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Trauma Informed Teaching to Support Student Social and Emotional Needs

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Trauma Informed Teaching to Support Student Social and Emotional Needs

By

Tara Williams

A culminating thesis submitted to the faculty of Dominican University of California in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education.

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This thesis, written under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor and approved by the department chair, has been presented to and accepted by the Department of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine how a trauma informed approach to behavior that supports the emotional growth of students and meets their needs for discipline and structure within a school environment affects teachers' negative perspectives of student behavior. This study examined the impact Rainbowdance had on teacher perception of student behavior before teacher training and after training. The participants are three lower elementary teachers at Country Charter School and the International Trauma Center (ITC) staff members who are implementing Rainbowdance provide additional information. The data collection was done through narrative interviews, field notes and observations. This study is phenomenological in design. The data collection attempts to answer the question that guides this research, how has the Rainbowdance program affected the social emotional teaching practices and the classroom climate for teachers at one school site?

The findings indicated that the trauma informed program, Rainbowdance has impacted teacher perception of student behavior because it provides insight and understanding of how trauma in a student's life impacts their behavior. Once a teacher is trauma informed and trained, it would be beneficial to continue the trauma informed approach to provide additional supports. The educational system would benefit greatly from adopting a trauma informed program and approach that supports teachers, thus supporting their students in understanding their needs.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that more than 25 percent of children have encountered physically, sexually, and or emotionally abusive experiences that are perceived as traumatizing (Crosby, 2015). How traumatized children experience the classroom, however, is greatly impacted by their attachment to their teacher. As Schwartz (2017) observes, the student needs to have a relational attachment with their teacher to feel safe and secure while at school and that is what Trauma Informed Care programs attempt to create. Trauma Informed Care programs attempt to create trauma informed teaching approaches that improve the emotional well being of the students and the teachers. A trauma informed system focuses on empathy to strengthen the student-teacher relationship.

During the credentialing process, Teachers are thoroughly trained in the practice of teaching, not trauma informed practices. Trauma is particularly challenging for educators to address because kids often don't express the distress they're feeling in a way that's easily recognizable — and they may mask their pain with behavior that's aggressive or off-putting (Miller, 2016). A trauma informed system provides teachers with the tools to address a student who has experienced trauma.

The Trauma Informed Care program, Rainbowdance (RD), gathers children and group leaders together for 45-minute classes twice a month, with the goal of enhancing self-regulation, self-esteem, and social empathy. Providing a symbolic journey into the world of nature and relationship, Rainbowdance encourages the growth of empowered and self-nurturing children. Rainbow Dance helps to create healthy developmental tools at this age that will mitigate the potential for future behavioral problems ranging from violence to depression. RD is particularly

well suited to the early elementary school environment and supports academic growth. Studies show that Rainbowdance programs can increase empathy and increase self-regulation while decreasing aggression with toddlers to 3rd graders (Macy, 2018). Once Rainbowdance has become instilled as a regular practice, teachers integrate it into their daily routines, incorporating songs, stories, and soothing activities to help build classroom harmony and alleviate moments of distress (Macy, 2018). Ultimately the Trauma Informed Care (TIC) program, Rainbowdance, creates empathy within the student and the teacher, this strengthens the teacher and student relationship.

Background and Need

In spite of well documented evidence that trauma informed care and SEL programs are effective in supporting student social and emotional needs, they are not accessible to the vast majority of teachers and schools (Sokal & Katz, 2017). Teachers who teach SEL in their classrooms have also demonstrated positive outcomes (Sokal & Katz, 2017). Despite these encouraging findings, implementation of SEL has been hampered by some limitations, including the lack of a consistent definition. A limitation that in turn affects research findings; lack of teacher education in SEL, which erodes confidence in the fidelity of implementation; and concerns that current SEL programs are not sensitive to cultural differences in communities (Sokal & Katz, 2017).

In an attempt to manage student behavior and define discipline schools have adopted the zero tolerance policy. Defined by E.A. Gjelten, a zero tolerance policy requires school officials to hand down specific, consistent, and harsh punishment—usually suspension or expulsion—when students break certain rules. The punishment applies regardless of the circumstances, the reasons for the behavior (like self-defense), or the student’s history of discipline problems.

That's why some critics call these policies "one strike and you're out" (Blumenson & Nilsen, 2003). Evidence clearly states that crime rates have stayed the same for the two decades since zero tolerance policies have been put in place and the suspension rate have almost doubled. Suspending a student, however, is not sending the child a message of care (Blumenson & Nilsen, 2003).

While a large body of research has explored school discipline and argues that it is necessary in order for students to learn, a generalized approach to school discipline does not leave space for the individual needs of the student. The literature on trauma informed care programs and teaching shows that addressing a student's emotional needs can benefit them academically and personally. SEL programming has a multi-pronged goal set in that it seeks to develop the social emotional competencies of all children so that they can work and learn together, while at the same time it seeks to both mitigate the development of mental illness and to create inclusive settings for children who are experiencing mental illness. (Sokal & Katz, 2017) However, There is little research exploring the effects of trauma informed care as a daily routine in the classroom.

Theoretical Rationale

Knowing how to identify and understand trauma can benefit both the teacher and the student. The Trauma Informed Positive Education (TIPE) model is a model that enhances the understanding of trauma-informed pedagogies by building on a student's regulatory capacities and relational attachments. It also emphasizes teaching practices that foster positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (Brunzell, Stokes & Waters, 2017). The TIPE model embodies the value of relational attachments and how it directly impacts the regulatory capacities of a child. If a child does not have a relational attachment in their life or a

fractured one, the child will often become attached to his or her teacher. For a student the attachment to a teacher may be one of few positive attachments, or perhaps the only positive attachment, they have in their life, thereby making such an attachment pivotal to the student's emotional development.

The TIPE approach positions learning within a dual continuum model of mental health, in which mental health and mental illness are related, in order to address domains of healing and of growth in trauma-affected students (Keyes 2002; Keyes & Annas, 2009). Classroom pedagogies and student management are enhanced for trauma affected students if teachers seek to directly redress the disrupted capacities, regulatory abilities and relational attachments that have been compromised by traumatic stressors; and nurture learning experiences that allow students to identify and build upon their strengths (Brunzell, Stokes & Waters, 2017).

Understanding how trauma affects the interactions of children with others is a key piece in identifying responses to trauma. Research indicates that children who have been exposed to trauma often have difficulty responding to social cues and may withdraw from social situations or bully others (McInerney & McKlindon, 2017). The use and implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs in schools can effectively influence the academic achievement of children, whereby incidence of problem behaviors decreases, the relationships that surround each child are improved, and the climate of classrooms and schools changes for the better (Elias, 2006). SEL provides tools for classrooms, families and communities. The tools are based in teaching empathy, responsibility, effective communication, relationship building, regulating emotions and tolerance of others. These SEL based tools combined with academic learning are essential for effective education in the current world we are in (Elias, 2006). It is

evident that SEL programs are a necessary piece of education in order to teach the “whole child” (Elias, 2006). To teach the “whole child” there must be access to SEL based content.

Statement of Purpose

Prior research indicates that mastering both academic and social skills are key to the healing process when children experience trauma, the aim is to increase teaching and learning time and reduce time spent on discipline. The ultimate goal is to help all traumatized students become successful members of their school communities. (Gil & Briere, 2006). Yet while a large body of research supports the use of Trauma Informed Care (TIC) program, for most teachers, accessibility to training and strategies for effective implementation are extremely limited. Empathy is not taught in teaching training or as professional development for educators (Shechtman & Tutian, 2016). Moreover, few studies have examined the transformative effects of TIC programs on teacher perspectives regarding student behavior. Additionally, few studies, if any, have elaborated on how to effectively serve the emotional needs of the student while still maintaining discipline. The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine how a trauma informed approach to behavior that supports the emotional growth of students and meets their needs for discipline and structure within a school environment affects teachers’ negative perspectives of student behavior. This study examined the impact Rainbowdance had on teacher perception of student behavior before teacher training and after training.

Significance of the Study

This research is for teachers, school staff and those interacting with children in a school setting. The intent is that my research may provide insight into student behavior and the reasons behind their behavior. Students display their emotions through their behavior and this is often times misinterpreted and given a consequence by the teacher in an order to maintain the

classroom management. As Miller (2016) discusses, one of the challenges in giving that support is that when kids misbehave, our schools often use disciplinary systems that involve withdrawing attention and support, rather than addressing their problems. Schools have very little patience for kids who provoke and push away adults who try to help them. This research may support teachers and school staff in identifying individual children who have experienced trauma and provide the strategies to address that trauma for the student. This research aims to advance educational equity for all students by providing each student with teachers that are trained in trauma informed teaching practices. Each teacher has the strategies and tools to support their individual students' social and emotional needs. With the appropriate strategies and tools, schools may understand the need to implement a trauma program at their site as a means to benefit the school climate, the mental health of individual students and open up the capacity of understanding of trauma for classroom teachers.

The research conducted has the potential to impact the teachers' perceptions of student behavior. This study will provide teachers with a better understanding of trauma and how to identify traumatized children that they may have in their classroom. This understanding will allow teachers to see their student's behavior from a trauma informed perspective. Teachers and school administration will learn about the need for trauma informed care programs. The research conducted encourages the necessity for trauma informed care teaching practices for teachers. The findings of this study will help in the development and implementation of trauma informed care programs in schools. Ultimately, this research will provide feedback and insight for the creators or Rianbowdance. Additionally, the findings of this research will be useful for the RD creators for further implementation, trainings and perceptions of the impact it may have on the teachers and students.

Summary of Methods

Data for this study was collected from The Country Charter School (CCS). In order to protect confidentiality of the participants and the school site, all names in the thesis are pseudonyms. CCS is the school site that this study is collecting data from for this research. The school site is a public K-8 school that is a part of the local school district. CCS has a student population of 220 students and is located in a predominantly Latino neighborhood. More than 50% of the student population is on free or reduced lunch and 10% of the parents do not speak English. The staff at CCS is made up of 10 classroom teachers and six full time classroom aides. The Country Charter School is collaborating with the International Trauma Center (ITC) to incorporate the Trauma Informed Care (TIC) program, Rainbowdance (RD), developed by ITC. The International Trauma Center's mission is to guide and support the natural resiliency responses of multicultural recovery into hope, healing and renewed strength for individuals and communities suffering from violence and trauma (Macy, 2008).

