

TRANSCRIPT

Practitioner Panel: Trauma-Informed Schools

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BETHANN BERLINER (MODERATOR)

Thanks, Carol. Good afternoon, everybody. I hope you enjoyed your lunch and that you met somebody new. I know I met a few new people, which is always great. In just a few minutes, we will be hearing from a panel of educators who are really key to moving trauma-informed practices from the margins to the mainstream in our schools. Like you, listening to all the morning presentations, I don't think anyone in the room needs any convincing that this is where we need to go in order to create more nurturing and transformative schools for all of our students, but especially our students who've experienced a traumatic life experience that's affected their development, behavior, and learning.

On the panel this afternoon, we have social workers, mental health therapists, clinical intervention specialists, psychosocial educators, and veteran K-12 educators, who through their careers have been teachers, principals, special educators, trainers, counselors, and district and state administrators. This really impressive range of titles goes to show that the work of dealing with trauma in our schools is not done by any one role-type—that's echoing what we've heard over and over again today. It really takes all of us. The panelists bring varied expertise, and are really exciting voices from the real world of supporting students in our classrooms. So it's my pleasure to briefly introduce each of the panelists before we jump into a conversation about the promising things that they are doing back home. Since everyone on the panel comes from a western state, I am going to start by introducing those of you in the Bay Area, and then I am going to work my way up north. So when I call your name, just wave a little bit so people all around the room know who you are.

So first is Jen Caldwell—Jen—she's also the Jen from the video that the two young women from the Wellness Center referred to; that's her school. So Jen is a social worker, who developed and is a lead clinician at the Wellness Center that you just saw on the video at El Dorado Elementary School in San Francisco. Also from San Francisco School District is Helen Parker—Helen—a restorative practices coach—isn't that a great title?—a restorative practices coach who helps schools build a positive school climate and integrate restorative behavior management

and trauma-informed practices. Across the Bay at Cox Academy in East Oakland is Robyn Ganeles, a clinical intervention specialist who offers individual therapy, trauma groups, and leadership in developing trauma-sensitive education curriculum. Okay, heading up north to Washington State's Spokane Public Schools, we have the Director and Coordinator of Student Services, Wendy Bleeker and Bonnie Ducharme, both of whom provide leadership across the district's elementary and secondary schools using trauma-sensitive practices. And over the mountains in Helena, Montana, is Erin Butts, who coordinates school mental health initiatives, including educator training and implementation of trauma-informed interventions in a range of settings across the entire state. So thanks to all of you for joining us, and up front here we've got Noelle; if you see her dancing and waving wildly, she is trying to keep us on time. So, we will all try to be mindful of our time, but it promises to be a really juicy conversation here. And there is going to be time for asking questions, so we hope that you guys keep track of things you would like to know a little bit more about.

I'd like start our conversation with each of you just taking no more than just two or three minutes—just a couple of minutes—to briefly describe for us your school or district or state context, and why you have adopted trauma-sensitive practices, unpacking that just a little bit. What student and school challenges are you trying to address? So let's start with you, Robyn.

ROBYN GANELES

OK, can everybody hear me? I work at a school in East Oakland. I work at a particular location where it's a highly traumatized community; an intersection of three different gangs all exist in this one community. And so we did a trauma screener—I work in a K through fifth grade school—we did a trauma screener of the entire fourth grade. And we learned that 96% of the students had been exposed to at least one traumatic life event, and 61% screened moderate-to-severe for symptoms of PTSD. So we really need to have some trauma-informed practices implemented at our elementary school level, in order to address the symptoms and experiences that our kids are experiencing, but in addition, to address our families and the community-at-large.

MODERATOR

Great. So Wendy, speaking on behalf of the Spokane team, why don't you take just a couple of minutes and describe for us sort of the context and challenges that you guys are facing as an entire community?

WENDY BLEEKER

So I will describe Spokane just a little bit. So we are about 50% or 60% free-and-reduced across the district, and our district is the city—so the city limits, our district—about 30,000 kids. Thirty-one percent of our kids are students of color, and only about, maybe, 3% or 4% are...do we have staff of color. And so we have a disparity between our staff and our kids, not just in poverty, but also around racial issues and cultural clash. And so we had...we really moved forward, because only about 16% of kids were graduating. And so we attempted to do some things within our system, but we found that that wasn't working; we really needed our

community. So within Spokane Public Schools, we really had to have our community embrace, and then push us forward, around the issues around trauma and ACEs.

MODERATOR

Erin, how about describing for us some of the things going on in Montana that have sort of facilitated you adopting a trauma-sensitive approach to schooling.

ERIN BUTTS

The state of Montana, as you might be aware, is the fourth largest geographic state—yeah, state—in the country, and that provides some very wonderful opportunities because of our rural communities, and working together. And we see a lot...a tremendous amount of collaboration, and partnerships, and people getting creative. It also creates challenges, particularly around access, resources, and training and development. And so with my background, in coming into this position in our state department, is providing a lot of opportunities to think broadly about bringing this information, thinking about trauma-informed strategies, both at the individual building level all the way to our preservice in universities.

MODERATOR

So, Jen, why don't we start with you, and then we'll move to Helen for the district perspective. But why don't you tell us about the El Dorado School context and the community, and why you as a community decided to go full force and develop your Wellness Center.

JEN CALDWELL

Okay, so our school is right next to one of the most violent housing projects in the southeast corner of San Francisco. And most of our students come from that housing project, so they are experiencing violence on a weekly basis, just from where they live, in addition to all of the other stuff that's going on in their community. And when I started working at El Dorado about five years ago, it was just kind of complete chaos; it kind of felt like a day treatment center, with kids, like, throwing chairs, and hurting themselves and teachers, and constantly having to call Child Crisis. And our principal at the time was asked by a program from UCSF that's called the HEARTS Program, that was specifically going to be implemented in the district to train staff and teachers, and provide direct service to kids that have experienced trauma. They reached out to our principal, and our principal was like, "What we are doing is not working, and we need to try something else," so that was kind of the impetus to move towards trauma-informed practices and restorative practices.

