

Hartsfield Elementary: Changing Course

A First Year Look at One School's Strategy for
Supporting and Educating Traumatized
Students





... that study (the *ACE Study*) was about broccoli, it would be all over the front page of The New York Times. The trouble is it's just such a huge thing to change. It's not like, 'Well, eat more broccoli.' ”

Patricia Wilcox, head of the Traumatic Stress Institute at Klingberg Family Centers in New Britain, as quoted in “The Long Reach of Childhood Trauma” by Arielle Levin Becker

Hartsfield Elementary: who are we?

- ◆ 448 students
- ◆ 79% Black, 12% White, 3% Hispanic, 2% Asian, 4% multiracial
- ◆ 100 % free and reduced lunch
- ◆ Approximately 65 students have moved in or out of our school during the school year.



Kaylee 2nd grader

*Lives with mom and
three siblings. Dad is
in jail.*

*Misses school almost
once a week.*

*Has been in and out of
Hartsfield during the
school year.*

*Behaviors: quick to
anger, often
antagonistic, defiant*

Devon

4th grader



Started at Hartsfield in February. Since then, has lived in three households.

Diabetic type 1. Due to many medical emergencies, now in a foster home.

Reading at a 2nd grade level.

Behaviors: Devon can

g. a. a. a.
**Lexi 5th
grader**



Lives in single parent household with six siblings.

Mom fled an abusive relationship last year. "We moved in with auntie but then the lights went off and that's when we started living in hotels." (Aniya)

Behaviors: A is often angry and defiant. L is often withdrawn.

Why a trauma-sensitive school environment?

- ◆ Traditional disciplinary methods do not work.
- ◆ A commitment to support all children socially, emotionally, behaviorally and academically is the most effective way to improve learning.
- ◆ A safe and supportive environment benefits ALL students.

The first step: awareness

- ◆ Trauma and stress affect language, memory, concentration, and emotional and behavioral regulation.
- ◆ The behavior for our children is logical for THEM. They are not being intentionally defiant or manipulative. They are being hyper-vigilant.
- ◆ Trauma affects relationships. But building relationships with our students is also where we need to start.

Common school behaviors of children with trauma

- ◆ Students pay attention to all the wrong things: peripheral sounds, actions of neighbors, a tone of voice. They can't be calm enough to hear instructions.
- ◆ Students push back, can be defiant, in order to gain some control.
- ◆ Students are very reactive. They switch emotions fast. Their triggers can be anything from a silent classroom to a certain smell to a physical touch.
- ◆ ***Think of the behaviors as a bid for connection.***



asking how
can we
change his
behavior?”
Let’s ask
“How can we
help him
feel safe,
secure and
calm?”

Hartsfield Action Plan

- ◆ Our mission is to **create a safe place** for students physically, academically, socially, and emotionally. We want to provide a sense of safety through **predictable patterns and structure**, with **adults in charge who convey confidence** through tone of voice, demeanor, and a **calm presence**.



Morning Meetings

- Intentional way to start the day in a calm and supportive manner.
- All classes follow the same curriculum
- Each week focuses on a specific social/emotional learning goal.

WHAT'S THE WORD?

HAPPY

cheerful

elated

gleeful

excited



sad

glum

discouraged

miserable

dejected

inconsolable

A photograph of a young boy wearing glasses, looking off to the side with a worried or anxious expression.

worry

anxious

nervous

scared

fear

A photograph of a young girl with a neutral, somewhat somber expression.

sincere

apology

1. I'm sorry
2. This is why
3. In the future
4. Will you accept my apology



Feelings Thermometer

Stop X
angry
very upset

Be Careful!
confused
not listening
need to think

Go good ✓
happy
working well

livid

furious

angry

cross

annoyed

Ways to Control

outside
Angelina

My

ANGER

Read your favorite book
Tom

do jumping Sacks
Tom

SQUEEZE my Baby Doll
amari Tom

Get + TAKE A DEEP breath and count to four.

