

Trauma-Informed Care in Austin Independent School District

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In 2015, Austin ISD (AISD) introduced Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI®) as a model of trauma-informed care to district employees. “TBRI® is an attachment-based, trauma-informed intervention that is designed to meet the complex needs of vulnerable children. TBRI® uses Empowering Principles to address physical needs, Connecting Principles for attachment needs, and Correcting Principles to disarm fear-based behaviors. While the intervention is based on years of attachment, sensory processing, and neuroscience research, the heartbeat of TBRI® is connection.” (Retrieved from <https://child.tcu.edu/about-us/tbri/#sthash.F3Gv4YRc.dpbs> on August 3, 2017)

In an effort to meet the increasing demand for TBRI® training, trainers from the Child Study Systems, which is housed in the Social and Emotional Learning Department in AISD, seek to provide workshops of various lengths to meet campus needs. To date, 22 campuses and five district support departments have been trained in TBRI®. In addition, this year TBRI® was part of the required training for every pre-k teacher in the district. The response from the trainings has been overwhelmingly positive. A survey of participants was conducted after the first year of training, which yielded the following results:

- 93% agreed that TBRI® helped them gain a better understanding of how trauma affects childhood development
- 97% think the training would benefit other school professionals and parents
- 82% agreed they interact with their students differently as a result of the TBRI® training.
- “When I am feeling frustrated with a child’s behavior, it helps me to stop and think about what they are going through, talk to them about the circumstances that have made school difficult at this time, and let them know that there are people here they can go to when they are struggling with their home situation.” (Elementary teacher)
- “While observing a student who was totally emotionally dysregulated, I was able to use some of the connecting principles to help him come back into his body, ground himself and become more regulated before moving to the correcting principles. He was able to reengage much quicker than he would have been before using these principles. (Elementary counselor)

After the second year of training, AISD has adapted TBRI® as a best practice for supporting teachers in grades Pre-K 3 through 2nd grade, as the “no suspension” initiative begins. The district has mandated that 1200 Pre-K 3 through 2nd grade teachers be trained in TBRI® before the 2017-2018 school year begins. In an effort to create a common language and develop a consistent approach, training has been provided for elementary administrators and campus counselors over the course of the summer. As a result of the positive response to TBRI®, AISD is actively seeking grants to further TBRI® in the district as campus requests for TBRI® training are at capacity.

As AISD looks to the future we are in the developing and instituting a Train the Trainers program, as well as follow-up coaching support for campuses after staff attend the TBRI® training in order to help integrate the learning into practice.