



Charting the Course

Support for Students Suffering Increased Trauma and Anxiety

Charting the Course provides decision makers with current information to create and maintain research and evidenced-based programs and increase positive student, educator and family outcomes.

January 2017 - In This Edition: Effects of Anxiety and Trauma on Students; Post-Election Fears and Trauma; Strategies and Resources for Educators to Support Students and Their Families

Background

Wexford Inc. staff has endeavored over the last decade to create and study effective programs and practices to support children suffering from trauma and anxiety. With local, national and international events of the last year and with teachers reporting students and families having heightened anxiety since the national election, Wexford staff has collaborated with colleagues and other agencies to identify the contributing issues. We have then identified strategies and resources to enable educators in providing support to their students and their families.

Effects of Anxiety and Trauma on Students

Researchers have identified home and community factors including traumatic events that lead to increased anxiety in children. These factors were found to affect student learning as much as in-school factors that include teacher quality. Out-of-school factors include:

- drug and alcohol abuse
- need for health and mental health care
- food insecurity
- family and community abuse and violence
- poor or no housing
- high school mobility and absenteeism rates
- racism and sexism
- over policing and excessive use of force

Trauma-exposed youth encounter academic, social and behavioral health challenges that negatively impact learning and relationships. Trauma sensitive schools use specific techniques that can be integrated into work with students to foster caring youth-adult relationships, improve student engagement, regulate emotion, and improve school climate. traumasensitiveschools.org

Post-Election Fears and Trauma

Even before the November 8 presidential election, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) reported that more than two-thirds of 2,000 K-12 teachers surveyed nationwide said that students – mainly immigrants, children of immigrants, and Muslims – expressed concerns or fears about what might happen to them or their families after the election.

In the aftermath of the election, these fears have been exacerbated with widespread reports of a disturbing increase in the targeting of students of color and of immigrant, Muslim, LGBTQ, differently able, and female students in schools and on college campuses across the nation and in California.

Human relations experts, as well as teachers, administrators, and nonprofit staffs, report an increase in hate incidents and hate crimes post-election. Education Week polled teachers nationally about how they were allaying students' post-election fears, and most teachers expressed the need for help in creating a safe space for students, especially those of color, to process the election results. Experts warn that public reaction to the transition, and how leaders react, could lead to additional collective trauma.

The links and strategies in this report can help teachers wishing to: 1) Address bullying, discrimination and negative social behavior, and 2) teach students to promote civic discourse rather than civil disobedience.

These strategies have also helped parents and community members promote "community resilience" which is more effective than withdrawing into isolation, grief or worse, hate acts.

Addressing Hateful, Shocking Behavior

*Teachers' comments: "Look and plan ahead."
"Don't pretend it's not happening."*

Districts have been proactive in projecting messages that hate-behavior will not be tolerated. Strategies include:

- Superintendent's sending home automated calls or information to parents; posting extensive Post Election resources on websites, as bostonpublicschools.org
- Collective events such as "empathy forums." (*Riverside, CA Poly HS*)
- Opening community centers to address parent and student questions on immigration issues. (*Los Angeles USD*)
- Safely facilitating student walk-outs (*Salt Lake City, Utah sites*)
- Using theater tableaux to facilitate safe discussion on the post-election fears as teachers trained in LA County Office of Education's Technology Enhanced Arts Learning program did. tealarts.org
- Organizing a post-election Peace Concert (*Parkview Elementary, Washington, D.C.*)

Facilitating Thoughtful Forums

For parents and teachers, Teaching for Change has provided a basic but powerful, agenda for facilitating meetings with parents and educators to hold thoughtful forums in a safe space on post-election fears. teachingforchange.org

At a school in Windsor, CA, parents and community members held posters as students came to school that read, "There are no walls in Windsor" the day, after "Build the Wall Higher" graffiti was found on a school wall after the election.

In Port Washington, WA, 500 community members attended a post-election forum after a school was tagged with a swastika.

In Queens, NY a community group provided self-defense and de-escalation classes for women and targeted groups in fear of hate incidents provided by the Women's Initiative of Self Empowerment founded to help Muslim women protect themselves from attacks. wise-woman.org

Additional Resources

For Los Angeles County school districts, there are free self-guided trainings on cyber-bullying and bullying prevention, model practices for working with LGBTQ students, and suicide prevention strategies for teachers, school mental health professionals and administrators.

teachstar.lacoe.edu

The Human Rights Campaign has organized a new *Parents for Transgender Equality Council* hrc.org

Immigration advocacy and education groups have compiled information for immigrant families, including, as examples:

- Immigrant Legal Resource Center, "Immigrant Rights Under a Trump Administration" ilrc.org
- National Immigration Law Center, "Know Your Rights" nilc.org
- National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights, "Immigrant Justice & Rights" nnirr.org

Other educators and organizations working and publishing information on the issues presented in this report include:

David Berliner, *Out of School Factors* nepc.colorado.edu

Mary McNaughton-Cassill, Professor, Department of Psychology, The University of Texas at San Antonio colfa.utsa.edu

Jack Saul, director of the International Trauma Studies Program itspnyc.org

Madeline Will, assistant editor, *Education Week Teacher* edweek.org

Californians Together californianstogether.org

Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission lahumanrelations.org

Students And Their 1st Amendment Rights

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) offers teachers weekly free lesson plans on various topics, and collects hate-crimes data.

adl.org

The Constitutional Rights Foundation has free teacher resources, which define students' constitutional rights and help teachers lead students to positive civic engagement.

crf-usa.org

The Southern Poverty Law Center has developed resources for teachers including "The Day After," "Voting in Your Town," and Teaching Tolerance. They also track hate crimes.

splcenter.org

The Zinn Education Project provides hundreds of free lessons for teaching civic participation.

zinnedproject.org

Cult of Pedagogy has "After the Election: A To-Do List" for teachers on promoting student engagement.

cultofpedagogy.com

Wexford Inc

Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of Wexford's Founding

Wexford Inc, a non-profit was founded in 1996 with a mission to increase educational excellence through equity by building bridges of understanding. We collaborate with public and private agencies and policy makers to improve educational outcomes for students, families, and staff. We use tools of research, evaluation, planning, program development, program management, technology, professional development, and family engagement, to improve programs for students, their families and educators in low-income communities and for English Language Learners.

Wexford Solutions is a division of Wexford Inc that uses design trials to develop customized solutions for your district or school. Wexford Solutions uses a process that includes problem definition, resource analysis, consultation action planning, PD, family engagement and other direct services to support clients in building internal capacities for improvement.

Wexford Solutions supports districts and post-secondary institutions in developing the social emotional wellness of learners (children and adults). This includes: developing a foundation for social emotional wellness, adopting Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF); creating a community of partners to support implementation; and evaluating services and outcomes.

Contact Us

For additional information or to find out more about our services please contact us:

Terri Villa-McDowell, JD	Director, Social Emotional Wellness Programs	tvillamcdowell@wexford.org
Deborah Jolly, EdD	Deputy Director	dvjolly@wexford.org
Sheila Cassidy, MEd	Executive Director	scassidy@wexford.org

Wexford Inc

27520 Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 130, Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274
401 Congress Ave. Ste. 1540, Austin, TX 78701

Phone: 310-541-1504
Phone: 512-422-6678

wexford.org

This fact sheet was compiled by staff at Wexford Inc.

Wexford cannot guarantee accuracy of reports or websites identified in this report, which are offered for information only and not intended to serve as endorsement of any agency.