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Social justice education through trauma-informed teaching

Shantel D. Crosby, Penny Howell, & Shelley Thomas

Abstract: Students in the middle grades experience tremendous development in various domains. However, childhood trauma can significantly impede this development, further exacerbating the functioning of our most vulnerable student populations. This article aims to describe the use of trauma-informed teaching as a form of middle-level, social justice education, providing a description of trauma, as well as how traditional classroom management and instruction can affect traumatized students. This article also provides narratives of current and emerging models of trauma-informed teaching, connecting them to the goals of social justice education, and providing practical strategies for implementing such practices in middle-level schools and classrooms.

Keywords: *school-to-prison pipeline, social justice education, socio-emotional development, trauma-informed teaching*

This We Believe **characteristics**:

- Educators value young adolescents and are prepared to teach them.
- Students and teachers are engaged in active, purposeful learning.
- Curriculum is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and relevant.
- The school environment is inviting, safe, inclusive, and supportive of all.
- Comprehensive guidance and support services meet the needs of young adolescents.
- Health and wellness are supported in curricula, school-wide programs, and related policies.

Students' middle-grade experiences are critical to their future academic success and life chances (Balfanz, 2009; Losen & Skiba, 2010). To thrive, young adolescents need good attendance records at safe, resourced schools, the beliefs (and evidence) that hard work and positive behavior contribute to their success, and engaging, rigorous coursework that contributes to college and work readiness (Balfanz, 2009). Conversely, young adolescents whose experiences do not align with these indicators or whose life circumstances interfere with or contradict those attributes are less likely to leave the middle grades confident, motivated, and prepared for their next steps.

This is particularly true for those living in poverty (Balfanz, 2009), those in urban schools, and racial/ethnic minority students, who disproportionately face complex challenges in and out of school due to poverty, oppression, and trauma (Brandt, 2006). Unfortunately, students' natural responses to trauma can contribute to various school problems, including discipline referrals and school suspensions (Cole et al., 2005; Wolpow, Johnson, Hertel, & Kincaid, 2009), which begin to significantly increase at the middle school level (Losen & Skiba, 2010). Students who are suspended during early middle school are more likely to receive additional suspensions by the end of their middle school experience (Owen, Wettach, Hoffman, 2015). More specifically, data show that Black students in middle school receive disproportionate amounts of school suspension, as schools suspend Black females at four times the rate of White females and Black males at triple the rate of their White counterparts. (Owen et al., 2015). These rates indicate a pressing need for middle school teachers to examine all facets of the referral process for all students, and especially for those who traditional exclusionary practices have disproportionately impacted.

This We Believe (National Middle School Association [NMSA], 2010) highlights the need for teachers to recognize and embrace their students' lived experiences within their curriculum and classroom community in order to better respond to the complex issues their students face. Teaching through a trauma-sensitive lens personifies a number of the 16 essential attributes of *This We Believe* (i.e., Active Learning, Challenging Curriculum, School Environment, Guidance Services, and Health and Wellness) affording young adolescents the opportunity to learn in an intellectually, academically, emotionally, and physically safe environment that best meets their needs.

The purpose of this article is to describe the use of trauma-informed educational practices to promote social justice in middle-level education and enact *THIS WE BELIEVE*'s characteristics of successful schools for young adolescents (NMSA, 2010). This article will provide middle-level teachers an explanation of trauma and describe how traditional classroom management and instruction affects traumatized students. It will also explore the use of trauma-informed teaching through narratives of current and emerging models, focusing on how a trauma-informed approach is well suited to address the issues that plague our most vulnerable middle school students. Finally, we provide a vignette and practical steps for how middle-level educators can create more supportive learning environments by promoting social justice education through the use of trauma-informed practice.

Social justice

As a dynamic process, social justice education is evolving and varied in practice. Nevertheless, its foundational tenets include the following: (a) Awareness of the privilege and disempowerment that unequally exists across groups of people in our society; (b) Recognition of the prevailing power held by the dominant group and its pervasive impact on all systems within society; and (c) Commitment to lifelong reflection on the ways in which we perpetuate oppression and actively working against it (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2009). Therefore, social justice education involves the process of acknowledging the systemic and institutional inequities that ubiquitously pervade our society and actively addressing mechanisms of privilege and oppression through critical self-reflection (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

…trauma-informed teaching is, within itself, an act of social justice education.

