Trauma-Informed Schools

Walk-Through Checklist

What are Trauma-Informed Schools?

A trauma-informed school is a safe & supportive environment that:

- ⚜ Realizes the prevalence and impact of trauma;
- ⚜ Recognizes the signs of trauma and the need for learning supports;
- ⚜ Responds to avoid re-traumatization by integrating principles of trauma-informed care into classroom practices;
- ⚜ Responds to staff needs for self-care.

The 6 Key Principles of Trauma-Informed Schools

Cultural Humility
Safety
Trustworthiness & Transparency
Collaboration & Mutuality
Empowerment, Voice & Choice
Peer Support

What is a Trauma-Informed Schools Checklist?

The purpose of this checklist is to identify areas of effectiveness and growth in creating a trauma-informed school environment. Pages 3-8 pertain to the 6 principles of trauma-informed schools. Each principle is broken down by indicators, which are designed to assess the degree to which the 6 key principles are being implemented across a range of settings in the school (e.g., classroom, hallways, common outdoor spaces, etc.).

This checklist is a product of the New Orleans Trauma-Informed Schools Learning Collaborative, a program of the New Orleans Health Department that includes partnerships with community-based organizations and schools in New Orleans. It draws on existing instruments designed to assess trauma-informed policies and practices, and incorporates feedback from New Orleans Trauma-Informed Schools Learning Collaborative partner schools.

Suggested citation: Trauma-Informed Schools Walk-Through Checklist. (2017). New Orleans Trauma-Informed Schools Learning Collaborative.

Trauma-Informed Schools
Walk-Through Checklist

Checklist Instructions:

1. Determine which setting you are assigned to observe. **All of your responses on the Checklist should pertain to this setting alone.**

2. **Complete the sections on this page**–include the name of your school, the day the observation was done, and your name(s). Indicate which setting you will be observing using the check boxes. **Do not indicate more than one setting.**

3. **Complete pages 3-8** - Mark the box that corresponds to the degree to which an indicator is in place in the setting that you observe – the options are *not at all*, *partially*, *mostly*, and *fully.* **Provide a response for EACH AND EVERY INDICATOR AND ALL 6 PRINCIPLES – DO NOT SKIP any indicators or pages.** If the indicator is not applicable to your setting, mark *no opportunity to observe.*

4. You can complete the Checklist while you are physically present in your assigned setting, *OR* after observing your setting. Either way, it is **recommended that you read over the checklist beforehand** in order to familiarize yourself with principles and their indicators.

5. Write any observations or reactions to the Checklist or assigned setting in the spaces.

School: _____   Date of Walk-Through:_____

Observer(s):_____

Setting Observed:

☐ Office	☐ Upper school classroom	☐ Lower school classroom	☐ Playground
☐ Cafeteria	☐ Upper school behavioral intervention space	☐ Lower school behavioral intervention space	☐ Hallway(s)
☐ Teacher lounge	☐ Gymnasium	☐ Bus lines	☐ Other:

Assessing Trauma-Informed Principle #1:

Cultural Humility

Degree to which the principle is present:

Indicator is **not at all** in place	1
Indicator is **partially** in place	2
Indicator is **mostly** in place	3
Indicator is **fully** in place	4
No opportunity to observe	×

Cultural Humility Indicators	1	2	3	4	×
Spaces are accessible and inviting to students and visitors.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students, staff and visitors are spoken to positively and politely.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Procedures and rules are easily understood by students and families.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Procedures and rules are spoken and/or posted in languages spoken by students and families.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A dedicated space (announcement board, etc.) exists to communicate to students, staff and visitors about school-wide announcements, policies and community events.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Examples of student work (art, research projects, etc.) are prominently displayed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Examples of staff values and commitments (initiative pledge/signage, interests, recognition, and goals) are prominently displayed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pictures/symbols representing the history and culture of the current student population are prominently displayed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pictures/symbols representing the history of the school and/or its neighborhood are prominently displayed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is diversity among the staff in this setting (race, gender, age, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are permitted to express their culture and identity through food, dress, music, language, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff apply discipline in a fair, equitable manner that does not negatively impact students with disabilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff apply discipline in a fair, equitable manner that does not negatively impact students for whom English is a second language	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff apply discipline in a fair, equitable manner that does not negatively impact students based on their race, gender or sexual orientation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Classroom material is presented to students in culturally and ethnically relevant ways	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Assessing Trauma-Informed Principle #2:

Safety

	Degree to which the principle is present:	
Indicator is **not at all** in place		1
Indicator is **partially** in place		2
Indicator is **mostly** in place		3
Indicator is **fully** in place		4
No opportunity to observe		×