MODERATOR

Helen?

HELEN PARKER

Yes. I am privileged to have the role of the Restorative Practices Coordinator for San Francisco Unified School District; that means trying to bring a paradigm shift, districtwide, in all our schools. We serve about 57,000 students; 61% of them are on free- and reduced-lunch, similarly

to your students, and 29% of them are English language learners. And people have the romantic fantasies of what life in San Francisco might be like, but it really is kind of a tale of two cities. We have so much wealth and privilege at one end of the spectrum, and yet so much poverty and historical oppression and marginalization at the other end of the spectrum. So half our schools kind of fit into one category and half into the other. And we serve about 60% of the children in San Francisco; many of those other students going to private education from the more privileged side of the city. But what happened in San Francisco is, our school board noticed a dramatic increase in the number of suspensions and expulsions in the early 2000s, particularly after Columbine, and zero tolerance policies being kind of adopted nationwide. This was a national phenomenon, not just in San Francisco, and in addition to that, the racial disproportionality in the suspension and expulsion data was also really extremely alarming. And so they were looking for solutions, and interventions, and strategies, and as a response to that they adopted restorative practices in 2009. And so we are kind of now looking at an integrated approach, where we're combining trauma-informed practices with restorative practices, with PBIS, with cultural competency and humility training, and with the escalation training as well. But at the heart of all these strategies is the relationship—the idea that that relationship between teacher and student, and between teachers, and between the school and the family, is really key to addressing concerns.

MODERATOR

Well, everybody here is really interested in learning from all of you about the trauma-sensitive supports that you are using to address your student needs. So I am going to ask Jen to start, followed by Robyn—since you're both at elementary schools—to please describe your key on-the-ground work, the practices that you put in place, and to share some examples with us of what you really do. What does it really look like? So Jen, we're going to have you kick off this part of the discussion; and you will each have a good five minutes, so please share as many examples as possible.

JEN CALDWELL

So at this point, we have a lot of stuff going on at El Dorado, which is really awesome. But we kind of started out with teacher and staff training with an agenda sort of like this—getting everybody on the same page; like, what does trauma look like? What is that looking like in the classroom? Really shifting that perspective to...like some of our speakers said earlier, instead of “What is wrong with this kid?”—“What happened to this kid? What need is this behavior meeting, and how can we get that need met in a more appropriate way?” And so some of the things that we have, systems set up at El Dorado is, we have...well, we have the Wellness Center, but before we had the Wellness Center, we had some other systems and structures that we got in place, which I think is what helped the Wellness Center be successful. And so we have a buddy work classroom system; so, for instance, if a kid is escalated in class, or having a reaction to a situation with a peer or with the teacher, or just some sort of internal angst, they can go to another teacher's classroom and take a break in there. And it's non-punitive, and it's their choice to go there. We also have a work classroom, which is a little bit more disciplinary, where kids go if they are not able to do their work in the classroom, which is also kind of an alternative to just suspending a kid—letting them go take a break, do their work in another

class for a little bit. All the classrooms have Peace Corners in their classroom—so you guys saw the Peace Corner in the Wellness Center video—but each classroom has, like, a corner or a table or an area set up where they have cool-down kits—where they have squeezees, drawing material, a timer so it's time-limited within each classroom. So that's also something that's set up. And the teachers are also using various strategies in their classroom, like brain breaks, and just visible schedules. They have morning and closing meetings for, like, relationship-building with the students. We have a schoolwide positive behavioral system called the Super Me's, and so there is like four qualities that we are looking for—be safe, be a scholar, be respectful, be compassionate. And kids get Super Me tickets if any staff member notices them exhibiting those qualities, and then on every Friday we have a circle where a student's name from each grade is drawn, and they get to wear a Super Me cape for the day. And actually, even the fifth graders are super into it. So people were really hesitant, they were like, aw, these fifth graders, they are going to think it's stupid, but they love it. Even the biggest, baddest fifth graders are into the Super Me's. And we also are really fortunate to have a Mindful Schools organization come out for three of the last five years, and teach mindfulness in all of our classrooms. So they got 15 minutes of mindfulness practice every day, and then the teachers at the same time were trained on how to do it. And we have, let's see, so we have social-emotional curriculum, 45 minutes once a week, K-5, that was like blocked out for the first time this year. So every class is mandated that they have a block of time set aside for social-emotional curriculum, and for K-3, that's *Second Step*, which is a research-based curriculum that teaches skills for learning, empathy, emotional regulation, and problem-solving. And then we have a behavior coach who is teaching identity lessons—more based around race and identity—that's she has adapted from...I'm blanking on it, but it's another curriculum that she is adapting to the elementary level. And we also have a mentoring program—that is a district program—so almost, not all of our students, but at least all of our high-need students are paired with a staff member as a mentor, and they meet with that student for one hour each week to just provide that positive relationship with an adult.

MODERATOR

Robyn, what do these practices look like in your school, across the Bay?

