

**TRAUMA**

**TRAUMA**



**DISSERTATION DEFENSE**

# **A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY FOR DEVELOPING TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES USING PARTICIPATORY ACTION METHODS**

**Transforming School Culture for  
Students with Emotional and  
Behavioral Disabilities**

**Jacob Campbell, LICSW**

**CIIS - Transformative Studies Department**

**Friday, March 3rd, 2023**

# COMMITTEE MEMBERS INTRODUCTIONS



**COMMITTEE  
CHAIR**

Dr. Michael Raffanti Ed.D., JD

California Institute of Integral Studies  
Adjunct Senior Lecturer

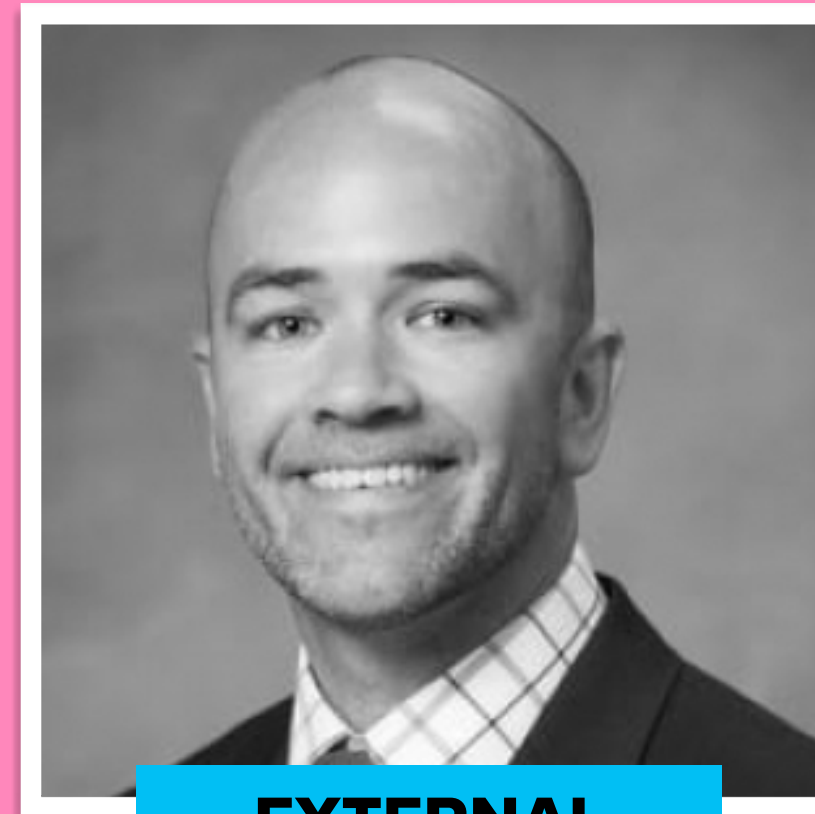
**Antioch University**  
Dean of the School of Education  
Director of Education Program



**INTERNAL  
COMMITTEE  
MEMBER**

Dr. Kerubo Abuya, Ph.D.

California Institute of Integral Studies  
Adjunct Lecturer



**EXTERNAL  
COMMITTEE  
MEMBER**

Dr. Doug Judge, Ph.D.

Center for High School Success  
Ninth Grade Success Coach



**PH.D. CANDIDATE**

Jacob Campbell, LICSW

Pasco School District  
EBD Program Social Worker

**Heritage University**  
Adjunct Faculty

# ORAL DEFENSE AGENDA

**Committee members introductions**

**Oral defense**

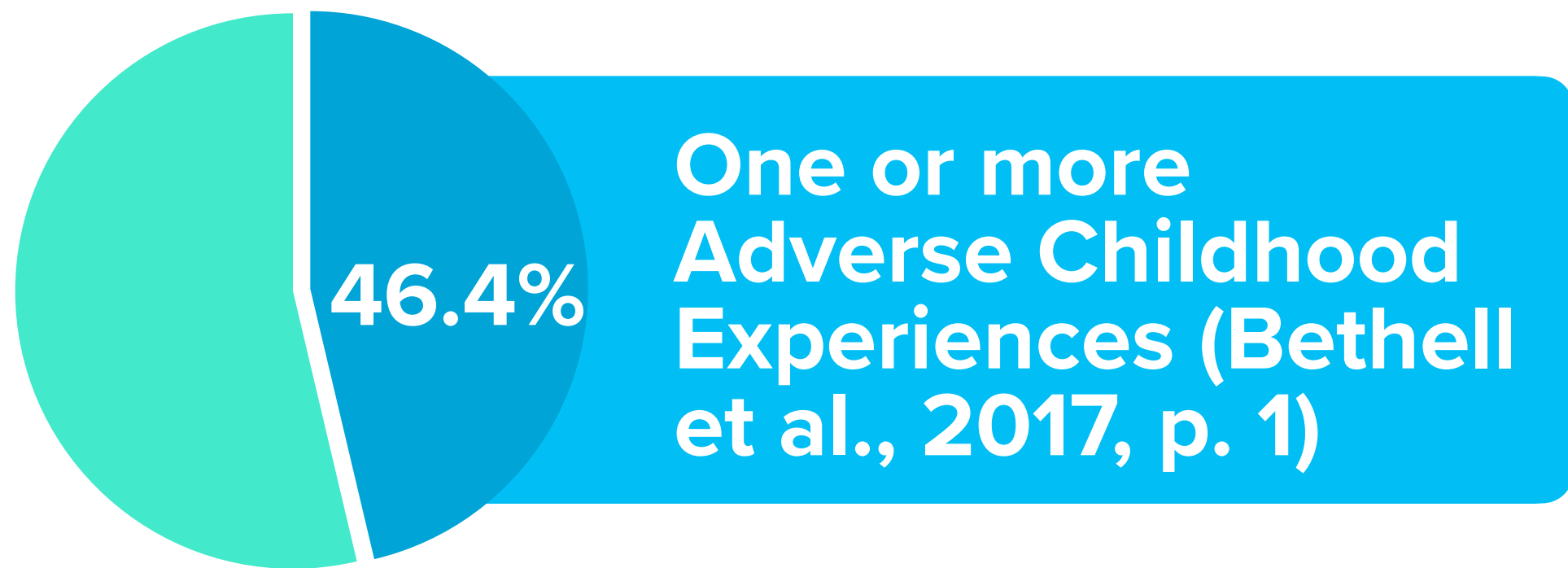
- \* Problem statement
- \* Research question(s)
- \* Theoretical framework
- \* Overview of research
- \* Connection of research questions and activities
- \* Limitations
- \* Discussion of results

