



Trauma informed care is increasingly becoming part of the conversation in promoting mental health in schools. It has been defined as, “a system level philosophy of service delivery which integrates choice, collaboration, empowerment, safety and trust to create an organizational culture sensitive to trauma” (Keesler, 2016, p. 482). Title II, Part A of the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015* calls for states to provide examples of “carrying out in-service training for school personnel - in (i) the techniques and supports needed to help educators understand when and how to refer students affected by trauma, and children with, or at risk of, mental illness...” In response, the VDOE is striving to develop a workforce that is trained in supporting students’ mental and emotional wellness. Through professional development, the VDOE seeks to develop trauma-informed staffs that are able to support the needs of all students.

To be **READY** to approach this form of care with students, school personnel must reorient their understanding of student behavior and performance, while opening new conversations regarding discipline, school services, and ethics of care. Becoming trauma informed does not require a specific set of facts, but does require a mind-shift away from traditional ways of describing student behavior. It asks teachers to pose new questions and to build trusting, secure, and safe relationships with students to support basic human needs.

Trauma should always be discussed and paired with human capacities for resilience. Resilience is the capacity to cope with adversity and adapt to challenges or change (Pritzker & Redford, 2017). School staff should recognize that there are many potentially trauma producing experiences in a child’s life; however, not all challenging or harmful experiences are traumatic. This is in part due to protective factors that buffer the child from experiencing loss of control or powerlessness. Protective factors included in many trauma informed contexts promote supportive relationships, emotionally safe environments, and active collaboration and empowerment of individuals experiencing toxic stress (Keesler, 2016, p. 482). The key element to remember as supportive adults is that “Resilience doesn’t mean that children get over it. It does mean that the caring adults in their lives have a lot of power to buffer rather than cement the effects of toxic stress” (Redford, 2016, p. 3).

Get **SET** to explore the topics of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study and the construct of resiliency through two ground breaking films by KPJR films.

- [Paper Tigers -](#)
“It is here, at the crossroads of at-risk teens and trauma-informed care, that *Paper Tigers* takes root. Set within and around the campus of Lincoln Alternative High School in the

rural community of Walla Walla, Washington, *Paper Tigers* asks the following questions: What does it mean to be a trauma-informed school? And how do you educate teens whose childhood experiences have left them with a brain and body ill-suited to learn?"

- [*Resilience: The biology of stress and the science of hope*](#) - "Researchers have recently discovered a dangerous biological syndrome caused by abuse and neglect during childhood. Toxic stress can trigger hormones that wreak havoc on the brains and bodies of children putting them at greater risk for disease, homelessness, prison time, and early death. While the broader impacts of poverty worsen the risk, no segment of society is immune. *Resilience*, however, also chronicles the dawn of a movement that is determined to fight back."

Each DVD comes with an accompanying toolkit to help educators and community members further the conversation on these topics.

GO find out more about the impact of trauma on students and your classroom by accessing the following resources:

[Every Student Succeeds Act](#), Pub. L. No. 114-95 § 114 stat. 1177 (2015).

Keesler, J. M. (2016). Trauma-informed day services for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities: Exploring staff understanding and perception within an innovative programme. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 29(5), 481-492.

Pritzker, K., & Redford, J. (Producers). (2015). [Paper tigers](#) [DVD]. Available from KPJR Films.

Pritzker, K., & Redford, J. (2016). [Resilience: The biology of stress and the science of hope](#) [DVD]. Available from KPJR Films.

Virginia Department of Education. (2017). [Elementary & Secondary Education Act: Every Student Succeeds Act](#).

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