected our teachers, we respected knowledge, and we studied really

hard. Learning was the most important thing to do and there weren't any

classroom management problems. This personal experience definitely caused a

lot of problems for me as a teacher. My childhood was very smooth and

successful. Here, I realized that my students are growing up in very different

environments than I did, not only educationally, but also family-wise, cultural-

wise, and language-wise. It is very, very different. I had a really hard time

understanding what they have been through and how I can meet their needs. That

was a big shock to me. It was clearly culture shock. (Lolie)

Molly summed up how important it was to realize that one's own personal experiences

with education was not and would never be the same as the student's experiences with

education.

Teacher Preparation Programs

When asked if their teacher preparation program helped to prepare them for the

current reality of teaching in their school, the majority of participants indicated that they

felt ill-prepared. Bob and Penny both indicated that they felt their program prepared

them more so than others; however, neither of them indicated getting any training on how

to work with students in a trauma-informed way. Penny was also quite concerned about

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the extreme teacher turnover that she sees in her school year after year. She believed that it is mostly due to new teachers lacking skills in relationship building, classroom culture-building and classroom management. Both T. Bone and Eva indicated that their teacher preparation program provided them with absolutely no social and emotional training. Jenn, who is an instructional coach for new teachers at her school reiterated this idea. She talked about her own personal experiences while touching on the skills that she believed new teachers coming fresh out of schools lack.

> Something I say a lot is that if I was just beginning as a teacher, I don't know if I would make it. I am saying that as an experienced teacher with 15 years of experience, but I became a teacher at a time when we were allowed to learn. I don't think we allow teachers to learn on the job anymore and they are coming in so ill-prepared. We used to say that they were missing the classroom management piece in teacher prep. programs, but I think that is a misnomer. I think they are missing the social and emotional learning piece, the how to effectively build relationships with your students and how to create a classroom culture and how to ensure that your students are functioning, effective, happy and engaged. (Jenn)

Finally, Bubba exclaimed his frustrations regarding the extreme lack of training he received in his alternative licensing program and his wish for the future of these programs.

I'm hoping that educational programs or teacher prep programs are starting to talk about all these things more so than just pedagogy and methodology and different ways to get groups and strategy. (Bubba)

Teacher Coaching

While all participants found the district professional development sessions to be informative and helpful when introducing the idea of trauma-informed practices, several participants wanted more. Molly summed this idea up best in her interview.

I see year after year, brand new teachers who come right out of college. They are miserable the entire year and they leave not only my school, but the entire profession of teaching after just one year. I think a lot of that has to do with not being able to obtain the support they need in order to improve their instruction, build a cohesive classroom community and meet the social and emotional needs of their students. I think that the entire coaching model should be redesigned. Instead of solely focusing on observations and instructional moves, I think coaches should be well versed in what trauma-informed practices looks like so that they could help the teachers in the building implement it. Maybe they model what it could look like in the classroom or maybe take over an instructional lesson so the teacher can build relationships with their students. It would be intensive study for them, but it would be worth it and teachers would feel so much more supported. (Molly)

Nina reiterated this in her interview, as well.

> I think it would be important to give teachers a higher level of coaching support
> that they could access. This would ensure that they get the behavioral training
> and tools they may need to better meet their student's needs. Maybe the teacher's
> coach could even do it for them the first time, much like an instructional coach
> will model new lessons for teachers. Like, hey, let's do a morning meeting with
> your class today. I'll do it for you today and then watch you do it tomorrow. This
> type of support could be really helpful. (Nina)

Both T. Bone and Eva also desired to have more consistent and intensive coaching
support, despite having fairly easy classes this past school year. Bubba and Bob
expressed wanting to be able to talk about students and trauma-informed practices during
their team meetings. Bubba was frustrated that team meetings were solely filled with
instructional content and data. He wanted to be able to talk about trauma-informed
practices and social emotional support for students from time to time. Bob talked about
how trauma-informed practices involved a mindset shift, but with a learning curve. He
stated his belief that teams needed to have more time to discuss trauma-informed
practices so that these types of conversations became routine and became a part of the
overall system of gathering and interpreting data. Finally, Julie thankfully expressed that
she was able to have this type of coaching this past school year, which she believed was a
strong component in why she felt supported.

> With my coach, sometimes our weekly meetings turned into conversations about
> students with behaviors. She would tell me, "Okay, we just learned about trauma-

informed practices, how can you implement that in your classroom? How can

you help these students know that they are welcome and that they can be

successful?" She was the one who told me that one of my most challenging

students needed me to be more welcoming and feel like he was a part of the

classroom community and then told me that another one of my students needed

acknowledgement that I was there for him. (Julie)

Bob's pictorial representation was closest to aligning with this domain (Figure

17). Bob chose to write down all of the words that came to his mind when thinking about

trauma-informed practices, but he also made a point to cross out assumptions. He knew

that his upbringing and personal experiences growing up contributed to his personal

perceptions. He disclosed that he constantly examined his own assumptions (mental

models) so that he could better meet his student's needs in a trauma-informed way.

Figure 17

Bob's Pictorial Representation
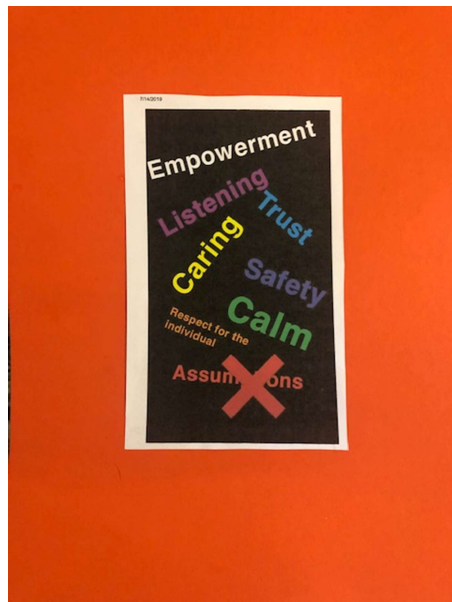
In summary, this essential domain was created to assist with possible personal barriers of different background experiences, personal mental models and educational experiences that can be influential in implementation success. Several participants believed in the effective practice of receiving one on one coaching to support each teacher in a meaningful way. Additionally, participants were frustrated with the lack of training in social and emotional instruction that they received during their preservice teacher education programs. Many expressed a desire for these programs to revamp their curriculum so that teachers would feel more prepared and be able to meet the needs of their students more effectively. While research that supports the effectiveness of coaching can readily be found, the idea of engaging in formalized coaching cycles for behavioral or social and emotional needs appears to be future research consideration.

Essential Domain: Accountability with Compassion

This final domain has not yet been found in the current trauma-informed practices literature, yet emerged as being a necessary component in order to ensure students are held accountable for their actions. While Bob talked about this particular domain with frustration at times, he also expressed the manner in which trauma-informed practices influenced his own personal management style.

> I think there was a common refrain of like, you know, what are the consequences for 'x' behavior? And that often came up when talking about trauma-informed practices. Some of my colleagues saw trauma-informed practices as a new name for behavior management and still wanted the punitive disciplinary consequences that have been doled out in the past. I saw trauma-informed practices as kind of an underpinning of how I try to run my classroom. I try to look for root causes and not blame kids much. I try to understand their problem behavior and think about the best way to hold them accountable. You can still have structure and consequences in your classroom, just do it through a trauma-informed lens. (Bob)

During her interviews, Penny also discussed how her established management style fits into trauma-informed practices.

> I think trauma-informed practices is being more understanding and empathetic to kids who are exposed to a lot of trauma and other situations in their lives. Instead of being so punitive, its more of an aspect of building those relationships and trying to adapt things. Consequences are important, but I think you need to carry them out with compassion. Students can have consequences, but I try hard not to

do punitive stuff and do more positive relationship-based things that I believe is more aligned with trauma-informed practices. (Penny)

Both Nina and Jenn told emotional stories about how they believe their students were retraumatized due to disciplinary actions. The story that Nina told became a turning point for her. After a series of incidents, Nina made the decision to handle all of the challenging student behaviors within her classroom herself. She did not have confidence that others within her building would be able to hold her students accountable with compassion.

I'm painfully aware of several instances in which kids were escalated, having a hard time and showing some not-so-great behaviors. Then when they were taken out of the classroom, they were immediately re-traumatized. The first thing they would hear from the people dealing with this issue was that they were going to call home and that they were in trouble. These kids were already traumatized by the school experience and this was clearly not going to fix their behavior. That was when I decided to handle everything within my own personal classroom bubble. (Nina)

Jenn's story was brought up a great deal of frustration and anger for her. While telling this story, Jenn's eyes welled up with tears.

There was a situation at my school where a student was becoming a danger in the classroom. The classroom teacher asked a student to call the office for support and then something like five adults showed up to support with one of them loudly exclaiming that she was going to call his grandmother. That was NOT what he

needed at the time. So, this poor student was retraumatized when all he needed

was to be loved and regulated. (Jenn)

Finally, she continued on to talk about her general school population and how her

mindset has changed.

Now that I have learned about trauma-informed practices, I know that the root

causes of many of the behaviors is really represented by their trauma, the things

that have happened to them in their lives. I look at some of our kids and I know

that their trauma has come from the school environment. There were some kids

this past school year that I came to realize have struggled at school simply

because school is traumatizing for them. They have learned a distrust for teachers

and not feeling safe and feeling like they are made to do things for no reason.

(Jenn)

In summary, the final domain of Accountability with Compassion was found to be

an emotional, yet essential component of trauma-informed practices. Several participants

related heartfelt stories of students who they felt were re-traumatized during the school

year and how difficult it was to watch this happening. Additionally, testimony from

multiple participants indicated that students need to be held accountable for their actions

so that they can learn from them; however, it is important to do so using a trauma-

informed lens.

Answers to Research Questions

There were three central and interrelated research questions for this qualitative study. In the remaining sections, a summary of the major findings that answer these questions is presented.

Research Question #1: *What practices do teachers implement in their classrooms according to their personal perceptions of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy?*

Research question #1 focused on identifying the practices that both elementary (K-5th grade) and middle school (6-8th grade) teachers implemented in their classrooms according to their personal perceptions of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy. Although the manner in which the practical strategies were implemented may have differed due to the developmental and maturity levels of students, the general strategies were quite similar. Two of the strategies emphasized by elementary and middle school teachers focused on the importance of establishing and maintaining relational trust, as well as a strong classroom community, and actively teaching and reinforcing academic and social-emotional rituals and routines (such as how to use a peace or calming corner, how to solve problems and how to apologize). The third practical strategy identified instructional practices that actively and consistently taught or reinforced emotional regulation skills. Emotional regulation or self-management is identified as being one of the core social-emotional competencies necessary for healthy development by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2013). An individual who is able to self-manage has the ability to successfully regulate emotions,

thoughts and behaviors and in turn, effectively manage stress, control impulses and

increase overall motivation (Oberle, Domitrovich, Meyers & Weissberg, 2016).

Relational Trust and Classroom Community Establishment and

Maintenance

Julie, a Spanish speaking fourth grade teacher, described her practical application

of trauma-informed practices as focusing mostly on building relational trust and creating

a strong classroom community. She identified that her main strategies throughout the

school year were to ensure that her students felt welcomed each and every day. She

believed that she achieved this by communicating her unconditional positive regard for

each student and remaining open and vulnerable. When discussing what type of advice

she would give to a new teacher implementing trauma-informed practices, Julie

concentrated on community building.

> I think my advice to a new teacher would be to make sure that everyone gets to
>
> know at least one person in the classroom so that everyone in the classroom feels
>
> welcomed. I think that if everyone feels welcomed, you will have fewer
>
> behavioral issues arising in the classroom. (Julie)

Eva and Nina, both elementary school teachers, also strived to create and reinforce a

strong classroom community every day. Eva believed that it was essential to allow her

kindergarten students a safe and welcoming classroom environment so that they could

express themselves. Three times a week, Nina led a morning meeting as a way to

reinforce classroom community. During this time, Nina encouraged kids to share

celebrations, questions and relate to each other. She also believed in handling peer-to-

peer conflicts and discipline through teachable moments, even if it meant deviating from academic instruction for a short time.

> I really try hard to make sure that my kids don't feel left out or alienated. We do a ton of group work and my biggest expectation in my classroom is that kids are being nice to each other and they are including each other. If kids aren't being inclusive or they aren't problem-solving effectively and they are getting angry at each other, then we have a conversation about it right then and there. "Okay, how do we solve this problem? I can tell that you are not feeling happy with each other right now." Oh, and if I noticed that something was going poorly for several different groups of kids, we would stop everything that we were doing and we would talk about it. Because, you know, you're not going to get anything done if half of the class is upset because of some social thing that is happening that they don't like. We addressed everything. A lot of this is listening to your kids, even if their complaints seemed minuscule. Give them the time, acknowledge their feelings and then help them move forward and repair the harm, if needed. I think that played a big part in making sure that everybody felt like they were a part of the community and a part of the classroom. (Nina)

Bubba, a sixth-grade math teacher, focused mostly on building and maintaining relationships and trust as much as possible each and every class period. He started every single class period with a handshake and a greeting. He also indicated that he liked to give high fives to the students at the end of each class to reinforce relationships. Getting to know families on a deeper level was also a big component of Bubba's relational trust

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implementation. He felt like home visits were essential for making connections with families and establishing trust. Molly, a middle school journalism teacher, also talked about how important it was to give students voice and creative outlets to express themselves as a way to build community and trust. She also believed it was essential to find ways to weave relationship building into academics.

