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Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma-Informed Schools: Restorative Practices for Social and Emotional Issues in Education

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Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma-Informed Schools: Restorative Practices for Social and Emotional Behavior Issues in Education

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to determine whether factors in school climate and culture and the educator's role in evaluating adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma-informed situations, and disruptive classroom behaviors, enable a school to generate interventions needed to help students succeed. This qualitative study evaluated the ACEs and the relationships traumatic incidents had on disruptive classroom behaviors that teachers experienced with students. Although there is emerging research regarding ACEs and trauma-informed schools, there are multiple factors that facilitate the relationship between ACEs and disruptive classroom experiences.

Data collection strategies included the use of interview procedures and document review. This evidence was gathered from teachers who provided their experiences with disruptive classroom behaviors and their experiences with behavior intervention programs such as RTI_2B (Response to Instruction and Intervention for Behavior) and trauma-informed practices. Analysis of data occurred in three phases: (a) categorization based on emergent themes from the interviews, (b) constructing the explanation in narrative form, and (c) re-examination of the collected data concerning discipline referrals, school climate surveys, and attendance surveys. This research study provided insight into experiences teachers had with disruptive classroom behaviors. The

experiences showed implementation of trauma-informed practices, a positive behavior program, and the need for a support system for teachers to be able to better reach students who have experienced ACEs that are related to disruptive classroom behaviors. The results revealed that there were direct factors that determined that the relationship between ACEs and trauma were consistent with disruptive classroom behaviors.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Jason, and my children, Kaiden, Lukas, and Molly. Without their support, this would not have been an attainable goal. My husband has been my rock, and the one who pushed me when I wanted to give up. He is the one who was always there with words of encouragement and praise. I hope that my children see through this process, the benefits of perseverance, determination, and the rewards that come along with reaching your goals.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the future outcomes that pose potential issues for children as they enter adulthood have powerful effects on each person as they become an adolescent and an adult. “The toxic stress that results from these ACEs can affect the pace and extent of brain development, the quality of our relationships, and our ability to manage ourselves” (Souers & Hall, 2016, p. ix). These experiences have shifted into the school setting and classrooms which has enhanced the need for schools to become trauma-informed and has allowed for the implementation of programs to equip these children with the tools they need to combat adverse childhood experiences. The need for trauma-informed care has contributed to many aspects in everyday school activities, climate, culture, and professional developments (Thomas et al., 2019).

Background

In the 1990s, Dr. Vincent Felitti (Flannery, 2016) discovered that his patients had shown signs of experiencing traumatic events during childhood. These traumatic events came to be known as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Felitti posited that damaging effects of the brain in adulthood stemmed from experiences that occurred in childhood. Additional studies from Felitti have shown that this can occur as early as ages 5-9. Neuropsychologists determined that the alterations of children’s brains caused stress and pushed a student into a fight or flight situation creating behavior issues in schools (Flannery, 2016). These traumatic events interfere with a person’s health, relationships, and stability throughout life, and this interference spreads over generations because the cycle of these childhood experiences kept repeating (Garcia & Scarlett, 2021).

Trauma is prevalent in schools but can be hidden until something triggers it to become noticeable. These traumatic events can affect the lives of families, students, teachers, and schools. Research has shown how these traumatic events can influence the changing brains of children which leads to the need for practical approaches that can be used in the classroom (National Council of State Education Associations, 2019). Research has shown that ACEs experienced by children have a direct relationship to drug and alcohol abuse and behavior problems. ACEs can cause a disruption in brain development that results in an inability to cope with emotion, and over time will produce disruptive behaviors, social problems, self-harm, or death (Davis, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

Adverse childhood experiences can induce trauma for children that can prohibit them from learning, behaving, or showing academic achievement in the classroom. Educators want to change disruptive student behavior and lack of participation in academics and discipline. Finding strategies can be the key to what motivates a student to want to perform better in school – both in academics and in behavior. Discipline and structure are top priorities in school reformation. Educators are refining tools that guide what direction needs to be taken to provide structure with fewer behavior issues and greater growth in academics (Ansary, 2007).

Classroom disruptions pose a problem for educators (Terada, 2020), and mismanagement of those classroom disruptions can lead to more serious problems in the future. Classroom disruptions and the transition to investigate a more positive reinforcement approach provide the groundwork that has been established for a response to instruction and intervention behavior (RTI_2B) program. RTI_2B focuses on using restorative practices to change behavior by instructing the student on how to behave and not just punishing the student and moving on. Restorative

practices focus on establishing positive relationships between students and mentors who teach those students the appropriate way to conduct themselves before the act occurs. Program implementation goals need to benefit a school and its vision for students who experience ACEs or trauma. For RTI_2B to work, all stakeholders must be on board (Terada).

These stakeholders include students, teachers, faculty, administration, parents and guardians, central office staff, school board members, and community members. The program cannot be started without proper planning and preparation (Terada, 2020). RTI_2B must be introduced with proper training, multiple planning meetings, and establishing a discipline plan before implementation.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it extends the research that encompasses ACEs and trauma-informed practices in relation to disruptive classroom behaviors that result from adverse childhood experiences children have experienced. Schools attempt to implement programs that incorporate restorative practices through response to intervention for behavior programs to reach the resilient learners affected by traumatic experiences. The restorative practices that have a focus of growth and positivity will create a school culture that has a positive and influential mindset. “This shift in perspective prompts us to be more sensitive to that effect and thus better fostering healing and growth” (Souers & Hall, 2016, p. 16). This study provides a snapshot of teachers' experiences of disruptive classroom behaviors with students who have experienced ACEs and trauma.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine 6th, 7th, and 8th grade administrators, counselors, and teacher's perspectives regarding trauma-informed practices in relation to restorative practices that focus on classroom behaviors and disruptions, ACEs, and RTI_2B.

Theoretical Framework

Stainbeck and Barham's (1986) theories for preventing disruptive behaviors in the classroom revolve around how much students want to succeed. "Discipline does not require a harsh, cold, aloof attitude. Contrary to popular belief, discipline is compatible and not competitive with those desirable traits of teachers such as being accepting, friendly, courteous, kind, and respectful of students" (Stainbeck & Barham, 1986, p. 8). The authors suggest restorative practices that will limit classroom disruptions and move toward a positive behavior plan. They advise teachers to be friendly (but firm), develop and enforce rules for appropriate classroom conduct, provide success experiences, attend to appropriate behaviors, group disruptive students with well-behaved students, and teach self-management (Stainbeck & Barham). These restorative practices align with the implementation of a response to instruction and intervention behavior program. They also recommend that for students to be less disruptive, "allowing for success experiences . . . builds the student's own expectation of success" (Steinbeck & Barham, 1986, p. 9).

Teacher preparation is the key to keeping disruptions from occurring in the classroom. Lannie and McCurdy (2007) evaluated the theory behind preparing teachers beforehand to handle classroom disruptions and what to do when they occur. "It is essential to provide teachers with easy-to-implement interventions with demonstrated effectiveness in decreasing problem behavior" (Lannie & McCurdy, 2007, p. 87). Implementing a schoolwide intervention program

proved to provide successful behavior and disciplinary actions that created a positive atmosphere for students. Discipline reports tended to decrease and more educational learning could take place. “Significant improvements also have been documented on teachers’ ratings of students’ prosocial behavior, student reports of school climate, staff reports of the school’s organizational health, teacher self-efficacy, and academic achievement” (Bradshaw, 2013, p. 290).

Research Questions

The central question for this qualitative study was: What are the perceptions of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade administrators, counselors, and teachers regarding trauma-informed practices in relation to restorative practices that focus on ACEs, disruptive classroom behaviors, and RTI_2B? The following supporting questions were used to guide the study:

1. How does the use of trauma-informed practices help create a safe and trusting learning environment for all students?
2. How do adverse childhood experiences influence classroom behavior?
3. How are trauma-informed practices implemented into school-wide programs such as RTI_2B?
4. What restorative practices are used in a trauma-informed schools?

Definitions of Terms

For the reader to have a clearer understanding of the terminology that is used throughout this study, definitions are provided for explanation.

- *Adverse Childhood Experiences* – can consist of many different characteristics such as physical neglect, emotional neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, parental substance abuse, parental incarceration, parental anxiety and/or depression, and interpersonal violence (Jones & Pierce, 2021).

- *Trauma* – an emotional response to a terrible event (Cavanaugh, 2016).
- *School Culture* – the set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the "persona" of the school (Education World, Inc., 2021).
- *Response to Intervention and Instruction for Behavior* – an evidence-based program for improving and integrating all the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes. It is a way to support everyone to create a school where all students are successful (Goodman et al., 2021).
- *Change Theory* – based on Michael Fullan's model of change process beginning with initiation, followed by implementation, and finally institutionalized (Bechard, 2017).
- *Resilient Learners* – the ability to bounce back from adversity (Souers & Hall, 2016).

Limitations and Delimitations

This study was limited to certified teachers, administrators, and counselors in a 6^{th}-8^{th} grade setting who experienced disruptive classroom behaviors, were involved in the trauma-informed implementation process, and participated in a response to instruction and intervention behavior program. Participation in this study was conducted on a voluntary basis. These experiences do not represent those who have not had training or instruction in ACEs or trauma-informed experiences. They also do not represent the experiences of teachers who did not choose to participate in the study.

This study was delimited to the experiences of only 6th-8th grade teachers at one school. The participants were limited in this study to administrators, teachers, and counselors who were employed by the school during the implementation period for trauma-informed practices.

Chapter Summary

This study is organized and presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 includes an introduction to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), reveals the background of trauma, and suggests interventions. Also included in this chapter are the statement of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, definitions of terms, and the limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

The literature review provides essential support for the understanding of adverse childhood experiences, trauma-informed schools, and intervention programs in relation to classroom behaviors. This literature review expounds on using these aspects to understand the importance of school culture and positive relationships among students and faculty.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are described as traumatic events that occur in one's childhood that have a lasting negative effect on the person's well-being (Center on the Developing Child, 2007). A person's future can be determined by what happens early in life. To design interventions that manage potential future outlooks, the problems with trauma and ACEs need to be addressed. According to the Center on the Developing Child (2007), these early experiences can influence brain development. Sometimes these experiences begin as early as the gestational period. Women who are drug users during pregnancy can create a lifetime of hardships for the child as the child experiences ACEs from birth in this situation per the Center on the Developing Child.

ACEs are harmful to the growth and development of a child and produce risk factors that contribute to misbehaviors and classroom disruptions later in life (Boullier & Blair, 2018). ACEs are preventable by creating a safe environment for families thus preventing the lifelong, lasting effects that ACEs produce (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021b). ACEs were first revealed as a contributing factor to adult incarcerations, mental health issues, violence, and drug abuse in a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study conducted from 1995 to 1997. This study concluded that 1 of 5 participants had experienced three or more adverse childhood experiences characteristics (Garcia & Scarlett, 2021). Adverse childhood experiences are

significant risk factors for issues in adulthood: “the more ACEs a child is exposed to, the greater the likelihood that he or she will experience developmental delays and health problems down the line” (Souers & Hall, 2016, p. 23). These risk factors can include families with special needs children, sexual activity in childhood, violence, abuse, or the suicide of someone close to them. All of these factors can contribute to toxic stress and are considered adverse childhood experiences (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021a). Unfortunately, ACEs are common. “About 61% of adults surveyed across 25 states reported that they had experienced at least one type of ACE, and nearly 1 in 6 reported they had experienced four or more types of ACEs” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021b, p. 2).

ACEs can be identified as physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect, and emotional neglect. The ACEs questionnaire is used to assess how many ACEs people have experienced (Appendix A). The data that is collected from the questionnaire can aid therapists, school administrators, and counselors to help students navigate and develop coping skills (Center for Health Care Strategies, 2019).

> It has been found that the more ACEs a child experiences, the higher the likelihood of experiencing these negative outcomes. These challenges manifest themselves in a number of school-based academic and behavioral challenges such as aggression, attendance problems, depression, inattention, anxiety/withdrawal delayed language and cognitive development (Cavanaugh, 2016, p. 41).

Scientific research indicates that ACEs in early childhood affect physical well-being, mental well-being, and brain development. These issues can lead to substance abuse, teen pregnancy, self-harm, and suicide (Davis, 2020). A research study conducted by the College of Social Work Office and Public Service at the University of Tennessee found that ACEs in

childhood have a can result in social costs. Lower high school graduation rates, higher divorce rates, and a reliance on public assistance are direct results of adverse childhood experiences and trauma early in life (Daugherty & Poudel, 2017). Children who experience ACEs early in life are more likely to experience developmental delays or other health problems. (Center on the Developing Child, 2007). Boullier and Blair (2018) found that ACEs can affect numerous systems of the body, as well. Toxic stress on the neurological system can lead to behavior problems, difficulties with concentration, and poor memory function. Boullier and Blair also state that children who have experienced ACEs can also have immune deficiencies that can lead to cardiovascular disease. Children who have experienced even one ACE had a higher percentage of becoming a delinquent youth or being incarcerated as an adult. They are at a greater risk of committing a serious or violent crime compared to those who did not experience ACEs as a child (Jones & Pierce, 2020). Direct relationships have been discovered between the academic mindset, health, and overall well-being of a child who experiences one or more ACE. This relationship was developed and graphed by Souers & Hall (2016); the graph (Appendix C) shows that the more ACEs a child experience, the more likely they are to have attendance problems, behavior problems, and health problems. Creating a foundation for government bodies to open discussions about how to address ACEs and build private and public relationships with the community can outsource the actions that are needed to innovate and implement traumatic coping strategies (Rolando et al., 2021).

ACEs have an effect on the health and wellbeing of children. The developing brains of children can be affected by the stress levels that are associated with ACEs, and children who experience numerous ACEs can develop behaviors that can be detrimental to their health. Young

children can make choices that lead to a pathway to poor health into adolescence and adulthood (Boullier & Blair, 2018).

> Estimates suggest that 20% of students receive some form of school mental health service with continued growth in that proportion in recent years. However, mental health challenges remain frequently under identified, making systems-level school-wide mental health promotion and prevention efforts absolutely critical. (August et al., 2018, p. 85)

Adverse childhood experiences can affect classroom behavior. There is little that a school employee can do to change what children experience at home; however, building relationships with those students can influence the changing of the outcome of student behavior in the classroom (Burns, 2020). Schools around the country have adopted the term "trauma-informed" when discussing students who have experienced ACEs in their life. Through training and becoming a trauma-informed school has become a way for administrators and teachers to provide intervention measures to help combat the negative behaviors in the classroom (Burns, 2020).

Over 50% of children in the United States have had a traumatic experience in their life as measured by the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence. These experiences can include violence, crime, abuse, or other traumatic events (Cole et al., 2009). "In schools, the signs of trauma may be seen in a student acting out in class, or they could be more subtle – like failure to make eye contact or repeatedly tapping a foot" (Minero, 2017, p. 4). Traumatic events early in life affect the basic functions of the brain which can continue into adulthood; it can also establish the foundation for the probability of disciplinary issues and behaviors. Shifting the balance in support of the whole child in both academics and behavior is a way to provide opportunities for students to change. Supporting children before these behaviors occur requires

cognitive, emotional, and social training. Children's futures are left in limbo when stress triggers damage to early brain functions; however, this damage can be reversed with stability and consistency. Shifting from asking students what is wrong with them to asking how they can be supported is a start in reversing the damage (Tennessee Department of Health, 2017).

ACEs and Toxic Stress

Experiencing numerous ACEs such as violence, abuse, and bullying without a support system is known as toxic stress. Toxic stress can lead to long-lasting effects on the brain and body. The sole way to attempt to fix toxic stress is to relieve or remove the sources of stressful events. The body does not know the difference between various kinds of threats; it just knows that there is a threat, and a reaction needs to take place (Center on the Developing Child, 2020). There are ways that therapeutic interventions can repair damage caused by toxic stress.

> Toxic stress experienced early in life and common participants of toxic stress – such as poverty, abuse or neglect, parental substance abuse or mental illness, and exposure to violence – can have a cumulative toll on an individual's physical and mental health. The more adverse experiences in childhood, the greater the likelihood of developmental delays and other problems (Center on the Developing Child, 2007, p. 2).

The most effective approach to ACEs is one that prevents the need for services and reduces stress in the home. When faced with a stressful situation the body experiences changes in the sympathetic nervous system. This causes a change in heart rate and the pupils to dilate. The hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal glands are also activated causing cortisol to be released into the system. Glucose levels rise causing cardiac and muscle tension. Following any traumatic event, the body must go through a recovery period to regain a healthy status. Permanent damage to physical systems can occur if multiple ACEs are experienced (Boullier & Blair, 2018).

> Today, over half of all children in the United States suffer from some kind of trauma. Whether trauma stems from a student's home life or results from a community tragedy, teachers recognize that helping children cope with outside challenges is part and parcel with helping them learn. (Baicker, 2020, p. 2)

Consequences of ACEs

The more ACEs a student has, the more likely the student will have negative behaviors or negative outcomes later in life. They are more likely to be absent from school, fail classes, and be suspended or expelled. Outside of school, these individuals are more likely to experience drug usage, alcoholism, or have health issues. In a study completed by the Centers for Disease Control in 2021, researchers found that 50% of deaths were associated with ACEs (Garcia & Scarlett, 2021).

> Chronic stress can be toxic to developing brains. Learning how to cope with adversity is an important part of healthy childhood development. When we are threatened, our bodies activate a variety of physiological responses, including increases in heart rate, blood pressure, and stress hormones such as cortisol. (Center on the Developing Child, 2007, p. 1)

Chronic Stress that develops over time can have lasting effects on one's health in the future. It can interfere with immunity or hormonal systems, and it can alter DNA. Strategies have been developed to help individuals cope with these ACE-triggered stressful situations that can allow a person to change the way the body reacts to stress (Garcia & Scarlett, 2021).

The consequences of long-term exposure to ACEs can affect physical and mental health. “Those with four or more ACE were 2 times as likely to develop a chronic disease before the age of 69. For type 2 diabetes, they were 4 times as likely and 3 times as likely to develop heart

disease or respiratory disease" (Boullier & Blair, 2018, p. 135). Trauma has an effect on a child's brain development and learning aspects in both positive and negative ways. Brain development occurs in the early stages of childhood, and traumatic events such as abuse and neglect can inhibit this development. "Trauma experienced during these sensitive periods has the potential to be particularly harmful to the brain development. Traumatic experiences can change the structure and functioning of a child's brains through the activation of stress response systems" (McInerney & McKlindon, 2015, p. 3-4). Long-term effects of childhood trauma can lead to many detrimental instances later in life. These children may be at risk for physical and mental health issues, drug abuse, or even legal issues (McInerney & McKlindon, 2015).

Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences

Preventing ACEs is a daunting but doable task. Decreasing the number of factors that children experience thus decreases the risk that children will be exposed to these experiences. To prevent ACEs, understanding the causes and risks is the first step (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021b). See Table 1 for strategies and approaches to aid in the prevention of ACEs.

Table 1

Strategies and Approaches to Aid in the Prevention of ACEs

Strategy	Approach
Strengthen economic support for families	• Strengthening household financial security. • Family-friendly work policies
Promote social norms that protect against violence and adversity	• Public education campaigns • Legislative approaches to reduce corporal punishment • Bystander approaches • Men and boys as allies in prevention
Ensure a strong start for children	• Early childhood home visitation • High-quality childcare • Preschool enrichment with family engagement
Teach skills	• Social-emotional learning • Safe dating and healthy relationship skills program • Parenting skills and family relationship approaches
Connect youth to caring adults and activities	• Mentoring programs • After-school programs
Intervene to lessen immediate and long-term harm	• Enhanced primary care • Victim-centered services • Treatment to lessen the harms of ACEs • Treatment to prevent problem behavior and future involvement in violence • Family-centered treatment for substance use disorders

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021b)

Addressing the negative effects that ACEs produce requires people to assess prevention needs by collecting data and effectively developing a prevention framework that is designed to align with the occurrence of ACEs (Davis, 2020). To break the cycle of damaging trauma to

children, a path of guidance to positive and moral behaviors must be set. Interventions can be implemented as a group or individually (McInerney & McKlindon, 2015).

Trauma-Informed

Childhood trauma can sometimes go unnoticed and can affect a child's ability to learn. According to McInerney and McKlindon (2015, p. 1), trauma is "a response to a negative external event or series of events which surpasses the child's ordinary coping skills." By understanding the triggers and causes for childhood trauma, school staff can reduce negative effects from the trauma, and use restorative practices to transform experiences into a positive environment (McInerney & McKlindon, 2015).

Traumatic experiences occur not only from ACEs but also from traumatic school experiences such as bullying and school shootings. Many schools have taken steps to become trauma-informed so the faculty, staff, and outside resources can respond to those who have been affected by traumatic events. Trauma can be difficult to identify because of the numerous experiences that can be classified as being traumatic, and each one is individualized to each child. Each one is never the same (Learning for Justice, 2016). The goal is not only to implement practices and strategies, but also to create a school culture that allows respect among all involved (National Education Association, 2021).

> The U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) conceptualizes individual trauma as resulting from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening, and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. (Gee et al., 2020, p. 3)

Students who suffer from adverse childhood experiences are in the category of experiencing trauma in their life. Trauma is not considered the event that occurred; trauma is the outcome and the response to the event the child experiences (Williams, 2017). Supporting students who have these experiences must have the entire school involved in finding ways to address the different classifications of trauma and the effects it has on the learning environment (National Education Association, 2021). Traumatic events can have lasting effects on a student's emotional status and their outlook on life. Students who experience traumatic events in their lives are more likely to have discipline issues and negative behaviors in school that can lead to developing risky behaviors such as drug use, sexual activity, violent behavior, and alcoholism. "Complex Trauma exposure refers to the simultaneous or sequential occurrences of child maltreatment – including emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse, and witnessing domestic violence – that are chronic and begin in early childhood" (Souers & Hall, 2016, p. 15). Teachers are going to encounter students who have had these traumatic events in their lives and have not realized it.

> Given the pervasiveness of ACEs across the population, most educators encounter trauma-affected students throughout their careers, whether they know it or not . . . When considering this reality, it is understandable that for many educators, student trauma manifests itself as concerns for school safety. (National Council of State Education Associations, 2019, p. 4)

Schools are more apt to identify ACEs and traumatic events using outside sources such as medical professionals and public safety officials. Teachers attended college to learn to educate students academically; however, that is not always conducive to the daily activities in the school. Some students cannot focus on academics when they are worried about what is going on at home

(McInerney & McKlindon, 2015). "Data shows that more than half of all U.S. children have experienced some kind of trauma in the form of abuse, neglect, violence, or challenging household circumstances – and 35 percent of children have experienced more than one type of traumatic event, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)" (Minero, 2017, p. 3). Some individuals can hide traumatic events making it more difficult for teachers to identify these students. Specific symptoms that distinguish these traumatic events are more prevalent over others. Revisiting or re-experiencing traumatic events cannot provide healing for the child, and students may also try to avoid the instances all together and pretend that they did not happen. Some children block specific events through blaming others for their behavior. These children are always looking out for someone who is about to harm them and are constantly worried about what will happen when they get home (Cole et al., 2009).

Trauma-informed schools are designed to create environments that not only benefit academics but also create effective practices that change the way a school assesses and handles students with ACEs and traumatic events.

> As defined by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), a "trauma-informed" approach is one that occurs at the systems level and involves all key educational stakeholders – from school leaders and educators to school staff – in addressing and responding to children's traumas and possible traumatic stress. (Gee et al., 2020, p. 4)

Trauma can adversely affect a student's ability to learn in the classroom and can result in class disruptions and negative classroom behaviors. There are four approaches that affect how a school reflects traumatic events in students' lives. The realization that events have occurred and the acknowledgement of a widespread occurrence of trauma is the first approach. Secondly, there is

a recognition of the signs that students have experienced trauma in their lives. Third, a response to these signs, based on evidence, is important to create a plan of action to aid the student. Finally, there is the resistance to allow any trauma to reoccur in the student's lives (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016).

Secondary Traumatic Stress

Secondary traumatic stress occurs when a person experiences another person's traumatic event. "Secondary traumatic stress (STS) is the emotional distress that arises when someone vicariously experiences the traumatic experiences of another individual" (Baicker, 2020 p. 2-3). STS can also have a lasting, negative effect. It is also not uncommon for teachers or adults who work with these children to experience traumatic effects from trying to help. Educators must be aware of their own mental status and health. "What was once referred to as stress or educators 'having a bad day' – which might still be happening – has evolved. Schools are realizing the very real presence of STS" (Walker, 2019 p. 4). Practicing self-care and mental stability is crucial in managing secondary traumatic stress. Seeking counseling in certain situations and being aware that one is under duress helps with stress management (Minero, 2017). Secondary traumatic stress can develop with educators who experience personal issues, job burnout, or health issues. Some of the symptoms that suggest secondary traumatic stress include:

- Increased anxiety and concern about safety
- Intrusive negative thoughts and images related to students' traumatic stories
- Fatigue and physical complaints
- Feelings of numbness or detachment from students and peers
- Diminished concentration and difficulty with decision making
- Desire to withdraw physically or emotionally from others

- Feelings of professional inadequacy (Baicker, 2020, p. 4)

Teachers naturally want to help their students and are sympathetic to their situations and emotional traumas; this can lead to STS in educators – especially those who work in extreme poverty areas or schools with high trauma rates. "Vicarious trauma affects teachers' brains in much the same way that it affects their students': The brain emits a fear response, releasing excessive cortisol and adrenaline that can increase heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration, and release a flood of emotions" (Minero, 2017, p. 5). STS is more common in female educators, those with their own unresolved traumas, new or inexperienced teachers, or those with unsupportive administrators. Listening, protecting, connecting, modeling, and teaching are approaches that can provide support for educators and combat STS (Baicker, 2020). "Teacher exhaustion or stress have often been dismissed as signs of weakness and an inability to cope" (Walker, 2019, p. 2). Walker proceeds to explain that teachers must be taken care of and live healthy lifestyles. It is a critical component of a positive school culture and teacher well-being. Just as students, teachers need to have coping strategies to help cope with the experiences they encounter. Teachers tend to focus on the well-being of their students and lose focus on themselves thereby creating a possible toxic sense of well-being for themselves. Teachers need to address the potentially stressful situation before it becomes one. This approach keeps teachers and students calm and allows them to think more clearly and in a level-headed manner. (Minero, 2017).

Trauma-Informed in Early Education

Mental health issues in pre-school children under the age of five are becoming prevalent resulting in the need for trauma-informed programs in pre-schools. The identification of the needs for these children can prevent disruptive behaviors later when the child enters school.

Establishing an identification process to aid in determining what trauma a student has experienced or the level the trauma that needs to be addressed is key to helping students cope with traumatic experiences. Education professionals need training in identifying traumatic characteristics. A team of teachers, social-workers, school nurses, and counselors that is trained in being trauma-informed can assess individualized and developmental effects on the mental health of children. This team establishes norms and expectations that encompass all students with a variance to individuality as is needed. Meeting regularly to assess these needs allows for early detection of traumatic situations. Early detection of trauma should require professionals to:

- Understand the effects of trauma on early brain development.
- Construct school and classroom environments that support trauma-impacted young children's emotional developmental needs and those with mental health issues.
- Implement instructional and assessment strategies that are developmentally appropriate and attuned to the social-emotional needs of these children.
- Follow up intervention as a team with written documentation of progress.
- Engage and educate parents and families about trauma and the team effort to intervene and maintain consistency in expectations between the home and classroom. (Stegelin et al., 2019, p. 4)

Trauma-Informed Tools

Administrators, teachers, and counselors cannot be expected to work with students who have ACEs or discipline and disruptive behavior problems in the classroom without strategies or tools to help when handling a student. Social-emotional learning affects student learning in the classroom and causes behavioral issues that can inhibit the learning process. "Supporting students who suffer from childhood trauma requires whole school involvement and

transformation" (National Education Association, 2021, p. 1). Children who have the skills to regulate their emotions, know when to ask for help, know what triggers their behaviors, and know the strategies to cope perform better in school. Students have a need to feel safe when they are around adults. Williams (2017) identifies three key strategies to develop a positive relationship for trauma induced students:

- Create a safe classroom environment. Incorporating consistent routines and rituals in the classroom helps students experience predictability and security.
- Help students identify an area of competence.
- Support positive relationship development with students. (Williams, 2017, p. 10)

Schools respond to trauma by implementing practices and programs. Implementing trauma-informed practices begins with professional development to train teachers and staff in the manner of identifying students with trauma and behavior issues. The goal of professional development is to understand the problem of trauma based on the demographics of the school and develop approaches that benefit students (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016).

Responding to Childhood Trauma

Adverse Childhood Experiences is an epidemic that is a problem across the nation. Many schools and districts are adopting strategies and programs that are designed to help students of all genders, races, situations, and demographics.

> Unions and districts across the country are working together to address the epidemic of trauma in schools with students' and educators' needs in mind. They are collaborating to transform schools into "trauma-informed" or "trauma-sensitive" environments, taking deliberate steps to become safe havens for every student and safe working environments for every educator. (National Education Association, 2021, p. 3).

These experiences are not going unnoticed by legislators, policymakers, and other governing bodies. The National Council of Education Associations has addressed this epidemic by bringing childhood trauma to Congress. A study that was conducted by the National Council of Education Associations concluded that teachers needed support as schools were lacking in funding for support and training. Attitudes toward trauma were not supported by current tools, and district policies did not support those students who experience trauma. Professional development and training enable teachers to be equipped with skills and a plan of action to help students. A committee that was assembled by the National Council of State Education Associations generated ideas for an action plan to respond to childhood trauma. Actions include policy designs to promote success through the federal, state, and local levels. Program activities were created to support students, and these activities were then put into action and practiced on a regular basis (National Council of State Education Associations, 2019). Foundational support was provided by the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Department of Correction, and the office of Criminal Justice Programs. These state agencies are crucial in the support and response to childhood trauma (Rolando et al., 2021).

Trauma-Informed School Practices

Trauma-Informed approaches that are implemented into a school-wide approach to combat ACEs trauma and disruptive classroom behaviors can lead students on a road to recovery and help in the resistance to any more experiences. The key to becoming a trauma-informed school is developing an educational program that provides a safe and protected environment.

Children who have experienced multiple traumatic events need extra support through positive interactions from trustworthy adults (Canvanaugh, 2016).

> Becoming trauma-informed requires a paradigm shift at the staff and organizational level to re-focus on understanding what happened to a child, rather than focusing on the conduct alone. Trauma-informed approaches represent a holistic approach to shaping organizational culture, practices, and policies to be sensitive to the experiences and needs of traumatized individuals. (McInerney & McKlindon, 2015, p. 6)

When dealing with trauma in schools, educators can be overwhelmed and unequipped to cope with students who have experienced traumatic events in their lives. These feelings could be because of untrained staff, their own stress, unresolved ACEs, or mental health issues. Providing support for teachers is needed for them to be able to help their students. It is important for teachers to be able to handle their own unresolved issues before addressing behavioral issues and classroom management needs (National Council of State Education Associations, 2019).

There is an abundance of approaches that schools can adopt that can affect a child's stress from traumatic events. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network provides seven key elements that systems can follow to respond to traumatic events for children:

- Screen routinely for trauma exposure and symptoms.
- Implement culturally appropriate, evidence-based assessments and treatments for traumatic stress and symptoms.
- Provide resources to children, families, and providers on trauma, its impact, and treatment options.
- Build on the strengths of children and families impacted by trauma.
- Address parent and caregiver trauma.

- Collaborate across child-serving systems to coordinate care.
- Support staff by minimizing and treating secondary traumatic stress, which can lead to burnout. (McInerney & McKlindon, 2015)

School Culture and Climate

School culture can be defined as the set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, and symbols and stories that make up the "persona" of the school (Education World, Inc., 2021). This includes curriculum, instruction, administration, and assessment (Reno et al., 2017). Building a successful and positive school climate and culture is an important foundation to creating a relationship with students that is built on commitment and consistency when dealing with behavior. "The values and beliefs that a school community puts into practice each day define its culture" (Murray, 202, p. 1). A school that is welcoming and inviting for students, parents, staff, and the community establishes a positive school culture. These positive school cultures promote conversation, changes in negative habits, and provide effective ways to accomplish goals. The overall mood and feelings that encompass a school are the support systems that determine the climate (Murray, 2021). Discipline procedures that are active, effective, and are practiced protect the culture and climate of the school (Stegelin et al., 2019). The difference between school climate and school culture is that climate is the way things are done and culture is the way it is felt. Culture is associated with climate, but school culture is a more permanent fix to school plans. For a school culture plan to succeed, all facets must be included (PowerSchool, 2021). A toxic culture can hinder growth both academically and emotionally. When a school has a toxic culture, they "lack a sense of purpose, have norms that reinforce inertia, blame students for lack of progress, discourage collaboration, and often have actively hostile relations among staff" (Education World Inc., 2021, p. 3). School climate and

school culture are two different entities but must work together for a school to be a positive environment instead of being a toxic environment. Each school has its own demographics and environment, and the culture of that environment is defined by the norms and values that are established. When a school has established a positive climate, the percentage of dropouts and behaviors issues decrease (Reno et al., 2017). Climate is often viewed as the behavior of students, and culture is seen as the values that the school possesses.

> A culture will be strong or weak depending on the interactions between people in the organization. In a strong culture, there are many, overlapping, and cohesive interactions, so that knowledge about the organization's distinctive character – and what it takes to thrive in it – is widely spread. (Shafer, 2018, p. 3)

A school's culture is consistency and routine and reflects the core values and mission that makes the school healthy (Garrick, 2019). Schools that focus strictly on standards, assessment, curriculum, and professional development are using incomplete practices to change the culture of a school. By being minimal, schools do not get close to what happens in a classroom and school cultures (Fullan, 2006). Children who are afraid of confrontations such as bullying or being disciplined by an administrator or teacher have more than likely experienced negative emotions in their lives. When they feel emotionally safe and protected, their behaviors and characteristics tend to be more positive. A positive school climate can improve not only social-emotional behavior but also discipline and academics making the students feel worthwhile and cared for (Prothero, 2020).

Schools that promote high academic standards, leadership, and cooperation provide a climate conducive to student achievement and success. In a positive school culture, a caring

atmosphere exists, and teachers have a sense of responsibility for student learning. Administrators and staff believe in their ability to achieve their goals (McKinley, 2021).

Positive school climates set the stage for positive behavior from students thus creating an environment where administrators, faculty, and students feel safe and successful. “Brain development flourishes when children feel emotionally and physically safe, when they know they have adults who care about them, and when they are challenged in their learning” (Prothero, 2020, p. 2). The climate and culture in a school is a prominent issue when it comes to the school’s leader. The goal of a school leader is to increase student achievement not only in the classroom, but in behavior and social-emotional aspects, as well.

> Strong school cultures have better motivated teachers. Highly motivated teachers have greater success in terms of student performance and student outcomes. School principals seeking to improve student performance should focus on improving the school’s culture by getting the relationships right between themselves, their teachers, students, and parents. (MacNeil et al., 2009, p. 14)

Many school cultures showed signs of improvement with a program that was designed to target social-emotional issues and behavior problems. The positive behavioral intervention and support (PBIS) framework has been adopted by many schools across the country with more following suit. “Practices within the PBIS are organized into a three-tiered framework based on decades of prevention theory and science including universal (Tier 1), targeted-group (Tier 2), and intensive individualized (Tier 3) support” (Simonsen & Sugai, 2013, p. 5). These tiers have been implemented into a response to instruction and intervention behavior (RTI_2B) program. Positive school climates and the implementation of behavior intervention programs such as RTI_2B prevented bullying and cyberbullying (Llorent et al., 2021).

The practices a school uses have an effect on the culture of the school if they are successfully implemented. It affects the students and faculty as well as the atmosphere and attitude of the school. Culture is in every aspect of the environment of a school building. A strong school culture starts with strong connections that include building relationships and making connections with the community. Garrick (2019) provides five characteristics for a healthy school culture. The first is attention to culture in all aspects of education. This includes activity inside and outside the classroom. A healthy school culture is reflected in the interactions that occur in transitions, hallways, sporting events, and school functions. Second, a nurturing environment with high expectations needs to be prevalent. To allow this characteristic to take place, the entire school community should be involved in the establishment of positive school culture. Third, engagement of staff and students displays a positive outlook on future endeavors and support from staff. Fourth, a commitment to lifelong learning includes allowing the school beliefs and values to occur at every level of the building. "Teachers who model inquiry, curiosity, and even uncertainty create the understanding that what students have not yet learned, can be learned" (Garrick, 2019, p. 5). Finally, a healthy school culture has a holistic sense of responsibility. Everyone involved has a responsibility to promote a positive school culture. Each person's responsibility takes on a different role, Garrick adds. Schools that engage in strong interventions and practices that are focused on learning, growth, and positive behavior tend to have higher-performing students (Rutledge & Cannata, 2016). Building a positive school climate and culture can be done in six steps: (a) collecting and analyzing data, (b) establishing a culture leadership team, (c) conducting a culture needs assessment, (d) developing a culture plan, (e) establishing a way to monitor the progress, and (f) using the data for long-term success. Creating a culture needs-assessment or survey will provide an understanding of the current state of the

school culture and the vision for the future of the school's culture (JBS International, Inc., 2021). Administrators and teachers' roles are critical in creating a positive school culture and they must understand what culture is needed for the vision to be successful. The principal's role is shaped by five elements: (a) fundamental beliefs and assumptions, (b) shared values, (c) norms, (d) patterns and behaviors, and (e) tangible evidence. Without one of them, the framework falls apart (Shafer, 2018).

