

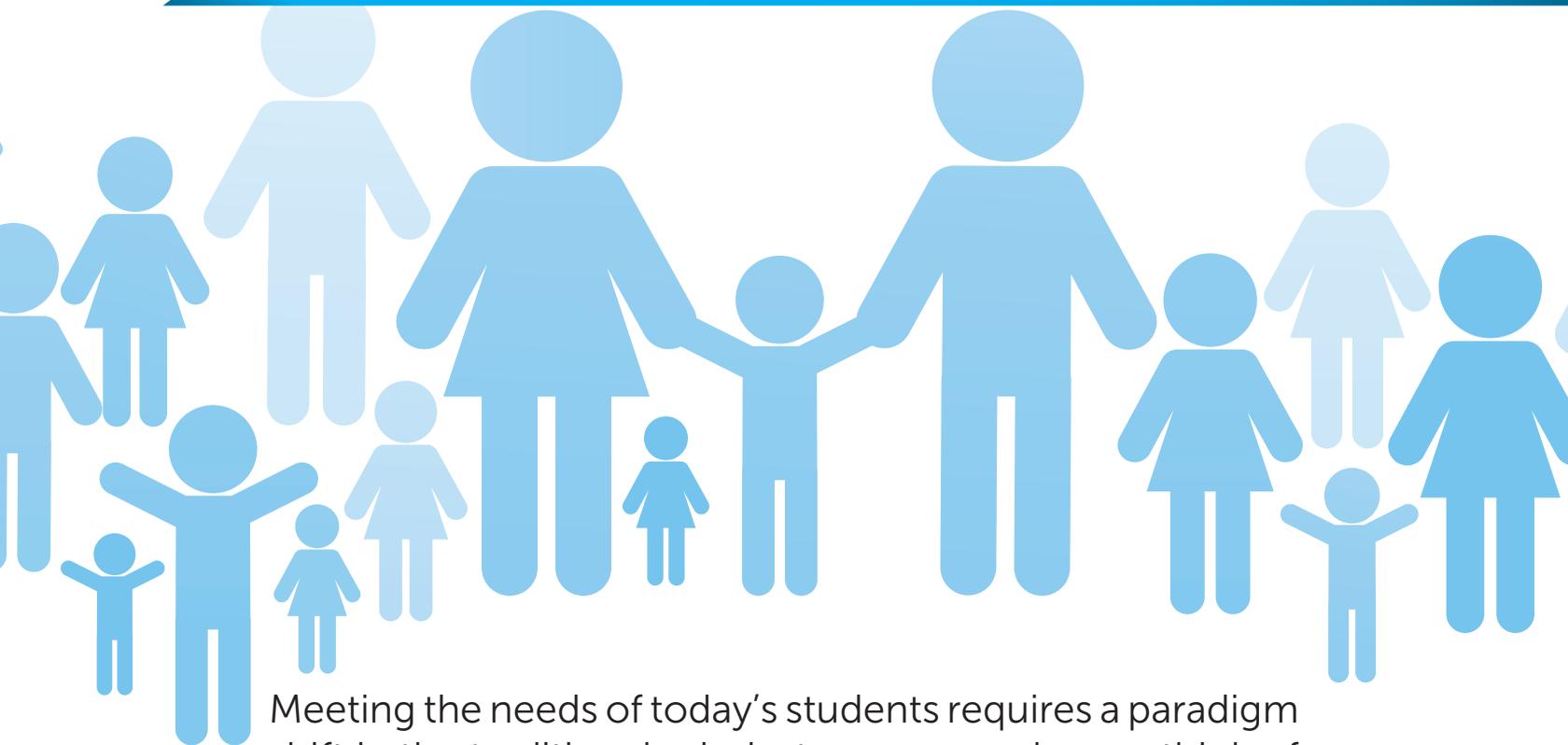
Principal magazine presents

LEADING LESSONS

USE THIS GUIDE WITH YOUR STAFF

Wraparound Services

Build connections, foster partnerships, educate the whole child.



Meeting the needs of today's students requires a paradigm shift in the traditional mindset; we can no longer think of schools as serving a singular purpose. In order to support our students' social, emotional, and academic needs, schools must build partnerships with multiple stakeholders to ensure that students come to school ready to learn.

A Focus on Trauma

Regardless of your school’s demographics, trauma can affect students’ learning in three primary areas:

- A. Academics.** Learning to read, write, engage in discussion, and solve math problems requires an ability to trust, organize, comprehend, remember, and produce work. Also important is the ability to self-regulate attention, emotions, and behavior. Trauma resulting from overwhelming experiences can negatively affect students’ learning development, like language acquisition, attention, memory, and understanding of cause and effect.
- B. Behavior.** Many traumatized children develop behavioral coping mechanisms that can frustrate educators—reactions that both strengthen the child’s expectations of confrontation and danger and reinforce their negative self-image. Many effects of trauma on classroom behavior originate from the inability to self-regulate emotions, distorted perceptions of the behaviors and feelings of others, and the inability to process social cues and convey feelings in an appropriate manner.
- C. Relationships.** Children’s struggles with traumatic stress and their insecure relationships with adults in and out of school can adversely affect their relationships with school personnel and peers. Students might distrust adults or fellow students and be generally unsure of the security of the school setting. These students might suffer delays in developing the healthy interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers that they desperately need.

Adapted from “A Safe Haven,” by Susan Cole. Principal, March/April 2020.



Reflection Questions

Before developing an action plan, staff can prepare by reviewing the following attributes of a trauma-sensitive school and deciding together whether they can make these attributes a regular part of the way the school is run.

Safety: Do our students feel safe—in the classroom, as well as in the hallways and getting to and from school? How do we know? What can we improve?

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Connections: Do students feel that they belong and are able to participate in everything that the school has to offer? Are they encouraged to contribute in their areas of strength?

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Shared Responsibility: Does our school have a strong, supportive community of staff that shares responsibility for each child? Do they work as a team to address the impact of trauma on learning?

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Anticipate Disruption: How do we prepare for the unpredictable changes in our students’ lives?

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