ROBYN GANELES

In my school, we have an Rtl model—which is Response to Intervention—and we work on the clinical level also through the Rtl model. So on the most intensive level, I work one-to-one and provide individual therapy for kids. I provide family therapy, I work collaboratively with teachers and families, and do collateral work with caregivers. And that would be the most intensive level. And then on a group level, I do trauma group, CBITS—which stands for cognitive behavioral intervention for trauma in schools—and then we also do grief and loss groups, and mindfulness groups, and yoga groups. And then our focus that I'd love to talk about more today is our Tier 1 supports, which is support that we provide to the whole student body and to the school as a whole. And we do a lot of the same things, we have PBIS—which is Positive Behavioral Interventions in Schools—where we do a system where we have “be responsible, be safe, be respectful.” And we give out cobra cash—our mascot is the cobra—we give out cobra cash for kids that are demonstrating those qualities. We have a social-emotional curriculum

that all the teachers teach for the first 15 minutes every day in the classroom, and we use Toolbox—and I highly recommend it; I think it’s worth looking into. We also do professional development training for teachers; we teach the teachers about trauma-informed education practices, and then we go a little bit further, because our focus is a lot on the interrelational traumas that happen in trauma. So we really focus on building relationships, and we work with teachers on identifying those—I think Carol may have put it in as *limited beliefs*. So really trying to identify a student’s limiting beliefs—we call them their internal working model—so these beliefs that they have about themselves that maybe get in the way of their functioning, such as, you know, “I am unlovable” or “I am alone.” And we work with the teachers to try to identify interventions that will specifically address those internal beliefs that are getting in the way of this child creating connections with other people. So we don’t just hand out a list of interventions, like, you need to do this with a student, because we all know that an intervention with one student might not work for another student, and it really depends on what’s happening within that student. So we really give teachers the tools to learn how to individualize their interventions when they are working with students, and we really promote safety and building relationships above all else. So I think one of the presenters had a slide where it said, “I am not alone, and I am safe,” and we really take those core needs that every one of us have, and we really think, how do we provide this for all of our students? We also do...we also have our version of a Wellness Center, which we call the Learning Lab, and it has a lot of sensory materials in there that kids can use. We also do a...we have schoolwide student-initiated check-ins, so not just students that have been referred for treatment can get supports. They can just fill out a little form—we call it Cobra Connect—and students can fill out their names and put it in the box, and then they can check in with the counselor if they need to. Teachers can also use it if they need to check in with a counselor, and we’ve also let parents know that they can also fill out forms if they need to check in with a counselor at any point. We also, let’s see...we also do screeners at our school. So at the beginning of the school, we do a social-emotional screener for the whole student body, and we have teachers fill it out. And on the social-emotional screeners, we highlight the internalized behaviors, so that those kids that are demonstrating more internalized behaviors aren’t falling through the cracks. So that we are addressing all of the students’ needs and not just the kids that are demonstrating externalized behaviors. We have also done trauma screeners for kids; we did it, like I mentioned when I opened, we did a trauma screener for the whole fourth grade. And we have also, have our version of—I can’t remember what you called it—but it was a specialized classroom that kids can go to if they are having special difficulties, that are an alternative to suspensions or detentions. So we are doing quite a bit; a lot of our focus is on empowering the students to have a voice, and also on building the teachers’ capacity to know how to respond to the behaviors and how to build relationships with the kids on an individual level.

MODERATOR

Great. I know Spokane is also working closely with both elementary and secondary schools, so let’s start with you, Bonnie, and focus on the elementary stuff that you are doing districtwide, and then we will switch over to Wendy. And we would love to hear some of the key practices that you are using in secondary schools, and how they differ somewhat when you are working with older students, so.

Yeah, so, we have been providing trauma-informed strategy training in our district now for probably seven or eight years. Wendy will talk a little bit more specifically about our collaboration with Washington State University, but at the elementary level, we have provided some very intentional, specific, trauma strategies training for four of our elementary schools. And it was one hour a week with the whole staff, and two days a week in the classroom—actual instructional coaching. So many of us in education are very aware of teaching instructional coaching models, so this model was really more that social-emotional support and coaching, and talking to teachers about how to work with students—how to deescalate kids, how to be aware of what kids’ triggers are. The schools that have participated in that training say that it—and these were all high-poverty schools, so it really validates teachers’ good work. But also, a part of it—it’s really a trust-building component for your staff, because you have to look at and identify your own triggers. And the biggest piece that I think has been important is that caretaker affect management piece. So really understanding, how do you take care of yourself, and how do you know when you need a break. So at these schools, they teach kids how to reset; so it’s not time out, because time out can be a trigger for some kids. So it’s not a time out; it’s, “You need a 30-second reset? Do you want to take a reset here or somewhere else?” And they allow for their *teachers* to reset. So there is no shame in a teacher calling the office and asking the counselor or the assistant principal to come down: “I need a reset for a few minutes.” So that’s been a big piece of it. Another part of that grant that was significant was access to a public healthcare nurse that could help the schools find social-emotional types of supports and also medical supports. We also do *Mind Up* and we do *Second Steps*; we also do *Why Try* in some of our schools. And one really exciting thing that’s happened—so at the elementary level, we had to extend our school day, because we were deficient in terms of our number of minutes at the elementary level. So schools were given some options of what kind of curriculum they were going to look at to extend that school day. So I am working very closely with three elementary schools that are using that extension, for the 30 minutes a day, more social-emotional and some college preparedness work. So those schools are going to be using *Mind Up*, *Second Steps*, and also at the older grade levels, some AVID strategies, because we are a district that’s really implementing AVID. So those are some things that we are doing. And one of the things that one of my principals said is, “It really helps to do a book study, or some kind of preparation, before you really start going deep into this work, because it’s...when we started this work—so Wendy and I know this very well—teachers wanted...said, “Just teach us some strategies for those kids, you know; just give us a few tricks that we can put in our toolbox for those kids.” And some people would even call us up and say, “Okay, I have identified three trauma kids in my classroom, now what do I do next for those kids?” So we’ve really shifted that perception with staff about: these strategies are really helpful for all kids. And teaching kids about how to deescalate, self-regulation, affect modulation—all those skills are really important. And I just wanted to share a couple of books that are really important in our district; so *Treating Traumatic Stress in Children and Adolescents*—ARC, which is attachment, self-regulation, and competency—and it’s Margaret Blaustein and Kristine Kinniburgh. So a lot of what we have done with WSU has been adapted from this site. And then also, this is a Washington State OSPI, which is our Office of Public School Instruction, *The Heart of Learning and Teaching*. So it’s...really talks about the Compassionate School Initiative. So it

doesn't speak to "trauma schools," or "trauma practices," but really the frame is "compassionate schools." So Wendy and I are both Compassionate Schools trainers, and that's one of the frames. And we've done multiple trainings; about three-fourths of our schools, including administration, have received some amount of trauma training. And, of course, all our counselors have received—because we're over-counseling—have received quite a bit of trauma training.