The participants are three lower elementary teachers at Country Charter School and the International Trauma Center (ITC) staff members who have implemented Rainbowdance provided additional information. All names and titles of teachers in my research are pseudonyms to protect the privacy of those participating. The ITC staff includes the behaviorists, a therapist and the director of the program. The researcher is a teacher at the Country Charter School and has students who are currently participating in RD at the school site and was trained in RD along with the other participants. The data collection was done through narrative interviews, field notes and observations. This study is phenomenological in design. The data collection attempts to

answer the question that guides this research, how has the Rainbowdance program affected the social emotional teaching practices and the classroom climate for teachers at one school site?

Summary of Findings and Implications

The findings indicated that the trauma informed program, Rainbowdance has impacted teacher perception of student behavior because it provides insight and understanding of how trauma in a student's life impacts their behavior. The findings reveal a shift in perception of student behavior and the understanding of the trauma increases. Teachers understand that trauma that a student has endured shapes their behavioral responses and the teacher perception is more tolerant.

Student behavior drives the climate of the classroom and the way in which the teacher responds to each student. When student behavior is negative, it can create a negative classroom climate. The teacher is constantly exploring new and progressive ways to counteract student behavior from destructing the classroom environment that they have so carefully built with their students. Schools do not have the resources to help teachers manage student behaviors effectively. Schools need to reform their behavior management systems to addresses their social and emotional needs rather than taking disciplinary action. A trauma informed approach to behavior could mend the overuse of discipline in schools.

A teacher takes on the responsibility to teach the student how to behave in a way that helps them be a successful learner and person. Furthermore, once a teacher is trauma informed and trained, it would be beneficial to continue the trauma informed approach to provide additional supports. The educational system would benefit greatly from adopting a trauma informed program and approach that supports teachers, thus supporting their students in understanding their needs.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The current literature makes it evident that there is a need for trauma informed care programs and teaching practices. The current research supports the benefits of trauma informed care programs and how using and implementing a Social Emotional Learning approach in the classroom impacts students and teachers. Existing literature states that understanding the impacts of trauma and behaviors that display trauma has occurred are essential in a teacher's ability to connect with an individual student and to address their behaviors. How a teacher responds to student behavior determines the classroom climate. Teachers are trained in classroom management to address student behavior and most often this is rooted in discipline. Historically, school discipline policies have been implemented in schools and classrooms yet the disruptive behavior remains. This pattern indicates the need for a process addressing a student's behavior that is caused by the experience of trauma. An essential piece of the process is to train teachers to understand and implement strategies that can reduce the behaviors at school and in the classroom.

There is a necessity for programs to aide in the social, emotional and overall well being for students who have experienced trauma and have disruptive behavior that impacts both their own learning as well as their classroom climate. Their needs to be access to trauma informed care programs that provide the tools and supports for teachers to understand trauma. There is little accessibility to trauma informed care programs and teaching practices for teachers and schools. There are currently a lack of programs that train teachers in understanding trauma and how they can implement trauma informed practices in their daily teaching. For the purpose of this research, trauma informed care programs and teaching practices are defined as an approach

to understanding student behavior and learning how to support their emotional growth on an individual basis.

This chapter examines the current literature of trauma informed care teaching practices and programs in schools. Research information is organized in the following categories: Historical Context and Review of the Academic Research. The themes found in the current literature are, understanding and identifying trauma, impacts of trauma, implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Trauma Informed Care (TIC) programs, outcomes of student behavior and achievement and school discipline addressing social and emotional needs of students.

Historical Context

Traumatic experiences in childhood are defined as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which may include physical, psychological, or sexual abuse; violence against one's mother; or living with household members who are mentally ill, suicidal, substance abusers, or previously incarcerated (McInerney & McKlindon, 2017). In response to a traumatic event, a person may feel intense fear, horror, or helplessness, and in response, a child may display disorganized or agitated behavior (McInerney & McKlindon, 2017). Research suggests that between half and two-thirds of all school-aged children experience trauma as they are exposed to one or more adverse childhood experience that can be trauma-inducing (McInerney & McKlindon, 2017).

Furthermore, trauma can occur in varying capacities and severities. Trauma displays itself differently, depending on the individual, some traumas are obvious and many are not. Trauma can be experienced in all parts of a person's life. People are most susceptible to the experiences they encountered as children. A pivotal experience that most people in this country

share is attending school and receiving an education as a child. We all can recall an experience from school or a teacher that had an impact on us. Whether the school experience was positive or negative, it has lifelong impacts. Every student comes to school with a background and an experience before they arrive into the care of a teacher and classroom. Those experiences make up who the child is and how they interact with the world around them.

Understanding and Identifying Trauma

All schools and educators work with children who have experienced trauma, but they may not know who these students are (McInerney & McKlindon, 2017). For a teacher it is an ongoing journey to understand a student and their behaviors. In order to address any academics a teacher must address the heart of the students they have in their care. Understanding a student through their behavior is to understand their heart. When a student has experienced or is currently experiencing trauma the behavior is showing the effect of the trauma as an action. The behaviors that are shown from an individual student can simply display that trauma occurred. A classroom teacher is managing student behavior before they are teaching academics. Addressing student behavior is a priority for any classroom teacher. You must address the heart before you address the mind. Understanding what is behind a student's behavior is essential to understanding a student. Teachers and staff reported they were more tolerant of children and youth when they could identify their behaviors as motivated by personal trauma (Fecser, 2014). From the lens of the teacher, student behavior can be disruptive, disrespectful and can negatively impact the classroom climate. When a teacher understands that the student is unable to control their behavior due to the trauma they have experienced the teacher understands the child. Understanding trauma is to understand the child and it can greatly impact the student, teacher relationship.

Impacts of Trauma

Children are constantly developing and changing; their life experiences play a large role in their development. Children experience physiological changes to their brains as well as emotional and behavioral responses to trauma that have the potential to interfere with their learning, school engagement, and academic success (McInerney & McKlindon, 2017). There is a direct link to a student's educational success and the trauma they have experienced.

Additionally, the ecosystems that a child experiences trauma within fall under five levels, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). The ecological systems framework developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner promotes understanding of how the ecosystems in which we live impact the individual child. Each ecosystem identifies the environmental system in which an individual interacts. The microsystem is institutional and group based, such as family, school, religious institutions or neighborhood. The mesosystem is the interconnection between the microsystems, interactions between family and teachers. The exosystem is a social setting in which the individual does not have an active role and changes occur that directly impact them. The macrosystem is the culture in which the individual lives, this includes socioeconomic status and ethnicity. The chronosystem is the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the course of the individual's life; this would be an event and transition such as divorce. The ecological systems framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979) provides educators an understanding of the environmental factors that can impact a child. The environmental factors are central to development in an individual's life. When a traumatic event occurs in an individual's life, it hinders development. Traumatic experiences occur outside the realm of usual experience, threaten one's life or bodily integrity, and invoke intense feelings of helplessness, powerlessness, and terror (American Psychological

Association, 2008). Understanding this framework can provide teachers with an ecological approach to student behavior and an awareness of how their environments outside of school impact their behaviors.

Teachers and school staff are not trained to deal with trauma and they do not know how to approach the topic (Anderson, Blitz, Saastamoinen, 2015). When dealing with students who have experienced trauma you must expand the understanding of the non-academic barriers of learning for children that can result from trauma and toxic stress. This can be seen in the classroom in students who are defiant, struggle with peer relationships and lack self-regulation skills (Anderson, Blitz & Saastamoinen, 2015). The impacts of trauma are noticeable and can be long lasting. Two thirds of all elementary aged children have experience some sort of trauma in their lives (McInerney & McKlindon, 2017).

In addition to trauma being long lasting, trauma impacts brain development. Children's brains are most malleable before the age of 10 years old, making early intervention key to the success of a child. Traumatic experiences can actually change the structure and functioning of a child's brains through the activation of stress response systems. Neurological imaging indicates that several regions of the brain may actually reduce in size as a result of childhood maltreatment (McInerney & McKlindon, 2017). When exposed to a stressor, the body responds through a "fight," "flight," or "freeze" response that activates several systems in the body and releases, stress hormones that are designed to be protective for survival. However, this response becomes dangerous to the brain, rather than protective, when repeated traumatic experiences lead to an over-reactive stress system (McInerney & McKlindon, 2017). Children who have been exposed to trauma are in a constant state of emergency as they go through their daily routines. They find daily routines difficult and unmanageable due to their trauma and are not able to function

emotionally in a healthy way. The trauma that a child experiences hijacks that child and they cannot develop and interact with other children in a developmentally appropriate way.

Implementation of SEL and TIC programs

The implementation of any new program, process or procedure in a school can be cumbersome and convoluted for the educational staff. Without proper implementation it is difficult to achieve the effectiveness of a program. Findings from the Child Development Project (CDP), a program designed to promote children's prosocial skills and give children opportunities to experience relatedness, competence, and autonomy, related to enhanced sense of community and improved achievement and behavioral outcomes (Battistich, Schaps, & Wilson, 2004), resulted in ineffectiveness at one school site due to teacher attitudes, approach and functionality in the school environment. The adoption CDP requires a purchase of materials, professional development training and a long-term commitment of three years of ongoing support of implementation (Schaps, 2013). In order for implementation to be effective, teachers must use the program materials as intended as well as be motivated to implement the program into their daily routines in the classroom.

