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Promoting Social and Emotional Competencies with a Trauma-Informed Approach to Early Education

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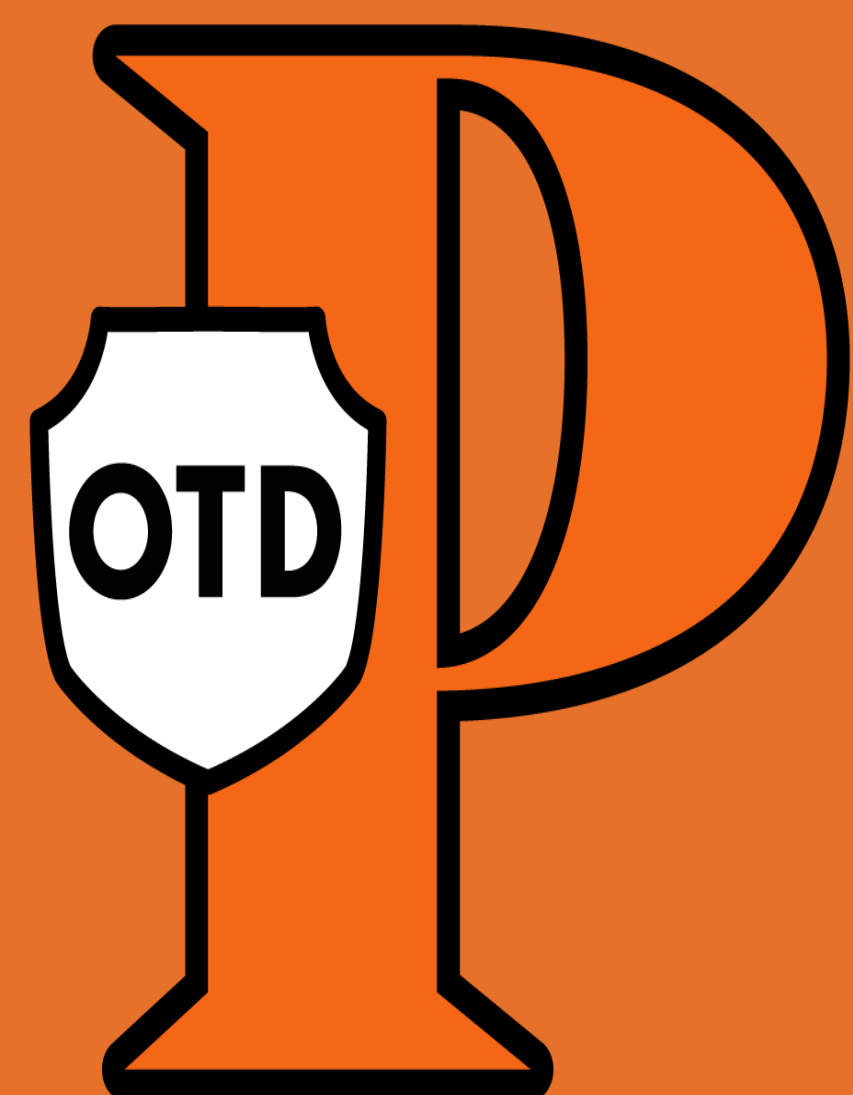
Promoting Social and Emotional Competencies with a Trauma-Informed Approach to Early Education