**Committee member responses (questions or concerns)**

**Committee deliberation**

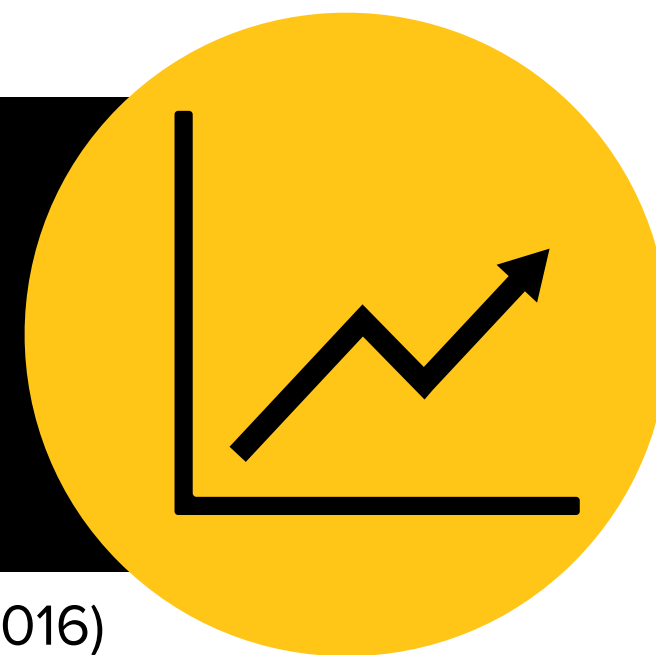
# PROBLEM STATEMENT

## The impact of trauma on students



Increasing likelihood of  
emotional, mental, or  
behavioral conditions

(Bethell et al., 2016)



(Perfect et al., 2016; Trout et al., 2006)



Less success cognitively,  
academically, and social-  
emotional behavioral functioning

Individual trauma results from an **event**, series of events, or set of circumstances that is **experienced** by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse **effects** on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. (p. 7, bold in original)

(Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative, 2014, p. 7 bold in original )

## **Developmental Trauma Disorder**

(Van der Kolk, 2015)

## **Race and ethnicity**

(Kincaid & Sullivan, 2017)

## **Socio-economic status**

(Khoury-Kassabri, 2004)

## **COVID-19**

(Shreffler et al, 2021)

# **INTERSECTIONALITY FOR OUR STUDENTS**

## **School to prison pipeline**

(Nelson et al., 2014)

## **Interaction with juvenile justice**

(Branson et al. 2017)

## **Disability**

(Nicolaidis & Raymakeer., 2015)

# PROBLEM STATEMENT

## The need for trauma informed practices

A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed **realizes** the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; **recognizes** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist **re-traumatization** (p. 9, bold included in the original text).

(Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative, 2014, p. 9, bold in original text)

- \* **Students who have experienced trauma need school to offer a safe and consistent environment**
- \* **Staff should put a particular focus on having positive interactions with the students**
- \* **Teachers should implement a culturally responsive practice within their classroom that offers peer interaction and connection and uses a strengths-based approach.**

(Cavanaugh, 2016)

# PROBLEM STATEMENT

## Challenges for teachers serving students with **EBD** and compassion fatigue

Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities

There is a significant amount of psychological distress for teachers working in special education.

(Ziaian-Ghafari and Berg, 2019)

There is a connection between special education teacher burnout and compassion fatigue.

(Hoffman et al., 2007)

Schools experience difficulty retaining special educators to serve students with **EBD**

(Bettini et al., 2019)

Students with disabilities and students of color experience marginalization based on access to quality instruction, school disciplinary practices, and special education placement practices. (Scherr & Mayer, 2019)

Minority students are disproportionately identified with **EBD** by schools.

(Bridget et al., 2016; Tefera & Fischman, 2020)

Children with special health care needs have disproportionately higher rates of **ACEs** compared to their non-disabled peers.

(Kan et al., 2020).

**SUPPORTIVE AND  
SHARED LEADERSHIP**

**COLLECTIVE  
CREATIVITY**

**SHARED VALUES  
AND VISION**

# PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

(Hord, 1997)

**SHARED PERSONAL  
PRACTICES**

**SUPPORTIVE  
CONDITIONS**



# PROBLEM STATEMENT

Using a PLC to deliver professional development for trauma-informed care

Providing a safe environment where school staff can discuss social-emotional learning competencies can be meaningful

(Johnson, 2018)

PLCs have been considered a format to discuss social-emotional learning and promote anti-racist ideals.

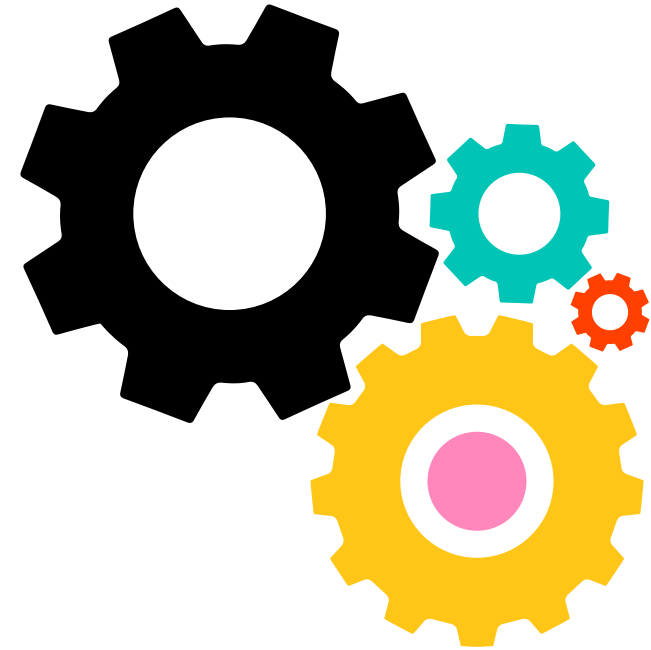
(Leonard & Woodland, 2022)

Reflection and being able to learn from reflective action is becoming considered integral in educational research.

(Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 722)

There has been a lack of examples of it being used to support the development and implementation of a trauma-informed classroom or school setting

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



## System Thinking

The patterns that emerge from these connections can often follow archetypes that help us understand the interactions of the parts of the system.

