


Chapter 5


Understanding Trauma in Education: The Spectrum of Adversity and Its Impact on Student Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the authors will explore the connection between adverse childhood experiences, social determinants of health, and the educational outcomes of children. The chapter will discuss how social-emotional learning and trauma-informed healing-centered education can positively impact marginalized populations' educational and mental health outcomes. The chapter will provide the reader with an overview of trauma, social-emotional learning, trauma-informed care, and healing-centered schools. Additionally, the chapter will offer two different case studies to explore the impact that this can have on a graduate counseling program and a community-based healing-centered summer program for adolescents who have experienced trauma.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter explores the critical intersection of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and trauma-informed education, emphasizing the need for a holistic, healing-centered approach to supporting students, particularly those from marginalized communities. The chapter examines the long-term impact of trauma, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and systemic inequities on student well-being and academic achievement.

A central theme is the role of SEL in mitigating the effects of trauma, fostering resilience, and creating school environments where students can thrive emotionally and academically. The chapter discusses various SEL frameworks, including the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) model and Transformative Social and Emotional Learning (TSEL), which integrate trauma-sensitive strategies.

The discussion also expands beyond traditional trauma-informed care by introducing Healing-Centered Engagement (HCE), a strength-based, community-driven approach that moves beyond pathology and focuses on collective healing and empowerment. Case studies, policy recommendations, and implementation strategies highlight the importance of system-wide change, culturally responsive SEL programs, and educator training to address the complex needs of trauma-impacted students.

By the end of this chapter, readers will gain a deeper understanding of how SEL and trauma-informed practices can work in tandem to promote student success while addressing broader systemic challenges.

As You Read, Think About:

- How does trauma affect a student's ability to learn, regulate emotions, and engage in social relationships?
- What are the key differences between traditional trauma-informed care and Healing-Centered Engagement (HCE)?
- How can SEL be leveraged to create supportive learning environments for students with high ACE scores?
- What barriers exist in implementing SEL and trauma-informed education in under-resourced schools?
- What role do educators, policymakers, and community organizations play in ensuring that SEL programs are equitable and effective?
- How can schools integrate SEL into everyday classroom activities while maintaining a trauma-sensitive approach?
- What policies and funding strategies can support the expansion of SEL and trauma-informed programs in marginalized communities?

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