> It is so important to integrate academics into relationship building. Kids need to feel that they are valued in your classroom every day. They need to know that they are important and heard. I had a big 'Aha' moment this year. Kids are dying to let the world know how they feel, what they believe in and how they think. Teachers, especially at the middle school level, need to let their students have the space and maybe even a creative activity to facilitate processing what they are going through in a deeper, more meaningful way. (Molly)

Molly also suggested several additional practical strategies to help with establishing a strong classroom community.

> I think greeting each student at the door is a really good first strategy. Things like music in the classroom or peace corners or talking through the expectations and helping the kids really understand how the classroom environment works and being explicit in the detail are all helpful. Also, do a lot of team building and get to know everyone, both peer-to-peer and student-to-teacher. I think we sometimes assume that the kids already know each other and the adults just need to get to know them and vice versa. However, that is not necessarily true. This

might be their first experience in a classroom that emphasizes relationships. So,

you need to make sure that you lay the framework. (Molly)

Finally, one of Lolie's biggest takeaways was the importance of building connections with students in a deeper, more meaningful manner. Lolie was an 8th grade math teacher and indicated that she learned a lot about building relationships over the course of the school year. She was very excited to start the next school year differently as she began to see the effectiveness of the practice.

Next year I'm excited to implement all of the things I learned this year as early as

possible: structure, rules, expectations, consequences with compassion and

positive reinforcement. Originally, I thought, "Oh, my students are just different

from me" and I continued to teach them the way that I always have taught. I had

a lot of behavioral challenges doing it that way, though. Towards the end of the

school year I began to establish connections with my students and learn more

about their backgrounds, their families, what their parents do, what they consider

themselves doing in five years and what their language is. I tried really hard to

make connections with them and listen to their voices, especially outside of class.

That gave me some success. I felt like more students were willing to be honest

with me. They also told me that they appreciated me being honest with them, too.

I expect I will start everything next year based on my new knowledge of trauma-

informed practices and will be able to have more practices, strategies and skills in

place. (Lolie)

Emotional Regulation Skill Instruction and Reinforcement

In addition to relational trust and community building, Julie also talked a lot about the importance of teaching her students emotional regulation skills. However, rather than using a curriculum to teach these skills, Julie did what came naturally to her and used her own personal self-talk to narrate her feelings to her class and how she planned to regulate herself. By using a simple breathing technique and actively modeling this skill, her students eventually began to engage in the same breathing technique she was using. She found this strategy to be quite effective.

> I would do the 'Lazy 8' breathing technique constantly. I had it on my flip charts
> and I did it after ever lesson. I would narrate, I'm feeling a little overwhelmed
> and stressed. I'm going to do the 'Lazy 8'. I did this a lot. The kids initially
> thought that I was crazy, but after a while, they started doing it with me. (Julie)

Similarly, Eva also provided opportunities for her kindergarten students to learn and practice regulation skills in a safe space.

> We had circle time and talked about conflicts or anything that was going on at
> home. I also gave them space to think in the peace corner if they came into
> school emotional. I think having a peace corner for kids to take their time if they
> need it is very important. Some of the kids came into the classroom at the
> beginning of the day really emotional. Something was bothering them, but they
> weren't ready to talk. Having the routine of being able to go to the peace corner
> to calm themselves was really helpful. (Eva)

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T. Bone disclosed that she engaged in daily mindfulness activities with her students. She also practiced yoga for a minute or two at the beginning of each day to assist with emotional regulation and ensure that her students were ready for learning. Jenn talked about the benefits of implementing a peace corner in her intervention room and believed in practicing mindfulness on a daily basis, even when strapped for time.

> I put a peace corner in my small room just like everyone did at my school. I loved it because we had a very intensive student who used my peace corner a lot. It was so cool to see that, yes, kids do need a space to chill out and slow their minds down. I also did mindfulness every day when we got in from lunch with my fourth-grade group. It was quick and easy and would get their brains regulated and ready for learning. (Jenn)

Nina also strongly believed in the effectiveness of actively teaching the skills that her students may be missing.

> Trauma-informed practices is being aware of the experiences that your kids bring to the table and providing an environment and structures within your classroom to support them with the behaviors that might manifest from the hard feelings that come along with the things that they bring to the table. Every single week at the beginning of the week we would introduce a social-emotional value and we would say, here are my goals for the week. The kids would tell me how they were going to show perseverance, for example. We would make goals and then right after lunch we would have our mindfulness time where we do a minute or so of meditation and positive narration. (Nina)

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From a middle school perspective, Bob also found the idea of a calming corner or cool down space beneficial in his math classroom.

> I think creating some sort of a cool down space in the classroom is essential, but you need to set up clear expectations around those spaces. Think about what kind of situations you would want kids to use the space for before they even start school at the beginning of the year. You need to make sure that it is not being exploited to serve a different purpose than what you intended. (Bob)

Finally, a few of the participants identified adult self-regulation as an effective strategy to not only model effective emotional regulation skills, but also to ensure a safe community. Penny's advice on how to implement trauma-informed practices in a practical manner was to "remain consistent and remain calm. Don't let students push your buttons. You are the adult and you are the one who is responsible for remaining calm." Bubba concurred with Penny's sentiment with his advice to new teachers.

> My advice to new teachers is to take a breath before you react to whatever the situation is. Don't let your patience get away from you. (Bubba)

Explicit Teaching and Reinforcing of Rituals, Routines, and Expectations

The final identified practical strategy revolved around the idea of consistently and explicitly teaching rituals and routines. Over the course of the school year, T. Bone revealed that she learned a great deal about the importance of consistency when engaging in rituals.

This past school year, we met as a group in morning meeting a lot. Sometimes we missed the morning meeting and the kids were off all day. It was really important to stay consistent. (T. Bone)

Furthermore, Julie also talked about how important it was to remain consistent with routines, expectations and skill building throughout the entire school year, even when feeling constrained by time.

Trauma-informed practices is very effective if you stick with it all year long rather than pick it up for a month or a week or a day and then forget about it. You have to keep up with it and make time for it in your schedule even though you may be teaching. You have to be flexible in how you do things in your schedule in order to be able to meet the needs of your students. (Julie)

Jenn was adamant that all teachers should engage in establishing solid rituals and routines at the beginning of the school year.

I think one of the first things that teachers should implement no matter what are rituals and routines. Within that would be the concepts of rituals and routines with a trauma-informed lens, right? So, how do we use a peace corner? Why do we use a peace corner? What exactly does it look like if you are feeling emotional? What do you do when you are expected to come back to class? Also, a teacher needs to establish and probably teach rituals and routines around how do we respectfully interact with our peers if we are disagreeing about whose scissors are whose? What do we do when we can't fix it ourselves and need an adult to

help? So essentially, establish rituals and routines around how to use a peace

corner and solve problems and build classroom community. (Jenn)

Penny's practical strategies matched the elementary school teachers and also stressed the

importance of establishing and sticking to routines as a practical strategy.

I'm a huge advocate for routines at school. I've noticed, especially in the high

poverty schools when I would go off of the routine, I would have many more

behavior problems than if I just stuck to my routine. As an adult, at first, I

thought, oh, it has got to be boring, what kid wants to do the same thing over and

over again? But as I started teaching more and more, I started realizing that my

classes craved stability, especially when home life was chaotic. (Penny)

Molly explained the expectations and routines that she set up at the beginning of the

school year in her middle school journalism classes.

I think it is essential to have high, clear professionalism expectations so the kids

know exactly what to do when they walk in the classroom. In my classroom, kids

walked in the door, shook my hand, and put away their hats and cell phones.

They knew to do this every day. Then once those parameters were met, then we

were able to flex a little bit and have fun with each other. (Molly)

Finally, Bob's interpretation also mimicked the theme of clear expectations and routines.

I try to create really clear structures and routines for kids so that they won't be,

well we won't have triggering moments where things are out of control and it

heightens the tension. And if they are already coming in at a higher baseline level

of stress and anxiety then it makes the margin for error a lot smaller and

escalations much more likely. (Bob)

See Appendix J for a table outlining the identified practical strategies each participant

implemented in their classroom.

Research Question #2: *What personal barriers impact teachers' implementation of*

trauma-informed practices within their classroom?

According to the literature, the following are often seen as being personal barriers

to implementation success: 1) implementer buy-in and perceived effectiveness, 2) skill

proficiency, 3) self-efficacy, 4) personal mental models and assumptions, and 5)

perceived need (Forman & Barakat, 2011; Kincaid et al., 2007). As noted within

Essential Domain: Systems-Level Support: Purposeful Implementation, all 10 participants

clearly believed in the effectiveness of the practice and were fully committed to

implementing it in their classroom. However, two of the participants (Bubba and Lolie),

believed that they did not yet have the confidence or the skills to effectively implement

the practice.

I think for me to become more confident in being able to implement trauma-

informed practices, I'd need more of a team approach, as well as coaching support

that was frequently revisited. Right now, my biggest takeaway is that I still don't

know what to do. I have so much to learn. (Bubba).

It should also be noted that Bubba did not originally plan on going into teaching as a

vocation. He obtained his license through alternative licensure which he also felt was a

personal barrier due to missing practical aspects of learning how to effectively build relationships and community, and teach social-emotional learning.

In addition to lacking confidence and skills, Lolie discovered that her own mental models and personal assumptions were clear barriers for her.

I think my personal experience growing up is creating a lot of problems for me right now. I am having a really hard time understanding what they have been through and what I can offer to them. This has been a big, big change and a big shock to me teaching at this school. Although, I had some of it at other schools, the shock is not as big as this one. These students are so different from what I know. (Lolie)

The personal barriers that Lolie and Bubba experienced clearly contributed to the creation of *Essential Domain: Systems-Level Support: Backgrounds and Teacher Coaching*. While several participants discussed the importance of having a social emotional or behavioral coach to assist them as they improve their skills in this area through coaching cycles, Bubba and Lolie both stressed how indispensable this type of support would be for them.

Research Question #3: *What professional or organizational barriers impact implementation of trauma-informed practices?*

According to the literature, several aspects of organizational functioning can influence implementation success. These include: 1) positive work climate, 2) effective procedures and structures, 3) alignment with school policies and procedures, 4) effective leadership and administration support, 5) alignment with school policy and vision, 6)

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existence of a program champion, 7) effective communication mechanisms, 8) procedures to ensure accountability and 9) a monitoring and feedback system (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Fixen et al., 2005; Greenhalgh et al., 2004). With only two exceptions (existence of a program champion and effective communication mechanisms), all of the barriers found in the literature were also identified by the majority of participants as being a barrier to implementation success according to this inquiry. In addition, several participants identified additional professional barriers that have not yet been found in the literature.

Positive Work Climate

While several participants disclosed that they did not like coming to work and often felt burned out, Jenn, Molly and Bubba all named the work climate as being a clear barrier to implementation.

> So, the work climate this past year was really awful. I would get a pit of anxiety in my stomach pretty much every morning as I walked up to the building. And I think part of that was that the adults just didn't feel safe. People wanted to feel valued and supported and they didn't and so that exhaustion ran into work avoidance for a lot of people. There was also a fear of uncertainty. (Jenn)

Bubba reiterated this sentiment:

> This job of teaching is extremely challenging. We are a psychologist to a nurse to a friend to an educator to the librarian. You need to have a strong work climate in order to feel supported when you are asked to do so many jobs. I didn't love my job based on the culture and climate of the school. Had it been more of a

community feel with everyone working towards a common goal, I would have

bought in. I sighed every morning that I had to come in. (Bubba)

Molly also talked about not feeling valued and supported in any way (personally and

professionally) over the course of the school year.

I did not want to be at work many of the days because I didn't feel supported or

valued for anything that I was doing. (Molly)

Effective Leadership and Administration Support

In close alignment with a positive work climate, several participants also

identified the school leadership as being a barrier. This theme was summed up nicely by

Molly.

We are only scratching the surface of being able to support our students if we are

not receiving support from our administrators. If administration is not taking a

trauma-informed practice approach to supporting their staff, then we cannot truly

take a trauma-informed practice approach to support our students. At least not to

the fullest extent. We can do as much as we can in our classrooms, but if that is

not supported by our administration, then it is really up to the teacher to decide,

am I doing this because of my own interest in supporting kids or is this too much

work on top of what I already do? (Molly)

Nina struggled with the ways in which students were re-traumatized by her

administration whenever they were responding to challenging behaviors within the

classroom. She eventually chose to start handling everything herself, but that clearly

took a toll on her overall well-being. She wanted to be able to trust that the

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administrators in her school would also be handling challenging behavior with a trauma-informed lens. Jenn also wanted to see the administration and leadership on board with trauma-informed practices.

> My biggest frustration was that I really did not feel the administration was on board with the practice. It felt like they were playing lip service to it for the most part. There were several incidents where I would not want to get administration involved in some situations because I felt they would go from a trauma-informed approach to a punitive negative approach. (Jenn)

Finally, Penny just wanted to feel valued and listened to from time to time. She believed that the lack of connection and relationship with her administration was a clear barrier to her own personal work climate, as well as her ability to implement trauma-informed practices to the fullest extent.