Presented By: Kaelyn O'Bryan, OTD/S

Site: SETA Head Start

Site Mentor: Kelly Sprake

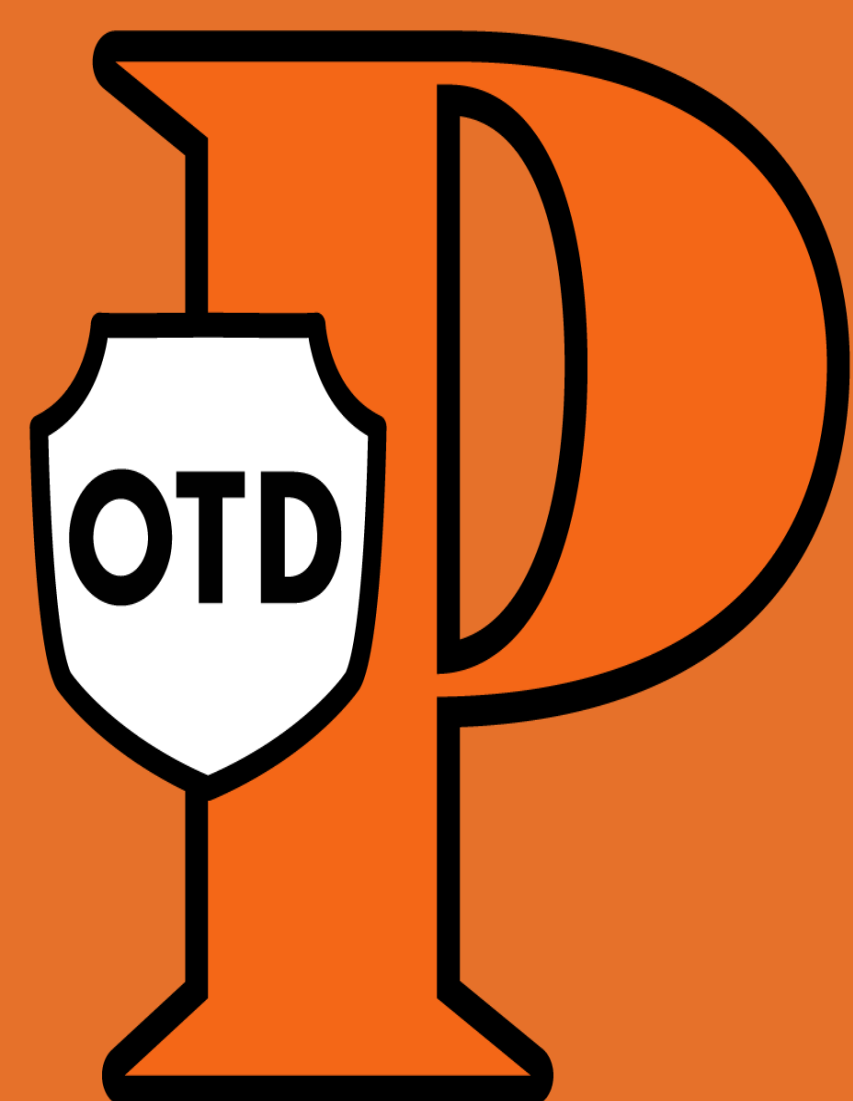
UOP Mentor: Tailar Johnson, OTD, OTR/L



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Site: SETA Head Start

- SETA Head Start Corporate Office in Sacramento, California
 - **Focus:** supporting all areas of child development for improved school readiness
 - **Serves:** low-income families; children from infancy to age 5
 - **Philosophy:** All areas of children's development (physical, social, emotional and cognitive) are interconnected. Child development services are family focused.



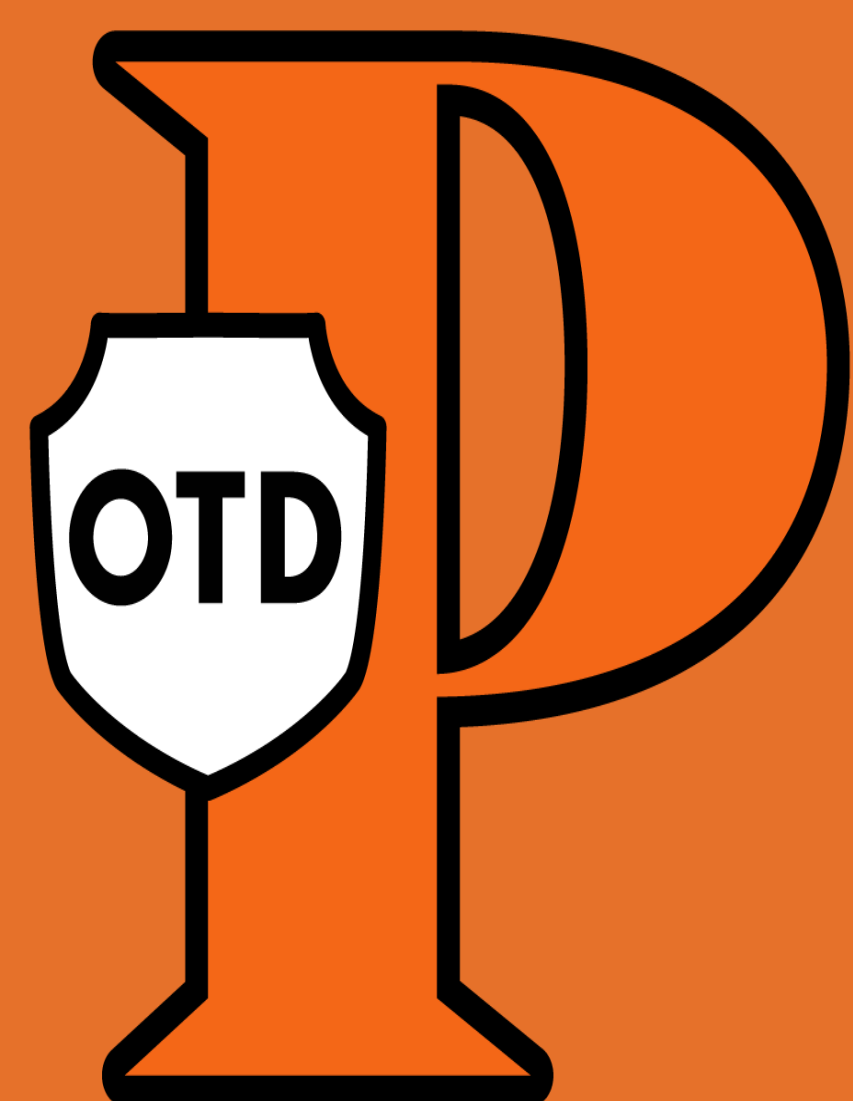
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Background

- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):**
 - Events occurring before age 18 that are potentially traumatic.
 - 1 in 6 adults have reported experiencing 4 or more ACEs.
 - Females, minority groups, and people of lower socioeconomic status are at a higher risk.
 - Associated with long-term negative physical and mental health outcomes.
 - Protective factors have been shown to mitigate the harmful effect of ACEs on a child's health
 - School communities are a primary setting for building resilience
- **Trauma-Informed Education:** attempts to acknowledge the prevalence of different childhood adversities and equips school staff with the skills to:
 - Recognize trauma
 - Identify tools and strategies to support students (social emotional learning is a key component)
 - Prevent re-traumatization

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022; National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Schools Committee, 2017; Office of the California Surgeon General, 2024)



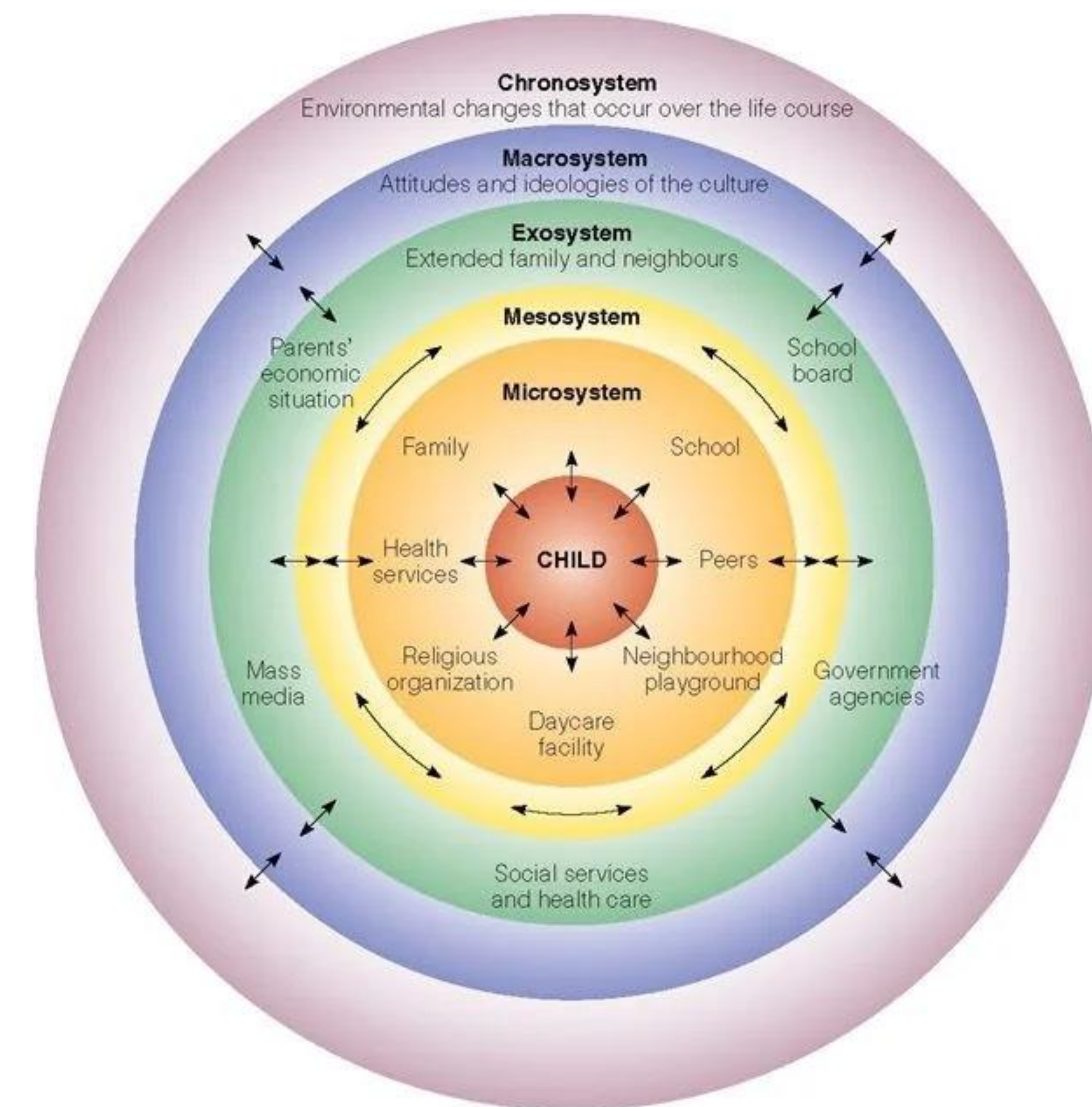
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Guiding Theories