MODERATOR

Wendy?

WENDY BLEEKER

Well, secondary has been a little bit of a different story, you know, as teachers could have up to 150 kids every day as they switch periods. So it's much more difficult to...how do you build a relationship with kids when you have 150 of them, and you don't...and then at semester, or even at quarter, you may change and get a whole brand-new 150 kids. So we have done, you know, we are implementing PBIS, and we are implementing...we have lots of training around trauma awareness, and really trying to get teachers to understand that the trauma is connected to the student and not to take it personal. When you take it personal and you react, then it becomes a discipline issue, and then we are pushing kids out of school. So then it leads to, so what did we do different at the secondary? We are really looking at, how do we educate staff, how do we educate our community and our parents, around restorative options, so...and strategies around restorative options in the classroom, and—because we were building a wedge between our schools and our parents and our community around discipline. And we were suspending kids right and left, and we knew that wasn't good. So we also have disproportionality in our discipline, and I believe that if you focus on the disproportionality, you can really address that, as well as all discipline for all kids. But if you just focus on restorative options for all kids, you are still going to end up with some disproportionality because of the institutional racism piece. So we created a community partnership; we brought in our stakeholders—members of our different communities—African-American communities, Native American communities, our police department, our city, and all of our stakeholders and community leaders. We created our CAT team, which is our Community Action Team, and basically said, we are going to address disproportionality, and secondarily we will address out-of-school suspensions—and through the restorative options. And we have really made some ground; are moving forward. And so we have kind of shifted into doing cultural competence training within our buildings to reduce that...like I said earlier, our staff is white and our kids are just a...quite a blend of different groups and cultures, and so we are trying to reduce that cultural clash in the classroom, and then also educating our community around supporting restorative options. Because if we don't suspend in our community for some significant bullying and we try a different option, we get parents calling in: "Why isn't this kid suspended? We want this kid hung, and we don't want this kid to ever go back to school again." And so we need a lot of education, so we are kind of doing this sandwich approach, where the community is doing some education and support, and we are doing education in conjunction in the schools, and wrapping our arms around it, and reducing our discipline in that respect. So, hope I answered your question.

MODERATOR

No, great.

WENDY BLEEKER

I do want to mention the Burns Institute. We partnered with the Burns Institute, and I think they are from the Bay Area. They do a lot of work around restorative justice in the justice system; we have partnered with our juvenile courts because it's that prison-to-pipeline. We are pushing our kids out, and then they are going right to detention. And so they came in and did a huge qualitative and quantitative study in our area and in Spokane. The key to that...first of all, they present very well around the disproportionality, so people aren't offended and don't feel like they are being called a racist. And the other thing that's real important is, from an outside evaluator, we could build trust with our community, so they didn't feel like we were hiding things if we presented our own data; very, very key, and they are wonderful to work with.

MODERATOR

Well, perfect segue for you, Helen. Your work is districtwide, and we are really interested in learning about the restorative practices that you are helping schools across your district to implement.

HELEN PARKER

Yes; it was really great to hear Dr. Corwin early on saying resilience is about connectedness. And restorative practices is all about connectedness. You mentioned restorative justice and responsive approaches to schoolwide discipline, but restorative practices is a proactive relational approach, where we focus on building strong relationships ahead of time, so that there is a relationship to restore once discipline issues happen. Without...it's hard to restore something that doesn't exist. So it's proactively building relationships, but not just between students, and staff and students, but also between our staff. One of the things you mentioned was staff getting triggered, and their own responses to trauma. One of the things we found to be very, very significant is staff's internalization of vicarious trauma from working with trauma-impacted youth. And I know...I worked in a court school for 12 years, and learned the hard way about how vicarious trauma does impact the folks who are working with our kids; that kind of shifting of energy from them to yours. And so unless we are taking care of our staff, and aware of that, we are less able to serve our kids. And so one thing many school staff say, when we present restorative practices is, "We need to do this with ourselves first; we have a lot of broken relationships in the staff." Because one of the unfortunate things that happens, when you're working in a trauma-impacted environment, is that it takes its toll on the relationships between staff, and there's a lot that can devolve into that kind of finger-pointing, and folks engage in their own unhealthy care-taking habits and unhealthy things that are happening. So by starting with the staff, and providing a safe and nurturing environment, building—consciously building—relationships between the staff, then we were able to move it to their classroom. The students take it up much more quickly than the adults do; they are much more plastic in their understanding of the need to connect with each other than the adults. So it's

very exciting to see them taking on restorative practices—doing community-building circles; running it themselves. And then once you have built that relationship, then you can do responsive circles and responsive approaches to restoring relationships when harm has occurred. And again, we are focusing on shifting the paradigm from rule-breaking, to one of, there was harm done. So how do we repair the relationship once the harm has been done? You are not a bad person; we are separating the deed from the doer, okay, and giving some of our most traumatized children actually a way—an empowering way—of repairing the relationships that have been harmed as a result of their often impulsive behavior. So empowering them in that way. Let's see...and so we can then shift into the responsive piece; having responsive circles in our classrooms, doing conferences between individuals who've experienced harm; and it's really excited when we get kids saying, "We need a circle; we need a circle. This happened on the yard; we need a circle right now!" and empowering themselves in that way. And as you saw in the video, the incredible work that's been done at El Dorado, which is spreading now with this Wellness Center, where we are really empowering our students to own and take responsibility for their actions, as well as manage their responses to the internal things that are going on for them.

