Creating Cultures of Safety for Staff in Schools

mackillop.org.au
Acknowledgement of Country

MacKillop Education acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we gather and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future. We also extend this respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people here today.
MacKillop Education

EMU PROGRAM
- Years 4-8 (currently 4-6)
- Early Intervention

MACKILLOP SPECIALIST SCHOOLS
- Geelong & Melbourne
- Tier 3-4 Disengagement

XTEND PROGRAM
- 12-17 Years
- Tier 3-4 Disengagement

CIRC/WEST
- Children in Residential & Out of Home Care
- Tier 4 Disengagement
MacKillop School Geelong

P – 12 School

Tier 3- 4

ReLATE

Teach the State Curriculum
Sanctuary creates a culture of safety in schools in which wellbeing and learning flourish for students and staff.
Why Trauma - Informed?

More than half of Australian women experience some form of physical or sexual violence in their lifetimes.

(Mouzos & Makkai 2004, p. 2)

Up to one quarter of young people have witnessed physical domestic violence against their mother or step-mother.

(Indermaur 2001 – survey of 5,000 Australians aged between 12 and 20)

**Abuse Disclosure**

Victims take an average 23.9 years to disclose.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
Why Trauma - Informed?

Schools (second only to Guardians) have the greatest exposure to children and young people.

**Mental Health in Australia (MHCA)**

Prevalence of Mental Disorders = 1 in 4 young people

In any given 12 month period:

- Approximately 10% of young people will experience an anxiety disorder
- 20% of Australians aged 16 - 85 will experience a mental health disorder
All Schools should be Trauma-Informed...
It is about Learning…

The Hierarchical Brain
(Simplified)
It is about Mission…
This is a Staff Safety case...

**Against** overreliance on rules, consequences and other responses that lead to exclusion

**For** staff capacity building, proactive interventions and better recovery processes
Schools require...

Staff who feel safe enough to engage all students and their guardians.
Our Schools are Living Systems…

- Complex with interactive parts
  - Have interactive problems and solutions
- Unpredictable
- Adapt to change
  - Risk of change is inevitable
- All about relationships
The worst case scenario…

TRAUMA ORGANISED

When an individual, family, organization, system or culture becomes fundamentally and unconsciously organized around the impact of chronic and toxic stress, even when this undermines their adaptive ability.

- Dr. Sandra Bloom
“Reflection is a key component in learning. Being able to reflect on our lives and work is crucial if we are to not fall into mindlessness, the routine process of doing the same thing over and over again”

- M. Carroll (2010)
Supervision

‘Guided reflective practice allows us to reflect with ‘supervision’ – new eyes, new perceptions, new visions – we can see things differently, forming new perspectives and new meanings’

- M. Carroll (2010)
Staff face real challenges…

Student Risk Factors

- Genetic factors
- Low socio-economic status
- Poor diet and nutrition
- Adverse parenting
- Exposure to violence
- Drug/Alcohol misuse
- Acute stress or significant loss
- Peer problems
- Poor problem solving skills
- Negative thinking patterns
- Learning difficulties
- Low self-esteem
- Mental health and depression
- Psychosocial difficulties
- Violence and crime
- Suicidal behaviour
Staff face real challenges…

Vicarious Trauma Symptoms

- Intrusive reactions
- Avoidant reactions
- Hyper-arousal reactions
- Anxiety and depression
- De-personalisation
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Increased irritability
- Feeling of reduced accomplishment
- Procrastination
- Low self-esteem
- No time or energy for others
- Increased cynicism, sadness, seriousness
- Avoiding situations
- Feeling distrustful of others
- Disruption to interpersonal relationships
- Sleeping problems
- Substance use
- Increased sensitivity to violence

Adapted from Morrison (2007), ‘Feeling Heavy’
Personal Self-Care Plans

Strategies for caring for yourself, outside of work:

- Physical
- Social
- Spiritual
- Psychological
- Worklife
Staff who are present...

Differential “State” Reactivity
Bruce D. Perry
Personal Safety Plans

Strategies for in the moment, that promote:
- Self-Awareness & Calm
- Emotional Intelligence
- Need identification
- Environmental Awareness
- Best response
Parallel Process

- **Student**
  - Student Dysfunction
  - Student Recovery
  - Student Health

- **Teacher**
  - Teacher Dysfunction
  - Teacher Recovery
  - Teacher Health

- **School**
  - School Dysfunction
  - School Recovery
  - School Health
Recovery Tool

- Shared, accessible language
- A way of organising complexity
- Dynamic and nonlinear
- Gets everybody on the same page
- Applicable to children, adults, guardians, staff and School
S.E.L.F.

- Staff Concerns (Red Flags)
- Peer Issues
- Classroom Challenges
- Incident Debriefs
- Organisational Change
- Support Students/Guardians

Morrison. Z. (2007). ‘*Feeling heavy*: Vicarious trauma and other issues facing those who work in the sexual assault field’. ACSSA Wrap. No.4 September