Purposeful Implementation with Frequent Check-ins

This category clearly supported the creation of the Essential Domain: System-Level Support: Purposeful Implementation. It encompassed the barriers found in the literature, centered around effective procedures and structures, alignment with school policies and procedures, and teacher accountability. Teachers really wanted this practice to be integrated into every team, system and policy. They wanted more check-ins, ways to ensure accountability (both for themselves and for their colleagues), trainings, time to collaborate with others, and the space to reflect on their own personal practices.   Bubba summed this idea up nicely.

If we are going to have the vision of putting social, emotional and trauma-informed practices first because it is a big school-wide focus, then let's make that the focus in everything that we do. We should learn new strategies or a new skill for 5 or 10 minutes at the beginning of every faculty meeting and then from time to time be given the chance to really share in small groups and reflect on our learning. We need to revisit this frequently. I have a feeling that it is just going to be another thing that we throw out the minute it is done if we don't. (Bubba)

Both Julie and Jenn indicated a desire to have time to reflect and debrief on difficult situations in either a small group or one-on-one setting. Whereas, Nina wanted someone to just be a listening ear as she worked through the obstacle of ensuring that she was consistent with her routines and relationship building.

One of my barriers was the fact that it takes a while to establish routines that these kids are going to adhere to and buy into. You need to be utterly patient and consistent when building those routines and relationships. I was able to overcome this obstacle, but it took a lot of reminding myself over and over again that I needed to just be consistent and calm. I really would have liked someone to check in with me more often and just listen to me vent from time to time. (Nina)

Finally, Bob and Bubba talked about the essential component of ensuring teacher accountability, while Jenn suggested the idea of creating a trauma-informed practices checklist that administration could use. Bob believed that the practice should be integrated into his evaluation.

It really needed to be clear that this was something you were supposed to be

working on in the classroom that would pay off in the long run. I think it takes

commitment to it in order for it to really become effective and not just the next

fad. I wanted it to be a part of my observation cycle and my coaching cycle. I

really wanted to figure out how I could better implement trauma-informed

practices in my classroom and would have liked that accountability. (Bob)

Bubba wanted teachers to be held accountable during their data meetings.

During our data meetings, we talked about our test scores and what standard we

were working on every week. That was great, but we clearly missed those kids

who just needed to have more of a personal touch and relationship. We never

talked about that. I really feel that would help with ensuring everyone is held

accountable for establishing a safe classroom environment or building

relationships with their students. (Bubba)

Time Constraints, Teacher Turnover and Self-Care

The last three barriers uncovered in this inquiry have not been found in the

implementation literature. At the middle school level, Bubba was quite frustrated with

not having enough time within his class period to build relationships or work on social-

emotional skills.

You need to keep building relationships with trauma-informed practices, but at

the middle school level, we just don't have time for that. In my math time, there

wasn't really time to teach social-emotional skills. I only had 58 minutes to get

everything done in the class period. So that meant I had two minutes of

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handshakes, high fives, sometimes fun, but the majority of the time it was like, we are here to do our work and then you have got to go. I don't feel out of the 68 students that I had this past school year, I was really able to build relationships with the majority of them. (Bubba)

Jenn was quite frustrated with the knowledge that half of her teaching staff left at the end of the school year.

Number one obstacle for me is figuring out a way to do the broad universal training with teacher turnover. We are going to have 17 new teachers at my school next year. What are we doing to get them on board with the 17 who are staying? It is basically half and half. Half had a full year of trauma-informed professional development and clearly grew in their understanding of the practices and half are going to come in without any of that. (Jenn)

Finally, both Penny and Bubba brought up the idea that self-care is absolutely necessary, but isn't always truly supported in the school environment.

It's really hard for adults to give 100% of themselves 110% of the time, every single day for 38 weeks. It gets emotionally draining on us even without our own traumas. Yet self-care wasn't truly supported at my school. We were frequently judged if we needed to take a moment during our planning periods. There was just this expectation that we always had to put students first. (Bubba)

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

In order to pull everything together, an overview of the procedures and data analysis will first be discussed. Then, I will outline how I was able to bring meaning to several teachers' lived experiences of trauma-informed practices implementation. Next, the development process of the Trauma-Informed Practices Model, as well as its significance will be explained. Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1977, 1979), I will also identify and discuss the implications of this study as it pertains to students' microsystem, mesosytem and exosystem. This will include how the trauma-informed practices movement could influence classroom practices, systems-level support, and disciplinary procedures, as well as the significance of this study on particular stakeholder groups and teacher preparation programs. I will conclude this chapter with limitations of the current study and future directions for research.

Overview of the Study

This study investigated teacher interpretation and integration of trauma-informed practices at the conclusion of a school year in an urban K-8 school. Furthermore, the personal and professional barriers that may have been influential during implementation were also explored. This inquiry was a qualitative phenomenology that focused on the experiences, attitudes, perceptions and actions of individuals. The approach was particularly appropriate given my own personal ontological assumption that nature

consists of multiple realities that are viewed differently by individuals. As it pertains to this investigation, the assumption was that the different realities of teachers were likely to be influential on the implementation and practical application of trauma-informed practices.

The research questions that anchored this study were the following:

What practices do teachers implement in their classrooms according to personal perceptions of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy?

What personal barriers impact teachers' implementation of trauma-informed practices within their classrooms?

What professional or organizational barriers impact implementation of trauma-informed practices within a school system?

To answer these research questions, I engaged in data collection at an urban K-8. This consisted of interviewing ten participants who had all experienced the phenomenon of trauma-informed practices over the course of the school year. I also integrated one additional form of data collection by asking each participant to create a pictorial representation of what trauma-informed practices meant to them. This additional activity provided rigor, breadth and richness to each participant's story. Furthermore, I also engaged in two of the research activities that van Manen (1990) outlines as a part of hermeneutic phenomenology research, namely writing and re-writing, and reflecting on essential themes.

Data analysis began with horizonalization, or the act of highlighting significant statements, sentences and quotes to provide an understanding of how each participant

experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I then moved to thematic draft writing which van Manen (2016) characterizes as summarizing the themes that identify the heart or essence of a phenomenon. Finally, by using Lichtman's *Three Cs of Data Analysis,* I was able to identify the following overarching essential domains: Relational Trust and Classroom Community and Culture; Emotional and Physical Regulation; System-level Support: Purposeful Implementation; System-level Support: Backgrounds and Teacher Coaching; and Accountability with Compassion (2013).

In phenomenological research, van Manen (1990) encourages researchers to bring "into nearness that which tends to be obscure" in order to determine what it is that gives a particular experience significance (p. 32). In other words, one of the essential purposes of phenomenological inquiry is to give meaning to a lived experience (van Manen, 1990). Through thoughtfully curating participant stories and lived experiences into five essential domains, I was able to find meaning in the lived experience of trauma-informed practices implementation.

These five domains were graphically illustrated in a Trauma-Informed Practices Implementation Model (Figure 18). The five domains of the Trauma-Informed Practices Implementation Model represented the essential issues the participants raised in regards to carrying out trauma-informed practices. While some domains took precedence over others for each participant, all participants touched on every domain in some way, suggesting that in order to successfully implement trauma-informed practices in a school, all domains need to be in place.

Figure 18

The Trauma-Informed Practices Implementation Model.
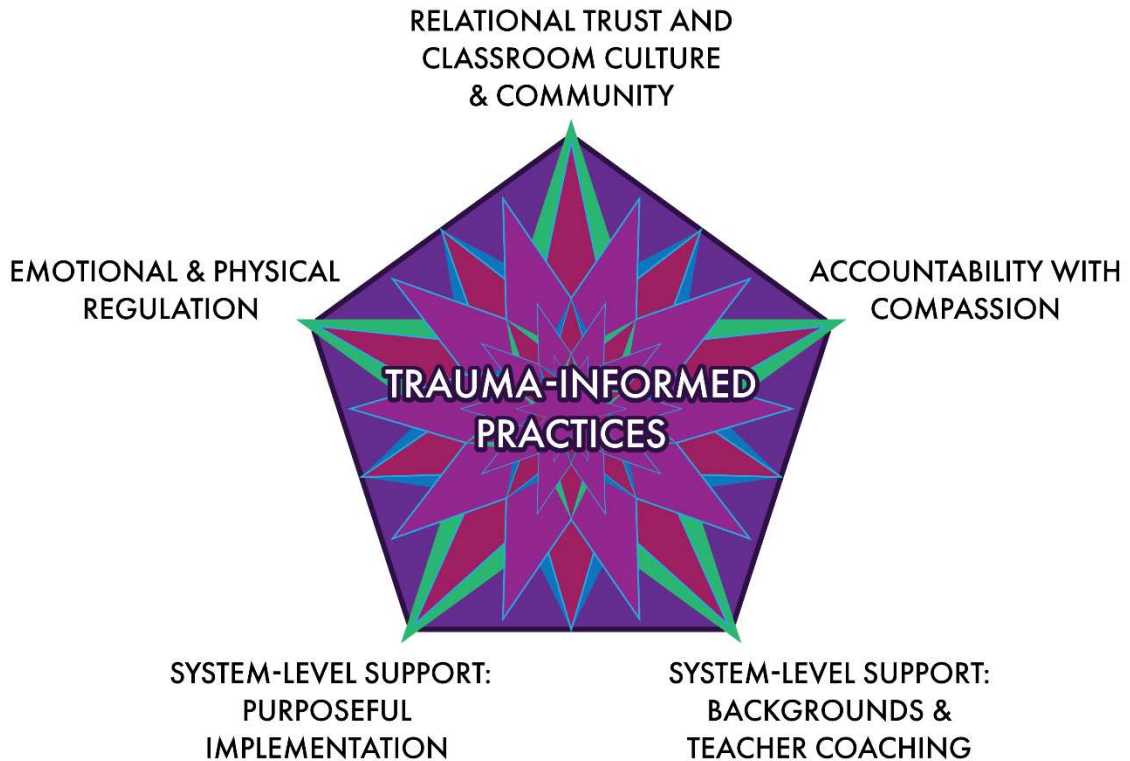
While addressing all five domains should be considered best practice, the data also implied that individual teachers can begin this process within their own classrooms by addressing the three domains listed on the top of the pentagon, namely Relational Trust and Classroom Culture and Community, Emotional and Physical Regulation and Accountability with Compassion. This assumption was made due to the fact that several participants felt there was a lack of system-level support in the urban K-8 over the course of the school year, yet still began implementation of trauma-informed practices in their own personal classrooms. While the lack of system-level support was a clear

professional barrier, they still believed in the movement and sought ways to begin implementation. Additionally, while this model is not meant to be sequential in any way, one can extrapolate that since teachers are willing and able to become trauma-informed within their classrooms without systems-level support, the three domains at the top of the pentagon may be seen as the first domains upon which to focus.

The inside graphic of the model was designed to resemble the patterns that can be seen in a kaleidoscope. The images viewed through a kaleidoscope are highly dependent on the angle in which the kaleidoscope is held. Each image or pattern in a kaleidoscope can be altered simply by a change in perspective. During data analysis, it was determined that each participant's lived experience depended on how they viewed trauma-informed practices. Their own personal perspectives, mental models and backgrounds influenced how they experienced trauma-informed practices, as well as what they felt were best practices during implementation. A kaleidoscope felt like the best way to visually illustrate this concept.

Summary of Major Findings

As noted previously, the results of this inquiry identified five essential domains necessary for successful implementation of trauma-informed practices. These five domains comprise the Trauma-Informed Practices Implementation Model. At the top of the pentagon of the model, Relational Trust and Classroom Culture and Community outlined the essential practice of creating and maintaining a physically, socially and emotionally safe learning environment through building relationships and classroom community and culture. The upper left point of the pentagon represented the domain of

Emotional and Physical Regulation. This domain emphasized the importance of explicit, but authentic social-emotional instruction (specifically emotional regulation instruction), as well as the significance of adult self-regulation. The right upper point of the pentagon introduced the idea of Accountability with Compassion. This domain focused on the importance of showing unconditional positive regard for students, yet still holding them accountable for their actions. The two bottom points on the pentagon represented systems-level support. Systems-Level Support: Purposeful Implementation outlined the importance of purposeful implementation with practical ideas, training, support and accountability and Systems-Level Support: Backgrounds and Teacher Coaching introduced the essential component of one on one coaching support for trauma-informed practices (especially as it pertains to mental models and backgrounds), as well as next steps for teacher preparation programs.

