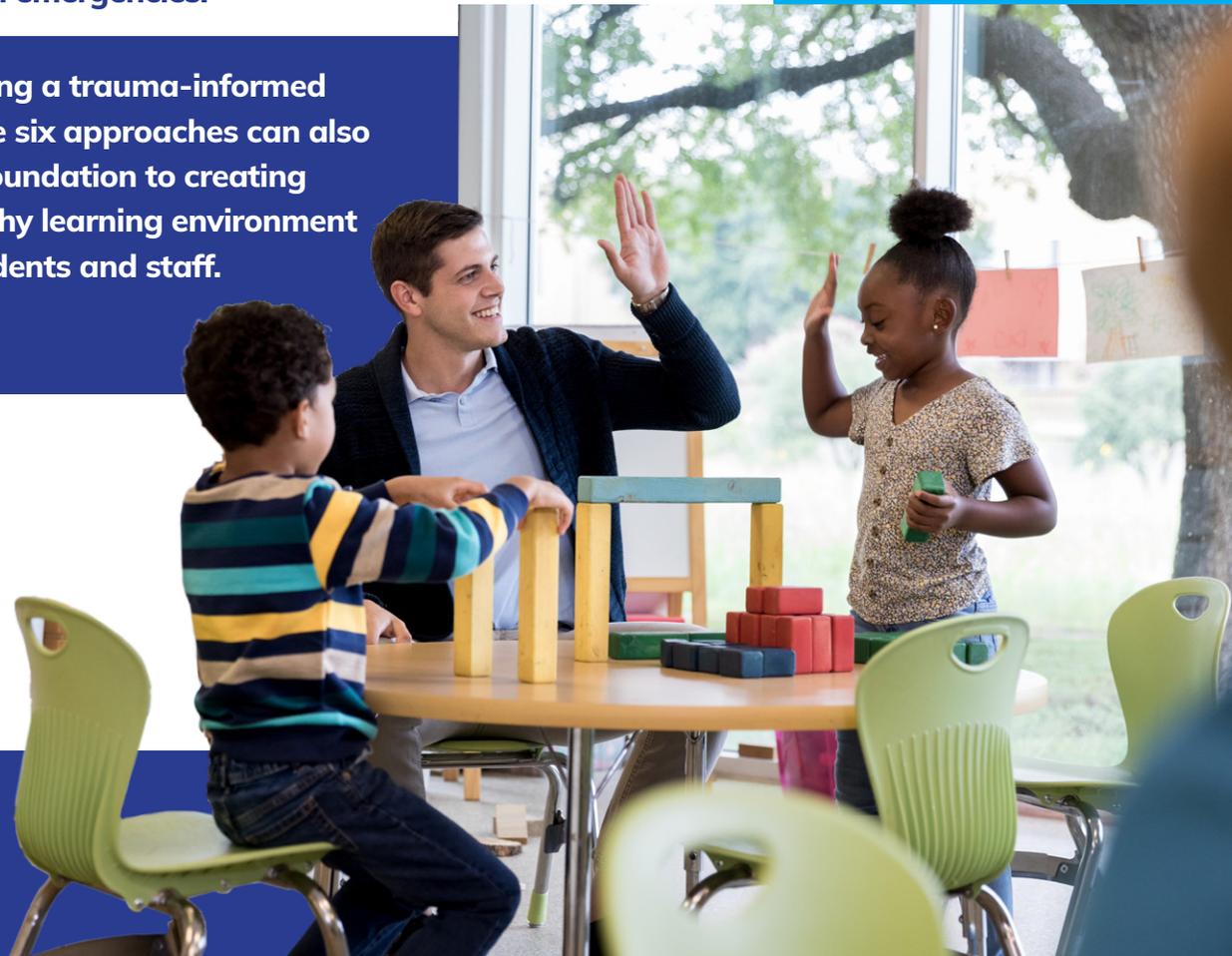


6 Principles to a

# Trauma-Informed Approach in School

- > The CDC's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (OPHPR), in collaboration with SAMHSA's National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC), drafted six trauma approaches for OPHPR employees regarding the role of trauma-informed care during public health emergencies.

When shaping a trauma-informed school, these six approaches can also serve as a foundation to creating a safe, healthy learning environment for both students and staff.



# 1. Safety

Ensure all the physical settings your students and staff will encounter throughout the school day provide a sense of safety. “Safety” also applies to interpersonal interactions, including both student-to-student and student-to-teacher. While teachers cannot always control how students interact with one another, they can control how they respond to escalated students.

A trauma-informed teacher will ensure they are [self-regulated](#) and in tune with how their behavior influences those around them; reinforcing a continuous sense of safety.

# 2. Trustworthiness and Transparency

As a school or district, your operations and decisions should be made based on trust and transparency. Following through on this philosophy and maintaining it with consistency will help build trust with both your students and staff.

A De-escalation Preferences Form is a key tool when establishing trust in school settings. Responses to the form’s questions develop personalized strategies that are unique to your individual school and to the specific needs of each student. Understanding what triggers a student and subsequently, what will help rebuild rapport, is critical to helping that student feel safe and supported.

**Download** a copy of our De-escalation Preferences Form in the Trauma-Informed Care for Educators Resources Guide



# 3. Peer Support

Peer support is critical for establishing safety and trust, fostering collaboration, and utilizing lived experience to promote recovery and healing. For students, encouraging open communication with teachers and their peers is critical to helping them feel they are not only supported, but heard. Peer Support is another area where De-escalation Preference Forms are key.

**“Given the widespread scope and prevalence of childhood adversity and trauma, promoting trauma-sensitive school approaches has the greatest potential to positively impact all students, regardless of trauma history.”**

- National Association of School Psychologists



## 4. Collaboration and Mutuality

This concept highlights the idea that everyone in the school or district plays a role in providing trauma-informed care. Starting with your staff, the leveling of power differences across the entire school reinforces the idea that healing can happen within professional relationships and by sharing the role of decision-making.

Once your teachers make this connection, they'll naturally incorporate this approach into the way they carry out their lesson plans. Allowing students to feel like they can weigh in on decisions for the classroom—even in areas as simple as selecting the items for a reading corner—can greatly increase their sense of collaboration and mutuality.

## 5. Empowerment, Voice, and Choice

Your support is shown by recognizing, empowering, and building upon the strengths and experiences of those who have been impacted by trauma. Trauma-informed schools see success in the form of students' ability to build resilience, academic achievement, and lower suspensions (source: ACES Too High).

Adequate and appropriate hiring and development empowers educators to collaborate effectively and reduce the odds of burnout or vicarious trauma. It also ensures that students are met with consistency and continuity across the school climate, not just in one classroom or with one staff member (source).

## 6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

The concept asks your school or district to move past cultural stereotypes and biases; utilizing policies, protocols, and processes that respond to racial, ethnic, and cultural needs. This can be achieved by providing students and staff access to gender and religion-responsive services through groups or committees. Committees such as this also offer empowerment and peer support opportunities.

Source: CDC's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response, in collaboration with SAMHSA's National Center for Trauma-Informed Care.

> Contact us for more information at [crisisprevention.com](https://crisisprevention.com) or call **800.558.8976**.



10850 W. Park Place, Suite 250, Milwaukee, WI 53224 USA  
800.558.8976 • 888.758.6048 TTY (Deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired)  
[info@crisisprevention.com](mailto:info@crisisprevention.com) • [crisisprevention.com](https://crisisprevention.com)

© 2022 CPI. All rights reserved. CPI-NCI-EBK-0209-ED-0122-US 05/22