



Trauma-Informed Schools

Walk-Through Checklist

The 6 Key Principles of Trauma-Informed Schools

Cultural Humility
Safety
Trustworthiness & Transparency
Collaboration & Mutuality
Empowerment, Voice & Choice
Peer Support

What are Trauma-Informed Schools?

A trauma-informed school is a safe & respectful environment that **realizes** the prevalence of trauma, **recognizes** the signs of trauma and needs for support, and **responds** in a way that **resists retraumatization**. The ways it does this is through:

- Building safe and supportive environments
- Establishing strong developmental relationships
- Focusing on co-regulation behaviors in the classroom
- Supports physical and mental health & well-being

What is a Trauma-Informed Schools Checklist?

The purpose of this checklist is to identify areas of effectiveness and growth in creating a trauma-informed school environment. Pages 3-8 pertain to the 6 principles of trauma-informed schools as developed by SAMHSA. Each principle is broken down by indicators, which are designed to assess the degree to which the 6 key principles are being implemented across a range of settings in the school (e.g., classroom, hallways, common outdoor spaces, etc.).

This checklist was originally developed by the New Orleans Trauma-Informed Schools Learning Collaborative, now known as the Coalition for Compassionate Schools (CforCS). CforCS is a program of the New Orleans Health Department that includes partnerships with community-based organizations and schools in New Orleans. This checklist draws on existing instruments designed to assess trauma-informed policies and practices, and incorporates feedback from partner schools.

Suggested citation: Trauma-Informed Schools Walk-Through Checklist. (2025). Coalition for Compassionate Schools. Available at: <https://cforcs.org/our-tools/>

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Walk-Through Checklist

Checklist Instructions:

Read over the checklist beforehand - You can complete the checklist while you are physically present in your assigned setting *OR* after observing your setting. However, you should familiarize yourself with the principles and indicators before observing.

Determine which setting you are assigned to observe – All of your responses on the checklist should pertain to *that setting alone*.

Complete the sections on this page – Include the name of your school, the day the observation was done, and your name(s). Indicate which setting you will be observing using the check boxes. Do not indicate more than one setting.

Complete pages 3 - 8 – Mark the box that corresponds to the degree to which an indicator is in place in the setting that you observe. The options are *1 - not at all*, *2 - partially*, *3 - mostly*, and *4 - fully*. Provide a response for EACH AND EVERY INDICATOR and for ALL 6 PRINCIPLES. Do not skip any indicators or pages. If the indicator is not applicable to your setting, mark *x - no opportunity to observe*. Af

Take notes on page 9 - Write any observations or reactions to the checklist or assigned setting in the spaces provided on page 9

School: _____ Date of Walk-Through: _____

Observer(s): _____

Setting Observed:

☐ Office	☐ Upper school classroom	☐ Lower school classroom	☐ Playground
☐ Cafeteria	☐ Upper school behavioral intervention space	☐ Lower school behavioral intervention space	☐ Hallway(s)
☐ Teacher lounge	☐ Gymnasium	☐ Bus lines	☐ Other:

Cultural Humility

Cultural Humility Indicators	1	2	3	4	×
Spaces are accessible and inviting to students and visitors.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students, staff and visitors are spoken to positively and politely.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Procedures and rules are easily understood by students and families.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Procedures and rules are spoken and/or posted in languages spoken by students and families.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A dedicated space (announcement board, etc.) exists to communicate to students, staff and visitors about school-wide announcements, policies and community events.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Examples of student work (art, research projects, etc.) are prominently displayed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Examples of staff values and commitments (initiative pledge/signage, interests, recognition, and goals) are prominently displayed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pictures/symbols representing the history and culture of the current student population are prominently displayed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pictures/symbols representing the history of the school and/or its neighborhood are prominently displayed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There is diversity among the staff in this setting (race, gender, age, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are permitted to express their culture and identity through food, dress, music, language, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff apply discipline in a fair, equitable manner that does not negatively impact students with disabilities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff apply discipline in a fair, equitable manner that does not negatively impact students for whom English is a second language	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff apply discipline in a fair, equitable manner that does not negatively impact students based on their race, gender or sexual orientation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Classroom material is presented to students in culturally and ethnically relevant ways	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Safety

Safety Indicators	1	2	3	4	×
All visitors to the area are easily identifiable as visitors (introductions, name tags, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spaces are actively supervised by staff members.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spaces are well-lit.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spaces are clean.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spaces are free of clutter, including unused furniture and the storage of items not used daily	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spaces are clearly designated and identifiable (classrooms, main office, gymnasium, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Emergency procedures (evacuation, fire alarm, tornado, lock-down, etc.) are prominently displayed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Emergency procedures (evacuation, fire alarm, tornado, lock-down, etc.) are easily understood by students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff maintain a calm demeanor when interacting with students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff model emotional control for students (narrating or demonstrating their own emotional regulation strategies).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff implement self-regulation skill building for students (e.g., breathing, movement, relaxation, calming activities).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Consequences for failing to meet expectations are delivered calmly and consistently by staff.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Trustworthiness & Transparency

