

Trauma-Informed Schools

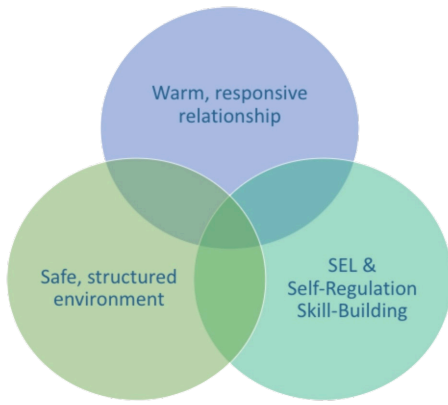
Educator Toolkit

Our mission is to build resilience and success for all North Carolina students and educators. Using school-specific training and coaching, we seek to create safer and more supportive schools that champion the whole child, reduce the impact of stress and trauma, and foster school communities.



Part 3: Resilience-Building Strategies Deep Dive

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Objective: Implement effective strategies to build resilience through relationships, structured environments, and social-emotional learning.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Relationships: Warm, responsive relationships are at the foundation of building a learning environment that feels welcoming, safe and supportive for students to thrive. Our brains are hardwired for connection!

In fact, the #1 predictor of positive child outcomes is a strong positive relationship with a caregiver.

Strong relationships with students are critical because:

- It provides a warm and secure foundation for students in the learning environment.
- It ensures that an adult “has their back” and is their champion.
- It helps to model healthy ways to express emotions and use positive coping skills.
- It provides cues of safety, which help tell a student’s stress response system to calm down when activated.

• **Relationship-building Strategy Ideas:**

- **Daily greetings by name:** welcome each student into the school and the classroom environment using their name and any form of creative greeting such as handshakes, high-fives, or other ideas students may even have for you on their own. The power of using names is huge!
- **Relationship mapping:** help identify students within the school who lack a meaningful bond or relationship with an adult. Explore this **Panorama resource** for guidance on organizing and facilitating this activity with your staff.
- **Staff-led clubs:** set up a structured time for individual staff to create and lead a short club around a hobby they enjoy and allow students to sign-up for the club they are most interested in; this is a great way to help staff and students connect over a common interest.





- **Check-in/Check-out:** use this as a tier II strategy to connect students needing additional adult support for behavior or academic goal-setting. Pair them with an adult for morning check-ins and afternoon check-outs, utilizing goal-setting sheets. For implementation details and sample sheets, consult the [Panorama resource](#).
- **2 X 10:** this is a one-on-one strategy for teachers to use with individual students when they are struggling to connect with a student or seeing repeated challenging behaviors from a student; the idea is to spend 2 minutes a day for 10 straight days engaging in one-on-one conversation with the student, employing active listening skills and allowing them to lead. Learn more about how to do it and the positive impact this can have through this [Panorma resource](#).
- **Community Circles:** leading a daily circle time in the classroom fosters stronger relationships among students and between students and teachers. By gathering students, establishing norms, and providing a prompt for sharing, one can enhance community bonds. Explore proactive circle creation and its benefits in this chapter from [IIRP's restorative practices book](#).

2. Safe, Structured Environment: It is essential for children to experience safety in physical, social, emotional, and academic domains while in school and the classroom. **Establishing environments with clearly defined expectations, along with consistent schedules and routines, plays a vital role in fostering a sense of safety and structure for students.** When learners are aware of what is anticipated from them and understand the flow of their day, they are more inclined to engage in the learning process and absorb new knowledge effectively.

• **Safe and structured environment strategy ideas:**

- **Visual posters, cues, and reminders of classroom expectations and daily schedule:** ensure that the classroom expectations and daily agenda are prominently displayed for students to observe, and dedicate a few moments at the beginning of each day, particularly early in the school year, to verbally review both.
- **Prepare and plan for transition times or “off-schedule” days:** create routines, engage in discussion, and strategize with your students for big transition times during the day's schedule. When you know there will be “off-schedule” days such as a field trip or major change in the schedule, give your students plenty of warning and preparation time so they know what change is coming and what to expect.
- **Create a classroom agreement or social contract with student input:** take time at the start of the year to create a classroom agreement or social contract WITH your students – lead a lesson on this, hear their voices, and create a visual for everyone in the classroom to sign. Learn more about how to do this through this [CASEL resource](#).
- **Keep the classroom environment neat and organized:** we know kids can be messy but as much as possible, limit clutter and create a structured environment that is neat and organized where there is clear signage for different areas or stations within the room and materials are organized and easy to access.

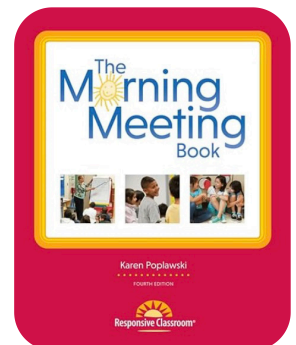
Part 3

3. Social-emotional learning (SEL) and self-regulation skill-building:

SEL can be defined as "the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions." (CASEL) Similarly, self-regulation skills are critical to one's success in school and in life – learning and understanding how to manage one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and how each of these are connected to one another is critical for development and thriving in the school setting. Just like we teach math and literacy, these are skills that must be taught in school as well. Trauma and toxic stress can disrupt regulation so schools should consider a tiered approach for proactively teaching these skills with students.

• SEL and self-regulation skill-building strategy ideas:

- **Creating and coaching use of calm-down corners:** create a calm-down space in each classroom or a calm-down/reset room for the school that includes space and tools for students to use when they are feeling overwhelmed or dysregulated; the key for these spaces is to get student input on what items they would like in a space like this AND to take time to properly introduce and teach how to properly use this space in the classroom. **This eduTopia article** shares more about how to set up and use a space like this in the classroom. These can be used for ALL grade levels!
- **Morning meetings:** morning meetings are a great way to build relationships and establish structured routines at the start of each day but also allow for time to embed and talk about regulation and SEL skills. These **resources from Responsive Classroom** will help guide you in creating and starting this strategy.
- **Mindfulness breaks:** using apps like GoNoodle, Mind Yeti, or Headspace (as just a few examples) to weave in mindfulness breaks throughout the day for students can help them learn new breathing practices or other regulation tools and bring a sense of calm during often chaotic transition times in the classroom. These can last for just 1 to 5 minutes at a time.
- **Integrate SEL lessons or a “regulation skill of the week” into weekly and daily content:** utilize SEL curriculum (such as Second Step) or others (the key is to use this curriculum with fidelity!) with your students OR create a concept such as “regulation skill of the week” where you introduce different regulation practices each week and build in designated time to teach and practice these. Examples may include utilizing fidgets, deep-breathing exercises, or grounding practices.





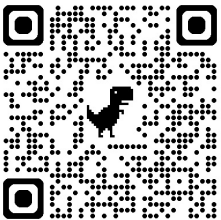
TOOLKIT ACTIVITIES

- **Relationship Mapping:** Identify ways to strengthen individual connections with students.
- **Environmental Audit:** Assess classroom structure and routines for trauma-informed practices.
- **SEL Integration Plan:** Develop a plan to incorporate SEL activities into the curriculum.

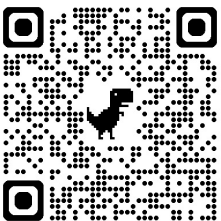
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