MODERATOR

So we've gone from the elementary to the secondary to districtwide; now Erin, you bring a statewide systems perspective to this kind of work, and oversee a number of different kinds of efforts across Montana. Can you tell us a little bit about some of the work that's being done there?

ERIN BUTTS

Sure. One of the things that has been really exciting for me in my position that I have gotten to do is, about a year ago there were two faculty in the education division in one of our colleges in Dillon, Montana—UM Western—who said, "We would like you to come do a presentation around mental health," and of course I said, "Could I talk about trauma?" And they said, "Of course,"...and why it matters in schools." And so they opened these different forums to students and preservice, and then also to some of their education alumni in surrounding districts. So I gave about a two-hour presentation workshop, and last fall these two faculty came back and said, "We'd like to meet with you in Helena, and we are really dissatisfied with one of our behavioral management courses," and this is in a particular special education course. And they said, "We know that the students are capable of learning the information; we don't think that the information's sticking, and we want to completely dump this thing and make it trauma-informed." And so over some conversations, we partnered up, and I worked with them on content areas—and they are doing the grading—because the work fits within my job description. So it's become a really nice partnership, not just between myself and these professors, but working—and my position is housed within the special education division—we have been able to partner in some different initiatives that we have going on statewide in bringing this into the preservice, where our students are going to be going back and working in the schools. Many of the students in this course are already teaching, because they get hired under the condition that they'll attain their special education endorsement within a certain time. And so this course previously was looking at, like, individual diagnoses, and I think so

much of what Dr. Wiet shared earlier—looking at what does ADHD look like, what does anxiety look like, what does depression look like, what is eating disorders—and we have completely shaped this, and have now made it trauma-informed. One of my graduate classes, one of my researchers said, “You know, sometimes you know you are hitting on the right research and the right information when the information continues to come back, and you are sort of not extending the citations.” And so I say this because our colleagues in Washington held up two texts for you, and those are the exact texts that we are using in this preservice course. So anecdotally, we are seeing a lot of really interesting feedback from the students about this, and it’s really reshifting. So that’s one of the areas that’s been really exciting that I’ve gotten to work on.

Montana is in its 20th anniversary of PBIS in our state, and as the times have moved since the 90s, when PBIS was implemented in the state, our very innovative coordinator, Susan Bailey Anderson, has also moved with the times. And so one of the things that we have been exploring—and I think Carol noted that with some of that implementation science stuff—we have been in conversations, for probably the last two to three years, about integrating mental health into our MDI modules and sessions, and the trainings. And so last October, the Office of Public Instruction received a statewide SAMHSA and Department of Ed grant. And so within both of those grants, we have written in mental health, trauma-informed practices. But where we are, we house the Department of Ed grant, and so we’re now actively working on building in trauma-informed modules with our PBIS training and systems. And originally, I think we were going to do something that’s kind of common, and the idea was, well, let’s partner mental health clinicians within the training or school regions, and have him or her teach with the consultants; so we’ll try to do a co-linking. And our consultant, Dr. Tim Louis out of Minnea...no, Missouri, excuse me, suggested if you really want to integrate, you might consider doing intensive mental health training with your consultants. And so we’re starting that process and anticipating that this is really going to shift the way that we work with our partners and their schools. We also have a pretty intensive wraparound initiative, that I would say...that’s focused on four of our reservations—on the Fort Peck reservations, where we have our Assiniboine and Sioux tribes; Crow; Northern Cheyenne; and we’re now moving into Fort Belnap. And this has really been a rich opportunity and process for our State Department of Education to think creatively, in some of our tribal communities, and I think the piece of that that I would like to note is when we advertise for the positions, and want to hire, the expectation is that the wraparound facilitator is somebody that’s capable and willing of learning the skill set to be a wraparound facilitator, and it’s much less focused on specific credentials. And so I think that it is such a rich example of adapting to the environment; all of our facilitators are from the communities—they very much understand what it means to live and be in tribal communities. There is much less of a concern of these adults—who become very connected with the youth and families in a very intimate way—leaving and not sustaining their work, and staying within these communities for a long time. And I think that these kinds of ways of thinking, and doing, and practices, and changes—the more that we can do these kinds of things, I think, the better chance we have of incorporating and sustaining.

MODERATOR

Thank you. We all know that in the real world of working with kids and schools, that change is often really hard and very slow. But given all the experiences that you guys have, and building on the good work that you have just described to us, what do you think is really making a big difference? We would like to hear about some of the positive changes your students, or your colleagues, or your school, or your community are experiencing since adopting these practices. So if you have touched on that and given us a little bit of a flavor, but I would like you to dig a little bit more deeply and give some specific examples. So Helen, if you don't mind, why don't we start with you for a districtwide perspective. What do you think are some of the real positive outcomes from your investment and your approach?

HELEN PARKER

Well, the biggest, most positive outcome for us right now is that our suspension numbers have dropped by half, over a three-year period, which is incredibly exciting, because we really want to focus on interrupting that school-to-prison pipeline. Unfortunately, the disproportionality in our data hasn't improved dramatically. We have seen a 17% drop in African-American students suspended or expelled in the last year, but that whole cultural piece is still a really, really significant piece for us to work on. But just, I think...we have been holding centralized trainings, and been lucky enough to have coaches that work with individual school sites now, that people are starting to develop a common language. And I think that's incredibly important to really garner any kind of systemic change, is that we are all using the same terms and developing an understanding of what a restorative approach is. We still have work to do around the fidelity of what that looks like in individual schools, and deepening people's understanding of what it looks like, but it's definitely in people's consciousness now; they are aware of the fact that we are trying to address suspensions and expulsions, they are becoming more aware of the impact of trauma and the disproportionality. So there is a shift—there is a paradigm shift—that's absolutely happening. We are on our journey, the ship is moving, but we've still got a long way to go in order to establish, districtwide, consistency and fidelity around the adoption of this approach.