Safety Indicators	1	2	3	4	×
All visitors to the area are easily identifiable as visitors (introductions, name tags, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spaces are actively supervised by staff members.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spaces are well-lit.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spaces are clean.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spaces are free of clutter, including unused furniture and the storage of items not used daily	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spaces are clearly designated and identifiable (classrooms, main office, gymnasium, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Emergency procedures (evacuation, fire alarm, tornado, lock-down, etc.) are prominently displayed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Emergency procedures (evacuation, fire alarm, tornado, lock-down, etc.) are easily understood by students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff maintain a calm demeanor when interacting with students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff model emotional control for students (narrating or demonstrating their own emotional regulation strategies).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff implement self-regulation skill building for students (e.g., breathing, movement, relaxation, calming activities).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Consequences for failing to meet expectations are delivered calmly and consistently by staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Additional Observations:

Assessing Trauma-Informed Principle #3:

Trustworthiness & Transparency

Degree to which the principle is present:	
Indicator is **not at all** in place	1
Indicator is **partially** in place	2
Indicator is **mostly** in place	3
Indicator is **fully** in place	4
No opportunity to observe	×

Trustworthiness & Transparency Indicators	1	2	3	4	×
Activities are structured in predictable ways (explicit routines, specific directions, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff consistently employ established procedures for student behavior (i.e., hallway pass systems, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student expectations are prominently displayed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student expectations are applicable to the space in which they are displayed (hallway expectations, bathroom expectations, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student expectations are clear, concise and positive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Schedules and posted events are prominently displayed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Schedules and posted events are current (not out of date).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Changes, including new people and activities, are foreshadowed so students and families can predict what will happen next.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Positive supports for student behavior are employed by school staff (proactively stating reminders for expectations, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff speak positively and respectfully to students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adults assume that students' intentions are positive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adults refrain from power struggles with students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff explore problems with students (i.e., what's going on, what's wrong) before discussing consequences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Natural consequences that are logically related to the misbehavior are utilized whenever possible.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff engage in active listening with students (i.e. listening carefully, restating the problem, empathizing with feelings and needs).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Additional Observations:

Assessing Trauma-Informed Principle #4:

Collaboration & Mutuality

Degree to which the principle is present:	
Indicator is **not at all** in place	1
Indicator is **partially** in place	2
Indicator is **mostly** in place	3
Indicator is **fully** in place	4
No opportunity to observe	×

Collaboration & Mutuality Indicators	1	2	3	4	×
Staff recognize and reward students' strengths and interests.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students learn about staff members' interests and hobbies.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students and staff interact collaboratively.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff members help students identify their personal strengths.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are encouraged to be active participants in classroom decision making.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are multiple opportunities to respond and participate during instruction and/or activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff members help students use personal strengths to address challenging behaviors and situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Restorative conversations or other strategies are utilized following disciplinary action.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Additional Observations:

Assessing Trauma-Informed Principle #5:

Empowerment, Voice & Choice

Degree to which the principle is present:	
Indicator is **not at all** in place	**1**
Indicator is **partially** in place	**2**
Indicator is **mostly** in place	**3**
Indicator is **fully** in place	**4**
No opportunity to observe	**×**

Indicator of Empowerment, Voice & Choice	1	2	3	4	×
Students are able to make personal choices throughout the school day.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff members actively and consistently seek out student perspectives and opinions (community circles, one-on-one conversations, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Information is presented in ways that reflect multiple learning styles.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learning is assessed in a variety of ways.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are encouraged to learn new skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are encouraged to build a positive self-identity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are encouraged to build a sense of self-efficacy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are encouraged to develop emotional and behavioral self-awareness and regulation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are encouraged to practice emotional and behavioral self-awareness and regulation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Additional Observations:

Assessing Trauma-Informed Principle #6:

Peer Support

Indicator of Peer Support	1	2	3	4	×
Students are taught about how their behavior affects others, both positively and negatively.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are taught about bullying.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are taught about how to be an advocate for someone who is being bullied.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff actively discourage bullying in all forms	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are given opportunities to practice appropriate peer interactions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spaces are set up in a way that encourages peer interactions (i.e. areas exist for students to sit in conversational groups, movement of students is designed so that appropriate interaction can take place).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students interact with students from other grades or classes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Positive interactions between students are encouraged and acknowledged by staff members.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adults model appropriate peer interaction with one another.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff assume that other adults' intentions are positive	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff refrain from power struggles with other adults.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff members recognize one another's personal strengths	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff are aware of one another's strengths and interests and incorporate them in conversation or other staff interactions and activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Additional Observations:

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Works Referenced

This checklist was developed using existing instruments as well as additions and input from the New Orleans Trauma-Informed Schools Learning Collaborative. Existing instruments that informed this checklist include:

Lesley University and Massachusetts Advocates for Children. (2012). *Trauma-Sensitive School Checklist*. Retrieved from http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/trauma%20sensitive%20school%20checklist%20(1).pdf

Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health. (2016). *Strategies and Resources to Create a Trauma-Sensitive School*. Retrieved from http://www.macmh.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Myklebust37.pdf

Orchard Place/Child Guidance Center's Trauma Informed Care Project. (2013). *Agency Self-Assessment for Trauma-Informed Care*. Retrieved from http://www.traumainformedcareproject.org/