Trustworthiness & Transparency Indicators	1	2	3	4	×
Activities are structured in predictable ways (explicit routines, specific directions, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff consistently employ established procedures for student behavior (i.e., hallway pass systems, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student expectations are prominently displayed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student expectations are applicable to the space in which they are displayed (hallway expectations, bathroom expectations, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student expectations are clear, concise and positive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Schedules and posted events are prominently displayed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Schedules and posted events are current (not out of date).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Changes, including new people and activities, are foreshadowed so students and families can predict what will happen next.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Positive supports for student behavior are employed by school staff (proactively stating reminders for expectations, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff speak positively and respectfully to students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adults assume that students' intentions are positive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adults refrain from power struggles with students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff explore problems with students (i.e., what's going on, what's wrong) before discussing consequences.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Natural consequences that are logically related to the misbehavior are utilized whenever possible.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff engage in active listening with students (i.e. listening carefully, restating the problem, empathizing with feelings and needs).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Collaboration & Mutuality

Collaboration & Mutuality Indicators	1	2	3	4	×
Staff recognize and reward students' strengths and interests.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students learn about staff members' interests and hobbies.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students and staff interact collaboratively.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff members help students identify their personal strengths.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are encouraged to be active participants in classroom decision making.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There are multiple opportunities to respond and participate during instruction and/or activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff members help students use personal strengths to address challenging behaviors and situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Restorative conversations or other strategies are utilized following disciplinary action.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Empowerment, Voice & Choice

Indicator of Empowerment, Voice & Choice	1	2	3	4	×
Students are able to make personal choices throughout the school day.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff members actively and consistently seek out student perspectives and opinions (community circles, one-on-one conversations, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Information is presented in ways that reflect multiple learning styles.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learning is assessed in a variety of ways.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are encouraged to learn new skills.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are encouraged to build a positive self-identity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are encouraged to build a sense of self-efficacy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are encouraged to develop emotional and behavioral self-awareness and regulation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are encouraged to practice emotional and behavioral self-awareness and regulation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Peer Support

Indicator of Peer Support	1	2	3	4	x
Students are taught about how their behavior affects others, both positively and negatively.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are taught about bullying.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are taught about how to be an advocate for someone who is being bullied.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff actively discourage bullying in all forms	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are given opportunities to practice appropriate peer interactions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Spaces are set up in a way that encourages peer interactions (i.e. areas exist for students to sit in conversational groups, movement of students is designed so that appropriate interaction can take place).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students interact with students from other grades or classes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Positive interactions between students are encouraged and acknowledged by staff members.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Adults model appropriate peer interaction with one another.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff assume that other adults' intentions are positive	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff refrain from power struggles with other adults.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff members recognize one another's personal strengths	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Staff are aware of one another's strengths and interests and incorporate them in conversation or other staff interactions and activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Additional Observations	
Cultural Humility	
Safety	
Trustworthiness & Transparency	
Collaboration & Mutuality	
Empowerment, Voice & Choice	
Peer Support	

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Walk-Through Checklist

Debrief Questions

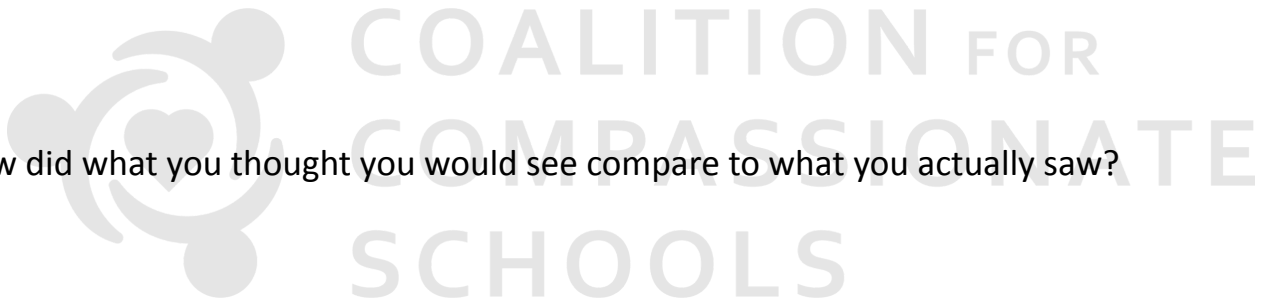
1. After doing your walk-through and observing various settings through this lens, in your own words, what does it mean to be a trauma-informed school/workplace? (connecting it to this year as an exploration year, a year of shared learning, and reiterate the 3R's)

2. What themes came up for you? That made you excited/motivated? Concerns/questions?

3. How did what you thought you would see compare to what you actually saw?

4. How does a trauma-informed school/workplace impact your school meeting their academic/CEO mandated/strategic goals?

5. What are the things we need to learn in order to move closer towards a trauma-informed school/workplace?



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Works Referenced

This checklist was developed using existing instruments as well as additions and input from the New Orleans Trauma-Informed Schools Learning Collaborative. Existing instruments that informed this checklist include:

Lesley University and Massachusetts Advocates for Children. (2012). *Trauma-Sensitive School Checklist*. Retrieved from [http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/trauma%20sensitive%20school%20checklist%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/trauma%20sensitive%20school%20checklist%20(1).pdf)

Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health. (2016). *Strategies and Resources to Create a Trauma-Sensitive School*. Retrieved from <http://www.macmh.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Myklebust37.pdf>

Orchard Place/Child Guidance Center's Trauma Informed Care Project. (2013). *Agency Self-Assessment for Trauma-Informed Care*. Retrieved from <http://www.traumainformedcareproject.org/>