When implementation is done as intended it will be effective (Elias, 2006). This is particularly true when schools implemented the SEL intervention as intended (Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps, 1995). According to Elias (2006) SEL programs can provide the eight elements necessary for the kind of academic-social-emotional balance that will lead students to success in school and life. Schools must align social-emotional instruction in the classroom to broader school services offered at the school. This might include offering counseling services for individual students, linking social-emotional instruction to other school services, using goal setting to focus instruction, using differentiated instructional procedures,

promoting community service to build empathy, involving parents, building social-emotional skills gradually and systematically, preparing and supporting staff well, and providing an evaluative process for staff. It is crucial to follow the implementation as intended and in order to do so those conducting the implementation must believe in the program being implemented. In order for a program to be successful there must be a buy in and belief that those involved will benefit (Elias, 2006).

Believing that change is possible is an investment in each student and their development. Just as a student's academic ability can change, the same is true for a student's behavior. SEL programs believe that behavior is a link between the social world and the academic world (Elias, 2006). SEL teaches the skills needed for family, community, relationships, workplaces and life in general. When schools implement SEL programs and use these approaches effectively, academic achievement of children increases, incidences of problem behaviors decreases, the relationships that surround each child are improved, and the climate of classrooms and schools changes for the better (Elias, 2006). In successful implementation there must be a focus on the importance of incorporating the teaching and reinforcement of SEL skills beyond the lessons and into daily interactions (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). An effective implementation of SEL will support integration of school practices and daily interactions that also tie into academic subjects. Jones and Bouffard, note the powerful role administrators have in taking a systems-approach rather than a classroom-only approach to promoting SEL. To increase program effectiveness administrators are advised to set up a supportive school culture, promote incorporation of SEL skills throughout the school day, continue the program from year to year and provide ongoing training and support for school staff.

In conclusion, effective implementation of a SEL program must occur across contexts and over time. SEL programs require support in daily routines and structure in the environment and with all involved. A SEL program does not happen in isolation and all involved must be participatory in order to achieve effectiveness. Successful implementation is ongoing, consistent and supportive of those implementing the program.

Outcomes of student behavior and achievement with SEL programs

According to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) “education of the whole child” is a philosophy to follow in order to create a successful child. To achieve the a balance that encourages all children to learn, work, and contribute to their fullest potential has been a continuing challenge as our world has grown more complex and our communities more fragmented (Elias, 2006). When children are exposed to better ways of learning through investments in early education, there are long term and short-term intellectual and academic gains for the youth’s well-being and benefits to the community as a whole (Yaroshefsky & Shwedel, 2015). With fragmented communities due to our complex world that is filled with little human interaction and an influx of technology, it is crucial to invest in the early education programs that address trauma and the social and emotional needs of our children.

There is abundance of research in support of the idea that students are most responsive academically to classrooms and schools that are non-threatening while still challenge them to learn. This is done successfully in classrooms that do not discourage but encourage (Elias, 2006). Schools who have implemented SEL programs and trauma informed practices are places where students feel cared about, welcomed, valued, and seen as more than just learners—they are seen as resources (Elias, 2006). Students matter in these environments and in turn they are invested in their learning and in themselves. Additionally, research shows that success in school involves

both social-emotional and cognitive skills, because social interactions, attention, and self-control affect readiness for learning (Jones, Greenberg & Crowley, 2015). A student must be ready to learn in order for learning to be effective. This implies that a student with adequate social-emotional skills will be successful in comparison to those students who do not obtain adequate social-emotional skills. Achievement is driven by intellectual ability as well as by the self-regulation, positive attitudes, motivation, and conscientiousness that are required to complete educational milestones. Substantial differences in non cognitive skills have been found between those who graduate from high school on time and those who complete a general equivalency diploma, as reflected in subsequent adult and economic outcomes (Jones, Greenberg & Crowley, 2015). As revealed by Jones, Greenberg and Crowley (2015) found statistically significant associations between measured social-emotional skills in kindergarten and key young adult outcomes across multiple domains of education, employment, criminal activity, substance use, and mental health. The benefits seen across research in student behavior and academic achievement with SEL programs implemented are evident to student success in school and in life.

Use of school discipline to address student behavior

Schools historically were designed to teach children the virtues of family, religion and community, not academics. The public school system evolved with the world around it and academics became the focal point of schools. With the shift to academic integration in schools, authority figures were strengthened. The teacher had more to teach and was the authority figure; the students were at a status below them. The “correct” ways of life and manners of being were taught through the authority in the classroom and all the students had to comply. There was no questioning authority or policy, it was firm and set. This left no space for individuality for the

students academic and emotional needs. This was traumatic for students who may have already experienced trauma in their lives. Students who have experienced trauma may feel that authority figures have failed to provide safety for them in the past and may therefore be distrustful of teachers. (Elias, 2006). A teacher's rules and consequences in the classroom may be viewed as punishment by children who have experienced trauma, increasing the potential for re-traumatization (Elias, 2006). This school culture has remained in many ways in our school systems.

We have a culture of discipline as a way to address disruption. Schools face a number of challenges related to disruptive and antisocial students. The behavior of these students interferes with learning, diverts administrative time, and contributes to teacher burnout (Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010). Teachers cannot sustain daily disruptions that impede on the learning of the student who is the cause of the disruption and the other students who are bystanders. Schools typically respond to disruptive students with external discipline, which consists of sanctions and punishment such as office referrals, corporal punishment, suspensions, and expulsions. For example, at least 48% of public schools took a serious disciplinary action against a student during 2005–2006. Among these actions, 74% were suspensions lasting 5 days or more, 5% were expulsions, and 20% were transfers to specialized schools (Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010). From the perspective of the student this implies that the school system has dominance over them. Thus implying that teachers and school staff are in control of their academic outcomes, not the students themselves. There is a lack of collaboration and understanding between the student and teacher in schools due to disciplinary actions.

Continually, to improve school discipline through an ecological approach and through classroom management focuses on improving the efficacy and holding power of the classroom

activities in which students participate (Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010). The teacher must be willing to be the guide the student. The teacher's core management task, then, is to gain and maintain students' cooperation in the programs of action that organize and shape classroom life (Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010). When a student is not engaged in their learning they are more likely to find other means of stimulation, which often results in misbehavior occurring. Teachers accomplish cooperation by defining activity segments, introducing them into the environment, inviting and socializing students to participate, and monitoring and adjusting enactment over time (Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010). This is a collaborative process and the teacher steps out of dominance and works with the student side by side, modeling the collaborative process. Yet, if classroom activities are not engaging for the student, it is unlikely that school wide discipline will make up for this deficiency (Osher, Bear, Sprague & Doyle, 2010). Moreover, if student engagement is low due to the ecosystem they live and interact in, that will not be mended by discipline.

Conclusion

The existing literature about trauma, current TIC and SEL programs, implementation and school discipline reinforces that addressing a student's social-emotional needs can benefit their academic success and success in life as a person. There is a direct correlation between the students' social-emotional needs being met and their academic achievements. This is a direct result of programs that address trauma and social and emotional needs. There lacks to be sufficient research coming from the teacher's perspective of student behavior and ways to address disruptive behavior that impedes on the learning environment. This research will look at teacher perception of student behavior with the implemented trauma informed care program, Rainbowdance. Specifically, this research will assess the teacher perception of student behavior

with teacher training in Rainbowdance. Data will be collected pre-training and post-training. All participants are experiencing the same phenomenon and share the experience of Rainbowdance training and implementation at the shared school site, thus making this a phenomenological research study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The purpose of this study is to look at the process of transforming teachers at the Country Charter School into trauma informed teachers. Being trauma informed means to have a deeper understanding of why a student may be acting out. Teachers require the deeper understanding of a student's behavior in order to support students' social-emotional growth and academic success. Teachers face student behavior on a daily basis. Student behavior drives the classroom climate. Behavior is powerful and it can either benefit or negatively impact the classroom environment. At the elementary level, student disruption is frequent and is increasing difficult to interpret because of developmental age of the students.

This research will look at teacher perception of student behavior with the implemented trauma informed care program, Rainbowdance. Specifically, this research will assess the teacher perception of student behavior with teacher training in Rainbowdance. Data will be collected pre-training and post-training. The research design is phenomenological. All participants of this study were trained in Rainbowdance and have had their students participating in RD throughout the course of this research. This study utilizes the instrument of narrative based interviews. The purpose of this design was to correlate the data collection pre-training and post-training with field notes, observations of teachers during training and in debriefs sessions. The participants are three elementary level teachers at the Country Charter School. This study attempted to answer the question, how has the Rainbowdance program impacted the teachers perception of student behavior at one school site?

Research Design

The research design is phenomenological. All participants of this study were trained in Rainbowdance and have had their students participating in RD throughout the course of this research. The purpose of this design was to correlate the data collection pre-training and post-training. This was done with field notes and observations of teachers during training and additionally during debrief sessions. Additionally, the goal of this phenomenological study is to draw conclusions about a shared experience from the participants. The design will look at the intersubjectivity of the shared experience to contrast the individual experience. The concept of intersubjectivity is often used as a mechanism for understanding how it is that humans are able to empathize with one another's experiences, and indeed to engage in meaningful communication about them (Langdrige, D., 2006). The phenomenological design of this study conducted qualitative analysis of the narrative data collected. The qualitative analysis was appropriate due to the framing of the qualitative interview questions that not only inquires about phenomena, understanding, or perceptions, but also signals the relevance of the study to a field or discipline.

Participants

Teachers at Country Charter School were recruited for participation in this study. The relationship the researcher has with the participants is a cooperative relationship. The researcher collaborates very closely with the participants in their every day work as teachers. There is a dependent relationship given that the work of teachers is shared and the participants and researcher strive to have a cohesive community in their school community. The teachers included three multi subject classroom teachers who teach grades K-3. Each teacher shared the same demographic of middle aged, Caucasian female, with 10 years or more teaching experience. The researcher is a teacher at the Country Charter School and has students who are

currently participating in the RD program at the school site. Rainbowdance (RD) was in its third year of implementation. This school year the teachers were trained in facilitation of Rainbowdance (RD) with the intention to bring the experience into the classroom environment and develop a regular RD practice.