Murray (2021) provides recommendations to build school culture and climate within a school. He suggests administering a school culture survey to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This allows for change and growth to occur to help meet those needs. Along with the survey he suggests working with the faculty and staff to review the mission and vision statements of the school and use those results to drive the decisions for the year. Finally, Murray suggests a leadership team should be developed to cultivate ownership for the future of the school.

Principal's Role in School Climate

Leadership is important in creating a school that is functional, safe, academically challenging, and respectful. The administration is the leadership. "A strong and positive school culture is characterized by a clear sense of direction and shared accountability to advance a vision for success, which shapes how teachers and leaders do their jobs" (Murray, 2021, p. 2). The way an administrator leads the school has a direct effect on the learning environment. If the school climate and culture is toxic, the students in the school are not going be respectful and discipline issues will occur more frequently. When teachers and students are happy to be at school, the principal knows that a positive school climate had been achieved. Principals need to understand the school in its entirety and learning about the history of the school can have an

influence on where the focus needs to be for the future culture of the school (Education World Inc., 2021). Continuing to celebrate the positive things of the school keep the school climate going in the right direction (INcompassing Education, 2021).

School administrators serve many roles. Their top priority must be student growth and achievement, but creating a school culture where students felt safe and can learn is just as important. “As a school leader, your top commitment is to improve student learning. So, refining instructional practices among your staff should be at the top of your priority list” (Wagner, 2016, p. 1). Creating that school culture falls to the principal to plan, facilitate, and implement for there to be academic success along with discipline and safety. Principals can hinder or grow a school culture of change by the way the school is led (Fessehatsion, 2017). A culture leadership team should be developed and include staff members who are devoted to helping change a school culture (JBS International, Inc., 2021). A strong and healthy school culture and climate must follow the vision in order to be successful (Murray, 2021). The principal's role starts with school-wide goals and a vision for students and staff. Building trusting relationships with staff will provide teachers with the leadership guide that they need to build trusting relationships with their students. After the goals are established, consistency with frequent school-wide rallies and assemblies to celebrate achievements remind students of expectations for behavior and go beyond school unity by building lasting relationships (Wagner, 2016). These relationships drive a school’s climate. Students need to be able to feel supported while they are at school. Principals can develop relationships with students and parents by making their concerns and voices heard which can be done through conversation or the use of surveys (Prothero, 2020).

Shafer (2018) describes core beliefs and behaviors that should be established by the school's administration. Each one of the elements provided is influenced by the principal, and is cohesive in structure.

- Fundamental beliefs and assumptions
- Shared values
- Norms
- Patterns and behaviors
- Tangible evidence

Each one of the elements works together with the other four. They are the driving force to reinforcing positive school climate per Shafer.

Looking at school data that is tangible and manageable is a way for a principal to establish positive student behavior and student performance. This data might include the number of office referrals, time spent outside the classroom for discipline, positive reinforcements, and how much time is given to managing these behaviors. Assessing the data for behaviors has a direct relationship with how a school is performing in achievement and growth (JBS International, Inc., 2021). Principals cannot make the needed additions or adjustments to stay on track to meet the goals set for the school without having school data to support direction and decisions. Data is a crucial piece of feedback for intervention programs (Prothero, 2020).

Wagner (2016) compiled strategies for creating a positive school community. The first strategy is to plan a bridge program for new students and staff. This plan involves new students and teachers participating in project-based experiences to understand their unfamiliar environment. This allows all new teachers and students to feel a sense of community and acceptance. The second strategy is making school-wide goals visible throughout the school.

Wagner's design is to post the goals throughout the school building for the entire school to see. The third strategy is to keep a loyal opposition. There will always be people who oppose what a principal is trying to accomplish. Wagner suggests that all stakeholders be an equal participant even if they are opposed to the plan. This shows that their opinions are valued. The fourth strategy is to establish cooperative networks. Moving forward to establish goals should take place after any obstacles are identified. Finding ways to overcome any obstacles to make way for the goals should be the priority. The final strategy is to hold school-wide rallies and assemblies. Holding assemblies aids with a positive school culture. Gathering for achievements and celebrations promotes positive behaviors and character building (Wagner, 2016).

Principals and administrators can create a positive school culture by celebrating successes, collaborating with faculty, and being committed to the growing of the staff through professional development opportunities. A positive school culture begins at the top with solid leadership; it then trickles down to the faculty and staff and finally to the students and their families. Growing school culture can be accomplished by creating communities that establish feelings of well-being for the school, supporting the students and teachers, creating a safe environment for all stakeholders, and promoting student engagement through creative activities and instruction (INCompassing Education, 2021).

School Counselor's Role in School Climate

A school counselor is also a leader in the school and is important to the social-emotional aspect of the school's culture. The counselor must be committed to supporting successful behaviors in the school. The role of a school counselor is primarily to assist students with developing an individualized program for social-emotional behavior issues (Smith et al., 2018). Counselors create a culture that promotes the support of social-emotional behaviors that stem

from ACEs and traumatic events. Having a social-emotional focus supports faculty and staff with building positive relationships when disruptive classroom behaviors occur. Effective leaders are only as strong as the relationships they take the time to build. School counselors are encouraged to take on leadership roles to create a trusting environment for students and teachers. Having leadership abilities can bring social awareness, self-management, and relationship skills to engage students in responsible decision-making (Bowers et al., 2017). "School counselors can adopt a leadership posture that is consistent with the nature of the profession and the needs of schools and learners, which in turn might translate into greater quantity and improved quality of services delivered" (Bowers et al., 2017, p 1). Counselors have also been given the task of promoting school culture by supporting students of different ethnicities, sexual orientations, and mental health issues. Schools that implement a response to instruction and intervention program for behavior also rely on the school counselor to facilitate a school counseling program that promotes positive behavior within the school (Goodman-Scott & Grothaus 2017). Porter-McGee (2020) states that schools are now having to focus on the "whole child" instead of focusing only on educating them in a classroom. The well-being of a child is a crucial piece in building school culture. Focusing on the well-being of the child also allows for a shift in behaviors and academics. Teachers cannot just teach students how to act or behave; it needs to be modeled. "While academic gains can be realized through direct instruction, educating the whole child – including forming character and cultivating the habits of virtue – requires a strong culture" (Porter-McGee, 2020, p. 3).

Teacher-Student Relationships

Educators expressed that they pursued a college education to instruct students – not be school counselors. They chose to educate themselves in a particular subject or grade band so they

could educate students; this was the reason they chose to teach. In reality, their school responsibilities go beyond the four walls of the classroom. Their students need more than academic lessons – they also need guidance in social-emotional skills (Porter-Magee, 2020). Teachers are the most common relationships that students have outside of their families as students spend a significant amount of time with teachers. Building positive relationships inside the school building will help students who have experienced trauma and will aid with decreasing disruptive behavior (Izard, 2016). "The stubborn truth is that you cannot address students' social and emotional needs without making tough, value-driven decisions about what to prioritize and what to teach" (Porter-Magee, 2020, p. 2). Trauma has a direct bearing on learning and behavior in the classroom according to Izard. Teachers are the ones who have direct contact with students every day. Building positive relationships with students can help with combating the negative behaviors that can occur in classrooms.

> Children develop in an environment of relationships that begin in the home and include extended family members, early care and educational providers, and members of the community. Providing supportive, responsive relationships as early in life as possible can prevent or reverse the damaging effects of toxic stress. (Center on the Developing Child, 2007, p. 4)

Building those relationships can help promote positive school culture. Teachers are the most direct school relationship that a student has, and teachers experience both positive and negative relationships with students (de Ruiter et al., 2021). "Research has found that a positive school climate can improve students' academic achievement, attendance, engagement, and behavior, as well as teacher satisfaction and retention" (Prothero, 2020, p. 2). The emotional toll that a teacher endures also has an effect on classroom behaviors. Conflicts with students associate

particular feelings of positivity or animosity per de Ruiter et al. Many theorists suggest that there is a direct relationship between students and teachers and the behaviors of students in the classroom. The way a teacher views a student provides a negative perspective if certain behaviors are observed (D. Evans et al., 2019). “The most effective school cultures support great teaching and learning. They empower teachers to communicate, collaborate, reflect, inquire, and innovate” (Garrick, 2019, p. 2). Establishing a safe place for social-emotional and containing disruptive classroom behaviors creates an atmosphere conducive to respect and positivity. The use of teaching and modeling from the teacher and anti-bullying and intervention programs establishes discipline and behavior management protocols that are designed for classroom culture (Learning for Justice, 2016). “Strong relationships not only help students feel safe and accepted in their school, they also help students build resilience to cope with adverse childhood experiences” (Prothero, 2020, p. 3). When teachers lack the ability to forge a positive environment in the classroom, cultural interactions decrease. Respect and positive relationships create an environment focused on accountability, responsibility, and growth. Reno et al. (2017) list tasks that must be present in a classroom for a positive culture to be evident:

- Creating a physical setting that supports academic and social goals
- Establishing expectations for behavior
- Communicating with students in culturally consistent ways
- Developing a caring classroom environment
- Working with families
- Using appropriate interventions to assist students with behavior problems (Reno et al., 2017, p. 425)

Children encounter many adults before they enter school. During these times there are ample opportunities to build relationships and model positive behaviors, and staff members must be equipped with a clear vision for commitment to understanding the social-emotional behaviors that students possess (Carstarphen, 2018).

Disruptive classroom behaviors can occur in even the best managed classroom. Classrooms that have established expectations, norms, and standards are not immune to disruptive behaviors and classroom disruptions. There are specific support systems for children who have suffered traumatic events. To support students, teachers must develop positive relationships that minimize disruptive behaviors. Family involvement is an important aspect of building positive relationships with the students and parents. First, teachers must learn about the children they teach and their families. Making a point to invite families into the classrooms or making contact with them frequently creates a commonality that can be approached on multiple levels. These interactions can reveal aspects of a child's life that can be pertinent to behaviors or the managing of behaviors in the classroom. Next, teachers must develop and teach the classroom expectations which must be implemented and practiced on a regular basis in order to be effective. Along with teaching expectations, one must teach empathy. Students who learn empathy engage in practices that develop into healthy relationships later in life (Price & Steed, 2016).

Disruptive Classroom Behaviors

The concept of labeling a child as a disruptive student can be a misleading statement. A traumatized child's most challenging behavior often originates in immense feelings of vulnerability. These feelings can translate into behaviors that interfere with learning and

> building relationships and can often sabotage their ability to hear and understand a teacher‘s positive message. (Williams, 2017, p. 5)

Teachers who are often unprepared for disruptive situations can cause a struggle with teachers and students to bridge the achievement gaps that are caused by disruptive classroom behaviors. “Decades of research and studies have established that children who experience adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) not only are more likely to exhibit negative behaviors at school, but are more likely to develop risky behaviors” (National Education Association, 2021, p. 2). Every year teachers experience an increase in diverse behavioral issues in the classroom. Is it the child that is being disruptive, or is it the mismanagement of the classroom that is allowing the disruptions to occur? Sometimes things do not go according to plan in a classroom and disruptions can occur. How they are resolved and finding the root of the problem is the key to responding to that disruption. Redl (1975) was a therapist whose primary focus was researching the problems of children who exhibit aggressive behaviors and has provided examples of what caused disruptive behavior in a classroom. Some of these causes include student boredom, reactions to mismanagement of the classroom, spillover from previous events that occurred earlier in the day, or testing the limits of the teacher. Redl’s report relates issues surrounding disruptive behavior in the classroom and the assumptions of what is considered disruptive classroom behaviors. Some of these assumptions include:

- There are children who are disruptive per se, and, once recognized as the devils they are, they simply need to be excluded from whatever place they wreak their havoc in.
- Disruptive behavior in a classroom is invariably the result of the shenanigans of some especially reprehensible agent who set it off, namely, “the disruptive child.”

- This entity of the disruptive child is a clearly diagnosable special package and therefore obviously different from the “normal learner” in any classroom.
- Disruption is always a bad thing, and what is being disrupted is always good and the idea that maybe sometimes disrupting something poisonous might be a sign of health rather than of negativism is pure nonsense.
- The major school problem is solved if the classroom teacher identifies the disruptive child and gets him out, after which pure learning in a given classroom will be a wonderful and happy smooth process forever. (Redl, 1975, p. 569)

The reality is that classroom disruptions are a common occurrence in classrooms. Students are looking for ways to gain attention or let out pent up emotions; unfortunately, that may manifest itself via classroom disruptions. There is no perfect classroom and students are going to act out. “Disruptive classroom behaviors negatively impact the student who is exhibiting these behaviors as well as other students in the classroom. However, early intervention may disrupt this negative behavior trajectory and support a productive learning environment” (LeGray et al., 2010, p. 185-186). ACEs affect behavioral problems by increasing the risk of suicide attempts in students. Depression that can be prevalent throughout a child’s entire life can be influenced by the ACEs experienced. Sleep deprivation as an adult is also higher due to ACEs (Davis, 2020). ACEs are also contributing factors in behaviors that can potentially harm people into adulthood. “Women with ACEs have reported risky sexual behaviors, including early intercourse, having had 30 or more sexual partners, and perceiving themselves to be at risk for HIV/AIDS” (Davis, 2020, p. 4).

Classroom Management Mistakes

Classroom disruptions can occur because classroom management skills are not present or have not been fine tuned. Teachers are to oversee the events going on in the classroom and avoid mismanagement and disruptive behaviors. Students test the limits of teachers to see what they can get away with during class. Students can easily notice which teachers struggle with classroom management and those that have a structured classroom. Terada (2020) states if students are misbehaving, there is an underlying reason. Instead of getting angry instantly, the teacher should take the time to see why the behavior is occurring. Teachers also need not assume that it is always a behavior issue. It could be an academic issue and the student did not know how to react other than to act out.

> It's a mistake to think that bad behavior always comes from a desire to break the rules—or that punitive measures will effectively address the underlying reasons that students act out. For some students, abuse or neglect at home can lead to higher levels of aggression at school. About 1 in 16 children suffer from oppositional defiant disorder or another conduct disorder. (Terada, 2020, p 2)

A teacher will never be able to teach standards and curriculum if every infraction were given attention. Teachers need only address the recurring issues or the serious discipline problems. However, isolating a student away from the class could also bring more behavioral issues to the classroom. After school hours, students have different experiences – some are at home alone, some are watching siblings, and some sit and play video games. Students who have these experiences do not have an outlet to be a child. They see school as a place to try and have fun. When a teacher reprimands a student, it leaves an impression on the student and the teacher. Biases are developed and teachers might punish students more frequently for the smallest

behavior infractions. Expecting students to be compliant when they feel they are being picked on will not change behaviors (Terada, 2020).

Terada (2020) provides seven common mistakes that educators make that affect classroom management. The first mistake is responding to surface-level behavior and not addressing the underlying reason for the behavior. Terada uses the example of two students who are misbehaving in class. On the surface, the students are causing a disruption; however, one student was having a stressful home life and the other was seeking attention from peers. To change this common mistake teachers must collect data about the student by evaluating when the behavior is occurring, with whom it is occurring, and what is happening before the behavior starts. The second mistake is assuming that it is not an academic issue. Teachers assume it is a behavior problem when a student disrupts class. In contrast, the behavior may stem from the lack of understanding of the material, or the student finds it too difficult making the student feel frustrated. The third mistake is confronting every minor behavior problem. This mistake occurs mostly in inexperienced teachers who are learning classroom management skills. Trying to stop every class disruption takes away important class instruction time and can increase behavioral disruptions. Also, pointing out every infraction can make students feel disconnected from the content being taught in class. Teachers must focus on positive conduct in order to avoid this mistake. Mistake number four is using time-out corners as punishment. This causes students to feel embarrassed thus creating a strained relationship between the student and the teacher. The fifth mistake is to shame the student publicly and embarrass them in front of their peers. One classroom strategy (that in the past was considered appropriate) was to write a student's name on the board when a student misbehaved which created a public shaming event to try and combat the behavior. Today, this is considered a form of emotional abuse to a student. The sixth mistake

is expecting all students to behave all the time. Students range in age from 3 to 19. The behaviors that students have are inconsistent and noncompliant, but the key to combating noncompliant behavior is to build positive relationships. The final mistake is the teacher not checking their own biases. Biases manifest themselves in diverse ways: gender, race, athletics, outside relationships, and academic abilities Terada notes.

Enforcing student behavior policies with a zero-tolerance policy is still the practice for most schools across the nation. Assigning consequences to behaviors can create more problems for students who have experienced trauma. “These policies are often rigidly applied, without consideration for the needs of other students or educators involved in the infraction and the intervention services needed to prevent them in the future” (National Council of State Education Associations, 2019, p. 14). Designing new expectations for dealing with students who have experienced trauma would provide educators with the tools needed to provide support to their students.

Response to Instruction and Intervention for Behavior (RTI_2B)

The rationale for RTI_2B programs was founded in the interest of school systems’ needs for a balanced academic and behavior program that would benefit all students. The behavior framework is designed with a tiered structure in mind. Discipline issues in school are not new concepts; research supports that repetitive disciplinary action was harmful to student and failed to create safer school environments. Overusing suspensions and expulsions does result in improved student behaviors (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). As with the academic RTI program, evidence shows that there is a direct relationship between academics and behavior. Student handbooks tell students what the consequences are for breaking a code of conduct, but it frequently does not teach them how to change behavior. Research shows that most students who

committed disciplinary actions are those with learning disabilities, male, students of color, and/or those who qualify for free and reduced lunch. Also, most of these students experienced a minimum of one ACE in their childhood (Reno et al., 2017).

> There is evidence that problems in one area (reading and behavior) can predict future problems in other areas. Poor academic skills early in school predict a wide range of behavior problems, because students who have difficulty reading may find problem behavior as an effective means of escaping or avoiding reading activities. (Bohanon et al., 2021a, p. 2)

A program that fits the needs of a school needs to focus on the end goals that are set forth by the leadership team. The RTI_2B program is explained through four steps that are broken down into a multi-tiered system. "Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based three-tiered framework for improving and integrating all the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes every day. It is a way to support everyone – especially students with disabilities." (Center on PBIS, 2021, p. 1). The first step is to identify predictable failures. This step uses past data with behaviors to create a plan for future behaviors. Teachers and staff predict foreseeable problems based on behaviors that have been observed in the past. Making classroom observations are also methods to predict these possible behaviors. After the potential behaviors are identified, preventive strategies can be developed. These preventative strategies must then be maintained and sustained using an intervention program. Finally, outcomes are to be measured to evaluate any need for change and development (Evanovich & Scott, 2016). The multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) is supported by data that is collected to improve outcomes and to meet goals. The tiered approach is designed as a way to combine the needs of academics, behavior, and social-emotional that will provide support for all students.