In Pedro Noguera's *The Trouble with Black Boys and other Reflections on Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education* (2008), the author, a leading researcher and advocate for social justice in education, argues that instead of punishing the students who have the most needs socially, emotionally, economically, and academically, schools should strive to become the educative places they aim to be. As advocates for middle-level students, we concur with Noguera and assert that trauma-informed teaching is a necessary approach to address some of the disproportionate discipline and academic gaps in students' experiences. We identify trauma-informed teaching as a viable solution to current inequities present in the field of education, and propose it as a mechanism for addressing *This We Believe* by providing all young adolescents a safe school environment, opportunities to develop healthy minds and bodies, and access to comprehensive guidance and support services from school professionals. Therefore, we posit that trauma-informed teaching is, within itself, an act of social justice education.

What is trauma-informed teaching?

Psychological trauma has been defined as our response to emotionally or physically harmful events that damage our ability to function across social, emotional, behavioral, or physical domains (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2012). Trauma can include a wide spectrum of events, ranging from acute experiences (e.g., surviving a natural disaster) to chronic trauma—known as complex trauma—which has a persistently negative impact on the ways in which youth function on the aforementioned domains (Cole et al., 2005; Cook et al., 2005). Complex trauma may include, but is not limited to, physical or sexual abuse, ongoing community violence, or parental neglect (Griffin, 2011). Childhood trauma, acute or complex, has been recently labeled as "America's hidden health crisis" (ACEs Connection, 2016), as it is an ever-present reality for many youth across our nation, impeding their development and creating residual negative health effects later in life. In one study, almost 50% of youth in the United States experienced at least one or more form of serious trauma (Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health, 2011/2012), illustrating the widespread nature of such adverse life events among youth. Furthermore, 26% of youth are expected to experience a traumatic event by the age of 4 (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth

Violence Prevention, 2012), indicating that approximately one-quarter of students will enter middle school already having encountered traumatic exposure.

Trauma-informed practice in schools requires educators to recognize the prevalence, impact, and indicators of childhood trauma and to respond to student behavior in ways that support traumatized youth without re-traumatization (SAMHSA, 2015). Birthed out of an interdisciplinary approach to students' well-being in schools, trauma-informed school practice requires that educators receive basic training on childhood trauma and recognize ways that it may manifest in students' behavior (Crosby, Somers, Day, & Baroni, 2016). It also requires that teachers demonstrate insight and flexibility in their classroom management and instruction practices. Additionally, administrators must become intentional in their efforts to develop a culture of support—for students and teachers alike—in order to foster school-wide trauma sensitivity (Oehlberg, 2008). This is often grounded in staff professional development (Day et al., 2015), sensitive school discipline policies (Baroni, Day, Somers, Crosby, & Pennefather, 2016), and strong interdisciplinary collaboration between education, mental health, and social work professionals, as well as other child-serving practitioners to ensure that school personnel are well-equipped to meet the complex needs of their students (Ko et al., 2008). In essence, trauma-informed teaching seeks to acknowledge the ways in which a young adolescent's life course is subsequently affected by trauma, and to use trauma-sensitive strategies in place of the traditional, punitive, and trauma-blind school practice that has historically compounded the effects of students' trauma.

Enacting social justice through trauma-informed practice

There are various ecological factors and societal conditions that contribute to the prevalence and persistence of childhood trauma, particularly in racial/ethnic minority communities (Bellair & McNulty, 2005; McNulty & Bellair, 2003). Historical and present-day racism, as well as the systemic oppression embedded within our current societal structure, has developed and sustained communities with children and families struggling to thrive amid tremendous poverty, social disadvantage (Bellair & McNulty, 2005; McNulty & Bellair, 2003), and violence (Anderson, 1994). In fact, African-American students are twice as likely to grow up in an impoverished community, often encountering more crime, neighborhood violence, and overall trauma (Brandt, 2006). In these communities, historical economic disinvestment, mass incarceration (Thorpe, 2014), and under-resourced schools (Taylor & Piche, 1991) are but a few examples of the oppressive elements at play, contributing to generational and ongoing conditions. In addition to having higher likelihood of trauma exposure, these students often have greater difficulty functioning in a healthy way in the midst of such adverse circumstances (APA, 2008).