Country Charter School is the research site. The researcher is a teacher on staff at the Country Charter School. The Country Charter School was founded 25 years ago and is a public K-8 school that is a part of the local school district. CCS has a student population of 220 students and is located in a predominantly Latino neighborhood. More than 50% of the student population is on free or reduced lunch and 10% of the parents are not native speakers of English. The staff at CCS is made up of 10 classroom teachers and 6 full time classroom aides. The Country Charter School is collaborating with the International Trauma Center (ITC) to incorporate a Trauma Informed Care program (TIC), Rainbowdance, developed by ITC. As stated by the founder of ITC, Robert Macy, the mission of ITC is to guide and support the natural resiliency responses of multicultural recovery into hope, healing and renewed strength for individuals and communities suffering from violence and trauma (Macy, R., 2006).

The trauma informed program, Rainbowdance could impact teacher perception of student behavior. Through Rainbowdance the teacher is able to see the student's behavior in an environment that is unlike the classroom. The environment is created by the expressive experience that draws on the students' ability to regulate. This expressive experience is done through the use of ritual, song, gesture, story and natural movements (skipping, jumping, leaping, marching, reaching, reclining). The integration of rhythm in RD is essential to its perceived outcomes. According to the creator, Dicki Macy, the co-founder of ITC, children naturally move to music, eagerly attempting to learn the lyrics to a song, which accompanies

their movements, to match tones in a musical phrase, and to find the patterns, which give life its comforting order. In design, RD connects to the patterns of nature and what comes naturally to all humans, repetition. The Rainbowdance anticipated outcomes are increased attachment, self regulation, trust in peers and natural environment, coordination of own body, attention span and tolerance for sustained stillness, positive communication and problem solving tools and increase in sense of safety and stability. Outcomes can be decrease sense of isolation, impulsivity, encourage healthy horseplay and discourage development of targeted aggression (Macy, D., 2006). Rainbowdance can unveil trauma experienced in a student based on their ability to display the outcomes described. Rainbowdance has the ability to aide in how the teacher perceives and understands trauma in a student given the anticipated outcomes.

The relationship that the researcher has with the other staff members is cooperative. The ITC staff, the teacher participants and the researcher met monthly to debrief about student behaviors and discuss scheduling of RD. The schedule of each RD session is dependent on all staff involved, each had to be flexible and willing to integrate RD into the regular school day, which carries its own chaos. The relationship was consistent and communicative, thus resulting in shared trust and motivation to provide RD for the students.

Sampling Procedure

The participants were identified based on their shared experience of Rainbowdance (RD). Each participant has had their students be participants in RD since the beginning its implementation 3 years ago. Each participant was being trained as an RD facilitator this school year. The participants all work at the same school site, which is specific to the RD program. Rainbowdance has not been implemented at any other school site in the local area. This sampling of participants is in order to understand each individual's perception of student behavior with the

implementation and understanding of RD. The findings attempted to be relevant from the perspectives of each participant.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher reached out individually to teachers to set up a time to conduct interviews. Participants signed an informed consent form prior to their participation in the study (Appendix A). The school site director signed a letter of permission to agency directors prior to research being conducted (Appendix B). The interviews took place at the school site in a private setting with only the researcher and the participant present. The researcher took detailed notes by hand during each interview. The interviews were conducted pre-training in December 2017 and again post-training in February 2018. Each interview was between 20-30 minutes in length. The interview questions were a set of 10 open ended questions that were designed to address the participants understanding of trauma, Rainbowdance, student behavior and their approaches to student behavior, classroom management and development of classroom culture. (Appendix C) These questions remained the same for both pre and post training interviews. The questions naturally evolved in the interview process due to the dialogic process. Creswell (2007) noted that ‘Our questions change during the process of research to reflect an increased understanding of the problem’.

The researcher attended monthly meetings with the ITC staff and teacher participants following the RD sessions with the students. Notes were taken during and following each meeting. This was in an attempt to have relevant information and researcher thoughts and impressions of meeting. Field notes were taken during bi-weekly teacher meetings and during the RD training. The field notes were based on observations of the participants in the varying

environments. The school site provided the RD program in collaboration with the ITC staff; this research project did not make any additions or changes to the existing educational practice.

Researcher Positionality

The researcher is a teacher and staff member of the school site being studied. The researcher has been an elementary teacher at the school site for one year and is in the second year of teaching at the school site. The researcher's classroom has been greatly impacted by disruptive student behavior and it has interfered with having an effective learning environment. This is a shared experience for the participants in their classrooms and the school site.

The school site observed a need for a social-emotional based program due to the behaviors that students were exhibiting. Student behavior was disruptive, harmful physically and emotionally and not being addressed appropriately. School staff saw that their social and emotional needs were not being met. Students were constantly in the office for behavioral issues, many parents were on site for emergency behavioral issues and large groups of students were missing their recess as a discipline measure for negative behavior. As a teacher at the school site, it became evident that the children at the school site were in need of emotional regulation when 25% of the students were seeing the school counselor weekly to develop self-regulation skills that are necessary in order to learn. The behaviors observed are emotionally driven. The behaviors were occurring unconsciously, the children had little to no self-awareness and self-regulation skills.

Prior to research of Rainbowdance (RD), the school staff was unclear about the purpose of the program. The perceptions were misunderstood as the staff did not see student behavior decrease but remain the same. Prior to research the school site had administrative conflicts and the students had not become a focal point, this may have been a contributing factor to the

misunderstanding of RD. This contributes because the administration did not successfully implement RD or provide a deeper understanding of the outcomes for the students and their behavioral needs.

Data Analysis Approach

Qualitative analysis of the narrative data collected was conducted. The qualitative analysis was appropriate due to the framing of the qualitative interview questions. The individual interviews were being compared along with observation and field notes. The researcher looked closely at the correlation of the data from pre-training of Rainbowdance, to post-training. The analysis attempted to reveal commonalities, differences and varying perceptions from each individual participant. The data was coded to identify themes related to trauma, behavior, student, and classroom climate.

Reliability and Validity

The researcher's credibility rests, according to Geertz (1973), on the specifics of a place and the people who inhabit that place at a given moment. Each interview was conducted at the school site and with only the researcher and participant. Due to the researcher being a colleague of the participants, internal validity was displayed. The credibility of the researcher rests in the close working relationship with the participants and the sufficient amount of time working together on a daily basis. The researcher clarified tentative findings with the participants in weekly teacher meetings. Additionally, the researcher compared interview notes with observations, field notes and personal impressions. After comparison of the data, codes were compiled into themes, the researcher verified with the participants the validity and reliability of the themes with member checks. This process occurred for each set of interviews that were conducted.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

As humans we rely on the feeling of safety. The feeling of safety is an evolutionary need, when not met it manifests into what is referred to as “fight or flight” response. When exposed to a stressor, the body responds through a “fight,” “flight,” or “freeze” response that activates several systems in the body and releases, stress hormones that are designed to be protective for survival. However, this response becomes dangerous to the brain, rather than protective, when repeated traumatic experiences lead to an over-reactive stress system (McInerney & McKlindon, 2017). The first time a child is predicted to experience safety is after birth. The moments after a child enters the world they are held and nurtured and through these actions are provided a sense of security. For a child who does not receive these predicted actions they experience a traumatic event and their body responds. This body response impacts the brain of that child and the impacts are long term. Each human has experienced some sort of traumatic experience that relates to his or her basic human need of safety. Whether it has occurred at birth, toddler years, elementary school, middle school, high school or adulthood, it is prevalent to each of our lives. For children the need for safety is much more identifiable because of their developmental stage which hinders their coping skills and ability to express their human needs. Adults have little awareness of their security needs except in times of emergency or periods of disorganization in the social structure. Children often display the signs of insecurity and the need to be safe (Maslow, 1943).

The theory developed by Abraham Maslow; in his 1943 paper “A Theory of Human Motivation” safety needs take precedence and dominate behavior. In the absence of physical safety – due to war, natural disaster, family violence, childhood abuse, etc. – people may (re-)

experience post-traumatic stress disorder or trans generational trauma. This is predominating in children as they generally have a greater need to feel safe. Children require safety in order to explore the world around them. The school setting is meant to be exploratory and to develop a natural sense of inquiry and curiosity.

As Dr. Bruce Perry (2008) describes safety in terms of children it is evident that safety is vital to function for the child. “When we are safe and the world around us is familiar, we crave novelty. When a child feels safe, curiosity lives. Yet when the world around us is strange and new, we crave familiarity. In new situations a child will be more easily overwhelmed, distressed, and frustrated. This child will be less capable of learning. The hungry child, the ill, tired, confused, or fearful child does not care about new things — they want familiar, comforting, and safe things.” If a child does not have the sense of safety they will lack capability. The teacher is the creator of the climate in the classroom and must know how to develop the safest place for the child while at school. A sense of safety comes from consistent, attentive, nurturing, and sensitive attention to each child's needs. Safety is created by predictability, and predictability is created by consistent behaviors. And the consistency that leads to predictability does not come from rigidity in the timing of activities it comes from the consistency of interaction from the teacher. If a schedule is consistent, but the teacher is not, there is no predictability for the child (Perry, 2008).

Safety was the recurring theme with the participants of this study. Throughout the course of this study each participant continually shared the need to create a safe and secure learning environment for the students. It was evident in the participant interviews, debrief meetings and predominantly during the Rainbowdance teacher training that safety was the overarching common thread. The participants perceived this thread differently but it was there for each of them. The teacher perception of student behavior for the participants revolved around safety for

themselves, the students and their classroom climate. As the researcher analyzed the data collected, the participants kept coming back to the “lack of understanding”, the “disjointed” feeling, need to “connect” with their students and a “shift” is hopeful. The findings will discuss the teacher understanding of trauma and the shift in teacher perception of student behavior prior to Rainbowdance training.

