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Balancing the Equation: Trauma-Informed Practices for Equity in Student Academic Achievement and Well-Being Outcomes

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Abstract

Adverse childhood experiences and trauma can have detrimental effects on students' academic performance and overall well-being, often resulting in inequitable academic and social outcomes. The problem of practice addresses how to build capacity for trauma awareness and trauma-informed practices in educators to support students impacted by trauma and their classmates. The organization involved in this change process is a large, suburban elementary school in Ontario, serving students in kindergarten through to grade eight. The Dissertation-in-Practice provides a framework for educators to better support students impacted by adverse experiences and/or trauma, through the development of socio-emotional learning competencies and the provision of psychological safety within their classrooms. Transformative and trauma-informed leadership approaches will be embedded within a layered framework that combines the change path model and the Missouri model for trauma-informed schools and applied to the problem of practice. Possible solutions are presented and include job-embedded professional learning, a classroom-based socio-emotional learning program, and parent engagement to mitigate the impacts of adverse experiences and trauma and achieve an envisioned future state. The preferred solution engages educators and students through a classroom-based socio-emotional learning program and offers change agents the opportunity for collaborative capacity building, while providing immediate supports for students. Enhancing psychological safety within each classroom will provide opportunities for school-wide transformation that will mitigate the impacts of trauma and support equitable academic and well-being outcomes for all students.

Keywords: Trauma, adverse childhood experiences, equity, socio-emotional learning, transformative leadership, trauma-informed leadership

Executive Summary

Erie Shores Elementary School is situated in a community within a small city, in Ontario. The dual track (English and French immersion) school serves almost eight hundred students from kindergarten through grade eight. As the largest elementary school within its publicly-funded school board, it strives to meet the academic and well-being needs of an increasingly diverse student population and school community. This Dissertation-in-Practice focuses on educator capacity building related to trauma-informed practices, at Erie Shores Elementary School. This dissertation consists of three chapters that will address the need for change, offer leadership approaches for change, and outline change monitoring and evaluation processes, as trauma-informed practices are implemented.

Chapter one identifies and frames the problem of practice relative to the organization, outlines guiding questions, and offers a vision for change. The school and board are committed to their mission of promoting the daily success of every student and their vision of empowering students to be globally minded. The board's strategic priorities are connected to student achievement and well-being; however, trauma awareness and trauma-informed approaches are not explicitly emphasized as a mechanism for achieving these outcomes. Trauma can have long term adverse impacts on students' academic performance, classroom behaviour, school attendance, and physical health (Davis, 2019; Gillham, 2023). Further, the intersectionality of race, culture, and trauma requires critical consideration, as it has historically been overlooked or has contributed to deficit-oriented perceptions (Haynes, 2022). Unrecognized trauma may lead to ineffective action plans that further perpetuate academic and social learning gaps. An increasing number of educators have acknowledged their need for building capacity in trauma awareness and trauma-informed practices within the school.

The problem of practice is the lack of educator capacity for trauma awareness and trauma-informed practices to support students impacted by trauma. Educators are facing increasing intensity and complexity in their roles, as they work to recognize and respond to the needs of students impacted by trauma. Creating a trauma-informed school will help to reduce the impact of trauma and support the academic success and well-being of all students (Erickson & Harvey, 2023). Educators at the school are deeply committed to professional learning and to providing a culture of care for their students and are communicating a resounding need for training and strategies to support the academic and socio-emotional needs of their students.

Chapter two provides a conceptual model that will guide transformative and trauma-informed leadership approaches and evaluate organizational change readiness leading to possible and preferred solutions. A layered framework combining the change path model (Deszca et al., 2020) and the Missouri model for trauma-informed schools (Carter & Blanch, 2019) addresses the problem of practice. This combined model will build educator capacity through greater trauma awareness, including the intersectionality that exists for equity-deserving, trauma-affected students, and the mobilization of trauma-sensitive teaching practices that are responsive to individual student's needs. The model also provides a framework for the implementation of trauma-informed teaching practices that will help to create a trauma-informed school.

Chapter three provides a change implementation plan that incorporates communication, monitoring, and evaluation, as well as next steps and future considerations. Transformative and trauma-informed leadership practices address four interrelated problems: how to increase the efficacy of the organization; how to optimize the resources to benefit students; how to facilitate complex learning that provides all students with equitable learning opportunities; and how to ensure that all educators recognize and value the intersectional identities of their students in an

unbiased manner that upholds their dignity, competence, and well-being (Gillham, 2023; Mintrop, 2020). Through these leadership approaches, three possible solutions are explored.

The first solution focuses on building educator capacity through job-embedded professional learning. This solution requires educators to participate in professional learning sessions and staff meeting presentations. Job-embedded professional learning involves educators learning first, before implementing strategies with students. The second solution offers educators opportunities to learn alongside students as they collaboratively implement a classroom-based socio-emotional learning program. Offering a comprehensive toolkit of structures and strategies can support educators as they begin to address the impacts of trauma within their classrooms (Koslouski & Chafouleas, 2022). With this solution, trauma-informed practices, including reducing potential triggers, fostering emotional regulation, reframing adverse behaviours, and implementing a pedagogical paradigm shift, will help to disrupt practices that perpetuate inequity and trauma (Koslouski et al., 2023). The third solution recognizes the fundamental role of parents in their children's learning experiences by focusing on improved engagement. Engaging parents is integral to supporting socio-emotional learning in students as "parents are their children's first teachers and [learning] begins at home" (Skoog-Hoffman et al., 2023, p. 6).

After careful analysis, a classroom-based socio-emotional learning program is preferred, as it centres around educator-student relationships and is well-aligned with the mission and vision of the school and board. Guided by the layered framework, this solution offers educator learning opportunities, strategies, and activities that can be immediately implemented to support student academic and socio-emotional learning competencies. This Dissertation-in-Practice provides a path forward for implementing transformative, trauma-informed change to mitigate the impacts of trauma and support equitable academic and well-being outcomes for all students.

Land Acknowledgement

  I acknowledge that the land, encompassing the physical territory and the waters of the Great Lakes, the air I breathe, and the expansive sky above, constitutes the traditional territory of the Chippewa, Odawa, Potawatomi, and Eelūnaapéewi Lahkeewiit Nations. These Indigenous communities, known as the Anishinaabeg and Lunaapeew, historically came together through their ancestral languages to mutually respect and share the land, recognizing their interconnectedness with the environment. As a settler, I commit to these principles of stewardship and harmony and demonstrate gratitude for the land, water, air, and sky, that sustain me as I live, work, and play.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Acronyms

ACE	Adverse Childhood Experience
CIT	Change Implementation Team
CPM	Change Path Model
EA	Educational Assistant
ECE	Early Childhood Educator
ESES	Erie Shores Elementary School
ETFO	Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
GLDSB	Great Lakes District School Board
KMb	Knowledge Mobilization
MMTIS	Missouri Model for Trauma-Informed Schools
OME	Ontario Ministry of Education
OPC	Ontario Principals' Council
OSSTF	Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
PDSA	Plan, Do, Study, Act
PESTE	Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Ecological/Environmental
SAFE	Structured Approach to Formulating a trauma-informed Environment
SEL	Socio-Emotional Learning
SMH-ON	School Mental Health Ontario
TIL	Trauma-Informed Leadership
TIP	Trauma-Informed Practices
TIS	Trauma-Informed School
TLT	Transformative Leadership Theory

Glossary of Terms

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE): potentially traumatic events or living conditions that occur before age 18 and negatively impact a child's sense of safety, stability, and attachment (CDC, 2019).

Equity-Deserving: individuals or groups of people facing historical and/or ongoing systemic and structural barriers, resulting in educational access and opportunity inequities, based on gender, social class, race, language, ethnicity and/or disability (Ocay et al., 2021).

Ontario Leadership Framework: a kindergarten through grade twelve leadership tool that describes successful individual and small group practices for both school and system leaders, as well as effective organizational practices at both school and system levels (Leithwood, 2017).

Psychological Safety: a belief that one is able to express themselves without negatively impacting their self-image, status, or career, for the enhancement of learning behaviors in work settings (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009).

Transformative Leadership: a critical leadership theory, focused on inclusion, equity, excellence, and social justice, that aims to transform social systems in organizations through redressing inequities existing in the status quo (Shields, 2020).

Trauma-Informed Leadership: a leadership theory that "involves becoming knowledgeable about, and building informed and compassionate attention towards, the range of traumas that students, teachers, and families face and the effects and possible impacts of these traumas on learning and behaviour in school communities" (Ravitch, 2020, p. 6).

Well-being: a state in which educators and students experience agency, connection, healing, and joy as they dismantle oppressive structures and practices and improve equity of learning outcomes for all (Safir & Dugan, 2021).

Chapter 1: Trauma-Informed Practices for Equity in Student Outcomes

Erie Shores Elementary School (ESES, a pseudonym) is a large, dual track (French immersion and English), kindergarten to grade eight school within a mid-size, publicly funded, Ontario school board. Educators at ESES are facing increasing intensity and complexity in their roles, as they work to effectively recognize and respond to the needs of students impacted by trauma. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) affect one third of Canadian students (Breaux, 2023; Letourneau et al., 2019; Winstanley et al., 2020) and can negatively impact student academic achievement due to diminished concentration, memory, organization, and language skills, and well-being due to aggression, anxiety and avoidance behaviours (Haigh, 2023; Honsinger & Brown, 2019). This Dissertation-in-Practice (DiP) will outline how transformative and trauma-informed school leadership can be leveraged to implement trauma-informed practices (TIP) to support educators, improve responses to trauma-affected children, and mitigate adverse academic and socio-emotional outcomes of students (Berger, 2019). Chapter one will situate the problem of practice (PoP) within the local context, outline personal and organizational leadership approaches and set a vision for TIP to improve outcomes for all students.

Positionality and Lens Statement

Positionality is an explicit recognition of identity that draws attention to individual privileges and barriers (Grain, 2022). Intersectionality describes the interlocking social categories and power systems in society and provides insight into how dominant systems operate, even in the absence of obvious disparities (Cooper, 2016; Grzanka, 2020). As a scholar-practitioner, my positionality and intersectional identities shape what I know and believe about the world around me and impact my interpretations and understandings of the social and political contexts in which I am situated (Smith et al., 2021).

Positionality

As an Administrator within the Great Lakes District School Board (GLDSB, a pseudonym) for the past sixteen years, I have been given opportunities to teach, learn and lead school leaders and educators. After nine years as a school administrator in urban, rural, and core schools, I became principal of ESES seven years ago. As a school leader, I am responsible for ensuring a safe and caring learning environment for over fifty teachers, twenty support staff, and almost nine hundred students. I am also responsible for mentoring vice-principals and leading the academic and socio-emotional learning (SEL) program for French immersion and English students as well as the GLDSB's virtual learning elementary school.

My agency as principal representative on numerous board-level committees, as well as my curriculum creator and course facilitator roles with our provincial administrators' council have provided me with insider views of academic leadership throughout the board and the province. My agency as an Ontario elementary principal aligns with the school-level leadership competencies of setting directions, building relationships and developing people, developing the organization, improving the instructional program, and securing accountability, as outlined in the Ontario Leadership Framework (Leithwood, 2017). My role as a school leader, along with my personal identity, as white, cisgendered, and heterosexual, confer certain privileges and assumptions that influence and contribute to my perceptions and interactions. I must consider and acknowledge the power, privilege, and biases that are inherent to my personal and professional positionality, while denouncing the oppressive structures that are present within the ESES school community. Recognizing and addressing the power, privilege, and biases I hold is essential for fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment. By actively dismantling

oppressive structures, a culture of care is created that enables all students to thrive academically and emotionally, ultimately enhancing their achievement and well-being.

Conversely, as a female school leader, I continue to encounter unique challenges and expectations that have informed and shaped my worldview. Armstrong and Mitchell (2017) found that many female administrators have to adapt their professional positionality to a male-dominated social and cultural environment. At times, during my tenure as a principal, I have experienced the need to "inhabit several contradictory identities revealing qualities, characteristics and leadership styles which diverge from socially prescribed gender-appropriate behaviours" (Jones, 2017, p. 907). As with many of my female principal colleagues, I have endured the impact of significant stressors due to intersecting professional workload, childcare, and home responsibilities, while navigating increasingly complex responsibilities, within time constraints, to achieve work-life balance.

Leadership Lens

As an experienced principal, I practice educational leadership through a liberal lens, as I am skeptical about tradition, believe in progress and change, and hold an optimistic appraisal of the human condition (Plazek, 2012). Liberal ideas align with my moral imperative of advocating for change and addressing systemic barriers to improve societies (Mill, 1999). Sensemaking through interpretivism posits that organizations are socially constructed and focus on participant meaning, understanding, and behaviour patterns (Capper, 2019). Together, these beliefs shape my leadership lens and influence my understanding, expertise, and interactions.

Marzurkeiwicz (2011) states that leaders must be reflexive and self-aware, while advocating for and motivating others. My professional experiences, as elementary principal of ESES and the GLDSB virtual learning program have shaped my leadership lens and provided

opportunities to build relationships that support the development of excellent teaching, excellent schools and enhanced outcomes for all students (Diez et al., 2020). Transformational leadership tenets align with the Ontario Leadership Framework and the organizational goals of the GLDSB. While they focus on increasing organizational members' effort and commitment, they do not emphasize informal leadership opportunities (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Transformative leadership is centred around relational processes that view leadership as being practiced every day, everywhere, by everyone (Montuori & Donnelly, 2018). While transformational leaders strive to lead schools within their current context, transformative leaders lead schools toward an ideal state or vision of what they could be (Hewitt et al., 2014). Trauma sensitive schools require transformative leadership practices that challenge inappropriate uses of power and privilege, aim to improve teacher-student relationships, and transform schools to be more equitable places (Marshall & Marsh, 2022). Transformative and trauma-informed leadership (TIL) approaches provide complimentary tenets that support these expectations and align well with my personal and professional positionality.

Transformative leadership begins with questions regarding justice, democracy, and the tension between individual accountability and social responsibility that offer an inclusive and just education that aims to transform society (Eizadirad et al., 2023; Shields, 2019; 2020). Transformative leaders focus on social justice, using a participatory approach to identify and disrupt systemic and structural barriers that continue to oppress equity-deserving individuals and groups (Hewitt et al., 2014) – facing poverty, racism, and/or challenges associated with compromised physical or mental health (Feldman, 2023). They recognize transformative moments and develop their agency through collaborative processes that lead to individual and social transformation toward a better, more equitable future (Montuori & Donnelly, 2018).

While transformative leadership leverages individual, organizational, and community strengths, TIL incorporates equity, diversity, inclusion and justice components as pillars of a social justice framework that challenges societal and institutional norms that privilege some and marginalize others (McIntosh, 2019). Trauma-informed leadership aims to provide a safe, caring, and consistent environment for staff and students by realizing, recognizing, and responding to trauma, while resisting retraumatization, as outlined in the four "R's" trauma-informed approach (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, 2014). This leadership approach also recognizes that the school culture impacts staff, students, and the school community, and provides a holistic approach to promoting healing and resilience in vulnerable students. In the current context, marked by the global pandemic and a clearer understanding of the oppressive barriers that marginalize individuals, principals must build and foster relationships to cultivate a safe and supportive school culture through meaningful connections with every student, teacher, and parent (Baron et al., 2021). This leadership approach supports a culture of caring for students and supports the well-being of school staff impacted by their own and/or their students' adverse experiences (Berger et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2024).

Combining transformative and TIL approaches supports the mobilization of educators to lead through collective engagement and collaborative practice (Kwatubana & Molaodi, 2021), as they posit leadership "as an everyday, everyone, everywhere, relational process" (Montuori & Donnelly, 2018, p. 322) that is manifested through small, incremental activities, in any context, without a privileged locus (Jullien, 2011). Both leadership approaches centre trusting relationships within a culture of care to enhance teacher-student relationships and improve student well-being. Incorporating transformative and TIL approaches will foster organizational, community, and personal growth through a combination of guidance and healing and will move

the organization forward with resilience and growth (Everly & Athey, 2022; Wharton-Beck et al., 2024). In addition, prioritizing individual and collective well-being through interdependence and interconnectedness creates the conditions necessary to address inequities and advocate for social justice (Shields, 2020). These combined leadership approaches also recognize the need to address the intersectionality of trauma within equity-deserving identities to shift paradigms toward asset-based perspectives, within mainstream educational settings (Haynes, 2022). Figure 1 shows that when combined, these leadership approaches will help to build psychological safety and foster a holistic culture of care for staff, students, and the school community.

Figure 1

Comparison of Transformative and Trauma-Informed Leadership Approaches
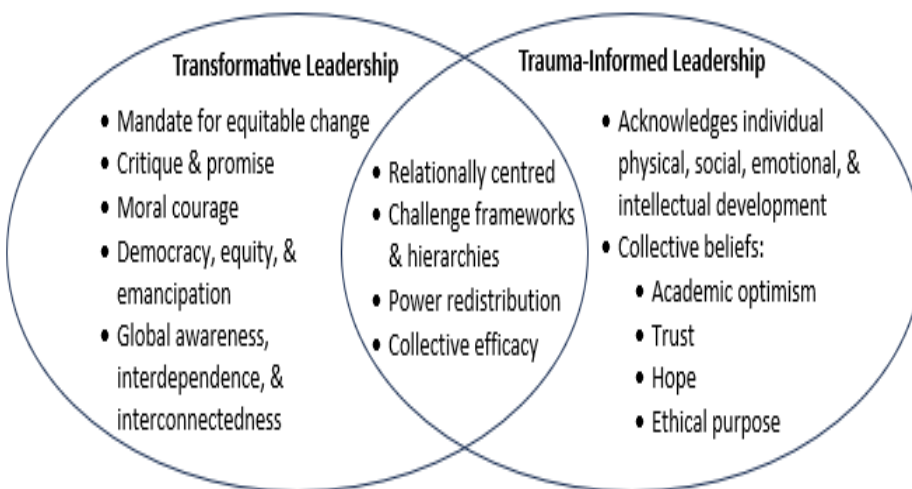
Note. Adapted from "Educational Professionals' Perceptions of Their Role in Moving Toward Trauma-Sensitive Practices in Schools" by L. M. Epp, 2020, [Ed.D., University of Nebraska]. (https://www.proquest.com/docview/2427297803/abstract/B8A7D574D2E545AEPQ/1) and "Becoming a Transformative Leader: A Guide to Creating Equitable Schools", by C. M. Shields, 2020, Routledge https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429261091.

Transformative school leaders encourage educators to join in a collective journey of creative inquiry to transform relationships with individuals and communities (Montuori & Donnelly, 2018). Transformative leadership is supported by TIL by creating a safe and supportive environment that enables individuals to recognize and heal from past traumas and realize their full potential. When leaders are attuned to the needs of their team members who may have experienced trauma, they can foster trust, resilience, and empowerment, which are essential components of transformative leadership. Collectively, these leadership approaches will provide the theories and praxes required to shift the contextual structures, within which the GLDSB is situated, toward more equitable and socially just outcomes for all students.

Organizational Context

The GLDSB is a publicly funded, mid-sized Ontario school board. It is comprised of fifty elementary and twelve secondary schools that provide comprehensive education services to over twenty-one thousand students (GLDSB, 2023a). Surrounded by the Great Lakes, the GLDSB has schools located in rural areas, towns, and small cities, across a vast geographical area. The board's mission is to promote the daily success of every student, and its vision is to empower its students to be globally minded (GLDSB, 2023a). As the largest elementary school in the GLDSB, ESES strives to meet the academic and well-being needs of an increasingly diverse student population and school community, including learners from four Indigenous communities.

Political Context

The values of the GLDSB reflect a combination of conservative and neoliberal idealisms (Green, 2016; Gutek, 2013), with a shift toward more liberal values, related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Figure 2 outlines these values within the board's strategic priorities, developed by the senior leadership team and approved by trustees of the GLDSB (2023b).

Figure 2

Great Lakes District School Board – Strategic Priorities
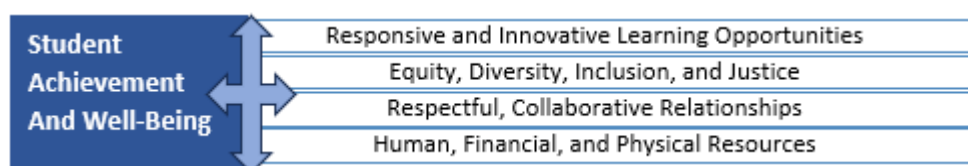
Note. Adapted from "Strategic Priorities 2020-26.", Great Lakes District School Board, 2023b.

The GLDSB strategic priorities are centred around student achievement and well-being and include the provision of responsive and innovative learning opportunities, respectful and collaborative relationships, human, financial, and fiscal resources, and equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice (GLDSB, 2023b). While TIP are linked to these priorities, they are not explicitly emphasized and educators do not receive awareness training pertaining to the role of school systems in perpetuating trauma, especially among equity-deserving students.

The GLDSB is committed to gathering input and feedback from its staff, students, and community partners, through staff and student censuses and school climate surveys. While opportunities for stakeholder input are provided, the GLDSB's traditional hierarchy distributes governance and decision-making authority to its senior leadership team. Policies and priorities, outlined by the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME), serve as directives and parameters for the GLDSB senior leadership team and sometimes hinder the board's autonomy with differentiating funding and initiatives. In turn, provincial political leaders influence the priorities of the OME and create an additional layer and distance from the students, who are central to the GLDSB.