Schools have implemented trauma-informed practices broadly across school levels through professional development programs and the use of various distinct trauma-informed teaching frameworks. For example, *The Flexible Framework* (Cole et al., 2005) and *Compassionate Teaching* (Wolpow et al., 2009) are both models for implementing classroom management and curricular changes to create trauma-sensitive school environments that are conducive to students' learning. Cole et al. (2005) proposes *The Flexible Framework* as a customizable model that schools can use to implement trauma-informed classroom management. The framework encourages ongoing professional development for teachers and school staff to become aware of the impact of trauma, practical classroom strategies and responses to students' behavior, and legal considerations that may impact trauma-exposed students. It also encourages supportive consultation between teachers and mental health practitioners to assist teachers with difficult student issues. *Compassionate Teaching* (Wolpow et al., 2009) describes a curriculum plan centered on three primary goals: (a) creating safety and connection; (b) improving students' self-regulation; and (c) helping students to develop personal agency, social skills, and academic competence.

These models adhere to the foundational principles of social justice by fundamentally challenging the way in which school staffs view students and their behavior. These models support teacher awareness of students' trauma and disempowerment in their school and community context and promote critical recognition of the ways in which systems—including the school itself—contribute to this disempowerment. Additionally, these models equip school staff with skills and tools to reflect on and challenge their responses to students that perpetuate disempowerment through re-traumatization and harsh school discipline. As an example, four interrelated studies (i.e., Baroni et al., 2016; Crosby, Day, Baroni, & Somers, 2015; Day et al., 2015; West, Day, Somers, & Baroni, 2014) described the

evaluation of a multifaceted trauma-informed teaching intervention that utilized the foundational goals of *Compassionate Teaching* with court-involved students in a middle and secondary school setting. The intervention included changes to the school's classroom management practices, curriculum, and student disciplinary procedures. It also utilized an empowerment approach, including the students themselves as participants in the development of this new trauma-sensitive school culture (West et al., 2014). The preliminary findings of these studies show reductions in students' post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms (Day et al., 2015), reductions in student suspension and expulsion rates (Baroni et al., 2016), and a philosophical shift from biased perceptions of students toward more trauma-sensitive perceptions and responses to student behavior (Crosby et al., 2015). Still, childhood trauma knowledge and training has not yet been systematically implemented at the teacher preparation level.

Classroom management practice and traumatized students

Classroom management practices focused on behavior management in today's middle schools are typically grounded in a school-wide plan focused on safe schools, antibullying, and zero-tolerance policies. While teachers do have professional autonomy within their own classrooms, most schools require that they adhere to school-wide practices in an effort to enforce consistency and standards across the school population. Even with teacher autonomy, Anyon et al. (2014) found that most discipline issues begin similarly with a referral to the office and "tend to be driven by minor infractions and subjective categories of student misconduct" (p. 380). This referral sets in motion a series of events that ultimately lead to harsher consequences and little room for reconciliation for the student. These events tend to have more dire outcomes for particular students; studies of school discipline outcomes demonstrate disparities with students of color, students from low-income families, and those with disabilities receiving harsher consequences based on more subjective criteria (Losen & Skiba, 2010).

Under traditional classroom management practices, traumatized students often struggle immensely to meet expectations, as trauma can create social and emotional impairments that often manifest as behavioral problems, impulsiveness, difficulty controlling emotions or behavior, and problems in interpersonal relationships (Cole et al., 2005; Wolpow et al., 2009). Young adolescents who are experiencing typical development (i.e. identity, social, emotional, moral, intellectual, and physical development) present many of these behaviors as they come to terms with their ever-changing state of being. However, experiences of trauma heighten these responses to new levels, as students cope with intensified anger and aggression, internal and external emotional triggers, and more chaotic and unstable contexts outside of school (Day et al., 2017; West et al., 2014). They also deal with an inhibited ability to verbalize their emotions, making it difficult to form the emotionally supportive relationships that could mitigate these responses (Crosby et al., 2016). This causes significant complications inside and outside of the classroom, as teachers often misinterpret these behaviors as apathy (Cox, Visker, & Hartman, 2011) or defiance (Wolpow et al., 2009), leading to traditional teacher responses that are often more harmful to the youth's overall well-being (Cole et al., 2005). This perception of traumatized youth behavior has heavy influences on the disciplinary decisions that teachers and administrators make (i.e., school suspension and expulsion). Not only do such decisions and policies contribute to poorer academic and socioemotional outcomes (e.g., school-to-prison pipeline) (Cameron & Sheppard, 2006), but they also perpetuate contentious classroom environments upon the student's return to school.

