Endless Possibilities Conference 2023
Guiding Families through Challenging Times

Conference Sessions

Keynote: The Impact of Toxic Stress and Trauma
Presenter: Dr. Amy Nelson Christensen

This session will provide an overview of the current understanding of the elements of a trauma sensitive school, define what is meant by “trauma sensitive” practices, and provide families with an outline of what they should expect from their child’s school, including how families and schools can work together, to be trauma sensitive. Dr. Nelson Christensen will also discuss the difference between trauma and toxic stress from a culturally sensitive lens and the intersectional issues of students of color who struggle with toxic stress or traumatization and the implications for special education services.

Building a Trauma Sensitive IEP
Presenter: Dr. Amy Nelson Christensen

Dr. Nelson Christensen will focus on building “trauma sensitive” Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) to further build skills for participants, whether they are educators or family members, so that families and educators can be on the same page about how they meet the needs of children who have unique behavioral or social-emotional needs because of toxic stress or traumatization.

Homelessness Among Youth
Presenter: Kristine Nadolski

This presentation will provide an overview of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and the supports that exist in public schools for students experiencing homelessness. McKinney-Vento and IDEA are both federal laws that work side by side for students with disabilities who also don’t have permanent housing. Participants will learn strategies to support students experiencing homelessness and how to utilize funding streams to meet student’s needs.

Building a Trauma Sensitive School through Family-School Partnerships
Presenter: Libby Strunz

In this session, participants will learn strategies that schools can use to empower caregivers to become school leaders and key decision makers and address barriers to family involvement. Participants will also explore specific ways that schools and families can collaborate to shift perspectives and build a shared understanding of the trauma sensitive lens to effect change on a systems level.

A trauma sensitive school is one in which core values of safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural responsiveness are infused into programs, practices, and systems of support to help students feel safe, supported, and connected at school.

This session will focus on the core value of collaboration, specifically how families and schools can work together to begin and sustain trauma sensitive schools. By using a trauma sensitive lens, schools can help to prevent and reduce the impacts of traumatic exposure on our youth and become a protective partner for these students.
Making a Pathway that is Eased for Children with Hope and Support  
*Presenters: Dr. Ricardo Anderson and Troney Small*

This session will discuss how mental health challenges can develop in children with trauma. Participants will engage in an “Expressive Talk” of a “Brother’s Life Story” and will be provided with resources for families and educators about children’s mental health, suicide prevention, person-centered language, and intervention strategies to provide Hope and Support for families.

Life Hurts. Have you Considered Forgiveness?  
*Presenter: Tim Markle*

We all get hurt. It’s part of living, but it hurts. Sometimes the hurts pile up and we can become weighed down by resentment, anger, and unforgiveness. What options do we have? Let’s talk about what forgiveness is and how it might be able to help us heal from our past hurts and pains. Although this is an introduction, the speaker will provide additional resources.

(Re)Settling In: Immigrant and Refugee Students and Families in Schools  
*Presenter: Amanda Dawabsheh*

In this session, participants will learn about resettled students and their families’ experiences when they become part of our school communities. Ideas and examples will be shared of how to welcome students and families in a way that honors their experiences and supports them.

Addressing Vicarious Trauma in Educators and Families  
*Presenter: Nia Taylor*

Being exposed to the traumatic experiences of others can impact a person’s emotional and psychological state, leading to what is called vicarious trauma. This presentation aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of vicarious trauma, examine the telltale signs, and learn how to build resilience. Participants will gain insights into how to build resilience through self-care practices, boundary setting, and stress management techniques.

English Learners with Disabilities: What exactly are their rights?  
*Presenter: Amy Maciolek*

Many factors affect how a family participates in their child’s education. Students who are English Learners and have a disability are entitled to both language services and disability-related services. Supporting families who are navigating these services requires developing strong relationships and leveraging partnerships. In this session you will learn about the rights English Learners, gain ideas for establishing relationships with families, building collaborative partnerships, and aligning services provided through language programming and special education.

How to be Trauma Informed in a Racialized World  
*Presenter: Myra McNair*

This session will explore the complex legacies of generational pain and its impact on communities today. In this interactive session, we will delve into the various ways historical trauma manifests, how it affects individual and collective mental health, and the importance of acknowledging and addressing these deep-rooted issues. Participants will engage in thought-provoking discussions and activities, fostering a safe space for healing, growth, and the building of resilience. Together, we will work towards developing strategies to overcome historical trauma and foster a brighter future for all.
Children with disabilities often struggle with boundaries. Many times, families don’t know how to navigate teaching safe boundaries. Poor Boundaries can lead to greater vulnerability, trusting everyone, complying with authority figures, calling strangers friends. These added vulnerabilities can open your child up to unsafe situations. In this session we will discuss the benefits of teaching clear boundaries. Tools and resources will be shared with attendees to ensure that parents and professionals are equipped to teach consistent boundaries to set your children up for success and safety.