

# Teaching and Learning Supports

## Elementary

Remember: Everyone in the classroom has a story that leads to misbehavior or defiance. Nine times out of ten, the story behind the misbehavior won't make you angry. It will break your heart.

**-Annette Breaux  
Educational Author**

Check us out on the web:

[Illinois Classrooms in Action](#)



## Are Classrooms Ready for Trauma?

Educators today need to have many strategies for the diverse academic needs of their students. The Social Emotional Learning skills of each student is also very diverse. Students experiencing trauma might get overlooked.



Being able to understand the trauma that affects our students and how their behaviors are often times masking the student's actual emotional state. Students of trauma may be seen as academically delayed or have attention issues such as ADHD. Students with trauma can consistently be in a "fight, flight, or

freeze" mindset. When they don't feel safe, are frustrated or just "lost" this will be the priority in their brains, therefore the learning activities will be difficult to process. Students must feel safe in the classroom in order to be successful.

Not only is behavior impacted by trauma but also the student's ability to learn. Children affected by trauma suffer from social, psychological, cognitive, and biological issues—difficulty regulating emotions, paying attention, forming good relationships. All of this makes it difficult for a child to succeed in school.

The CDC show in a recent study that 1 in 10 students will have experienced 3 or more ACEs.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

\*\*\*Does not include Economic Hardship\*\*\*

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Mental illness of a household member

- Problematic drinking or alcoholism of a household member
- Illegal street or prescription drug use by a household member

- Divorce or separation of a parent
- Domestic violence towards a parent
- Incarceration of a household member

The most prevalent ACEs students in Illinois experience are 23% Economic Hardship, 16% Divorce, 9% Alcohol and 8% Violence. (Nationally— 26% Economic Hardship, 20% Divorce, 11% Alcohol and 9% Violence.) Data from ChildTrends 2014—<http://bit.ly/2B8tWpg>

## Strategies for the Classroom

Recognize **"Survival Mode"**-

- ◆ Deer-in-the-headlights look
- ◆ Turn red & clench fists
- ◆ Breathe more rapidly
- ◆ Begin "moving" - ready to run
- ◆ Burst into tears or look ready to cry

Respond with kindness and compassion. "I see you are struggling with this" and then offer choices the child can do, at least one should appeal to this specific student. This will allow him/her to gain a sense of control. Over time the student will build the relationship to be able to say "I need help." For more suggestions download the Child Health Data Resource packet.- <http://bit.ly/2PhJsCj>

**Calm and predictable transitions**

can help a student manage the triggers before entering survival mode. The panic of "Uh Oh, what will happen next" can be controlled.

Educators can play music, ring a calming bell or have a catch phrase (1-2-3 eyes on me) to signal when it is time to transition. Building a routine around transitions for students will help them know what is happening, what they're supposed to be doing and what is next. This gives the students some controlled understanding in their environment. Secondary educators can have a signal when there are 10 minutes left of the class period.

**Praise Publicly, criticize privately**

to allow the student to build confidence in their abilities and understand that mistakes are okay. Find the moments when the student is doing really well and point it out, be specific. "Thank you for helping your classmate with math!" This will help build his/her self-worth and connections to their peers. When re-directing or correcting work do so privately as possible and in as calm a voice allowed for the environment. "When we get frustrated we can't yell in the classroom. Is there something else we could choose to do when frustrated?" Let the student guide the discussion to find the appropriate options.