The Flexible Framework counters these traditional responses by providing a host of nonacademic strategies for helping teachers build strong, positive relationships with students, and emphasizing the use of clear and consistent disciplinary alternatives to hold students accountable for their behavior while also being sensitive to its root causes (Cole et al., 2005). Another example, the Monarch Room (MR), is one potential disciplinary alternative utilized by a trauma-informed alternative school. As described in Day et al. (2015), the MR is a safe space classroom that is available throughout the school day—by teacher or student self-referral—for students who become triggered or emotionally escalated. Trauma-trained staffs manage the MR and work with students using brief, positive supports (e.g., problem-solving, sensory integration tools) to help students to de-escalate and self-regulate their emotions before returning to class. Individual classrooms have also adopted school-wide aspects of the MR with sensory tools available within a designated space in each classroom so that students can resolve their heightened emotional states and self-soothe as needed while

remaining in class. Teachers receive in-depth training on how to utilize these tools in their respective classrooms, as well as ongoing training on how to be reflective and sensitive in their responses and behavior as to avoid triggering or re-traumatizing students (Day et al., 2015).

Curriculum and traumatized students

Traditional approaches to curricular design and enactment are more teacher directed, skills based, and narrowly focused on content standards (Kliebard, 1995). Within the current educational climate, high-stakes accountability has shifted the goal of curriculum to one focused on improving test scores through rote memorization, skill-building exercises, and curricular interventions for struggling learners. For traumatized students in these traditional academic environments, even basic elements of the learning process can be very daunting. Childhood trauma impacts a number of cognitive functions as well as brain development, which may lead to problems with organization and memorization, and other issues that impact learning (Cole et al., 2005; Wolpow et al., 2009). Students with traumatic histories often struggle with meeting the academic demands of the classroom due to socioemotional stressors and triggers that persistently hinder these executive functions. However, teachers generally focus on students' academic progress with less attention to their socioemotional development.

The goals of a trauma-informed curriculum are twofold: (1) teaching substantive content and (2) addressing the socioemotional needs of students. It can be extremely challenging for traumatized students to focus on the former when little or no attention is given to the latter. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers are intentional about creating a safe learning environment through instruction, providing opportunities for emotionally healing adult and peer relationships, and integrating content that focuses on students' socioemotional learning and development. Through the three aforementioned goals of *Compassionate Teaching* (Wolpow et al., 2009), curriculum plans help students to not only learn content, but to also gain the social and emotional skills needed for academic success. This model provides rich examples, activities, and practical strategies that can be translated into most middle-level education lesson plans. *The Flexible Framework* also describes academic instruction for traumatized children, focusing on providing structure and consistency for students, emphasizing classroom safety, and utilizing multiple, varied methods of teaching material (Cole et al., 2005).

A trauma-informed teaching vignette

Veda, a sixth-grade language arts teacher, considers the importance of neurological development as she designs instruction, particularly for her students who have experienced trauma. Throughout the year, she has created a classroom environment that is a secure place for students to learn content, higher level thinking, and self-regulation, and she has done so without mentioning trauma. Instead, she uses what she knows about adolescent development as well as what she knows about the neurological development of students exposed to trauma. She recognizes the plasticity of her students' brains and the need for traumatized students to have exposure to higher-order thinking to rebuild neural networks by "doing something" with what they learn. They also need empathy and the use of feeling words modeled for them in order to build their capacity for expressing emotions and regulating their behavior. Thus, Veda has explicitly taught students this important facet of their own neurology, maintaining consistent classroom routines, utilizing explicit instructions that encourage self-assessment, and by using feeling words and "I" statements—rather than punitive actions—when addressing student misbehavior. She likewise avoids actions that might trigger students' "fight, flight or freeze" (Craig, 2017) neurological responses such as threats or controlling demands.