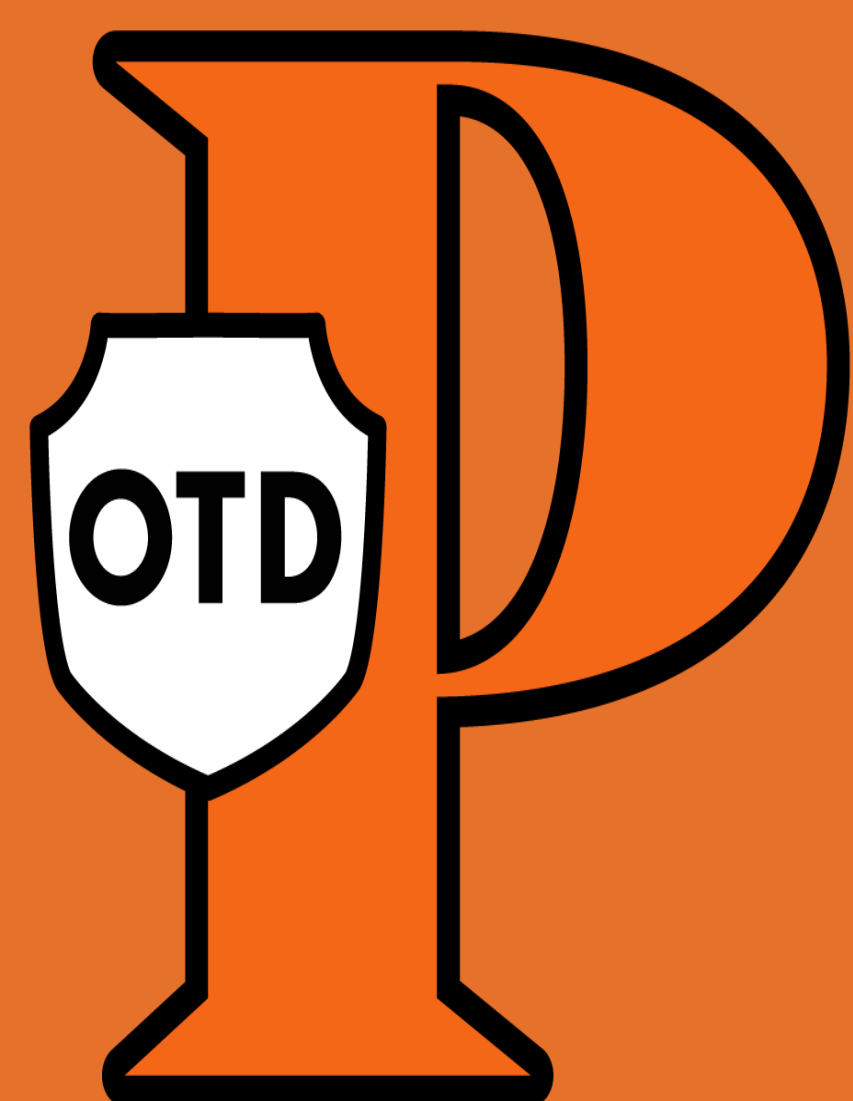
Social Participation Frame of Reference



Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



(Bronfenbrenner, 2000; Olson, 2010)



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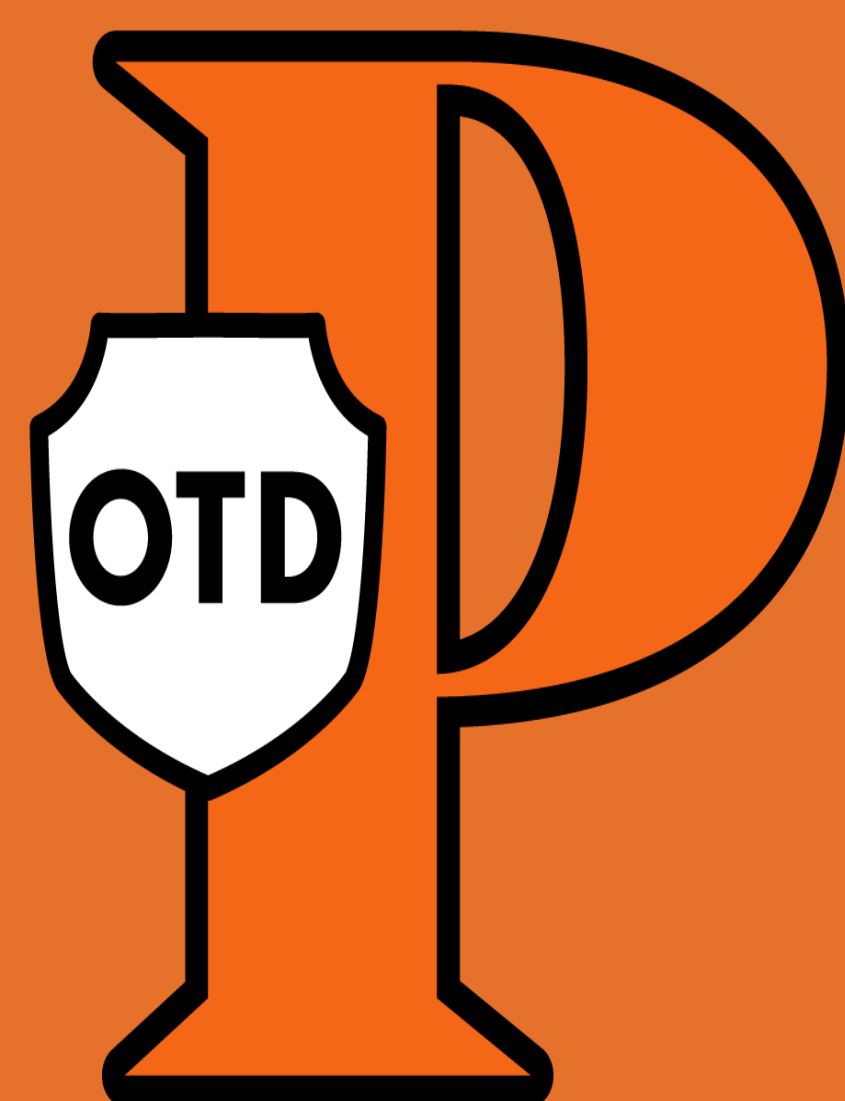
Literature Review