(Stroh, 2015)

One of the intentions of Participatory Action Research is to be transformative

## TRANSFORMATION PARADIGM

(Mertens, 2009)

The **transformative leadership** framework lets us understand that leadership can be developed through emergent processes. It also views it as paradoxical and allows for plurality in how it is embodied

(Montuori & Donnelly, 2017)

**T** HIS INQUIRY SEEKS TO DETERMINE WHETHER A PLC FOCUSED ON TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE PRACTICES CAN CREATE CLEAR AND WORTHWHILE CHANGE FOR TEACHERS SERVING STUDENTS WITH EBD AND SUBSEQUENTLY IMPACTING THEIR CLASSROOMS AND SCHOOLS THROUGH A PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH QUESTION

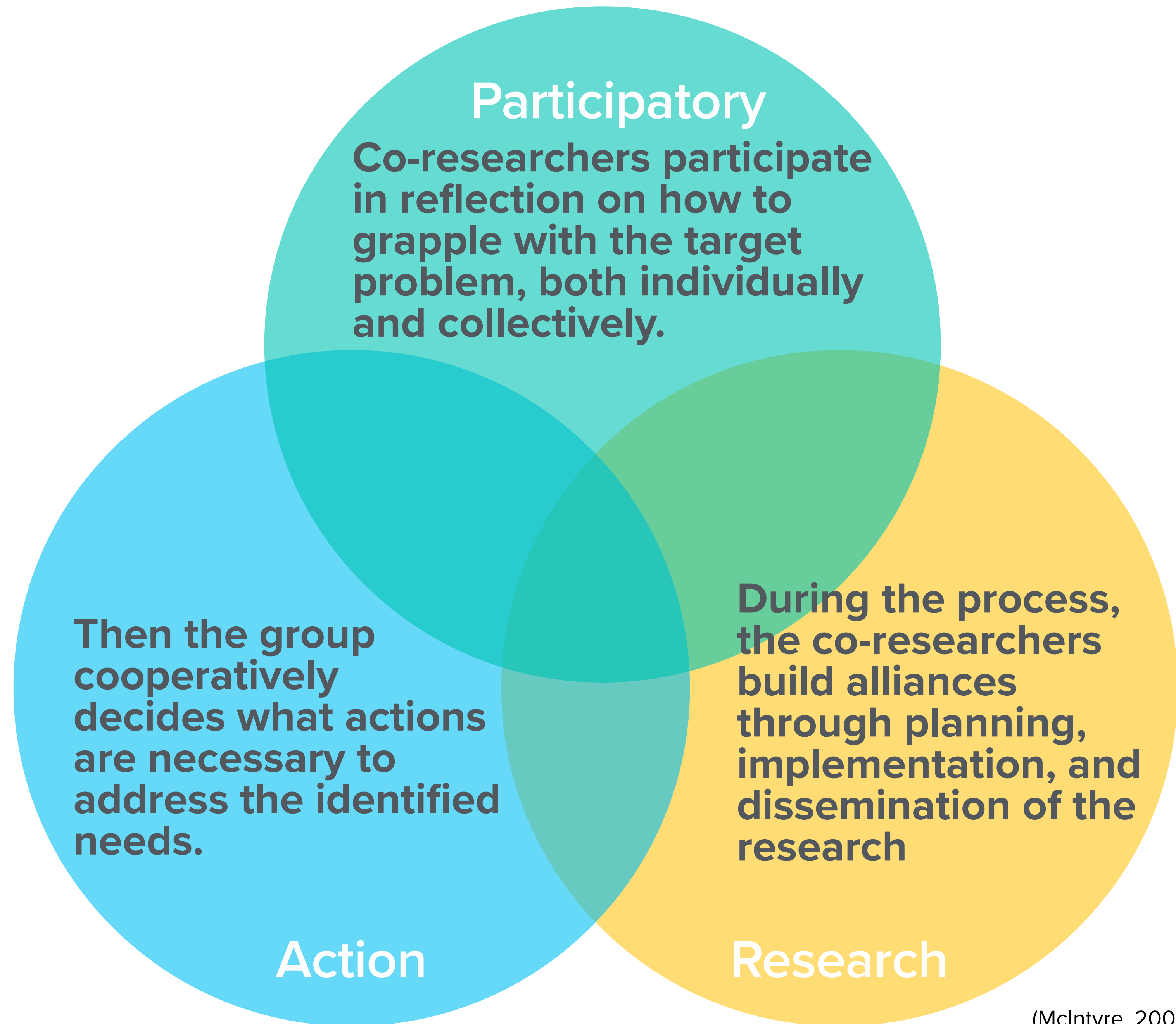
# SUB QUESTIONS BEING RESEARCHED

- **What do the co-researchers know about trauma and its impacts?**
- **What type of practices do the co-researchers already do in their classroom to limit re-traumatization and increase resilience?**
- **What are the self-care practices of the teachers, and how do they manage secondary trauma?**
- **What practices can they develop together to promote change within their classrooms and schools?**
- **What effective systems or recommendations could the co-researchers create to help develop similar growth in other schools?**

# WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH?

PAR is a qualitative methodology that includes collaboration at all levels of the research process and an intention to address a social problem that affects an underserved community.

(Creswell et al., 2007)



(McIntyre, 2008)

**1 Orientation:**  
discussing PAR, its values, tenets, principles, practices, and processes

**2 Entry interviews:**  
Co-researcher voice in developing agendas and describing needs

**3 Six co-designed sessions:**

- \* Understand how trauma impacts students
- \* Limiting re-traumatization within the classroom
- \* Methods for increasing resiliency factors for students
- \* Engaging in self-care and burnout prevention to reduce the impact of secondary trauma
- \* Evaluate and implement ideas for promoting systematic changes within a classroom and school-wide
- \* Develop a tool or recommendation for how other school staff could create similar growth in other schools



6 Co-Researchers  
3 School Social Workers  
2 Behavior Interventionist Teachers  
1 Para Educator

# OVERVIEW OF STUDY PHASES

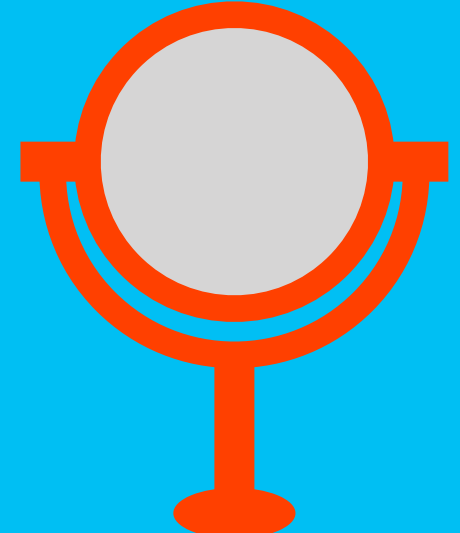
Embed in dialogues



Group Book Study



Self-Care Activity



Exploration, Reflection, and Action

# RECRUITMENT PHASE

**Purposive Sampling**  
Staff that work with students with EBD in a self-contained classroom setting.

**3**

## School Districts

Richland's BESST Program,  
Kennewick's Tier II Behavior Program,  
and Pasco's Bridges Program

**10**

## Elementary School Buildings

17 staff at the  
elementary Level

**5**

## Secondary School Buildings

12 staff at the  
middle school and  
high school levels

\* there are about 85 schools across the three districts.