"Each tier has its own set of systems and practices, but some key components appear across every level. Each of these features needs to be presented in order for MTSS to be implemented with fidelity" (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021e, p. 2). Key components include:

> Practices that are based on evidence to be effective in a similar context with similar populations, practices are organized along a tiered continuum beginning with strong universal supports followed by intensified interventions matched to student needs, data are collected and used to screen, monitor, and assess student progress, and resources are allocated to ensure systems and practices are implemented with fidelity over time. (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021e, p. 2)

Emerging Links Between Academics and Behavior

Addressing issues with academics and behaviors could lead to improved future outcomes for students. Research indicates that low academic skills such as reading and comprehension have a direct relation to behavior instances (Bohanon et al., 2021a). "Poor academic skills early in school predict a wide range of behavior problems, because students who have difficulty with reading may find problem behavior as an effective means of escaping or avoiding reading activities" (Bohanon et al., 2021a, p. 4).

Bohanon et al. (2021a) also say that students who struggle with reading have an 18% chance of receiving an office referral by the 5th grade. Schools now have the option to develop intervention plans to combat behavior issues. The Response to Intervention and Instruction for Behavior (RTI_2B) allows for those connections to be determined earlier in a student's school years, permits intervention and universal support plans to be administered, and progress monitoring to take place (Bohanon et al., 2021a).

Universal supports are strategies that are provided to all students within a school. These strategies are designed to promote success for all students and deter failures. “An integrated Response to Intervention model not only views academics and behavior as components of the same support system, but these components also influence one another” (Goodman et al., 2021, p. 1). By using universal support, the needs for students are met and those students will not have the need for a more individualized support plan. The outcomes for these students become more manageable and cost-effective (Goodman et al., 2021).

Providing a support plan for behavior can improve academics and develop positive relationships between peers. When academic and behavior support systems are used together, they become more successful in motivating positive classroom behavior (Goodman et al., 2021.

Tiered Framework and School-Wide Approaches

A school-wide approach to behavior intervention should be established before implementing a new program. Positive behavior intervention support (PBIS) programs provide improvements to classroom behaviors and academics. “When schools implement PBIS, they start by implementing it school-wide" (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2021a, p. 1). Before a school-wide approach can be implemented, the staff must be fully invested in the success of the program. They need to understand the need and the logic behind the motivation for the program. If there is any reluctance from the staff the program will fail (Evanovich & Scott, 2016). The downside with school-wide approaches to implementing a behavior program is sustainability. The long-term effects need to be built on a foundation from the development of a leadership team that is well versed in RTI_2B and positive intervention programs (Yeung et al., 2016). “It establishes a social culture, and the behavior supports needed to improve social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes for all students” (Positive Behavior Interventions

and Supports, 2021a, p. 1). The development of a leadership team that discusses the goals for the students in the school, the support needs for the demographics of the school, and the financial capabilities allotted to provide the right support is the first step in the process.

> Setting observable and measurable goals helps schools hold themselves accountable to creating the kind of place where every student succeeds. Schools select the outcomes to target based on data they find meaningful, culturally equitable, and centered on students' achievements or school-level implementation. (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2021a, p. 2)

Involve every member of the school including cafeteria workers and custodians. This allows all stakeholders to encourage students and help provide them with the right support. "Many school districts and administrators are implementing school-wide prevention behavior models in an effort to promote a positive school culture and to reduce discipline problems" (Reno et al., 2017, p. 423). When a school-wide approach is implemented the school should document a mission and vision statement that meets the set goals for supporting the students. These expectations are clearly communicated to all acting parties including administrators, teachers, other staff, and students. Those involved model these expectations by defining them and acting in the manner deemed appropriate. Providing feedback and encouragement is part of a recognition strategy. Re-teaching appropriate behavior is used as needed along with encouraging the cessation of inappropriate behavior (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2021a). Academic and behavior programs focus on practices to change the behavior in students. When selecting what practices benefit a school, Bohanon et al. (2021a) provide a list of planning and intervention programs:

1. A short list of critical priorities identified by a school, district, or provincial/state team.

2. A limit of only one or two major adoptions at one time.

3. Strategies that have been proven effective in addressing the desired outcomes.

4. The ability to monitor progress of implementation to determine the need for improvement. (Bohanon et al., 2021a, p. 7)

The multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) uses data to create a framework that is specific and beneficial to a school and is designed to improve the outcomes of student behavior. "MTSS relies on a continuum of evidence-based practices matched to student needs . . . MTSS emerged as a framework from the conducted in public health emphasizing three tiers of prevention" (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021e, p. 1).

Tier 1 affects all students within the school setting. Tier 1 is established by guiding principles that promote a PBIS program:

- Effectively teach appropriate behavior to all children
- Intervene early before unwanted behaviors escalate
- Use research-based, scientifically validated interventions whenever possible
- Monitor student progress
- Use data to make decisions (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021b, p. 1)

This tier promotes positive behavior interventions to an entire school and attempts to decrease disruptive behaviors. It is a universal approach to appropriate student behavior. "Tier 1 PBIS builds a social culture where students expect, prompt, and reinforce appropriate behavior for each other. When implemented with fidelity, Tier 1 PBIS systems and practices meet the needs of 80% or more of all students" (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2021a, p. 3). It was designed to be the foundation for continuous proactive support. Tier 1 strategies aid in the

prevention of the escalation of trauma in a student's background before another experience exacerbates the trauma in the student's future (Gee et al., 2020). This tier is a foundation for behavior and academics. A leadership team should be assembled to discuss the layout of the framework and how it fits and affects their school. This team must meet consistently to review data and refine the layout, if needed. Most of a school's students will fall into the Tier 1 category. "The key to PBIS implementation is staff consistency. All staff members need to be aware of goals, processes, and measures. Tier 1 implementation may require professional development to orient all school personnel" (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021b, p. 2). Monitoring all students is crucial in collecting data. If data is not collected on all students in the Tier 1 level, some students will fall between the cracks.

> In academic and behavior supports, it is important to monitor student progress to determine whether students are performing behaviors correctly and whether those responses meet a standard for acceptable quality. Frequent monitoring allows school personnel to intervene early to correct errors and encourage students to continue correct responding. (Goodman et al., 2021, p. 4)

Before Tier 2 can be implemented, Tier 1 must be implemented with fidelity and the practices in place. The rest of the program will fail if the foundation is not present (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021b). Tier 2 was designed to focus on students who were successful in Tier 1 and need secondary support from the school. The students who fall into this category have minor, but consistent, behavior issues. This tier focuses on the development of a specific action that the student displays. This tier tends to be a small group of students (usually about 10) with the same deficits. This kind of group intervention teaches students social skills, self-management, and academic skills to use in school and at home (Positive Behavioral

Interventions and Supports, 2021c). Putting these students into a support group provides an opportunity for feedback on the intervention program (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021e). When Tier 2 students are identified, the leadership team is charged with providing the correct support for each student. It is important to remember that they must be treated in individual situations and not grouped together. To identify students for this tier, schools use discipline referrals, screeners, teacher evaluations, parental recommendations, and other assessments (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021c). For a student to be classified as having a need to be in Tier 2, the team should evaluate office referrals, teacher inputs, and observations.

> Regardless of the intervention, Tier 2 supports include additional instruction for key social, emotional, and/or behavioral skills. An important outcome of Tier 2 interventions is when students can regulate on their own, when, where, and under what conditions particular skills are needed and can successfully engage in those skills. (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021c, p. 2)

Tier 2 implementation focuses on key practices that are crucial to the success of this stage in the RTI_2B program. Before beginning the Tier 2 stage, Tier 1 must already be implemented and practiced. All staff involved in the program must understand how Tier 1 works and how to proceed to the next tier. Tier 2 has six key practices that are required for successful implementation. Not all these practices may be needed for students who are identified to participate in Tier 2 because the practices must be individualized for the student (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021c). The first key practice is increased instruction and practice with self-regulation and social skills. This practice involves instruction for social-emotional well-being and behavior and instructs students on how to self-regulate their behaviors

and who to contact when they need help. The second key practice is increased adult supervision which models appropriate adult relationships and positive behaviors. The third key principle is increased opportunity for positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior which is the main goal for Tier 2. This is also a modeling aspect for students. Students see this positive adult interaction as a positive model for behavior resulting in continued positive behaviors. The fourth key practice is increased pre-correction which is a strategy for school staff to anticipate student behaviors. When triggers can be identified for each student, teachers can attempt to avoid these triggers. Attempting to pre-correct behaviors before they escalate also models self-regulation for students. The fifth practice is increased focus on functions of problem behavior. This practice involves school staff investigating why certain behaviors are occurring for identified students. This may require interviews with the student and parents and evaluations by interventionists. If the cause of the behavior can be identified, strategies to change the behavior can be implemented. The final key practice is increased academic support. Students who have been identified as Tier 2 students are more likely to have academic struggles, as well. This can be a trigger to behavioral issues. Providing opportunities for tutoring or other academic assistance can change disruptive behaviors (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021c).

In this stage of the RTI_2B program, secondary supports need to be established for those students who are identified as having a need for intervention. “Tier 2 supports are often successful when provided within groups. At this level, systems and practices are efficient. This means they are similar across students and can be quickly accessed” (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2021a, p. 3). These secondary supports are the next steps after implementation of a universal support system and are specific and targeted for specific individuals. One method of secondary support is a functional behavior assessment (FBA). An

FBA is designed to identify the specific behavior problem, what triggers the problem, and what strategies can be used to help correct the problem. “The FBA process plays a pivotal role in helping teams understand whether integrated academic and behavior supports are needed, or if one or the other will suffice” (McIntosh et al., 2021, p. 6). Another method is the use of a behavior education program (BEP). A BEP is designed as a check-in/check-out routine for teachers and students to contact each other for accountability. It can be an expansion of the school-wide approach to behavior intervention. “The BEP builds on schoolwide expectations by providing frequent feedback on classroom social behavior and rewards to students demonstrating appropriate behavior” (Hawken et al., 2011). These tertiary supports provide insight into a student's needs. The tertiary support for Tier 2 utilizes self-management, a check-in, check-out system, small group social skill instruction, and academic supports as strategies to implement positive behavior. Tier 2 intervention supports 5-15% of students in a single school (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2021a). The data that is collected from Tier 2 can identify a more intrinsic issue that involves a more intensive and invasive approach to correct the behavior.

> Supporting students at the tertiary level places many demands on school systems. An important tactic to improve efficacy at the tertiary level is ensuring that strategies at the universal and secondary levels are implemented with fidelity prior to referral as the tertiary level. (Bohanon et al., 2021a, p. 4)

Tier 3 students receive the most intensive support that a school is allowed to provide. After these students’ issues are addressed through the Tier 1 and Tier 2 support system and are found to need more intensive support, they are referred to a Tier 3 level of support. Tier 3 students usually make up a small amount of the student population. “At Tier 3, these students

receive more intensive, individualized support to improve their behavioral and academic outcomes" (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021d, p. 1). Assessments are used to target specific behavior issues and match them to an instructional intervention strategy. Many aspects are evaluated when a student enters the Tier 3 level of support. Physical and mental status, mental health needs, and family support are included in the support plan for the student. A population of 3-5% of students fall into the Tier 3 category (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2021a). Tier 3 strategies work for students with developmental disabilities, autism, emotional and behavioral disorders, and students with no diagnostic label at all" (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021d, p. 1). Students who are assigned to Tier 3 have a team of educators who work closely with them. The members of this team include an administrator, a behaviorist representative, and teachers who work closely with the student on a daily basis. The behaviorist of this team must have formal behavior knowledge and can provide support inside and outside the school building. Each team will not look the same in every building. However, each team must meet on a regular basis to assess the data, determine if additional support needs to be put into place, and monitor the success rate of the supports (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021d).

In addition to a leadership team, a problem-solving team should be assembled as a support for those students who are in the Tier 3 program for intervention. This team designs the strategies that are pertinent to the particular school. The goal of this team is to decrease the need for strategies for the students as they show an increase in positive behavior. The members of this team include staff members from the school, family members at home, and members of the community. Families play a pivotal role in implementing the behavior plan and interventions (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021d). Cognitive behavior therapy is a

conceptual strategy that is reserved for Tier 2 and Tier 3 students. “CBT interventions focus on shifting the though patterns of individuals and equipping them with coping strategies and aids in building their confidence” (Gee et al., 2020, p. 6).

Universal supports are cohesively preventive and proactive through core instruction and improve competencies for students. Goals are set that align with expected outcomes, and these goals provide appropriate instruction, monitoring, feedback, and encouragement (Goodman et al., 2021). Appropriate instruction is effective and essential to the strategies that are developed. “Teaching behavior expectations is accomplished much like teaching academics. Students are presented information on behavior expectations, including examples of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors so that students can clearly understand the concept being taught” (Goodman et al. 2021, p. 4).

Tertiary Supports

Within a school, other interventions are sometimes necessary to provide additional support for students. These are referred to as Tertiary Supports. Components of these support systems include Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA), Functional Academic Assessments, Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP), and Comprehensive Assessments. These assessments may allow for further evaluations or a change in placement for the student. An FBA centers the focus on the student’s behaviors. Through observations and teacher input, a plan is developed to provide behavior support for the student. The plan is then used by everyone that the student encounters while at school and includes related art teachers and counselors. It provides the student with interventions that are specific to the behavior and are useful for the individual student (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021d). “Plans resulting from a formal FBA process will include strategies for: preventing unwanted behavior, teaching appropriate

behavior, positively reinforcing appropriate behavior, reducing rewards for unwanted behavior and ensuring student safety" (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021d, p. 2). Students do not need an Individualized Education Plan to have an FBA but the process for eligibility is similar. Although a student may not have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), creating a plan using tertiary supports can provide a needed treatment plan for the targeted behaviors (Bohanon et al., 2021b).

Facilitating the Implementation of the RTI$_2$B Program

When the school develops a framework and a plan of action, the next step is to implement the plan. They might ask which students should benefit from a behavior intervention program? The answer is all of them. All students can be exposed to the Tier 1 level of a behavior program. When rolling out the RTI$_2$B program all stakeholders are involved. The first step is to gain the support of the faculty and staff and build a leadership team that helps make decisions and guide the program (Center on PBIS, 2021). "Researchers suggest that a buy-in by 80% of staff is necessary to ensure long-term sustainability and success" (Feurborn et al., 2013, p. 28). As staff perceptions can affect how a program is implemented, it is important that structure, planning, goals, and follow-up are evident when presenting the program to them. They need to see data – not just an idea presented to them. "Implementing school wide positive behavior supports requires thoughtful, collaborative process with a steady eye toward long-term goals and sustainability" (Feurborn et al., 2013, p. 32).

After the facilitating process begins there are four steps to be followed. The first step is to identify predictable failures. "A method of predicting problems such as this is to have faculty and staff brainstorm problems that they have observed" (Evanovich & Scott, 2016, p. 6). This gives the faculty input in the design plan from firsthand experiences. The second step is to develop

effective preventive strategies. This step begins the process of teaching replacement behaviors to students to achieve student success. Consistency is the third step in maintaining sustainability and preventing any failure of the program. "Consistency is enhanced by having a PBIS team look at data, make decisions, and report back to the full faculty and staff on a monthly basis" (Evanovich & Scott, 2016, p. 6). The last step is to evaluate the program, assess the outcomes, and determine whether the data matches the goals that were set at the beginning. The data can be used to change the process and make adjustments as needed.

School counselors serve a significant role in the RTI_2B program, and their position requires them to be more hands-on than some of the other faculty and staff. "School counselors' advocacy and systematic change roles are crucial given the insidious achievement and access gaps among groups of students in U.S. schools" (Goodman-Scott & Grothaus, 2017, p. 138). School counselors specialize in issues such as mental health, behavioral disorders, and emotional problems. A school counselor on the leadership team, is a critical piece in making the program a success.

Parent involvement is another important aspect that must be included when implementing RTI_2B. When parents are involved in their children's education, behavior issues were lower. "One dimension of parent involvement – direct interactions between teachers and parents – has been related to poor behavioral outcomes" (McCormick et al., 2013, p. 279) Parents must be included as stakeholders in the implementation process before behaviors occur. Most parents do not interact with a school until a behavior issue happens. By then it is sometimes too late to intervene (McCormick et al., 2013).

Fidelity

The tiered system for RTI_2B is intended to be for all students; however, frequent monitoring, known as fidelity checks, should be completed. “Without considering fidelity of implementation, it is unknown whether students fail to respond to secondary supports or if staff have failed to provide adequate supports” (McIntosh et al., 2021, p. 8). Within the planning of the program, fidelity is needed to monitor the progress of the program, the strategies involved, the executed plan, and the intended outcomes. For a school to have a successful RTI_2B intervention program focusing on academics or behavior, all components for fidelity must be in place. Those components include a multi-tiered intervention program, a screening process, progress monitoring, and regular data meetings with the leadership team (Johnson & Hutchins, 2019). Secondary support is identified based on the results of fidelity checks. These secondary supports require additional consultations, screenings, assessments, and progress monitoring. Strategies for secondary support include additional instruction or practice in academics or behaviors. Students may need a more one-on-one approach to teach critical social skills and behaviors for results to come to fruition (McIntosh et al., 2021). Frequently monitoring student progress allows schools to provide needed intervention immediately. “In academic and behavior supports, it is important to monitor student progress to determine whether students are performing behaviors correctly and whether those responses meet a standard for acceptable quality” (Goodman et al., 2021, p. 4).

When developing goals for any RTI_2B program, sustainability is a priority.

> A key activity for integrating and sustaining systems is the braiding of initiatives. Braiding refers to building the practices of any new initiative into the fabric of existing programs and priorities within the school building and the school district. The process

> involves identifying how parallel systems, data, and practices may be combined into a coherent, unified set of daily responsibilities with a common language. Braiding will help provide a common focus for staff in improving student outcomes and in enhancing sustainability of initiatives. (Bohanon et al., 2021a, p. 9)

Developing teams that are responsible for the implementation and integration of the program is a crucial piece in sustainability. Allowing school faculty and leadership teams to analyze data will develop school improvement plans and allow for reflection on the implementation process (Bohanon et al., 2021b).

