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The Other Costs of Trauma: Educator Compassion Fatigue

by Dr. Brandie Oliver, Butler University School Counseling Program

During my daily drive home, I often listen to the news channel. A day does not pass that I am not taken aback by the news of loss and devastation somewhere in our community whether that be locally, nationally, or internationally. These stories can evoke terror and fear and may leave us pondering our own safety. Despite these horrific daily accounts of tragedy, we must continue our work as educators and forge ahead, striving to provide opportunities that encourage our students to become change agents working to create communities where peace is the norm. Within our schools, we know many students not only have witnessed but also have been victims of trauma and violence. Over the recent years, much attention and training has focused on trauma informed teaching practices to best educate these students. However, how often do we support or even recognize the needs of the teachers that serve these children impacted by trauma?

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (<http://www.nctsn.org/>) states that any educator who works directly with traumatized children and adolescents is vulnerable to the effects of trauma. This is commonly referred to as compassion fatigue, vicarious or secondary trauma (herein referred to as compassion fatigue). Physical, mental, or emotional symptoms can be associated with compassion fatigue, and it is critical that all educators have training to recognize symptoms as well as be equipped with tools and resources to address compassion fatigue.

Over the Thanksgiving holiday, I reflected on the many amazing people who have offered me a listening ear and ongoing support following a traumatic event in my own life. Our teachers do this type of heroic work each and every day. They provide a safe refuge for so many students. We must pay attention to their needs and provide training to ensure educators have both knowledge and awareness of the potential impact of stress associated with compassion fatigue. In addition to knowledge, we must work to build skills to address compassion fatigue. Creating a school community that promotes and expects self-care is vital to the success of both our teachers and our students. As an administrator, you can promote the message that no one has to go at this alone. When any educator learns of stories of trauma, it is critical to guard against isolation. While it is important to respect student confidentiality, getting support from others (e.g., teachers, school counselors, administration, etc.) is one of the most important steps to address compassion fatigue. Providing time and space to support each other, brainstorm strategies, and practice self-care strategies (e.g., mindfulness, reflection, exercise, etc.) can be the first steps in working toward reducing the costs of trauma in your school.

NASSP Report

by: Steve Baker, Principal at Bluffton HS

IASP is healthier than ever, and it has the momentum to continue growing and serving our members like never before. I think it is easy to see the advantages of joining IASP and the importance of attending the IASP Fall Conference every year. However, one question that I have heard since I have accepted the position of the IASP State Coordinator for NASSP is “Why should I attend the NASSP national conference?” This is an excellent questions that deserves an answer.

Why should I attend the NASSP national conference? The NASSP national conference, Ignite '16, provides a unique opportunity to enhance leadership skills, obtain tried and true ideas for facing important education issues, and bring back fresh ideas that will help your students and school be successful. Listed below are more reasons to attend Ignite '16.

Stay Up-to-Date. As a principal, assistant principal, or future principal, you tackle an array of issues every day. Ignite's comprehensive sessions, led by educators with diverse backgrounds, cover the gamut of the challenges school leaders face.

Professional development. In addition to helping your students, it is important to foster your own professional growth. Numerous sessions are designed to hone your expertise, enhance your knowledge, and leave you well equipped to lead your school into the future.

Networking. Meeting other education leaders from across the country (and around the world) allows you to benefit from the collective wisdom of other school administrators. Ignite '16 makes it easy for you to expand your professional learning network by connecting you with colleagues and renowned education leaders who face the same issues you do.

Exhibits. Connect with innovative exhibitors who can show you the latest products, services, and technology that are transforming schools today. Work one-on-one with exhibitors to develop solutions to meet your specific needs.

Invest in Yourself. At the end of the day, if you are unable to secure funding from your school or district, consider the value—ideas, tactics, and solutions—you stand to gain when you finance the trip yourself.

Funding Sources. When you request funding, keep in mind that Title I, Title II, and ESEA funds may be available for this type of professional development.

I know it can be challenging to substantiate expense and time out of your school, regardless of a conference, but I believe it will be worth the investment. Ignite '16 will be held February 25-27, 2016, in **Orlando, FL**. I hope to see you there.