# 1 Orientation:

discussing PAR, its values, tenets, principles, practices, and processes



6 Co-Researchers

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# OVERVIEW OF STUDY PHASES



# CO-RESEARCHER:

Noun

\ (,)kō-ri-'sər-chər



Participants as co-researchers refers to a participatory method of research that situates participants as joint contributors and investigators to the findings of a research project. This qualitative research approach validates and privileges the experiences of participants, making them experts and therefore co-researchers and collaborators in the process of gathering and interpreting data.

(Boylorn, 2012, p. 600)



**JACOB**

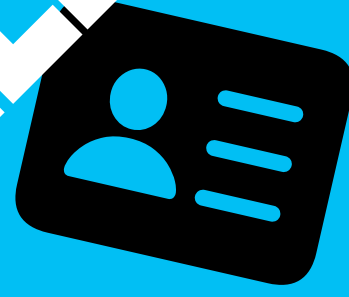
Occupation: **Social Worker**  
Education: **Master's in Social Work**  
Location: **High School**  
Experience: **8 Years of School Social Work and 5 Years Community Mental Health**

**“I like working with youth who are a challenging and a bit of a knucklehead, because I was one”**

# PRIMARY RESEARCHER

**“Insider action research offers a unique perspective on systems, precisely because it is from the inside.”** (Coghlan & Shani, 2008, p. 644)

# CO-RESEARCHERS



**LUNA**

Occupation: **Social Worker**  
Education: **Master's in Social Work**  
Location: **High School**  
Experience: **3 Years of School Social Work**

"I try to meet students where they are at."



**EMILY**

Occupation: **Behavior Intervention Teacher**  
Education: **Teaching Certificate in Special Education**  
Location: **Elementary**  
Experience: **7 Years Teaching Life Skills, 1 year in Behavior**

"I just love working with the kids that need the most support. I sometimes think of it as a puzzle."



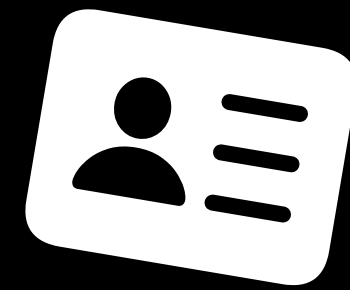
**JACOB**



**ANGELICA**

Occupation: **Behavior Intervention Teacher**  
Education: **Teaching Certificate in Special Education**  
Location: **K-3 Elementary**  
Experience: **6 Years Teaching Behavior, 14 Years as a Para Educator**

"People always tell me I should go work in resource because of my age."



**MARIE**

Occupation: **Para Educator**  
Education: **Bachelor's Degree**  
Location: **Elementary**  
Experience: **2 Years in the Behavior Program**

"I love the work I do at this job."



**SHANIQUA**

Occupation: **Social Worker**  
Education: **Master's in Social Work**  
Location: **Elementary**  
Experience: **4 Years of School Social Work**

"I love spending time with my students each day."

# CO-RESEARCHERS

## Managing Power Dynamics

(Grant et al., 2008, p. 594)

“

View research project as learning opportunity for all

Demystify research process

Encourage community involvement in all stages of project, with increasing control