The tiered framework has a specific list of supports that are to be implemented at every level, but there are some practices that are instituted in all three tiers. For fidelity to be implemented with success these components must be met:

- Practices are based on evidence to be effective in a similar context with similar populations.
- Practices are organized along a tiered continuum beginning with strong universal supports followed by intensified interventions matched to student needs.
- Data are collected and used to screen, monitor, and assess student progress.
- Resources are allocated to ensure systems and practices are implemented with fidelity over time. (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021e)

Evaluating the effectiveness of the tiered framework is a continuous process. Goodman et al. (2021) cite two main questions that are used to evaluate the effectiveness of universal support. “First, are the programs that comprise the universal supports implemented with fidelity? Second, are students achieving the desired student outcomes?” (Goodman et al., 2021, p. 7). Through fidelity and evaluation, adjustments are made to the program to meet the needs of the students

most effectively. The basis for fidelity and support is the success of the student. The goal must be effective for both academics and behaviors (McIntosh et al., 2021).

Interventions

Research has shown that positive behavior interventions have improved academics and behavior in schools (Yeung et al., 2016). “Positive behavior interventions have been widely used in early childhood, elementary, and high school settings to reduce students’ problematic behaviors and improve educational outcomes” (Yeung et al., 2016, p. 146).

Instruction and intervention programs such as RTI_2B were meant to promote positive behavior in students using positive reinforcement and restorative practices. These practices need to be instilled in a child as early as preschool. At this level, students are taught as a group appropriate ways to behave while at school instead of singling out the child to reprimand the behavior (Saad, 2018). Interventions are available to teachers and students to prevent and respond to disruptive classroom behaviors. Functional-based interventions use multiple designs to facilitate interventions in academic engagement and classroom disruptions decrease. Schools that use a Response to Intervention and Instruction for Behavior (RTI_2B) program use practices that monitor these programs. “Because PBIS is not a packaged curriculum or intervention, schools implement the core features of evidence-based practices in a way that fits with the schools’ cultural values” (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2021a, p. 2). Monitoring of intervention programs showed that focusing on contingencies, self-management, and positive reinforcements had a higher success rate than those that focused on maintaining disruptive behaviors (Lane et al., 2007). Educating professionals on ACEs, trauma-informed practices, and restorative practices and the effects they have on the health of a student is crucial in providing a successful intervention (Bouillier & Blair, 2018). “Programs and policies that promote safe,

stable, nurturing relationships and environments for children grow up in will both prevent ACEs occurring and limit the effect of the adversity if it does occur" (Bouillier & Blair, 2018, p. 136).

Classroom disruptions can become dangerous behaviors when classroom management efforts are not provided. Murphy and Brunt (2018) offer a three-pronged approach to de-escalation of disruptive classroom behaviors. The first is to clarify norms in the classroom and create a safe climate for students. This involves teachers creating an environment that is derived from mutual respect and classroom expectations and appropriate classroom behaviors. Respectful relationships deter aggressive and defiant classroom behavior. The second is de-escalating the situations as they occur. Adopting these skills include avoidance of embarrassing the student, dealing with the issue later in private, and staying focused on the class. Strategies for de-escalation include one-on-one conversations with students, standing near the student who was misbehaving until the issue is resolved, and using motivational techniques. Finally, faculty should use teamwork. After the student leaves the classroom, the strategies that were used in one class should be used in others. Consistency for that student combats disruptive behaviors. Creating a behavioral intervention team for targeted students helps with consistency. These behavior teams include school personnel, counselors, and outside resources, if needed (Murphy & Brunt, 2018). Building a leadership team with an administrator and teachers from all grades provides support to the staff through appropriate training and equips students with strategies to cope. This team is responsible for creating a full staff buy-in for sustainability (Goodman et al., 2021). "The building leadership team monitors the effectiveness of supports provided at the universal level" (Goodman et al., 2021, p. 6).

Schools who integrate relationship structures to their schedules and routines can increase academic support. One practice that can build relationships between teachers and students is

targeted looping. When scheduling students at the beginning of a new school year, assigning a teacher to a student that has an established relationship with that teacher will provide prevention practices at an early stage. Students with behavior issues react to change in diverse ways. Establishing familiarity for the student will create a safe space for students to continue practicing what has been learned (Rutledge & Cannata, 2016). Schools also develop discipline protocols that are individualized for each student in Tier 2 or Tier 3 of the RTI_2B program. Not every student responds to the same discipline procedures that are used within a school or district according to Rutledge & Cannata.

Positive Feedback and Encouragement

Feedback is needed for sustainability and performance. When students take a test or complete an assignment, feedback is provided for student growth and achievement. The same feedback is used for behavior interventions. Students need feedback to correct undesired behaviors and provide encouragement, and feedback can identify errors in behavior (Goodman et al., 2021). “Errors are identified and corrected so students do not spend time practicing incorrect responses. . . . In behavior supports, discipline problems are first assumed to be behavioral errors” (Goodman et al., 2021, p. 5). Providing feedback engages students in appropriate behavior and teaches taking responsibility for inappropriate behavior.

Restorative Practices

Implementing restorative practices addresses the needs of the students within a school. These should be established before drastic measures such as suspensions and expulsions take place. Restorative practices is a problem-solving technique that developed from a plan to amend school-wide disruptive behaviors and to repair the traumatic effects of events that students experienced as children (Anyon et al., 2016). The role of a school administrator and a leadership

team is to develop these restorative practices and communicate them to students, parents, and staff. Educators are not the only ones who have contact with students before they enter the classroom. Crossing guards, cafeteria workers, and bus drivers all have a chance to build positive relationships with students before the students begin the academic day (Carstarphen, 2018). Teachers indicated that, "those in restorative practice schools thought that conduct management, teacher leadership, school leadership, and teaching and learning conditions had improved" (Augustine et al., 2018, p. 2).

Restorative practices are founded on seven key principles to develop a deeper understanding of how educators guide their practices in the classroom. The first principle assesses and meets the needs of students with classroom behaviors. Principle 2 focuses on providing accountability and support. Districts with established zero tolerance policies aid in the accountability of students, but responsibility comes from the students themselves. Principle 3 focuses on repairing the harm that was done to students and helping them to heal. Principle 4 views conflict as a learning opportunity for both students and teachers. They are meant to be a learning response to behaviors and a path to a collaborative solution for each situation. Principle 5 focuses on building healthy relationships and strengthening student relationships with other students, teachers, and school communities. Principle 6 centers on repairing broken relationships that were damaged during prior traumatic events. Finally, principle 7 addresses transferring power imbalances that dominate school discipline (K. Evans et al., 2013). All these principles were designed to reform relationships. Restorative practices promote positive relationships to minimize unwanted behaviors. Learning about children and their families is a restorative practice that builds positive relationships with parents as well as students. Inviting families into the classrooms, participating in classroom activities, and making home visits is a way to connect

with students and their families. In a school where restorative practices are planned and implemented effectively, the Tier I level of students promotes empathy, inclusion, and community. Tier 2 aids in restoring relationships through early intervention. Tier 3 is an intensive intervention in the restoration of relationships (Smith et al., 2018). Information that is gathered about the students and their families is used as an effort to maintain effective classroom management. Teaching the classroom expectations in a positive manner and monitoring them frequently for adjustments makes the program successful. When challenging behaviors occur, the expectations need to be reiterated and used as teaching moments to reinforce positive behavior. Being empathetic and showing concern for social-emotional or negative behaviors fosters a responsive and positive school environment (Price & Steed, 2016).

The role of a school counselor in the use of restorative practices is to "assist all students in developing the skills needed for academic success, career and college readiness, and social/emotional development" (Smith et al., 2018, p. 1). School counselors are advocates for students who feel neglected or for unrepresented groups of students; they are charged with creating programs that are designed to close all gaps including achievement and social-emotional development.

Resilient Schools

Trauma is real. Trauma is prevalent and more common in every school. Trauma is toxic to the brain and can affect development and learning in multiple ways (Souers & Hall, 2016).

> Stress is the number one cause of medical visits in this country; if we are to prepare our children to live in the 21st century, then we need to teach them the skills to deal with stress and promote physical and emotional wellness. Resiliency skills are as important for

> our children and teens as any other skill they will learn in school, because these are skills they will call upon in all aspects of their lives. (Benson-Henry Institute, 2018, p. 2).

Being prepared to offer support for resilient learners with positive experiences so students can grow, learn, and succeed leads to implementing the program effectively. The home environment is more predictive of student success than grades and school. To help resilient learners, educators must focus on the trauma or the behavior itself and provide support to understand the behavior and the effects it has had on the student (Souers & Hall, 2016). "Educators can also protect and promote good outcomes for students facing adversities by increasing their ability to anticipate and circumvent threats" (Burns, 2020, p. 4).

Schools have taken notice of the social-emotional needs of students and begun to promote resilience. Resilience is described as the actions taken to face adversity. Research has shown that resilience relies on the relationships that are built, and the implementation and modeling of coping skills and strategies are the important factor that decreases disruptive behavior. Resilience relies solely on relationships (Kumar & Luthar, 2020). Resilient school systems take the same approach to adapting change for problem-behavior students as they have for blended learning, virtual schools, and hybrid learning opportunities. "A resilient school system might take a similar approach in implementing a diversity of instructional methods" (Digital Learning Collaborative, 2020, p. 2). The Resilient School Program attempts to promote a stress-free environment for schools and the surrounding communities through implementing stress management tools for disruptive behaviors and class disruptions. Through the program, teachers learn how to recognize how stress affects the learning environment and the signs and symptoms of stress that increase disruptive behaviors. Students learn how to use stress relievers such as deep breathing exercises and relaxation techniques. Coping skills are employed and

incorporated in daily classroom activities. The Resilient School program has been a crucial factor in providing schools with strategies to manage stress and calm students so they are ready to learn when they enter the classroom. Through the program, students can learn how stress affects their learning capabilities, relaxation exercises, and coping skills that can be incorporated into everyday life situations (Benson-Henry Institute, 2018). “While coping skills and techniques like yoga and meditation are important, we know that connection with others is the single most important protective factor in the face of high and prolonged life stress” (Kumar & Luthar, 2020, p. 3). Building resilience is a challenge for schools. The strategies that are employed must be adapted and changed based on the changes of ACEs and the traumas and the increase in class disruptions and behaviors (Waite, 2020).

Teachers need to practice mindfulness to be aware of what is going on in the moment. This will model positive behavior for students. Students need to be mindful of their situations and provide a resiliency to adversity and trauma (Bouillier & Blair, 2018).

Change Theory

Childhood trauma has contributed to the fact that a change was evident in schools across the country. Restructuring teaching practices, establishing a positive school climate, and the implementation of restorative practices and trauma interventions developed the need for change that paved the way for a change theory approach on behavior and trauma-informed schools (Thomas et al., 2019). Fullan’s idea for Change Theory for school improvement was the foundation for success in combating class disruptions, disruptive behaviors, and promoting implementation of restorative practices through intervention programs. “Change theory or change knowledge can be very powerful in informing education reform strategies, and, in turn, getting results” (Fullan, 2006, p. 3). Fullan’s Change Theory is broken down into three sections.

Section 1 describes flawed change theories within a school. The theories that schools consider on the surface appear to be strong, but have flaws that could make them detrimental to a school's focus for change. Schools must consider standards-based reformation policies, create professional learning communities, and adopt a framework that focuses on leaders in the school (Fullan, 2006). "If teachers are going to help students to develop the skills and competencies of knowledge-creation, teachers need experience themselves in building professional knowledge" (Fullan, 2006, p. 4). School improvement planning is an approach to an educational shift to change student outcomes. Fullan's design for the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) involve school communities working together to change learning environments to accommodate disruptive behaviors by developing capacity building within the school community. Fullan indicates PLCs are focused on learning, collaborative cultures, best practices, learning by doing, continuous improvements and results.

Section 2 refines actions that sustain merit in the classroom. By sustaining merit, capacity building that focuses on results establishes an actionable theory to motivate and change the context of learning. Capacity building monitors the reform of changing disruptive classroom behaviors. (Sudha, 2019). "Most theories of change are weak on capacity building, and that is one of the key reasons why they fall short" (Fullan, 2006, p. 9). When it comes to changing behaviors, research shows that suspensions and expulsions have negative effects on promoting positive behavior and, instead, make students more likely to be placed in a juvenile court system (Anyon et al., 2016). Acknowledging the need for change is the first step.

Changing the way new teachers and staff are hired has a lasting effect on implementing restorative practices. "Having a 'theory in use' is not good enough, in itself. The people involved must also push to the next level, to make their theory of action explicit" (Fullan, 2006, p. 3).

Providing professional development to train new and veteran teachers teaches them to recognize the need and when to implement restorative practices to benefit students who have experienced ACEs, traumatic events, and have disruptive classroom behaviors. Taking the time to invest in trainings opportunities around school expectations for behavior develop positive relationships (Carstarphen, 2018).

Section 3 provides a prospect for the future of change knowledge in education. Change knowledge cannot fix the problems by itself. Just knowing what to do will not meet the needs of a school. The more people know at the local, state, and federal levels, the more established change theory can become. Reformation must be shared by all to succeed. "Shared vision and ownership is more an outcome of a quality process than it is a precondition. This is important to know because it causes one to act differently in order to create ownership" (Fullan, 2006, p. 10).

Federal and state agencies have also adopted discipline reform policies that reference the social and emotional aspects of students and provides them with opportunities to change the way discipline is managed. In 2015, the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESSA) brought a federal approach to discipline within school districts (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). Through the U.S. Department of Education, the act provides five strategies to reduce discipline rates by requiring state agencies to collect data and provide behavioral support systems.

1. State education agencies will now be required to collect data from school districts on different forms of exclusionary discipline.
2. State education agencies will receive funds to support activities and programs on behavioral interventions.
3. State education agencies will develop plans for supporting school districts in reducing their use of exclusionary discipline.

4. School districts will develop plans for reducing the use of exclusionary discipline.
5. School districts will identify schools with high rates of discipline disaggregated by subgroups. (Gregory & Fergus, 2017, p. 120)

The federal and state discipline reform policies do not specifically cite a need for more social-emotional opportunities; instead, it created a focus on the reduction of suspensions across the nation. The state legislative argument is that suspension practices are not appropriate for all ages and abilities. “Banning or limiting the suspension of young children may help states reduce lost instructional time” (Gregory & Fergus, 2017, p. 121). Instead of suspensions, schools are embracing more social-emotional practices and providing more opportunities to treat the mental status of students.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 provides an overview of pertinent research related to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma-informed schools, Response to Intervention and Instruction for Behavior (RTI_2B), and restorative practices. The chapter focuses specifically on the implementation of interventions and practices related to classroom disruptions and providing a schoolwide approach to combating these classroom disruptions. Included in the research are methods to equip teachers with strategies and coping techniques to help these students' progress from disruptive experiences to positive relationships at school and to help students repair the damage that was caused by adverse childhood experiences. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the study.

Chapter 3. Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine 6th, 7th, and 8th grade administrators, counselors, and teacher's perspectives regarding trauma-informed practices in relation to restorative practices that focus on classroom behaviors and disruptions, ACEs, and RTI_2B. Included in this chapter are the research questions that are aligned to the interview questions that were asked of the participants, the researcher's role in the study, the methods of data collection, and the research design.

Research Questions

The central question for this qualitative study was: What are the perceptions of 6th-8th grade administrators, counselors, and teachers on trauma-informed practices in relation to restorative practices that focus on ACEs, negative classroom behaviors, and RTI_2B? The following supporting questions were used to guide the data collected for teacher experiences with ACEs and trauma and disruptive classroom behaviors?

1. How does the use of trauma-informed practices help create a safe and trusting learning environment for all students?
2. How do adverse childhood experiences influence classroom behavior?
3. How are trauma-informed practices implemented into school-wide programs such as RTI_2B?
4. What restorative practices are used in a trauma-informed school?

Design of the Study

The researcher concluded that a qualitative approach would be necessary to gather teachers' experiences through an interview process. A qualitative research design uses written language instead of numerical data to collect data and expand on emergent themes throughout

the research process. The researcher used a narrative format that included coding and transcribing the data that is collected through the interviews (McLeod, 2019). The qualitative method for this research study was a phenomenological research design which involves the researcher describing experiences by individuals about the phenomenon that is being researched. This type of research involves conducting interviews to collect data. In a phenomenological design the sample size falls within a range of 3-10 people (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Using a qualitative approach meant that the sample size was relatively small or focused on a particular group. This study examined the rationale for observing Adverse Childhood Experiences and the direct relationship to classroom behavior.

Site Selection

The site selected is located in a rural area of eastern Tennessee. The school was chosen for the study because it is currently a trauma-informed school that implemented restorative practices school-wide and is practicing a growing response to instruction and intervention program for behavior (RTI_2B). This allowed for the selected site to have relevant and current information and experiences for trauma-informed, strategies used, and plans for the program.

This selected school is a Title I school with approximately 69% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. The student to teacher ratio is 15:1 with 1 Principal, 1 Assistant Principal, 29 teachers, 1 guidance counselor, and 5 instructional assistants. As of October, 2021, there were 334 students enrolled in the school ranging from Pre-K to 8^{th} grade. It is predominately White (94%) with the other 6% being Hispanic or Black. The school also serves 37.7% of economically disadvantaged students.

Population and Sample

The researcher used a purposeful sampling approach to identify participants. Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research to identify, select, and implement information related to the phenomenon being researched (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach uses specific sampling that meets the requirements for the research. To participate in the study teachers had to meet three criteria areas: (a) hold an active teaching license, (b) have a minimum of 3 years classroom experience, and (c) have been employed by the school for a minimum of 3 years. The criteria for the selection of participants were developed in order to gain a better knowledge of the school and the needs of that school and its teachers. Of the criteria set forth, the researcher identified the principal and assistant principal, 13 teachers, and the guidance counselor who met all three requirements for participation. A list was compiled of voluntary participants, each person was contacted, and virtual interview dates were set up. At the conclusion of the interview, each participant was asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview if needed.

Data Collection and Strategies

The data collection process began following receipt of approval for the study from East Tennessee State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and from the school system's superintendent or his associates. Interviews with teachers at the selected site then began. Analysis of data occurred in three phases: (a) categorization based on emergent themes from the interviews, (b) constructing the explanation in narrative form, and (c) re-examination of the collected data concerning discipline referrals. After permission was granted, the identified participants were contacted for a voluntary interview through the distribution of a recruitment flyer. The interviews were conducted via Zoom and participants were recorded to ensure

accurately transcribed information. Prior to the interview, participants were provided with a description of the study which included the purpose of the study, the researcher's role in the study, and the participant's role in the study. Individual interviews were scheduled with each participant and lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. Interview questions can be found in the Appendix B. All interviews were recorded and transcribed onto an Excel spreadsheet.