Research Question #1

The first research question focused on identifying the practices that both elementary and middle school teachers implement in their classrooms according to their personal perceptions of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy. Both elementary and middle school teachers emphasized the importance of establishing and maintaining relational trust and ensuring that students feel welcomed each and every day. Additionally, participants also emphasized the significance of establishing and actively teaching academic and social-emotional rituals and routines. This included greeting and welcoming students into the classroom every day (or every class period), sticking to daily and weekly routines as much as possible, having clearly posted and frequently revisited

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expectations, and actively teaching social-emotional routines (such as how to use a peace or calming corner, how to solve problems and how to apologize. These practices are often seen as being essential when ensuring that schools and classrooms are emotionally and physically safe, a key element of a trauma-informed school (Fallot & Harris, 2009; Guarino & Chagnon, 2018). Furthermore, the literature from safe and civil schools also supports these practices as being effective for overall classroom management (Sprick & Daniels, 2010). Sprick and Daniels (2010) believe that effective classroom management is based off of the following tenants: Structure the Classroom for Success; Teach Behavioral Expectations to Students, Observe and Supervise, Interact Positively with Students, and Correct Fluently. These strategies clearly aligned with the effective classroom management components of Structure the Classroom for Success, Teach Behavioral Expectations to Students, and Interact Positively (Sprick & Daniels, 2010).

The third major finding included the active and consistent teaching and reinforcing of emotional regulation skills. This included incorporating daily mindfulness activities, using music to assist with regulation after transitions, actively teaching new coping skills on a frequent and consistent basis, and personally modeling emotional regulation skills, such as breathing and calming exercises. This practice is well documented in the literature due to the fact that children with a trauma history or living in chronic stress are often considered to be dysregulated across systems—neurologically, emotionally, behaviorally, cognitively, and socially (Cook et al., 2005). Gratz & Roemer (2004) describe emotional regulation as the awareness, understanding, acceptance, and adjustment of one's emotions, as well as the ability to behave in an acceptable manner

regardless of one's emotional state. Through actively teaching and reinforcing emotional

regulation skills, participants were able to address the key domain frequently identified in

school-wide trauma-informed approaches of building strong social-emotional skills

(Fallot & Harris, 2009; Guarino & Chagnon, 2018). Furthermore, teaching this skill also

addressed the core competency of self-management identified by CASEL as being

necessary for healthy development (CASEL, 2013).

Research Question #2

The second research question investigated the personal barriers that may have

impacted teacher implementation of trauma-informed practices. While there were several

possible personal barriers identified in the literature as being possible barriers to

implementation success, there were only two identified as impacting implementation

success in this inquiry. The participants that identified personal barriers believed that

they did not yet have the confidence or the skills to effectively implement this practice.

They expressed a strong desire for additional professional development in trauma-

informed practices, one-on-one coaching support, and the creation of a team to assist with

implementation. This finding can be directly aligned to the idea that skill proficiency and

confidence, or having the knowledge, the capacity, and the confidence to carry out the

required activities of the movement is an essential component for implementation

(Bosworth et al., 1999; Dusenbury et al., 2005; Forman & Barakat, 2011). Additionally,

a few participants believed that their backgrounds attributed to their own personal

barriers due to previously determined mental models and assumptions.   As stated in

implementation science literature, understanding the behavior, perceptions and

assumptions of each teacher is a key variable in implementation (Fogarty International Center, 2010). As it pertains to this inquiry, all participants demonstrated a high level of buy in and enthusiasm, as well as a willingness to learn more about trauma-informed practices, variables that are often associated with intervention success (Forman et al., 2009). Yet these participants still indicated that their own personal mental models hindered their initial implementation success, a phenomenon not yet directly studied in the literature.

Research Question #3

The third research question focused on the professional barriers that impeded successful implementation. Given that this was a definite area for growth at the urban K-8, almost all of the participants discussed the importance of having a positive and supportive work climate with effective leadership and administration support. Additionally, several participants identified needing more purposeful implementation of trauma-informed practices. This meant that they wanted this movement and philosophy to be integrated into every team, system and policy. They also wanted more personal check-ins, ways to ensure accountability, trainings, time to collaborate with others and the space to reflect on their own personal practices. Several middle school teachers also brought up their frustrations with not having enough time to effectively build relationships with their students within the short academic blocks. Finally, an additional professional barrier involved teacher turnover from year to year and figuring out ways to train new staff while continuing the work with returning staff. Most of the professional barriers indicated in this inquiry can be supported by previous literature. According to

Durlak & DuPre (2008), positive work climate, effective procedures and structures, effective leadership and support, and the extent to which the innovation is rewarded, supported and expected are all professional barriers that have been documented to impact implementation success. Additionally, school culture is also a widely researched variable in implementation research (Domitrovich et al., 2008). Culture influences the way things are carried out in a school and is important to consider when examining barriers (Domitrovich et al., 2008).

In the next section, the implications of these major findings will be presented using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model (1979). Table 6 outlines the major findings of the research questions for this inquiry.

Table 6

Major Findings for Each Research Question

Research Question #1: What practices do teachers implement in their classrooms according to personal perceptions of trauma-informed practices	Research Question #2: What personal barriers impact teachers' implementation of trauma-informed practices within their classrooms?	Research Question #3: What professional or organizational barriers impact implementation of trauma-informed practices within a school system?
Relational trust and classroom community establishment and maintenance	Not yet having the confidence or the skills to effectively implement the practice	Lack of a positive work climate
Emotional regulation skill instruction and reinforcement	Mental models and personal assumptions	Need for an effective leadership and support team
Explicit teaching and reinforcing of rituals, routines, and expectations		Purposeful implementation with frequent check-ins
		Time constraints, teacher turnover and self-care

Implications of the Major Findings through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model

Schools play a major role in improving the educational outcomes for all students, especially those who have endured trauma or chronic stress (Cole et al., 2005; Wolpow et al., 2009). Implementing trauma-informed practices can assist in creating environments where all students can feel safe and successful (Cole et al., 2005; Wolpow et al., 2009). However, translating the theory and research that fuels the trauma-informed movement into practical application within the schools can be quite challenging. Furthermore, interventions implemented in natural contexts have notoriously unpredictable outcomes with an approximate 70 percent failure rate according to the literature in the business world (Maurer, 2010). This rate is similarly found within the school system (Maurer,

2010)xd. In order for this movement to be sustainable, it will be essential to implement the practice in a more systematic and structured manner.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory guided this research inquiry. This theory views human development and behavior as the product of various interacting systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). As children grow, they are influenced by multiple different microsystems or environments. These environments form an individual's ecosystem. Individuals who experience traumatic events or live in chronic stress often encounter challenges within their ecosystem that can impede healthy development. Improving the overall educational well-being of students may help to mitigate the effects of trauma or chronic stress and encourage resiliency by creating emotionally safe learning environments (Crosby, 2015). The Bronfenbrenner ecological model provides an ideal framework to guide stakeholders who aim to implement trauma-informed practices in a systematic manner (1979). For the purposes of this study, the micro-, meso- and exo- system levels will be discussed. Implications for school practice that is relevant to each ecological level will also be identified as it pertains to the data collected in this inquiry.

Implementation Implications within the Microsystem

Interactions within the microsystem usually involve personal relationships with family members, classmates, teachers and other caregivers. Nurturing and supportive interactions and relationships with individuals within the microsystem fosters healthy social and emotional development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). There are two main practice implications identified in this study that fall within this microsystem. These

include the establishment of relational trust and connection within the classroom and the significance of increasing social-emotional instruction (especially emotional regulation skill-building).

Relational Trust and Connection in the Classroom

Relationships are beneficial to all students; however, they are especially fundamental to students with trauma histories (Spilt, Hughes, Wu & Kwok, 2012). This is due to the fact that positive, supportive relationships with students help to facilitate a sense of safety and security and provide students with positive models of consistent and healthy relationships (Spilt, Hughes, Wu & Kwok, 2012). Nevertheless, it may be challenging to build a connection with students who have sustained trauma or live in chronic stress. Many times, these students approach adult communication and connection with a sense of mistrust (Wolpow et al., 2009). Even the most seasoned individual can benefit from additional instructional support in this area as engaging in daily relationship-building with students can be difficult and at times, exhausting. In order to be successful, relationship and trust building skills need to be actively taught, reinforced and refined.

Positive relationships with students are built through warm and accepting interactions (Pianta et al., 2008). To promote teachers being perceived as warm, caring and supportive, as well as to create a classroom environment that is conducive to a child's social, emotional and academic growth, the Northeast Foundation for Children developed strategies known as the responsive classroom approach (Baroody et al, 2014). The Responsive Classroom strategies include: 1) leading daily morning meetings; 2) teaching

students specific skills so that they can participate successfully; 3) accepting mistakes as a part of learning; 4) using positive language; 5) teaching in ways that build excitement about learning; 6) giving students opportunities to reflect on their own learning and 7) collaborating with parents (Baroody et al., 2014). A teacher's utilization of the responsive classroom strategies could provide teachers with skills needed to create a caring, well-managed classroom environment where connections and relationships are the focus (Baroody et al., 2014).

An additional way for teachers to promote connection and build relational trust is to engage in self-disclosure and vulnerability. Self-disclosure describes what one does when sharing a personal view or a personal experience (Parker & Parrott, 1995), whereas vulnerability is described as uncertainty, risk, the feeling of emotional exposure and the willingness to make mistakes (Brown, 2012). Self-disclosure can be beneficial in the classroom when establishing connection (Parker & Parrott, 1995). Teachers who share information about who they are and their personal life allow students to see them as being real people with their own struggles (Parker & Parrott, 1995). Teacher self-disclosure also suggests to the student that the teacher is invested in creating connections and trust (Cayanus, Martin & Goodboy, 2009). According to the participants in this inquiry, the ability and willingness to show personal vulnerability within a classroom was identified as an essential component when establishing trust and strengthening relationships with students, especially those who have a history of trauma. Brené Brown (2012) echoes this sentiment according to her grounded theory research on vulnerability. She states that

through the effective use of vulnerability, teachers can facilitate an environment where students feel emotionally and physically safe (Brown, 2012).

Furthermore, researchers emphasize that teachers need to gain an awareness of the typical challenges students with trauma or chronic stress face on a daily basis (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). This may include hypersensitivity to transitions and difficulties with routine changes (Minahan & Rappaport, 2012) or challenges with connection and relationship building. Teachers may readily be able to build relationships with students who are at low to no risk, but struggle when relationship building efforts are thwarted or challenged. Yet the most effective teachers see disrespectful and challenging behavior as an indicator of a need rather than a personal attack on them (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Additionally, they respond in ways that reaffirm the relationship and unconditional positive regard they have for the student (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). One of the "most important aspects in a teacher's daily functioning is interacting with students (Raufelder, Bukowski & Mohr, 2013). It is not only the most essential component of the experience of being a teacher, but it also is the most challenging aspect" (Raufelder, Bukowski & Mohr, 2013, p. 2).

The value of establishing a strong and positive classroom community and culture was an additional finding of this study. The data suggested that reinforcing a strong classroom community and culture needs to be an active and ongoing process that occurs all throughout the school year. Emotionally supportive classroom communities and cultures are characterized by strong feelings of warmth, respect, positive affect, teacher responsiveness and sensitivity, and low levels of anger, sarcasm and irritability (Buyse et

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al., 2008; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Pianta, Hamre, & Mintz, 2010). An effective classroom culture fosters positive feelings of regard from all students within the classroom and contributes to resiliency factors, particularly among students who are considered to be at risk (Center on the Developing Child, 2010; Rucinski, Brown & Downer, 2017).

While it is essential to understand the factors that promote relational trust and positive classroom culture, also identified in this inquiry were the professional barriers that can thwart this practice. Teachers have a significant number of responsibilities to complete on a daily basis which can make it very challenging for them to continuously focus on enhancing classroom climate and reinforcing relational trust. Furthermore, teachers may have the best intentions of establishing classrooms that are characterized by unconditional positive regard and emotional support, but be unsure of how to effectively create these conditions in their classroom over time. It will be essential for schools to allow adequate time for culture and community building activities to happen at various points throughout the school day, as well as the school year. Furthermore, there is a clear need for programmatic improvements in teacher training, professional development and coaching support to facilitate a teacher's ability to implement the essential strategies necessary (Pianta et al., 2008; Zan & Donegan-Ritter, 2014).

Finally, closely related to relational trust is the idea of employing disciplinary practices that reinforce relationships and connection while continuing to hold students responsible for their own behavior. Wolpow, Johnson, Hertel and Kincaid (2016) postulate that traumatic events make it difficult for children to trust others.

Unconditional positive regard, or the ways that individuals show genuine respect for other humans, is an important ingredient in building resiliency. Struggling students dealing with trauma do not need another adult telling them what is wrong with them, they need someone to support them in their current development and help them to become better humans with sustained kindness and empathy (Wolpow, Johnson, Hertel & Kincaid, 2016). The data in this inquiry suggested that it is important for students to be held accountable for their actions and behaviors; however, this needs to be carried out in a manner that supports development and reinforces their need for unconditional positive regard. Teachers, with assistance and support from their administration, can lead this crusade through eliminating the usage of punitive disciplinary practices and adopting discipline practices that reinforce relationships and promote empathy. While this practice can be started within the classroom community itself, it will be essential to integrate it into school discipline policies and procedures (exosystem, Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Social Emotional Learning within the Classroom

Another important implication that can directly impact a student's microsystem is the direct teaching of social-emotional learning skills, and in particular, emotional regulation skills. Successful development of important social-emotional learning skills, especially emotional regulation, can set children on a trajectory for positive school experiences (Moen, Sheridan, Schumacher & Cheng, 2019). In addition, there is a growing body of literature suggesting that social-emotional programming enhances a student's connection to school, overall classroom behavior and academic achievement (Zins et al., 2004). Research also suggests that social-emotional programs may affect

executive functioning skills that develop in the prefrontal areas of the cortex (Riggs, N., Greenberg, R., Kusché, M., & Pentz, T., 2006). Furthermore, a study conducted in 2010 determined that the overall improvement of emotional regulation skills has the positive effect of reducing the incident rate of disciplinary actions and suspensions (Wyman et al., 2010). The data from this inquiry reinforces the overall benefits of this practice while adding a practical application aspect. Several classroom teachers disclosed being able to teach missing social and emotional skills in a manner that was directly aligned to the needs of the students within classroom and authentic to who the teacher was as a professional (yet the instruction was not directly aligned with a published curriculum). An important aspect of any instruction is providing students with a way to practice and generalize skills (Wyman et al., 2010). Through the use of teacher modeling, explicit teaching and prompting, as well as providing a safe environment and location to practice the skills (for example, through the effective use of a peace or a calming corner), students appeared to not only learn important skills, but also seemed to generalize them. While this claim will need to be verified in future research, the implications are interesting. Nevertheless, teachers will need to engage in appropriate training so that they feel comfortable teaching this important skill and, consequently, building coping skills and nurturing healthy development in their students.