Economic Context

The GLDSB receives annual funding from the OME to build and maintain schools, hire and retain staff, and provide student programs (OME, 2023). Funding is impacted by the number

of full-time equivalent students within each school and is limited by provincial government priorities. Annual school budget allocation by the GLDSB is governed by funding requirements, restricting principals' agency to direct funds to school-specific needs. Due to its large student population, ESES has the largest elementary school budget; however, it is challenged with distributing its funds across a greater number of students, classes, and instructional programs.

In addition to Ministry funding, individual schools organize fundraising activities to supplement their instructional programming. Proceeds from fundraisers are variable and are impacted by factors associated with each school community. These factors may perpetuate financial inequities within and among schools in the GLDSB and may create additional barriers in already underserved school communities. Transformative and TIL approaches would seek to mitigate these inequities by deconstructing frameworks that perpetuate inequity and rebuilding them as more collaborative and inclusive structures, that provide equitable opportunities for all (Kim & Venet, 2023; Shields & Hesbol, 2020; Venet, 2023).

Social Context

Student achievement and well-being are central to the strategic priorities of the GLDSB (GLDSB, 2023b). While students are central stakeholders within the four strategic priorities, educators play an integral role. Ensuring high expectations for innovative and responsive learning opportunities and championing anti-oppressive learning practices are prioritized in this model and are linked to educator and student well-being (Salmela-Aro et al., 2019). Sustainable stewardship, through optimizing human, financial, and physical resources is influenced by the political and economic factors that impact the GLDSB. Strengthening relationships through respectful collaboration between staff and students is a key goal for transformative and TIL approaches and aligns with the GLDSB's strategic priorities and the PoP (Hitt & Tucker, 2016).

The GLDSB operates with formal protocols and procedures, under the direction of its director and superintendents, in a top-down hierarchal structure. Protocols and procedures are developed to maintain high expectations and organizational stability within the board, while gradually aiming to meet the organization's mission and vision and achieve its strategic priorities. Top-down organizational structures limit opportunities for differentiated professional learning and program initiatives, informal collaborative networks, and educator voice in school improvement efforts (Berry, 2019). System structures focus to a greater extent on academic achievement outcomes and do not explicitly address ongoing inequities and barriers experienced by students impacted by trauma. These structures often fail to recognize and understand the oppressive structures that exist within education that result in equity-deserving students being further disadvantaged due to their ascribed statuses including race, gender, class, or language (Hammond, 2015). Educator voice and agency with policymakers are required for system change integration and sustainability of school reform initiatives (Datnow, 2020). Further while student achievement is a strategic priority of the GLDSB, building educator capacity to support trauma-affected students will provide better outcomes for all students (Kim, 2023; McIntosh, 2019).

Leadership Structures

Educators are hired based on formal qualifications and experiences. Hiring protocols align with the practices mandated by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) and in accordance with the collective agreements of the local and provincial unions. Future GLDSB leaders are identified by current leaders, based on leadership competencies found within Katz's (2009) Three-Skill Approach to Leadership, outlined in Figure 3. While technical, interpersonal, and conceptual skills are valued, human skills development requires an ongoing, intentional focus.

Figure 3

Three-Skill Approach to Leadership
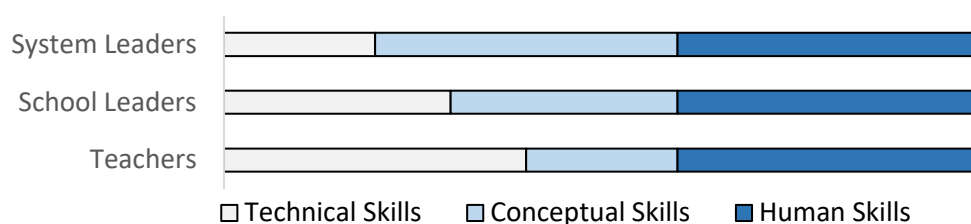
Note. Adapted from "Skills of an Effective Administrator", by R. L. Katz, 2009, Harvard Business Review Press https://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id.

Equity and Social Justice Challenges

Childhood trauma can have long-term, adverse impacts on students' academic performance, classroom behaviour, school attendance, and physical health (Davis, 2019; Gillham, 2023; Puchner & Markowitz, 2023; Shoko, 2024). As a result, students facing trauma are at a disadvantage compared to their untraumatized peers, as they experience barriers in performing and learning, leading to inequitable educational outcomes (Erickson & Harvey, 2023). Unrecognized trauma can also lead to misdiagnosed action plans that are ineffective and lead to increased academic and social learning gaps. Trauma affected children may have difficulty forming trusting relationships, collaborating with others, and self-regulating.

Coupled with the lack of emphasis on human skills development and trauma sensitive training for educators, educator-student relationships are often negatively impacted (Taxer et al., 2019). Positive educator-student relationships are necessary for building a compassionate culture that challenges barriers and inequities, and champions anti-oppressive and inclusive education. Educators play an integral role in student achievement and well-being and in creating inclusive classrooms, where all students can learn and grow (Katz, 2009). Leaders must support and

empower educators in this important work to ensure equitable outcomes for all students. Social justice, which includes culturally responsive, equitable, inclusive, and trauma-informed learning spaces, should not be separated from student achievement goals. Trauma sensitive schools mitigate barriers to student achievement and facilitate more equitable outcomes for all learners.

Leadership Problem of Practice

The PoP being addressed in this DiP is the lack of educator capacity to effectively support students impacted by trauma. Approximately 40% of Australian children and almost 60% of American children have been exposed to some form of trauma (Greig et al., 2021; Reinbergs & Fefer, 2018; Wiest Stevenson & Lee, 2016). In Canada, one third of children under the age of 16 have been impacted by ACEs (Letourneau et al., 2019; Winstanley et al., 2020; Yoon et al., 2015), and Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) estimates that one third of students are impacted by trauma, with estimations doubling following the global pandemic (OPC, 2022).

There are increasing calls for mental health literacy among educators as they must support students' academic and mental well-being. Implementing TIP may provide educators with the strategies and resources needed to support students in reaching their full potential. These tools may lessen the impact and mitigate the risks of educator stress and burnout, prevalent in the teaching profession (Johnson et al., 2005; Lambert et al., 2009; Luthar & Mendes, 2020). Laurie and Larson (2020) found that 85% of Canadian teachers reported that poor work-life balance negatively impacts their quality of teaching. Further, job-related stress and burnout have led to increased teacher absenteeism and decreased psychological safety within classrooms (Henley, 2023; Kim et al., 2021; Laurie & Larson, 2020). The responsibilities associated with supporting and caring for trauma-exposed students and their families was identified as a stressor for 62% of Canadian teachers (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2014).

Creating a trauma-informed environment is essential in reducing the impact of childhood trauma and in supporting academic success and well-being for all students (Erickson & Harvey, 2023). Further, educators must shift their thinking from viewing trauma through a deficit lens of student's experiences towards a structural perspective that analyzes how education systems cause and perpetuate trauma (Guido, 2023). Recognizing and redressing structural barriers requires thorough analysis of the systems and policies that perpetuate trauma so that educators view all students through an asset-based lens (Portell, 2021).

Students spend a significant amount of time at school, surrounded by educators and peers. Therefore, the implementation of TIP in schools may be the most impactful way of mitigating the effects of trauma and ensuring that students affected by trauma are able to learn and grow into healthy adults (McInerney & McKlindon, 2014; Plum et al., 2016). Trauma-informed schools offer students opportunities to achieve academic success and improve SEL (Madigan & Kim, 2021) through increased engagement, high expectations, and positive educator-student interactions (OECD, 2016).

As we emerge from the global pandemic and recognize the systemic oppression that equity-deserving students and their families face, the responsibilities of principals, toward their staff and students, are magnified (Moore, 2024). School leadership is intricately linked with student achievement and well-being outcomes and to the collective capacity of educators in their schools (Ramachandran et al., 2023). Educators at ESES, and throughout the GLDSB, have voiced concerns about their capacity to appropriately meet the needs of students affected by trauma and their personal experiences with compassion fatigue as they serve as caregivers and supporters of vulnerable children. Ongoing, empathic care of students is often a precursor to the development of compassion fatigue in educators and can lead to burnout that negatively impacts

educator-student relationships and affects the psychological safety of students (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2018; Perez-Chacon et al., 2021).

Trauma has no boundaries with regard to age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or geography. Students impacted by trauma are present in every school and community (Honsinger & Brown, 2019). Lower academic achievement and a lack of overall well-being is correlated with students who have experienced trauma (Brown et al., 2022; Venet, 2023). Trauma-informed leadership that prepares educators with the requisite understanding of the intersectionality of trauma and the skills and strategies to implement TIP that support the mitigation of the adverse effects of trauma on students will support equitable academic and well-being outcomes for all students.

Framing the Problem of Practice

According to Thomas-Henkel & Schulman (2017), trauma refers to negative experiences that affect a person's ability to cope and can have long-term emotional and cognitive impacts. Childhood trauma is especially impactful, as it affects the developing brain and other biological systems. Typically measured as the cumulative number of potentially traumatic events occurring in childhood (Leban & Delacruz, 2023), ACE scores are disproportionately higher for equity-deserving children (Allen et al., 2020; Pataky et al., 2019; Sacks & Murphey, 2018; Thorson & Gearhart, 2018). Compared to their non-trauma-exposed classmates, students exposed to trauma are more likely to struggle with the academic and SEL demands related to schooling (Ballin, 2023; Moore, 2024). McIntosh (2019) found that equity-deserving students experience multiple and repetitive exposure to overlapping negative experiences that impair educational success. Schools must support equitable outcomes for all students by adopting TIP.

Historical Overview

The GLDSB conducted a student census survey in 2022 as a means of better understanding its students and school communities to support equity and inclusion as well as student academic achievement and well-being. Findings show that over 80% of families speak English within their homes, with three quarters of respondents identifying as White (GLDSB, 2022). While historically these findings are representative of ESES students and their school community, there has been a marked increase in the number of English Language Learners and racialized families. In addition, the French immersion program at ESES represents 70% of the student population and draws from all geographic areas within the city and the rural outskirts.

Classroom teaching must be reflective of and embedded within the context of school climate and the broader context of community and society (Blitz et al., 2020). Equity-centred, trauma-informed pedagogy, that is relevant and reflective to the needs of students and their families requires specialized skills that deepen relationships, build engagement, and empower students as they bring increasingly complex lived experiences to their classrooms (Blitz et al., 2020). The large enrolment and increasing diversity and complexity within ESES require educators to foster a culture of care by building relationships with students and their families.

Anti-Oppressive Education Context

Exposure to trauma, including chronic bullying, housing insecurity, witnessing or experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect, and dealing with loss or separation, affects twenty-five percent of children, and may lead to adverse academic and socio-emotional outcomes (Cole et al., 2013; Crosby, 2015). Racialized students and students impacted by poverty or living rurally are disproportionately impacted by trauma and face additional barriers to receiving support. A direct correlation between poverty and the prevalence of ACEs exists and redressing these

conditions has been shown to improve mental health and well-being outcomes in children (Lacey et al., 2022; Walsh et al., 2019). MacDonald (2023) found that lower educational achievement is correlated with poorer longer term earning capacity, adverse mental and physical health, and increased incidence of housing and resource insecurity. These factors lead to poorer educational outcomes for children, in subsequent generations, and perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage (Camina & Iannone, 2014; Haig, 2014; Keddie, 2016; Smyth & McInerney, 2013).

While educators strive to meet the academic and SEL needs of their students using differentiated instruction and universal design for learning strategies, students impacted by the complexities associated with trauma often require specific tools and strategies. Implementing TIP can support the equity of educational outcomes and mitigate the risk of re-traumatizing students, which can occur if educators are not sufficiently trauma-informed (Ballin, 2023). Educators at ESES have conveyed concerns about their lack of capacity to support trauma-impacted students.

PESTE Analysis

Effective and impactful organizational change requires careful assessment and analysis of the external macro-environmental factors that influence decision making within the organization. External change forces, including changing social, cultural, and demographic patterns, influence organizations and must be considered within the change process. Deszca et al. (2020) summarize these factors by conducting a PESTE analysis, which stand for "political, economic, social, technological, and ecological/environmental factors" (p.5). A PESTE analysis of ESES and this PoP will determine how external factors will influence the need for change.

Political

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), the union representing public elementary school teachers, and many of the province's early childhood educators (ECEs), have

voiced their concerns about the impact of trauma and negative mental health on elementary students. In their submission to the OME, ETFO (2022, p. 18) stated their belief that the government's underfunding of public education has negatively impacted the developmental, emotional, and behavioural needs of students, and has limited their members' ability to focus on supporting students' learning needs. Similarly, People for Education (2022), an independent research, policy and public engagement organization, reports that only sixteen per cent of schools in Southwestern Ontario have access to regularly scheduled mental health professionals, according to their 2022-2023 Annual Ontario School Survey.

ETFO has requested additional government funding to improve access to in-school supports, including guidance counsellors, social workers, psychologists, and child and youth workers, to meet students' developmental and behavioural needs. They are also advocating for the delivery of long-term, comprehensive, and culturally responsive mental health supports for students and ongoing, sustainable funding for professional learning for educators in the area of student mental health (ETFO, 2022, p. 18). People for Education (2022) has called on the OME to commit to funding mental health resources and increasing access to community supports.

A trauma-informed lens suggests that TIP require the collaboration of government partners, unions representing educators and support staff, health care providers, educators, and paraprofessionals to provide comprehensive, wrap around supports for children and families experiencing adversity. Further, TIP shift from blaming and shaming, to recognizing strengths and seeking solutions that focus on academic and social well-being for all students. Addressing the impacts of trauma and promoting resilience requires all political partners to prioritize providing the tools necessary for recognizing and assessing ACEs and equipping educators with the guidance, strategies, and resources needed to best support their students (Forkey et al., 2021).

Economic

Government funding decisions impact board and school budgets, including staffing levels, student resources, and the provision of mental health supports. According to the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), the union representing secondary school teachers, the 2023-2024 grants for student needs has been cut by $600.00 per student, when adjusted for inflation, over the previous year's funding levels (OSSTF, 2022). A board's total grants for student needs funding includes foundation grants, that cover the basic costs of education for all students, the special purpose grants, that reflect the unique needs of students, schools and school boards, and capital funding programs, that financially support maintenance and new construction (Ontario School Trustees, n.d.).

Economic inequity and funding shortfalls adversely affect the academic and social well-being of all students and are disproportionately impactful to students impacted by trauma (Greig et al., 2021) and students from equity-deserving groups (Chafouleas, 2022). Further, unaddressed ACEs can have deleterious long-term economic effects on students impacted by trauma, due to a direct causality with mental and physical health, educational, and employment opportunities (Bellis et al., 2016; Sweetman, 2022). While there are costs associated with building educator efficacy with TIP, the impact of overlooking childhood trauma are long-term and widespread.

Social

School Mental Health Ontario (SMH-ON) is a provincial implementation support team that helps school boards enhance student mental health with evidence-based strategies and services (SMH-ON, 2019). The support team's vision is that every Ontario student will be able to care for their own mental health, support the well-being of others, seek assistance when mental health problems arise, and experience a strong sense of identity, confidence, and belonging

(SMH-ON, 2019). SMH-ON (2019) has identified the key role that schools can play in student mental health promotion and early intervention that will support well-being, enhance learning, and lead to economic benefits.

The OME (n.d.) has called upon educators to plan instructional strategies that foster a supportive classroom environment, build mental health awareness, and reduce the stigma associated with mental illness, in order to create a strong learning foundation that encourages student success. Schools that are trauma-informed offer positive and supportive learning environments that are responsive to the needs of trauma-impacted students. These communities of care prioritize safety and consistency and offer students opportunities to collaborate and support each other. Trauma-responsive practices that are implemented using a whole-school approach give value to all voices and promote respectful, healthy relationships, and resilience in children (Blitz et al., 2020; Loomis et al., 2024). Students impacted by trauma often have greater difficulty developing and sustaining positive relationships due to lagging socio-emotional skills.

Technological

Technology plays an increasing role in students' lives at school and at home, and it is important to consider its potential positive and negative impacts on academic and well-being outcomes of its users. Williamson et al. (2020) posit that "technology is not a neutral entity that simply does good when people have access to it – it is a complex and social cultural artefact" (p. 111). When used appropriately, technology can provide a medium for virtual interactions, communication, and socio-emotional connectedness between students (Pandya & Lodha, 2021). Numerous studies indicate that there is little evidence to support a correlation or link between the appropriate use of digital technology and mental health symptoms (Jensen et al., 2019).

Conversely, other studies show that ongoing and unrestricted use of technology is associated with several negative mental health outcomes, including low emotional stability and greater risk for depression or anxiety (Allen et al., 2019; Pandya & Lodha, 2021). When digital use is unregulated, impulsive or compulsive, it often has negative consequences on student mental well-being, including persistent problems with emotions (angry outbursts, worries, low mood), and difficulty with or avoidance of social interaction (Kuss & Lopez-Fernandez, 2016; SMH-ON, 2021). As we emerge from the global pandemic, technology has supported online learning and mental health resources, while also burdening students with the need to navigate new social constructs. Online tools and resources can be leveraged to provide an engaging, alternative platform for offering TIP to help educators and caregivers support children.

Ecological/Environmental

Trauma affects "a student's ability to learn, sustain healthy peer and adult relationships and their capacity for resilience in the face of adversity" (Erickson & Harvey, 2023, p. 666). Students affected by trauma have difficulty seeing the world as a safe place (Cole et al., 2005). Equity must also be considered when developing a trauma-informed school (TIS), as equity recognizes how education and social systems are interconnected and examines the prevalence of inequities and its integral link to trauma (Venet, 2021). The whole-school environment must support TIPs and be aware of how trauma affects the brain and the body. Everyone within the school community must be committed to implementing TIP that support the school community for programs to be successful (Ballin, 2023). Transformative, TIL supports educators as they help students address problems not directly related to education (Perez-Chacon et al., 2021). Educators who uplift student agency and voice, by meaningfully engaging all students in the

learning process, will create a compassionate culture where all students are supported in achieving success (Berger et al., 2022; Luthar & Mendes, 2020; Sadin, 2020).

Relevant Internal and External Data

Internal and external data confirms the need for school-wide TIP that meet the academic and SEL needs of all students and ensure equitable outcomes for trauma impacted students. Results from the GLDSB's school climate survey (2021) indicate twelve percent fewer intermediate students (grades seven and eight) can identify a caring adult at school that they trust compared to junior students (grades four to six). In addition, only forty-one percent of intermediate students and sixty-five percent of junior students would seek help with mental or emotional health issues at school (GLDSB, 2021). Student feedback suggests that while most students feel a sense of belonging within their school, and have at least one close, trustworthy friend, they feel less supported by the adults within the building (GLDSB, 2021). This data aligns with SMH-ON (2022b) findings, that show mental illness affects approximately 1.2 million Canadian children, and that eighteen to twenty-two per cent of students in Ontario meet the criteria for a mental health illness or concern.

While the number of students expressing a need for mental health services is increasing, two thirds of children and youth with mental health concerns do not receive needed clinical services. The disparity in identifying caring adults and seeking help for mental health and well-being issues among elementary students, along with the broader context of unaddressed mental health concerns in Canadian children, underscores the need for guiding questions to explore and implement TIP in schools and their impact on equitable outcomes for all students.

Guiding Questions

The PoP being addressed in this DiP is the lack of educator capacity to effectively support students impacted by trauma. The investigation into this problem has led to the emergence of three guiding questions. They relate to building educator capacity, implementing TIP, and reducing educator compassion fatigue. These guiding questions frame the development of this DiP, and their answers are explored in chapter two.

Building Educator Capacity

Educators play a central role in student achievement and well-being and schools are primary systems of care, in which children are socialized (Luthar & Mendes, 2020). Increasingly, the need for mental health literacy among teachers that addresses students' mental health needs, in addition to providing academic instruction, is being raised (Kwatubana & Molaodi, 2021; Leschied et al., 2018). Transformative, TIL that recognizes and builds educators' capacity for TIP is required to equip educators with the skills and practices necessary to redress the oppressive barriers that are perpetuated by the impacts of trauma. Transformative learning theory also raises awareness and offers the opportunity to recognize and critique social injustices, while committing to leadership reflexivity and learning of new practices so that educators are able to best serve students. Educators who understand the impacts of trauma recognize the causal circumstances that lead to adverse student behaviour, rather than misinterpreting it as intentional defiance. In this context, the first guiding question is raised: What trauma-informed professional learning is needed to build educator capacity for supporting trauma-impacted students?

Trauma-Informed Practices

"Trauma-informed practices focus on individual students as well as whole classroom and school-wide initiatives, potentially benefitting all, not only those students experiencing trauma"

(Von Dohlen et al., 2019, p. 6). Trauma-informed approaches include six key principles: "safety, trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues" (SAMHSA, 2023, p. 10). Implementing TIP helps to promote safe learning environments where students are better able to self-regulate and develop healthy relationships that promote academic achievement and well-being. Given the quantity of TIP that are offered, the second guiding question is: What TIP should be implemented to best support students affected by trauma and improve academic achievement and well-being outcomes for all students?

Reducing Educator Compassion Fatigue

Teaching is an emotionally and cognitively demanding profession (Corbin et al., 2019; Roeser et al., 2012). Unlike in many professions, teachers are expected to shift their focus from individual to diverse whole class learning needs seamlessly, engage in real-time problem-solving, and regulate their emotions in the moment without opportunities to disengage (Corbin et al., 2019). Educator well-being influences students' motivation and attitudes toward learning. Managing classroom dynamics while focusing on academic goals becomes increasingly difficult and may lead to more frequent and intense student escalations when educators experience stress and compassion fatigue (Downer et al, 2012). Given this, the third guiding question will be: What actions can be taken to support educators and reduce compassion fatigue to ensure that they have the capacity and resilience needed to support student emotional well-being?