Themes

- Childhood adversities can have a profound impact on areas of: physical and mental health, social emotional development, academia and learning.
- Increasing awareness of the health risks that are associated with ACEs is important in informing potential policies that can promote prevention or resilience:
 - Establishing buy-in for implementing restorative practices
 - Advocacy efforts
 - Gap in standardization of programs
 - Providing educator support

(Avery, 2020; Bethell, 2014; Breedlove, 2020)



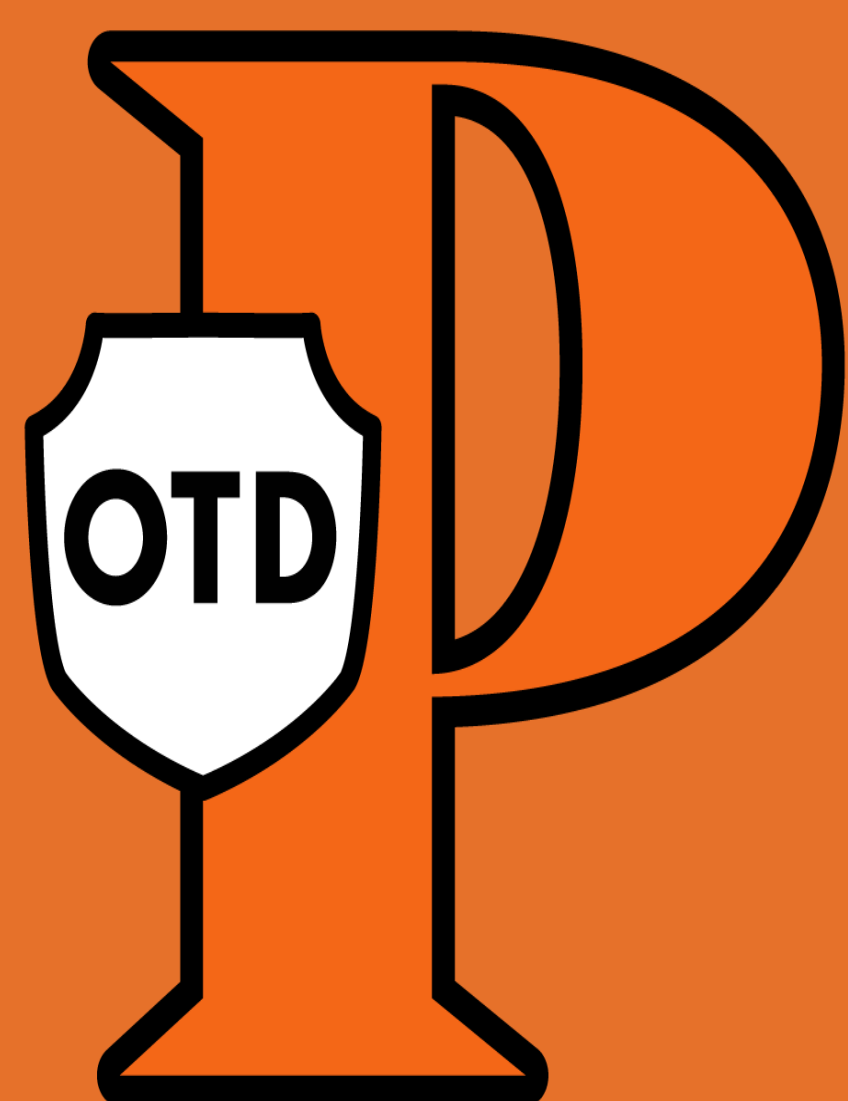
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Needs Assessment