Implementation Implications within the Mesosystem

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the mesosystem involves the interaction and influences of different microsystems that, in turn, impact a child's development, emotional state and well-being. The manner in which other microsystems influence the

classroom microsystem is the main practice implication that falls within the mesosystem. While there are several microsystems within a school that could potentially influence a classroom microsystem in a positive or negative manner, for the purposes of this inquiry, three microsystems that have the potential to be influential in trauma-informed practices implementation were identified. These microsystems include administration support and overall school culture, classroom community and management support often provided by instructional coaches, and social and emotional support often provided by mental health professionals. When teachers feel supported in trauma-informed practices implementation, better overall outcomes can be seen in their classrooms.

Administration Support and Overall School Culture

According to Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), a principal's leadership often sets the tone of the school. Additionally, Vanderwegen et al. (2013) discovered that a principal's ability to build strong relationships with their staff, their students and the community provides the foundation for the essential work culture that is necessary when becoming trauma-informed. Furthermore, Vanderwegen et al. (2013) also determined that administration and leader modeling of compassion, respect and empathy to all staff and students was an additional essential component of effective trauma-informed leadership. The results from the current inquiry reinforced the notion that the positive influence and intersections of leadership and the classroom microsystem is highly influential when becoming trauma-informed. Furthermore, the absence of leadership or the lack of a strong and positive interaction between leadership, the teacher and the classroom microsystem is a clear organizational barrier. Therefore, an encouraging and

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supportive leadership and school climate was determined to be an essential component to ensure that students and teachers alike felt like they were supported and part of a larger community.

Classroom Community and Management Support often Provided by Instructional Coaches

According to Knight (2018), instructional coaches partner with teachers and help improve teaching practices within a school. To do this, instructional coaches collaborate with teachers to get a clear picture of the current reality in a classroom, identify goals, pick teaching strategies to meet the goals, monitor progress and problem-solve until goals are met (Knight, 2018). Effective coaches see teachers as professionals and work hard to establish strong relationships and relational trust prior to suggesting any shifts in practice (Knight, 2018). As such, coaches are in an influential position to assist with strengthening the classroom community and improve classroom management to make it more trauma-informed. Additionally, coaches are also in a key position to support teachers as they work through their own personal barriers to implementation. A few participants believed that their own personal backgrounds were barriers to implementation success. One participant even attributed the learning curve that she embarked on over the course of the school year as a type of culture shock, a phenomenon that she believed left her feeling fearful and uncertain, at times. Through effective coaching, teachers are more likely to feel supported and willing to embark on practices that may initially conflict with their own personal mental models (Knight, 2018). As a

result, students would begin to feel more physically and emotionally safe within their classroom microsystem.

However, given that instructional coaches are typically master teachers and do not usually have a comprehensive background in behavioral and emotional supports, it will be essential to provide them with intensive professional development in this area. This could involve basic counseling techniques, as well as best practices in emotional regulation and classroom community and culture. Additionally, it will be imperative for school administration to support not only coaching that focuses on academic improvement, but also coaching that improves the overall classroom community.

Social and Emotional Support

While all mental health professionals are essential in the trauma-informed practices movement, the social emotional support that school psychologists can bring to a classroom microsystem is particularly beneficial. According to the NASP Practice Model Implementation Guide (2015), school psychologists have knowledge and specialized skills in consultation, collaboration and communication (Skalski, 2015). Not only are these skills applicable to students and families, they are also useful when engaging in coaching with teachers and systems-level change (Skalski, 2015). Data suggested a need for a higher intensity of one-on-one coaching support in the area of trauma-informed practices. Participants desired this more intensive support so that they could broaden their understanding of practical strategies, and in turn, positively influence the classroom microsystem. As noted previously, the literature on instructional coaching indicates that teachers who are able to collaborate with a coach for three consecutive years demonstrate

the ability to implement new strategies and practices and have a better understanding of their students' needs (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Vanderburg and Stephens, 2009). Since instructional coaching has a proven track record of increasing a teacher's professional practice (Knight, 2018), behavioral or social/emotional coaching is the logical next step to foster a deeper understanding of trauma-informed practices and challenge possible assumptions and generalizations. Given their skills in consultation and collaboration, school psychologists are in an excellent position to provide this type of coaching support.

Furthermore, inquiry data also touched on the necessity of having a team approach when implementing trauma-informed practices as an additional support to assist with improving classroom microsystems at the universal and more targeted levels (whole class and more individualized to certain students). This team could be similar to a problem-solving team or Multi-Tiered System of Support team, but with a clear focus on meeting the social and emotional needs of students using trauma-informed practices. Sporleder and Forbes (2016) discuss the necessity of repurposing or developing a team in their book, The Trauma Informed School. With their leadership skills and strong understanding of behavior, school psychologists would become integral members of this team.

School psychologists can also be vital contributors when developing professional development within the schools. The NASP Practice Model Implementation Guide (2015) indicates that school psychologists have comprehensive knowledge of evidence-based strategies to promote social and emotional functioning and improve behavioral health (Skalski et al., 2015). As a component of this, school psychologists are able to

facilitate the design and delivery of curricula to help students develop effective skills such as self-regulation (Skalski et al., 2015). Additionally, they also have extensive knowledge on ways to improve community and develop relationships (Skalski et al., 2015). Both of these skills could be highly influential in a classroom microsystem.

A final consideration for school psychologists relates to their role with supporting teachers with their own self-regulation strategies. The individuals who contributed to this inquiry discussed the importance of being able to personally regulate their own emotions and body language. School psychologists could be integral in supporting the identification of practical strategies and ideas for teachers to use that may help mitigate adult dysregulation. Regulated teachers are more likely to support a regulated classroom microsystem.

Implementation Implications within the Exosystem

Bronfenbrenner's exosystem (1979) is the third level of the ecological systems theory. It pertains to the settings or events that do not directly interact with the student, but still have profound effects on student development. As it pertains to the school system, there are three implications identified in this study that can be explained through the exosystem. These include incorporating trauma-informed practices into all school policies and procedures, developing a performance evaluation framework that incorporates the practical aspects of trauma-informed practice, and ensuring that teachers receive preservice and inservice training on trauma-informed practices.

The Incorporation of Trauma-Informed Practices into Policy and Procedures

Necessary policy and procedures at the exosystem level that further the implementation of trauma-informed practices was a clear theme in participant responses. Implementing any innovation in schools is a process, not an event, and schools adopting trauma-informed approaches need to be thoughtful and purposeful in how the innovation is rolled out. Participants asked for trauma-sensitive policies and language to be woven into all systems, including but not limited to the school's Unified Improvement Plan. Polices would ensure that there was a schoolwide focus on the purposeful implementation of trauma-informed practices. Additionally, participants also desired to have time regularly set aside to learn new skills, analyze data or simply to reflect on their learning. According to Phifer & Hull (2016), implementing trauma-informed practices requires a comprehensive plan. This should include a needs assessment, detailed professional development plan, policy changes, and practical implementation ideas (Phifer & Hull, 2016). In order to sustain implementation, districts and schools would likely benefit from purposeful planning that includes a clear scope and sequence and accounts for possible barriers (such as teacher turnover).

The Development of a Trauma-Informed Practices Performance Evaluation Process

An additional consideration for districts and school leaders would be to create an evaluation process that assesses the presence of trauma-informed strategies and tools in order to promote accountability. Research in this field suggests that teachers and their instructional approaches are key factors in the effectiveness of school improvement

(Reynolds, Creemers, Stringfield, Teddlie & Schaffer, 2002). Additionally, teacher evaluation is often regarded as one of the many tools that can be used to strengthen a teacher's professional practice (Huber & Skedsmo, 2016). As it pertains to trauma-informed practices, a future research consideration would be to identify practical implementation ideas and integrate them into teacher observation rubrics and checklists to assist with accountability and successful application.

Ensure Teachers Receive Preservice and Inservice Preparation in Trauma-Informed Practices

Traditional teacher preparation programs prepare approximately 200,000 future teachers every year (Greenberg, Pomerance & Walsh, 2011). These programs often play an essential role in equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills to promote not only academic learning, but also social and emotional competencies (Greenberg, Pomerance, & Walsh, 2011). Critical questions in recent research have asked how to best prepare teachers for the challenges of teaching and what courses and experiences teachers may need to prepare them for teaching students in the 21st century (Greenberg, McKee & Walsh, 2014). Within the past two decades, while successful program models that improve the quality of teacher preparation have been developed, teacher preparation programs continue to have a deficit in all aspects of social-emotional learning instruction (Greenberg, McKee, & Walsh, 2014).

In 2017, Schonert-Reichl, Kitil, and Hanson-Peterson prepared a report for the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) that investigated the presence of social emotional learning instruction in preservice teaching programs.

They discovered that the promotion of social emotional learning is given little attention in required courses of teacher preparation programs (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). In fact, 49 states did not address any of the five core social emotional learning competencies identified by CASEL as being essential for development in required teacher preparation courses (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making) (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017). This is highly concerning given the paucity of research supporting the importance of incorporating social emotional learning into daily K-12 curriculum.

Several participants expressed their frustrations with not being introduced to the concept of emotional regulation instruction (or, simply, any social emotional instruction) while in their teacher preparation programs in the current inquiry. As social emotional learning and trauma-informed practices continues to gain momentum, it will be essential for teacher preparation programs to figure out how to integrate these concepts into their programs. Nevertheless, as prior research suggests that professional development trainings have the potential to impact teacher attitudes (Dorado et al, 2016; Perry & Daniels, 2016; Sanetti et al., 2013), it will also be essential to ensure that current teachers also receive high quality inservice training in trauma-informed practices.

Implications of the current study as it pertains to COVID-19

Not only did the COVID-19 pandemic upset daily life across the country, it increased general anxiety and feelings of uncertainty in both adults and children. It will be essential, now more than ever, for schools to begin moving towards becoming trauma-informed. At the very least, students will need to feel emotionally and physically safe

within their classroom microsystems. It is recommended that teachers prioritize relationship building and pay special attention to building strong classroom communities through intentional relationship building activities, both student to student and teacher to student. Additionally, it is recommended that classrooms at all grade levels hold regular class meetings that are appropriate for each developmental age, establish classroom traditions and routines, create dedicated teacher to student connection times and actively teach and model emotional regulation skills on a daily basis.

However, in order for the microsystem of the classroom community to be most effective, the mesosystem and exosystem in schools will also need to be addressed. It is recommended that districts consider passing a board resolution for trauma-informed practices to assist with the overall vision of becoming trauma-informed. Additionally, schools should compile a scope and sequence to ensure purposeful implementation that includes the establishment of a district and/or school-wide vision of trauma-informed practices, high quality professional development for all school professionals that focuses on both the theory and practical application of trauma-informed practices, as well as ongoing coaching support for universal, targeted and intensive trauma-informed practices implementation. Furthermore, it is also recommended that leadership intentionally set aside time for individuals at the school to connect and collaborate with each other for both academic and social/emotional needs, create (or repurpose) a team to support teachers as they embark upon trauma-informed practices, and ensure that instructional coaches and others who may fall into the consultation or coaching role broaden their understanding of TIP, as well as their ability to coach in a trauma-informed manner.

Finally, to assist with accountability, leadership may want to consider developing a checklist of "lookfors" to observe and work on throughout the school year.

Limitations

Although this study has yielded important findings regarding successful implementation of trauma-informed practices, a number of limitations must also be noted. Notable limitations are identified in the design or methodology used, subject limitations and personal limitations.