For this particular lesson, Veda focuses students on College and Career Readiness anchor standards around Comprehension and Collaboration (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2018). Her lesson includes frequent opportunities for the sixth graders to talk while they are learning so that they are indeed doing something with their new knowledge while helping them explore how ideas are expressed through language. Both Veda and the students use formative assessments with routine, immediate feedback, so that a safe and comfortable learning environment is affirmed. Through this cycle of reflection and "doing," students build dendrite mass, further enhancing their cognitive functioning (Craig, 2017).

Veda begins the lesson with a learning target focused on CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2 (i.e., deciphering the theme of a text) (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2018). She understands the need for students with trauma histories to learn using multiple modalities and to work collaboratively, and has structured the lesson with this in mind. To start, she explains to students what they will do. They have previously watched a YouTube video and today they will choose one of

three related poems to read in small groups, discuss its elements, and prepare to write their own poetry based on the video and their chosen poem. She intentionally gives students the choice to select which poem they will read (and which group they will join), as exercising control and choice in their environment can provide a level of comfort and security to students with traumatic histories. After reviewing the expectations that are used consistently for talk in the classroom, students review what they already know about language use around meter and rhymes. Veda scaffolds the discussion to address potential misunderstandings, and as they read in small groups, students write comments and questions on Post-its that Veda can pick up, read quickly, and provide feedback as she moves around to each group. As she circulates, she is also vigilant about social dynamics and student interactions in each group (e.g., bullying, ostracizing) that might threaten the safety of the learning environment.

When the students finish reading the poem, they continue to answer strategic questions about what they read; they include checks for understanding less common language usage as well as checks for comprehension and questions about their emotional responses to the poem. Veda has designed the questions with the understanding that students who experience trauma may miss information because their focus might be on affect (a teacher or peer's facial expressions) rather than content, and these students need opportunities to integrate new knowledge alongside what they already know. As the groups complete their tasks, Veda returns to the whole class structure to allow students to share while they check their responses and hear their classmates' different perspectives. To perpetuate consistency, Veda wraps up using a familiar routine, having students reflect on their work and do something with what they learned—she asks them to connect the themes in their respective poems to a famous quote on their exit slips before they leave class. Throughout the lesson, Veda has utilized trauma-sensitive practices to both teach substantive content (i.e., CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2) and address the socioemotional needs of students (through affirming, questioning, and building empathy), leveling the playing field for trauma-exposed students who might otherwise struggle in her class.

Social justice, trauma-informed practices, and *This We Believe*

The aforementioned frameworks for trauma-sensitive classroom management and curricular practices create middle school environments that meet one of traumatized students' most fundamental needs—safety. Consistent with *This We Believe's* Culture and Community characteristics, school environments that students perceive as being safe and secure better equip them to function at their highest and best, assisting them in meeting the academic demands of the classroom (NMSA, 2010). Given the long-standing effects of childhood trauma, it should not be surprising that traumatized students can face numerous negative outcomes throughout their life course, academic and otherwise, which perpetuate their disempowerment. This is disproportionately true for racial/ethnic minority students who are more likely to encounter traumatic and oppressive systems (Brandt, 2006), and are then often villainized and subjected to higher rates of school suspension and expulsion (Gavazzi, Russell, & Khurana, 2009). Rather than blaming and punishing students for their reactions to their circumstances, trauma-informed teaching has an embedded social justice perspective that seeks to disassemble oppressive systems within the school. It encourages educators to gain awareness of the ways in which trauma-exposed students have been disempowered by their circumstances, to recognize the ways in which traditional school practice may continue to disempower them, and to persistently monitor their own behavior, exchanging oppressive and counterproductive responses for those that model positive socioemotional skills for students.

Additionally, these practices address two essential attributes of *This We Believe* by focusing on support services for students through prepared teachers and specialized professionals within guidance services as well as providing opportunities for students to maintain healthy minds and bodies by addressing health and wellness consistently (NMSA, 2010). Collaboration among teachers and other child-serving professionals inside and outside of the school is essential. Further, clear and consistent communication as well as strong collaboration with students' caregivers serves to further remove oppressive barriers that often impede the success of students with complicated histories.

Rather than blaming and punishing students for their reactions to their circumstances, trauma-informed teaching has an embedded social justice perspective that seeks to disassemble oppressive systems within the school.