**1 Orientation:**  
discussing PAR, its values, tenets,  
principles, practices, and  
processes

**2 Entry interviews:**  
Co-researcher voice in  
developing agendas and  
describing needs



6 Co-Researchers  
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1 Para Educator

# OVERVIEW OF STUDY PHASES

Embedded in the dialogues



Group Book  
Study



Self-Care  
Activity



Exploration,  
Reflection,  
and Action

# EMBEDDED IN

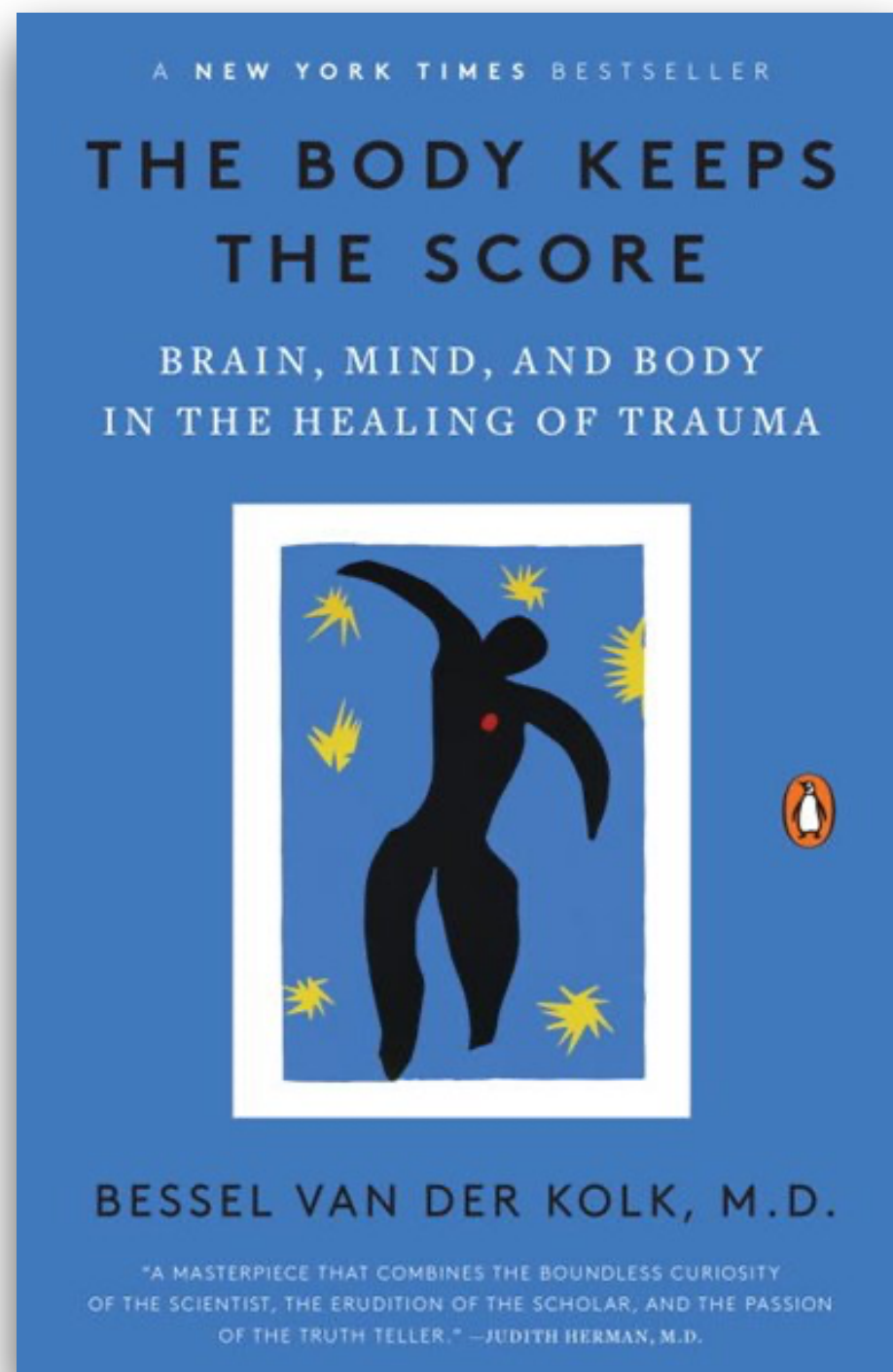
# DIALOGUES

the



Group Book Study

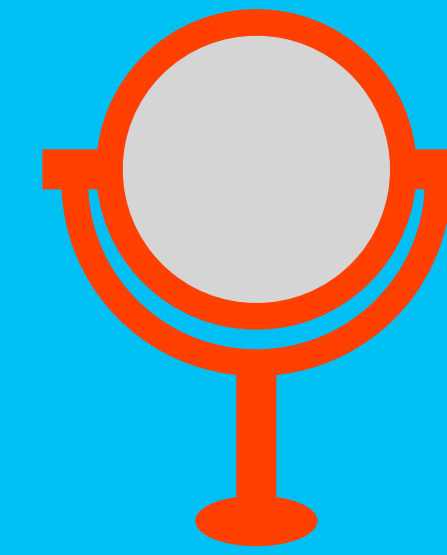
(Van der Kolk, 2015)



I would prompt my co-research to share what stood out in the readings, things that inspired more in-depth consideration, or other thoughts and comments about the book.



