

POLICY BRIEF

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Preparing Our Brains and Bodies to Regulate and Learn Through Adversity and Trauma

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Providing Accommodations Through an ACEs Lens

Many of our students who need emotional support and resources do not have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 or a team of educators and staff available and who consistently meet their social and emotional health needs each day. These students often come to school in a survival brain state and are plagued by the adversities that have accumulated throughout the days, weeks, months, or years. These templates are created collaboratively to support all students who come to school with significant Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). These supports address the critical needs of attachment and regulation as, more often than not, students move to different classrooms and environments without consistency of routine opportunities to implement to calm and regulate while building relationships with other adults or students throughout the school day.

Providing accommodations through an ACEs Lens is not adding more work to what we are already doing, but rather intentionally and transparently handling a child or adolescent with care and the understanding that pain based behaviors show up in disrespectful, defiant, or shut down ways. These accommodations can occur naturally through our procedures, routines, transitions through morning bell work and meetings.

We know that many of our dysregulated students do not have these accommodations with accompanying accountability, or if they do, they are not consistently available and monitored. As a district, school, department, classroom, or grade level, we need to create these accommodations, so they are consistently dispersed, discussed and implemented each day. Because our students spend over 13,000 hours in school during their K-12 span, educators have

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the opportunity and the obligation to address the social and emotional skills and competencies through creating the modifications and adjustments needed for emotional, social and cognitive well-being.

Learn more about my approach to [providing accommodations through an ACE's lens](#).

Preparing Educators Through Pre-Service and In-Service Learning on Applied Educational Neuroscience

Educators should be taught a framework of [Applied Educational Neuroscience](#) as a necessary part of professional training. This framework addresses brain development through an educator's lens and explores attachment research, co-regulation, educator brain state, and teaching students and staff about their own neuroanatomy. These four constructs support a relational and brain aligned discipline lens which addresses the behaviors, communication, relationships, sensations, feelings and thoughts of all students and staff. These four constructs provide a new lens for discipline that is preventative, brain-aligned and becomes part of educators' procedures, routines, bell work, morning meetings and rituals throughout the day. This work begins with staff and adult brain regulation. These four constructs include creating touch points which are connections for teachers, ways to regulate through touch, music, rhythm, movement and breath along with learning about how our brains learn react and respond to negative situations.

This framework embraces and supports researched and evidence-based strategies and resources within the tiers of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and RTI that provides a sustainable structure and space for the social and emotional well-being of all students within the Tier One level. Tier Two and Tier Three supports the strategies, and resources required for increased intensity and frequency depending upon the social and emotional needs of the student. Dr. Bruce Perry reports that many of the achievement gaps we are seeing are a result of adversity gaps that can be lessened through repetitive patterned relevant experiences. We need to teach the behaviors we want to see unfold.

Applied Educational Neuroscience meets each student in brain development, leading to enhanced emotional and social well-being, and improved academic performance. Many of our students with or without IEP's, a 504, Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) or Functional Behavioral Analysis (FBA) walk into our schools with significant levels of anxiety and stress set points that are chronically activated and we are seeing these numbers rise. This brain aligned relational

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discipline addresses brain development through sensory / motor integration, attachment, regulation and cognition.

Brain Aligned Discipline begins with the brain state of the educator. Discipline strategies are preventative and built into our instructional practices, routines, procedures, and transitions. They are taught to the students as procedures and sanctions. Students learn about their neuroanatomy as we begin to view discipline through the lens of science. Brain Aligned Discipline is the platform for the creation of "Resiliency Teams" which is the foundation of this new discipline lens calling for adults to co-regulate students first and foremost within the discipline process. Co-regulation is the first step in these discipline procedures. A dysregulated adult cannot regulate a child!

Ultimately, we must TEACH students about their neuroanatomy and turn the ideas of learning and self-discipline into a science that students can understand and apply. In this time, it is imperative we meet students in brain development so that we begin to build social and emotional skills from the bottom up leading to executive function performances, activating sustained attention, emotional regulation, inhibition of responses, problem solving, decision-making working memory and creative and innovative cognition.

By helping children learn how to choose a different response to a stressor, we help them to actually rewire their brains to produce behavioral responses that avoid trouble. Learn more about [teaching students about neuroplasticity](#).

Lori Desautels is an Assistant Professor at Butler University where she teaches both undergraduate and graduate programs in the College of Education. Lori has created a nine-hour graduate certification at Butler University in Applied Educational Neuroscience/Brain and Trauma. Lori teaches in the classroom two days a week as part of a university course release and Lori is implementing these strategies and practices in classrooms with students and educators. Her website is www.revelationsineducation.com where you can find additional supports and resources for trauma responsive work in the schools.