The enactment of trauma-informed practices in middle-grade schools illuminates an interdisciplinary

perspective of developmentally responsive pedagogy. *This We Believe* advocates curriculum that is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory (NMSA, 2010). Viewed through the lens of trauma-informed practices, curriculum and instruction that is student oriented and emphasizes both cognitive and affective development provides all students with opportunities to experience curriculum that meets AMLE's expectations and their needs as learners. Drawing on students' lived experiences and integrating those into the classroom through curriculum, instruction, and assessment promotes deeper more authentic connection to students' lives (Bean, 2005). Bean (2005) suggested that the "integration of experiences" within curriculum design becomes "a resource for dealing with problems, issues, and other situations, both personal and social, as they arise in the future." (2005, p. 397). Expanding the meaning of responsiveness in the middle-level classroom to include trauma-sensitive practices creates the culture of learning where students feel physically, academically, and emotionally safe and valued. It also highlights the ways in which *This We Believe* cuts across disciplines of education, social work, and mental health (NMSA, 2010).

Implications: Practical strategies for implementation

As described in the aforementioned literature (i.e., Cole et al., 2005; Wolpow et al., 2009), some practical key steps for teachers, schools, and districts to implement trauma-informed practice include:

1. Teachers: Establishing regular classroom routines that are consistently followed, where transitions or changes to the routine are discussed with students in advance in order to maintain dependability
2. Teachers: Exercising patience and empathy when students act out during a transitional time or unexpected routine change, as these are often triggering for students who experience trauma
3. Teachers: Taking intentional steps to remove potential triggers from the classroom (e.g., addressing any bullying that is witnessed, monitoring tone of voice with students, being cautious about the use of physical touch)
4. Teachers: Having safety plans in place for identified students in order to be prepared when difficult student behavior surfaces
5. Teachers: Having regular class meetings to discuss safety, particularly after weekends and holidays, when trauma-exposed students may be more prone to trauma exposure in their home or community setting
6. Teachers: Embedding opportunities into the class routine for students to have some measure of control (e.g., allowing students to choose from a prescribed list of readings, arranging peer tutoring opportunities or partner/group activities that allow students to take leadership in helping their classmates to learn, etc.)
7. Teachers: Modeling the use of feeling words with students, so that they can develop language to better verbalize their own emotions and begin to self-regulate their behavior rather than acting out in inappropriate ways (e.g., using expressive feeling words and "I" statements when students do something disruptive or upsetting in the classroom)
8. Teachers: Modeling empathy and other social skills in the classroom through interactions with students (e.g., keeping a calm and moderate voice level when dealing with an escalated student, using feeling words to describe why a behavior is not appropriate)
9. Teachers: Providing curricular opportunities for students to practice social skills and empathy within the lesson plan (e.g., activities on assertiveness, nonviolent communication, and fair fighting; writing and journaling activities that allow students to discuss stress and other emotions)
10. Schools and Districts: Generating buy-in and leadership from school principals and administrators regarding trauma-informed practice
11. Schools and Districts: Assessing school staff needs for executing trauma practices and self-care, and providing resources and support to fill any gaps
12. Schools and Districts: Reviewing school policies, particularly disciplinary procedures (e.g., suspension/expulsion), to ensure that they are trauma sensitive
13. Schools and Districts: Creating partnerships with trauma-related community organizations and stakeholders to share knowledge and resources
14. Schools and Districts: Evaluating school trauma practices on a regular basis and addressing remaining barriers

(Also see Craig, 2017 for more explicit instructions on how to design trauma-sensitive instruction for middle-level education.)

Conclusion

Trauma-informed teaching practices provide middle-level learners affected by emotionally or physically harmful events the social, emotional, and academic supports they need. By attending to the curriculum as well as the school and classroom environments, teachers can provide safe, equitable, and meaningful learning experiences connected to their students' lives. Furthermore, the integration of trauma-sensitive practices expands the notion of developmental responsiveness by including issues of trauma that greatly impact a young adolescent's development. Finally, trauma-informed classrooms welcome and encourage a child to bring who they are, where they are from, and what they desire to be into the classroom every day. Connecting with and supporting students in this way inherently creates learning environments that are more socially just for all students, including those who have been traditionally disadvantaged.

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