Data were also collected from the school's documentation for the 2021-2022 school year and included the current school climate survey and log entries for discipline office referrals. Office referrals were sorted into categories based on conferences with administrators, detentions, In-School suspensions, Out-of-School suspensions, and expulsions. This data were obtained from the administration of the selected site.

Data Analysis Strategies

The researcher examined themes that emerged from the data, and the participants were placed into three groups: general education teacher, related arts teachers, and administrator. Data were collected using a virtual interview session, and the interviews were transcribed onto a spreadsheet for correct data analysis and member checking. The results were compared by focusing on emerging themes; the themes that emerged were categorized by (a) trauma-informed, (b) empathy, (c) discouragement and lack of resources, (d) multiple ACEs, (e) lack of coping skills, (f) disruptive classroom behaviors, (g) RTI_2B, (h) surveys, (i) restorative practices, (j) use of data, and (k) continuous learning opportunities.

Documents such as climate survey results, attendance survey results, and office referral data were collected from the principal of the selected site. These documents included percentages of students for the current school year that were assigned in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, detentions, behavior conferences, and office referrals. These percentages were

broken down by grade level and gender. The principal provided compiled data from the school climate survey to assess the demographics of the school. These categories were further disaggregated between students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and those who do not.

Assessment of Quality and Rigor

In qualitative research, quality and rigor is assessed using four elements: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was determined through member-checking after the completion of the interviews, the data collected and coded, and a follow up session established for the member-checking to be completed. Triangulation was also used with interviews. Triangulation was established by asking each participant the same questions through different methods of data collection, and transferability used the collected data and attempted to apply them to other situations or scenarios (DeVault, 2019). Transferability was conducted by asking teachers about experiences to provide insight into what was needed to develop a program such as RTI_2B to help students and teachers decrease disruptive classroom behaviors. Dependability is related to reliability per DeVault. Dependability was provided to participants through the purpose of the study which is to find the relationship between ACEs and disruptive classroom behaviors and the use of a behavior intervention plan to decrease disruptive behaviors. Participants were selected on a voluntary basis. The study was advertised in a flyer that was approved by the district's director of schools and was emailed to all 6^{th}-8^{th} certified teachers at the selected school. Finally, confirmability was measured through the recording of each interview and transcription using a 3^{rd} party program. Conformability was established to aid other researchers who might use the data and expand on it as more research becomes available.

Notes were also recorded based on body language and emotional reactions to each question during the interviews; follow-up questions or clarification questions were asked as needed.

Ethical Considerations

Anonymity and confidentiality were the top priorities for the research study, and participation was voluntary. Each participant was informed of the purpose of the study, the interview procedures, and the risks involved; they were also informed that there was no compensation for participation in the study. Verbal consent was collected before the interviews were conducted. Steps were taken for the identities of the participants to remain anonymous or pseudonyms were used. Any information that was provided that would identify the participants was removed from the transcription. Confidentiality was maintained by having all collected data safely locked on the researcher's computer which was password and fingerprint protected. All research procedures were submitted to East Tennessee State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval to proceed with the research study.

Role of the Researcher

The interview questions were created by the researcher, sent via email to the Director of School or his assistant for approval, and the results were transcribed into categories based on emerging themes. The researcher's role in the interview process was to gain access to the voluntary participants, set up virtual interview sessions, transcribe the data, and conduct follow-up interviews as needed. The participants were educators at the selected site who worked directly with students in 6^{th}, 7^{th}, and 8^{th} grades including administrators and the counselor. The interviews were conducted by the researcher who had attended CITI training within the last three years.

Chapter Summary

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between ACEs and disruptive classroom experiences of teachers in 6^{th}-8^{th} grades at the selected site and the implementation of interventions and restorative practices such as student of the month and earning positive behavior tickets that were used to purchase merchandise items at a school store. The researcher collected data from volunteers and conducted interviews via Zoom. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and the data was compiled for entry onto an Excel spreadsheet. Emergent themes included the educator's experiences with ACEs, trauma-informed practices, disruptive classroom behaviors and their outcomes, RTI_2B, and interventions.

Chapter 4. Results

The purpose of this study was to examine 6th, 7th, and 8th grade administrators, counselors, and teacher's perspectives regarding trauma-informed practices in relation to restorative practices that focused on classroom behaviors and disruptions, ACEs, and RTI_2B. The researcher collected data that pertained to classroom experiences with ACEs, trauma-informed practices, and Response to Instruction and Intervention for Behavior for analysis to answer the following research questions:

Overarching Question: What are the perceptions of 6th-8th grade administrators, counselors, and teachers regarding trauma-informed practices in relation to restorative practices that focus on ACEs, disruptive classroom behaviors, and RTI_2B?

1. How does the use of trauma-informed practices help create a safe and trusting learning environment for all students?
2. How do adverse childhood experiences influence classroom behavior?
3. How are trauma-informed practices implemented into school-wide programs such as RTI_2B?
4. What restorative practices are used in a trauma-informed school?

Data were collected through semi-structured virtual interviews with individual teachers that were associated with 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students. Those included taught specific academic subjects, related arts courses, guidance counselors, and administrators. The researcher interviewed teachers individually and encouraged open responses to the interview questions. This allowed the researcher to analyze each individual response to find common themes based on the experiences.

Interviews were recorded through Zoom; the transcribe feature was used to collect the data and transferred onto an Excel spreadsheet. Participants were provided with a copy of the transcribed spreadsheet that was significant to their interview for member-checking and validity. Participants were advised that the session was recorded and any identifiers were removed and replaced with pseudonyms. Transcripts were reviewed, color-coded, and analyzed for emerging themes. Table 2 includes the relationship of the interview questions to the application of the research questions. The letter assigned to the interview question describes the application to the teacher, administrator, or counselor. The corresponding number relates to the question that was asked.

Table 2

Research Questions and Interview Questions Relationship

Research Question	Interview Question
How does the use of trauma-informed practices help create a safe and trusting learning environment for all students?	4, 5, 8
How do adverse childhood experiences influence classroom behaviors?	1, 2, 3, 9
How are trauma-informed practices implemented into school-wide programs such as RTI_2B?	6, 7
What restorative practices are used in trauma-informed schools?	10, 11

Interview Participants

The school currently employs 29 teachers in grades K-8. Since the inception of being a trauma-informed school, 13 of those qualify for the participant interviews for this study. To qualify, each participant had to be the primary instructor for 6^{th}, 7^{th}, or 8^{th} grade students. Ten of those identified chose to participate. The following table shows a demographic breakdown of the

individual participants by gender, level of education, years of experience, and the grade level taught.

Table 3

Interview Participants

Name	Gender	Level of Education	Years of Experience	Grade Level
Participant 1	F	Masters	3	Related Arts K-8
Participant 2	F	Masters	12	Counselor 5-8
Participant 3	M	Masters	9	Related Arts K-8
Participant 4	F	Bachelors	3	7th Grade
Participant 5	F	Doctorate	18	Administrator
Participant 6	F	Doctorate	9	Administrator
Participant 7	M	Masters	10	7th Grade
Participant 8	F	Bachelors	14	8th Grade
Participant 9	M	Education Specialist	9	8th Grade
Participant 10	F	Bachelors	3	6th Grade

Interview Results

Data collected through individual participant interviews were recorded through Zoom, transcribed using Microsoft Excel, and coded for emerging themes. The researcher began disaggregating the data by transcribing the recorded interviews onto an Excel spreadsheet using an open coding technique and documenting line-by-line. Themes emerged from the responses provided by the participants. The credibility of this research study was supported by member checking of the transcripts from the interviews by the participants.

The researcher determined the themes that emerged for Research Question 1 were trauma-informed empathy towards students and discouragement due to the lack of resources. The themes that emerged in response to Research Question 2 were: multiple ACEs, lack of coping skills, and disruptive classroom behaviors. Research Question 3 focused on the use of Response

to Instruction and Intervention for Behavior (RTI_2B) and the use of surveys. The themes that emerged from Research Question 4 were restorative practices, use of data from the surveys, and continuous learning opportunities. The results of this study are organized by guiding research questions.

Research Question 1

How does the use of trauma-informed practices help create a safe and trusting learning environment for all students?

Participants indicated that they all had some form of trauma-informed training, but with the changing ACEs and traumas that students are experiencing, they would like to have more opportunities to stay up-to-date with changes that occur. The themes that emerged when participants were asked about trauma-informed practices within the school were trauma-informed, empathy towards students, and discouragement regarding the lack of resources. The following responses were obtained from the participants expressing their experiences with trauma-informed practices.

Trauma-Informed

Being trauma-informed involves many hours of training and practice for the successful implementation of the program. Being a trauma-informed school requires schools to protect students in all ways that they can, provide students with coping strategies to help with traumatic events, and provide prevention strategies to keep the trauma from influencing the student further. These participants described their experiences with the training they had received.

Participant 5, an administrator, said:

> We had a team go to the data training. The team came back and brought information that was delivered to the full staff. Our full faculty, each year, goes over the trauma-informed

> practices, the RTI2B process. We have a very high economically disadvantaged population. It sits at 71% currently, so we have to teach our teachers how to deal with the trauma these students endure. They must be shown how to engage with students of poverty. We must really focus on a change of mindset and work with the opportunity myth.

Participant 6, an administrator added:

> Once a month we have a call with a worker from the state department. Through Microsoft Teams we share ideas and suggestions to implement specific practices in our school. We discuss real struggles that teachers endure and work to develop practices to alleviate those struggles.

Participant 9, an 8th grade teacher, revealed their experience:

> I know it can't be a one-size-fits-all program, but what options do we, as teachers, have who are trying to reach these students? Particularly the disruptive ones. What can we do to get them centered and back on task of being a productive member of the classroom? I wanted to relate to them a little better. We have all had trauma in our lives, but each one is different. I want to better understand them and have more tools at my disposal to intervene when disruptions arise that are brought on by a traumatic event.

Empathy Toward Students

Participants revealed their experiences with students who struggle coping with their emotions. They discussed strategies that were implemented to help students self-regulate and work through what they are feeling.

Participant 1, a related arts teacher, revealed:

> I try to build that relationship with the students that I see struggling. When they can see that you care, then sometimes they change their behaviors.

Participant 2, a school counselor, added:

> I always offer the students a chance to separate themselves from the classroom and either take a walk or get a drink of water. Sometimes a change of environment can change the trigger in their brains and how it functions. All teachers have different tactics, but the first thing I do is offer them an option to leave the environment and take a break.

Participant 6, an administrator also added:

> I don't know what these students go through because it is not something that I have dealt with personally, but we can sympathize and have empathy with them and their situations. We truly do not know what is going on in their 10-year-old brains.

Participant 8, an 8th grade teacher said:

> I do not want to baby them, but you must be careful the way you approach things with students with trauma and ACEs. These students may go off and it could turn into a dangerous situation. A certain student that I am thinking of would be defensive about everything, so you would always have to make a point to be always near him. I would walk beside his desk to show proximity. Sometimes you would have to take him into the hallway to defuse the situation, or just let him calm down and redirect.

Participant 10, a 6th grade teacher, stated that:

> Most of my students do not respect authority figures or adults. Some of them are raising themselves, or being raised by a family member. They see themselves as the authority figure in their homes. When they come to school, they find it difficult to see someone else as an authority figure over them.

Discouragement Regarding the Lack of Resources

After the implementation of the trauma-informed practices and RTI_2B practices, participants discussed training or strategies they need to reach the students they serve. Participant 1, a related arts teacher, stated:

> Since I am a fairly new teacher, I would like a professional development refresher course that focuses on new changes in trauma and ACEs and the use of new behavior techniques that I can use in my classroom. I want to understand how to make it successful in my classroom. We attend professional developments regarding trauma-informed, but it is not shown to us how to practice it.

Participant 2, a school counselor, also said:

> Teachers do not feel like they are equipped or have the knowledge to help these kids. I feel that some of the trauma and the experiences they have encountered are beyond what I was trained to do as an educator. They are more in depth and need more outside resources to help them.

Participant 6, an administrator, described:

> I think learning how to de-escalate situations is something that needs to taught. It is a skill. It is not something that a person knows naturally how to do. De-escalation tactics have to be taught, practiced, and developed. We as teachers have our own children, but most of our children do not come from environments that our students come from. It is hard to relate to a student who has a parent in jail, or a family member who has committed suicide, or parents who are getting divorced.

Participant 7, a 7^{th} grade teacher, included:

> There are some classroom disruptions that I know are brought on by outside forces. It is not going to get better and is progressively getting worse. I would like classroom strategies to better handle discipline issues. The issues that I face today are not the same ones that I was dealing with when I first began teaching. I think moving forward we need to figure out what we can do in our classrooms to better reach these students with so much trauma. I want to be effective when we are dealing with these kinds of disruptions so we can get back to educating these students and figure out how to help them be successful.

Participant 9, an 8th grade teacher said:

> I would like to see scenarios of how teachers and administrators handle students with ACEs. I want to see what kind of techniques they use to help these students. I would also like to hear from students who have experienced ACEs and have been a part of a successful program.

Research Question 2

How do adverse childhood experiences influence classroom behavior?

Participants were asked about their experiences with ACEs and the influence these ACEs have on disruptive classroom behaviors. The themes that emerged when participants were asked about adverse childhood experiences within the classroom were: multiple ACEs, lack of social skills, and disruptive classroom behaviors. The following responses are from participants in regard to the experiences with students who have experienced ACEs or trauma in their lives.

Multiple ACEs

Participants discuss the ACEs that the students they serve experience and what strategies are used to help these particular students.

Participant 2, a school counselor, revealed:

> While the demographics of our student population do not experience ACEs that involve natural disasters such as tornados, or hurricanes, they do experience more situations such as parental drug and alcohol abuse, sexual abuse, loss of a parent, incarcerated parent, or familial suicide. We have a lot of kids who are being raised by grandparents due to parental behaviors.

Participant 3, a related arts teacher, said:

> We have a huge population of students who have experienced neglect, divorce, and abuse. These behaviors have a large impact on how they act outside of the home. Every now and then you can see the abuse of the student, or smell them. There was a time that I can remember having to have a kid removed from my room due to the overpowering smell. It was causing disruption in the classroom.

Participant 4, a 7th grade teacher, stated:

> I have had conversations with students who have watched a love one die or had a family member commit suicide. A large percentage of my students only have one parent living in the home. Some do not have any and they are being raised by a grandparent or other family member.

Participant 6, an administrator said:

> We have a high number of students who live in poverty. We are a Title I school. Most of our students come from a broken home, so they don't have a stable home life. Family dynamics are different than they were 10 years ago.

Lack of Coping Skills

Students exhibit a lack of coping skills to handle the trauma they have experienced. Participants discuss their experiences attempting to help students cope with the trauma, why it occurred, and how to understand them.

Participant 5, an administrator shared:

> Teachers are having to learn where their student's traumas are coming from. School gave them an escape from the traumas at home, but they have had to learn how to balance those traumas and cope with them. They cannot understand that their traumas do not define them. How they cope with them and move on defines them.

Participant 6, an administrator, revealed:

> Because children do not know how to regulate their emotions, they do not have coping skills to handle what is going on in their lives, so they act out. The trauma they have experienced and not having support at home to help in certain situations that intervene and provide structure, have hindered them learning how to cope.

Participant 7, a 7th grade teacher said:

> It seems that the type of students that we have this year struggle with redirection and do not always work making it very difficult to maintain classroom management. Most students do not have a lot of optimism if any at all, and are very negative. In my experience, these students want to experience some kind of interaction even if it is a disruption or a negative interaction. They want attention, even if it is bad attention.

Disruptive Classroom Behaviors

Students exhibit disruptive classroom behaviors for multiple reasons. Participants provide their experiences with disruptive classroom behaviors and how they were resolved.

Participant 4, a 7th grade teacher, said:

> I do not experience a lot of classroom disruptions due to the small size of my classrooms. However, on the days that I do, they revolve around disrespect and anger issues. I have experienced students who have gotten angry when they have been asked a question. They show their frustration by trying to change the situation.

Participant 5, an administrator, stated:

> Right now, behaviors are tripling. Students are unable to sit still for a 45-minute class period and consistently want to be entertained. Their attention spans are decreasing. When you look at their home lives you can see a direct relationship between the number of ACEs they have and the behaviors they have during the school day. It is hard to have class when a student is screaming or throwing chairs or other things across the classroom. We have had to remove an entire classroom of students to protect them from the other student until the issue is handled. Teachers are dealing with students who do not want to do a preferred activity. The amount of disrespect and defiance is becoming an issue that is growing rapidly.

Participant 6, an administrator, said:

> The biggest thing we are dealing with right now is the amount of disrespect. Kids are trying to see what they can get away with. Something as simple as asking them to remove a hat or a hood, will make them lash out. This is a rule that they have had to follow since they were young, but they want to see how far they can push the line. They reach a different level of frustration and all they understand is how to get angry or go into a defense mode.

Participant 9, an 8th grade teacher, also added:

> For me, with a specific class, I experience disruptive behavior at least two to three times per week. Sometimes more. I have tried several things such as positive reinforcement. I have tried praise. I have tried consequences. I have tried isolation. I have tried building relationships. I am at the end of my rope with behaviors. They are trying to get through a 90-minute class, so they can go home. At the end of the day, I have 20 other students who are not participating in the behavior, but they are completely distracted and off-task because of the behavior. All my efforts to engage these particular students have been unsuccessful.

Research Question 3

How are trauma-informed practices implemented into school-wide programs such as RTI$_2$B?

The RTI$_2$B program is an intervention program for students with behavior issues (Evanovich & Scott, 2016). The themes that emerged when participants were asked about school-wide programs that were implemented, they responded with: the use of Response to Instruction and Intervention for Behavior (RTI$_2$B), restorative practices, and the use of surveys. The following educator responses detail the experiences with the Response to Intervention and Instruction for Behavior (RTI$_2$B) and the strategies that were used to implement a school-side program.

Response to Intervention for Behavior (RTI$_2$B)

RTI$_2$B is provided for students who need extensive intervention for disruptive behavior problems. Participants revealed their experiences with the RTI$_2$B program and the influence the program had on students.

Participant 2, a school counselor, said:

> We do a lot of trust building activities that model positive behavior. When you listen to the students, you learn about their family situations and experiences. We want to find ways to better improve behavior in our classrooms. RTI_2B has been a work in progress, but at this point we are all desperate for any strategies to help the behaviors, so we can do what we love. We want to teach.