School leaders are responsible for ensuring a safe and caring learning environment for staff and students. Transformative, TIL can support the professional learning required to implement TIP that transform outcomes and remove barriers to learning for all students. Building educator capacity is central to the leadership-focused vision for change and will enhance TIP that

foster social connections and improve teacher-student relationships and well-being (Kaiser & Thompson, 2021; Kim, 2023; Newman, 2022).

Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

Organizational changes are intentional revisions to an organization's components — mission, vision, values, culture, strategy, goals, structure, processes or systems, technology, and people — that improve the organization's effectiveness or efficiency (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 2). Leading a trauma-informed change process requires that leaders "continuously work to understand the emotional dimensions of relational and organizational life and consider how trauma histories play out in learning situations, experiences and contexts" (Ravitch, 2020, p. 7). This section will consider the extant gap between the present state of ESES and its envisioned future state and will identify how the change vision will improve teaching and learning conditions, while challenging inequities faced by staff and students. In addition, change priorities and macro, meso, micro, and individual level leadership considerations will be outlined.

Gap Analysis: Present and Envisioned Future State

At present, and in alignment with expectations set out by the GLDSB, ESES has developed an annual school learning plan that includes student achievement, well-being, anti-oppressive education, Indigenous education, and attendance goals. Specific to the student well-being goal, leaders and educators are expected to support students by creating belongingness, serving as caring and trusting adults, and providing a sense of welcoming for all of the students at ESES. In addition, school learning team members are asked to consider student voice, evidence-based instruction, tiered supports, and culturally responsive resources as strategies for achieving the identified student well-being goal.

When considering the three-skill approach to leadership (Katz, 2009), there are insufficient trauma-informed tools, resources, and supports available to school leaders and educators at ESES. Technical skills are provided by an itinerant social worker, who is responsible for supporting students with non-urgent or intensive needs at several elementary and secondary schools. As such, the assigned social worker reports to schools throughout the district and must adhere to a prescribed schedule that limits sessions to specific days for students. Travel time constraints and varying school entry and dismissal times further limit student accessibility to supports. This lack of flexible and immediate access to skilled social workers has necessitated ESES educators to attempt to mitigate and address students' mental health concerns.

Conceptual resources provided by GLDSB include mental health and well-being posters, infographics, and tip sheets to support staff and students. While these standalone resources offer strategies and ideas, implementation support is limited, and their scope and sequence has not been directly outlined. Further, these resources focus upon current sources and symptoms of trauma and negate the prevalence and impact of historical and/or intergenerational trauma. As a result, ESES educators have expressed concerns about their ability to implement these resources.

Educators at ESES are committed to supporting students impacted by ACEs and ongoing or intergenerational trauma, who often have greater difficulty forming attachments to safe and caring adults and peers (Erickson & Harvey, 2023; Jennings, 2019). Erickson and Harvey (2023) posit that when "educators are able to forge strong connections with students, they have the ability to reduce the negative impacts of trauma" (p. 668). The envisioned future state of ESES reflects a whole-school culture that is centred around TIP. Figure 4 outlines Erickson and Harvey's (2023) Structured Approach to Formulating a trauma-informed Environment (SAFE) Model and is comprised of seven identified TIP-related themes that are found within TISs.

Figure 4

SAFE Model: A Structured Approach to Forming a Trauma-Informed Environment
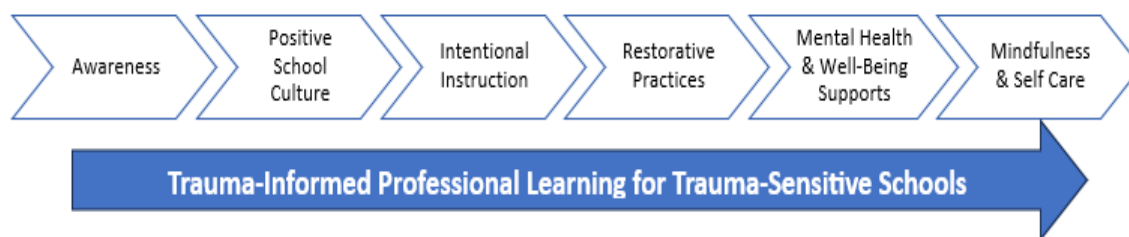
Note. Adapted from "A Framework for a Structured Approach for Formulating a Trauma-Informed Environment", by M. Erickson and T. Harvey, 2023. *Journal of Education, 203*(3), 666-677. Doi:10.1177/00220574211046811

Creating trauma-sensitive schools is essential for mitigating the effects of trauma, as children spend a significant amount of time there. Educators at ESES strive to promote the daily success of every student, in alignment with the GLDSB's mission, by supporting learners' academic and well-being needs. In recognition of the lack of capacity of ESES staff to identify, address, and support students impacted by trauma, the current DiP will focus on building educator capacity to better lay the foundation for ESES students affected by trauma to learn and grow into healthy and contributing members of a global society (Erickson & Harvey, 2023; McInerney & McKlindon, 2014; Plumb et al., 2016). Transformative, TIP based on the SAFE model offer comprehensive yet differentiated resources to build capacity with educators, as we create a trauma-sensitive school culture at ESES.

Challenging Inequity and Improving Conditions

Students exposed to trauma are more likely to struggle in school than their peers. The correlation between trauma exposure and education-related functioning, including social and emotional difficulties, issues with self-regulation, and academic difficulties is well established

(Berger, 2019). Children impacted by trauma are more likely to require special education interventions, due to impaired working memory, delayed language and vocabulary, and lower academic achievement (Ballin, 2023; Cole et al., 2013; Perfect et al., 2016). A cycle of disadvantage, outlined by MacDonald (2023) shows that lower educational achievement leads to poorer long-term earning capacity, decreased well-being, housing and resource instability, and eventually greater barriers for their children. For equity-deserving students, this cycle has been exacerbated, as educators lack the capacity to recognize the intersectional impacts of trauma and systemic oppression (Chafouleas et al., 2021; Gherardi et al., 2020; Haynes, 2022). Schools must adopt trauma-sensitive practices that "level the playing field" for all students, as a matter of educational equity (Ballin, 2023, p. 93). Schools that do not embrace trauma-sensitive practices risk further disadvantaging and may re-traumatize students impacted by trauma (Moore, 2024).

Schools serve as an obvious site for supports and early intervention for children affected by trauma (Douglass et al., 2021; Sweetman, 2022; Thomas et al., 2019). The inherent structure of the school day with its predictable events and timings, and attendance of a broad range of children, makes it an effective site to provide trauma informed supports (Perry and Daniels, 2016). A lack of trauma-informed training, resources, and programs have been identified by ESES educators as barriers to implementing TIP and require greater focus. Ensuring staff are well-equipped to recognize and respond effectively to students impacted by trauma would create a whole-school trauma-sensitive praxis that offers equitable outcomes for all students. Cole et al. (2013) defined a trauma-sensitive school as "one in which all students feel safe, welcomed and supported and where addressing trauma's impact on learning on a school-wide basis is at the centre of its education mission" (p. 11). Students at ESES will experience improved learning conditions when educators build capacity in TIP and are better able to support all students.

Priorities for Change

Transformative, TIP help school leaders and educators to create trauma-sensitive schools that are safe, caring, and inclusive places for students, including those impacted by trauma (Wharton-Beck et al., 2024). The GLDSB recognizes that educator mental health literacy is important and that tiered supports are required to address the diverse academic and well-being needs of its students. Educators at ESES have a broad spectrum of trauma awareness and interact with a diverse student population, experiencing various impacts of trauma. As such, trauma-informed professional learning must be differentiated to build capacity in every educator and meet the specific needs of trauma-impacted students and their peers. Further, educators must demonstrate an awareness to and a sensitivity for the intersectional identities and magnified effects of trauma on equity-deserving students. To build educator capacity that will support students impacted by trauma, the following priorities for change are identified:

- ensure that all educators can identify and understand trauma and its impact on students and their families;

- create psychologically and physically safe spaces for educators to engage in trauma-informed professional learning;

- foster opportunities for choice, collaboration, and connection to support educators as they build relationships and implement TIP with their students;

- support educators and students in embracing trauma-sensitive practices and deepen their self-care and mindfulness practices; and

- reflect with educators and students on the efficacy of the strategies being implemented to determine what initiatives should be repeated, revised, or replaced.

Leadership Considerations

Trauma-informed organizations recognize signs of trauma and its impact and respond by integrating trauma-specific knowledge into their policies, procedures, and practices, while striving to actively resist re-traumatization (SAMHSA, 2014). Blitz et al. (2016) found that schools that implement a whole-school approach to TIP promote healthy relationships, foster resilience in children, and value the voices of all members of the school community. Equipping educators with TIP will enhance educator-student relationships and increase academic and well-being outcomes for all students (Crosby et al., 2023; Wharton-Beck et al., 2024). School leaders understand the need for equity-centre TIP to be implemented by educators who recognize and value the diverse lived experiences of students within a safe and inclusive school environment. Figure 5 outlines the considerations required of trauma-informed school leaders within each organizational level.

Figure 5

Trauma-Informed Leadership Considerations for Trauma-Informed Schools
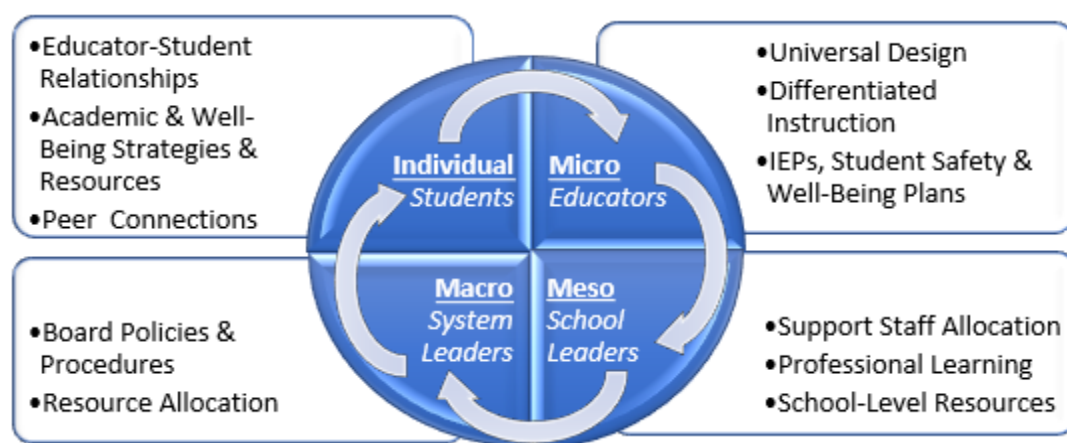
Note. While this visual is cyclical in nature, reflecting sequential interdependency, reciprocal relationships among and between all levels of leadership are present.

Macro Level Leadership

Senior leaders within the GLDSB must embrace TIP and provide opportunities for its leaders, educators, and students to engage in trauma-informed learning opportunities, as a way of prioritizing academic and well-being initiatives. In alignment with the three-skill approach to leadership (Katz, 2009), the GLDSB must allocate the required theoretical, conceptual, and human resources to build capacity and implement TIP to create the requisite TIS environments. As macro level leaders, senior administrations must recognize and find ways to overcome the competing challenges of staffing shortages, budget constraints, and limited community-based supports to create the conditions needed for ESES educators to support students through TIP and provide a safe and supportive learning environment at ESES.

Meso Level Leadership

School leaders must focus on creating a school environment that reflects a culture of care, in which educators and students feel safe, included, and supported. Creating conditions that foster positive, trusting, and reciprocal relationships among and between all stakeholders, including leaders, educators, support staff, students, and their families is essential to ensuring high levels of academic achievement and emotional well-being. These relationships are dynamic in nature, as they are impacted by changing roles, responsibilities, and contexts that are present within ESES. Ensuring educators are equipped with relevant and ongoing professional learning opportunities that meet their individual learning needs and address the unique needs of ESES students impacted by trauma and their classmates is imperative for ESES school leaders.

Micro Level Leadership

Most educators at ESES realize the need to embrace trauma-informed professional learning. As with any organization, the willingness and pace with which people adapt to change

processes depends largely upon their level of comfort and engagement with the proposed change initiatives (Deszca et al., 2020). Informal and formal school leaders, as well as early adopters, must be leveraged to model open mindedness, vulnerability and a willingness embrace professional learning strategies, resources, and supports that will better meet the needs of themselves and our students. Several educators at ESES have taken on the role of change initiator by identifying the need for change and are actively championing the change initiative within the school (Deszca et al., 2020). However, a comprehensive and consistent school-wide plan to support students impacted by trauma does not yet exist.

Individual Level Leadership

The strategic priorities of the GLDSB centre around student academic achievement and well-being. It is critically important that the proposed change initiative upholds the leadership of our students as central change agents to align with macro level prioritization. Trauma-sensitive schools must champion a "nothing about us without us" approach by validating the voices of our students. Students must also commit to learning, unlearning, and relearning how best to approach, interact, and respond within individual and social contexts, in a variety of settings, for different purposes. Honouring their own voices and embracing mindfulness and self-care will increase students' agency and support more equitable outcomes.

A transformative, TIL approach woven into the individual, micro, and meso levels of ESES, and within the macro level of the GLDSB organization will prioritize Katz's (2009) human, technical, and conceptual resources to build educator capacity for TIP. Further, a TIL approach aligns with Erickson and Harvey's (2023) SAFE model and integrates the seven tenets of TIP that are inextricably linked to school leadership – awareness, positive school culture,

intentional instruction, restorative practices, mental health and well-being supports, and

mindfulness and self-care, that will transform ESES toward becoming a trauma-informed school.

Conclusion

Students impacted by trauma require a safe, caring, and inclusive school environment. It

is imperative that school leaders, through transformative and TIL practices, provide the resources

and supports needed for educators to adopt effective, trauma-informed methods that support all

students in achieving academic success and improved well-being. Building capacity with

educators through trauma-informed professional learning will create trauma-sensitive schools in

which trauma-affected students and their peers can thrive. Chapter two will provide a framework

that outlines how this change process can be implemented to achieve this envisioned future state.

Chapter 2: Leading Change with Heart

Chapter one provided an analysis of the impacts of trauma and the growing interest in using trauma-informed practices (TIP) to mitigate the adverse effects of childhood trauma. Creating schools that are equipped to serve as cultures of care and offer equitable academic and well-being opportunities for all students is an urgent need within and beyond the Great Lakes District School Board (GLDSB). Chapter two examines leadership approaches and a layered framework for leading change, assesses readiness and ethics in organizational change, and offers strategies to build a trauma-sensitive school culture at Erie Shores Elementary School (ESES).

Leadership Approach to Change

Educational leadership needs to be centered on the school leaders' "love for children, for their work, and a deep belief in the power of education" (Byrne-Jimenez & Yoon, 2019, p. 3) to achieve equity for all. Leading from the heart often challenges the notion of school administration that prioritizes efficiency and effectiveness and offers leaders permission to "seek joy in their work and maintain personal as well as professional integrity" (Kim, 2023). A holistic view of leadership that centres around trust, empathy, and reciprocal relationships aligns with my personal leadership lens and the goals of the GLDSB. Transformative leadership theory (TLT) and trauma-informed leadership (TIL) approaches have been selected to address the PoP.

Transformative Leadership Theory

Transformative leadership is based on two principles. The first, according to Gélinas-Proulx and Shields (2022), is that adults in the workplace and students in educational settings are more focused and successful when they feel respected, valued, and included. This principle aligns with the current DiP, in that students are better able to concentrate on their learning when they feel safe and cared for at school. The second principle is that when the focus on individual

academic achievement within the school setting is balanced with the focus on social

responsibility, democracy, and collective civil engagement, students learn about productive

collaboration (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022). This principle aligns with the current DiP, in that

the GLDSB's mission and vision are to promote the daily success of every student, while

empowering all students to be globally minded (GLDSB, 2023a).

Based on the premise that everyone contributes to and co-creates the world we live in,

whether or not they are conscious of their agency, TLT reflects a critical and collective process

(Shields, 2016; 2022). The TLT approach has been selected to address this PoP as it is centred

around "critically reviewing the past, questioning and recognizing the present, envisioning

alternatives and possibilities and embodying and enacting the future" (Montouri & Donnelly,

2018, p. 15). Transformative leaders envision and communicate a new societal reality and are

critically aware of the past-present-future triad and recognize the importance and impact of each

of these three states on the current PoP.

Transformative leaders must demonstrate the courage to create solutions while also

supporting the diverse voices and directions of educators. The size, scope, and complexities

within ESES require a TLT approach that is focused on reciprocal relationships and a willingness

of its educators to transition between the roles of leader and follower. Mitigating the adverse

impacts of trauma requires a combination of 'hard' (organizational) and 'soft' (interpersonal)

leadership skills, inherent to TLT, to build educator-student relationships and foster a culture of

care. Educators are uniquely positioned to provide ongoing and innumerable daily interactions

with students that can be instrumental in creating a sense of belonging, connection, value, and

trust (Avery et al., 2022) that allow leaders to foster relationships that encourage generative and

creative thinking within the group (Montouri & Donnelly, 2018).

The effects of trauma are variable, and its impact is specific to individual children, with magnified impacts on equity-deserving students, due to their intersecting identities. Learning environments in which students feel valued and respected and afford students opportunities to better understand their place in the wider community is a necessary pre-requisite for social and emotional well-being (Gélinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022). Transformative leaders must cultivate and foster practices that develop self-awareness of perceptions, tendencies, and responses and resist making decisions as a way of avoiding the anxiety associated with ambiguity (Kim, 2020; Lauriola et al., 2015). A redistribution of power, associated with TLT, provides students with greater voice and agency over their learning (Shields & Hesbol, 2020). In the current context, sensemaking of an increasingly complex and dynamic environment and exploring and creating alternatives to current, oppressive systems, processes, and structures is essential to closing the empowerment gap (Adams et al., 2023; Shields, 2018).

Transformative leaders and educators must focus on creativity, flexibility, and building relationships to create the positive change needed for equitable outcomes for all students. Positive relationships foster positive educator-student interactions that can help to overcome deficit thinking (Beachum & Gullo, 2020; Crosby et al., 2023). Recognizing and valuing "the variety of socially and culturally situated ways of knowing and doing that students bring into the classroom" (Fortner et al., 2021, p. 7) provides a transformative shift away from a deficit-based paradigm toward an asset-based paradigm, that offers a lens of hope and promise of equitable opportunities for student success. Transformative leaders must provide opportunities for educators to identify and dismantle oppressive and deficit-based perspectives that perpetuate trauma and inequity. A transformative paradigm shift requires educators to foster an asset-based

understanding of their students, valuing their lived experiences and empowering them to connect their perspectives to learning opportunities (Fortner et al., 2021; Lalas & Strickwerda, 2020).

In the current context, educators are called upon to consider multiple perspectives, in dynamic situations and demonstrate flexibility as they make inclusive decisions. Transformative leaders act with morality to transform the narratives of students impacted by trauma and extend perspectives from a deficit-focused, victimization lens, to one of anti-oppression, growth mindset, and unlimited possibility (Beachum & Gullo, 2020; Shields, 2019). Figure 6 shows these leadership competencies, along with the four orienting concepts of TLT, outlined by Montouri and Donnelly (2018) and provides a broad framework through which transformative change can be interpreted, guided, and implemented.

Figure 6

Four Orienting Concepts of Transformative Leadership - Past, Present, Future
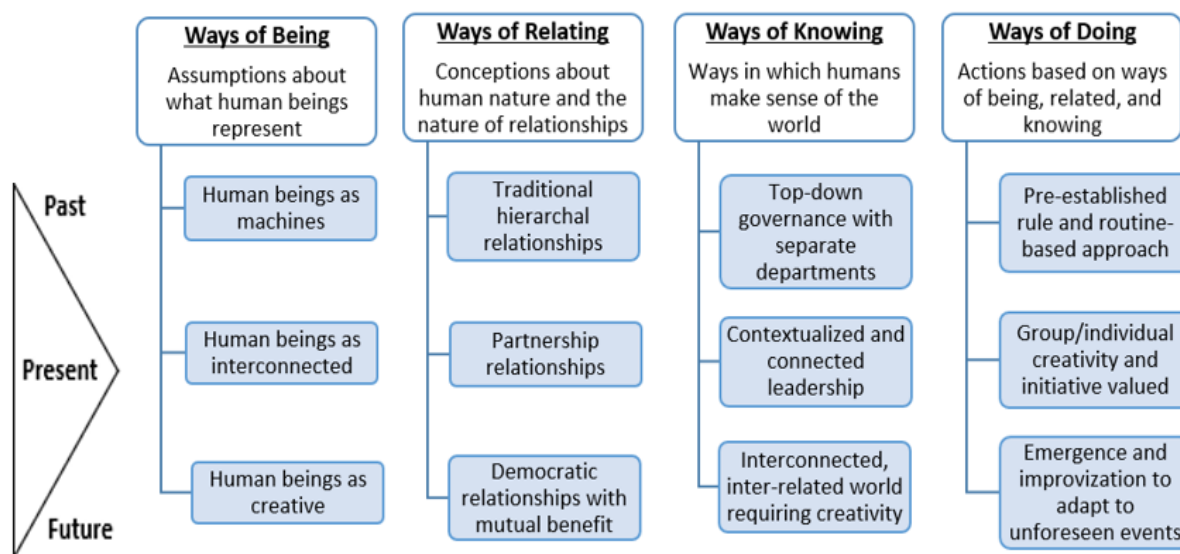
Note. Adapted from "Transformative Leadership", by A. Montuori and G. Donnelly, (2018). In *Handbook of personal and organizational transformation* (pp. 319–350). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66893-2_59

Trauma-Informed Leadership

This PoP is situated within an educational setting in which TIL "involves becoming knowledgeable about, and building informed and compassionate attention towards, the range of traumas that students, teachers, and families face and the effects and possible impacts of these traumas on learning and behaviour in school communities" (Ravitch, 2020, p. 6). Trauma-informed leaders mobilize change by driving schools forward (Greig et al., 2021; Guarino & Chagnon, 2018; Middleton et al., 2015). Howard (2019) asserts that trauma-informed leaders are influential in developing a sense of momentum for implementing change. At ESES, change mobilization and momentum require that educators have a keen sense of knowledge about their students' strengths and challenges and an understanding of their own professional learning needs in order to best implement TIP and ensure a safe and caring school environment. Leaders must mobilize transformative, TIP and counter the negative impact of stalling leadership that may exacerbate trauma exposure and lead to retraumatization (Carter & Blanch 2019; Howard, 2019).

