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# Editorial: Trauma-informed education

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## Editorial on the Research Topic Trauma-informed education

*Trauma-informed education* has emerged as a novel approach to teaching and learning to support children and young people at school. Acknowledging interdisciplinary advances from the fields of neurobiology, therapeutics, wellbeing and social justice scholarship, the paradigm of trauma-informed education is relatively new. It is necessary in a service-rationing education sector to ensure that efforts toward improvements in teaching and learning approaches encompass the impacts of chronic stress experienced by today's students. These stresses result from increasing levels across the world of child maltreatment, family instability, lingering impacts of COVID-19 and other health troubles, economic uncertainty, political instability, and other continuing community concerns (Hammerstein et al., 2021; Drotning et al., 2023; Leigh et al., 2023).

As childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences can have detrimental impacts across the lifespan and on education outcomes, proactive pathways of support often require a mosaic approach. These include evidence-based and evidence-informed interventions which encompass but draw far beyond teacher pre-service training or professional development focussed primarily on academic planning and delivery (Maynard et al., 2019). So far, trauma-informed education has incorporated novel understandings of neuroscience and the integrated nervous system as connected to the body's regulatory needs for stress regulation and relational health (Costa, 2017). From attachment-aware perspectives, trauma-informed education advocates for relational pedagogies to ensure teachers exemplify unconditional positive regard, restoration and repair for students whose behaviors can rupture the classroom community. It builds upon legacies of social emotional learning (SEL), resilience studies, restorative practices in schools and the like (Ma et al., 2020; Durlak et al., 2022; Martins et al., 2022). It is informed by culturally-responsive pedagogies and values toward educational equity and an emancipatory mindset through education (Gay, 2018). It is centered upon the voices, perspectives and lived experiences of students made vulnerable by systemic factors of social and economic disadvantage (Stokes et al., 2019).

Trauma-informed education provides a new vista to teaching professionals, school leadership teams, and education researchers to integrate allied fields. This is in the service of a singular practice narrative to ensure school-aged students contending with complex, unmet needs for learning receive differentiated pedagogical intervention to increase their capacities, capabilities, and readiness to learn. Two articles in this Research Topic address this area. These include articles on trauma informed instructional practices (Stokes);

trauma informed culturally responsive behavior support (Schimke et al.). At its foundations, trauma-informed education employs an interdisciplinary approach to remind teachers that learning is not stress free. Many students struggle because they have lower baselines for stress tolerance and cannot yet manage their own escalation or dissociation within the classroom in times of learning or social struggles. To address this, teachers and educational support staff need specific training in trauma-informed education. A number of articles address this area. They included: considerations for the delivery of trauma informed professional learning for teachers (Koslowski and Chafouleas; Koslowski); trauma informed initial teacher education (L'Estrange and Howard) and trauma informed education for teachers working in remote areas (Brown and L'Estrange; Brown et al.).

Trauma-informed education also directly addresses teacher workforce retention and burnout (Brunzell et al., 2018). Stories of meaning-making at work (Brunzell et al.) provide perceptions of teachers' understanding of the impact of working with children impacted by trauma. Providing measures of educator self-efficacy around emotional coregulation furthers this understanding (Lindstrom Johnson et al.).

There is much work to be done to ensure that trauma-informed education reaches its potential as a sustainable field of enquiry yielding practice innovation. It is necessary to promote a system-wide trauma-informed response to bolster schools to meet the increasing needs for safety, relationships, and learning within classrooms and beyond. The work on developing national

guidelines for trauma aware practice begins this process of system support (Howard et al.). Innovation must build upon findings well-established in the trauma-informed literatures. This Research Topic features promising practices, evidence of impact, policy support and future directions for the paradigm.

## Author contributions

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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