MODERATOR

Jen, since your school's in the same district, why don't you piggyback onto Helen's comments, and tell us what you think are some of the big wins that you have experienced at your school over the last five years.

JEN CALDWELL

Yeah, I mean, I think numbers-wise, there was an 89% decrease in suspensions and a 75% decrease in office referrals, so I think that that was huge, and I think that that was a result, like Helen was saying, of a huge...a really, truly shift in belief, a shift in paradigm amongst the staff. I mean, it was kind of like, I didn't realize how challenging it was going to be to make that shift, but when it finally happened, it just clicked that like, "Oh wait, we can't just consequence a behavior out of a child; oh, a child isn't going to automatically trust me and listen to me just because I am a grown up." That we need to really think about what the

meanings of the behaviors are, what has happened to the child; really work, like Helen was talking about previously, on building those relationships straight from the beginning of the school year. And I think also, like Helen was saying, just a common language, not just among staff, but also among students. Like kids at our school, they're like, "I need to talk it out," which means I need to have a restorative conversation, or "I need to calm it down," which means I need to go take a break in the Peace Corner, whether it's in the classroom or in the Wellness Center. And even, like through our *Second Step* curriculum, like kids are able to talk about some of the brain stuff that we were learning earlier today; so they teach that you can make a brain with your fist, and this is the thinking part of your brain, and this is the feeling part of your brain. And I was in the offices last year, and a student was in there, and I said, "What happened, so-and-so?" and he was like, "Ms. Jen, my brain was like this!" [demonstrating an open hand]. And so they are, like, starting to understand, like, what's happening for themselves, and then...and learning what they can do to calm themselves down. They know how to use the tools in the Peace Corner; they know how to take belly breaths. They are really starting to have that common language and the internalizing these skills. I mean, we still have a long road ahead of us; we are still dealing with big behaviors every day, or at least every week, and...but there is systems and ways to talk about it, and things that we are starting to teach kids how to do. And I think it's definitely improved our staff retention. I mean, we still have a lot of work to do, but there is like, less people leaving each year; instead of like, nine people leaving every year, it's maybe two or three. So I think that's been an improvement, and we haven't...we don't quite have the academic numbers to...yet, but it hasn't been that long. But definitely the behavioral change has happened, and my expectation is that—fingers crossed—academics come next.

MODERATOR

Great. Wendy and Bonnie, what changes are you seeing in your community? You touched on sort of that sandwich thing, with the community and the schools, and that was just a really beautiful image, but can you dig a little deeper and a little more focused on school stuff? What sorts of things are you seeing as being transformative in your schools?

WENDY BLEEKER

Well, I can say what's been hugely transformative for us—and I have to agree with all that you two have said—and...but we became a mental health facility. And so we now are a mental health, and drug and alcohol, facility; we have 45 mental health therapists that work in the schools. And we still partner with our outside agencies, and it's...we're, we're working together. But what makes a difference, if a student misses their appointment, the therapist can see them the next day, and so they don't have to wait for another week. And really, the stigma goes away, the transportation issues to get to treatment goes away, and actually, the kids at secondary are kind of proud; they look at their therapist in the hall, "That's my shrink!" You know, it's just a different kind of...it does take that stigma away. And so that's been a huge shift for us. And then again, it's partnering; it's knowing that we can't do this all ourselves, you know, we need help and support. And it's shifting from that...it's really about changing what we do, instead of trying to change the kids so much. We have to change what we do, then that shifts and supports the student.

BONNIE DUCHARME

And on more of a school level, like Wendy said, when we first got a Safe Schools, Healthy Students grant, and that helped us start implementing mental health therapists districtwide, and now we are working with the regional health network and getting more therapists in our school. And at first, people didn't really want them, and some of our school counselors saw it as a threat. And now, their hands are up all the time, "We need more mental health therapy in our schools; more mental health therapy." The schools that did the specific collaboration with WSU around really deep work on trauma, what those schools have started doing is, their child study team process, which is like your pre-referral process for special education, they are doing that whole process through a trauma-focused lens now. So they are really doing...they are doing case studies, and meeting together, and looking at what kids' needs are, and how do we correlate that academic piece. With Common Core now, we have lots of teachers even...and we had two new curriculums at elementary this year, so there is this pressure on teachers to get it done, and get it done fast. And so our trauma work really helps kind of let them know that unless you are providing those strategies for kids, that they are not going to get there. So how many instructional minutes are lost—that's one of the ways we frame it—what instructional minutes are lost when you are attending to, you know, an escalating child that may be in the principal's office for an hour. I was an elementary principal also, so I know how that is, when you can't get out in your building. So that's been a big learning piece. Wendy and I have also done lots of training with our district counselors, so we have done a training-of-training model so that they can take some of this work and provide this work also within their buildings. A Carol Dweck mindset; we have done some studies with that, because there is a big focus on *t-two-four*—getting kids ready—technical, two-year, four-year college readiness. So how do we blend the trauma-informed strategies work with that? PBIS is also happening in our district, and as many others have said, we have seen a huge reduction in office referrals and out-of-school suspensions for kids. People are looking at more restorative options.

MODERATOR

Erin, what good things are happening in Montana that you think are really making a big difference?