Surveys & Interviews

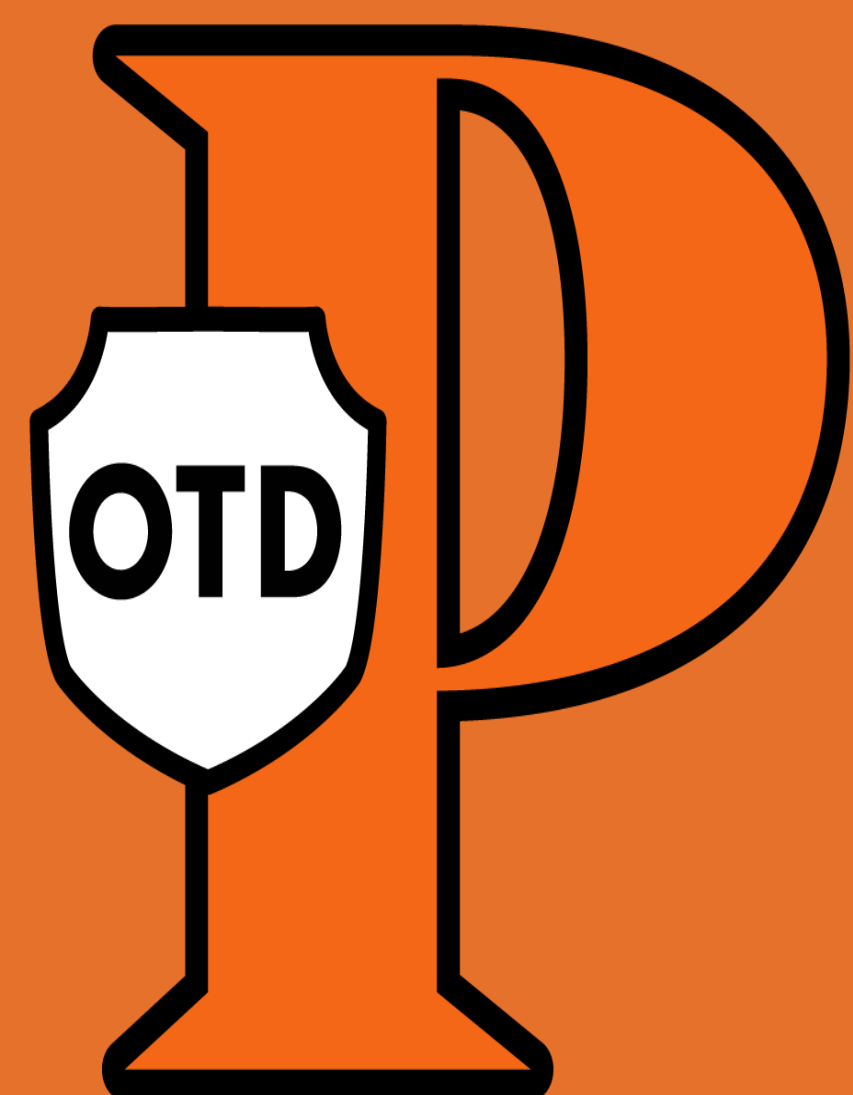
- Utilize Second Step and the Teaching Pyramid: frameworks that help educators in meeting student's diverse needs by promoting social, emotional, and behavioral development.
 - Gap in transferring skills from school to home
 - Variable knowledge across teachers/districts
 - Trainings are optional and limited
 - Low participation
 - Burnout
- Low understanding in how trauma impacts development and school readiness



