

Buzz Brazeau,
Superintendent



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Written testimony: Support of HB 2408 in continued funding of the Trauma Informed Schools Pilot project.

Submitted: March 23, 2017

Health Care Chair Representative Greenlick and members of the Committee:

As Superintendent of the Central School District, I am writing to share information with you about the need to continue to fund the current pilot project which develops a trauma informed school at Central High School.

Pilot Overview

Last legislative session, HB4002 passed. The passage of this bill allowed for the Chief Education Office to offer a grant to two high schools to embark on the transformation of becoming a Trauma Informed School. Central School District and Tigard School District were awarded the grant and funding for the pilot began in October 2017, at which time we began to train our staff and hire a Trauma Informed Coordinator to guide the school through this effort.

Current Success

Although there has not been enough time passed to formally gauge the impact of this pilot through formal research, we are seeing gains in our daily interactions with staff, students, and families. With the guidance of our Trauma Informed Coordinator, staff are utilizing tools such as getting a heartbeat on their classrooms before teaching begins and building in quick breaks that allow students and staff to shift out of the learning side of their brain and into the creative side of the brain. These tools help students build self-awareness, emotional regulation, and most importantly, relationships.

Recently, we had a behavioral incident at our school that involved two students; one that we know has experienced a tremendous amount of adversity and scores high on the ACEs scale.

If we were to follow current discipline processes for major incidents, we would have imposed a 3-5 day in or out of school suspension. The exposure to the concepts of Trauma Informed practice and the ACEs scale moved us in a very different direction. We were able to offer the student and parent an alternative to suspension. We welcomed the student back to school the following day with the understanding that we would set up a series of five counselling sessions with our in school Behavioral Health Specialist, each representing equivocally a day of suspension. If the student came to school every day and attended each meeting, no other consequence would occur. Each meeting that she missed would result in a day of suspension. This accomplished two things, first, it allowed the student a choice, and created a format to meet the needs of the student.

Secondly, it created a model for staff to see that discipline does not have to be punitive, but that we can still hold a student accountable, while helping them get their needs met.

At the end of the day, this is the momentum I see continuing with additional funding for this pilot. Without the context of becoming a Trauma Informed School, I do not believe that we could have approached the incident with a lens that addressed behavior change, as opposed to the traditional means of disciplining a student, without receiving significant pushback from staff.

Future Anticipation

We see great potential for our students, staff and community through this project. We are looking forward to engaging students and families, continuing to educate and guide our staff, and building better bridges with local social service organizations. We also anticipate that the formal data will show an increase in attendance, a decrease in negative behavior, and higher levels of staff satisfaction in their work.

We are also excited about what this pilot will produce and offer to other schools wanting to transform into a trauma informed setting. With a continued State investment in this project, we feel confident that the students will reap the benefit of this pilot project. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Buzz Brazeau".

Buzz Brazeau
Superintendent