

The Impact of Complex Trauma Exposure on School Populations

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Why P-12 Education has a Fundamental Stake in Addressing Trauma

- Schools have to educate all students
- Schools are the principal provider of mental health services to children in the United States.
- Children's behavior and emotional adjustment facilitates or hinders their own academic success.
- What children bring to school not only challenges their own learning but also create burden for schools as systems because their behaviors affect other students and teachers.
- How classroom teachers succeed with traumatized children's needs is foundational to the success of all children in the class.

The Growing Evidence for Immediate and Profound ACE Effects in Childhood

- Dunedin NZ studies, Environmental Risk Longitudinal Study (E-Risk) in Great Britain
- Spokane elementary school ACE study
 - 2,101 randomly selected students, 10 buildings, 200 teachers
- Risks addressed were:
 - Failing to meet grade expectations in one or more core subjects
 - Attendance problems severe enough to interfere with academic success
 - School behaviors severe enough to interfere with academic success
 - Health status

Spokane Study ACEs Exposure

	Lifetime	Past 12 months
Parents Divorced/Separated	36%	6%
Residential Instability	9%	6%
Domestic Violence Witness	9%	5%
CPS Involved	9%	4%
Jailed Family Member	9%	4%
Substance Abuse in Family Member	7%	3%
Basic Needs	7%	4%
Mental Health Disorder in Family Member	5%	3%
Physical Disability in Family Member	3%	1%
Community Violence Exposure	3%	1%
Parent/Caregiver Death	2%	1%

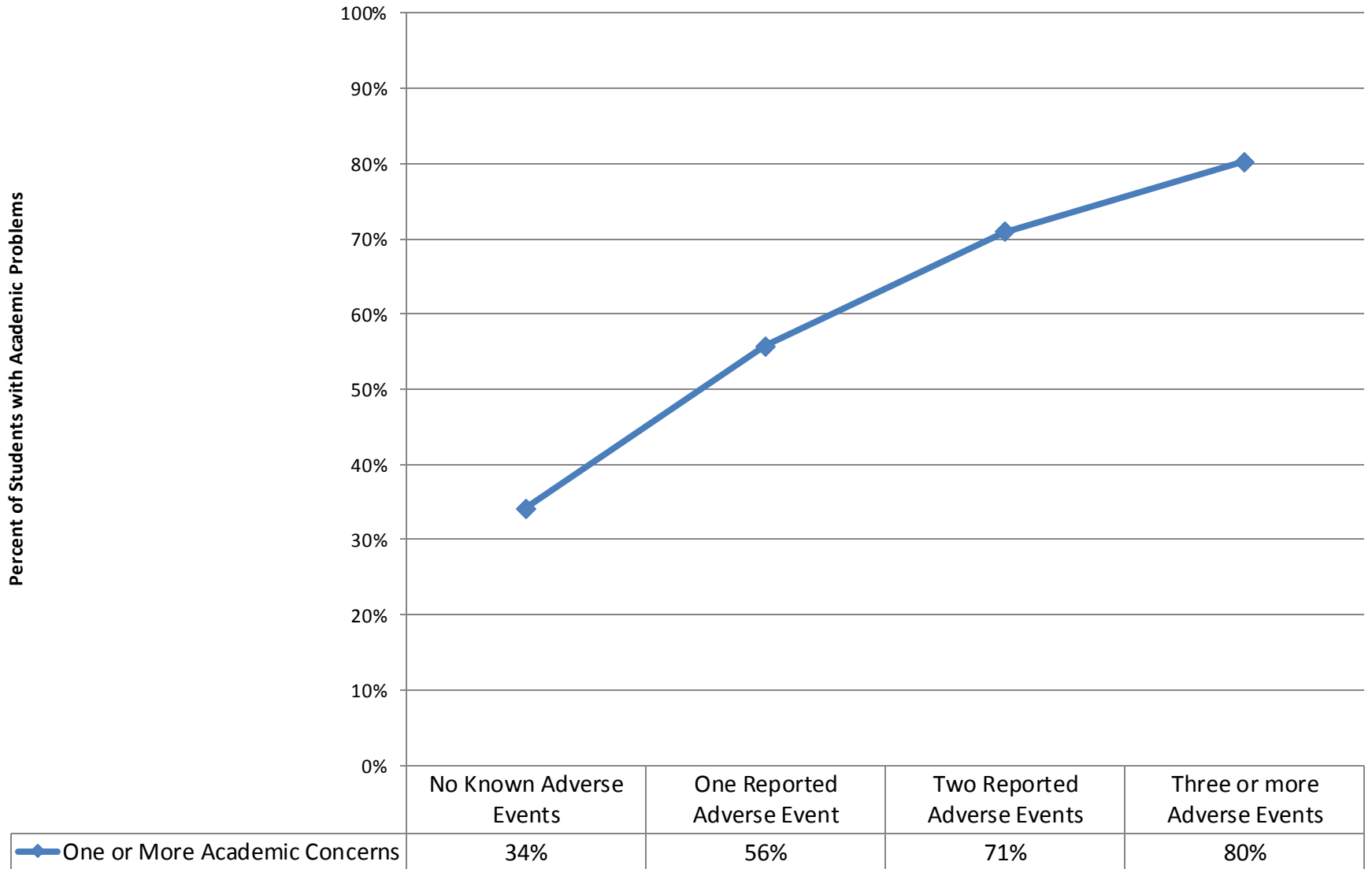
Complex Trauma Risk in the Spokane Students

	Lifetime ACE Exposure	Past 12 Month ACE Exposure
None	55%	81%
One	23%	12%
Two	10%	4%
Three	5%	2%
Four	3%	1%
Five	2%	0%
More than Five	1%	0%