ERIN BUTTS

You know, one of the things that sticks out—just about this course—one of the first assignments—this is mostly an online course, so I should say that—was to watch a TED talk the 2015 Montana Teacher of the Year gave in Bozeman. And the TED talk is a very compelling and very rich. And it's a high school science teacher that talks about this connection, and this app that he built with his cousin, and it was a way of checking in with the students. And his whole TED talk is around, he thought he was just checking in with students, and at one point he says, "Within two periods, I experienced every human emotion, and this is not what this was intended to do." And so the students in this class wanted to actually get this tool that he developed, and so the professors contacted Craig, and Craig said that he is actually working on making this app available. And so this is something. I think, from this course that it is going to start being implemented across the state of Montana and perhaps nationally, as a very user-

friendly way on a scale of checking in with your students—zero to 100. And this teacher talks in this about, you know, there was a student that had zero for several days, and all of a sudden the student was gone, and few weeks later he came back and explained to the teacher that he had been at a psychiatric residential treatment facility and had attempted suicide. And the teacher said, “If you ever get to a zero again, can I check in with you?” And the student said, “Yes.” And he said, actually through that change in relationship, his number never got below an 80, so I think it reinforces that connection. I also agree that, with this language around trauma—and now I am speaking with the Department of Education right now in Montana—we are seeing common language and common understanding across systems. So within juvenile justice, it’s slow, but within our healthcare system, within our child welfare system, in providing us a common way to talk about students and challenging behaviors. And I think the other piece, just to be really honest, is all this work in trauma and my education in the last five to six years has really, I think, impacted me and how I am; and at least on my good days, more aware with my colleagues that can sometimes be difficult, and looking at those challenging behaviors that can really stand out. And things like work ethic, tone of voice, and the way that we can talk to each other is unbelievable; and so, I think that on a very personal level, it’s impacted me.

MODERATOR

OK, and Robyn, what are some of the positive changes that you have seen at Cox Academy over the last while?

ROBYN GANELES

Well, we’ve also seen a decrease in suspensions and referrals to the office, but I think from my perspective, I really see it as a case-by-case situation. And so when you asked me this question originally, I was thinking about my caseload, and specific kiddos, and did we see a decrease in their behaviors. And I think that that’s what oftentimes is an indication that something is working. And I think of one kiddo in particular who did have a pretty significant trauma history. The referral behaviors were either withdrawal—like he would crawl under his desk or he would leave the classroom—or he would get aggressive, and mostly defiant towards the teacher, but also sometimes towards other students. And this is a kiddo that really internalized these beliefs that, “I am alone in the world, and nobody cares about me, and I am not successful here; I am not successful anywhere.” And we were trying to build a relationship with his father, who he was placed with for the first time in his life in second grade, and I have now had him for three years; he is now in fifth grade. And I see the changes, not only in his behaviors, because he can use those tools that he is learning in *Toolbox*—he can ask to take breaks, he can ask to go to the sensory room, he can ask to check in—but also, we see it on the teacher’s level, when we are meeting with the teacher. And sometimes the student is present and sometimes a student isn’t, but the teacher is speaking about the student and the student’s behavior in a completely different way. She is trying to understand what beliefs are getting in his way. She is trying to build a connection with him. Whereas before she would isolate his desk from the rest of the class because the behaviors were really disruptive, she started realizing, “Wait a second, I am confirming that belief that ‘I am alone,’ and I really need to be fostering that belief that ‘I am connected.’” So we really worked together to find ways to build that relationship and

connection with the teacher. We started having breakfasts with the teacher; we would invite the father to come along. Then the father started building relationships with the teachers, and with the schools, and with his son. And the son started seeing, “Oh, wait a second, when I am acting out, people aren’t just sending me away, including my father. People are actually coming around me and supporting me.” And we did start to see a decrease in his behaviors, and more engagement on the father’s part, and more communication with the teacher. The teacher was starting to change the way that she was intervening with the behaviors, and I think that kind of illustrates how it was a positive experience for all of the players involved. So that’s how we are seeing it, yeah.

MODERATOR

Great. So my last question for you, before we open it up for questions and comments and all that, is: Based on your successes and struggles, what advice do you have for the Utah educators with us today, who either want to introduce, or better integrate, or strengthen the trauma-sensitive practices in their schools or districts, or in their work more broadly, because we have a number of people here today from different types of organizations. So why don’t you think....why don’t you take like, a minute or so, and share. What’s your advice; what’s your “top tips” for moving this kind of work forward? And why don’t we just start with you, Bonnie, and you could just move on down the panel line here.

NOELLE CASKEY (from audience)

They could even take two minutes.

MODERATOR

Okay, you could take *two* minutes for more “top tips.”

BONNIE DUCHARME

Okay. So part of...the biggest advice that I can give to anyone starting to implement this work is that *readiness to receive services* piece. So many times, we have different initiatives that come out in the schools; some teachers will be like, “I have no time for one more thing; I have no time to learn something else,” or like I said earlier, “just teach me a few strategies in my toolbox to work with that kid, and I am good to go.” So really that readiness to receive services; and some schools, they use the purple book, because we kind of see that as a primer on—the one you saw earlier—as kind of a primer on trauma and informed strategies. So some schools use that as a book study, the year before they started really integrating practices, or, you know, Dave Pelzer’s work, or work about specific people who have lived through horrific, horrific trauma experiences, and have been resilient and come out the other side. So sometimes those kinds of book studies, where people can really get a sense of, this was a real kid. One of the big “ahas” that the schools that we had, that did that really deep collaborative with Washington State, was they did the ACEs study with their children. They adapted that study to the children population, and that was a huge “aha” for the staff to see how many of their kids, their very own kids, had so many ACEs already at a very young age. So getting your staff prepared to do this work, so that people are on board, they don’t see it as one more

thing, and really aligning it with classroom instruction and the fact that you are going to save classroom instruction time by doing it; that it's not going to just take up more time, and now you get to do this thing, and now can go on to the real meat of instruction. So you have to really allow people to get that understanding of how they can buy in to that; it's going to save instructional minutes in the classroom.