Design Limitations

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss the importance of ensuring reliability and validity through the idea of "trustworthiness". "Trustworthiness" involves establishing credibility, or the confidence in the truth of the findings; transferability, or showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts; dependability, or ensuring that the results can be replicated; and confirmability, or the extent to which the findings of the study are shaped by the participant responses and not the researcher bias, motivation or interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While multiple steps were taken throughout the research to ensure credibility, when looking at confirmability, a few limitations must be noted. This design was a qualitative phenomenology with research outcomes that were naturally contingent upon the inherent biases and assumptions of the researcher. While *epoche* (Moustakas, 1994), bracketing and multiple attempts at member checking were all used in an attempt to remove any preconceived assumptions, engaging in these activities merely mitigates bias. It does not completely eliminate it. Additionally, while a modified triangulation was also used in an attempt to increase the reliability and

confirmability of the study, only two methods of data collection were employed. Should this study be replicated, it is recommended that an additional mode of data collection be considered. This could include observational data to determine the presence and frequency of use of practical strategies, survey data to measure perceptions at various times throughout the school year or possibly the use of pre-existing data including teacher evaluation data and student growth data. Finally, the interpretive nature of qualitative methods recognizes that human knowledge and perception is an ever-changing field and all claims should be interpreted with varying degrees of caution (Rossman & Rallis, 2016).

An additional limitation should be noted when examining dependability (Lincoln & Guba,1985). While this study can possibly be replicated within a different building, the dynamics of the researcher, participants and context in which this study was developed is bound to deeply influence the findings in a way that may produce different insights. Additionally, this school was already considered to be a school "ready" for this system-level change given that the district had already moved towards becoming trauma-informed and the researcher was employed in the K-8 school with the ultimate goal of helping the school towards becoming trauma-informed.

Subject Limitations

In addition to methodological limitations, there were a few notable limitations of this study. First of all, this study is considered to be exploratory and cannot be generalized to other contexts or populations due to its small sample size. Small sample sizes lend themselves well for the purposes of phenomenology; however, the perspectives

are innately individualized and cannot be transferred (Creswell, 2013). While every

effort was made to set aside any prior knowledge and assumptions of the practices of the

participants over the course of the school year, one would be remiss to think that this

connection did not influence subject participation in some way. Finally, while

participation in this study was completely voluntary, the prior working relationship that

the researcher had with each of the participants likely influenced their overall

involvement in the study in some way.

Personal Limitations

As noted above, I was employed at the urban K-8 for the entire school year prior

to the research study. I also was highly involved in the implementation of trauma-

informed practices in the building. As a result, I clearly came to the table with my own

personal biases and assumptions on the value of this movement. I used several

techniques in an attempt to engage in *epoche* and lessen potential bias. This included

active and empathetic listening without comment or acknowledgement, trying to stay

conscious of my body language and facial expressions, statements prior to each interview

reminding the participant to not think of me as an insider, and interviewing participants in

neutral locations. However, I believe it was impossible to remain completely impartial.

It is likely that at least some of my own personal assumptions may have been

subconsciously conveyed during interviews. Additionally, interviews were scheduled

according to the personal preference of the participants and their summer schedule. As a

result, there was clear variability in the latency between interviews. This ranged from a

few days to a month between each interview. At times, the short turnaround limited the

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time that was available to transcribe the interview and return it for member checking. Furthermore, transcriptions were not always reviewed prior to moving onto the next interview. As a result, some participants may have had more time to revisit concepts and ideas than others.

Directions for Future Research

This phenomenological study explored the lived experience of teachers who implemented trauma-informed practices at an urban K-8 school. The findings provide perspective about the essential practical strategies necessary to become "trauma-informed", as well as the barriers to implementation success. Additionally, the Trauma-Informed Practices Model provides a visual and clearer understanding of what should be considered best practices when embarking on this movement. As mentioned above, the findings have implications for a variety of stakeholder groups across the critical systems that impact student learning and behavior. In this section, several ideas will be introduced in regards to potential avenues for future research.

The primary areas recommended for future research include developing a study that replicates the current study and validates the individual components of the Trauma Implementation Model. Additional research should also focus on ensuring that the model as a whole can be considered best practices. Furthermore, it will be essential to develop an evaluation tool to assess initial needs in each domain, as well as allow for progress monitoring. This should include developing and testing a rubric, checklist or evaluation system to assist with the practical aspects of becoming trauma-informed.

An additional next step could include the development of a coaching cycle rubric, possibly similar to Jim Knight's (2018) Impact Cycle, but with a behavioral spin to it. If instructional coaches and/or school psychologists have access to an already developed and empirically validated behavior coaching cycle structure, they would not only be able to support teachers as they shift their own personal mental models, but also be able to more efficiently engage in coaching conversations that effectively meet the needs of students. Additionally, further implications for research should look at the effectiveness of increasing teacher capacity in being able to support their students' emotional regulations skills and the effectiveness of integrating targeted social emotional learning instruction in preservice teacher preparation programs.

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Appendix A
System Level Change Logic Model
Trauma-informed practices – Year 1 2018 - 2019

Goal: to successfully empower the staff at Urban K-8 to collectively alter their professional approaches to teaching and incorporate a system wide trauma-informed lens

Objectives	Activities	Short term Outcomes
VISION: Provide staff with a vision aligned with Trauma-informed practices – Teach staff "Why" this is important	1. Adopt urban district vision to Urban K-8 – change as necessary 3. Communicate shared vision to all at Urban K-8 school	Staff is aware of the district vision, as well as the Urban K-8's vision
SKILLS: Increase capacity of staff with regards to self-awareness, restorative practices, being able to develop relationships with their students and build a culture of inclusivity and community	1. Restorative Practice training – 9/17/2018 2. Weekly newsletter articles 3. Teach Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) about Trauma-informed Practices (TIP) and how to support their direct reports in this capacity (with an emphasis on self-regulation strategies) 4. Implement schoolwide Social/Emotional Learning (SEL) program (elementary and middle – Random Acts of Kindness)	Staff increases their understanding of and capacity for conducting restorative practices conversations for minor behavioral infractions Staff increases their understanding of a Trauma-informed learning environment in bite sized pieces through newsletter articles ILT gains a deeper understanding of TIP and a Trauma-informed learning environment

Objectives	Activities	Short term Outcomes
	5. Implementation of mindfulness practices and calming corners in all classrooms 6. Develop a one page trauma sensitive environment look for and best practices document to be distributed to all teachers 7. Training through district trauma team (adapted to meet the needs of Urban K-8s staff) 8. Throughout the school year, teaching staff needs are identified through various means (observation, Attitudes Related to Trauma-informed Care (ARTIC) data etc) and addressed accordingly 9. Deescalation training	ILT begins to understand how to coach their direct reports in self regulation strategies Staff begins to teach kids social/emotional lessons through Random Acts of Kindness Students start learning missing social/emotional skills Staff begins to understand the components of a trauma sensitive environment and response Staff furthers their understanding of Trauma-informed practices Staff continues to build their understanding and skill levels
INCENTIVES: Evaluators will be able to use the teacher evaluation framework to focus on relationship building, classroom community building and other Trauma-informed practices in all coaching conversations and goal setting with their direct reports	1. Identify indicators on teacher evaluation system to support relationship building and community building (learning environment indicators that focus on relationships, respect, trust and classroom management practices) 2. Agree upon a schoolwide focus that all can support. Use teacher evaluation system to assess and provide incentives for staff 3. Present universal social/emotional screening data assessed through the Behavior Evaluation Screening System (BESS) and district whole child data as	ILT members deepen their understanding of indicators that could provide an incentive for their direct reports Staff begins to understand the social emotional needs of the students at Urban K-8 school, as well as the power of relationship building and community building (BESS and Whole Child Data) ILT members further their understanding of the power of self-regulation skills and broaden their own professional coaching skills

Objectives	Activities	Short term Outcomes
	appropriate to further provide incentives for TIP 4. Teach ILT team about TIP practices and look fors	
RESOURCES: All members of the Urban K-8s staff feel supported both academically and emotionally (relational trust)	1. Face to face discussions/coaching at all tiers (but especially Tier II and III) 2. Administration and Deans are visible, engaged and responsive 3. MH staff start to weave Trauma-informed language into everything they do 4. Demonstrating respect with genuine listening, taking views and philosophies into account 5. Reorganize Multi-Tiered System of Support (problem solving team for academic and behavioral concerns) to make it more accessible and be preventative rather than reactive 6. Implementation of mental health check in/check out intervention (CICO) for Tier 2 students 7. Teach and reinforce learning with teachers and other school professionals regarding best ways to deescalate students (What is going on, How can I help you, Empathize and THEN redirect appropriately).	Staff begin to deepen their tool boxes with regards to behavior and social/emotional response Staff feel respected, heard and supported Staff begin to hear Trauma-informed language and begin to incorporate it into their own practice Staff are able to get their concerns addressed before they become dysregulated themselves Staff increase their capacity to better meet the social/emotional and behavioral needs of their students Students with more intensive needs are able to access the support they may need on a prevention basis. Social/emotional skills and relationship building is reinforced on a daily basis by someone other than the classroom teacher

Objectives	Activities	Short term Outcomes
ACTION PLAN: Implementing TIP at Urban K-8 is effectively broken down into steps that the staff can easily understand and are able to implement it in small bitesize pieces	September – 1. Restorative practices training 2. BESS screener for 3 – 8th grade 3. Implementation of a CICO system for Tier 2 students 4. TIP newsletter initiated 5. Students identified who may need more intensive TIP supports 6. Teacher evaluation focus indicator identified (learning environment) 7. Video taping of 8th grade teacher who is already Trauma-informed. Align her professional practice with greatest area of growth. October – 1. Start up of prevention based MTSS system with universal practices aligned with relationship building and community imbedded into referral document 2. BESS data dive to determine areas of need (4th /5th grade) 3. Determine if correlation exists between BESS/Discipline data/Threat Appraisals/Suicide Risk Reviews	Staff will gain a deeper understanding of restorative practices and how to use in their classroom BESS screener will allow MH team to determine areas of need and provide data-based decision making as it pertains to mental health BESS screener – baseline in September and end of year in April/May. MH staff will analyze data and respond to particular needs with tiered supports Staff will begin to understand why Trauma-informed practices is the focus for this school year and how they will be held accountable Staff will be able to see a colleague of theirs talking about TIP and will further broaden their understanding of why TIP is important Staff will begin to understand the importance of prevention and problem solving TIP will be integrated into the MTSS language and system Data based decision making will be used to determine areas of need. Staff will further understand the reasons why TIP is important

Objectives	Activities	Short term Outcomes
	4. District trauma training (adapted to Urban K-8's needs) 5. 4th grade and 5th grade teachers will be presented with BESS data, what they can do on a universal level and how the MH team can help 6. Schoolwide trauma identifiers developed 7. Mental health team to begin Ride the Wave (social/emotional) curriculum with fifth grade November – 1. Begin to assess for TIP identifiers 2. Communicate discipline practices, overall behavioral incidents to targeted classrooms 3. Deescalation Training – 11/26/2018 January – 1. Ask full-time teaching staff, administration and mental health staff to complete the empirically validated Attitudes Related to Trauma-informed Care (ARTIC) survey to provide implementation data and determine next steps 2. Analyze and summarize data for administration.	PD will further staff understanding of trauma and importance of TIP Staff in the 4th and 5th grades (and specials) will further their understanding of the targeted and intensive needs of these two grade levels. Staff will begin to adapt their practice accordingly. MH staff will assist with implementation of TIP Staff will continue to gain skills that align with Trauma-informed practices Provide data that is representative of teaching staff (response rate of 91%) to determine where current implementation stands and an idea of possible next steps. Develop an action plan for end of school year, as well as an idea of what year 2 implementation may look like.

Objectives	Activities	Short term Outcomes
	March – 1. Present data to Instructional Leadership Team. Analyze data as a team to determine next steps in implementation for this school year and next school year. 2. Present data to Staff Faculty. Analyze data and engage in a gallery walk to determine root cause. April – 1. Administer spring screen of BESS to all students 2. Analyze and summarize data to determine next steps and effectiveness of interventions May – 1. Develop an action plan for year 2 implementation	All stakeholders will have a better understanding of where current staff sits with regards to Trauma-informed practices and areas for growth. Action plan for the remaining months of the school year will be developed. Leadership team will begin to discuss changes that may need to happen for year 2 implementation Stakeholders will be able to determine effectiveness of interventions and determine next steps. Mental health staff will have data that may be able to be used to start interventions earlier for the following school year. Stakeholders will have a clear understanding of next steps for year 2 implementation

Managing Complex Change model adapted from Knoster, T. (1991). Factors in managing complex change.

Title of Research Study: Pivotal Perceptions: A Phenomenological Exploration of Trauma-informed Practices in an Urban School

Researcher(s): Marni Choice-Hermosillo, PhD Candidate, University of Denver
Faculty Sponsor: Gloria Miller, PhD, Morgridge Endowed Professor in Literacy

Description: You are asked to participate in this research study because you can provide valuable insight into the experiences of teachers in an urban school after a year of trauma-informed practices implementation. This study is focused on understanding the process teachers may go through as they move towards implementation, the barriers that may have emerged during implementation and the practical application of trauma-informed practices. The ultimate goals of this study are to inform the district's Board Resolution 3831of implementing Trauma-informed Practices as a district, guide future implementation research, and provide insight into possible barriers of success.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and discontinue at any time. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.

Procedures: If you agree to participate in this research you will be asked to commit to three interviews of approximately 60 – 90 minutes each. These interviews will be held at a public place or another location at your discretion. These interviews will need to take place during the summer (June/July). The interviews will include questions about your teaching history, as well as your personal experience with implementation of Trauma-informed practices over the course of the school year. These questions are designed to elicit productive conversation about your experiences and guide future implementation research.

