



SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS OVERVIEW

Snapshot of Safe and Supportive Learning Environments – “Trauma-Sensitive Schools”

Children affected by trauma may or may not see school as a safe haven or "different place" than the one where they experienced a trauma. In the case of chronic bullying, school is the location of the trauma. Most educators understand and acknowledge that students bring a diversity of experiences when they enter the classroom. Yet, educators may not know that a child is a victim of trauma. Research is clearly indicating a high prevalence of children exposed to violence in every classroom.

The significance of trauma is that educators may not be aware that a student is learning or responding under a trauma response. Behaviors, learning patterns or social skills may be misinterpreted or mislabeled. Traumatized children are vulnerable; teachers are the critical link to intervention with sensitivity and awareness. Best practices create an environment where students can learn in a safe and positive environment. Trauma sensitive practice is a must for every educator's toolkit. Trauma has profound effects on a child's ability to participate and process the regular school day. Educators have an opportunity to intervene and advocate on behalf of their students with trauma sensitive practice and awareness.

Elements of Safe and Supportive Learning Environments – “Trauma-Sensitive Schools”

“Trauma-Sensitive Schools” may include:

- Comprehensive professional development for teachers and other staff
- A team of school/district personnel to assess individual student cases
- Expanded counseling services
- Referrals to outside support services
- Parent and family workshops on the effects of trauma
- Conflict resolution training for both teachers and students
- Consultation with local hospitals, mental health facilities, women's shelters, and other community based organizations

Massachusetts State Grant Program for Safe and Supportive Learning Environments

In the 2008-09 school year, the state grant program (line item 7061-9614) supports a total of \$425,352

Grantee Districts		
Academy of Strategic Learning CS	Fitchburg	Peabody
Amherst (with Northampton and Ware)	Framingham	Pembroke
Athol-Royalston Regional	Gloucester	Quincy
Barnstable	Lowell	Smith Leadership Academy CS
Boston (Edwards Middle School)	Ludlow	Somerville
Boston Day and Evening Academy CS	Mashpee	Springfield
Bridgewater-Raynham	Methuen	Taunton
Brockton	New Bedford	Triton Regional
Chicopee	North Central Essential CS	Wareham
Dennis-Yarmouth	Orange	Worcester

in grants. Grants are administered on an annual basis.

For Additional Information about Safe and Supportive Learning Environments

Visit the state Trauma-Sensitive Schools website: www.doe.mass.edu/tss , or contact Jenny Curtin, Program Coordinator, via jcurtin@doe.mass.edu or 781-338-6839