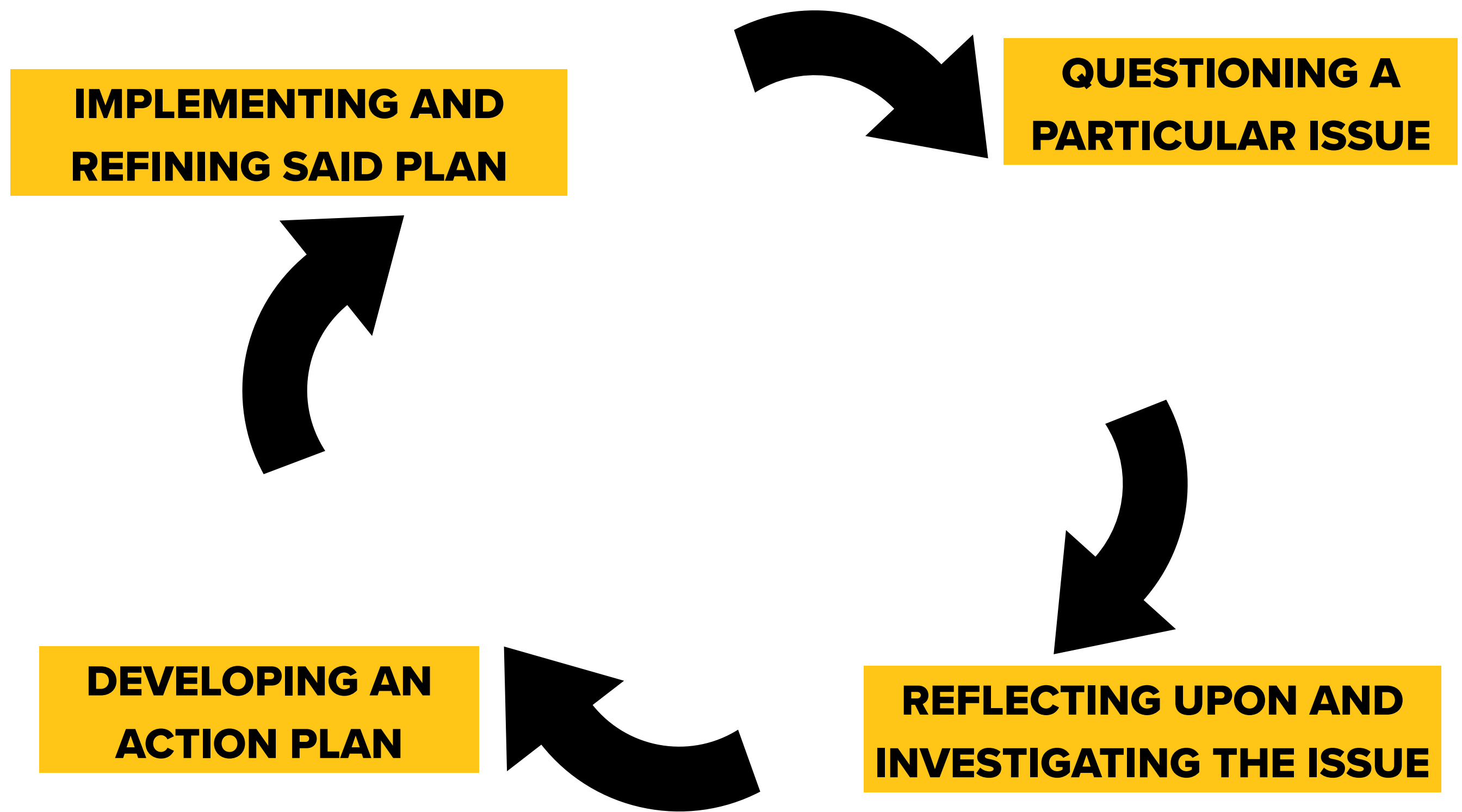
Self-Care Activity



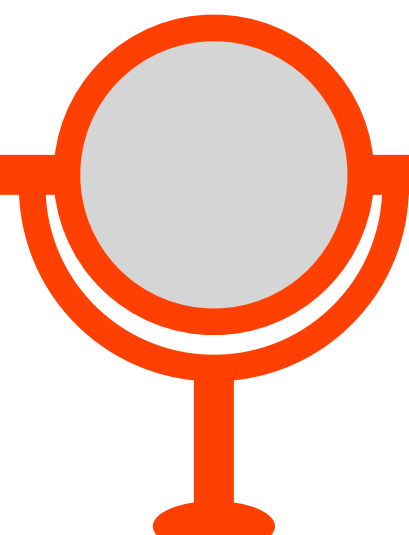
Exploration, Reflection, and Action

1. Practice box breathing
2. Activating the vagus nerve
3. Gratitude free write
4. Round-robin sharing of how we maintain balance in our lives
5. Debriefing as self-care in the classroom
6. Brainstorming self-care practice
7. Five senses exercise

# A BRAIDED PROCESS OF EXPLORATION, REFLECTION, AND ACTION



(McIntyre, 2008)



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# OVERVIEW OF STUDY PHASES

Embedded in the dialogues



Group Book Study



Self-Care Activity



Exploration, Reflection, and Action



# IDEAS AND CONTENT USED DURING TRAUMA-INFORMED PLC

During the entry interviews, there were many great ideas that came up. Many were included in the agenda for the session.



## Rational When Not Included

- Based on other content, we would be reviewing
- Based on the emergent nature of the group and following the group's conversation

# DATA ANALYSIS

- **Data Collected Included Session Notes**

Agendas, notes that were taken during the session (both handwritten/typed), information from collaborative tools (e.g., Google Docs and Chat on Zoom), my reflections after the session, and information added after the session through the process of refining and processing the session notes for completeness

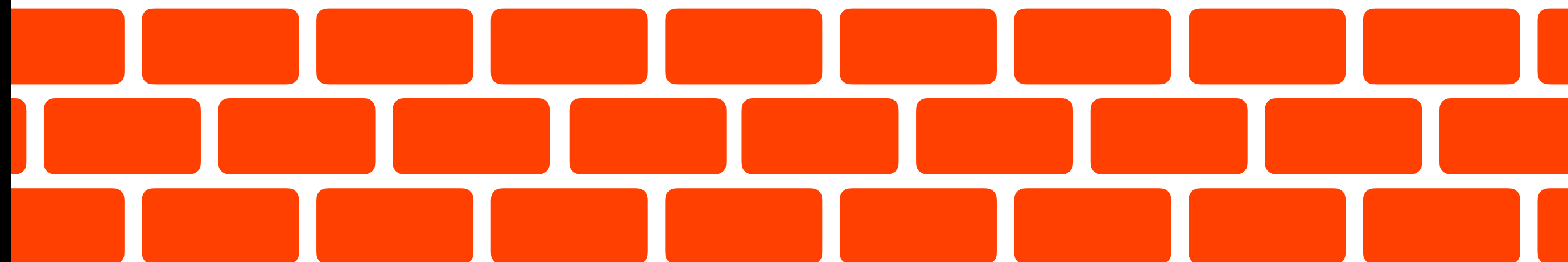
- **Data Analysis Included**

Processing notes and calling out themes and organizational structures as I found them. I added highlights and comments to organize information. Added information to a mind map to see it visually and assist in finding connections.

**SUPPORT GROUP  
USING MUTUAL AID**

**INTERDISCIPLINARY  
WORKING GROUP**

**FOUNDATIONAL ASPECTS OF  
THE TRAUMA-INFORMED PLC**



**SUPPORT  
GROUP USING  
MUTUAL AID**

**“I don’t have a place that I  
feel comfortable”**

**— Angelica**

**“It’s like a support group”**

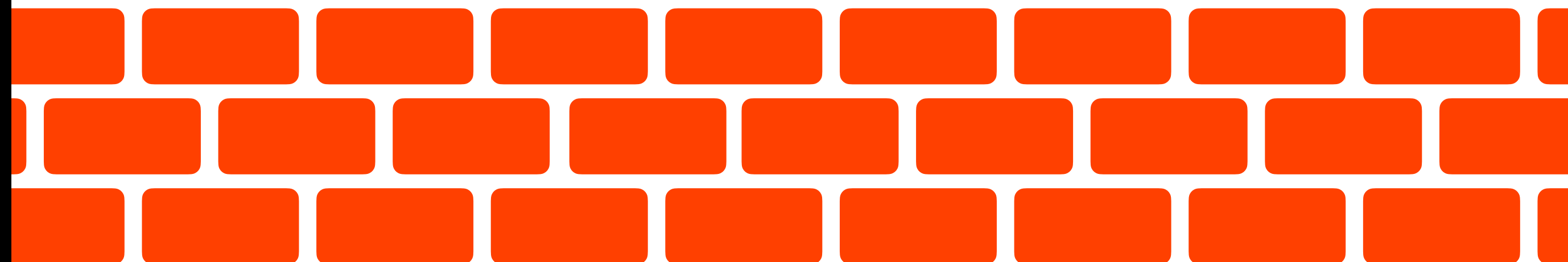
**— Shaniqua**

**Emily added that this group  
has been a positive outlet to  
address things and be around  
people with the “same  
mindset.”**

**Roles of a Facilitator in a  
Support Grope from Kurtz  
(2017)**

- A facilitated the group
- Group engages in consulting, linking, and supporting
- Maintaining helping factors that include promoting feelings of similarity, acceptance, and support

**FOUNDATIONAL ASPECTS OF  
THE TRAUMA-INFORMED PLC**



“As a social worker, I...”

or

“As a teacher I...”

Emily described, “I like hearing other people’s perspectives on things, just to hear what others do in the same field.” Later in talking about the social workers in the group, she explained it has been really “eye-opening” to hear the social worker side, “it’s just been fascinating learning more about trauma and those types of things.”