Trauma-informed schools (TIS) require leaders who are committed to building engagement and meeting the needs of students, educators, and the school community (Guarino & Chagnon, 2018; Stokes & Brunzell, 2019). Building capacity in educators by enhancing their understanding of the development impacts of trauma, through professional learning and collaboration, is central to leading TIS. Carter and Blanch (2019) and Overstreet and Chafouleas (2016) demonstrate the importance of enhancing educator efficacy through professional learning, knowledge sharing, and implementation as foundational components of trauma-informed organizational change practices. Additionally, addressing the emotional and physical safety and support needs of educators is a key aspect of TIL, as a way of offsetting the potential impact of vicarious trauma and fostering positive and reciprocal educator-student relationships.

Trauma-informed leaders are a critical component in the implementation of TIP within organizations, as they initiate transformative change, promote inclusion, build commitment among stakeholders, and critically examine organizational policies and processes to ensure alignment with trauma-sensitive practices (SAMHSA, 2014; Wilson, 2021). Nealy-Oparah and Scruggs-Hussein (2018) assert that "school leaders have to create environments where it's safe for adults to share, be vulnerable, speak their truth, heal, and have difficult conversations" (p. 15). Implementation of TIP embeds effective practices, programs, and policies throughout all aspects of the school (Howard, 2019), and redresses deficit-based assumptions that posit adverse student behaviour as intentional acts of opposition or defiance (Guarino & Chagnon, 2018). Table 1 outlines the TIL competencies required to foster the culture of care needed to transform teaching practices to ensure that all students can be successful (Trauma Transformed, n.d).

Table 1

Trauma-Informed Leadership Competencies

Leadership competency	Description
Radical and critical inquiry, and complexity	Capacity to be deeply reflective about self-concept and organizational context Awareness of systems thinking and change management Able to lead in unpredictable or ambiguous learning spaces to transform structures and systems, that do not have predefined paths
Inclusive, distributive, and relational leadership	Honours diversity and difference and promotes choice and voice Generates more expansive contexts by using power distribution and sharing Recognizes causes of trauma and mitigates its effects, within relationships and systems
Reflection and mindfulness	Cultivates contemplation for carefully considered responses and solutions and creates opportunities for healing, while dismantling trauma-inducing structures and systems
Trauma-informed communication	Practices intentionality about mode, frequency, and quantity of information provided to others, to reduce the impact of stress and trauma

Note. Adapted from "Leadership Competencies of a Trauma-Informed System", by Trauma Transformed, (n.d.),

https://www.traumatransformed.org/documents/Leadership%20Competencies.pdf

Transformative, Trauma-Informed Leadership

Building educator capacity for TIP requires a comprehensive both transformative and TIL approaches. Transformative leadership offers both critique and promise and is centred around a mandate for equitable change that requires moral courage and a mandate for equitable change. Transformative change requires a global awareness and a deep understanding of the interdependence and interconnectedness that exists within organizations. Trauma-informed leadership perspectives recognize the importance of physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth within individuals and through TIP channel this through collective beliefs of optimism, trust, hope and ethical purpose (Epp, 2020). When combined, transformative and TIL offer educators the relationally centred space to recognize lagging SEL skills in students, challenge existing hierarchies, and develop their collective efficacy to shift toward an asset-based paradigm that is needed to transform ESES towards a TIS (Epp, 2020; Montuori & Donnelly, 2018). Transformative, TIL also aligns well with my positionality as an experienced Principal, who has built and fostered relationships, within a culture of care with educators at ESES, for seven years.

Framework for Leading the Change Process

Organizational frameworks provide information, explain relationships between concepts, delineate processes, and provide clarity for communication (Moullin et al., 2020). Deszca et al.'s (2020) change path model (CPM) provides directions for leaders to effectively establish the desired change. Within the context of the current PoP, the CPM sets out a series of sequential steps that offer educators a professional learning continuum with which to support students.

Equity in education begins with creating a framework that supports students impacted by trauma, inclusive of their social-emotional needs, to perform their best (Ballin, 2022; Moore, 2024). Adopting a framework that leverages trauma-sensitive practices to build and foster socio-

emotional learning (SEL) competencies will support student success within and beyond school settings. At present, ESES educators have demonstrated various degrees of conceptualization of trauma and its impacts on ESES students and a variable awareness of the additional barriers and biases faced by equity-deserving students. According to Wassink-de Stigter et al. (2022), "creating an effective and sustainable trauma-informed approach in schools [has proven] to be a challenging, time-consuming, and complex process" (p. 470).

In response to the complexities associated with the current PoP, a layered framework that integrates Deszca et al.'s (2020) CPM and Carter and Blanch's (2019) Missouri model for trauma-informed schools (MMTIS) has been created. This layered framework will sequentially build educator capacity through improved trauma awareness and the mobilization of trauma-sensitive teaching practices, that are responsive to the needs of students impacted by trauma. Figure 7 provides an overview of a layered framework for sustained implementation of TIP and creates a TIS that champions equitable academic and well-being outcomes for all students.

Figure 7

Layered Framework: The Change Path Model and The Missouri Model
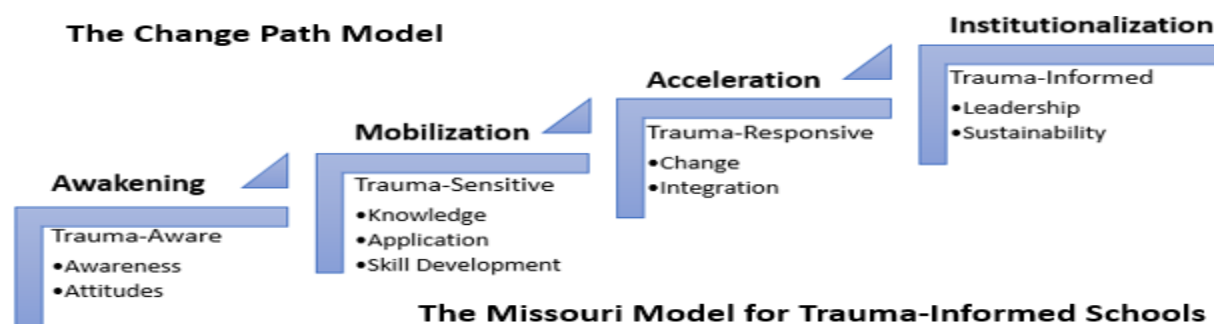
Note. Adapted from "Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Toolkit (4th ed.)", by G. Deszca, C. Ingols, and T. F. Cawsey, 2020, Sage Publications and "A Trauma Lens for Systems Change", by P. Carter and A. Blanch, 2019, *Stanford Social Innovation, 17*, 48-54

Change Path Model

Successful organizational transformation requires careful consideration and analysis of the factors that influence decision-making. The CPM is a process model that is both descriptive and prescriptive and supports transformation with strategies for implementing, measuring, and monitoring sustainable change toward the envisioned future state (Deszca et al., 2020). The four incremental phases that comprise the CPM involve an awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization of change.

Awakening Phase

In this first phase of the CPM, leaders use relevant data to identify and confirm the need for change and determine the gap that exists between the current and the envisioned future state of the organization (Deszca et al., 2020). Administrators at ESES will gather and analyze data pertaining to internal factors, based on the school climate survey results and student survey data collected during the grade three and grade six provincial literacy and numeracy assessments. In addition, student census survey data will be assessed to better understand the external factors that are impacting ESES students. Data from the GLDSB human resources equity audit and the equity action plan will be used in a gap analysis to build awareness of the need for change, to ensure that students see their identities and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) recognized, valued, and reflected within ESES educators and classrooms and throughout the school.

In this phase, change leaders will set the direction, using a collaborative approach, to communicate and support the need for all educators to build trauma awareness competencies (Katz et al., 2018). Clear and ongoing communication with change recipients is essential for change leaders to propel transformative change toward more trauma-sensitive and trauma-responsive practices. Educators at ESES are committed to supporting students. However, it is

important to be cognizant that the diversity in educators' roles, responsibilities, and experiences require differentiated yet inclusive approaches to professional learning.

Mobilization Phase

Sensemaking and leveraging of the formal structures and systems within ESES will be considered within the change context as a means of moving toward the desired vision. Power and culture dynamics will be assessed and will inform coalition-building to support transformative change (Deszca et al., 2020). Eddy and Kirby (2020) posit that context influences the type of change needed and the levers required for successful change implementation. Gap analysis findings will be used to determine whether first-order or second-order change is needed, as change begins on an individual basis before expanding to more institutionalized transformation.

Within the mobilization phase it is imperative to consider the type of change required, within the current context. First-order, incremental change, described by Eddy and Kirby (2020), involves revisions to the processes and systems within the existing conditions, while second-order change involves critical introspection and questioning of the underlying assumptions within the organization (Eddy & Kirby, 2020). Transformation of ESES from a trauma-aware to a TIS, within this phase will require a comprehensive understanding of how educators can change their classroom practices (first-order changes), while critically examining existing perceptions, ideologies, and structures (second-order influences) that must be addressed for deep, school-wide, sustained change. Mobilization efforts must honour individual educator's unique current position along with their professional learning continuum.

Acceleration Phase

Transformative organizational change requires change leaders to engage and empower change agents (Deszca et al., 2020). Advocacy and coalition building with educators is needed to

address issues of equity, social justice, and system change (Almeida, 2019; Bryson et al., 2021; Wolff et al., 2016). While communication is integral throughout the phases of the CPM, it is especially important within the acceleration phase. Supporting educators in developing their TIP will accelerate change momentum. Managing transition, celebrating small wins and milestones along the path of change is essential to building trauma-responsive change (Deszca et al., 2020).

Institutionalization Phase

The final phase of the CPM involves assessment and monitoring of the change process to evaluate progress and determine what is further required for ESES to become a TIS (Deszca et al., 2020). Institutionalizing the change initiative will depend upon the selected solution and on the outcomes of the change initiative. As a change leader, I must continue to monitor and evaluate the change process and ensure a continuous forward momentum, while supporting educators as they resist organizational pressures to return to the current state of ESES.

Missouri Model for Trauma-Informed Schools

Similar to other models of trauma-informed organizational change, the MMTIS is based on the principles of safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment (Carter & Blanch, 2019, p. 52). This model reflects a four-stage continuum of transformative organizational change from understanding to addressing trauma. A TIS is conceptualized as being a "place that provides safe and supportive environments for children to learn and educators to work" (Peoples, 2022, p. 13) and represents an ideal future state and is achieved with successive, transformative progress through the trauma aware, trauma sensitive, and trauma responsive MMTIS phases.

Trauma-Aware School

In the initial stage of understanding and addressing trauma at ESES, educators must become trauma aware. Similar to the awakening phase, within the CPM, leaders and educators

will participate in trauma awareness training. The capacity for which educators develop trauma awareness will be determined by their individual and collective understanding of trauma and its impact on students and their learning (Peoples, 2022), as well as their willingness to engage in social and emotional teaching practices and work with families and community support agencies.

Trauma-Sensitive School

As transformative change occurs at ESES, educators will progress from being trauma aware to being trauma sensitive. Coalition building, as with the mobilization phase of the CPM, will occur through the establishment of a change team. As change agents, educators will provide input into ESES's readiness for change and further develop trauma-informed values. In addition, the change team will assess the respective roles of educators and students within ESES and the influence and impact of trauma on actors within the organization (Carter & Blanch, 2019).

Trauma-Responsive School

Similar to the acceleration phase within the CPM, the trauma-responsive school stage is aimed at transformative change and integration. Reviewing existing policies and procedures, leveraging awareness, and developing skills to improve the learning environment at ESES will be prioritized by change leaders and change agents (Carter & Blanch, 2019). The sharing of best practices and supporting the development of trauma-informed professional learning resources to build educator capacity is a priority within this third stage of the MMTIS.

Trauma-Informed School

Change leadership and sustainability are key components to the final stage of the MMTIS. Evaluating and monitoring the impact of TIP on educators and students, along with ongoing review and revision of policies and procedures, will support transformative change at ESES. Continued development of decision-making processes, based on the integration of

trauma-based information, and engaging with and empowering the school community will
further support change integration (Carter & Blanch, 2019).

Organizational Change Readiness

The benefits of TIP have become increasingly evident as a means of mitigating the
impact of trauma on children's development and educational outcomes (Wassink-de Stigter et al.,
2022). Further, ACEs can have long-term, negative impacts on children, into adulthood and have
been shown to increase their risk of experiencing physical, educational, behavioural, and mental
health problems (Breaux, 2023; Perfect et al., 2016). Educators are faced with and must address
the negative impacts of ACEs and require an awareness of their impact on students' behaviour,
well-being, and academic achievement (Goodwin-Glick, 2017; Haigh, 2023). Integration of
school-wide trauma programs that incorporate practical and professional interventions across the
organization are necessary for creating TISs (Hanson & Lang, 2016; Maynard et al., 2019).

School leadership and school culture play an integral role in organizational change
readiness at all levels. Atasoy (2020) identifies school organizations as being "composed of
individuals who have different socioeconomic status, style of living, rules, and values" (p. 258).
Administrators must value school culture, be aware of internal and external change pressures,
and understand the context of the organization. A holistic, wide-angle view of the culture of the
organization provides leaders with a broader framework and a deeper understanding of school
climate and complex relationships within the school organization (Atasoy, 2020).

Organizational change readiness is defined as "a multi-level construct in that readiness
can be high or low for individuals, teams, departments, or organizations" (Weiner, 2020, p. 216)
and is an integral requirement for change implementation (Deszca et al., 2020). Figure 8
provides a conceptual organizational change readiness model.

Figure 8

Conceptual Model for Readiness and Factors Affecting Readiness for Change
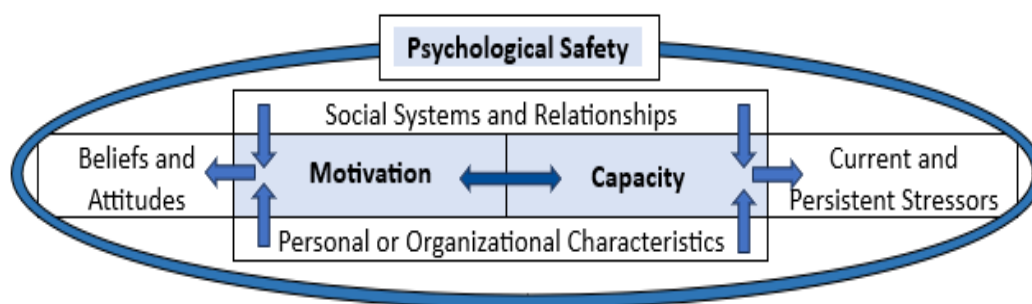
Note. Adapted from "Measuring Readiness for Change in Early Care and Education", by T. Halle, A. Partika, and K. Nagle, (2019). In *OPRE Report #2019-63.* Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and "Psychological Safety As An Element of Readiness to Implement.", by S. B. Wanless, (2018). National Research Conference on Early Childhood, Virginia, June 2018.

Psychological safety is central to this adapted model (Wanless et al., 2018) as are two key subcomponents: motivation to engage in and capacity to meaningfully participate in the initiative within existing resources (Peterson, 2013). Psychological safety, motivation, and capacity are impacted by contextual factors, including "beliefs and attitudes, social systems and relationships, current and persistent stressors, and personal or organizational characteristics" (Halle et al., 2019, p. 3). Additionally, multiple dimensions of change readiness, including team, organizational, and system readiness, collectively interact with individual readiness (Rafferty et al., 2013) and consistent leadership for sustained organizational change (Safir & Dugan, 2021).

Psychological Safety

Psychological safety, "the degree to which individuals feel comfortable taking interpersonal risks" (Wanless, 2016, p. 6), may impact an individual's self-image, status, or

career and their ability to engage, learn and develop in work settings (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009; Weiner et al., 2021). Educators are tasked with high expectations for advancing their pedagogies, with limited resources to improve outcomes for an increasingly complex student population (Edmonson et al., 2016). As public-facing systems, schools can be places where people interact with others and engage in learning in ways that are facilitative of, indifferent to, or deleterious toward their psychological needs (Adams & Olson, 2017; Edmondson et al., 2016).

Transformative, trauma-informed leaders must centre their leadership approaches around professional learning conditions that allow for vulnerability within a culture of care for educators and students alike. Li et al. (2023) posit that principals should prioritize psychological safety within their professional learning communities to contribute to educator professional learning associated with inquiry, collective responsibility, and knowledge co-construction that occurs when educators take risks and demonstrate vulnerability. Further, leaders who prioritize educators' psychological safety needs provide learning conditions that motivate educators and increase their capacity for transformative change (Adams, 2021; Eacott et al., 2022).

Motivation for Change

Cognitive beliefs about change and employees' positive responses to change are critical antecedents of change readiness and are correlated with change-supportive behaviours that lead to successful and sustainable individual and organizational change (Rafferty & Minbashian, 2019). Many ESES educators have conveyed a need to reconsider their pedagogies to be more equity-centred and culturally responsive, to better meet the academic and SEL needs of all students. As "critical stakeholders in TISs, [teachers] are tasked with recognizing and responding to the needs of students who experience trauma" (Brown et al., 2022, p. 662). While not every student is impacted by trauma, the needs of those who are can impact the success of their peers.

Trauma-informed practices can overcome the negative impact of ACEs, close academic and well-being outcome gaps, and narrow opportunity gaps by improving student's self-regulation and coping strategies into adulthood (Frankland, 2021). The majority of educators at ESES have demonstrated their willingness to learn more about ACEs and childhood trauma. ESES educators in the kindergarten and primary divisions have demonstrated their motivation to become more aware of and sensitive to trauma, as initial steps within the MMTIS, by their overwhelming response (80%) to voluntary, afterhours trauma training, offered as a pilot project by the GLDSB psychology department. Educators at ESES are experiencing current and persistent stressors, similar to those found by Katz and Lamoureux (2018), associated with compassion fatigue due to a lack of trauma-sensitive strategies to support students.

Beliefs and attitudes are contextual factors that are integral to actors' willingness to change. While many of the educators have demonstrated commitment and alignment with the proposed change, there is an ongoing need to build awareness and understanding amongst some of ESES's educators of the critical importance of becoming a trauma-informed learning environment. As the change leader, I must bear witness to the injustices and oppressive practices that exist within ESES and demonstrate lead educators in transformative, trauma-informed change that advocates for a more dignified, free, and socially just school culture (Grain, 2022).

Capacity for Change

A trauma-sensitive culture must begin with a shared understanding of trauma and its impact on students (Craig, 2017; Souers & Hall, 2016). Erickson and Harvey (2023) explain that "educators that have an awareness of the existing research on trauma are more likely to shift [their] classroom practices in response to their understanding" (p. 669). While the current PoP has identified a lack of educator capacity related to TIP, ESES educators have demonstrated

agency thinking as "the belief in one's ability to achieve goals through action" (Grain, 2022, p. 143). Most educators recognize their professional responsibility for creating a safe and caring learning environment and are committed to fostering positive, respectful relationships with students and their families. Within the current context of ESES, educators lack capacity for equity-centred, trauma-informed approaches. However, many have communicated a steadfast commitment to, and capacity for, change. When explored more deeply, however, staff have communicated a need for a trauma-informed approach that upholds predictable structures and clear expectations, while implementing more restorative-focused consequences.

Competing Forces

Organizational change readiness is impacted by several competing forces, including increasing work intensity and complexity, a lack of supports and resources, unfilled jobs, and a resistance to changing current practices. A recent survey of over 900 Ontario principals and vice-principals found that educator shortages are occurring daily, with some staff positions remaining unfilled on a daily basis (OPC, 2023a). These province-wide findings are reflected within ESES, with an increasing number of unfilled jobs, compared to one year ago.

The current DiP is focused on ESES educators, including teachers, early childhood educators (ECEs), and educational assistants (EAs), as they are collectively responsible for providing a safe and caring learning environment and play an integral role in supporting students. Throughout the province, and in the GLDSB, staff shortages are highest for EAs, followed by ECEs. Teacher shortages are becoming more frequent within ESES and the GLDSB, and teachers are increasingly being called upon to absorb school and system pressures when supports are limited. In their recent survey, the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC) found that staff shortages are being addressed by combining or cancelling classes, using unqualified adults

and parent volunteers, and EAs who are responsible for supporting students with special needs are being required to supervise classes.