Creating a Safe Learning Environment

The environments in which we interact reveal different aspects of our lives. For a child who has experienced trauma the ecosystems that a child experiences trauma within fall under five levels, the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979). The ecological systems framework developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner promotes understanding of how the ecosystems in which we live impact the individual child. Each ecosystem identifies the environmental system in which an individual interacts. The ecosystem that is dominant for a child is school. The environment of school can be predictable, there is a teacher within a classroom and there are other students. The teacher is the controller of this environment and uses their most powerful tool, their personality to create the safest learning environment possible. We all remember having a teacher in school that made us feel loved by just their smile and voice each day. There is also a memory for each of us that recalls a teacher who made you feel less than or have a negative perception of school by their look, lack of smile and tone of voice. The teacher must be attuned with themselves and with the children in order for the learning environment to feel safe. The difficulty is when the student is not attuned, they are unable to self-regulate and their behaviors are often disruptive. For even the most experienced and self-aware teacher, disruptive student behavior impacts the safe learning environment.

Student behavior drives the climate of the classroom and the way in which the teacher responds to each student. When student behavior is negative, it can create a negative classroom climate. The teacher is constantly exploring new and progressive ways to counteract student behavior from destructing the classroom environment that they have so carefully built with their students. When asked how student behaviors impact your classroom climate, Betty answered, “The ones that are good, create a positive climate and we recognize them for their good behavior and reward them. When the students aren’t making strong choices we all have an opportunity to learn from them and that includes me as the teacher.” The perception of the same question altered from each participant. Melissa states, “Negative student behavior is addressed on an individual basis, more private.” This implies that student behavior does not impact the classroom environment and it is simply dealt with. In response to how student behavior impacts her classroom climate, Lisa answered, “The students are the pulse of the classroom and if their behavior is off and it becomes disruptive, it throws everything off track and learning does not happen.” This reaffirms the claim that student behavior drives the climate of the classroom.

As a result of a trauma history, The National Child Traumatic Stress Network states that a child may be easily triggered or “set off” and is more likely to react very intensely. The child may struggle with self-regulation (i.e., knowing how to calm down) and may lack impulse control or the ability to think through consequences before acting. As a result, traumatized children may behave in ways that appear unpredictable, oppositional, volatile, and extreme. In the classroom, the teachers at the Country Charter School frequently experience a student who is unable to self-regulate and behaves in extreme ways that express they have experienced trauma. For example, in her own classroom the researcher observed a student attempting to hit another students, refusing to take redirection from the teacher and then attempting to physically harm

himself. The teacher calmly and repeatedly addressed the student directly until the student took “break” outside of the classroom. The magnitude of this student’s behavior frequently negatively impacts the classroom climate. This is an example of a student’s behavior compromising the safe learning environment. This is because the other students begin to feel unsafe, unsure and situations become unpredictable. In order to keep the traumatized child and the other students in the classroom, a teacher must have tools that promote safety. Although the action of the teacher was predictable the disruptive behavior took precedent and the teacher had to address it in order to maintain safety for all students.

The approach to addressing student behavior according to Dr. Bruce Perry is to be attuned with the child’s overload point and let the child find some space and solitude, allowing their brain to “catch up.” When asked how do you address student behavior, Melissa addresses it on an individual basis and does it privately. While Betty states, “ I ask a lot of questions, ‘what is your responsibility right now? Are you making a strong choice?’ I have them tell me so they can verbalize it and give them a focal point. This gives them personal responsibility and provides a purpose.” Lisa has a more direct approach to student behavior, “ I do let a student’s disruptive behavior continue to sacrifice the learning of the other students. As much as I can control as the teacher, I do. I create strategies for the students who have frequent disruptive behavior and require that they use them to regulate. If they can not use their strategies then I get administration involved if absolutely necessary.” The participants each carry their own perspective and approach to student behavior. The commonality was that each approach but ownership on the student in an attempt to teach the student self-regulation skills. These outcomes were prior to teacher Rainbowdance training. Do teachers understand how trauma impacts a student and are they equipped with the tools to address traumatized students effectively?

Teacher Understanding of Trauma

The perspective of teachers differs about trauma prior to Rainbowdance teacher training. According to teacher, Melissa at the Country Charter School, trauma is reflective of an unsupportive home environment. Looking at trauma as a system that is negatively impacting student behavior while at school is an attempt to look at trauma as a whole, this includes the home environment. Trauma may occur in the home environment but this is not inherently true. Trauma does not imply that a student is not being supported in their home environment but rather an indicator that the child has experienced a trauma, the environment being less of importance. The impacts of trauma on a child cause their behavior to stand out in the eyes of the teacher. For a teacher, student behavior has the most impact on the classroom climate and ultimately on the learning that can occur.

To be trauma informed means to have a deeper understand of why a student may be acting out (Dotson, 2017). When student behavior is perceived as a disruption, a way to express disinterest or simply a destructive behavior, it is not seeing beyond the behavior but seeing the student as their behavior. When teachers are trauma informed they are able to see student behavior as a means of communication rather than intent to disrupt.

There is a lack of understanding about trauma from a lack of training for teachers. Teachers are not solely teaching academics to students but are essential role models in their lives. Teachers are trained in the practice of teaching, but not trauma informed practices. Trauma is particularly challenging for educators to address because kids often don't express the distress they're feeling in a way that's easily recognizable — and they may mask their pain with behavior that's aggressive or off-putting (Miller, 2016). In addition to being a student's teacher, they may play the role of parent, counselor and even nurse a times. From the perspective of Betty, trauma

can be “anything that would keep a student from focusing and receiving learning in the classroom.” Trauma can be big or small and can happen to anyone, most often to children due to their innocent nature. We all have experienced some version of trauma in our lives. Trauma has the potential to impede us from meeting our full potential. Trauma can happen in any setting and be brought with the individual always.

Teachers can assume that each student is ready to learn, the environment of school encourages this readiness. Melissa firmly believes that in her classroom, “students need to be able to self-regulate, be independent and are able to collaborate.” The reality isn’t what the environment has set up for each child; many of those students are carrying a traumatic experience with them. According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, more than 68% of children and adolescents will have experienced a potentially traumatic event by the age of 16. These children don’t view their classroom or social world the same way as a child who has not experienced trauma. Children who have experienced trauma are looking for attachment, safety and consistency. These qualities all lie within the school environment. When a teacher is trauma informed, they can see through misbehaviors that display that trauma has occurred and begin to see the child beyond their experience and ultimately begin to provide aid to the child.

Seeing student’s behavior beyond the behavior is a challenging task. If a child is staring at the teacher and throws a chair and screams, it is difficult to not react with a disciplinary action. The reaction needs to shift to a response so that the child and the other children can feel safe and that the adult in the room is in charge and sure of the next step. Teachers, Betty and Melissa at the Country Charter School address student behavior with a holistic approach that respects the child by recognizing students with positive behavior and addressing negative behavior on an individual basis, as to not shame the child. While teacher, Lisa addresses student behavior with a

direct approach that promotes self-awareness and self-advocacy for the child by addressing the negative behavior and providing an alternate option for the student to correct their behavior rather than face a consequence. These perspectives of how to address negative student behavior are a prior idea to Rainbowdance teacher training. Each perspective is a result of years of teaching and understanding techniques that work for each participant in their classroom that they find effective in managing student behavior. This management does not change the student's behavior but rather addresses it in a way that is approachable for the teacher. How does the teacher's approach and perception of student behavior change as a result of Rainbowdance training?

Implementation and Training of Rainbowdance

Rainbowdance is an experience to increase empathy and promote self-regulation. It is used as a primary tool to identify students who have or may be experiencing trauma. This is based on their behavior and ability to self-regulate during a RD session. The facilitators are trained behaviorists and take careful notes after each session. These notes are then relayed to the teacher and school counselor who is a part of the ITC team. The referral is made for students who need additional support, this would mean seeing the counselor weekly while at school. Parent consent is required to see the counselor and the teacher is encouraged to approach the parent and have a conversation about the child being identified with a need for extra support.

The integration of Rainbowdance (RD) has been a journey that was introduced to the Country Charter School three years ago by a private funder of the school. This funder approached the International Trauma Center (ITC) to work with CCS in order to address the impacts of behavior on the classroom and create a safe learning environment. The first year of implementation was an observation year, for the ITC team to get to know the school setting,

student demographics and school staff. The ITC team worked closely with the CCS staff to get to know them, their classrooms and their students. According to Robert Macy, “Year one was about constructing the relationship and building trust with the CCS staff and the ITC team.”

The introduction of RD to the students was done at the end of year one but was done through small increments. The students did not participate in a full RD session until year two. In year two, RD became a part of the early school calendar, with a goal to have a session once a month for each grade level from Kindergarten through 3rd grade. The teachers at CCS were not eager to implement RD; they all shared the primary reason, that it meant the loss of instructional time. The loss of “valued” instructional time, in addition to the limitation to having a maximum of 15 students participate at a time, made for more feelings of distress for the teachers. In order to provide a productive experience for the students, the students attended each session in groups of 10-15. According to teacher Melissa, this is half of the students in a class for each session and felt “disjointed.” The teachers had a clear interest in helping the students with their behavior and any trauma they have experienced but the exchange was not well received.

Looking into the current year three, the teacher investment has increased due to multiple factors. The understanding of RD has increased due to the ITC team providing a two-day training on RD to the teachers and other staff who were able to attend. This was possible in part to administration that provided the support to teachers to leave the classroom to take part in the training. The intent behind the teacher training was to connect the classroom teachers to the RD experience and become more trauma informed in their student’s behavior. The long-term goal is to have the teachers become facilitators and conduct an abbreviated version of RD in their own classrooms to create a connection between RD sessions and their classroom environment. This study concluded prior to the participants conducting RD sessions in their own classrooms and

data was not collected on that part of the training. The priority of an RD session is to create a safe environment. This mirrors the classroom environment in which the teacher and students create simultaneously during the school day. In the case of RD teacher training, the teachers were the students and Dicki Macy was the teacher. It was observed by the researcher that each teacher had embraced the environment but not without hesitation. The body language was an indicator of this. Lisa was giggling and smirking, noting nervousness, when it was time to practice the sequence in which silk scarves had to be thrown into the air. Betty was constantly looking around at the other participants before making her next motion, indicating she was apprehensive. Melissa was observed with looks of confusion in her facial expression but was able to replicate the sequence the quickest of the group. These observations are shared to provide an understanding of the training experience and how it felt for the teachers to learn a movement sequence that could potentially bring up their own traumas. Macy, D., made the environment secure for the teachers by her tone of voice, her predictability and the repetition of the RD sequence. Being trained in RD, allowed the teachers to feel the experience the way their students do and receive the benefits from that secure environment.