**INTERDISCIPLINARY  
WORKING GROUP**

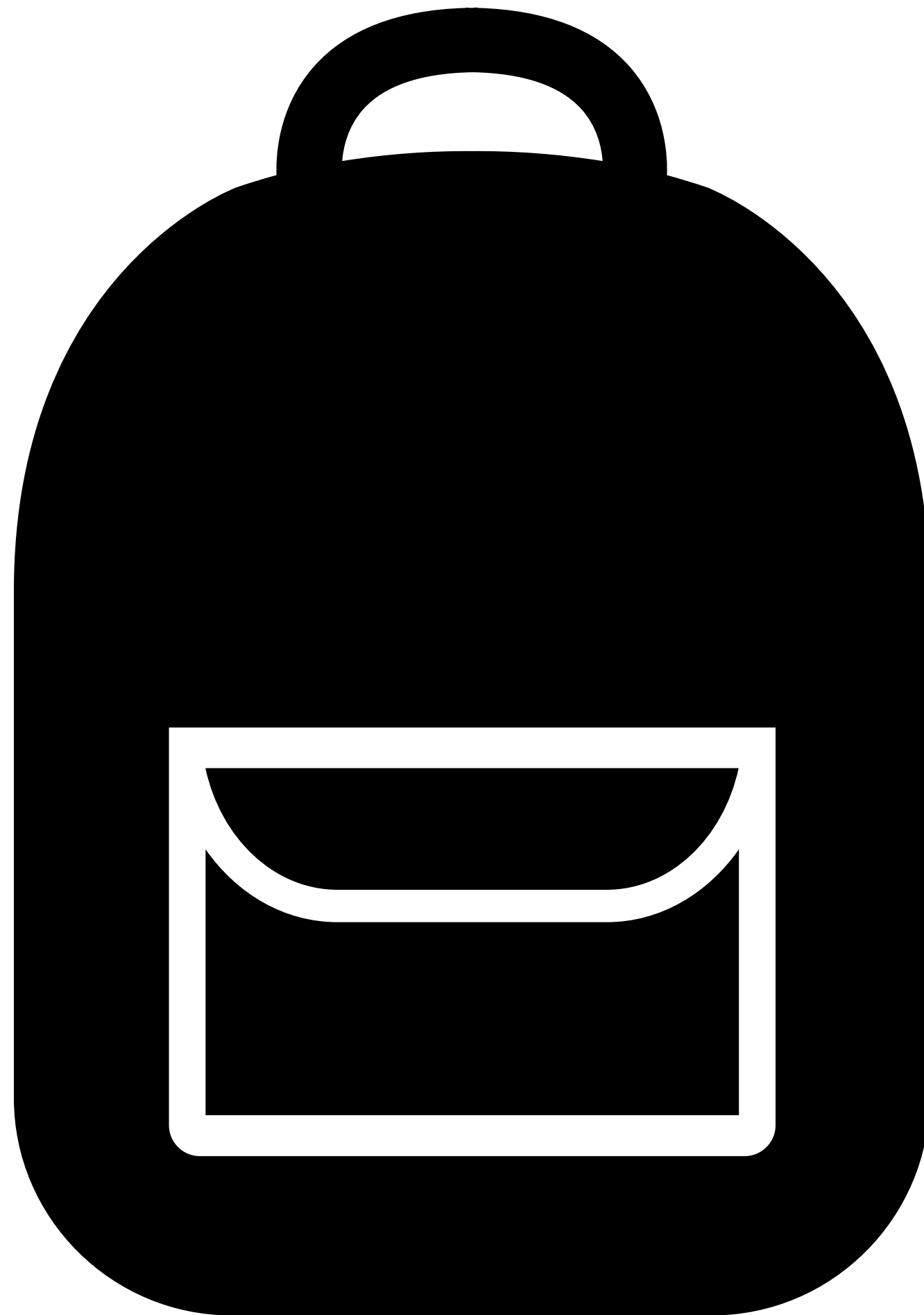
**“Interdisciplinary brings about the reciprocal interaction between (hence “inter”) disciplines, necessitating a blurring of disciplinary boundaries, in order to generate new common methodologies, perspectives, knowledge, or even new disciplines”**

(Choi & Pak, 2006, p. 395)

**FOUNDATIONAL ASPECTS OF  
THE TRAUMA-INFORMED PLC**

# LEARNING STRATEGIES

Cohesion Developing and Meaning Making



Sharing practical examples

Developing working definitions

Identifying aspects of concepts

Sharing personal challenges

# LEARNING STRATEGIES

## Idea Generation and Brainstorming

Using a related field to translate strategies to a K-12 setting

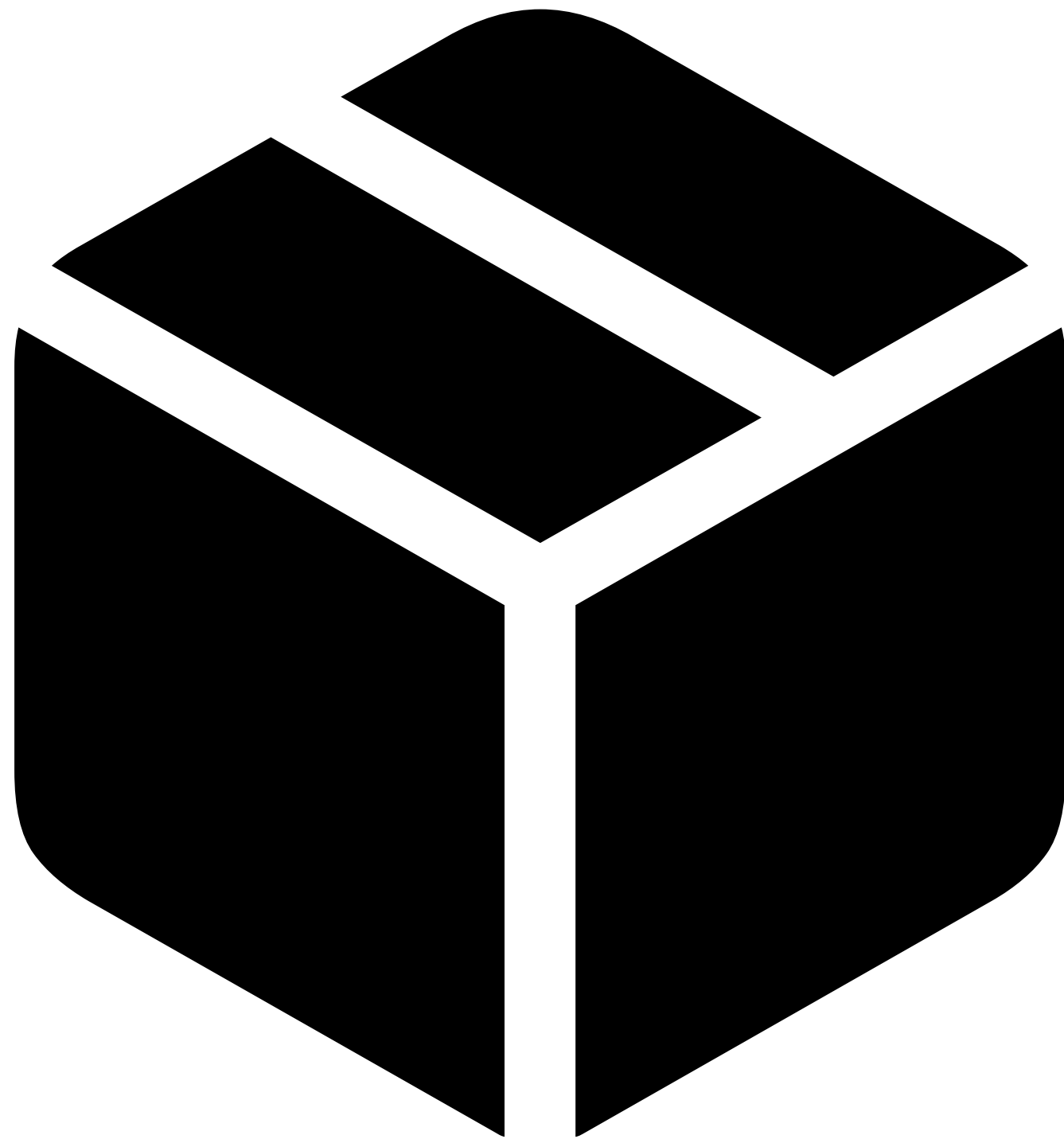
Developing a list of ideas for implementation