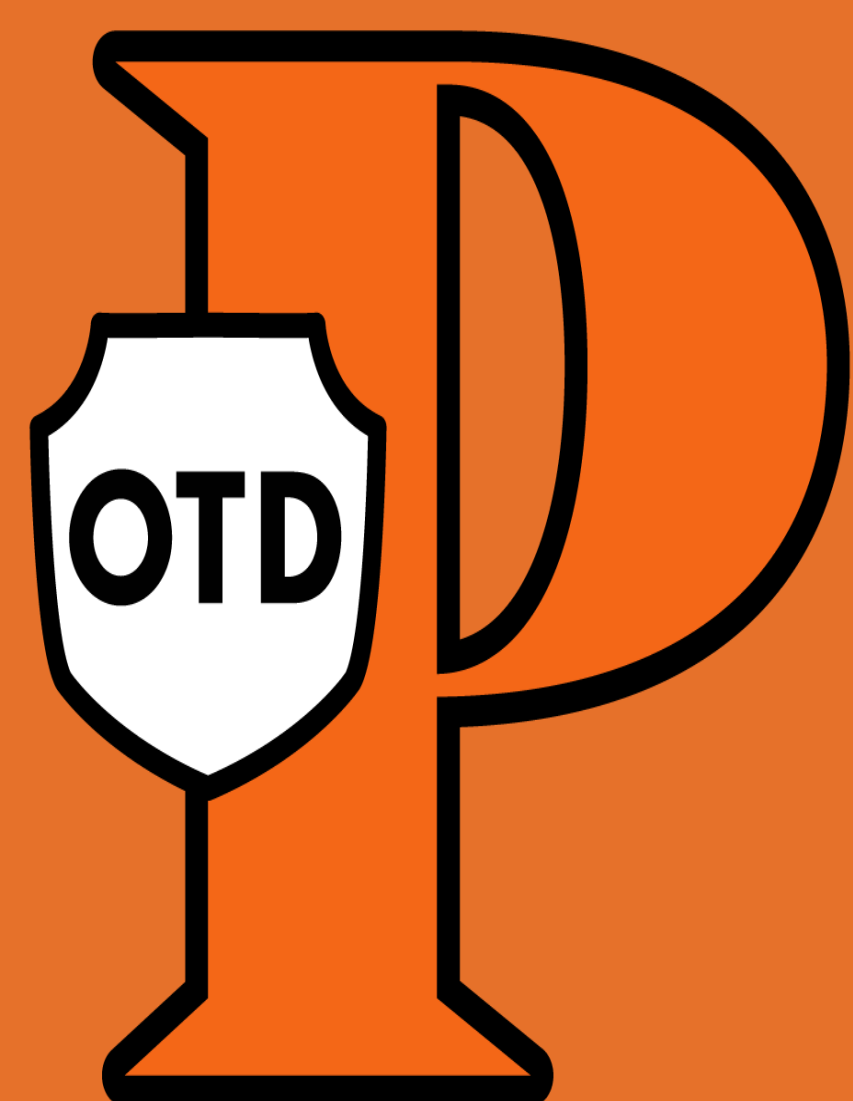
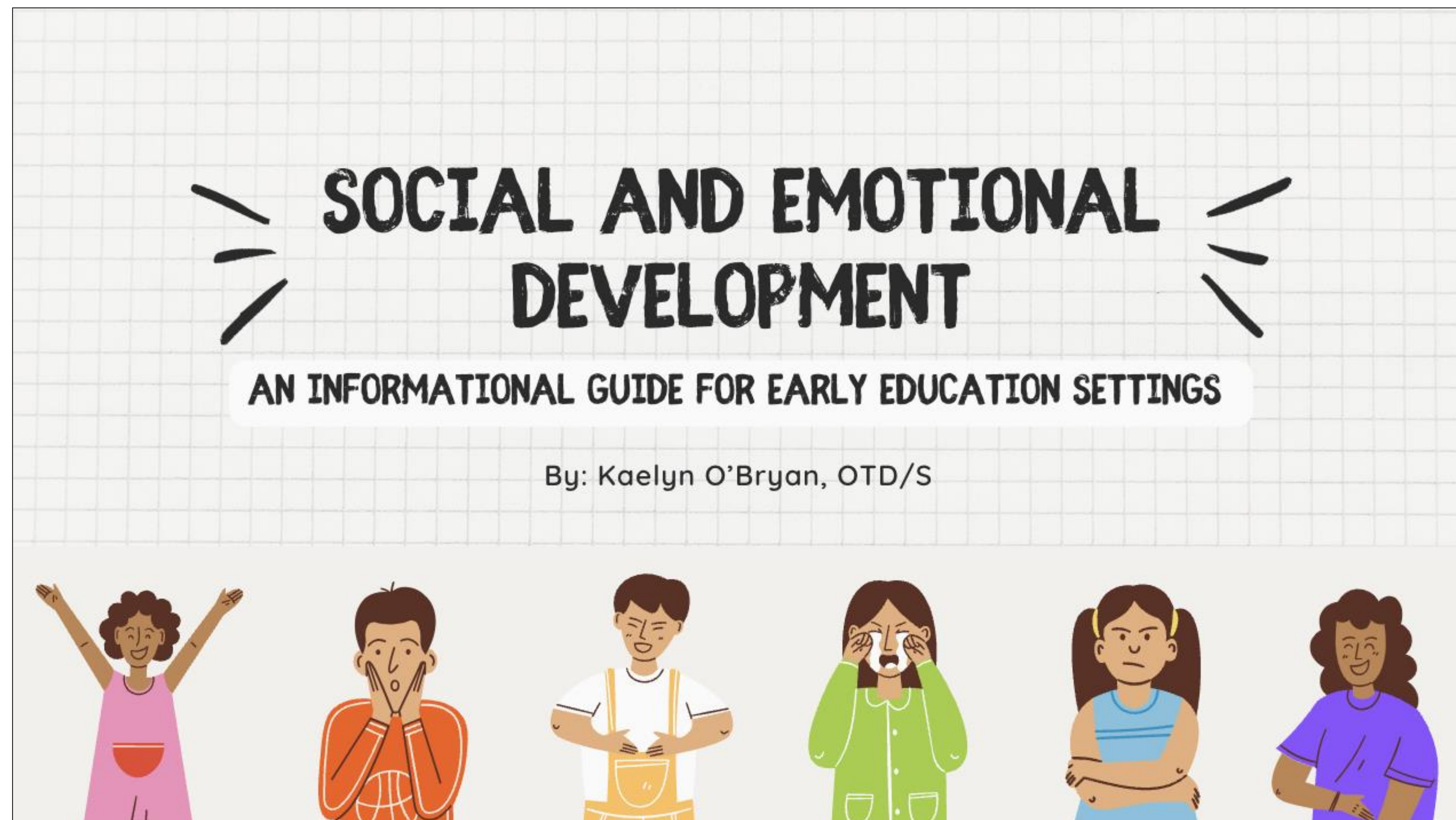
Program Purpose



- **Design:**
 - Actionable
 - Accessible
 - Valuable
 - Complimentary
- **Purpose:**
 - Understand how ACEs impact development
 - Address core principles of trauma-informed approaches to education and protective factors
 - Increase self-efficacy in the application of classroom management strategies
 - Promote occupational therapy in areas of emotional regulation, social participation, and trauma-sensitivity



Outcome #1



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Outcome #2

TEACHING PYRAMID

NEWSLETTER SERIES

What Is The Teaching Pyramid?

What It's About

THE BASICS

The teaching pyramid is a framework that is focused on promoting children's social and emotional development and general life skills.

WHO USES IT?

