



Spring 2022 Newsletter

Teaching with a Trauma-informed Lens

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“I HAVE USED SO MANY OF THE MINDFULNESS EXERCISES AND GROUNDING EXERCISES IN MY CLASSROOM. THESE HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY VALUABLE DURING PANDEMIC TEACHING TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO BE AWARE OF THEIR BODIES AND THE CONNECTION BETWEEN BODY AND MIND.”

participate, the professional development was offered in a virtual format eliminating the need for travel and alleviating concerns some may have had about gathering in person.

PHENND conducted an application process during Summer 2021. We received about 95 applications for what we originally intended to be 80 slots (20 people in each of four cohorts). One set of applications was from a distinct university-school partnership – Swarthmore College with Olney Charter High School. Thus, we wound up expanding to five cohorts, the fifth being a group exclusively for the Swarthmore/Olney partnership. The 95 applicants represented educators from 43 different organizations and institutions; approximately 30% were from institutions of higher education, 12% from K-12 schools, and the remainder from community-based organizations. Participants were asked to pay a \$100 registration fee for the three-part series; grant funds were used to provide a generous number of scholarships and to keep the cost low to participants overall. Of the 82 participants who eventually attended sessions, 25% were granted scholarships.

“I THINK THE TIMING OF THIS COULD NOT HAVE BEEN BETTER ...AND THINK THIS KIND OF COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IS GOING TO BE DEEPLY NECESSARY GOING FORWARD.”

Activities

With support from the BT2P grant, PHENND (Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development) offered a three-part series for educators in the Philadelphia region to collectively learn about trauma, how it manifests itself in classroom settings, and how to change teaching practice to incorporate this knowledge. To ensure that as many teachers as possible could

Workshop Series

The workshop series was structured over the course of three sessions, with separate dates and schedules for each of the five cohorts. However, we wanted to share some overall general

principles and background to all participants, so we held a formal kickoff event in August. The cohorts all met on their own schedule between late August 2021 and January 2022.

While we allowed movement between cohorts prior to the start of the series, mostly due to time and scheduling considerations, we did try to group cohorts by “primary learner.” Thus, we had an “undergraduate/graduate” group, a group primarily for K-12 teachers, a group for youth-serving community-based organizations, a group for adult-serving community-based organizations, and a fifth group just for the Swarthmore/Olney partnership. Swarthmore College paid the registration fees for all participants in that cohort.

While each cohort had slightly unique experiences, the trainers collectively organized the three-part series to follow a framework that moved participants from understanding to impact. The first session focused on individual awareness of basic trauma-informed concepts, the second session focused on interpersonal, and the third attempted to move participants to institutional.

During the series, participants from all cohorts were also invited to a Google drive of curated readings and resources.

Feedback

At the conclusion of the third session, participants were asked to complete a short survey about the experience.

“I NEED TO BEGIN THE CONVERSATION ABOUT THIS WORK WITH MY NEW SUPERVISOR.”

Of the 82 participants, 32 individuals completed the survey. Respondents were somewhat evenly distributed across the five cohorts with the largest number (9) being from the

undergrad/graduate group, and the smallest (4) being from the youth CBO group.

Participants were asked a series of questions about whether they felt more comfortable now than at the start of the series on a variety of domains. Responses showed high levels of changed knowledge, with 93% reporting that they definitely or mostly “had read more about trauma and trauma-informed approaches.” Improvements in attitude were also present with three-quarters of respondents saying they definitely or mostly “feel more comfortable teaching from a trauma-informed lens.”

When it comes to extending their knowledge beyond their own classrooms or domains and into the rest of the school, campus or organization, results were more tempered. While 72% of respondents reported that they had definitely or mostly “talked about what I learned in this series with coworkers and colleagues,” just under a third (31%) said the same for talking with their administration. This demonstrates the continued need to not only provide this type of training for frontline educators, but also to incorporate strategies for generating buy-in from leadership, a key ingredient for the eventual institutionalization of any new practice.

Despite misgivings many had for approaching their school or organization’s leadership, 65% of respondents nonetheless said they definitely or mostly had “a clear sense of at least one policy or

structural change that needs to take place at my school/organization, related to trauma-informed approaches.”

Future Directions

We hope to spend summer 2022 developing a new toolkit or guidebook with additional support from BT2P to extend the work beyond the individual educators we trained as well as beyond this region.

We also hope to offer this series again in the 22-23 school year. Based on feedback from participants, we might run cohorts consecutively rather than concurrently while also shortening the time between sessions. We would also like to offer a more advanced track for educators who participated this year but want to have a space to deepen their practice, particularly with regard to making structural changes in policy and practice at their schools and organizations.