Participant 3, a related arts teacher, added:

> I am on the RTI_2B team and helped to design our behavior plan. We work to strategically plan implementations and interventions the are specific to our demographics. Each year we meet to make any added changes that would work best for our students and evaluate those that did not work well. We especially look at those to see why they did not work and what we can do to make them work.

Participant 4, a 7^{th} grade teacher said:

> As a new teacher, finding ways to manage my classroom is a way for me to build relationships. Using the behavior plan that we established has proven to be a way to start that at the beginning of the school year.

Participant 5, an administrator, revealed part of their RTI_2B program:

> We have a progressive discipline plan throughout the whole school. There is a student-managed portion that allows the student to take responsibility for their actions, a teacher-managed approach that is handled within the classroom, and an office-managed approach. Usually when the behavior reaches the office, it is a repeated offense or one that is extremely severe. It is harder for the older kids to follow, but the younger students

do very well with the behavior plan. The behaviors in the middle school ages are out of the ordinary and are causing a lot of stress among teachers.

Participant 6, an administrator, added:

> Now that we are a trauma-informed school, our RTI_2B program needs to align with the trauma-informed practices. When we have students who are so angry, you cannot attempt to talk to them until they have calmed down. We are trying to educate ourselves to recognize the signs and changes in behavior. Student behavior is not going to change if we cannot teach them how to change.

Participant 10, a 6th grade teacher, shared their observation of Tier III of the RTI_2B program:

> I have noticed that students who are in that Tier of the program do have more adversities than some of the others. They tend to struggle more at home and at school. They have a hard time applying themselves, and any approach to boost their confidence or change behaviors takes longer than those who are in Tier I or Tier II. It is hard for them to understand that they do not have to follow the paths that they are currently on. Our students tend to have a good response to the program, but they struggle to stay there sometimes without proper guidance. We can guide them here at school, but we cannot help as much when they go home. We can only hope that they make the right decisions when they are there.

Surveys

Surveys are used to collect information that can be used to help the students. Participants discussed the use of the surveys and how the data was used to help the students. The universal screener can be seen in the Appendix D, and the results from the attendance survey can be found in the Appendix E.

Participant 2, a school counselor, described a survey that is used to help place students in a tier:

> We use a universal screener that teachers use to assess the behaviors they experience in the classroom. This survey provides information that allows the RTI_2B team to put students into the correct behavior tier. We do this screener three times a year to collect data to see if any progress is being made. The other survey we use is a trust building survey. This survey asks students about their experiences at school. One question that is asked is "Who in the building do you trust and have built a good relationship with?" That one question helps teachers effectively use the program to reach those students. The information is not shared except in a need-to-know situation. This protects the privacy of the student while building relationships and trust.

Participant 5, an administrator, also added:

> The state department provides a climate survey that is administered to students. This climate survey asks students about their experiences at school, and if they feel safe while here. An attendance survey is also administered every nine weeks to the 5^{th}-8^{th} grade students. They get to tell us how they learn and what makes them feel uncomfortable in the classroom or at school. They can tell us when they thrive and where they are struggling and need help. It has really been an effective tool for teachers to design their lesson plans for engagement. The attendance portion is analyzed by the administration. They look to see why kids like to come to school and why they do not, and use that to develop intervention plans. When behaviors start to escalate, having this data is beneficial as a place to start in developing an intervention plan.

Participant 6, an administrator, discussed the attendance survey that is administered every nine weeks:

> It is a very short survey that teachers do as part of their morning meeting. It is a Google form that they add to their Google Classroom. It is designed to be a quick check-in to see how they are feeling and if they need to speak to someone. Emojis are used to express their emotions. They select how they are feeling. It also asks if they know how to check their attendance and access their grades. It checks to see if they know where to get any missing assignments, or what to do with absence excuses. It is a way to start building responsibility at an early age and taking accountability for their assignments and absences.

Participant 9, an 8th grade teacher, spoke about an engagement survey that is administered in the classroom:

> At the beginning of the year, I give my students a survey that asks them about their engagement in the classroom. It addresses how they learn. Some of the questions that are asked include what kind of activities they have participated in, and if they have shown growth or did well in that class due to the learning activity. It also asks them about their weaknesses. I use this to try to grow those weaknesses into strengths.

Research Question 4

What restorative practices are used in a trauma-informed school?

When the participants were asked about restorative practices within the trauma-informed school, they responded with: restorative practices within the school vs. classroom, use of data from the surveys, and continuous learning opportunities. The following responses indicate the

strategies that were used in various aspects in the school and describe professional developments and training provided for the teachers.

Restorative Practices within the School vs. Classroom

As part of the RTI_2B program schools use restorative practices to develop a student's coping skills and attempt to change the disruptive behaviors. Participants responded with restorative practices that were implemented both school-wide and within the classroom. Participant 1, a related arts teacher, said:

> When disruptive behaviors occur, I try to change the environment of the student such as moving them away from other students. If it continues, I remove the student until I can talk to him or her and attempt to de-escalate the behavior.

Participant 3, a related arts teacher, described a school-wide incentive for positive behavior:

> Specifically, I like the positive behavior plans we have – like student of the month. It is motivational for students. We also have the mall ball which is like our own little gift shop. Students earn tickets that vary in number. They can earn tickets for positive behavior and citizenship. It is a way for those students who do not necessarily make good grades to have an opportunity to be a part of something positive. Every time we open the mall, almost every student has at least one ticket.

Participant 4, a 7th grade teacher, discussed one teacher-managed strategy that is used in the classroom:

> When disruptive behaviors occur in my classroom, I turn it into a teaching moment. That student then becomes my classroom assistant for the day. This is structured in a way that the student is still learning class content, but also not distracting other students. Most of the time this ends with that student being able to help others who are struggling in the

content. Sometimes this strategy is not appropriate for the behavior and an office referral is warranted.

Participant 5, an administrator, discussed the use of school-wide practices to handle behaviors:

> Our first thought is to provide the student with a small amount of time to calm down. They usually sit in the office or the counselor's room until they are calm enough to have a conversation. There are notebooks and writing prompts that are in these rooms. This allows the student to immediately write down their feelings and get the anger out on paper instead of lashing out at another person. It also provides us with documentation so we can monitor the reasons for the behavior. For younger students there are face charts that the student can circle their emotional state at that moment. Often finding out the triggers at that moment allows for an individualized support plan to be developed. This also helps you to plan the next steps. Those steps could be as simple as the student just having a difficult day to being a repeated pattern and resulting in a more severe punishment. This is where the Tier II and Tier III behavior plans are developed. Once the plan is in place it is reviewed once a month and changes are made on a case-by-case basis.

Participant 6, an administrator, provided insight into the trainings that are provided to teachers for them to implement restorative practices in their classrooms:

> We read the book “Help for Billy” and did a school wide professional development. A Google Classroom was created with discussion boards for the faculty to discuss the content and provide input into strategies to help the child that was discussed in the book. Theoretically, they were designing strategies that would be beneficial to students who

were just like Billy. We wanted to educate ourselves about the situations that these students go through from their viewpoint. It is allowing all of us to self-reflect.

Participant 7, a 7th grade teacher, elaborated on activities that allow teachers to build relationships with students:

> Part of our RTI$_2$B program is to develop relationships with students with a mentor program. Most of our behavior issues come from our male students. Our male faculty members work with our male students to mentor and model appropriate behavior that these boys may not see at home due to not having a father, their father being incarcerated, or being abused. One of our related arts teachers holds a lunch bunch group for students with behaviors. They eat lunch together, talk about their likes and dislikes, and their hobbies and interests. We have partnered with an outside therapy service that comes in once a week to collaborate with those students who are classified as Tier III behavior students.

Use of Data

The school uses surveys as a way to understand student progress, depth of knowledge, and obtain information in regard to student well-being. Participants who administered the surveys to students elaborated on the purpose of the surveys and how the data was used to improve the programs.

Participant 2, a school counselor, discussed the use of data from the needs survey:

> The information that the kids give us from the needs assessment is used to disaggregate the students into appropriate tiers for RTI$_2$B. It gives the staff the knowledge they need to be able to work with the students they are assigned to mentor. The data collected is not widely known. It is only shared with those faculty members who are assigned as mentors.

Participant 5, an administrator, said:

> We use the learning profile folders that we collect through surveys at our data team meetings. The behavior plans that are included in these learning profiles are used in the classroom to collect more data. These profiles are brought to our data team meetings that occur once a month. We make sure the plan is being followed and if anything has changed either for the better or negatively. Changes are made accordingly. These profile folders allow us to track behaviors in the students.

Participant 6, an administrator, added:

> After the attendance survey is given, I display the percentages outside the office. The students only know the percentages. The data is broken down more by grade level, gender, and student for teachers to assess. As a team, we develop strategies for teachers to discuss in their morning meetings in regard to attendance. We develop conversations starters such as college and career choices. Students do not realize these few minutes every morning are allowing teachers to develop relationships and learn about them as individuals.

Continuous Learning Opportunities

Four participants discussed continuous learning opportunities with the use of book studies and professional development opportunities that were completed by the staff.

Participant 4, a 7th grade teacher, said:

> As a faculty, we are always participating in professional developments that pertain to trauma and RTI$_2$B. Each year we experience new trauma with our students and new behavior issues that were not there before.

Participant 5, an administrator, elaborated:

> Most of us have not experienced the ACEs that our students go home to every day. As a faculty we participated in a poverty simulation. This simulation was designed for groups to participate in a group activity. The groups were given multiple ACEs and different living situations and scenarios such as: A broken home, a certain budget, and a health issue, or an abusive mother, government assistance, and drug abuse. This simulation puts into perspective the situations that our students endure daily.

Participant 6, an administrator, discussed one of the book studies:

> To implement trauma-informed strategies, we as a staff have participated in a book study that is entitled "Help for Buddy" it focuses on those ACEs from a student's perspective. These perspectives guide the behavior plans that are designed to meet the needs of the students who have experienced trauma and ACEs. A Google Classroom was created for book studies where discussion boards are utilized when behaviors occur. Administrators post questions for the faculty to comment on and discuss.

Participant 9, an 8th grade teacher, added input from another book study:

> Student engagement is a priority for classrooms. If students are distracted, bored, or unengaged, they are not going to function well in a classroom – emotionally and academically. We did a book study entitled "Just Ask Us." The book asks students about how they learn and what engages them in the classroom. It even focused on activities that gave students the desire to come to school to learn. The book included real life scenarios with video links to watch the strategies that were designed based on the data collected from students and how they are used in the classroom. This was beneficial because it allowed us to see it being executed, not just read it in a text.

Document Analysis

The researcher collected data from the school climate survey that was administered to all students at the beginning of the school year, discipline data to support the responses that were provided during the interviews, and responses that were collected by the administration through student surveys.

A school climate survey for the 2021-2022 school year was administered at the beginning of the school year. The survey is provided by the Tennessee Department of Education, and the results are compiled and provided to administrators. The survey is anonymous and only identifies students within a grade level at a particular school. Students are asked to provide responses to topics such as school safety, relationships with teachers, relationships with administrators, bullying, and school culture. Students assign a numerical value to each question: 1-Disagree strongly, 2-Disagree, 3-Agree, 4-Agree strongly. For questions 1-4, 6, 7, and 9-16 the higher the average of the score is, the better. For questions 5, 8, and 17 the lower the number, the better. Table 4 depicts the averages for each question based on the grade level.

Table 4

School Climate Survey Averages

Question	6th grade	7th grade	8th grade
1. My classroom is a fun place to be	2.91	2.91	2.96
2. I like my school	2.91	2.42	3.03
3. Students in my class help each other learn	2.45	2.5	2.8
4. I feel safe and comfortable with the staff and students in this school	3.17	3.33	3.32
5. I wish I could go to another school	1.5	1.5	1.65
6. Students in my class treat each other with respect	2.38	2.33	2.42
7. The teachers always try to be fair	3.00	2.83	3.20
8. Students in my class are mean to each other	2.30	1.83	2.29
9. People in this school are willing to go out of their way to help each other	2.60	2.92	2.65
10. The students here treat others as they would like to be treated	2.67	2.60	2.30
11. Students in this school accept and follow rules	2.71	2.33	2.52
12. Staff, students, and the principal are aware of the procedures to resolve problems or conflicts	3.17	3.33	3.26
13. The teacher/principal is willing to listen if a student has a serious problem	3.38	3.59	3.32
14. Most students in this school know each other very well	2.75	3.17	3.16
15. Students are always fighting with each other	2.13	1.67	2.26
16. Teachers are able to stop someone from bullying	2.88	3.08	2.74
17. I have been bullied at school	2.13	.17	1.9

This survey provided information that related to relationships in the school building. Both student-to-student relationships and student-to-teacher relationships were included. The data shows that all three grade levels feel safe and comfortable around the staff and other students with a combined average of 3.27. Students also felt that the administration was willing to listen to their problems which is supported by the combined average of 3.43. These findings support research questions 3 and 4. The findings from the data provided by students supported focusing on building positive relationships through restorative practices and RTI_2B programs.

When students were asked about being bullied in school, the average was closer to 1 than to 4. This data shows that students feel they are less bullied while at school. The average composite was 1.4 which supports research questions 1, 3, and 4. The use of trauma-informed practices and restorative practices have proved to decrease bullying within the school. Students also feel that teachers treat them fairly with a 3.01 average when making decisions in class and when involving students. The culture within the school is supported by how few students (average 1.55) want to transfer to another school. This is also supported by the number of students who like their school; the data show that an average of 2.79 students like their school. Students have indicated that most students in the building follow school rules. The average fell within the middle with a 2.52 average.

Data were also collected through specific document analysis. The documents that were collected and analyzed included office referrals, detentions, and administrative conferences regarding male and female students in grades 6, 7, and 8 that were given in-school suspension and out-of-school suspensions. Table 5 depicts the number of discipline issues for male and female students in 6^{th}-8^{th} grades. The data showed that most discipline actions were resolved without the need for suspension. This supports the interview data in that the use of restorative practices and positive reinforcement for behavior had an effect on student behavior. The highest number of office referrals and suspensions were for those students in the 8^{th} grade. Teachers went away from using basic classroom management skills and in turn used restorative practices and positive reinforcement to manage classroom behavior. These numbers support the responses to research questions 1, 3, and 4. Using trauma-informed practices, the results also supported a shift to increasing a positive school culture and climate.

Table 5

Discipline Data

Discipline Type	Grade	Male	Female
Referral	6th	16	5
	7th	26	13
	8th	28	19
In-school Suspension	6th	4	0
	7th	3	4
	8th	12	4
Out-of-school Suspension	6th	0	0
	7th	2	6
	8th	8	6

Data were also collected by analyzing an attendance survey that was administered as a Google form by the assistant principal of the selected site; results are found in the Appendix E. The survey supports the responses for research questions 1, 2, 3, and 4. The survey established a trusting relationship by allowing to students to provide their responses and needs without feeling as if they were being interrogated. The questions from the survey support Research Question 1. Certain questions from the survey evaluated ACEs about the student and analyzed the well-being of the child. This supported research question 2. The results from the survey are used as part of maintaining the trauma-informed practices that are established within the school. The results from the survey are also used as part of the RTI_2B program and show where changes need to occur; this supports research question 3. The use of the survey to provide data allows the selected site to develop restorative practices to meet the needs of the students that are identified from the results. This approach supports research question 4. The survey was provided to all 3rd-8th grade students. The purpose of the survey was to establish key themes within the school that were related to attendance, student engagement, and the reason the students come to school. The data from the survey was used to create an attendance incentive program for students as part of the

RTI_2B program. When the selected site began researching how to be a trauma-informed school and the RTI_2B program, a large part of the process was attendance and getting the kids to school in order to help meet the needs of the students who experienced ACEs and trauma. Participant 6 states:

> It's a very short survey. I have teachers do it as part of their morning meetings at the beginning of each nine weeks. They upload it onto their Google Classrooms. These morning meetings are important for our trauma-informed practices and the evaluation of the social emotional aspects of the students. Once I get all the information compiled, I put it on the weekly bulletin for teachers to see. This helps them to be able reach out to specific students and attempt to help them get on track. If something in particular stands out about a student, it allows us to press the matter further to see if something more invasive needs to be done.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 includes the results of the findings of this study. The focus of this study was to understand the experiences of educators within a trauma-informed school, disruptive classroom behaviors, and the implementation of restorative practices. The researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews and data collection from discipline referrals. Interviews were video-recorded through Zoom and were transcribed onto an Excel spreadsheet. The participant's privacy was kept anonymous with the use of a pseudonym. Transcripts of the interviews were provided to all participants for member-checking and accuracy. Transcripts were coded and reviewed for emerging themes. Themes were included in this chapter along with quotations from participants to support the emergent themes.

Chapter 5. Summary

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine 6th, 7th, and 8th grade administrators, counselors, and teacher's perspectives regarding trauma-informed practices in relation to restorative practices that focused on classroom behaviors and disruptions, ACEs, and RTI_2B of certified teachers at a selected school site. The central research question was: What are the perceptions of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade administrators, counselors, and teachers on trauma-informed practices in relation to restorative practices that focus on ACEs, negative classroom behaviors, and RTI_2B? The following supporting questions were used to guide the experiences of the educators.

1. How does the use of trauma-informed practices help create a safe and trusting learning environment for all students?
2. How do adverse childhood experiences influence classroom behavior?
3. How are trauma-informed practices implemented into school-wide programs such as RTI_2B?
4. What restorative practices are used in a trauma-informed schools?

The qualitative approach that was used for this study was a phenomenological approach. A phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to conduct interviews that permitted the participants to explain their experiences about ACEs, trauma-informed practices, and disruptive classroom behavior. A phenomenological approach also allowed for a small sample size to be used for data to be collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data were collected through interviews with participants using the video platform Zoom. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and coded for accuracy and emerging themes.

Participants were selected through a qualification protocol. Participants had to hold a current certified teacher's license and work predominately with 6^{th}-8^{th} grade students. These participants included administrators, counselors, and teachers.

Data was also collected from the site's discipline records for 6^{th}-8^{th} grade students and the school's climate survey for the current school year. These documents were provided by the school's administrative staff.

Research Question 1 Discussion

How does the use of trauma-informed practices help create a safe and trusting learning environment for all students?

When asked about trauma-informed practices, participants indicated that building trusting relationships with students was the foundation of trauma-informed practices and the RTI_2B program. Building strong relationships helps decrease disruptive behaviors. The results of the findings correspond to the findings that were supported in the literature review in Chapter 2. Participants shared their experiences through structured interviews. The analysis of the transcribed data and document analysis produced a thorough understanding of the implementation process and the strategies that are practiced in various parts of the school.

