



Conversation Guide

Webinar Series - Supporting Student Learning through MFWHSR

Trauma Informed Practice

Sue Bell and Sarah Jane Lees - Queen Elizabeth High School

In this session, Sue and Sarah discuss their journey in implementing Trauma Informed Practices in a large urban Redesign School. Strategies on how staff worked together to shift instructional approaches, curriculum and scheduling are presented. Also highlighted are ideas for creating and sustaining relationships with students, as well as how administration developed school policies and practices. While this was and continues to be messy work, the environment has shifted and is beginning to show results that indicate that these practices are having a positive impact on student learning.

We invite you to use this conversation guide along with this presentation to engage in a dialogue about innovative high school practice.

Consider using this recording with staff, parents and/or students. What might be some of the outcomes you would highlight as you consider these different audiences?

Moving Forward with High School Redesign is about more than simply shifting a timetable. It's about shifting mindsets. The shift in mindset to a focus on student-centered learning happens as a number of key practices are put in place, including personalizing learning, intentionally developing meaningful relationships, creating rigorous and relevant learning opportunities, and supporting mastery learning. Schools that are focused on innovative, collaborative, comprehensive, and meaningful learning opportunities, are showing evidence of increasing student engagement and success.

Key Understandings:

- With diverse learning populations, schools need to change their structures and instructional approaches to better meet student needs.
- **Trauma** is a physiological response to a threat. Trauma can be linked to developmental causes, shock or crisis, relationships, or a complex combination of these life experiences.
- Teachers need to identify “triggers” in the student’s environment that negatively impact or stress the student (ie. dark corridors, uniforms, loud noises, physical contact in the hallways, and facial expressions can be stressful or create fear). School staff can support students in managing these triggers.
 - Schools need to do the “front end” work with students to ensure they are ready to learn: Build relationships by creating a safe and secure environment, a sense of belonging and community.
 - Create calm predictable routines that encourage self-regulation and resilience
 - Scaffold learning experiences by starting with student strengths, program for linguistic and academic reach.

Questions for Discussion:

- Use the information presented on trauma to identify students in your school community who might be impacted by trauma risk factors.
- Is staff familiar with trauma informed practices that can support students?
- What “front end” strategies are teachers and other staff members using to establish a safe and caring school environment?
- How are trusting relationships nurtured within the classroom?
- What instructional approaches are currently being practiced to support new Canadians and other students who have come to school experiencing trauma?
- How do students at your school have access to outside specialized support services as needed?