^{Katie}
A way to relax yourself down is to say you will have a great day

get me down
Tom

199

Also, take deep breaths in and out and count to

You can play with a friend

play with your favorite toy

get to exercise
Heidi

talk about your feelings

play outside
Heidi

Ha

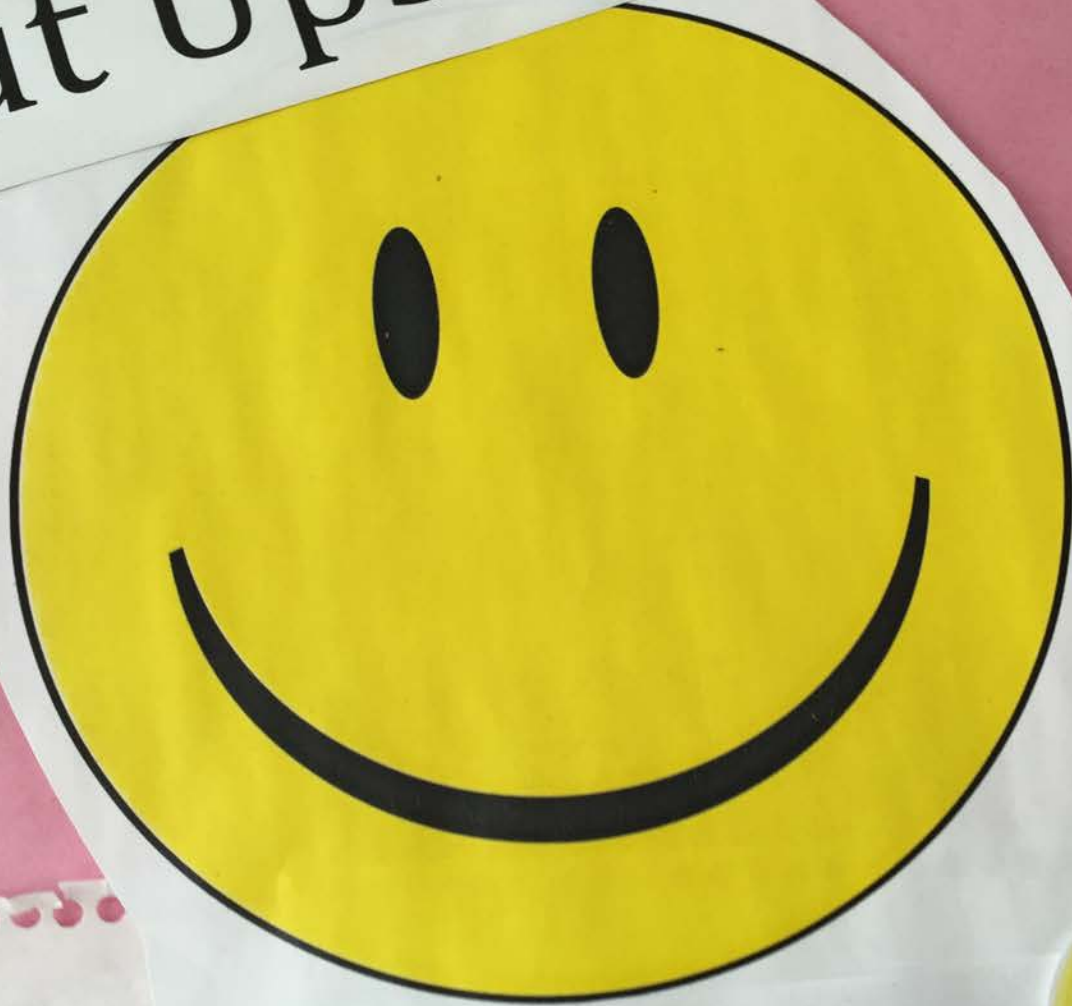


sincere

apology

1. I'm sorry for....
2. This is wrong because....
3. In the future I will...
4. Will you accept my apology?

Put Ups!!!



