



Educator Response to Children's Trauma in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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In the past 18 months, school-aged children have been exposed to new and heightened sources of trauma, including the COVID-19 pandemic, and ongoing U.S. racial strife. Forced virtual schooling increased the levels at which children were exposed to domestic violence at home.



METHODS:

Grounded Theory: This study, with anonymous/voluntary educator participation across all ages via questionnaires, establishes a direction for school districts as they support students who may return to school from times of traumatic experiences.



TYPES OF EDUCATORS:

Educators (n=72) – After 2 Rounds (During Remote Learning & Back to In-person Learning)

1. Special education (n=22)
2. Classroom teachers (n=42)
3. Educational Assistant or Coach (n=7)
4. Counselor or Nurse (n=3)
5. Administrator (n=3)
6. Social Worker / School Psychologist (n=2)



EDUCATOR CONCERNS:

During remote learning vs. in-person learning in Fall 2021 comparison:

Remote Learning **In-Person (Fall 2021)**

60% of educators are very concerned & want to do more

40% opted out of thinking about need for mental health for students & families



Teachers are split on whether schools should intervene in the family with no clear consensus on solutions. Two directions:

1. Liaisons for families at schools;
2. Embed Mental Health in Classes

WHAT SHOULD SERVICES LOOK LIKE?

- Full-time in-school attendance for all
- Curricular mental health
- Schools providing meals/food assistance, clothes/hygiene assistance, tutoring, mentoring, counseling, referrals
- Individual/group academic/behavioral interventions from counselors/social workers
- Parental supports/liaisons
- Not teacher's role
- Community resources (school's role ends with referrals)



Third of responses indicated educators don't know what to do OR are not concerned with new or prior student needs

Written Pre-Pandemic - Concerns Before the Pandemic



Cause I Ain't Got a Pencil

I woke myself up
 Because we ain't got an alarm clock
 Dug in the dirty clothes basket,
 Cause ain't nobody washed my uniform
 Brushed my hair and teeth in the dark,
 Cause the lights ain't on
 Even got my baby sister ready,
 Cause my mama wasn't home.
 Got us both to school on time,
 To eat us a good breakfast.
 Then when I got to class the teacher fussed
 Cause I ain't got a pencil.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RATES:

1 in 15 U.S. children are exposed to domestic violence every year, resulting in feelings of worthlessness, powerlessness, depression, withdrawal, fear, & over-concern for siblings & parents (Domestic Violence Round Table, 2008; Hamby et al., 2011).

--This is likely an underestimate!



EDUCATORS = FRONTLINE WORKERS:

The extent of the trauma experienced by the pandemic cannot be determined yet. Phelps and Sperry (2020) provided a commentary on the lengths to which schools will need to prepare to support children during the COVID-19 pandemic.



EDUCATOR CONCERNS:

Signs of Concerns about Students	Number of Educators
Student withdrawn, acting out, anxiety	53
Incomplete or missing homework/academic performance	14
Direct evidence of abuse, through statement or cuts/bruises	21
Hunger, through requests for food	22
Student distress upon leaving school	16
Poor hygiene, ill-fitting clothes	16
Sleep issues	5
Unstable home environment	14
Lack of parental involvement	5
Lack of school resources	5
Lack of community resources	4
Lack of administrative support	1



CURRENT SERVICES:

- Schools provide meals, clothes, counseling, after school programs
- Schools help with curriculum (PBIS-Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, SEL-Social-Emotional Learning, Enrichment periods)



IMPROVING SERVICES:

- More activities for children
- Increased home visits
- Improved communication with families
- More 504/special education support
- More mental health support for parents & students
- More community resources



2021 COVGEN Alliance Summit

- Monday, November 10, 2021; 9am to 12pm CST in Chicago, Illinois (Hybrid Model Online & In-Person)
- **Additional study will guide practices with administrative involvement in working with community resources & next steps on a long-term solution to supporting children's trauma.**



SPRING 2021:

This year as a full time remote student has been difficult. At the beginning of the year it was easy because every assignment in the starting week was about ourselves and facts about our life so that the teachers know more about us. As the weeks came the work got harder and there were bigger assignments. Sometimes being a full time remote student is really stressful and frustrating because it's hard to keep up with all the assignments in every class since all of my teachers are constantly posting. The work becomes so stressful that I feel like giving up and to stop trying to do it because it's too hard or too much especially in my english class. The most frustrating part is that nobody really knows how to do the work sometimes and since my parents had a different method of teaching in that subject that was taught to them when they were in school, I have nobody to help me. Another bad part of being full time remote is the attendance check in. Sometimes the check in doesn't work so im being marked absent when im not. The most annoying part of being a full time remote student is when we are in zooms or google meets the teachers often kick us out because we don't feel comfortable enough to turn our cameras on yet and its that's often not even the case, maybe it's because our cameras aren't working since not everybody has a stable internet connection in their homes which also affects the ability to turn in work or join our zoom meetings. Some of my classes are so hard that I have multiple F's even though I'm trying my hardest to get them turned in on time.

What do we do moving forward?

Practices that need to end

- Complaining about our students and families
- Making decisions without hearing student voice
- Arguing with kids
- Politely ignoring inequity when we see it

Practices we need to begin, today.

- Speak with and about Students and Families with a Solutions Oriented Mindset
- Include Student Voice when making decisions
- Support the use of appropriate responses with a firm, yet calm voice
- Provide students with a list of appropriate responses when redirected
- Give students the space and the time to make good choices
- Address Inequity when we see it

-Ben Stover, Middle School Building Principal

CALL-TO-ACTION

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