In Ontario, "ongoing staffing shortages also have a ripple effect and negative impact on staff mental well-being" (OPC, 2023a, p. 1). Continuously unfilled jobs result in additional workload being placed on school leaders, as they must try to fill vacant positions, reallocate staff, and create alternate timetables for students. Further, OPC reported that they have observed an increasing number of long-term disability, sick leave, early retirements, and return to teaching requests, which all increase the workload being placed on school leaders (OPC, 2023b). Leaders and educators are also facing more frequent student dysregulation and violence in schools is increasing (Peist et al., 2024), due in part to the lack of qualified staff, reduced supervision levels and a limited ability to provide proactive strategies and structures to support their students.

Transformative organizational change that fosters TIP is necessary to ensure equitable outcomes for all students. Organizational success, however, can be negatively impacted by employee resistance to change, even when the proposed change is beneficial to the organization's actors (Chalakani, 2020; Sundborg, 2018). Metwally et al. (2019) found that change resistors may be resistant due to being unable to alter their behaviour, skills, and commitment to meet new expectations, and they may lack the capacity required to be change ready. In education, trauma-informed approaches require a complete paradigm shift to be successfully implemented. Russell et al. (2023) state that successful intervention requires that "teachers must actively engage with the topic being presented to experience change that can be sustained over time" (p. 10).

Overcoming resistance to change by building relationships and fostering educators' willingness to engage in and support TIP is essential for meaningful implementation (Hickey et al., 2018; Puchner & Markowitz, 2023). As the change leader, I must recognize the unique

biases, perspectives, and trauma-awareness held by individual educators (Grain, 2022).

Organizational change requires a steadfast commitment to propelling ESES forward using

differentiated approaches to meet the needs of all change agents. These complexities will be

considered when solutions to address the PoP are proposed.

<div align="center">**Leadership Ethics in Organizational Change**</div>

School leaders are responsible for creating and nurturing a positive school culture and in

so doing, can increase educators' commitment to meeting individual and collective expectations

(Lee & Louis, 2019). Karadag and Ozdemir (2015) suggest that schools with strong cultures are

learning spaces where educators and students are highly motivated to teach and learn, and are

committed to collaborative learning, through honest, sincere, and respectful relationships.

Transformative, TIL practices promote psychological empowerment and enhance knowledge

sharing among followers, enabling them to think creatively (Shafique et al., 2019). Within the

context of this PoP, prioritizing psychological safety for educators and students will support

professional learning and implementation of TIP. Further, ensuring educators are able to support

students impacted by trauma will mitigate the potential of re-traumatizing students, and support

an equity of academic achievement and SEL outcomes for all students (Ballin, 2023).

Ethical Considerations

Educators at ESES must consider how policies, procedures, and decisions impact

students and prioritize equitable outcomes for all students. Kalkan et al. (2020) state that

"educational institutions are one of the most important organizational structures, for which both

input and products are basically 'human'" (p. 1). Extant studies propose that TIP align well with

educational contexts, as schools provide psychological safety for children's emotional expression

and healing (Vericat Rocha & Ruitenberg, 2019).

At present, a central focus in schools appears "to be on regulating and controlling emotions, rather than exploring and expressing them" (Ritchie, 2016, p. 119-120). The envisioned future state of ESES would implore educators to expand their focus beyond lagging self-regulation skills, when responding to the negative impacts of trauma on cognitive development, behavioural expectations, and academic achievements (Haigh, 2023; Vericat Rocha & Ruitenberg, 2019). Educators are called upon to resist the tendency to pathologize students impacted by trauma and to leverage our positionality to foster educator-student relationships and act as a conduit of access to strategies, resources, and supports.

Transformative, trauma-informed educators must engage in ongoing learning to be better able to examine and redress oppressive policies and practices that further oppress trauma-impacted students. Educators must dismantle their biases and perceptions, while reframing student behaviours, to better support their students (Lieberman, 2015). Equity-deserving students face systemic barriers within and beyond educational contexts. Educators must build their capacity for TIP to address these barriers to foster equitable outcomes for all students.

Commitments and Responsibilities

Educators are responsible for fostering justice and redressing inequities through disruption of the status quo and the enactment of transformative change (Souto-Manning & Winn, 2019). As members of the OCT, leaders and teachers must adhere to ethical standards, be committed to students and their learning, and act responsibly toward students, caregivers, colleagues, and members of the public (OCT, n.d.-a). Within the current DiP, the term 'educators' also includes ECEs, who co-teach in kindergarten classrooms. ECEs are registered with and must uphold the core beliefs and values of the College of ECEs (College of ECEs, n.d.). Table 2 outlines the collective moral imperative and shared responsibilities of all educators.

Table 2

Comparison of the Ethical Standards and the Code of Ethics for Educators

Ontario College of Teachers	
Ethical Standard	**Commitment and Responsibility**
Care	Developing students' potential, with compassion, acceptance, and interest. Demonstrating commitment to student's academic and well-being outcomes.
Trust	Professional relationship with all stakeholders are based on trust, honesty, openness, and fairness.
Respect	Advocating for human dignity, emotional wellness, and cognitive development, and modelling respect for social justice, spiritual and cultural values, and democracy.
Integrity	Acting morally in an honest and reliable manner, while engaging in ongoing reflection.

College of Early Childhood Educators	
Code of Ethics and Responsibilities	**Commitment**
To Children	Upholding children's rights and taking responsibility for the well-being, learning, and care of children. Creating learning environments where children feel a sense of belonging and inclusion. Respecting each child's dignity, uniqueness and potential.
To Families	Building and fostering responsive and collaborative relationships, based on mutual trust and respect. Collaborating and sharing knowledge and resources to support children's learning and well-being.
To Colleagues and to the Profession	Building supportive, collaborative relationships with colleagues, by showing respect, trust and integrity. Valuing lifelong learning, professional conduct, and reflective practice.
To the Community	Providing and promoting high quality programming and supporting children and their families. Collaborating and connecting with community partners to enhance programming.

Note. Adapted from "Ethical Standards", by Ontario College of Teachers, (n.d.-a).

https://www.oct.ca/public/professional-standards/ethical-standards/ and "Code and Standards",

by College of Early Childhood Educators, (n.d.). https://www.college-ece.ca/members/code-and-standards/

Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change

Ethics focuses on the morals and values of the individual and what is deemed appropriate by the wider community, creating the envisioned culture of the organization (Northouse, 2019). Leading ethical organizational change requires a deep and collaborative commitment to creating equitable outcomes for all stakeholders, as "sharing power, hope, and the fruits of society is inhibited when there is a lack of shared vision and conflicting leadership goals and approaches" (Shields & Hesbol, 2020, p. 17). As a change leader within the GLDSB and as principal of ESES, I am responsible for providing a safe and caring learning environment that focuses on

student achievement and well-being, while ensuring equitable outcomes for all students. Through both transformative and TIL approaches, I must demonstrate my commitment to implementing TIP by understanding diverse educator professional learning needs and by leading TIP that support all ESES students. Increasing educator capacity to support the development of the whole child, using an integrated, relational approach, based on shared understandings of equity, cultural responsiveness, and trauma will guide educators in supporting students (Avery et al., 2022). As a leader, it is my moral imperative to build an inclusive, anti-oppressive, and equity-centred learning space that reflects the diversity of staff, students, and school community (OPC, 2024).

Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

Trauma-informed schools integrate effective practices, programs, and policies into all aspects of their organizational culture to meet the needs of trauma-exposed students (Ballin, 2023; Chafouleas et al., 2015; Koslouski & Chafouleas, 2022, Koslouski et al., 2023). Improving equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice outcomes in education through trauma-informed approaches is a complex process, requiring innovation, moral reorientation, motivation, capacity, courage, and risk-taking (Halle et al., 2019; Mintrop, 2020; Montuori & Donnelly, 2018; Wanless, 2018). Transformative and trauma-informed leaders must address four interrelated problems: how to increase the efficacy of their organization; how to optimize the resources to benefit students; how to facilitate complex learning to provide all students with rich, authentic, and equitable learning opportunities; and how to ensure that all educators value students in a manner that is unbiased and upholds their dignity, competence, and well-being (Ballin, 2023; Gillham, 2023; Mintrop, 2020; Montuori & Donnelly, 2018; Wharton-Beck et al., 2024). In Table 3, three possible solutions, including professional development, a classroom-based SEL program, and parent engagement are offered and will be analyzed.

Table 3

Possible Solutions to the Problem of Practice

Solutions	Intervention	Focus	Alignment with Layered Framework
Job-Embedded Professional Learning	Professional learning communities, coaching, book studies, and critical friends approaches for professional development.	Educators	Awakening/Trauma-Awareness
Classroom-based Socio-Emotional Learning Program	Integrated daily teaching practice based on neuroscience, mindful awareness, positive psychology, and socio-emotional learning	Students and Educators	Awakening/Trauma-Awareness Mobilization/Trauma-Sensitive Acceleration/Trauma-Responsive
Parent Engagement	Building reciprocal connections between home and school to foster positive, respectful relationships	Parents and Educators	Acceleration/Trauma-Responsive

Job-Embedded Professional Learning

School leaders play an integral role in providing equitable student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2019). Trauma-informed professional learning addresses both the academic and well-being learning needs of students (Berger, 2019; Robinson & Gray, 2019; Stokes & Brunzell, 2019). Recognizing the need for alternative and differentiated instructional approaches, as outlined by Stokes and Turnbull (2016), to address the needs of students impacted by trauma is central to professional learning practices for leaders and educators. Increasing educator knowledge of trauma-informed approaches through professional learning may foster a growth mindset, necessary for opening minds, changing perceptions, and building engagement, while also promoting engagement and ensuring implementation sustainability for TIP (McIntyre et al., 2019; Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016).

Professional learning for educators at ESES will focus on building connections with students, using an asset-based lens that focuses on "unfinished learning" rather than learning loss or lagging skills of their students (Curriculum Associates, 2021). Giboney Wall (2022, p. 268) found that educators must cultivate school-wide relationships, provide structure, and share control with students, while supporting self-regulation and SEL within the school community. Educators at ESES are generally open to learning and are willing to try new approaches to teaching and interacting with students as a means of providing holistic support and improving outcomes for all students.

Increasingly, however, the demographic composition of the school population has changed, with an influx of students registering at ESES, after relocating from larger cities in the province. Conversations with parents and guardians during the registration process have provided accounts of ACEs, and an increasing number of students are experiencing difficulties with self-regulation and appropriate social behaviour. Subsequently, anecdotal reports from educators have provided evidence of increasingly challenging behaviours within the classroom environment and during less structured time periods. Educators are recognizing that their pedagogical approaches are no longer meeting the academic and SEL needs of their students.

Strengths and Challenges

Professional job-embedded learning that can happen anywhere or anytime is most effective when framed in a manner that identifies needs (educator and school), incorporates educator expertise to build and foster engagement, and carves out and protects time for educators to learn (Zepeda, 2019). Job-embedded professional learning offers a variety of approaches that can be customized to meet the personal and professional responsibilities and learning needs of educators, while overcoming limitations in human, financial, and technical resources.

Professional learning communities, coaching, book studies, and collaborative-critical colleague approaches offer opportunities for shared teaching and professional development.

Trauma-informed professional learning builds educators' trauma awareness and shifts perspectives about students experiencing self-regulation and behaviour difficulties. While trauma awareness is an important first step in creating TISs, recognizing trauma and understanding its impact on student learning does not mitigate its effects. Educators must be supported in their capacity to apply their trauma knowledge and through the implementation of TIP within their classrooms (Dorado et al., 2016; Kim, 2023; Kim et al., 2021), while recognizing and dismantling oppressive policies and practices that perpetuate inequity and trauma for equity-deserving students (Haynes, 2022).

Classroom-based Socio-Emotional Learning Program

A school-wide, trauma responsive approach can narrow the gap between the current state at ESES and propel its staff and students towards becoming a TIS. Response to trauma, however, requires that educators have the capacity to integrate SEL opportunities into their teaching to build resilience and mitigate the adverse effects of trauma (Chernicoff & Labra, 2024). Offering a comprehensive toolkit of structures and strategies can support educators as they begin to address the role of trauma within their classes (Koslouski & Chafouleas, 2022). Trauma-informed practices include reducing potential triggers, fostering emotional regulation, reframing adverse behaviours as signs of student distress, implementing a pedagogical paradigm shift, and advocating to disrupt practices that perpetuate inequity and trauma (Koslouski et al., 2023).

Strengths and Challenges

Equipping educators with a variety of strategies is reflective of the varied presentation of trauma and recognizes that no single approach would support all students, as each child has

individual strengths, competencies, and challenges (Koslouski & Chafouleas, 2022, Koslouski et al., 2023). Classroom-based SEL practices increase educator engagement and agency, through distributed leadership and collaborative professional learning. When educators can voice their ideas and feel valued, they are more apt to meaningfully engage in professional learning and program implementation (Douglass, 2017; Douglass et al., 2021). Implementing SEL practices gives educators opportunities to build positive, empathetic, and respectful relationships with colleagues, students and families (Chernicoff & Labra, 2024). Improving educator-student relationships builds a culture of care and a sense of psychological safety within the classroom. Douglass et al. (2021) report that when educators implement classroom SEL strategies, their perspectives about student behaviour shift, from students behaving "badly" to children communicating about adverse experiences and feelings. Engaging in SEL practices with students provides an opportunity for educators to learn about trauma and integrate TIP into their personal practices to mitigate compassion fatigue and improve well-being (Koslouski et al., 2023).

While there is considerable evidence that SEL programs are beneficial in many ways, "most programs are based on monolithic approaches that often do not consider dynamics of power and oppression" (Mahfouz & Anthony-Stevens, 2020, p. 60). Equity-centred trauma-informed education requires an asset-based, human-centred, and universal approach that is proactively implemented (Venet, 2023). Ensuring an equity-centred, classroom-based SEL program requires a comprehensive understanding of the oppressive systems and structures that exist within ESES. Further, while the distributed leadership approach offers opportunities for educator collaboration and capacity-building, inconsistencies with content, approach, and implementation are a risk, as educator interpretation and biases may impact the integrity of the classroom-based SEL program delivery on a school-wide basis.

Parent Engagement

Parents play an integral role in their child's learning experiences and are invaluable partners in education. While many parents understand the importance of being involved, they feel that schools need to invest in their empowerment, clearly communicate the school vision, and explicitly outline parent involvement expectations (Myende & Nhlumayo, 2022). Parents involved in their children's education demonstrate a more positive attitude toward educators and school, leading to greater parent-educator collaboration (Grant & Ray, 2013; Myende & Nhlumayo, 2022). Partnering with parents through ongoing communication provides educators with valuable insights related to individual student's strengths and challenges and collaborative strategies the would best support their academic and SEL needs. Creating the conditions for authentic, meaningful, and collaborative connections between home and school enables children and their parents to feel that ESES is a safe and caring learning environment to receive support (Ritsma, 2020). Engaging parents is integral to supporting children in developing effective SEL competencies. While "parents are their children's first teachers and SEL begins at home" (Skoog-Hoffman et al., 2023, p. 6), educator-parent relationships can provide ongoing support and consistency to students as they continue to build and practice SEL skills.

Strengths and Challenges

Authentic partnerships recognize the identities and lived experiences of all stakeholders. Engaging parents can offer equity-deserving children and their families opportunities to centre their perspectives when interacting with educators and leaders. Developing respectful, reciprocal relationships can support children by providing a circle of care that offers consistency through "mutual understanding, shared goals, and reciprocity of power, privilege and influence" to provide more equitable academic achievement and SEL outcomes for all students (Skoog-

Hoffman et al., 2023, p. 6). Further, parent engagement through relationship-building provides opportunities for educators, children, and their families to work collaboratively to solve problems and co-create safe, caring, and equitable learning environments for students.

Engaging parents requires that educators demonstrate their capacity and willingness to care, support, and advocate for their students' academic achievement and well-being. Parent engagement is a culmination of their trust in educators and administrators. Koslouski et al. (2023) encourage educators to reflect on the quality of their relationships with their students and their families and to consider how their biases and perceptions may impact their assumptions. In the context of TIP, educators may have adverse emotions toward parents who they may feel are partially or fully responsible for the ACEs of their students. In addition, developing relationships may take considerable time, which can be exacerbated with complex or adverse situations, such that effective and sustained parent engagement may not occur in a timely manner. With respect to these limitations, educators at ESES must make a conscious and sustained effort to recognize, understand, empathize, and partner with families to support students and positively impact all relationships (Gherardi et al., 2020).

Comparing Solutions

Building a TIS at ESES requires a comprehensive approach that recognizes the contextual complexities of all stakeholders, while being responsive to the internal and external factors acting upon them. Solutions reflect possible options in recognition of my leadership agency as principal of ESES. Table 4 compares the solutions based on their respective efficacy in addressing the three guiding questions outlined in chapter one, as well as their resource requirements (human, time, and fiscal) for effective and sustained implementation.

Table 4

Solutions and Evaluation Criteria

Solutions	Addresses Guiding Questions			Resources Required		
	Building Educator Capacity	Implementing Trauma-Informed Practices	Supporting Educator Well-Being	Human	Time	Fiscal
Job-Embedded Professional Learning	High	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	Moderate
Classroom-based Socio-Emotional Learning Program	Moderate	High	High	High	Moderate	Low
Parent Engagement	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low

Note. The author's perspective has determined the evaluation criteria, based on their understanding of the contextual dynamics of ESES and in consideration of relevant literature.

Job-embedded professional learning is the first solution to be evaluated. Educators at ESES have varied awareness, understanding, and experiences with TIP. As such, professional learning is a great starting point for ensuring that educators have a consistent, conceptual, and technical understanding of trauma (McIntyre et al., 2019) and its disproportionate impact on equity-deserving students (Chafouleas, 2022; Douglass et al., 2021), and it aligns well with the three-skill approach to leadership, outlined in chapter one (Katz, 2009). Foundational professional learning, however, is limited in its ability to provide differentiated training and requires significant time and fiscal resources, including the provision of occasional educators to cover release time. Given the increasing number of unfilled jobs and budgetary constraints within the GLDSB, this solution would only be feasible if educators attended voluntarily in alignment with Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and CUPE collective agreements. Further, professional learning centres around developing educator proficiency rather than providing implementation supports that would directly impact students.

The second solution to be evaluated is the provision of a classroom-based SEL program that provides a continuum of supports and resources for all students. This solution offers educators a shared language and curriculum pertaining to SEL skills and an opportunity to model and reinforce these skills in various school settings throughout ESES (Schimke et al., 2022). This approach centres around educator-student collaboration and offers opportunities to learn and practice strategies together. Classroom culture is also improved as educators model that mistakes are learning opportunities. While this approach would require human, time, and fiscal resources initially, onboarding the program would occur over a continuous, incremental timeline, alongside students in the classroom. Incorporating school-wide SEL programs has been shown to reduce adverse student behaviour, improve classroom culture, and build SEL competencies that lead to improvements in overall well-being for educators and students (Cochran & Parker Peters, 2023). Classroom-based SEL programs have been "associated with qualities that are critical to effective teaching, such as empathy, emotion regulation, and affect tolerance" (Shapiro et al, 2016, p. 86).

Parent engagement is the third possible solution and focuses on the circle of care that surrounds students. Building and fostering respectful, trusting, and reciprocal relationships with families can provide opportunities for connectivity and consistency between home and school. Further, engaging with parents may offer valuable insights into individual student's strengths and struggles and how best to support students and their families in a caring and familiar way. Parents play an integral role in the psychological and behavioural adjustment of their children, and their perceptions can provide supportive or inhibitive conditions that influence educator-parent-student relationships (Luthar & Eisenberg, 2017; Luthar & Mendes, 2020). Research by Posey-Maddox and Haley-Lock (2020) found that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach has limited success, and that attention must be given to diverse family dynamics and individual parent

strengths and needs. As such, meaningful parent engagement requires a considerable time commitment, beyond the instructional day, resulting in a variable impact on educator well-being.

Job-embedded professional learning and parent engagement offer adult-centred, collaborative opportunities to build relationships and positively impact children's academic and well-being outcomes. Classroom-based SEL programs, however, centre around educator-student relationships as the foundational component for building well-being strategies and fostering resilience for adults and children. In alignment with the mission, vision, and strategic priorities of the Great Lakes District School Board (GLDSB), outlined in chapter one, and in recognition of my agency as principal of ESES, provision of a program the implements classroom-based SEL practices provides the greatest promise of addressing the three guiding questions and mobilizing ESES to become a TIS.

Conclusion

The significant impact and far-reaching experience of trauma requires school leaders to build and foster TIS cultures. Using trauma-informed approaches to mitigate the effects of trauma and create cultures of safety and care by creating learning environments that provide equitable opportunities for academic and SEL success aligns with transformative and TIL approaches (Avery et al., 2021; 2022; Loomis et al., 2024). Redressing current structures to a more responsive and equitable envisioned state requires careful consideration of the leadership (parent engagement), organization (classroom-based SEL program implementation), and competency (job-embedded professional learning) drivers that exist within ESES, within a layered change framework, that ensures organizational change readiness. Chapter three will outline the author's plan for change through a classroom-based SEL program.

Chapter 3: Change Implementation, Communication, and Evaluation

Chapter one described the impacts of trauma, relative to the PoP and established the organizational context of Erie Shores Elementary School (ESES). Chapter two examined transformative and trauma-informed leadership (TIL) approaches, through a layered change model, as a means of propelling change, while being cognizant of the organization's change readiness. Three possible strategies were proposed and discussed: job-embedded professional learning, classroom-based socio-emotional learning (SEL) programming and fostering parent engagement. Classroom-based SEL program implementation offers reciprocal relationship building opportunities for educators and students at ESES and is most closely aligned with the organization's current readiness for change. Chapter three examines change implementation, communication, and evaluation, as well as proposed next steps for transforming ESES into a trauma-informed school (TIS), through the implementation of a classroom-based SEL program.