The teachers who attended the RD training included Lisa, Betty, Melissa and the researcher. They all unanimously stated that knowing and understanding the philosophy and background of RD has increased their investment. Each teacher stated that knowing how to conduct RD as a facilitator has impacted his or her perception of the program and the value, despite the loss of instructional time. Betty stated, “ For me, going to the RD training and understanding the background behind it, knowing the philosophy has helped but I have not practiced it in my classroom yet.” The teachers experienced an increase in knowledge, which led to an increase in investment in the program.

Teacher investment developed as a result of being trained in RD. As a result of training did teacher perception of student behavior change? Did the RD training impact the teacher's classroom climate and teaching practices? The outcomes of these questions vary depending the participant. Melissa states, " (with the training of RD and the understanding) it feels like it heightens students' energy, they come back into the classroom when half of the classroom community is not regulated from the RD session since they go separately. It is difficult that the whole classroom isn't doing it at once. I am not seeing a benefit and I would prefer doing mindful practices." This implies that post-training the benefits of RD are not seen in the student's behaviors thus not seen in the teacher perception of student behavior. Betty states, "It (RD) has not helped my students with their peer relationships and their behavior continues to be disruptive. I am hopeful that we will see more of an impact this year because of the frequency that the students will go to RD. The students enjoy RD. The tool it gives them is self-regulation, which I am already teaching in my classroom." Betty goes on to explain the impacts that RD has had on her classroom management of student behavior, " I don't see it (RD) impacting my classroom in that way, it's going to come from within the child but they need more exposure and that is by design of the program and not fault of the program. It is like working with the student for the school year. It's a process and it takes time and it all comes from within and it is not conscious for them yet and at some point they will have the awareness to regulate themselves." Betty suggests that she is hopeful for a change in student behavior with the increase in RD sessions as well as the integration of RD and the teachers. Providing an RD experience in the classroom and with the teacher is intended to reinforce the relational attachment that all children need and what traumatized children have difficulty with. While Lisa finds that the RD training provided her with new insight into the psychology of student behavior through a behavioral lens.

Lisa states, “ The impact that the RD training made on me as a teacher is encouraging that it has the capability to do the same for my students. I have not seen student behavior shift but I am more aware of why a student would act out or what it could indicate. I feel more encouraged to go further with the topic of trauma having now been trained. There is more to be discovered for me.” The teachers experienced the same training and had different outcomes; this is reflective of how perception works. Just as teachers perceive student behavior differently, they do the same with their own experiences.

Lisa implied that as a result of RD training that the relationship with her students would be impacted because of their shared experience. Has RD teacher training impacted the student teacher relationship? Betty felt that she has not done RD enough with the students as a participant following the training to see an impact, “I want to do it more and feel that when I get more into RD with them then that will change the relationship. When it becomes integral then I hope to see a shift.” Making RD a regular practice promotes consistency, reliability with the teacher and student thus creating a safe learning environment (Macy, D., 2006). From Melissa’s perspective, RD training was beneficial to her as a teacher and once she starts to do it in her classroom as a group she hopes it will help foster more community. In regards to the RD program as it stands with the students attending and the teacher being a participant Melissa feels it has had a negative impact on her relationship with her students. “ I don’t want to be in RD to regulate student behavior. I know it is valid for the students to not follow the group but they get out of control and I don’t want to be the one coming in separate from the RD leaders to manage the student’s behaviors. It is not how I manage my classroom with their behavior, I don’t let it get to that point with them, I de-escalate the students. In RD, it continues to feel like I am an outsider coming in.” With the deeper understanding that the teacher training provided to the

participants the perception of the classroom teacher still exists for the students. This is in conflict with how the teachers perceive the students. Melissa makes it clear that the next step in the training process, to integrate into the classroom is essential for there to be a shift in perception of student behavior and for a deeper understanding of a trauma through student behavior.

With the implementation of RD, the teacher training and the frequency of RD sessions increased, the teacher was able to see that the student may have a need for extra emotional support based on their behavior during RD. The teachers at CCS all agreed that knowing how RD identifies students who have experienced trauma and what to look for in the RD sequence has been useful to them. This has been useful in terms of how student behavior is perceived by the teacher.

The teachers will continue to be supported by the ITC team this school year and beyond. The teachers were and remain hopeful that negative student behavior will decrease in the classroom and that RD sessions will become more effective in terms of behavior for the student participants. The teacher perception of negative student behavior will shift as the student behavior consequently does.

Conclusion

The implications of the trauma informed program, Rainbowdance has impacted teacher perception of student behavior because it provides insight and understanding of how trauma in a student's life impacts their behavior. The perception of student behavior shifts from a student "misbehaving" to a student "communicating" their trauma through their behavior. The understanding of the trauma that a student has endured shapes teacher perception of an individual student and that student's behavior. Lisa expressed that she personally views RD more as a platform for the students to communicate with the adults who can help them. "Teachers have

always tried to look at trauma and understand it for their students but it have not been formalized.” Rainbowdance gives teachers the in-depth understanding behind their students’ behavior and that is irreplaceable to a teacher.

Teacher perception of student behavior has not shifted dramatically but according to Betty, “(Rainbowdance) provides me with a new set of eyes that see trauma before I see behavior.” This is not the view of all teachers; Betty and Melissa found that their perception of student behavior with RD is that when students return to the classroom more “dis-regulated” than when they left the classroom. Teachers reported that the students are not “settled” when they return from RD, and this disrupts the classroom community that they enter. This is in relation to the “disjointed” nature of the RD session, only taking half of the students at a time. The teachers also report that negative student behavior still occurs and their negative nature still exists.

There are benefits and implications on the student and teachers relationship with the use of RD. There is a shift in the role that a teacher plays in the classroom versus the role that a facilitator plays in RD. There is not an over correction of behavior due to allowing the student exhibit behaviors that they might not otherwise display given the environment and freedom. Safety is key in RD and that is made clear with the students but from a teacher perspective the behaviors a student can display are seemingly “out of control” and definitely not something that is promoted in a classroom.

Rainbowdance does not connect to the daily classroom routine. Although the teachers have been trained in Rainbow Dance the experience is outside of the classroom and is facilitated by a member of the ITC team. Student behavior is not isolated to the environment they are in but it is reflective of that environment. In order to have the self-regulation piece of RD connect to the daily behaviors that teachers see throughout the school day, RD must be integral in the school

day. With an increase of frequency of RD and a full integration into the classroom, conducted by the classroom teacher a shift will occur in student behavior and teacher perception of the behavior will become trauma informed. With the implementation and training of RD, teachers at CCS have been able to shift perception of student behavior as a result of a RD session. The teachers continue to struggle with how to address students emotional needs based on trauma. During a debrief meeting, the teachers expressed a desire for more training and tools on how to create a classroom climate that encourages appropriate student behavior, promotes safety and provides consistency. The RD team validated this request and it is being planned for next school year to conduct monthly trainings that are more relevant to the classroom component.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS

Trauma informed understanding and teaching practices are not inherent to a teacher. There is a contradiction in how a teacher understands and identifies trauma. This contradiction impacts the teacher perception of student behavior. The implications of the trauma informed program, Rainbowdance (RD), has impacted teacher perception of student behavior because it provides insight and understanding of how trauma in a student's life impacts their behavior. The perception of student behavior shifted from a student "misbehaving" to a student "communicating" their trauma through their behavior. The understanding of the trauma that a student has endured shapes teacher perception of an individual student and that student's behavior.

Implications for the Literature

Social Emotional Learning and Wellness (SELWEL) are essential to the success of a student in a school setting. Previous research has shown that when a student's individual needs on a social and emotional level have been addressed and been cared for they are able to focus and often times achieve success academically. The social engagement of students also rises with SELWEL. Students who are able to ease any trauma from their past, present or future can focus on what is around them in their school environment and this includes friendship and socialization. Students benefit socially, emotionally and academically from trauma informed care programs like SELWEL. When schools implement SEL programs and use these approaches effectively, academic achievement of children increases, incidences of problem behaviors decreases, the relationships that surround each child are improved, and the climate of classrooms and schools changes for the better (Elias, 2006).

As found in the research conducted on RD students are provided with an environment that supports their need for self regulation skills, provides feeling of safety and encourages their personal expression. The findings from this research demonstrate that this outlet over time can benefit the student's behavior. With frequent and continued practice of RD the student's behavior may remain the same as before participating in RD. This frequency provides consistency, which is what a traumatized child craves in their experiences. Studies show that Rainbowdance programs can increase empathy and increase self-regulation while decreasing aggression with toddlers to 3rd graders (Macy, D., 2006). Once Rainbowdance has become instilled as a regular practice, teachers integrate it into their daily routines, incorporating songs, stories, and soothing activities to help build classroom harmony and alleviate moments of distress (Macy, D., 2006).

A significant finding was that teachers had a negative perception of RD. Teachers were apprehensive about RD due to it being "one more thing" to do in the busy schedule of teaching. Teachers want to do all they can to benefit their students but have to manage academic teaching and student behavior. It was unexpected that teachers did not see the urgency to address student behavior from a trauma informed approach in order to conduct effective academic teaching. This may be a result of trauma informed care understanding and how it connects to teaching practices. This finding results in an understanding of teachers and students as whole and that each carry their own weight in the dynamic of a classroom climate. Teacher bias around RD influenced how the teachers perceived student behavior. The participants expressed that they believed that RD was "disjointing" their classroom and their students' behavior was more "dis-regulated" when they returned to the classroom following an RD session. Previous research largely focuses on the

influence a program such as RD can have on student behavior, not the teacher perception of the behavior. My findings document the shift in how a teacher perceives a student's behavior and thus the student themselves. When a teacher understands a student's behavior with an understanding of trauma it can shift their perception of the student and how they interact with them. Teachers and staff reported they were more tolerant of children and youth when they could identify their behaviors as motivated by personal trauma (Fecser, 2014).