MODERATOR

Thank you.

WENDY BLEEKER

Well, I am kind of piggybacking on what Bonnie said, and I think it's really trying to tie in the brain—the brain piece, the functioning of the brain—and tying that into academics. So at the building level, or even at the district level, there's teachers and administrators that do not see that connection. And I can't tell you how many times I have been told, "Well, if it's just good instruction, and we just need good curriculum and good pedagogy. You know, these kids can just pull up their boot straps, and they can do it." And we know that it's just much more complicated than that. And so, if they can understand what's happening in the brain, and how trauma affects the brain, and how that affects learning—and the purple book does that in the second and third chapter, and it's really well put together for educators—it's just like that opens that window, and they go, "Oh, okay, I think I get this," and so then they are much more open to looking at that. And so...because some people look at trauma-informed strategies as kind of the "fluffy stuff" and it's not; it's about kids getting to academics and graduation. Our graduation rate went from 60% to 86%.

JEN CALDWELL

Wow, awesome. I think, just again, the staff buy-in is so important, because we did four years of work prior to implementing our Wellness Center last year. And without that four years of prior work of staff training, and strengthening teachers' strategies and systems in the school, then the chaos that was the front office six years ago would have just been relocated into the Wellness Center. So it would have been just moving the problem somewhere else. So I think administrative buy-in, staff buy-in, teacher buy-in, and everybody having that common language, and really understanding and believing in restorative practices and trauma-informed practices; like, that's key. And then also that it takes a long time; and there was many times throughout the last five years I was like, "It's not going to happen; it's not going to happen." And then like, it was just like this light bulb; one day it just clicked, and everything started synching. And it still not perfect—it's still insane sometimes...a lot of the time, every week—but it's just controlled chaos, I guess. But it really works, and it take a long time. And then another book that I would recommend—it's towards teachers, and it really breaks down different behaviors, and the brain effects, and then specific strategies for the classroom—called *Reaching and Teaching Children Who Hurt*, and it's by Susan Craig. And that's been another...we also use all of these books in San Francisco Unified, and then in addition, this book has been really helpful in that education piece for staff. And I think that family involvement, you know—you guys spoke to it—is really key. That's been a little bit challenging for us, due to

some similar cultural differences, work schedules, and all that kind of stuff, but I think that that—having the family buy-in—is also really key in having these systems work, as well.

HELEN PARKER

I am coming, a little bit, at this question from a district perspective, and thinking about the things that you need in place. We have been very lucky in San Francisco to have an extremely supportive school board, and that's been helpful for us in terms of getting the political momentum to bring about policy changes. Also, San Francisco has adopted...er, has opted out of the No Child Left Behind requirements, and has adopted SQII—which is the School Quality Improvement Initiative—which addresses not just academics, but also the social-emotional piece. And we will be integrating that into how we are evaluated as a district, which is incredibly exciting, that systemically we are going to have a holistic approach to school evaluation. So, stakeholder awareness; really working with your families, the different community groups, our parent advisory councils, to help them to understand this paradigm shift, because we, too, have experienced pushback from our parents, so like, “We just need that kid out of the class. We just...we don't want that kid in the class with our kids. Our kids are being traumatized by that child as a result.” So really helping them to understand what's happening in this approach. A coherent, logical roll-out plan at a district level, so that teachers don't just feel like this is another initiative on top of another initiative on top of another initiative; to help them see how it is empowering them as educators by giving our students what they need to be successful. And asking our leadership to model restorative practices, too. This is a way of being; we are all in relationship with each other. And having them use this approach as well is one of the most important things we can do to get buy-in from teachers who are finally, “Oh, wow, the leadership are actually doing this? This is something radical.” So that's been important to us; we have even had some of our school board members who participated in our restorative process after a challenge that came up in a school board meeting, so that's very exciting—that these are our values as a district, this is who we are as a district, and helping folks to really implement that.

ROBYN GANELES

I want to piggyback off of what everyone has said, and specifically Jen. I think that the buy-in at a specific school—and I work at an elementary school—the buy-in from the administration, and from the teachers, and from the families is super important, and I think along with that goes the collaboration piece. So I think, really coming from a perspective of, we are going to be working collaboratively with the families, with the community, and that the admin is going to work collaboratively with the teachers, and the teachers are going to work collaboratively with the families, and all...I think collaboration is a key piece in this process. And I think just making sure that there is enough teacher support, and resources available to the teachers, because we are asking them to do quite a bit, and we are seeing this as a paradigm shift, in that we need to do this in order for kids to be able to access the education; so in essence, it's going to be saving time in the long run. But I think it's so important to give the teachers the supports and the resources that they need in order to feel like they can go forward with this process.

MODERATOR

Erin, the last word.

ERIN BUTTS

I think it takes an aspect of humility, and we are really...we're talking about very, like, difficult human emotions and experiences, and very wounded and unhealed—not only children, but also adults. And with your permission, I would just like to close, because I think this work is very hard, with a poem by Marge Piercy. And if you didn't know, April is National Poetry Month.

To Be of Use

*The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing like half-submerged balls.*

*I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.*

*I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who stand in the line in hall in their places
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.*

*The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.*

Thank you.

MODERATOR

Okay, before we open it up for some questions here, I personally would like to thank each of the panelists for joining us here today. Some of you cut short your spring breaks, and I know at least two of you hopscotched all over the western states to get here yesterday. So we are really, really, really grateful to learn from your experiences and your descriptions of such important work.