NOT put downs



you
ostic! because
look good by the way!

You are
your th

You are really good at gymnastics!

You are beautiful, inside and out!

Can I help you with that?

you can be the beautifulist

I hope you feel better.

Have an excellent day today.

you are at throwing

You are fantastic at candy land.

I like your glasses.

you are smart

you are fantastic at art because you draw good

I love you.

you will always be my best friends

You are really good at cheerleading

You are a bright eye student. you are good at basketball

You are really good at softball!

you are a math wiz

have a nice day.

you are really good at basket

ever had.

I like your jacket.

you are a good football player.

your not four eye! please.

me! you are very good at math Kayla

You can do math really

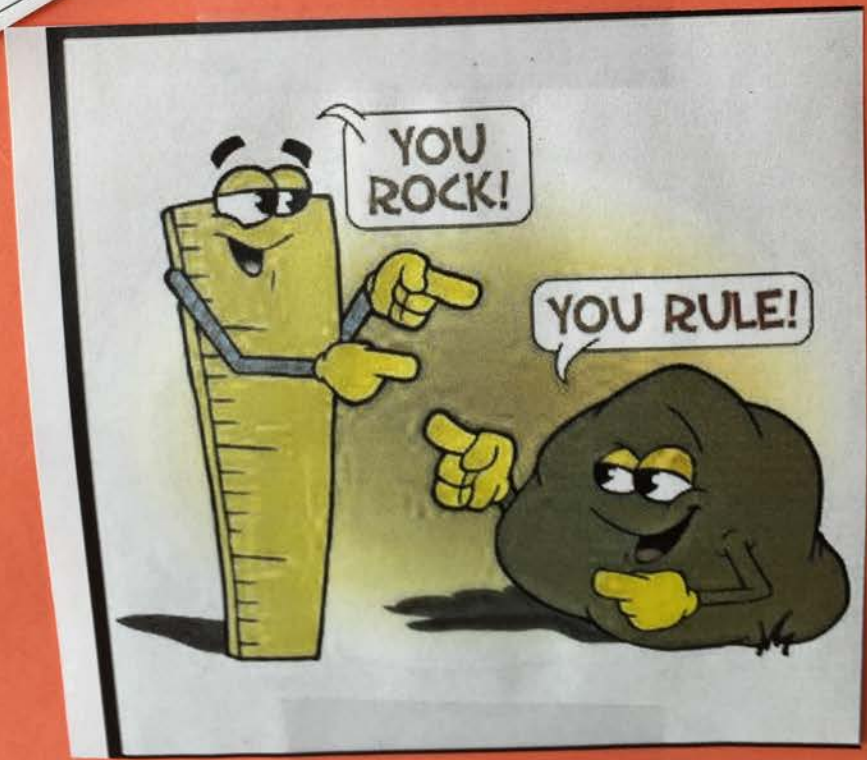
ll...
ny

empathy



The ability to stand in
someone else's shoes

appreciation



I appreciate how
you work good at
your job. I
appreciate every
you do so helpful.
thanks.

Love
LOVE
LOVE
LOVE
Love
LOVE
LOVE
LOVE
LOVE

Mrs. Peitler
Thank you for making
sure Hartshorn School has
the best book ever!



TY



<https://youtu.be/nwAYpLVyeFU>

Where do we go from here?

- ◆ 100% of Hartsfield staff trained and ready to practice trauma-sensitive strategies on a daily basis.
- ◆ All teachers receive ongoing training on developing relationships with children and helping them with self-regulation.
- ◆ We continue to find ways to reach out to families and collaborate with them in supporting their children.
- ◆ Additional resources are found to help with clinical intervention and family support.
- ◆ An evaluation component is developed.

Cherokee Point Elementary, San Diego



Schools are
communities
for children.

They need to
be safe
havens.



**“Your ability
to give love
and stay
mindful is the
new
outcome.”**

Heather T. Forbes,
LCSW