

September 14, 2023

Good Afternoon esteemed members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity. I would like to provide you with a comprehensive overview of the Philadelphia Healthy & Safe Schools program, PHASeS, and the significant impact it has made on the well-being of our communities, especially our children. PHASeS is dedicated to trauma sensitivity and has been instrumental in enhancing school-community wellness and safety while improving attendance and retention through trauma-sensitive approaches. Let's delve deeper into the evidence and success stories that underscore the importance of this program.

Background and Purpose

The Philadelphia Healthy and Safe Schools (PHASeS) Trauma Program is a response to the growing recognition of trauma's significant impact on students within educational settings. Research reveals that a substantial number of students have encountered various forms of trauma, which can hinder their academic success and overall well-being. The purpose of PHASeS is to develop a holistic and trauma-informed approach to address these challenges and provide students with the necessary support to thrive.

Program Overview

The PHASeS Trauma Program is a comprehensive initiative aimed at transforming the educational environment into a safe and nurturing space for all students. By integrating trauma-informed practices, comprehensive student support, and active community engagement, the program seeks to create an educational ecosystem that promotes healing, resilience, and academic success. Our program prioritizes a collaborative approach that involves students, families, staff, and the broader community to collectively build a culture of understanding, empathy, and growth.

Impact on Wellness and Safety

Research evaluations conducted within schools participating in the PHASeS program has shown a tangible improvement in school climate and a sense of wellness among students and staff. The program's trauma-sensitive approaches have contributed to a safer and more nurturing environment, promoting overall well-being.

Early data indicates that schools implementing PHASeS have experienced improved attendance rates, reduced behavioral issues, and a more positive perception of school life quality among both students and staff. These findings highlight the practical benefits of trauma sensitivity in educational settings.

Building Relationships

PHASeS places a strong emphasis on building relationships within trauma-sensitive schools and communities. Through the provision of trauma-sensitive supportive services, teachers and school-based staff are better equipped to assist students in coping with trauma and stress. This relational approach has resulted in improved teacher-student connections and a more conducive learning environment.

Feedback from educators participating in the program underscores the positive impact of these relationships. Teachers have reported a heightened sense of empathy, active listening skills, and a greater ability to address students' emotional needs, all of which contribute to a more nurturing educational experience.

Collaboration with Temple University

PHASeS' collaboration with Temple University's Lewis Katz School of Medicine Center for Urban Bioethics enriches the program with expertise, resources, and a commitment to effecting lasting change. This partnership has been instrumental in advancing trauma-informed practices in schools and communities.

Research conducted in collaboration with Temple University has demonstrated the efficacy of trauma-sensitive strategies in improving student well-being and academic outcomes. These findings emphasize the value of continued investment in programs like PHASeS.

Core Language and Practices

PHASeS employs a comprehensive set of trauma-related concepts and practices that have been carefully integrated into school culture. These include trauma awareness, active listening, safety plans, resilience-building, and mindfulness.

Teachers and school staff who have undergone PHASeS training have reported feeling more equipped to handle students' emotional needs, resulting in improved classroom management, student engagement, and staff well-being.

Impact on Specific Schools

In schools with marginalized communities like Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary, Kenderton Elementary, and WD Kelley, PHASeS has made a significant impact on students, staff, and the broader community. Through its services and support, these schools have seen a reduction in behavioral incidents and an increase in student attendance and engagement.

Testimonials from school counselors, principals, and teachers at these institutions attest to the transformative power of trauma-informed practices. These stories underscore the real-world impact that PHASeS has had on our most vulnerable communities.

Empowering Parents and Staff

PHASeS' commitment to empowering parents through workshops and providing essential training to school staff on de-escalation techniques and self-care is critical to its success. These initiatives have helped bridge the gap between schools and families, creating a more supportive network for students.

The emphasis on staff well-being has contributed to reduced burnout rates and increased job satisfaction among educators. Research indicates that teacher satisfaction is correlated with improved student achievement, making these efforts integral to enhancing academic outcomes. (Banerjee et al., 2017)

The Necessity of Trauma-Informed Practices

The data supports the argument that trauma-informed practices are not a luxury but a necessity in today's schools. Teacher burnout is associated with reduced academic achievement and student motivation, which underscores the importance of investing in strategies that promote teacher well-being. (Madigan and Kim, 2021)

Studies have shown that attitudes related to trauma-informed care are positively correlated with compassion satisfaction and negatively correlated with compassion fatigue. Increasing awareness of trauma and trauma-informed strategies leads to decreased burnout and increased job satisfaction among school staff. (Blomeke et al., 2017; Klassen and Chiu, 2011)

Call to Action

I urge this Committee to consider the compelling evidence presented here and the invaluable contributions of PHASeS to our schools and communities. Investing in trauma-informed practices is investing in the future of our communities, and the time to act is now.

Let us unite in support of Philadelphia youth, champion this vision, and ensure that our children have the safe, nurturing, and empowering educational environments they deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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