Odds for Problems with Increasing ACEs after Controlling for Other Risks

	Academic Failure	Severe Attendance Problems	Severe School Behavior Concerns	Frequent Reported Poor Health
Three or More ACEs N =248	3	5	6	4
Two ACEs N=213	2.5	2.5	4	2.5
One ACE N=476	1.5	2	2.5	2
No Known ACEs =1,164	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

Percent of Students with One or More Academic Concerns by ACE Exposure



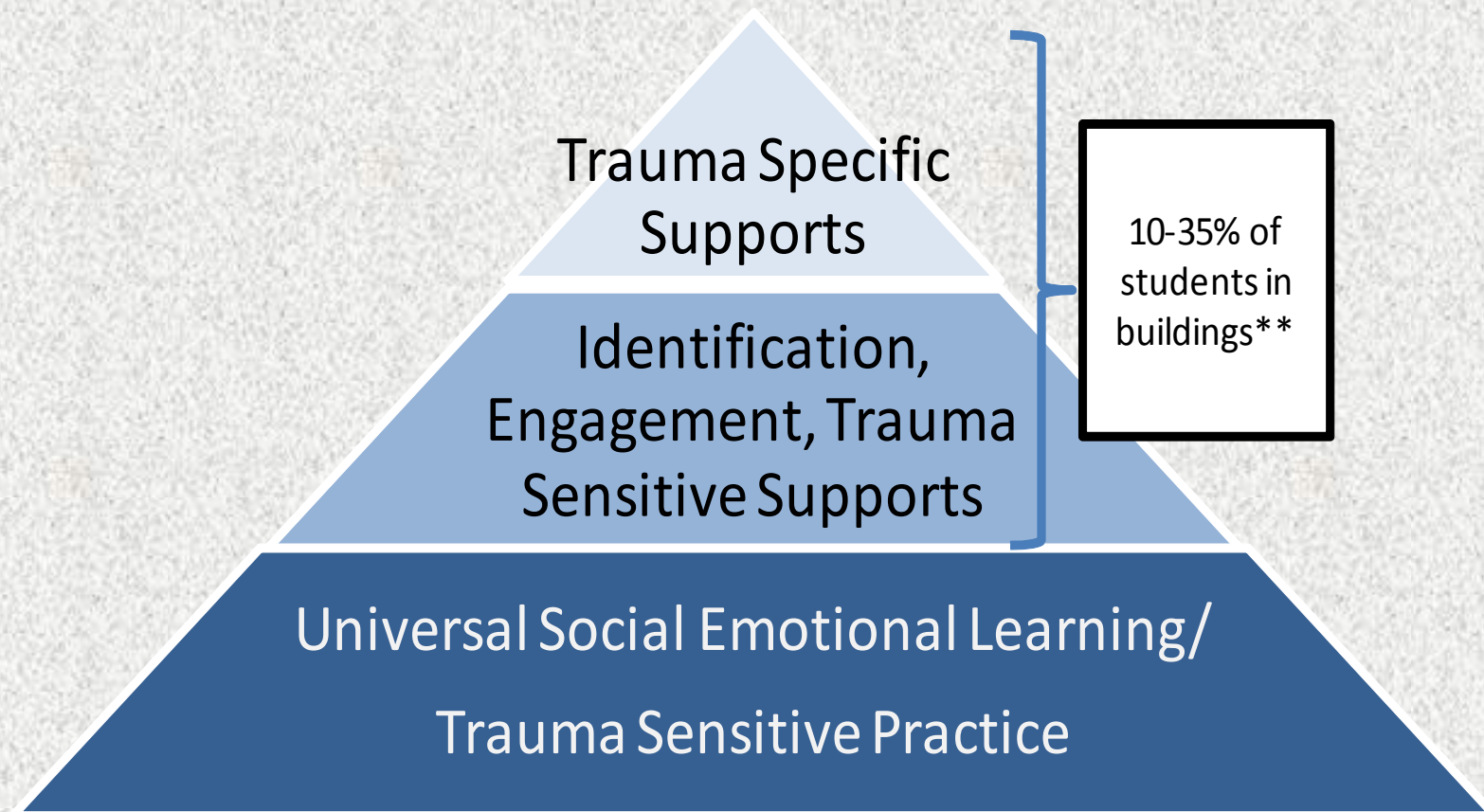
Trauma-Informed Educational Practices

- Start with ourselves as the agents of change
- Infuse social emotional learning practices
- Build the ‘system-ness’ of how we act
 - The ARC Model as a common language
- Manage principal dimensions of trauma’s risks
 - Attachment and the power of relationship
 - Understanding biological responses and neuro-developmental effects of trauma to guide pace, timing, and sequencing of engaging students
 - Threat appraisal axis and self regulation
 - Developmental deprivation, skills deficits, and cognition

A 'Response to Intervention' Framework for Trauma-informed School Response

- Aligned with multiple current efforts (e.g. PBIS)
- Integrate social emotional learning into universal practice
 - Reduce triggers of trauma responses
 - Professional development in social emotional learning and trauma-informed practice
 - Classroom management and building teams
- Effective assessment and management of risk
 - Right kids with right supports. Accountability not punishment.
- Targeted use of brief school-based interventions
 - Integration of care planning to support classroom success
 - More sustained remedial care where needed
 - Coordination with community supports when possible

Increasing School Success through Trauma-Informed School Practice



What Schools Can Do to Respond to Trauma

- Six basic goals to guide school improvement strategies
 - Keep the focus on the educational mission
 - Build meaningful relationships
 - Preparation to learn and grow
 - Engagement to parents where and when possible and safe
 - Create safety and predictability
 - Promote skill development from where students are
 - Accountability as an essential survival skill
 - Meaning-making (reasoning and problem-solving)
 - Add targeted supports when support is needed