You will be audio recorded during each interview in order to ensure accurate transcription and analysis of data. After each interview, audio files will be transcribed by an individual who has signed a confidentiality agreement. After transcription, the audio files will be destroyed. Transcriptions will be kept confidential in the private home of the researcher and will be destroyed after data analysis. If you do not want to be audio recorded, please inform the researcher and only hand-written notes will be taken during the interview.

All information collected through this study will be held confidentially, meaning that Marni Choice-Hermosillo will not share any personally identifiable information about participants until data is de-identified. As a consequence of interviews, the researcher will know the identities of the participants; however, participants will be asked to choose a pseudonym by which they would like to be known.

However, according to law, the researcher may disclose your name or identifiable information or documents ONLY under the following circumstances:
- If required by Federal, State or local laws
- To comply with mandated reporting, such as a possible threat to harm yourself or others and reports of child abuse and/or neglect
- Under other circumstances with your consent

Audio files prior to transcription and transcribed interviews will either be kept in paper form in a locked file cabinet in the private home of the researcher or on the personal password-protected computer of the researcher. All data will be destroyed after data analysis has been completed.

I will do everything I possibly can to ensure your records are kept confidential. However, it cannot be guaranteed as the consent form signed by you may be looked at by federal agencies that monitor human subject research or regulatory officials from the University of Denver where the research is being conducted who want to make sure that the research is safe.

Possible Risks: There are no expected risks to you as a result of participating in this study. You will always have the option to decline answering questions and may stop the interview at any time. You may speak with Marni Choice-Hermosillo to discuss any distress that may be related to study participation.

Compensation: For your participation, you will receive nominal compensation in the form of a $30 VISA gift card. Participants are entitled to compensation even if they withdraw from the study.

Voluntary Participation: Participating in this research study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to answer any question or choose to end your participation with the study at any time for any reason without penalty. If you decide to withdraw early, the information or data you provided will be destroyed.

Questions: If you have any questions about this project or your participation, please feel free to ask questions to Marni Choice-Hermosillo at (303) 829-7072 or at mchoicehermosillo@gmail.com.

If you have any questions or concerns about your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Denver's Human Research Protections Program (HRPP) by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researchers.

The University of Denver Institutional Review Board has determined that this study is minimal risk and is exempt from full IRB oversight.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

_____

Participant Name (printed)

_____   _____

Participant Signature   **Date**

☐   **I have read and understand the above descriptions of how my recordings will be gathered and used. I consent to be recorded for these purposes.**

☐   **I DO NOT give consent to be recorded.**

Sample Recruitment Email

Dear _____,

I would love to have you participate in my research study because you can provide valuable insight into the experiences of teachers in an urban school after a year of Trauma-informed practices implementation. This study is focused on understanding the process teachers may go through as they move towards implementation, the barriers that may have emerged during implementation and the practical application of Trauma-informed practices. I hope to be able to inform future systems level implementation.

If you decide to participate, you will need to commit to three one on one interviews with myself lasting approximately 30 – 90 minutes. One or two of these interviews may need to be conducted during the summer. For your participation, I will give you a VISA gift card. I would also like to audio record and transcribe each interview with your permission.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you'd like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at mchoicehermosillo@gmail.com or 303-829-7072.

Thank you!

Marni Choice-Hermosillo, PhD Candidate

DEMOGRAPHIC FORM FOR PARTICIPANT

Pseudonym: _____
(Your name will NOT be used in any public files. All public research documents will include pseudonyms.)

What is your age range?:
21 – 29   30 – 39   40 – 49   50 - 59
60 – 69   70+

Please indicate your race (circle all that apply):
Black/African American   Asian/Asian American   Hispanic/Latino
Native American/American   Pacific Islander   Multiracial/Mixed-race
Indian   White

Please indicate your highest educational attainment level:
Doctoral Degree (Ed.D., PhD.)   Professional Degree (Ed.S., J.D.)
Master's Degree   Bachelor's Degree

Please indicate total years you have been working as a teacher (locations where teaching experience has occurred may differ):
0 – 2 years   2 – 5 years   5 – 10 years   11 – 15 years   16 – 20 years
21 – 25 years   26 – 30 years   31 – 35 years   36+ years

Please indicate total years you have been employed AT A DPS SCHOOL
0 – 2 years   2 – 5 years   5 – 10 years   11 – 15 years   16 – 20 years
21 – 25 years   26 – 30 years   31 – 35 years   36+ years

Please indicate total years you have been employed AT THIS SCHOOL
0 – 2 years   2 – 5 years   5 – 10 years   11 – 15 years   16 – 20 years
21 – 25 years   26 – 30 years   31 – 35 years   36+ years

1. Tell me about your road to becoming a teacher. Why did you choose this vocation?
   This question remains in the final version and is a part of interview one.
2. Tell me about your own personal experience in K-12 schools.
   This question was rephrased to make it a little clearer: Tell me about your own personal experience growing up in K-12 schools.
3. How do you think your personal experiences growing up influence who you are today?
   This question remains in the final version and is a part of interview one.
4. What are your educational and professional goals?
   This question remains in the final version, but was moved to interview three so that each interview would have rapport building questions.
5. What specific practices, if any, do you engage in as a teacher that recognizes trauma and how it can affect children and their learning?
   This question was reworded completely due to researcher assumptions that each participant believes in the efficacy of trauma-informed practices. The new question was: Do you feel trauma-informed practices is an effective approach to take with the students at your school? Why or why not?
6. What procedures, if any, are in place in your school which support school personnel with the recognition of the signs and symptoms of trauma in children?
   This question was reworded due to being a leading question. The new question was added into interview three and is as follows: Are there specific practices or policies in place in your school that you feel helped you meet the needs of students who may have been affected by trauma?
7. What specific practices do you engage in as a teacher that addresses the following areas?
   - Relationships with peers and adults
   - Self-regulation of behavior, emotions, and attention
   - Academic and behavioral success
   This question was broken down into separate questions and reworded. Some parts of it were also eliminated due to it being confusing. The final questions are as follows and fall into interview two: How do you build relationships with your students? Do you feel as if your approach was effective this school year? Is there anything you would do differently next year? Did you have any students you struggled to build a relationship with? Why do you think that happened?
   To address social/emotional learning, the following questions were added into interview one: Did you actively or routinely teach any social/emotional skills over the course of the school year? If so, what did

you teach and why? If you are going to teach next year, do you plan on teaching any social/emotional skills? Why or why not?

8. What practices, if any, have you put in place to ensure that your classroom culture creates an environment where students feel physically, socially, emotionally and academically safe?
   This question was determined to be a leading question and was amended. Additionally, several additional questions were added to ensure that the topic is saturated. The following are the final questions and all questions were added to interview two: Describe your classroom culture. How did you establish your classroom culture? Do you feel as if all students responded positively to your classroom culture? Do you feel as if all students felt as if they were a part of your classroom community? What advice would you give to a new teacher on the importance of classroom community and how to effectively establish it?

9. What practices, if any, do you have in place to anticipate and adapt to students' ever-changing needs?
   This question was eliminated due to it being unclear and redundant.

10. What has been your biggest "take away" this year with regards to trauma-informed practices?
    This question remained in its original form and is a part of interview one.

11. What obstacles or barriers have you faced when working with students who you believe may have experienced trauma?
    This question remained in its original form and is a part of interview three.

12. Are there specific practices or policies in place in your school that you feel prevented you from meeting the needs of students who may have been affected by trauma?
    This question remained in its original form and is a part of interview three.

13. What types of ongoing implementation support do you feel you need to better implement and sustain trauma-informed practices at the school?
    This question remained in its original form and is a part of interview three.

14. Are you in support of trauma-informed practices as a system level change?
    This question remained in its original form and is a part of interview two. However, the two sub-questions were eliminated due to redundancy. They were both determined to be leading questions.

15. What skills and/or knowledge are needed in order to effectively implement trauma-informed practices in your classroom?
    This question was reworded for clarity and combined with the following question (do you believe you have the skills needed to effectively implement trauma-informed practices). The following is the final question and is a part of interview two: Do you feel as if you have all of the skills necessary to meet the needs of the majority of your student's social/emotional and/or behavioral weaknesses or challenges?

16. How confident are you that you can implement trauma-informed practices in your classroom?
This question remained in its original form and is a part of interview three; however, the following question was added to address the lived experience of the teacher over the course of the school year: Did something happen over the course of the school year to strengthen or hinder your confidence?

17. Do you believe that current practices in your building support a teamwork approach and shared responsibility for all students, including students affected by trauma?
This question was eliminated due to it being a leading question and replaced the following questions all in interview three: Are there specific practices or policies in place at your school that you feel prevented you from meeting the needs of students who may have been affected by trauma? Thinking about the level of support over the course of the school year, was anything missing? Was there anything you would like to see changed for next year?

18. What conditions are in place that facilitate implementation success at the school? What conditions are needed to improve implementation success at the school?
These two questions were eliminated due to the concepts being incorporated into other questions.

19. Tell me about your work climate. Do you feel as if there is a feeling of trust and respect between your teammates and yourself? Your evaluator and yourself? The administration staff?
These questions were amended due to implicit bias. The new questions are part of interview two and three and read as follows: Tell me about your work climate/overall school culture and climate. Did you like coming to work most days? Thinking back over the course of the school year, did you ever feel so "fatigued" that you just couldn't bring yourself to go to work? Tell me about that.

20. Is having the ability to engage in shared decision making with how trauma-informed practices has been implemented in your building important to you?
This question was eliminated due to implicit bias. It was determined to be a leading question.

21. Tell me about the communication style in your building. What would you like to see that you are not yet seeing?
This question was eliminated due to redundancy and bias. It was determined to be a leading question.

22. What or who has been the most helpful in understanding and implementing trauma informed practices in your building?
This question was eliminated due to redundancy.

Appendix F

Key: First number listed before each question represents where each question can be located in the interview sequence (interview one, two or three). The second number represents the number of the question in each respective interview. Questions may be listed multiple times as they were identified as being able to answer more than one research question.

Questions designed to build rapport:

- 1.1 Tell me about your road to becoming a teacher. Why did you choose this vocation?
- 1.2 Tell me about your own personal experience in K-12 schools.
- 1.3 How do you think your personal experiences growing up influence who you are today?
- 3.15 What are your educational or professional goals?

RQ:1 What practices do teachers implement in their classrooms according to their personal perception of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy?	RQ:2 What personal barriers impact teachers' implementation of trauma-informed practices within their classrooms?	RQ:3 What professional barriers impact implementation of trauma-informed practices within a school system?
1.4 How would you define or describe trauma-informed practices?	1.1 Tell me about your road to becoming a teacher. Why did you choose this vocation?	1.7 Did anything frustrate you with regards to trauma-informed practices this past school year? What would need to change in order for it not to frustrate you?
1.5 Do you feel as if trauma-informed practices is an effective approach to take with the students at your school? Why or why not?	1.2 Tell me about your own personal experience in K-12 schools.	1.12 Tell me what it is like to be a teacher at this school. Do you believe that your teacher preparation program prepared you for all of the skills that are required when teaching?

RQ:1 What practices do teachers implement in their classrooms according to their personal perception of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy?	RQ:2 What personal barriers impact teachers' implementation of trauma-informed practices within their classrooms?	RQ:3 What professional barriers impact implementation of trauma-informed practices within a school system?
1.6 Thinking back over the course of the school year, how did you implement trauma-informed practices into your classroom?	1.3 How do you think your personal experiences growing up influence who you are today?	1.13 What types of ongoing implementation support do you feel you need to further implement and sustain trauma-informed practices in a school?
1.8 Did your students or any other students in your school experience behavioral challenges this past school year? If so, what do you think are the root causes of these behavioral challenges?	1.7 Did anything frustrate you with regards to trauma-informed practices this past school year? What would need to change in order for it not to frustrate you?	1.15 What would you like year two of trauma-informed practices to look like?
1.9 Did you actively or routinely teach any social/emotional skills over the course of the school year? If so, what did you teach and why? If you are going to teach next year, do you plan on teaching any social/emotional skills? Why or why not?	1.11 Prior to this school year, what was your experience with teaching social/emotional learning?	1.16 In your own words, describe the school where you worked this past school year and what it means to you.

RQ:1 What practices do teachers implement in their classrooms according to their personal perception of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy?	RQ:2 What personal barriers impact teachers' implementation of trauma-informed practices within their classrooms?	RQ:3 What professional barriers impact implementation of trauma-informed practices within a school system?
1.10 What has been your biggest "take away" this year with regards to trauma-informed practices?	1.12 Tell me what it is like to be a teacher at this school. Do you believe that your teacher preparation program prepared you for all of the skills that are required when teaching?	2.10 Tell me about your work climate/overall school culture and climate.
1.13 What types of ongoing implementation support do you feel you need to further implement and sustain trauma-informed practices in a school?	1.13 What types of ongoing implementation support do you feel you need to further implement and sustain trauma-informed practices in a school?	2.11 Did you like coming to work most days? Why or Why not?
1.15 What would you like year two of trauma-informed practices to look like?	1.14 Prior to this school year, what was your experience with trauma-informed practices?	2.12 I want you to think about your first year of teaching compared to this past school year. Were there any notable changes with the overall work expectations? With behavioral challenges seen in your students?