Change Implementation Plan

The change implementation plan will detail the necessary steps for enhancing educator capacity to transform ESES into a TIS. School Mental Health Ontario (SMH-ON) (2022a) calls upon school and system leaders to integrate a focus on mental health with the development of safe and inclusive learning environments that support equity and promote student achievement. Further, SMH-ON (2022a) recommends a coordinated approach across related initiatives that align with the school improvement plan and involve a limited number of short-term, attainable goals, with multiple entry points throughout the year, for educator and student participation.

Alignment with the Organizational Strategy

The mission and vision of the GLDSB are to encourage the daily success of every student and to empower them to be globally minded (GLDSB, 2023a). Educators at ESES have focused

on academic student outcomes that reflect proficiency in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. Increasingly, however, educators are recognizing the impact of non-academic SEL competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness on student's cognitive performance and academic achievement (Corcoran et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; OECD, 2015; Schiepe-Tiska at al., 2021). Over the past year, ESES educators have demonstrated a growing interest in building their professional capacity, related to trauma awareness, trauma sensitivity, and trauma responsive practices to improve learning outcomes for all students. This is evident in educators' commitment to the implementation of SMH-ON strategies and resources and their active participation in voluntary, after-hours professional learning workshops.

As members of the OCT, school leaders and teachers are responsible for supporting their students' mental health (OCT, n.d.-b). Educators are uniquely positioned to observe student well-being directly and consistently across a variety of contexts, enabling them to identify students at risk, seek support, and create a learning environment that supports student well-being (OCT, n.d.-b). While ESES teachers and early childhood educators (ECEs) are aware of their role in supporting student mental health, many feel that they lack the skills needed to identify adverse behaviours, intervene appropriately, and provide supportive learning environments (Rossen, 2020; Shelemy et al., 2019; Stratford et al., 2020).

Leading and Managing the Transition and Change

The final day of the school year within the GLDSB is dedicated to educator professional development. It provides an opportunity for critical reflexivity and constructive feedback, giving voice to all staff at ESES to discuss what went well during the current school year and areas for learning forward, as we begin to plan for the upcoming school year. During these professional learning sessions, educators are invited to join various learning teams within ESES, for the

upcoming school year. Based on formal (school-based team meetings, professional learning communities, and school improvement meetings) discussions and informal conversations, educators are recognizing the need for capacity building related to trauma-informed practice implementation and SEL competency development for their students. Based on voluntary participation and interest expressed thus far, I anticipate that at least fifteen educators will join the SEL program change implementation team (CIT) for the 2024-2025 school year.

Educator capacity building for the implementation of a classroom-based SEL program will be guided by the layered change framework (Figure 7), as educators learn through each of the four phases: awakening/trauma-aware, mobilization/trauma-sensitive, acceleration/trauma-responsive, and institutionalization/trauma-informed. This layered framework, as discussed in chapter two, combines the work of Carter and Blanch (2019) and Deszca et al. (2020) and will be used to inform the plan to lead and manage transformative, trauma-informed change.

Awakening/Trauma-Aware

The awakening/trauma-aware phase will begin with the formation of the SEL program CIT and will continue to increase educator awareness of the impacts of childhood trauma and "the connection between student life experiences and educational outcomes" (Chafouleas et al., 2021, p. 213). While ESES educators have collaboratively analyzed student climate survey data and are familiar with the need to engage in professional learning pertaining to trauma, they will be awakened to the urgency of integrating trauma-informed practices (TIP) into their classrooms and the positive impact of these approaches on trauma-affected students and their peers.

The SEL program CIT will meet bi-weekly during a series of lunch and learning sessions, with the exact meeting days and schedules arranged to accommodate recess supervision responsibilities of the team members. Sessions within the instructional day have proven to be

more accessible, as many educators have responsibilities within and beyond the school, outside of their instructional day. As the change leader, I will share resources that highlight the integral link between educator knowledge and perceptions about trauma, as well as the need for pedagogical shifts toward TIP implementation and SEL opportunities in the classroom, to build and foster relationship that support equitable outcomes for all students (Douglass et al., 2021).

Mobilization/Trauma-Sensitive

As early adopters and change agents, the SEL program CIT will explore trauma-sensitive classroom practices and will mobilize their knowledge, by sharing their learning with their colleagues, throughout the school year. As capacity building continues within the CIT and expands to more ESES educators, it will be important to be cognizant of individual educator's trauma awareness and knowledge about TIP. Further, the CIT will need to recognize the diverse presentation of trauma in students and be cognizant of the broad toolkit of trauma-sensitive practices that can be utilized (Koslouski et al., 2023; Koslouski & Chafouleas, 2022). Equity-centred professional learning will be embedded into this phase of the change process to provide opportunities for educators to develop their awareness of the barriers faced by equity-deserving students that may magnify the effects of trauma for students with intersecting identities. Mobilizing transformative change will require that TIL is distributed to these change agents as they advocate for the urgency of adopting TIP and support their colleagues as they become more trauma aware and begin to build trauma-sensitive learning spaces within their classrooms.

Opportunities for trauma-sensitive mobilization will be offered during monthly staff meetings, quarterly school improvement planning workshops, and with ongoing invitations (multiple entry points) to join the CIT during lunchtime sessions. Additional discretionary time during the instructional day will be allocated to members of the CIT to provide them with

scheduled opportunities to mentor and co-teach with educators in other classrooms. Further, the CIT will be connected to the itinerant multi-disciplinary team with the GLDSB, who will provide additional support and scaffolding for ESES educators.

Acceleration/Trauma-Responsive

As transformative change mobilization continues, opportunities to accelerate and deepen educator capacity will be offered. In this third phase of the layered change framework, SEL program implementation will be expanded to provide a broader, school-wide implementation. A whole-school trauma-sensitive approach is essential for trauma-impacted students (Craig, 2017; Erickson & Henry, 2023; Jennings, 2019). The SEL program CIT will expand professional learning opportunities to include their curriculum partner colleagues as a means of creating a trauma-responsive school culture and accelerating the transformation of ESES toward a more equitable learning space for all students. In addition to monthly staff meetings, SEL practices, related to class routines, discipline practices, and overall school culture, will be focused upon during professional development days and will be discussed during school-based team meetings. Educators will also be reminded during staff and school-based team meetings of the opportunity to co-plan and co-teach SEL- and TIP-based learning opportunities with members of the CIT.

Institutionalization/Trauma-Informed

The final phase of the layered change framework aims to institutionalize the transformation to ensure that the whole school reflects a trauma-informed culture of care. Coalition building throughout the first three phases is essential for creating change momentum. As such, it is essential that this change process is reflective of and responsive to the differing levels of expertise of ESES educators. Further, we must continuously examine the structural and cultural parameters that exist within ESES and address barriers to equitable outcomes for all

students, school-wide, as we transform ESES into a trauma-informed culture of care. In this final phase we must reflect upon the positive changes that have been made, continue to build educator capacity throughout the school, and seek ways to move our collaborative learning forward and beyond the walls of ESES to improve equity of outcomes for all students in the GLDSB.

Change Implementation Timeline

The layered change framework provides four key phases for implementing change and aligns with the school year. Figure 9 outlines a chronological monthly implementation plan that appears linear, however transformative change is multidirectional, reflecting the reciprocity of relationships among educators and between educators and students. Further, the classroom-based SEL program implementation is designed with multiple entry points and individualized program integration timelines to meet the unique capacity building needs of ESES educators.

Figure 9

Change Implementation Plan for the 2024-2025 School Year

A survey will be conducted at the beginning of the school year and as part of the onboarding process for educators who are hired mid-year to determine their individual strengths and learning needs pertaining to trauma and its impact on students. This information will offer a starting point for educators to engage in the classroom SEL program and will provide input for customized CIT mentoring sessions to "inform and shape our next moves" (Safir & Dugan, 2021, p. 55). Change implementation will be monitored, evaluated, and adjusted through a circular Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) framework that will be addressed later in this chapter.
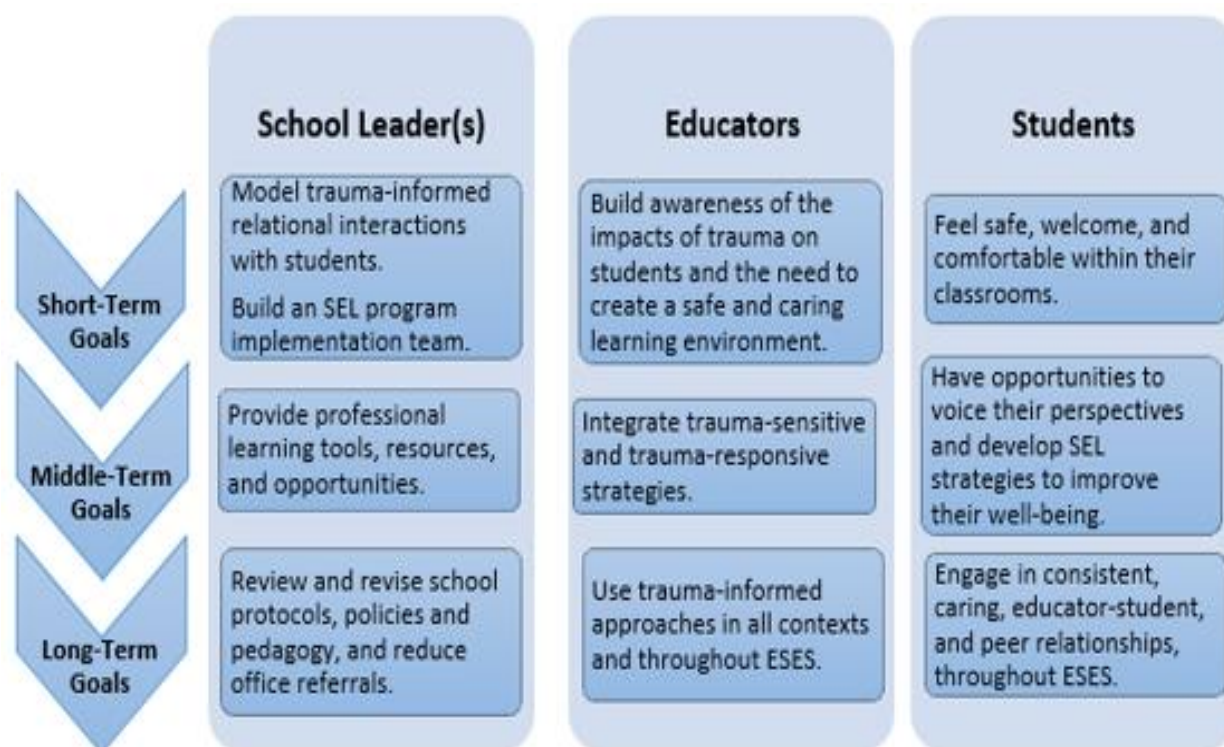
Change Implementation Goals

As indicated in chapter two, this PoP outlines the need for both first and second order changes. Beginning with the formation of the SEL program CIT, educators will be awakened to the negative impacts of trauma on students' social, emotional, and behavioural needs (Koslouski et al., 2023) and start to critically analyze current practices and structures within ESES that perpetuate inequity for students (Eddy & Kirby, 2020). As team members begin to prioritize and focus on current classroom practices that may amplify the effects of trauma, they will mobilize and implement supports and strategies to mitigate their impact on students.

As change implementation proceeds, second order change will occur as the SEL program CIT and other ESES staff begin to recognize that a TIS culture requires school-wide practices that honour students' lived experiences and provide equitable academic and well-being opportunities. Sustained change requires critical introspection by all staff members of their pedagogical practices, as well as examination of the structures and barriers that exist throughout the school and the board. Second order change requires that leaders and educators recognize and redress their policies and practices to mitigate the detrimental impacts of trauma on ESES students, so that all students can achieve academic success and well-being.

Transformative, trauma-informed change requires change leaders and change agents to recognize and challenge their underlying beliefs and assumptions. Creating a TIS requires that educators have a shared understanding of the fundamental truths about trauma: it is real and prevalent, it is toxic, and it impacts learning and development in students (Erickson & Harvey, 2023; Souers & Hall, 2016). Figure 10 outlines incremental, transformative change goals and an overview of the respective roles of change leader(s), agents, and recipients. Components and timelines will be assessed and be subject to change to reflect individual learning journeys and outcomes, recognizing that small, steady, incremental professional learning provides for more sustained, school-wide change (Deszca et al., 2020).

Figure 10

Social Emotional Learning Program Implementation Team Incremental Goals

Note. Benchmarks and timelines are subject to revision, in response to ongoing monitoring.

Potential Implementation Barriers

Leadership, organizational processes and readiness, change agent buy-in and understanding, and collective ownership are factors that enable transformative change implementation (Avery et al., 2022). The layered framework provides a concise change implementation process that may lessen the impact of implementation barriers, including time, resources, educator turnover, and workload (Avery et al., 2022). Schools are complex, dynamic organizations that must operate within internal and external constraints and address the competing needs of their stakeholders. Leveraging change enabling factors will help to overcome potential barriers and provide the conditions necessary for ESES to become a more trauma-informed organization that is better able to support equitable outcomes for all of its students.

Building a TIS culture is an iterative process that requires a deep commitment to fostering a culture of care, throughout the school. Leaders, educators, and support staff at ESES have diverse strengths and experiences. However, they share a collective commitment to improving the learning conditions required for all students to be successful. Building capacity within ESES staff to implement TIP and build a culture of care and consistency, school-wide, requires a reflective and responsive approach to change implementation. Effective communication is required to lead change and support change agents in implementing TIP at ESES.

Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and the Change Process

Educators are integral to supporting student well-being and development and are expected to address mental health in addition to providing academic instruction (Leschied et al., 2018; Luthar et al., 2020). Organizational change requires communication that builds educator awareness and articulates capacity building processes to support student well-being. Leaders must know their audience and communicate the need for change from the onset of the change

process (Lewis, 2019) and ensure that communication remains at the forefront, throughout the change process (Beatty, 2015). Further, Deszca et al. (2020) highlight the importance of education and communication for creating an understanding of the need for organizational change and outlining the responsibilities of an organization's change agents.

The communication plan in this DiP reflects a combined approach that includes formal, single direction communication (written memos, staff announcements, school newsletters) and informal, reciprocal communication (conversations, reflections, check-ins, and observations) (Lewis, 2019). As the change leader, I must recognize the professional learning needs of ESES educators and communicate clearly, consistently, and comprehensively to ease uncertainty, build engagement, and mitigate any issues as they arise. As a transformative, trauma-informed leader, I must conduct myself and communicate in a trauma-informed matter. To build capacity and foster change, without risking disengagement or re-traumatization of educators and students, it will be critical that I 'model the model' and demonstrate careful attention to the accuracy of language, appropriate timing and methodology of communication, and commit to frequent check ins with change agents and change recipients (Edelman, 2023). Communicating the need for change and developing a knowledge mobilization (KMb) plan will centre around building educator engagement and capacity with TIP, in a trauma-informed way, to support equitable academic and SEL outcomes for all students.

Building Awareness of the Need for Change

The initial step in the Structured Approach to Formulating a trauma-informed Environment (SAFE) model (Figure 4) is to build an awareness of the need for creating trauma-informed schools that address and redress oppressive systemic practices and dismantle existing knowledge constructs that perpetuate inequity. Central to this model is an asset-based, 'student

up' approach that disrupts the current success paradigm, that silences the voices, de-values individual gifts, and prioritizes quantitative improvement measures over wholistic learning and transformation (Safir & Dugan, 2021). Currently, a weekly memo that includes an overview of the events, opportunities, and pertinent information is distributed to all ESES staff. As a means of building trauma awareness, a section will be added to each weekly memo introducing trauma and its impact on ESES students, similar to the examples shown in Appendix A. These weekly insertions will build and foster trauma awareness and align with the first phase of the layered change framework shown in Figure 7.

Educators at ESES are at various stages along their knowledge and understanding related to trauma awareness. In recognition of their diversity in their professional learning journeys and styles, it will be important to provide multiple entry points along the knowledge acquisition continuum. Similar to the curriculum resources corner that is currently located in the teacher resource room, a corner of the staff room will be dedicated to trauma informed information, supports and resources, and will offer staff the opportunity to read short articles and ideas to try within their own classrooms. Further, the intentional centering of the topic of trauma within a less formal learning space aims to re-frame educators' conversations about student dysregulation from one of students intentionally misbehaving to one where adults consider the lived experiences of students and what may have happened to trigger them (Perry & Winfrey, 2021). This learning table will connect the impact of trauma to equity of outcomes, and barriers to successful academic and well-being outcomes for students. Appendix B provides examples of the resources that will be included.

The weekly memo section and the trauma learning table in the staff room provide multiple entry points for all staff to build trauma awareness capacity in a safe and asynchronous

manner. Professional learning positions the educators themselves as the experts and provides an inquiry and learning framework that recognizes individual learning needs and offers multiple entry points and opportunities for self-guided growth (Brown et al., 2020; Chu et al., 2020). Building awareness of the need for change will lead to collaborative learning as educators work together to improve student outcomes, enrich school culture, and support each other in making context-specific, transformative changes (Brown et al., 2020; Guskey, 2014). As the change leader, it will be important to build awareness and create the conditions needed to evoke transformative change and mobilize knowledge beyond individual classroom walls in a manner that builds capacity and foster relationships with educators and collaboratively supports them as they support ESES students.

Knowledge Mobilization

Change leadership encompasses individual and collective efforts within an organization and is propelled by knowledge mobilization activities that activate the necessary resources and processes for transformative change to occur (Canterino et al., 2020). MacGregor and Phipps (2020, p. 1) define KMb as "efforts undertaken to aid and accelerate research impact pathways by directing focus to processes that support impact". As the change leader I must offer opportunities for educators to co-learn and share knowledge, collaborate, and strategize as they develop an understanding of trauma, and build capacity, using multi-directional change agent input and feedback channels (Malik, 2020). The layered framework model previously outlined in Figure 7 provides a plan for KMb. Educator knowledge sharing and capacity building will be supported in incremental phases that include — awakening/trauma-aware, mobilization/trauma-sensitive, acceleration/trauma-responsive, and institutionalization/trauma-informed. Figure 11 provides a visual representation of the KMb for this DiP.

Figure 11

Knowledge Mobilization Plan Integrated Into the Layered Framework
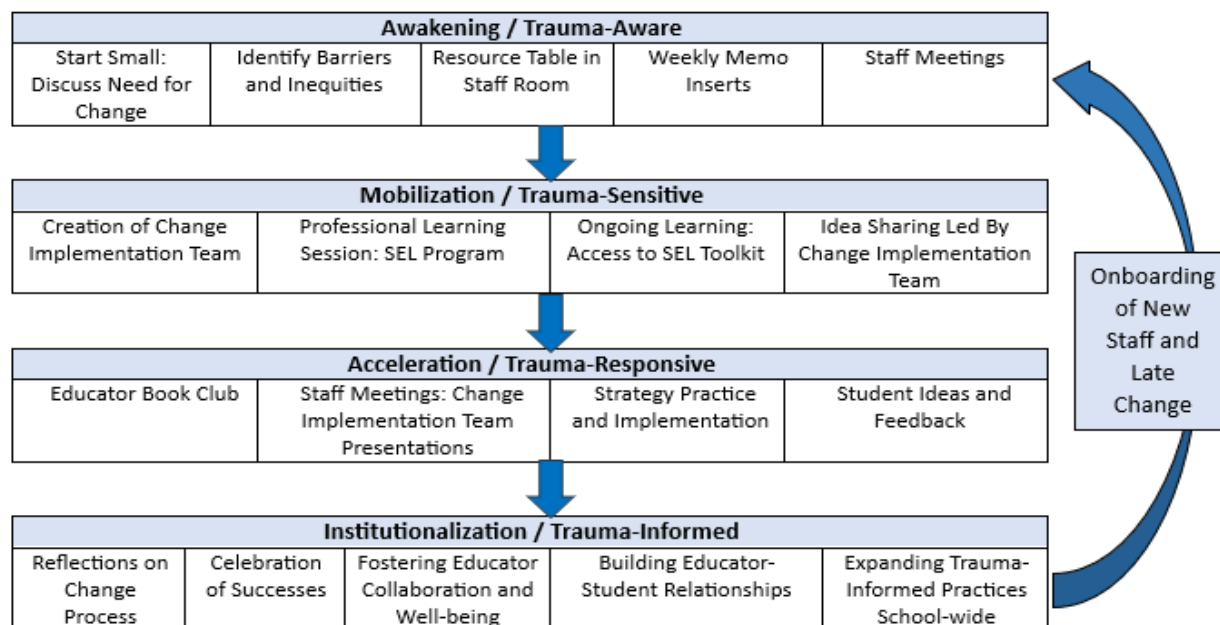
Note. While the layered framework is incremental, this plan reflects multiple entry points and an opportunity to invite and include new staff within the school, throughout the year.

Beginning with awakening/trauma-aware, educators at ESES will be provided with information about trauma and its impact on students and their learning. In this phase, we 'start small' and create the conditions needed for sustained change that ensures equitable education opportunities for students within the ESES community (Grain, 2022). During this phase, barriers and inequities within the ESES community will be identified and coalition building amongst educators will begin (Deszca et al., 2020).

