

Margaret Gilman

Career Development

Innovative School Summit March 21-23, 2019

Intro: I want to thank KPBSD for the opportunity to attend the Innovative Schools Summit held in Orlando, Florida. Listed below are some of the notes and questions gleaned from the sessions that I felt had the most impact.

#### A Handful of ACEs – “The Impact of Trauma on Students who are Wired Differently”

- What are the ACEs? – emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, physical neglect, divorce, domestic violence, substance abuse of a parent, or a parent with a mental illness. There are other adversities but these are the chief concerns identified. When ACEs were initially studied, it was done by Kaiser Permanente Medical to determine if there was an impact on childhood experiences and adult physical health status. The original studies involved middle and upper income children and youth.
- Studies indicate strong association with ACEs and adult high risk health behaviors including smoking, substance abuse, promiscuity, obesity, depression, heart disease, cancer, lung disease and a shortened lifespan.
- In a typical classroom in the U.S. almost half of the students have enough ACEs to impact their behavior and learning. Statistics particular to Alaska indicate that AK is at the top of the numbers with regard to ACEs.
- Negative impacts on behavior and learning include difficulty in focus and organization, difficulty with executive functioning skills, difficulty forming attached relationships, and a difficulty in engaging with the curriculum.
- Building positive trusting relationships is the most important way to build resilience in children, particularly those who have ACEs. Students also need plenty of calm, predictable, and positive experiences to rewire their brains. For kids who are too often in a “fight/flight” mode, they “listen” most intently to non-verbal messages.
- Schools may need to redefine “success”. Social/emotional skills are slow to soak in and kids need lots of opportunity to practice them in a safe, consistent environment.

#### Mean Girls Behind the Screen – “Addressing and Preventing Bullying, Cyberbullying and Relational Aggression”

- How has social media affected brain development? Research indicates that the average 10-17 year old girl spends **11 hours per day** on social media. Research also indicates that the average 10-17 year old girl only spends **12 minutes per day** talking to a parent. These statistics are astounding and have major implications for the messages our children are receiving.
- How does social media affect mental health? Children (and adults) are bombarded with images of perfection in social media. Think about the perfect family vacation depicted on Facebook when we know the reality may be that the kids were arguing for the last six hours in the car before the photo was taken. Adults are able to make that distinction between “fake” and real but developing children and adolescents are not able to.

- Social Media/Internet Addiction, what are the signs? There is now an official diagnosis of Internet Addiction Disorder and it refers to those who may be addicted to the internet on their computer, tablets, or smart phones. There is some evidence indicating that this is caused by a chemical dependency such as those who are addicted to drugs or alcohol and it appears that there may be a physical change to the brain. Symptoms of the disorder include depression, dishonesty, anxiety, feelings of euphoria when using the internet, work avoidance, mood swings, procrastination, boredom with routine tasks, and loneliness.

#### Lost Boys – “Strategies to Help Educators Navigate the World of Boys for Academic Success”

- Boys and statistics – Boys are held back in school twice as often as girls. Boys make up 80% of the discipline referrals in schools. Boys also are expelled from preschool nearly five times more often than girls and they are diagnosed with learning disorders and attention problems at nearly four times the rate of girls.
- How can we adapt our schools and behavior systems so we are acknowledging the differences in male and female brain chemistry and behavior? Are we “punishing” boys for the simple fact that they are boys and may be more inclined to act out in physical rather than social/emotional behaviors? Are we providing enough opportunity for physical release in our school day and are we providing all students the opportunity to physically unwind? It is interesting to note that 90% of the Ritalin produced in the world is consumed in the United States.

#### School Safety and Social Media Threats – “How to Utilize Publicly Available Social media to Ensure Safer Schools”

- This session was presented by “Safer Schools Together” and dealt specifically with using online media to determine the level of threat in a threat assessment situation.
- Instruction was presented about how to deal with anonymous online threats, sexting, swatting, and doxing. The instructor presented information about how to use geolocation to determine levels of engagement as well as levels of threat.

#### Keeping Our Children Safe in School: Have We Done Enough?

- This was one of the most sobering presentations. The presenter described himself as a “Dad” and he stood in front of us wearing a bullet resistant vest that he had made himself. He went on to explain that his family lives just twenty minutes from Stoneman Douglas High School, which was the site of a school shooting last year. He describes that when the news was rolling on the television he brought his teenage daughter out to talk with her about what had happened. The daughter was quiet and then looked at him as she said, “I don’t know how I’ll ever be safe in school again.” He decided at that moment that he had to do something to protect his daughter and he didn’t want to wait for policy to change to do so. So, he began making a vest that would be resistant to bullets. He finished the prototype and the daughter expressed concern about the rest of her classmates so he set out to produce the vests in a larger quantity. The vests attach to a backpack and easily detach if needed. Children and adults can put the vest on in 3 seconds. The vests are pricing at just under \$200 per vest/backpack combination.

## Considerations, Questions, and Take-aways

- The ACEs presentations was interesting in that most attendees had not had much training in this topic. Alaska and KPBSD have been focusing on this in the last couple of years so I was pleased that this was an area of understanding that we are somewhat “ahead” in terms of focus. When I have done an informal analysis of ACEs at Nikiski North Star I find that my students have even more ACEs than is average for Alaska and Alaska has more than the rest of the nation.
- A major take-a-way for me was the fact that the most important thing students (and adults) need is human connection and engagement. This is true for all students and perhaps even more importantly for students who come to school with deep social concerns. I wonder what this looks like, and what the implications are, for our increased focus on the use of technology in learning?

*Sean Dush*

6-20-19