Discovering new and novel ideas



# LEARNING STRATEGIES

## Professional Socialization Through Sharing Process and Protocols



Sharing innovative or creative strategies

Specific ideas → Generalized Applications

Reviewing skills, values, professional identity, and attitudes that makeup professional socialization

(Miller, 2010)



# WHAT DO THE CO-RESEARCHERS KNOW ABOUT TRAUMA AND ITS IMPACTS?

- We framed our discussion regarding trauma and its impacts considering the ten ACEs first described by Felitti et al. (1998) and using the list of types of trauma from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (n.d.).
- As a PLC, we co-defined trauma as a topic and explored the impacts that we have seen from our students and our personal lives.
- We explored our experiences working with students or clients with diverse traumatic histories.
- We generated ideas on how somebody might experience the types of traumas and how it appeared to impact them in their lives at home and school.

# WHAT TYPE OF PRACTICES DO THE CO-RESEARCHERS ALREADY DO IN THEIR CLASSROOM TO LIMIT RE-TRAUMATIZATION AND INCREASE RESILIENCE?

- The co-researchers frequently shared examples of their engagement with students and practices used in their classrooms.
- We made meaning through the development of working definitions of re-traumatization and resilience.
- We developed a framework for understanding resilience that relates it to internal versus external resiliency factors.
- We built on the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (2014), and the strategies recommended to build resilience by counselors as we drafted examples of how they could be adapted to a school setting.

# WHAT ARE THE SELF-CARE PRACTICES OF THE TEACHERS, AND HOW DO THEY MANAGE SECONDARY TRAUMA?

- Each session, the co-researchers engaged in a self-care practice to develop our skills and repertoire in self-care practices.
- We considered our personal experience with secondary trauma using the ProQOL (Hudnall Stamm, 2010).
- We used idea generation to reflect on new and novel ideas for self-care practices.
- The structure of the group, acting as a type of support group using mutual aid practices, offered support in managing compassion fatigue.

# WHAT PRACTICES CAN THEY DEVELOP TOGETHER TO PROMOTE CHANGE WITHIN THEIR CLASSROOMS AND SCHOOLS?

- The co-researchers used the group as a space to discuss individual practices and work within our classrooms and schools.
- This process led to a type of socialization, developing practice improvements.
- We would reflect on these practices and share their application.
- Often there would be plans made for making changes in our settings and following up about those plans or implementation afterward to continue refining our practice.

# **WHAT EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS OR RECOMMENDATIONS COULD THE CO-RESEARCHERS CREATE TO HELP DEVELOP SIMILAR GROWTH IN OTHER SCHOOLS?**

- **We discussed the need for a practical cookbook-style guide that school personnel could use to develop their own Trauma-Informed PLC.**
- **The group members shared their desires to continue having a space to meet with and talk with fellow peers and people who work in their specific field of practice to continue to develop and improve their practice skills.**
- **They all reported being interested in continuing the work we began in the Trauma-Informed Care PLC the following school year.**
- **We developed specific recommendations for how schools can prevent secondary traumatization by structuring our proposals based on Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (2014) list of recommendations for behavioral health centers, adapting the strategies to what would make sense in a school-based setting.**

# **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

**Study was exploratory**

**The group composition**

**Not focused on external measures or processes**

**Potential for ambiguity and misunderstanding**

**Does not evaluate implementation or programs**

# MANAGING WITH A BROKEN WAND

“it is like my wand is broken.”

— Shaniqua

“I got a little bit of  
my, we are going to  
change the world  
back”

— Luna

“I think I'm just burnt  
out from life. I think  
that it is bleeding  
into work.”

— Marie



“I could call one of you guys  
and say, Hey, this is  
happening. I need to talk  
about this. I mean, I would feel  
like I could do that at this  
point.”

— Angelica

Engage in the Process of Reviewing Practice Together for Development

Use Idea Generation Develop New and Novel Ideas

Use Storytelling to Make Meaning and Develop Cohesion

Define Concepts as a Group to Enhance Understanding

Integrated Self-Care Practices Into Group and Encourage Use to Reduce Compassion Fatigue

Include Scholarly Sources and Develop Connections to Evidence-Based Practice

Review Protocols for Professional Socialization

**LEARNING STRATEGIES**

Understand How Trauma Impacts Students

Methods for Increasing Resiliency Factors for Students

Evaluate and Implement Ideas for Promoting Systematic Changes Within a Classroom and School-Wide

Develop a Tool or Recommendation for How Other School Staff Could Create Similar Growth in Other Schools

Limiting Re-Traumatization Within the Classroom

Engaging in Self-Care and Burnout Prevention to Reduce the Impact of Secondary Trauma

**THEMES**

Follow Mutual Aid Model

Incorporate an Interdisciplinary Framework

**COMPONENTS IN BUILDING A TRAUMA-INFORMED PLC**



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