The mobilization/trauma-sensitive phase reflects an incremental shift in the change process, as early adopters become more sensitive to trauma and embrace trauma-informed principles. Shifting educators' perspectives of TIP from being additional responsibilities to

integral components of equitable and socially just pedagogy in this phase will build change momentum (Carter & Blanch, 2019). The CIT will attend an after-school, professional development session to learn about the SEL program that they will be piloting in their classrooms. Session attendees will be provided with online access to the comprehensive SEL program website that contains grade-appropriate information, resources, and introductory, implementation tools for educators to try with their students.

Leading transformative, trauma-informed change invites change leaders and change agents to learn together, join the struggle, and engage in organizational transformation (Grain, 2022). In the acceleration/trauma-responsive phase, all educators will be offered the opportunity to participated in a voluntary, professional learning book club, facilitated by members of the CIT. Trauma-informed change requires sustained, long-term commitment of change leaders and change agents as new learning addresses underlying assumptions and shifts oppressive practices (Carter & Blanch, 2019). As the coalition builds, change leadership is distributed so that educator trauma knowledge expands teaching practices become more responsive to the needs of ESES students. Educators read and reflect upon the book, *What Happened to You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing*, by Dr. Bruce Perry and Oprah Winfrey (2021), during weekly book club lunch and learning sessions.

The institutionalization/trauma-informed phase offers the potential to guide ESES educators toward deeper forms of school-wide change (Carter & Blanch, 2019). In this final phase, educators shift to higher-order practices that foster a psychologically safe classroom environment, and seek ways to expand this culture of care, school-wide. Institutionalized change requires a listening orientation in which change leaders and change agents must "learn to listen and listen to learn" (Safir, 2017, p. 15) to build and foster relational trust. Opportunities for

reflection and celebration and further reciprocal learning between educators and students will continue to strengthen educator-student relationships. Within this phase, educators at ESES will be called upon to sustain TIP by continuing to prioritize relationship and connection as a precursor to curriculum content and academic rigor (Safir & Dugan, 2021).

Communicating Milestones and Celebrating Wins

Educators play an integral role in students' lives and are the most important in-school factor contributing to student academic achievement and well-being outcomes (Viac & Fraser, 2020). With the potential for enormous impact comes increasingly complex responsibilities. Building educator capacity for TIP is a comprehensive process that requires transformative change while simultaneously responding to students' unique learning needs, facilitating students' SEL skills development, and working with colleagues and families to support students' holistic development (Schleicher, 2018).

The additional responsibilities and demands of developing trauma knowledge and implementing an SEL program can be sources of stress and fatigue for educators. To mitigate this, Kayode et al. (2023) posit that celebrating professional learning accomplishments and reflecting upon academic progress and improved well-being in students plays a crucial role in cultivating a culture of transformative learning. Safir and Dugan (2021) suggest that using broad, satellite data to "illuminate patterns of achievement and equity" will provide inspiration and deepen educator engagement in the change process (p. 55). Figure 12 outlines proposed opportunities to communicate milestones and celebrate successes that will be planned formally, by the CIT, and informally, through reciprocal communication with ESES educators. Educators will be encouraged to share their own successes and those of their students, in a variety of manners, if they are comfortable doing so.

Figure 12

Proposed Opportunities to Communicate Milestones and Celebrate Successes
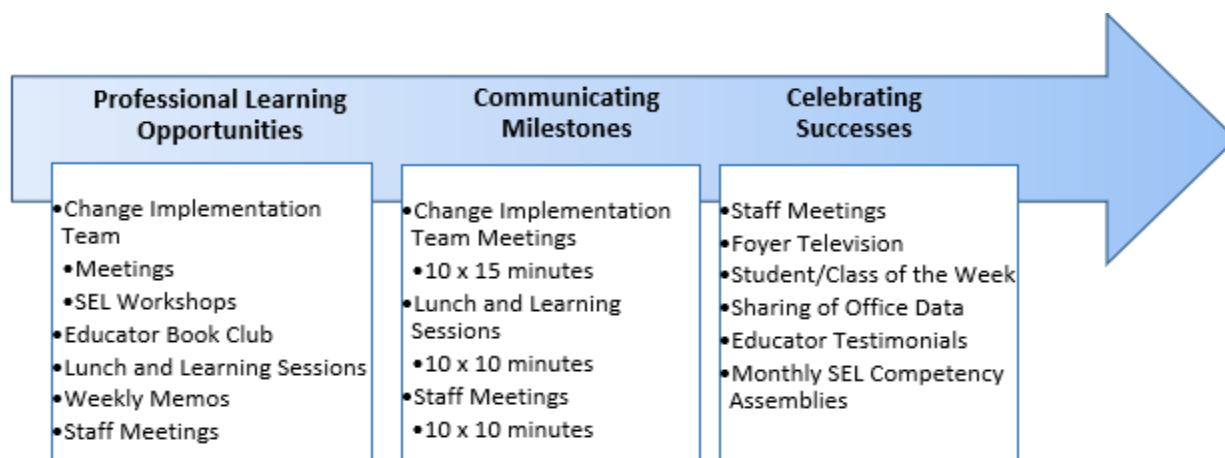
Framing Issues for Various Audiences

Successful communication with various audiences requires that change leaders consider their own positionality, as well as the heterogeneous positionalities held by diverse audiences (Meredith, 2021). Change leaders (CIT), agents (educators), and recipients (students) represent the various audiences for which communication will be adapted, with expansion to the ESES families and the wider school community as the implementation momentum continues.

Change Leaders

The CIT will reflect a diverse range of teachers and ECEs, based on the responses received through the SEL program pilot workshop invitation. As early adopters, their expression of interest toward this voluntary professional learning opportunity suggests that they are engaged and supportive of building their instructional capacity and deliver trauma informed teaching strategies. It will be important to nurture their willingness to learn, by front loading research-based information, and to support their leadership, by providing opportunities for collaboration and sharing of best practices.

As school leader, I must also consider the diverse leadership aptitudes, experiences, and styles that comprise the CIT. While all team members come together as champions of change, their leadership roles and approaches will differ. While diversity supports the transformative change process, the team and I must be mindful of the individual learning journeys, perceptions, and biases (both overt and implicit) of ESES educators and provide ongoing, opportunities and pathways to engage with the change process. Building and fostering relationships and creating a psychologically safe, culture of care, using restorative practices to enhance educator-student relationships will be an ongoing focus during this transformative journey (Farr et al., 2020).

Change Agents

As change agents, educators are centrally positioned within the change model of the current DiP. Each brings their own personal and professional, academic, and lived experiences to the transformative change process. Educators at ESES possess varying degrees of change engagement, readiness, adoption, and follow through. Research by Tate (2012) and Garmston (2013) suggests that adult learners crave efficacy and understanding, tend to be flexible, strive to improve their craft, and require interdependence in their professional learning. Interdependence is found within professional learning experiences that provide "reciprocity, belonging, and connectedness" (Garmston, 2013, p. 210).

Framing communication for ESES educators will require differentiated approaches that honour educators' positionality and voices within individual, micro, meso, and macro level contexts of the school and school community. Integral to the success of the change initiative will be communication of the need for change and the pivotal role that each educator has in ensuring transformative change by embedding equity-centred TIP at ESES. Educators are more apt to engage with the community and larger system in which they are a part of and as such, change

must be communicated in a manner that gives voice and presence to change agents (Mason, 2022). Guiding questions will be: "What do you observe in your classroom? What relationships need support? What supports are needed? What is the first small step?

Change Recipients

Students at ESES are central to the trauma-informed change process and must remain at the forefront throughout transformative change process that educators are engaging in. Creating, supporting, and sustaining a culture of care within classrooms, through improved educator-student relationships that provide the "healing power of an adult who cares" (Wolpow et al., 2016, p. 72) is the goal for the current DiP. Communication with change recipients requires ongoing and multi-modal opportunities for reciprocal discussion. Safir and Dugan (2021) posit that opportunities for small groups of students to meet with educators provides a way of garnering student voice and fostering. Reciprocal collaboration enables students to share their support needs, express sources of frustration, and express whether they feel a sense of belonging.

Understanding the diversity of identities and lived experiences ESES students hold is a first step in developing trauma awareness for change leaders and agents. Educators will be encouraged to get to know their students and their families, through online educational communication platforms, at parent evenings, and with parent/guardian presentations. In addition, educators will conduct morning meetings to build relationships with and among students to build and foster classroom cultures of care. Guiding questions during morning meetings will offer low risk, high reward connection opportunities for educators and students to build relationships, and may include: "What is your favourite __? Would you rather __? What compliment would you give to the person sitting to your left or right?" (Kiser & Snoke, 2019).

While morning meetings provide positive and efficient check-ins, they are limited in their capacity to provide deeper discussions and insights. Communication with individual students will also be embedded in curriculum, through a series of oral discussions, writing, and/or visual arts prompts, with samples provided in Appendix C and Appendix D, respectively. Through the use of educator-student conferences, educators will be able to ask questions and expand on student reflections, centring student voice and providing ongoing check-ins opportunities. Educators will be encouraged to meet with individual students and learn about their strengths and struggles. As school leader, I will engage with small groups students during learning lunches to better understand their lived experiences and gather input on the strategies that are needed to increase their sense of belonging within the ESES community. Student conversations will provide valuable insights for the monitoring and evaluation processes outlined below.

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

Transformative organizational change requires effective communication that considers who and how to focus on knowledge acquisition and mobilization. Monitoring and evaluation ensures that the change process is aligned with the goals of the plan and that its implementation remains on track (Ebrahim, 2020). Monitoring involves "observing and reviewing the progress of a program over a period of time to see if it is achieving its objectives" (Mertens & Wilson, 2018). While monitoring involves data collection to track implementation, evaluation uses data to determine whether value is being added as a result of change implemented (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). In chapter one, the envisioned future state of ESES was identified as being a TIS where educators are equipped with the capacity for trauma awareness and are able to be sensitive and responsive to its impacts on students. While the ultimate goal of the DiP is to mitigate the effects of trauma on change recipients, change leaders and agents must be cognizant that the

journey towards an equity of outcomes for all students often results from small, incremental steps and achievements. Transformative, trauma-informed change must begin with building and fostering equity-centred educator-student relationships. Venet (2023) posits that equity-centred, trauma-informed educators take the time to get to know their students by "witnessing how their minds work [and] noticing the ways they communicate with their peers" (p. 102). Monitoring and evaluation systems require specific tools and measures to accurately track and assess the change progress, to recognize both overt and subtle paradigm shifts.

Monitoring and Evaluation Measures

Change progress will be monitored and evaluated using a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data gathered through observations, conversations, and products. Implementation feedback data, student SEL data, educator-student relationship data will serve as performance indicators and will be discussed below.

Implementation Feedback Data

The CIT is comprised of early adopters and leaders of the change process. The team will have an instrumental role in providing planning and feedback pertaining to the professional learning opportunities; weekly memo highlights, lunch and learning sessions, educator book club, and in the implementation of the classroom-based SEL program. Quantitative measures will include the number of educators signing up for and attending voluntary professional learning sessions (book club, lunch and learns, and SEL program pilot sessions. Qualitative data will be collected as educators participate in each of the phases within the layered framework (Figure 7). As they continue through the change process, educators will consider five key indicators, as they evaluate the efficacy the change implementation plan, including appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability Markiewicz and Patrick (2015, p. 264-265). A sample key

indicator feedback form is provided in Appendix E. This form will be used as change leaders

engage in ongoing monitoring and evaluation, within each phase of the layered framework model

and it will inform the revision and refining of future SEL learning opportunities. As change

recipients, students will be encouraged to leverage their individual and collective agency, by

providing feedback to change leaders and change agents. Age- and stage-appropriate

implementation feedback forms for students in the primary grades (kindergarten to grade 3) and

the junior-intermediate grades (grades 4-8) are provided in Appendix F and Appendix G,

respectively.

Student Socio-Emotional Learning Data

As educators develop trauma awareness and build capacity in implementing TIP, it will

be important to monitor and evaluate student behaviour and well-being across a variety of

settings and contexts (buses, classrooms, school yard). Haymovitz et al. (2018) posits that SEL

programming decreases incidences of misbehaviour and reduces the number of office referrals,

resulting in increased learning time for all students. Sustained implementation of SEL programs

leads to improved outcomes in various aspects of students' lives, including increased self-

confidence, improved attendance and engagement, greater academic achievement, and more

consistent self-regulation (Chernicoff & Labra, 2024; Greenberg et al., 2017; Todd et al., 2022).

Educators will be provided with a standardized, mixed-methods data collection form, to

track student attendance, office referrals and send outs, and incidences of dysregulation,

opposition and/or defiance in their students. Appendix H shows a sample form that includes a

simple tally system, along with space for anecdotal or contextual observations. These tracking

forms will provide early and ongoing data, that will be used to monitor the change process and

evaluate the efficacy of change implementation within each step of the layered framework,

providing an opportunity for data-driven reflection and revision.

Educator-Student Relationship Data

Children have a need to seek comfort and strive for regulation, and that the greatest, most powerful form of reward is relational (Perry & Winfrey, 2021). Educators are uniquely positioned to provide connections that are both rewarding and regulating for students. Student reflection opportunities will be offered, weekly, with journal prompts, morning meetings, and informal conversations with school leaders and educators. Educator reflections and feedback will be sought during lunch and learning sessions, book club meetings, and at monthly staff meetings. While qualitative, this data will deepen our understanding and offer insights into educator-student relationships. Further, shared understandings and experiences can foster positive emotional contagion that can support connectedness, sustain SEL competency development in students, and help to mitigate the negative impacts of trauma on interpersonal relationships.

Monitoring and Evaluation Tools

Building educator capacity for trauma knowledge and transformative change requires tools that align with iterative learning processes and are reflective of the cyclical nature of the pedagogical practices found within ESES. The PDSA cycle and appreciative inquiry will be the tools used for monitoring and evaluating progress. Quantitative and qualitative sources will help to support change leaders in gauging and assessing the extent to which "the program motivate[d] people to change their behaviour" (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016, p. 174).

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry is a "well-documented approach to helping individuals and systems move from a deficit-based paradigm to a strengths-based perspective" (Armstrong et al., 2020, p. 1). As an asset-based approach, appreciative inquiry encourages positive and reciprocal relationships between change leaders, agents, and recipients, to build capacity, (Cooperrider &

Whitney, 2005; Lane et al., 2018; Shuayb et al., 2009) while aligning with the elements of trust, respect, communication, collaboration, feedback, and support that are inherent to psychological safety for educators and students (Ndidiamaka & Idowu, 2023). In the context of this DiP, appreciative inquiry considers and values feedback, educator and student learning, and the classroom environment (Dewar et al., 2020; Jefford et al., 2021) and can be used as a tool to identify and recognize TIP that support SEL competencies and improve student achievement and well-being outcomes (Chernicoff & Labra, 2024; Lane et al., 2018).

This approach will support the CIT as they become trauma aware and develop trauma sensitivity and responsiveness competencies, while serving as change leaders for other ESES educators and students. Strengths-based framing of the PoP will provide the conditions needed to support educator vulnerability and coalition building (Cooperrider et al., 2013; Deszca et al., 2020). The appreciative inquiry tool views ESES as a human social system, with an unlimited capacity for human relationships that will support the transformative change process (Langley et al., 2009). Appreciative Inquiry supports the creation of a psychologically safe, culture of care for educators and students by focusing on the conditioned needed for more positive change, rather than emphasizing what is not working (Jefford et al., 2021).

Plan, Do, Study, Act Model

The PDSA model offers organizations an iterative, four-step cycle to build on current systems thinking by supporting ongoing monitoring, developing, and refining of change implementation strategies (Leeman et al., 2021; Magnan, 2021). Its steps include defining a problem and providing possible causes and solutions (plan), implementing improvement actions (do), assessing and evaluating outcomes (study), and cycling back to refine and improve outcomes (act).

In addition to the collaborative conditions that emphasize psychological safety, offered by the appreciative inquiry model, and the incremental and iterative focus of the PDSA cycle, three guiding questions will be considered when monitoring and evaluating the change process: How will this stage build educator capacity toward becoming a trauma-informed school? How will we know that we have become more trauma-informed? What can we change to accelerate our trauma-informed change process? (Langley et al., 2009; Magnan, 2021). Figure 13 provides an integrated monitoring and evaluation tool, that combines the appreciative inquiry model and the PDSA cycle and considers the three guiding questions within each quadrant.

Figure 13

Layered Monitoring and Evaluation Tool: Appreciative Inquiry and PDSA Cycle
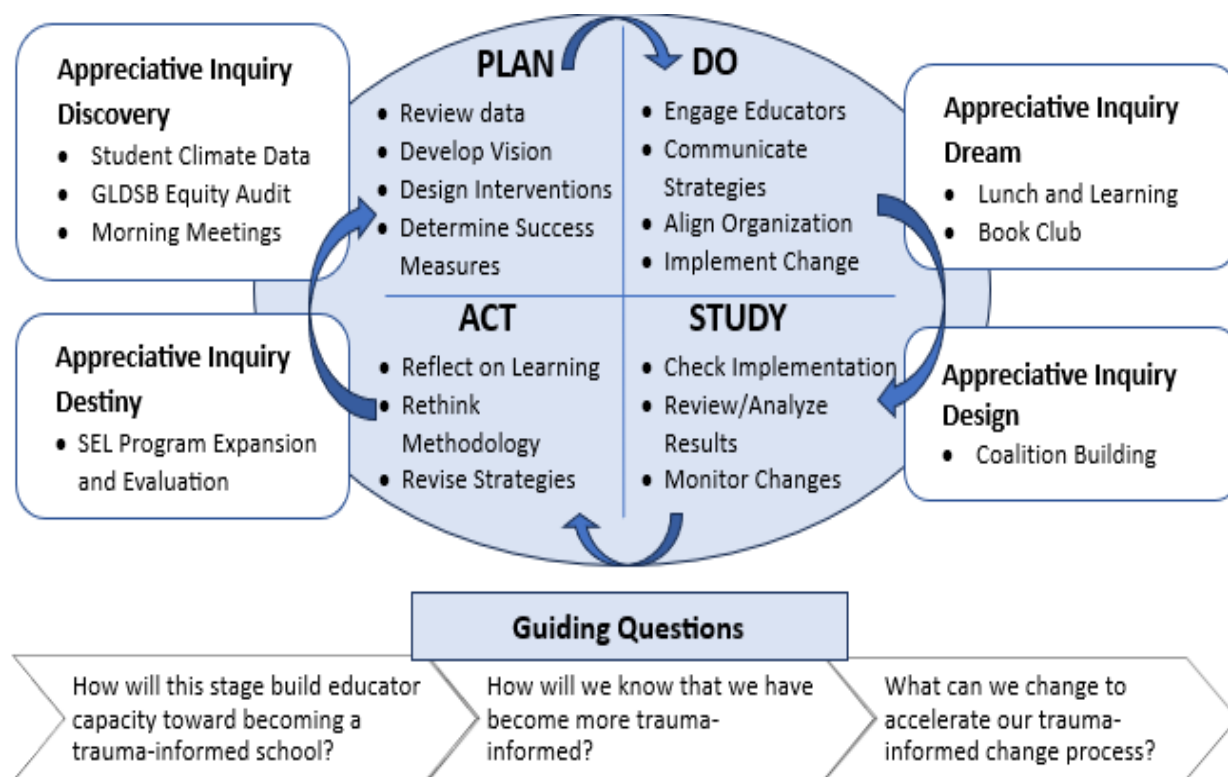
Note. Adapted from "Framework for Strategic Learning: The PDCA Cycle", by M. Pietrzak and J. Paliszkiewicz, 2015, p.153, Management, 10(2), 149-161.

Refining the Change Implementation Plan

The CIT will play an integral role in reviewing, reflecting, and refining the implementation plan. Monitoring and evaluation measures and tools, outlined earlier in this chapter, will provide the data and frameworks necessary for deep analysis and reflection. During their meetings, every two weeks, the CIT will review feedback and tracking forms and adjust professional learning and SEL program implementation accordingly. In addition to data-informed decision-making, it will be important to be proactive and responsive to the dynamic environment within the walls of ESES. As a human system, ESES will have natural ebbs and flows throughout the school year. Trauma triggers are unique to individuals however, certain times and events can perpetuate its impacts. Change implementation will need to be responsive to the stressors and needs of staff and students and respectful of their individual lived experiences and learning journeys.

Change leaders will need to consider the emotional well-being of ESES educators and students and offer ways of mitigating stressful circumstances and supporting well-being within the school (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). While fostering a positive school culture will support change implementation and organizational commitment for ESES educators (Kovanci et al., 2020), change leaders must also ensure that educators are equipped with the requisite skills and capacity to implement the change process. Thus, implementation refinement may be necessary as new educators are welcomed to ESES and late adopters overcome change resistance and engage with the change process. As school leader, I along with the change implementation must strive to break down professional learning barriers, by offering additional mentoring, co-planning, and co-teaching opportunities, as a means of formally and informally building educator trauma-awareness and professional capacity for implementing TIP at ESES.

Change Implementation Considerations

As we begin the transformative learning process, it will be critical that all actors develop an awareness of their own tacit assumptions and expectations and these biases and beliefs are critically scrutinized against the equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice principles that are central to the change initiative (Gelinas-Proulx & Shields, 2022). As change leaders, the CIT must integrate the transformative premises and tenets outlined by Shields (2020) and uphold their commitment to TIP as they interact with educators and students throughout the change process. As the change implementation plan moves along the layered framework, transformative change leaders and agents must maintain their focus on social justice, including issues of equity, democracy, and inclusion (Gelinas-Proulx & Shields 2022).

