

Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) have an important role to play in combating the negative impacts of trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in their schools and communities. Thoughtful, empathetic adults and volunteers are a vital link between home and school and should be using trauma-informed guidelines and practices in their policies and programs. PTA's can help ensure a positive, socially and culturally sensitive school climate by using trauma-informed strategies that improve a student's resiliency and their ability to learn and grow personally and academically.

FOSTER A TRAUMA-INFORMED PTA

Leadership/Membership

- Be inclusive, consider school-wide demographics when you establish membership for various committees, elect officers or design programs.
- Keep membership fees low to allow more families to participate. Allow sponsorships to cover membership fees for those who can't afford it.
- Seek unique and diverse ways to engage families to join the PTA. Look for unintentional barriers for potential new members/PTA leaders.
- Be deliberate in seeking diverse voices to help plan PTA/school projects and programs.
- Consider a virtual meeting or a call-in meeting occasionally to allow families to participate using their smart phones/personal computers or a community computer often found in public libraries. Record some meetings and post them on web/Facebook.
- Keep meetings short. At all PTA events, consider offering childcare. Work with your principal to provide an interpreter as needed.

Fundraising

- Be inclusive in selecting fundraising activities that include all students in the event, such as fun runs.
- Be sensitive to students who do not have the networks to seek contributions or have family resources to contribute.
- Offer ways for parents to contribute to fundraising that is not based on monetary contributions alone, such as volunteering at the event.
- Use fundraising strategies that reward all students, even if they do not personally meet monetary goals or participate in the fundraising event.
- Use prizes that are fun for everyone. For example, the entire class/grade level is rewarded with a "get to sit where you want" lunch pass or the entire school gets to cheer on the principal running ten laps!
- Be thoughtful about "Themed Days" – some students aren't able to afford unique t-shirts, purchase school/classroom tees, or have money for book fairs. Have sensitive and thoughtful alternatives that do not make students or their families feel uncomfortable or isolated.
- Provide some spirit wear items at a very affordable price. Add a 'sponsor a t-shirt' line to your spirit wear order form and purchase a school tee for students who cannot afford one.

Programs

- Select dates and activities that captures the largest potential group of diverse students/families in your school. Be inclusive when planning.
- Promote diversity in speakers and program topics. Check the calendar for religious holidays.
- Understand the limitations that keep parents from attending such as transportation and childcare.
- Programs directed at students should be sensitive to issues such as transportation and cost; also consider family or cultural reasons that may limit a student from participating.
- Vary the times of your PTA meetings/programs (before-school, after-school, evening, weekend, etc.) to broaden access by parents. Consider recording some programs for later viewing as a way to expand outreach/build community.
- Keep all PTA events welcoming to all families even if they are not PTA members. Send newsletters and announcements to all families. Find a parent who might be able to provide translation services.

Parents have a critical role in helping their children deal with the many emotional hurts and traumas that children face today, including the uncertainties that are a normal part of growing up. The ability to thrive, to cope, to overcome adversity—to be resilient despite the challenges—can be learned over time! Parents can help their children develop resilience at home and at school through a variety of strategies.

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN

Building a Relationship With Your Child

- **Connect:** Spend one-on-one time with your children. Let them know they are loved **unconditionally and have your support**. Building resiliency begins with them believing in themselves and with trusting you. Developing trust will help them seek advice in difficult situations when they need your help the most.
- **Social Support:** Increase their time with people who care about them. Positive interactions help build self-esteem, confidence, and optimism. Dependable, uncompromising and loving relationships are critical. Caring adults matter and they can be a parent, grandparent, teacher, coach, etc.
- **Maintain Routines:** Children need structure to reduce stress and anxiety (includes time for adequate sleep and exercise/play time, not just homework). Help your children develop their own routines for home and school.
- **Encourage Problem-Solving:** Ask questions to help them think of solutions (don't fix everything too quickly). **Listen:** Let them talk and give them time to process. Build their own "self-talk" language to help them talk through problems to come up with their own solutions. **Promote some healthy risk taking** to build confidence (new sport, friend, school club).
- **Teach self-care:** Suggest taking a break and the value of taking a walk! Help your child learn how to relax and calm themselves when stressed/frustrated (look for fun ways to meditate/breathe or create a silly mantra).
- **Promote the bright side**—optimism and resilience go together! Keep things in perspective. Share how everyone makes mistakes (including you) and how this teaches us.
- **Model resiliency:** Let your children see how you calm down, how you cope, how you problem-solve, how you see the bright side! Show your children how to reframe challenges to deal with difficulty. Learning how to stick to a task helps build resiliency. Model self-care by practicing it!

Building a Relationship With Your Child's School

- **Collaborate With Teachers:** Set realistic expectations for your child and share with teacher/child. Celebrate small victories, take note of improvements.
- **Advocate for Your Child:** Seek input from helping professionals at school when needed. Speak up when you are concerned and don't hesitate to use available school resources. Even your best efforts to help your child deal with adversity may not work. School professionals can also direct you to community resources. Find out which staff to contact if you need help.
- **Value Your Child's View:** Listen to how your child describes interactions between their peers and teachers. Value their concerns and seek to understand their perspectives. Don't hesitate to talk to school staff about bullying issues.
- **Visit School:** Attend PTA meetings, school events, have lunch with your child, be a volunteer, etc. Being around school/in your child's classroom can help you understand the school climate and school norms. This will help you guide your child's coping choices.
- **Be Sensitive To Membership Issues:** Not being accepted to a school club, to be on a team or in a school play/chorus may have significant impact on your children. Be prepared to help them deal with rejection and seek alternatives.
- **Pay Attention To Social Media:** Understand and be sensitive to social media's impact on your child. This is a major form of bullying in middle and high school. Access to technology is both a positive and negative aspect of school.