Implications for Practice and Policy

Teachers can learn that trauma informed teaching practices, programs and understanding can shift their perception of student behavior. This can impact their classroom climate and how they address negative student behavior in the classroom. Teachers can become trauma informed and be able to see a student behavior as an identifier of trauma or other implications they have experience in their life rather than overly disciplining that student for a behavior that is "communicative" of their experience.

The school site can benefit from continued use of Rainbowdance due to the long-term impacts it can have on the student but more so on the teacher's methods of addressing student behavior with a trauma informed approach. The continued training of teachers in Rainbowdance will continue to benefit the teachers and their classrooms. The presumed outcome of bringing RD into the classroom by the teacher was that it would connect the experience of RD to the classroom environment, and as a result would shift the student's behaviors and increase the connection to the teacher and classroom community. This experienced occurred after this study concluded and was not measured. It would be encouraged to measure this integration in a further study.

Schools can benefit greatly from trauma informed programs and teaching practices. Trauma informed care programs aide in the social, emotional and mental health of students. Training teachers in trauma informed care and teaching practices would only benefit the teaching practice itself, classroom climates and most importantly the well being of the students themselves. The more informed teachers can be in trauma the better they can address their behaviors and needs in their students at a young age, before it escalates beyond a schools capability.

The findings of how a teacher perceives student behavior based on trauma informed care can change the way we as a society, address mental health issues and how it is addressed at an educational level. If teachers are trained to identify students who have experience trauma and given the resources to support their student's mental health, it will not only save their students lives but also potentially the lives of others. There is a need for teacher preparation program reform. Teachers are trained in the practice of teaching, but not trauma informed practices. Trauma is particularly challenging for educators to address because kids often don't express the distress they're feeling in a way that's easily recognizable — and they may mask their pain with behavior that's aggressive or off-putting (Miller, 2016). With the current state of violence in schools that is seen, it is pertinent to teacher education to be trained in trauma informed practices. Teacher preparation programs must address the lack of trauma informed teaching practices in their curriculum. In order to appropriately prepare teachers for the realities of teaching, teachers must understand trauma in children. Reform must begin at the teacher preparation level. School sites may not be able to provide the resources for teachers to be trauma informed but the power is in the teacher's knowledge. Teachers are change agents and in order for our societal view on trauma to shift we must begin with a teacher shift.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study that must be acknowledged. The limitation of time confined the study to collect data within a shorter time period and at the beginning of implementation of RD. In reflection, this study would have benefited from a larger population of teachers who have implemented the RD program and tracking their perceptions over a larger length of time.

The findings are limited to one school site with a small sample of teachers who were participating in the program of focus, Rainbowdance. It is the only school site that is included in the research due to RD being in a pilot stage and not currently offered in other schools in the local area. The teacher population is homogenous and the students vary in ethnicity and background, primarily white and Latino. The participants all shared demographics; they were all middle aged, white female teachers with 10+ years of teaching experience. The study is absent of a perspective of a teacher who is non-white in ethnicity and is teaching a demographic that varies greatly in background and ethnicity. An additional limitation is that there is not a perspective from an alternate school site that has limited resources and funding to provide such programs being studied here.

The study also lacks the perspective of a teacher, such as the researcher, who is within the first two years of teaching. This perspective is important due to the newness of understanding student behaviors and the process of discovering how to establish a positive classroom climate. As the researcher and a teacher experiencing the RD program, I was entangled in the work of the program being studied. This limited the data collection because my positionality led to my own expectations and biases of the RD program while conducting research on the program itself. It was a challenge to maintain a position of objectivity throughout the data collection process. My

own understanding of trauma and trauma informed care programs was heightened through the research process itself. This resulted in my perspective being increasingly trauma informed in addition to the information I learned through the RD program, whereas the participants were only trauma informed through the RD program.

Future Research

The aim of this research study is to provide the perspective of teachers when it comes to student behavior and the impacts that behavior has on the classroom climate. It has become clear through this study that student behavior is the driving force of the classroom climate as well as the way in which the teacher perceives the student as a learner and person. There are limited resources in schools to help teachers manage student behavior. Due to this limitation, it has become increasingly difficult to support teachers in understanding student behavior. Effective management of student behavior in terms of this study means to address student social and emotional needs rather than taking disciplinary action. Further research would be encouraged to better understand a teacher's perspective of student behavior and how they can be supported in helping the student manage their own behavior as well as knowing when outside resources are needed. A teacher takes on the responsibility to teach the student how to behave in a way that helps them be a successful learner and person. Further research can look at the limitation of resources and programs for teachers to implement a trauma informed approach to teaching. Furthermore, once a teacher is trauma informed and trained, it would be beneficial to continue researching the trauma informed approach to determine how to best provide additional supports.

Finally, additional research might study student behavioral shifts as a result of RD during the school day as well as outside of school. Measuring the shift of negative student behavior to behavior that exhibits self-regulation. Alternatively measuring the shift of student behavior that

exhibits self-regulation to a student expressing negative behaviors as a result of participating in RD. The student experience would be a further study that would measure the behavior shifts for each individual student. This would be a long-term study that would be powerful as a participatory action research project. This would require consent from the parents, in addition to data collection from the parents as they observe their children in the environments outside of school. It would be advised to conduct a survey that was administered to teachers and parents for specific students and then cross-reference the survey results.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

With 25 percent of children have encountered physically, sexually, and or emotionally abusive experiences that are perceived as traumatizing (Crosby, 2015), it is evident that teachers are in need of trauma informed teaching training and support. Teachers are trained in the practice of teaching, but not trauma informed practices. Trauma is particularly challenging for educators to address because kids often don't express the distress they're feeling in a way that's easily recognizable — and they may mask their pain with behavior that's aggressive or off-putting (Miller, 2016).

While a large body of research supports the use of Trauma Informed Care (TIC) programs, for most teachers, accessibility to training and strategies for effective implementation are extremely limited. Empathy is not taught in teaching training or in schools for staff (Shechtman & Tutian, 2016). Moreover, few studies have examined the transformative effects of TIC programs on teacher perspectives regarding student behavior. Additionally, few studies, if any, have elaborated on how to effectively serve the emotional needs of the student while still maintaining discipline. Prior research states that mastering both academic and social skills are key to the healing process, the aim is to increase teaching and learning time and reduce time spent on discipline. The ultimate goal is to help all traumatized students become successful members of their school communities (Gil & Briere, 2006). This is possible with TIC programs such as Rainbowdance.

Rainbowdance gathers children and group leaders together for 45-minute classes with the goal of enhancing self-regulation, self-esteem, and social empathy. Providing a symbolic journey into the world of nature and relationship, Rainbowdance encourages the growth of

empowered and self-nurturing children. Studies show that Rainbowdance programs can increase empathy and increase self-regulation while decreasing aggression with toddlers to 3rd graders (Macy, D., 2006). Once Rainbowdance has become instilled as a regular practice, teachers integrate it into their daily routines, incorporating songs, stories, and soothing activities to help build classroom harmony and alleviate moments of distress (Macy, D., 2006).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine if negative perspectives of student behavior from teachers can be transformed by the trauma informed program, Rainbowdance. This study examined the shift of behavior that supports the emotional growth of students and meets their needs for discipline and structure within a school environment.

Knowing how to identify and understand trauma can benefit both the teacher and the student. Trauma Informed Positive Education (TIPE) model is a model that enhances the understanding of trauma-informed pedagogies by building on regulatory capacities and relational attachments. The TIPE model embodies the value of relational attachments and considers how these relationships directly impact the regulatory capacities of a child. If a child does not have a relational attachment in their life or a fractured one, the child will often become attached to his or her teacher. For a student the attachment to a teacher may be one of few or perhaps the only positive attachment they have in their life, thereby making such an attachment pivotal to the student's emotional development.

The TIPE approach positions learning within a dual continuum model of mental health, in which mental health and mental illness are related, in order to address domains of healing and of growth in trauma-affected students (Keyes 2002; Keyes & Annas, 2009). Understanding how trauma affects the interactions of children with others is a key piece in identifying responses to trauma. Research indicates that children who have been exposed to trauma often have difficulty

responding to social cues and may withdraw from social situations or bully others (McInerney & McKlindon, 2017). The use and implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs in schools may effectively influence the academic achievement of children, whereby incidence of problem behaviors decreases, the relationships that surround each child are improved, and the climate of classrooms and schools changes for the better (Elias 2006). SEL provides tools for classrooms, families and communities. The tools are based in teaching empathy, responsibility, effective communication, relationship building, regulating emotions and tolerance of others. These SEL based tools combined with academic learning are essential for effective education in the current world we are in (Elias, 2006). It is evident that SEL programs are a necessary piece of education in order to teach the “whole child” (Elias, 2006). To teach the “whole child” there must be access to SEL based content.

Access is the primary function to a TIC program or SEL based approach in education. A need must be established in order for the educational system to implement such approaches for their school sites, staff and students. This research is for teachers, school staff and those interacting with children in a school setting. The intent was, that my research might provide insight into student behavior and the reasons behind their behavior. Students display their emotions through their behavior and this is often times misinterpreted and given a consequence by the teacher in an order to maintain the classroom management. As Miller (2016) discusses, one of the challenges in giving that support is that when kids misbehave, our schools often use disciplinary systems that involve withdrawing attention and support, rather than addressing their problems. Schools have very little patience for kids who provoke and push away adults who try to help them. This research may support teachers and school staff in identifying individual children who have experienced trauma and provide the strategies to address a students problems.

With the appropriate strategies and tools, schools may understand the need to implement a trauma program at their site as a means to benefit the school climate, the mental health of individual students and open up the capacity of understanding of trauma for classroom teachers.