RQ:1 **What practices do teachers implement in their classrooms according to their personal perception of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy?**	RQ:2 **What personal barriers impact teachers' implementation of trauma-informed practices within their classrooms?**	RQ:3 **What professional barriers impact implementation of trauma-informed practices within a school system?**
2.2 I'm going to give you a few minutes to get creative. I have given you a piece of paper and colored pencils for you to creatively construct a finished product that answers the question, what does trauma-informed practices mean to you? You can use words, drawings or any combination of both	2.12 I want you to think about your first year of teaching compared to this past school year. Were there any notable changes with the overall work expectations? With behavioral challenges seen in your students?	3.3 Are there specific practices or policies in place in your school that you feel helped you meet the needs of students who may have been affected by trauma?
2.3 Can you give me specific examples or stories of students that have been impacted (behavior, attitudes or academics) as a result of trauma-informed practices at this school?	2.13 Do you feel as if you have all of the skills necessary to meet the needs of the majority of your student's social/emotional and behavioral weaknesses or challenges?	3.7 Thinking about the level of support in your building, was there anything that really helped further your understanding of trauma-informed practices?
2.4 Describe your classroom culture. How did you establish your classroom culture?	2.14 Thinking back on the past school year, have you had any specific "A-ha moments" with regards to implementation of trauma-informed practices? Did any of these "a-ha moments" change how you ran your classroom?	3.8 What obstacles or barriers have you faced when working with students who you believe may have experienced trauma? Were you able to overcome these? If so, how?

RQ:1 **What practices do teachers implement in their classrooms according to their personal perception of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy?**	RQ:2 **What personal barriers impact teachers' implementation of trauma-informed practices within their classrooms?**	RQ:3 **What professional barriers impact implementation of trauma-informed practices within a school system?**
2.5 Do you feel as if all students responded positively to your classroom culture?	2.15 Are you in support of trauma-informed practices as a system-level change?	3.9 Are there specific practices or policies in place at your school that you feel prevented you from meeting the needs of students who may have been affected by trauma?
2.6 Do you believe all students felt like they were a part of your classroom community? Why or why not?	3.4 How confident are you that you can implement trauma-informed practices in your classroom?	3.10 Thinking about the level of support over the school year, was anything missing? Was there anything you would like to see changed for next year?
2.7 What advice would you give to a new teacher on the importance of classroom community and how to effectively establish it	3.5 Did something happen over the course of the school year to strengthen or hinder your confidence?	3.11 How do you process and reflect on your own personal practice? Do you have someone at school or at home who you can process with or bounce ideas off of? Is this important to you to have?
2.8 How do you build relationships with your student? Do you feel as if your approach was effective this past school year? Is there anything you would do differently next year?	3.6 Thinking forward to next year, what would be helpful as you strengthen your confidence in being able to implement trauma-informed practices (even if you are already really confident)?	3.12 Thinking back over the course of the school year, did you ever feel so "fatigued" that you just couldn't bring yourself to come to work? Tell me about that.

RQ:1 **What practices do teachers implement in their classrooms according to their personal perception of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy?**	RQ:2 **What personal barriers impact teachers' implementation of trauma-informed practices within their classrooms?**	RQ:3 **What professional barriers impact implementation of trauma-informed practices within a school system?**
2.9 Did you have any students you struggled to build a relationship with? Why do you think that happened?	3.8 What obstacles or barriers have you faced when working with students who you believe may have experienced trauma? Were you able to overcome these? If so, how?	3.13 What are you most excited about implementing next year as you look towards the second year of trauma-informed practices?
2.14 Thinking back on the past school year, have you had any specific "A-ha moments" with regards to implementation of trauma-informed practices? Did any of these "a-ha moments" change how you ran your classroom?	3.11 How do you process and reflect on your own personal practice? Do you have someone at school or at home who you can process with or bounce ideas off of? Is this important to you to have?	3.14 What types of implementation support do you feel you need to better implement and sustain trauma-informed practices at the school?
2.15 Are you in support of trauma-informed practices as a system-level change?	3.13 What are you most excited about implementing next year as you look towards the second year of trauma-informed practices?	

RQ:1 What practices do teachers implement in their classrooms according to their personal perception of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy?	RQ:2 What personal barriers impact teachers' implementation of trauma-informed practices within their classrooms?	RQ:3 What professional barriers impact implementation of trauma-informed practices within a school system?
3.1 I want you to imagine that you are the new teacher ambassador for the building next year. How would you explain trauma-informed practices to a new teacher in your building? What would be your advice to the new teacher as they begin implementing trauma-informed practices? What would be the first few strategies that the new teacher should implement?	3.15 What are your educational and professional goals?	
3.2 Trauma-informed practices can be very theoretical. How did you move from theory to practice over the course of the school year? What practical strategies did you implement?		
3.3 Are there specific practices or policies in place in your school that you feel helped you meet the needs of students who may have been affected by trauma?		

RQ:1 **What practices do teachers implement in their classrooms according to their personal perception of trauma-informed practices and its efficacy?**	RQ:2 **What personal barriers impact teachers' implementation of trauma-informed practices within their classrooms?**	RQ:3 **What professional barriers impact implementation of trauma-informed practices within a school system?**
3.7 Thinking about the level of support in your building, was there anything that really helped further your understanding of trauma-informed practices?		
3.13 What are you most excited about implementing next year as you look towards the second year of trauma-informed practices?		

Appendix G
Pivotal Perceptions: Interview One

Script:

Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me and gain your perspectives of how the first year of trauma-informed practices has gone! Your personal perspective and voice are very important to my research and I encourage you to answer each question as candidly as possible. Everything will be kept strictly confidential and your testimony will be associated with a pseudonym. I also will not name the school or the district in my final results. Even though I am considered to be an insider, it is important that you explain what you are talking about so I can capture your voice and reduce my own personal bias. Specific examples and stories are really helpful! Do you have any questions?

1. Tell me about your road to becoming a teacher. Why did you choose this vocation?

2. Tell me about your own personal experience growing up in K-12 schools.

3. How do you think your personal experiences growing up influence who you are today?

4. How would you define or describe trauma-informed practices?

5. Do you feel as if trauma-informed practices is an effective approach to take with the students at your school? Why or why not?

6. Thinking back over the course of the school year, how did you implement trauma-informed practices into your classroom?

7. Did anything frustrate you with regards to trauma-informed practices this past school year? What would need to change in order for it not to frustrate you?

8. Did your students or any other students in your school experience behavioral challenges this past school year? If so, what do you think are the root causes of these behavioral challenges?

9. Did you actively or routinely teach any social/emotional skills over the course of the school year? If so, what did you teach and why? If you are going to teach next year, do you plan on teaching any social/emotional skills? Why or why not?

10. What has been your biggest "take away" this year with regards to trauma-informed practices?

11. Prior to this school year, what was your experience with teaching social/emotional learning?

12. Tell me what it is like to be a teacher at this school. Do you believe your teacher preparation program prepared you for all of the skills that are required when teaching?

13. What types of ongoing implementation support do you feel you need to further implement and sustain trauma-informed practices in a school?

14. Prior to this school year, what was your experience with trauma-informed practices?

15. What would you like year two of trauma-informed practices to look like?

16. In your own words, describe the school where you worked this past school year and what it means to you.

Appendix H
Pivotal Perceptions: Interview Two

Script: Just a reminder, even though I am considered to be an insider, it is important that you explain what you are talking about so I can capture your voice and reduce my own personal bias. Try to explain or give examples of everything. Specific stories are always helpful!

1. I'm going to give you a few minutes to get creative. I have given you a piece of paper and colored pencils for you to creatively construct a finished product that answers the question, what does trauma-informed practices mean to you? You can use words, drawings or any combination of both.

2. Thinking back on our first interview, do you have anything that you would like to add or any specific stories that illustrate your thoughts?

3. Can you give me specific examples or stories of students that have been impacted (behaviors, attitudes, academics) as a result of trauma-informed practices at this school?

4. Describe your classroom culture. How did you establish your classroom culture?

5. Do you feel as if all students responded positively to your classroom culture?

6. Do you believe all students felt like they were a part of your classroom community? Why or why not?

7. What advice would you give to a new teacher on the importance of classroom community and how to effectively establish it?

8. How do you build relationships with your students? Do you feel as if your approach was effective this school year? Is there anything you would do differently next year?

9. Did you have any students you struggled to build a relationship with? Why do you think that happened?

10. Tell me about your work climate/overall school culture and climate.

11. Did you like coming to work most days? Why or why not?

12. I want you to think about your first year of teaching compared to this past school year. Were there any notable changes with the overall work expectations? With behavioral challenges seen in your students?

13. Do you feel as if you have all of the skills necessary to meet the needs of the majority of your student's social/emotional and/or behavioral weaknesses or challenges?

14. Thinking back on the past school year, have you had any specific "A-ha moments" with regards to implementation of trauma-informed practices? Did any of these "a-ha moments" change how you ran your classroom?

15. Are you in support of trauma-informed practices as a system-level change?

Appendix I
Pivotal Perceptions: Interview Three

Script: Just a reminder, even though I am considered to be an insider, it is important that you explain what you are talking about so I can capture your voice and reduce my own personal bias. Try to explain or give examples of everything. Specific stories are always helpful!

1. I want you to imagine that you are the new teacher ambassador for the building next year.

   a. How would you explain trauma-informed practices to a new teacher in your building?

   b. What would be your advice to the new teacher as they begin implementing trauma-informed practices?

   c. What would be the first few strategies that the new teacher should implement?

2. Trauma-informed practices can be very theoretical. How did you move from theory to practice over the course of the school year?

   a. What practical strategies did you implement?

3. Are there specific practices or policies in place in your school that you feel helped you meet the needs of students who may have been affected by trauma?

4. How confident are you that you can implement trauma-informed practices in your classroom?

5. Did something happen over the course of the school year to strengthen or hinder your confidence?

6. Thinking forward to next year, what would be helpful as you strengthen your confidence in being able to implement trauma-informed practices (even if you are already really confident)?

7. Thinking about the level of support in your building, was there anything that really helped further your understanding and implementation of trauma-informed practices?

8. What obstacles or barriers have you faced when working with students who you believe may have experienced trauma? Were you able to overcome these? If so, how?

9. Are there specific practices or policies in place at your school that you feel prevented you from meeting the needs of students who may have been affected by trauma?

10. Thinking about the level of support over the course of the school year, was anything missing? Was there anything you would like to see changed for next year?

11. How do you process and reflect on your own personal practice? Do you have someone at school or at home who you can process with or bounce ideas off of? Is this important to you to have?

12. Thinking back over the course of the school year, did you ever feel so "fatigued" that you just couldn't bring yourself to go to work? Tell me about that.

13. What are you most excited about implementing next year as you look towards the second year of trauma-informed practices?

14. What types of ongoing implementation support do you feel you need to better

   implement and sustain trauma-informed practices at the school?

15. What are your educational and professional goals?

Appendix J
Practical Strategies Identified by Each Participant in the urban K-8

Participant	Relational Trust and Classroom Community Establishment and Maintenance	Emotional Regulation Skill Instruction and Reinforcement	Explicit Teaching and Reinforcing of Rituals, Routines, and Expectations
Julie	Welcomed students each and every day; Worked on communicating effectively with students; remained open and vulnerable	Taught skills through modeling and self-talk	Strived for consistent rituals, routines and expectations
Eva	Established safe and inclusive spaces for expression	Explicitly taught and reinforced emotional regulation skills; used peace/calming corner for generalization	
T.Bone	Reinforced classroom community and relationships every day. Greeted students in the morning. Shared herself. Conducted morning meetings for community building.	Engaged in daily mindfulness practice and yoga	

Participant	Relational Trust and Classroom Community Establishment and Maintenance	Emotional Regulation Skill Instruction and Reinforcement	Explicit Teaching and Reinforcing of Rituals, Routines, and Expectations
Jenn	Actively established and maintained a feeling of community	Reinforced use of peace corner and explicitly taught emotional regulation skills; engaged in mindfulness practice; used de-escalation strategies to help with emotional regulation	Instituted and actively taught rituals, routines and clear expectations
Nina	Created and reinforced a strong classroom community; Engaged in morning meetings three times a week	Actively taught social-emotional skills including conflict resolution and problem solving	Ensured consistent use of expectations, structures and routines
Penny	Created and reinforced a strong classroom community	Actively taught social-emotional skills	Established and adhered to clear routines and expectations
Bubba	Built and maintained relationships and trust with students and families. Daily practice greeting all students; Engaged in home visits		

Participant	Relational Trust and Classroom Community Establishment and Maintenance	Emotional Regulation Skill Instruction and Reinforcement	Explicit Teaching and Reinforcing of Rituals, Routines, and Expectations
Molly	Gave students voice and choice; wove relationship building into academics; daily greetings for all students; engaged in team building activities	Played music in the classroom; Established a peace/calming corner to help with emotion regulation	Ensured her expectations routines and rituals were clear, concise and consistent
Bob	Engaged in relationship building; Actively established a welcoming classroom community	Implemented a calming/peace corner to assist with emotion regulation	Ensured that structures, routines and expectations were clear and consistent
Lolie	Built connections with students in a deep and meaningful manner		