Collaborative learning opportunities during the appreciative inquiry- and PDSA-based monitoring and evaluation tools must ensure that all voices are present and centred, so that inequities that exist within and beyond the school walls are considered and redressed within ESES (Shields, 2015). As the CIT collects, monitors, and evaluates data, to refine and expand implementation, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) highlight the importance of using an ethic of care that mitigates the impacts of trauma, and avoids re-traumatization for educators and students. As we look to the data to inform the cyclical change process within each phase of the framework, we must create a culture of care for educators, such that they are able to sit with vulnerability and question their own assumptions, and the perceptions and beliefs of those sitting next to them. Through critical thinking and questioning, we must be mindful of what our educators and students are seeing, saying, and experiencing, to ensure that our assessment of the efficacy of this DiP is accurate and just.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

This DiP centres around an articulated POP the identifies the need to build educator capacity related to trauma awareness and TIP to help to mitigate some of the negative impacts of trauma and support equitable academic and well-being outcomes for all students at ESES. Transformative, TIP critically analyze and consider the "cultural and historical factors relating to individual and collective experiences such as structural and interpersonal racism" (Ramasubramanian et al., 2021; p. 11). Educators at ESES and throughout the GLDSB, must engage in TIP to better understand and accommodate all equity-deserving students and move away from the current narrative the places responsibility on students to students fit into the current educational context that exists within dominant narratives.

Perry and Winfrey (2021, p. 111) posit that shifting perspectives in schools from "What is wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?" can lead to happier and healthier outcomes for children and transform schools from deficit-based mindsets. An asset-based pedagogical approach recognizes that race, culture, and neurodiversity are strengths that are typically dismissed in mainstream learning spaces (Thomas et al., 2019). This DiP has many layers and complexities and requires both transformative and trauma-informed change, within individuals, classrooms, and the school as a whole. Successful, ongoing, and sustained change is "incremental in the short term, but [has] significant long-term effects" (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 147). As ESES embarks upon transformative change toward a more TIS, three next steps are immediately apparent.

Firstly, careful consideration must be given to building educator awareness of the need for change and fostering a willingness to engage in trauma-informed practices within ESES. Providing opportunities that recognize that educators are uniquely positioned along the

professional learning continuum and have different lived experiences, roles, and responsibilities is critical to building coalitions and engaging change agents. Creating a culture of compassion and collaboration, with multiple entry points, will ensure that the change initiative reflects the diversity within our staff and is accessible to all.

The second next step involves creating conditions to better understand the lived experiences, strengths, and struggles of ESES students. Focusing on building collaborative classroom communities, that offer psychological safety to educators and students will move the learning forward. A triangulation of data that includes conversations during morning meetings, observations during academic and less structured time, and products, such as surveys, checklists, attendance and assessment records should be used to provide a comprehensive profile of ESES students. Incorporating data to inform decision-making will enable the CIT to determine a baseline and assess whether transformative change is occurring.

Finally, as educators develop greater trauma-awareness and build capacity with trauma-informed pedagogy, biases and assumptions must be critically considered. Educators at ESES must continually examine the suitability and relevance of their practices to ensure that they are addressing the academic and well-being needs of their students. Central to the success of this DiP is ongoing educator commitment to reviewing, refining, and reflecting upon teaching practices to ensure equitable learning opportunities for the student.

Outlining next steps ensures that the transformative and trauma-informed change, identified within this DiP is propelled forward at ESES. The PoP articulates the need for building educator capacity with TIP to mitigate the negative impacts of trauma on student outcomes. Future considerations require that change leaders and change agents understand that "your own experiences and the echoes of your ancestors' experiences influence the way you

think, feel, and behave" and that developing an awareness of this enables us to remember that every action we take now will echo in future generations (Perry & Winfrey, 2021, p. 132). Given the central focus on trauma, within this DiP, two important future considerations arise.

The first consideration is that ESES educators have individual lived experiences, both positive and negative, that they carry and have shaped them. As educators develop trauma awareness and TIP, they may be awakened to or triggered by adverse experiences that they have endured or are experiencing. Building and fostering a culture of collaboration and psychological safety that supports mental health must be a focus. Providing information and encouraging educators to reach out to the employee assistance program, as needed, is crucial to ensuring that that our educators' well-being is also prioritized and supported.

The second consideration is that while this DiP centres around mitigating the negative impacts of trauma, experienced by children, leaders and educators must be cognizant of their professional agency. Educators are equipped with professional education and experiences related to content knowledge and pedagogical practices. Mental health and social work training are not within the professional scope of educators. Building educator capacity with TIP will help to enhance the learning environment and provide greater psychological safety for students. Developing this culture of compassion may offer conditions in which complex feelings, thoughts, and actions arise in students. Thus, educators must stay within their agency of helping students and their families to access school, health-care, and community agencies to address their mental health and well-being needs, that are beyond the professional scope of educators.

Conclusion

Trauma-informed learning environments allow students to feel safe and supported by educators. Psychological safety is achieved through clearly communicated expectations and

positive, reliable, and repeated educator-student interactions (Loomis et al., 2024). When a culture of care is nourished, children are able to heal from the negative impacts of trauma (Moore, 2024). The change implementation plan reflects a layered framework that provides opportunities for strengths-based collaboration and ongoing monitoring and evaluation through cyclical feedback and data triangulation. Communication that is varied in format and audience articulates the requisite professional learning and change implementation supports needed for sustained, transformative and trauma-informed change. Each of the components within this DiP aim to build educator capacity for trauma awareness and TIP at ESES. Educators at ESES are uniquely positioned to support students impacted by trauma, yet many lack the resources and professional development opportunities to build their capacity to implement trauma-informed pedagogy. This DiP provides the foundational work needed to build educator capacity for trauma awareness and TIP to shift ESES toward a TIS that will help to mitigate the negative impacts of trauma and provide the conditions needed to ensure equitable outcomes for all students.

Narrative Epilogue

While this Dissertation-in-Practice reflects a culmination of over three years of focused research, reflection, and revision, it is comparatively inconsequential to the lived experiences, complexities, and inequities faced by many of the students and families I have worked as a school leader and educator during the past twenty-two years. As I moved through this doctoral journey, I reflected upon many possible problems of practice and dreamed of an envisioned future state that would authentically value and give voice to equity-deserving students and their families. Though my path meandered, two students were with me at every turn, as their journey has forever changed me.

The late Maya Angelou said, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better". While I tried my best to connect with these two students, in my early years as their principal, I should have known better. This doctoral journey has driven me to recognize the strengths and gifts, as well as the lived experiences and barriers faced by the students in our care. If I have one wish for these former students, it's that the people in their lives take the time and care to consider *What happened to you?* more thoroughly. You and your lived experiences matter and you deserve a circle of care that understands, supports, and advocates for you. Our educator-student relationship has left an indelible impact on me. Thank you — You have forever changed me and have impacted my leadership more than you will ever know.

The aim of this DiP is to recognize biases, challenge perceptions, and shift our practices as we become more intentional in considering the impact of adverse childhood experiences on students' academic and socio-emotional learning competencies. Only when we consider these experiences, do we generate the capacity to build healthier educator-student relationships, that support children in trauma recovery and offer opportunities for all students to thrive.

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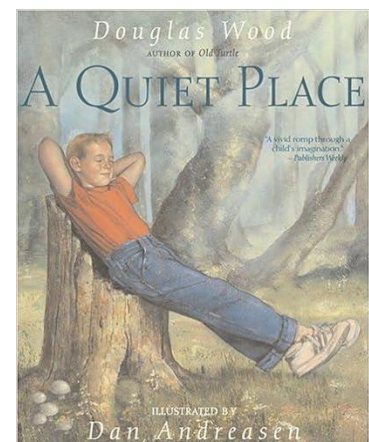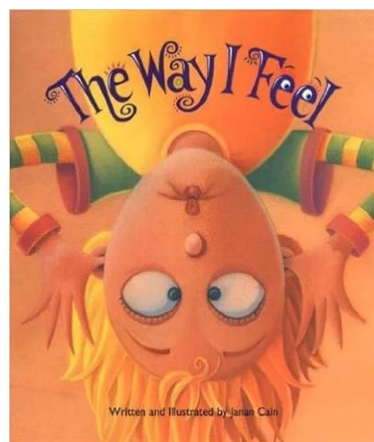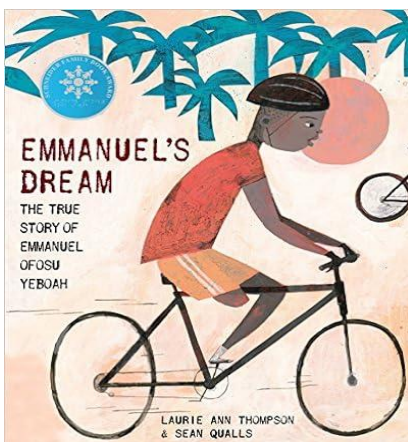
Appendix A:

Weekly Memo Sections – Examples

The weekly staff memo provides an overview of what is happening within the school, a list of staff who will be absent, a list of guest educators who will be covering their absences. Additionally, sections outlining school learning plan goals, health and safety, and other focus areas are included. A section providing socio-emotional learning competencies, trauma awareness concepts and eventually, trauma-informed pedagogy will be added. Examples may include:

September	Building Relationships
Week 1	Here's what you can do to help students feel more comfortable and confident in your classroom: • Provide a warm welcome and offer a welcoming activity • Co-create classroom norms and routines • Provide ongoing activities that honour and support individual students • Offer time for collaboration and social interaction
Week 2	Morning meetings offer opportunities to build a sense of community in the classroom. Morning meetings can be effective for introducing: • Social-emotional learning skills • Current events and/or social justice topics • Celebrations or concerns within the classroom community
Week 3	What is socio-emotional learning? Social and emotional learning is a foundation for many of our most pressing priorities: SEL helps young people – and adults – learn and practice skills that set them up for academic success, fulfilling careers, healthy relationships, and responsible civic engagement. (CASEL, n.d.)
Week 4	Something to think about… "If we really want all students to leave school having developed certain academic, social, personal, and cultural capacities, we need to think really carefully about whether we as educators are creating the types of experiences that we know from research will help develop those capacities." Dr. Dave Paunesku
October	**What is Trauma?**
Week 1	Did you know? One in four students has been exposed to a traumatic event that can affect learning and/or behavior (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2008). Stay tuned for more facts about trauma….
Week 2	FACT: Trauma can impact school performance. Students who have experienced trauma often have higher rates of absenteeism, are at a greater risk of dropping out, struggle more with literacy, and are suspended more often.
Week 3	FACT: Trauma can impair learning. Single exposure to traumatic events may cause jumpiness, intrusive thoughts, interrupted sleep and nightmares, anger and moodiness, and/or social withdrawal—any of which can interfere with concentration and memory.
Week 4	What might trauma look like in students? Reactions to trauma are varied. Some children may appear to be unfocused; others may present themselves as lacking motivation, resistant, or defiant. Some students may exhibit lethargy or other psycho-somatic symptoms (e.g. stomachache, headache, etc.)

November	Engaging Families and Managing Stress
Week 1	Did you know? Positive connections between parents and teachers have been shown to improve children's academic achievement and SEL competencies.
Week 2	Parents, caregivers, educators, and support staff play a critical role in supporting students' academic and SEL development. Check out these tips for supporting family engagement to enhance academic and well-being outcomes for children: 　　Supporting Parent and Family Engagement to Enhance Students' Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (Ma et al., 2023)
Week 3	Education is a stressful occupation. Here are some ways to ease the stress associated with report card writing and support the students in your class: 　1.　Communicate and get support 　2.　Take short mindfulness breaks and make time for sleep 　3.　Get organized and celebrate small milestones along the way
Week 4	Did you know? **Trauma Experienced in Early Childhood Impacts:** 　• Cognitive Development 　• Brain Anatomy 　• Socio-Emotional Development 　• Behaviour 　• Ability to Develop Healthy Relationships 　• Learning 　• Physical Health 　• Mental Well-Being

Appendix B:

Staff Room Professional Learning Table Resources

Website Resources

- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). www.casel.org

- MindUp. www.mindup.org

- School Mental Health Ontario. www.smho-smso.ca

Professional Reading Books

Trauma-Informed Education

Alexander, J. (2019). *Building trauma-sensitive schools: Your guide to creating safe, supportive learning environments for all students.* Brookes.

Phillips, S., Melim, D., & Hughes, D. (2020). *Belonging: A relationship-based approach for trauma-informed education*. Rowman & Littlefield.

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Socio-Emotional Learning Competencies

Ballin, A. (2022). Connecting trauma-sensitive schooling and social–emotional learning to promote educational equity: One school's intentional design, *Children & Schools*, *44*(2), 107–115. https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdab032

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Suggested Classroom Read Alouds
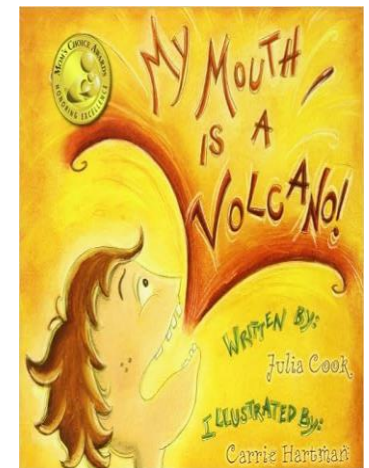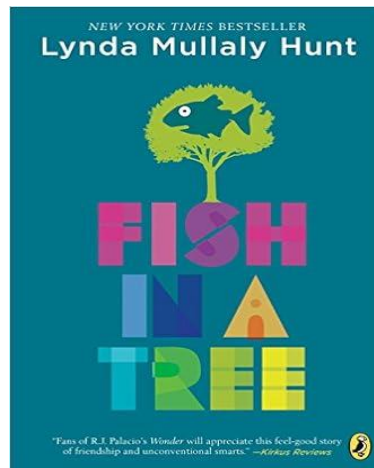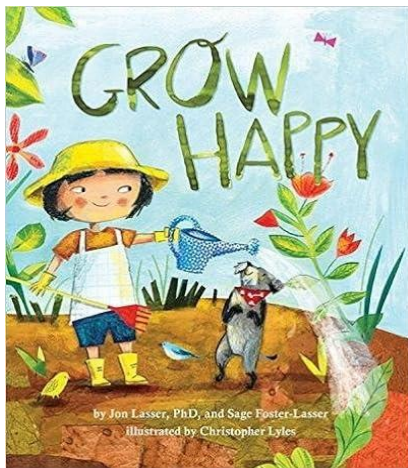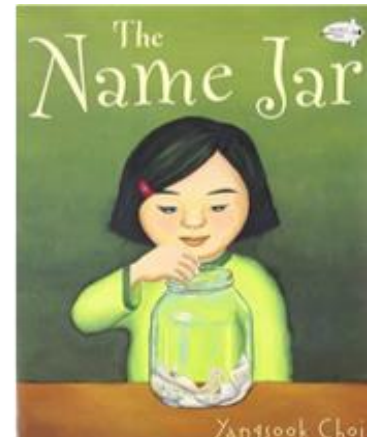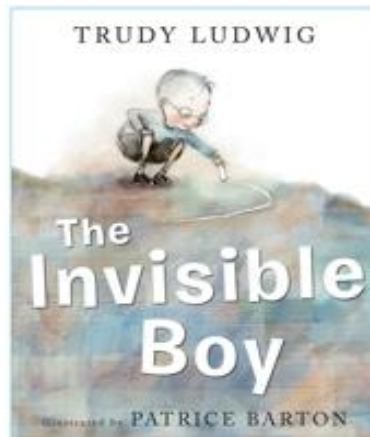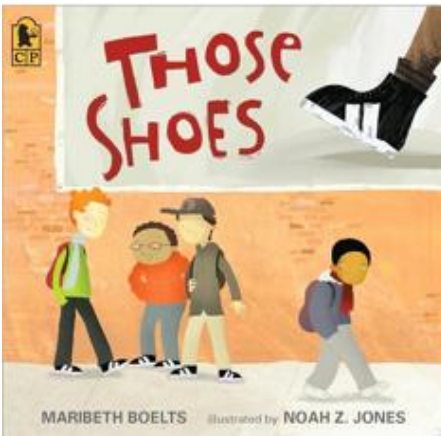
Appendix C:

Communication – SEL-Based Writing Prompts

SEL Competencies	SEL-Based Writing Prompts
Self-Awareness and Self-Management	• What makes you angry? • Write about a time that your emotions negatively impacted your actions? What could you have done instead? • What events in your life have shaped you into who you are now? • What does "support" look like to you? What is not "support"? • Write about a time you accomplished a goal or a dream.
Social Awareness and Relationship Skills	• How do you communicate your feelings? • Write about a time that you found it difficult to communicate in a group. • What is the benefit of having multiple perspectives on a subject? • Write about a time when a classmate's perspective changed your opinion. • Write a recipe for "Conflict Soup". What ingredients are needed to solve disagreements?
Responsible Decision-Making	• How can you help to make your school safe and inclusive for everyone? • A friend is erasing a classmate's name from an assignment and writing their own name. How would you handle this situation? • A group member does not have their portion of the assignment complete because they were off task. How would you handle this situation?

Note. Adapted from What Is the CASEL Framework?, by CASEL, n.d. Retrieved March 12, 2024, from https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/ and Everyday SEL Reflection Prompts, by Learning to Give, n.d. Retrieved March 12, 2024, from https://www.learningtogive.org/resources/everyday-sel-reflection-prompts

Appendix D:

Communication – SEL-Based Drawing Prompts
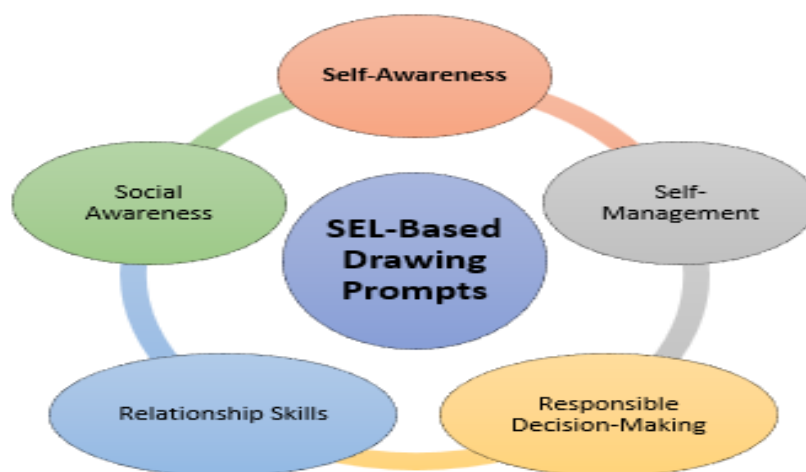
SEL Competencies	SEL-Based Drawing Prompts
Self-Awareness	• Illustrate a memory from a time you felt confident. • Draw yourself in the middle of the page. Add words around you that describe your best qualities. Circle those that you wish to develop further.
Self-Management	• Draw a place where you feel safe and included. • Draw two ways that you contribute to our school community.
Social Awareness	• Sketch a picture of you and a friend side by side. Between each of you, list your similarities. On the outside of each person, list your differences. • Trace your hand and wrist to look like a tree trunk (wrist) with branches (fingers). Draw leaves coming off of each finger and write supportive qualities that help you and your friends get through challenges.
Relationship Skills	• Illustrate an image that shows how you feel when you are listened to. • Sketch your ideas of some ways to show you care about someone.
Responsible Decision-Making	• Design the word "curious" in a creative lettering style, written vertically. Write an acrostic poem that describes how you demonstrate curiosity. • Think about a time you helped a friend or classmate. Illustrate an image that represents that interaction.

Note. Adapted from What Is the CASEL Framework?, by CASEL, n.d. Retrieved March 12, 2024, from https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/ and 50 SEL Sketchbook Prompts to Help Start Your Day, by The Art of Education University. https://theartofeducation.edu/2022/09/sept-50-sel-sketchbook-prompts-to-help-start-your-day/

Appendix E:

Key Indicator Feedback Form

Does this learning format appropriately address this topic? Are there more accessible formats?

Did the information presented effectively support your teaching practices? If so, how?

How does this learning impact your teaching?

Any other thoughts, ideas, feedback?

What ideas do you have for efficiently embedding trauma-informed or SEL practices in your teaching?

What questions do you still have? What learning forward is needed to ensure sustainability?

Appendix F:

Student Feedback Form – Kindergarten to Grade 3

Name: _____

	Angry	Okay	Happy
Today I am feeling	😣	😐	😁
I feel safe and welcome in my classroom.	😣	😐	😁
I have friends who care about me.	😣	😐	😁
I have adults who care about me.	😣	😐	😁

I feel angry when…

I feel happy when…

Appendix G:

Student Feedback Form – Grades 4 - 8

Name: _____

☐ I would like to discuss this.

☐ I do not want to discuss this.

WANNA TACO 'BOUT IT?

Good	**Unsure**	**Bad**

How are you feeling today?

I feel positive about…

I am concerned about…

Good	**Unsure**	**Bad**

How do you feel about today's lesson?

I feel confident about…

I am still having difficulty with…

Appendix H:

Educator Tracking Form

Student Academic & Well-Being Profile		
Name: **Grade:** **Date:**	**Observations**	**Frequency (Tally)**
Strengths and Gifts *Consider:* • Academic Subjects • SEL Competencies • Talents • Interests		
Learning Forward Opportunities *Consider:* • Academic Subjects • Lagging SEL Competencies • Attendance and/or learning gaps		
Signs of Contentment/Well-Being	**Signs of Discontentment/Struggle**	
Connections *(Educators? Family? Caring Adults? Friends?)*	**Wonderings** *(What is going well? What is missing?)*	
Next Steps		