Findings

The implications of the trauma informed program, Rainbowdance has impacted teacher perception of student behavior because it provides insight and understanding of how trauma in a student's life impacts their behavior. The perception of student behavior shifted from a student "misbehaving" to a student "communicating" their trauma through their behavior. The understanding of the trauma that a student has endured shaped teacher perception of an individual student and that student's behavior.

Three teachers at one school site were the primary participants of this study, teachers Betty, Melissa and Lisa. Teacher Sans expressed that she personally views RD more as a platform for the students to communicate with the adults who can help them. "Teachers have always tried to look at trauma and understand it for their students but it have not been formalized" (Lisa). Rainbowdance gives teachers the in-depth understanding behind their students' behavior and that is irreplaceable to a teacher.

Teacher perception of student behavior has not shifted dramatically but according to Lisa, "it (Rainbowdance) provides me with a new set of eyes that see trauma before I see behavior." This is not the view of all teachers, Betty and Melissa, find that their perception of student behavior with RD is that the students return to the classroom more "dis-regulated" than when they left the classroom. Teachers reported that the students are not "settled" when they return from RD, and this disrupts the classroom community that they enter. This is an additional concern on top of the "disjointed" nature of the RD session, only taking half of the students at a

time. The teachers also report that negative student behavior still occurs and their negative nature still exists.

There are benefits and implications on the student and teachers relationship with the use of RD. Teacher Grove states, “It has impacted the relationship in a negative way because we are unsure of the place in RD (as the teacher)”. The teachers are trained in RD but due to scheduling conflicts and having only half of their students in the RD session, they were only able to attend one RD session as a participant, with intentions to co-facilitate in the future. “It is not how I manage my classroom with behavior, I don’t let it get to that point with them, I deescalate the students. In RD it feels like an outsider coming in” (Melissa). There is a shift in the role that a teacher plays in the classroom versus the role that a facilitator plays in RD. There is not an over correction of behavior due to allowing the student to exhibit behaviors that they might not otherwise display given the environment and freedom. Safety is key in RD and that is made clear with the students but from a teacher perspective the behaviors a student can display are seemingly “out of control” and definitely not something that is promoted in a classroom. Rainowdance does not connect to the daily classroom routine. Although the teachers have been trained in Rainbow Dance the experience is outside of the classroom and is facilitated by a member of the ITC team.

Student behavior is not isolated to the environment they are in but it is reflective of that environment. In order to have the self-regulation piece of RD connect to the daily behaviors that teachers see throughout the school day, RD must be integral in the school day. With an increase of frequency of RD and a full integration into the classroom, conducted by the classroom teacher the hope is that a shift will occur in student behavior and teacher perception of the behavior will become trauma informed. Teacher Grove reported, “It is a process (self-regulation) and it takes

time and it all comes from within and it is not conscious for the students yet and at some point they will have the awareness to regulate themselves.” With the implementation and training of Rainbowdance, teachers at CCS have been able to address students emotional needs based on trauma. The teachers have the insight into how to create a classroom that encourages appropriate student behavior that comes from within for the student and how their perception of student behavior impacts the climate of the classroom.

Next Steps for Educators and Society

The aim of this research study was to provide the perspective of teachers when it comes to student behavior and the impacts that behavior has on the classroom climate. It has become clear through this study that student behavior is the driving force of the classroom climate as well as the way in which the teacher perceives the student as a learner and person. Schools do not have the resources to help teachers manage student behaviors effectively. Schools need to reform their behavior management systems to address their social and emotional needs rather than taking disciplinary action. A trauma informed approach to behavior could mend the overuse of discipline in schools.

Teachers need to have a say in the decision making process for their students behavioral needs. It would be encouraged to share their perspective of student behavior and how they can be supported in helping the student manage their own behavior as well as knowing when outside resources are needed. A teacher takes on the responsibility to teach the student how to behave in a way that helps them be a successful learner and person. Furthermore, once a teacher is trauma informed and trained, it would be beneficial to continue the trauma informed approach to provide additional supports. The educational system would benefit greatly from adopting a trauma informed program and approach that supports teachers, thus supporting their students in

understanding their needs. This is necessary in order for our society to understand trauma from a mental health perspective rather than ignoring it as simply, “bad behavior.” Mental health needs to be addressed and it begins with understanding trauma and how that impacts a child’s mental health state. It begins with those on the front lines with children, and it begins with teachers.

Final Thoughts

The process of conducting this research began with a focal point of research. Due to the closeness to the topic I had as the researcher, it was accessible to research such an innovative program in the field of mental health. Throughout the research and writing process it has become evident that it was not the accessibility that drove me to conduct this research. The need for research on trauma in children and how we as educators are a driving force in their social and emotional well-being has become an obsession. I will continue this work, it is a part of me as an educator and no teacher should continue teaching not having the knowledge that I have gained from researching trauma in children, trauma informed programs and the tools to support children. I did not realize how prevalent trauma is for children and how we all as humans carry it with us. Through this study I came to the realization that those closest to children are not informed, trained or supported with the effective tools to thus support our children. Mental health issues in children are on the rise and it is seen far before they are young adults committing heinous acts of violence towards those around. We as educators can be the change agents for mental health in young children, educators must be trauma informed to teach in order to support student social and emotional needs.

APPENDIX A

LETTER OF PERMISSION TO AGENCY DIRECTORS

**DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
LETTER OF PERMISSION TO AGENCY DIRECTORS**

[Redacted]
Director, [Redacted]
[Redacted]

Dear [Redacted]

This letter confirms that you have been provided with a brief description of my senior thesis research project, which concerns trauma informed care programs and teaching practices impact on the classroom climate, and that you give your consent for me to visit your facility to interview a random sample of your clients. This project is an important part of my undergraduate requirements as an Education major, and is being supervised by Jennifer Lucko, Professor of Education at Dominican University of California.

As we discussed in our phone conversation, I will make every effort to ensure that my data collection does not interfere with your regularly scheduled work duties, and that your employees are treated with the utmost discretion and sensitivity. If you have questions about the research you may contact me at phone number or email address below. If you have further concerns you may contact my research supervisor, Jennifer Lucko, at 415.482.1873 or the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants at Dominican University of California by calling (415) 482-3547.

After my research project has been completed in May 2018, I will be glad to send you a summary of my research results.

If my request to visit your establishment and to interview your clients meets with your approval, please sign and date this letter below and return it to me in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope as soon as possible. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this project.

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Tara Williams
[Redacted]

I agree with the above request

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT
DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

1. I understand that I am being asked to participate as a Participant in a research study designed to assess experiences with Trauma Informed Care practices and the program called Rainbow Dance. This research is part of Tara Williams's Senior Thesis research project at Dominican University of California, California. This research project is being supervised by Jennifer Lucko, Professor, Dominican University of California.

2. I understand that participation in this research will involve taking part in two 30-minute in-person interviews, which will include thoughts and feelings on the topic of trauma in students at school. I understand that participation in this research will involve the researcher, Tara Williams, observing me as the teacher in my classroom following a Rainbow Dance session. This observation will occur twice in the school year.

3. I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and I am free to withdraw my participation at any time.

4. I have been made aware that the interviews may be recorded. All personal references and identifying information will be eliminated when these recordings are transcribed, and all Participants will be identified by numerical code only; the master list for these codes will be kept by Tara Williams in a locked file, separate from the transcripts. Coded transcripts will be seen only by the researcher and her faculty advisors. One year after the completion of the research, all written and recorded materials will be destroyed.

5. I am aware that all study participants will be furnished with a written summary of the relevant findings and conclusions of this project. Such results will not be available until May 1, 2018.

6. I understand that I will be discussing topics of a personal nature and that I may refuse to answer any question that causes me distress or seems an invasion of my privacy. I may elect to stop the interview at any time.

7. I understand that my participation involves no physical risk, but may involve some psychological discomfort, given the nature of the topic being addressed in the interview.

8. I understand that if I have any further questions about the study, I may contact Ms. Tara Williams at tara.williams@students.dominican.edu or her research supervisor, Jennifer Lucko, jennifer.lucko@dominican.edu, 415.482.1873. If I have further questions or comments about participation in this study, I may contact the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants (IRBPHP), which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHP Office by calling (415) 482-3547 and leaving a voicemail message, by FAX at (415) 257-0165 or by writing to the IRBPHP, Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dominican University of California, 50 Acacia Avenue, San Rafael, CA 94901.

9. All procedures related to this research project have been satisfactorily explained to me prior to my voluntary election to participate.

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND ALL OF THE ABOVE EXPLANATION REGARDING THIS STUDY. I VOLUNTARILY GIVE MY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE. A COPY OF THIS FORM HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME FOR MY FUTURE REFERENCE.

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions

1. What is your role at the Sonoma Charter School and how long have you worked for SCS?
2. What is your understanding of trauma?
3. What is your understanding of trauma informed care programs and teaching practices?
4. What is your understanding of the ITC team and Rainbow Dance?
5. Do you feel that Rainbow Dance benefits your students, teaching, classroom climate?
6. How do you discipline your students?
7. Do you believe in a school wide discipline policy?
8. How do you deal with behavior in your classroom?
9. Do you have experience or training with Social Emotional Learning?
10. How do student behaviors impact your classroom climate?

APPENDIX D



December 12, 2017

Tara Williams
50 Acacia Ave.
San Rafael, CA 94901

Dear Tara:

I have reviewed your proposal entitled *Creating a Trauma Informed System for Teachers* submitted to the Dominican University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants (IRBPHP Application, #10636). I am approving it as having met the requirements for minimizing risk and protecting the rights of the participants in your research.

In your final report or paper please indicate that your project was approved by the IRBPHP and indicate the identification number.

I wish you well in your very interesting research effort.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]

Chair, IRBPHP

[Redacted]

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants

Office of Academic Affairs • 50 Acacia Avenue, San Rafael, California 94901-2298 • 415-257-1310 www.dominican.edu

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