One result from the findings is the building of positive relationships with students. Students who grow up in environments that induce toxic stress can have a challenging time forming healthy and trusting relationships with others (Centers for Disease Control and Protection, 2021b). This finding directly reflects the studies by Williams (2017) who identified three key strategies that develop positive relationships with students: creating a safe learning environment, having consistent routines, identifying students with competence, and supporting positive relationships with students in an appropriate manner. When children are protected by

relationships with adults that support them, they learn to cope with the challenges of stressful situations due to traumatic events (Center on the Developing Child, 2007).

Evidence concerning the development of trusting relationships was collected from the participants who described these relationship practices. Participant 3 states, “Even if the students see me as just trying to get them in trouble again, they realize that I am not. I am trying to build a relationship of trust.”

Participant 2 also described an experience of developing relationships:

> We get the joy of working with adolescents. I think there are some aspects that make it easier to work with younger kids, but being able to help the older kids break the cycle of physical abuse or drug abuse is rewarding. We are struggling to break those cycles, but that is where trusting relationships develop to aid in that process. Students are more prone to follow modeled behavior if they know they can trust you.

Research Question 2 Discussion

How do adverse childhood experiences influence classroom behavior?

Adverse childhood experiences include events such as broken homes, divorce, death of an immediate family member, drugs, incarceration of a parent, and suicide. These are traumatic events that can occur in childhood and can have a lasting effect on the child. Research has shown that students who have experienced at least one ACE will have a higher risk of experiencing more ACEs during their lifetime. The higher the number of ACEs, the higher the risk of delinquent behavior and violent offenses (Jones & Pierce, 2020). These traumatic events can also play a role in disruptive behavior in adolescents (Boullier & Blair, 2018). A child’s brain develops many years into adolescence, and these traumatic events can hinder the development of the brain causing brain function for emotional and social characteristics to be delayed. This delay

can cause disruptive behaviors due to the lack of development (Tennessee Department of Health, 2017). When students are exposed to trauma, the child's cognitive development can have a negative effect on coping skills that can contribute to disease, disability, social issues, and mortality (Davis, 2020).

The findings from this analysis support the data that was distributed in the Tennessee Department of Health (2017) report and the Centers for Disease Control (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021b). Participants stated that most of their students had at least one ACE that influenced classroom behavior.

Participant 1 described behaviors that were related to ACEs:

> We have a lot of students that come from drug addicted homes. That is the environment that they were born into or raised in. That is probably the one that impacts our classrooms the most. They see the behavior at home and were not raised to know anything different.

Participant 6 described the experiences with students and behavior:

> You can definitely tell that the students with the poor homelives and backgrounds that there are cases of abuse and drugs. You can definitely see the correlation between the number of ACEs and the disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Students are struggling to cope with the trauma they experience and acting out or disrupting class is how they try to deal with the situations they are experiencing.

Participant 3 described two incidents that showed the trauma that was experienced:

> Every now and then you can see the trauma that students endure. Sometimes you can smell the kid who doesn't bathe or have clean clothes. There was an incident several years ago in our school that was on CNN, of students who were removed from their

homes and kicked out of school for not bathing. I have had to have a student removed from my classroom because the smell was so bad, my other students were getting sick.

Research Question 3 Discussion

How are trauma-informed practices implemented into school-wide programs such as RTI$_2$B?

Response to instruction and intervention for behavior (RTI$_2$B) plans can lead to improvement in both academics and behaviors. There is a connection between students who have low performance in the classroom and behavior issues. Sometimes these can begin as early as kindergarten. The link between the two can be seen in a student who struggles with reading and uses disruptive behaviors as a means to escape academics (Bohanon et al., 2021a).

The results from this study concluded that teachers perceived the implementation of the RTI$_2$B program as a positive implication of improving student behavior. The findings support the research for a response to instruction and intervention for behavior. The school-wide, tiered program established a school culture that supported positive behaviors. The school-wide program is a three-tiered approach to help schools create for students to succeed and make decisions and choices that promote positive behavior (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2021a). Tier 1 is a universal support system that affects all students. If it is implemented correctly, it meets the needs of 80% of students. It is designed to build a social culture where students use appropriate behavior (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021b). Tier 2 is a more targeted approach that focuses on students who were not successful in Tier 1 of the program. Participant 5 described the RTI$_2$B program at their school:

> When behaviors become office-managed behaviors, we first look at why they are behaving this way and if something has happened to create this behavior. We don't always know what is going on in their personal lives, so we need to self-reflect before

> approaching the behavior. These students display angry behaviors and they don't know how to cope with them. Having a program that allows them to deescalate and attempt to manage the behavior themselves allows for the student to make better choices later in life.

Participant 1 discussed the implementation of Tier 3 and how the students are assigned to the Tier:

> A universal screener is distributed to all faculty members. This includes administrators, teachers, instructional assistants, and the school secretary. The scores from this screener determine how to place all students into the appropriate tier. Students who have a score of 12 or higher are identified as having serious behavior issues and are put into Tier 3 of the program for intensive intervention. These students work with outside therapy institutions that collaborate with the schools to help these kids. Tier 3 kids meet every Friday morning to work with therapists. They are progress-monitored with fidelity checks every three weeks for improvement or other issues that need to be addressed.

Tier 3 uses supports that require the most resources that are available to the student. Schools rely on surveys and assessments that determine a student's level of intervention (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2021e). A universal screener is used to identify which students need more support to be successful, both academically and behaviorally. The purpose of the screener is to identify those students who may not have been identified by a teacher. Universal screeners consider every student so they do not go unnoticed (McIntosh et al., 2021).

Research Question 4 Discussion

What restorative practices are used in a trauma-informed school?

Schools cannot change the trauma that students experience, but they can implement a multi-tiered program that can help these students who have exposure to traumatic experiences. (Gee et al., 2020). Adopting treatment strategies and developing intervention programs that work to help the whole child, not just the trauma, is the foundation for the multi-tiered approach to restorative practices (August et al., 2018).

Restorative practices are ways to respond to behaviors while building a positive school culture and community. Implementation of restorative practices reduces the suspension rate of students because other strategies are used to improve the learning and social environments in the school setting (Augustine et al., 2018). Dispensing punishments based on behavior is a continuing problem across the nation. Restorative practices have been found to reduce the need for suspensions and have increased positive school climate (Mirsky, 2019). Participants in this study indicated that the use of restorative practices have changed the course of behaviors for most students. One practice that was implemented at the selected site was deemed to be successful for the RTI_2B program.

Participant 3 discussed the use of mall tickets as a reward system:

> I think it is motivational for the kids to have the Vol mall, which is like our own little gift shop. Students earn tickets for different things. They might earn one ticket for holding a door open for another person, or being kind in class. They might earn five tickets for meeting a behavior goal. Students can use their tickets to get small prizes, which most of the younger students do, or they can trade them in for getting to eat lunch with a certain teacher or administrator. These are just a few examples of what they can purchase with their tickets. Every time we have the Vol mall, almost every student has enough tickets to get something.

Another participant added another restorative practice:

> We have implemented a student-of-the-month program that evaluates students' behavior and citizenship. A student from each homeroom is selected every month. It resets at the end of every month. The best thing about this program is that it gives students who have messed up at some point a second chance to make good choices and change their behavior.

Recommendation for Practices and Data Analysis

After a thorough review of the literature surrounding trauma-informed schools, ACEs, and restorative practices, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- Administrators should be professionally trained in trauma-informed practices before providing training for all faculty and staff (Boullier & Blair, 2018). Before implementing any practices, teachers and staff who work with students should participate in numerous professional development hours before implementing practices in their classrooms. (Izard, 2016). Also, trainings should be held every six months for the first two years of implementation and then on a reoccurring professional development schedule every school year. Teachers need support for changes that occur and need up-to-date information.
- Administrators should develop a trauma-informed team within the school. This team would facilitate certain aspects of the trauma-informed program and would work together to make any changes or developments to the program as it is needed (Cole et al., 2009). Each member of the team would contribute in such a way that would benefit all teachers and staff in areas such as professional

development opportunities, book studies, rewards and incentives, and restorative practices (Souers & Hall, 2016).

- Teachers should review their rosters each year and, based on facts that they know about each student and ACEs, evaluate how classroom instructors need to shift to meet the needs of vulnerable students. One strategy that administrators can use is to pass around the rosters and have teachers put their initials beside a student's name with whom they have developed a relationship. They should develop an action plan for those students who have less than three names (Williams, 2017).
- Actively support safe, trauma-free working and learning environments in all schools by promoting effective discipline policies that focus on the causes of behaviors in the classroom and invest in the implementation of restorative practices (National Council of State Education Associations, 2019).
- To develop restorative practices school-wide, schools should provide a designated time for team development and building relationships with students.

Recommendation for Future Research

The findings of this research have allowed the researcher to identify the following recommendations for future studies:

- A study could be conducted to evaluate the perceptions of teachers and disruptive classroom behaviors after implementation of a trauma-informed program such as Response to Intervention and Instruction for Behavior RTI_2B.
- A study could be conducted to evaluate the effects of student involvement in the creation of a trauma-informed program.

- A study could be conducted evaluating the district and administrators steps and procedures taken to become a trauma-informed school.
- A study could be conducted to evaluate the link between ACEs and Response to Intervention and Instruction for Behavior RTI_2B.
- A study could be conducted to evaluate the school climate and culture change after a school has implemented trauma-informed practices.

Conclusion

All schools experience the duress of academics and test scores, but the well-being of a child is just as important. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are critical contributors to negative health and behavior issues in an adolescent's life (Jones & Pierce, 2020). Research has shown that the earlier a child experiences these ACEs the higher the likelihood that students will experience difficulties in life. These difficulties can be seen in disruptive behaviors in the classroom as well as in life. "With an understanding of how ACEs affect learning, educators can take proactive measures to create positive learning environments, thereby improving the odds for the most vulnerable children" (Burns, 2020, p. 7). Having a good relationship with other people may seem like an easy task for some, but for someone who has experienced trauma such as loss of a parent, familial death or incarceration, abuse or neglect, and drug abuse, that simple task can lead to stress and disruptive behaviors (Tennessee Department of Health, 2017).

The purpose of this study was to evaluate teacher experiences with disruptive classroom behaviors and how they were resolved within an active trauma-informed school. The researcher found that implemented trauma-informed and restorative practices within a school had a positive shift on school climate, culture, and disruptive classroom behaviors. Disruptive behaviors in grades 6-8 were resolved using different approaches other than suspension or expulsion. Through

the analysis of documents and interview transcripts that were conducted by the researcher, the participants provided experiences with trauma-informed practices, disruptive classroom behaviors, and RTI_2B. As a result, fewer students in grades 6-8 at the selected school site were suspended during the current school year. Most incidents of disruptive classroom behavior were resolved within the classroom by the classroom teacher or another approach was used by the administration staff.

Although these findings are limited to one school, the conclusions from this study are supported by the literature review provided. By using these studies, educators had a better understanding of what ACEs are, how they are affecting students in a classroom, what approaches were taken to implement trauma-informed practices, and what the outcomes were in a trauma-informed school.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: ACEs Questionnaire

This questionnaire will be asking you some questions about events that happened during your childhood: specifically, the first 18 years of your life. The information you provide by answering these questions will allow us to better understand problems that may have occurred early in your life and allow us to explore how those problems may be impacting the challenges you are experiencing today. This can be very helpful in the success of your treatment.

While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household <u>often</u>:
   Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you?
   OR
   Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
   ____Yes ____No If Yes, enter 1_____

2. Did a parent or other adult in the household <u>often:</u>
   Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?
   OR
   Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
   ____Yes ____No If Yes, enter 1_____

3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you <u>ever:</u>
   Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?
   OR
   Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?
   ____Yes ____No If Yes, enter 1_____

4. Did you <u>often</u> feel that:
   No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?
   OR
   Your family did not look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?

   ____Yes ____No If Yes, enter 1_____

5. Did you <u>often</u> feel that:
   You did not have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you?
   Or
   Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
   ____Yes ____No If Yes, enter 1_____

6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced?

____Yes ____No If Yes, enter 1_____

7. Were any of your parents or other adult caregivers:
   Often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at them?
   Or
   Sometimes or often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?
   Or
   Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?
   ____Yes ____No If Yes, enter 1_____

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?
   ____Yes ____No If Yes, enter 1_____

9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?
   ____Yes ____No If Yes, enter 1_____

10. Did a household member go to prison?
    ____Yes ____No If Yes, enter 1_____

ACE SCORE (Total "Yes" Answers) _____

(Center for Health Care Strategies, 2019)

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. How familiar are you with the phrase “Adverse Childhood Experiences”?
2. What ACE characteristics are most identified with your students?
3. What ACEs characteristics are having the most impact on disruptive classroom behaviors?
4. How do teachers describe their experiences with unsafe/disruptive behaviors in the classroom?
5. How frequently do you experience disruptive classroom behaviors in your classroom, and how do you handle these behaviors?
6. How do teachers in K-12 schools describe their experiences with a response to instruction and intervention program for behavior (RTI_2B)?
7. What areas of RTI_2B do you or your school need more training or information on to implement the program effectively?
8. What training did you complete to become a trauma-informed school?
9. What do most of your office referrals consist of? How many of them are related to an adverse childhood experience?
10. What surveys do you provide to students, or were you provided with to get data about adverse childhood experiences?
11. How do you use this data to help meet the needs of students?

Appendix C: Correlation Between Number of ACEs and Struggles with School and Health

	Attendance	**Behavior**	**Coursework**	**Health**
3+ ACEs	4.9	6.1	2.9	3.9
2 ACEs	2.6	4.3	2.5	2.4
1 ACE	2.2	2.4	1.5	2.3
No known ACEs	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

(Souers & Hall, 2016, p. 21)

Appendix D: Universal Screener for Behavior Used at Selected Site

Teacher: **Student:**	**Use this scale to rate each item for each student.** **0=Never** **1=Occasionally** **2=Sometimes** **3=Frequently**
Steal	
Lie, Cheat, Sneak	
Behavior Problem	
Peer Rejection	
Low Academic Achievement	
Negative Attitude	
Aggressive Behavior	
Emotionally Flat	
Shy; Withdrawn	
Sad; Depressed	
Anxious	
Lonely	

Appendix E: Attendance Survey Questions and Responses for the 2021-22 school year

Provided by the administration at the selected site. The survey was not conducted by the researcher. (Survey was distributed to 3rd-8th grade students. Only data for 6th, 7th and 8th grade students are represented)

1st 9 weeks	2nd 9 weeks	3rd 9 weeks
What grade are you in? - 6th grade-15.9% - 7th grade-14.3% - 8th grade- 17.6%	What grade are you in? - 6th grade- 15.2% - 7th grade- 22.5% - 8th grade- 14.5%	What grade are you in? - 6th grade- 16.1% - 7th grade- 20.4% - 8th grade- 26.1%
How do you usually wake up in the mornings? - 26.4% are woken by an alarm clock - 64.8% are woken by a parent or guardian. - 7.4% are woken up by a sibling. - 1.4% are woken up by a friend.	Do you know how many days you have missed this school year? - Yes- 42.4% - No- 57.6%	If you are absent, do you bring a note to the office? - Yes-89.6% - No- 10.4%
What are your top THREE reasons for coming to school? - I can eat breakfast or lunch- 18.7% - I think education is important- 51.1% - My parent/guardian encourage me- 37.9% - I like to see my friends- 80.2% - I like school- 31.9% - My classes are interesting- 26.9% - I like to participate in after-school activities- 26.9% - Coming to school makes me feel safe- 10.4%	If you are quarantined, do you know how to continue working on your assignments? - Yes- 92.8% - No- 7.2%	What time does school start? - 8:00- 91% - 8:05- 1% - 8:10- 1% - 8:15- 3% - I do not know- 4%
How often do you miss school? - Never- 14.3%	If you miss school, is it hard for you to make up the assignments you missed?	How many tardies lead to being assigned morning detention?

- Rarely- 43.4% - Sometimes- 37.4% - Often- 4.9%	- Yes- 46.8% - No- 53.2%	- 3- 23.2% - 5- 65.9% - 10- 10.9%
Do you know how many unexcused absences you can have before you receive a letter from the school? - Yes- 45.6% - No- 54.4%	How many days can you miss each year, and still have good attendance? - 1- 17.3% - 3- 30.2% - 5- 40.3% - 7- 2.8% - 9- 9.4%	If you miss school, do you have to make up the assignment you missed? - Yes- 94.3% - No- 5.7%
How often are you late for school? - Never- 36.8% - Rarely- 43.4% - Sometimes- 15.9% - Often- 3.9%	Do you know what the attendance challenge is? - Yes- 64% - No- 36%	What do you like most about school? - Seeing friends- 67.3% - Related arts- 9.5% - Breakfast and lunch- 3.9% - Educational Break- 11.2% - Learning opportunities- 8.1%
Who notices if you miss school? - My teachers- 76.9% - My administrator- 40.7% - My guidance counselor- 15.4% - My parent/guardian- 63.7% - Another family member- 22.5% - Friends- 64.8% - Nobody- 3.3%	What are some incentives that would motivate you to help your grade level win the attendance challenge? - 15 extra minutes of educational break- 70.5% - Mall store tickets- 46.8% - Lunch outside- 41% - Lunch with administrator- 20.1% - Lunch with SRO- 15.1% - Special treat- 74.1%	If you are absent, why do you miss? - Sick- 72.5% - I get bullied at school- 1% - I don't understand my assignments- 1% - I don't like school- 3.2% - Waking up early is hard- 1.4% - Doctor/Dentist appointment- 20.9%
Do you know how to get missing assignments if you are absent? - Yes- 77.5% - No- 22.5%	What makes you want to come to school? - I like to see my friends- 52.5% - I like my teachers and classes- 15.8% - My parents make me- 18.7% - I like school and learning- 12.9%	Is education important to you? - Yes- 78.7% - No- 2.8% - Maybe- 18.5%

	- Breakfast and Lunch are provided- 0%	
When you miss an entire day of school, what are the top THREE reasons why? - I cannot wake up in time- 16.5% - I have difficulty getting to and from school- 7.7% - I don't care about getting good grades- 3.3% - I don't understand the material- 3.3% - I have to care for a younger sibling- 9.3% - I have a doctor/dentist appointment- 79.7% - I am sick- 86.3% - Someone else is my family is sick- 46.7% - I am concerned about my safety- 6.6% - I am suspended- 10.4%		If you are absent often, do you feel lost or confused when you return? - Yes- 30.8% - No- 31.3% - I have good attendance and rarely miss school- 37.9%
		Did you know that students who miss 9 days or less have higher grades? - Yes-39.3% - No- 60.7%
		Did you know that if you miss 1 day of school, you are 2 days behind your classmates? - Yes- 53.1% - No- 46.9%

VITA

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