The teaching pyramid is designed to be used in education settings, from preschool to 12th grade. Educators use the teaching pyramid as a guide to help meet student's diverse needs.

HOW DOES IT AFFECT MY CHILD?

The teaching pyramid is not a curriculum, but is used in schools to support children with being able to learn, communicate with teachers, play with peers, and participate at school.

DOES IT WORK?

The teaching pyramid is evidence-based and supported by several years of research. Studies show that children have improved social skills and school behaviors when classrooms use teaching pyramid practices.


More Info

This series will discuss each of the pyramid levels. For more information, visit: <https://cainclusion.org/teachingpyramid/>

Pyramid Levels

The teaching pyramid consists of five levels.

- **5th Level (the top):** focuses on supporting children who have challenging behaviors (consistent tantrums, hitting, kicking, etc).
- **4th Level:** focuses on teaching children social and emotional skills like sharing, kindness, and resolving conflicts.
- **3rd Level:** promotes inclusive, safe, and supportive home and school environments.
- **2nd Level:** encourages positive and trusting relationships between students, teachers, and families.
- **1st Level (the base):** focuses on an effective workforce where staff members are committed to promoting student development.



Kaelyn O'Bryan, OTD/S WestEd. (2024). Teaching Pyramid. <https://cainclusion.org/teachingpyramid>

TEACHING PYRAMID

NEWSLETTER SERIES: PART 2

Building Supportive Relationships & Environments

What It's About

The bottom levels of the teaching pyramid are focused on creating positive relationships and safe environments. These levels are universal, meaning that all children receive these supports. Having nurturing relationships and environments is critical for meeting children's basic needs and provides them with the foundation to flourish in school.

Relationships

THE BASICS

Children learn how to participate in the world through their interactions with others. Children with healthy adult attachments are better able to manage their own feelings, be empathetic to others, and be more open to learn.

BEST PRACTICES

- Use positive language: encourage your child and recognize their efforts.
- Be descriptive! Use statements like: "you are picking up, you are being respectful and keeping our home safe". This will help your child become more confident and aware of their own skills.
- Play with your child. Follow their lead but also offer new ideas to help expand their imagination.


Environments

THE BASICS

Supportive home and school environments help children feel safe to explore and learn. Positive environments allow children the freedom gain new experiences and to practice skills like problem-solving and responsible decision making.

BEST PRACTICES

- Try to keep a predictable routine. If something in your schedule changes, let your child know.
- Prepare your child for transitions by using a timer, making up a game, or singing a song.
- Have a calm down space available. This can help your child cope with and manage big emotions.



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TEACHING PYRAMID

NEWSLETTER SERIES: PART 3

Promoting Social & Emotional Development

What It's About

THE BASICS

The fourth level of the teaching pyramid focuses on providing children with specific social and emotional strategies with the goal of preventing challenging behaviors.

WHAT ARE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS?

These skills include the ability to: solve problems, manage and communicate emotions, and develop friendships.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Children who have better social and emotional skills also have improved grades, more positive attitudes about school, and demonstrate less challenging behaviors.

WHAT SUPPORTS ARE PROVIDED?


Children are taught how to do things like share, trade, take turns, recognize and understand feelings, and manage big emotions. This is done through direct instruction, story telling, role-playing, and modeling appropriate behaviors.

Best Practices

- If you notice that your child is becoming frustrated or upset: **discuss the emotion**, then teach them to use calm down strategies (like deep breathing).
- Teach them about feelings, use phrases like "it looks like you are feeling..." or "how did you feel when..." or "how do you think it made them feel when..."
- Use timers to help with turn-taking, or play games that require turn-taking (like "go fish"). This will help them learn and practice self-control.
- Practice trading: start with items that your child does not have an attachment to, show them how to trade, and praise them when they do trade. This will help build skills like negotiation, conflict resolution, and sharing.

Practice Makes Progress

Remember, children need to be taught these skills (just like they need to be taught to ride a bike!). They also need opportunities to practice. Gaining these skills takes time and they may not always get it right the first time.



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TEACHING PYRAMID

NEWSLETTER SERIES: PART 4

Addressing Challenging Behaviors

What It's About

THE BASICS

The top level of the pyramid focuses on providing individual interventions to children who experience persistent challenges that affect their daily life.

BEHAVIOR = COMMUNICATION

All behaviors have meaning! Interventions at this level attempt to identify and understand the reason for a behavior. Once the meaning behind the behavior is recognized, the child is then provided with tools to more effectively communicate their needs and ultimately replace the challenging behavior.

The Process

1. Observe the child's patterns of behavior and identify any triggers that may be causing the behavior.
2. Make a plan, collaborate with teachers, and be sure that you are being consistent in carrying out the plan.
3. Evaluate what's working and what's not and make any needed changes to the plan.

Best Practices

REASSURE

Sooth the child and acknowledge their experiences and emotions.

CHANGE THE ENVIRONMENT


Reduce or increase the lighting or noise, allow the child to have extra time, keep consistent routines, and provide the child with choices.

TEACH

Teach the child your expectations and be descriptive and direct. For example: use phrases like "walking inside is safe, running could hurt you or the people around you". Model the behavior yourself, children learn through imitation.

Remember

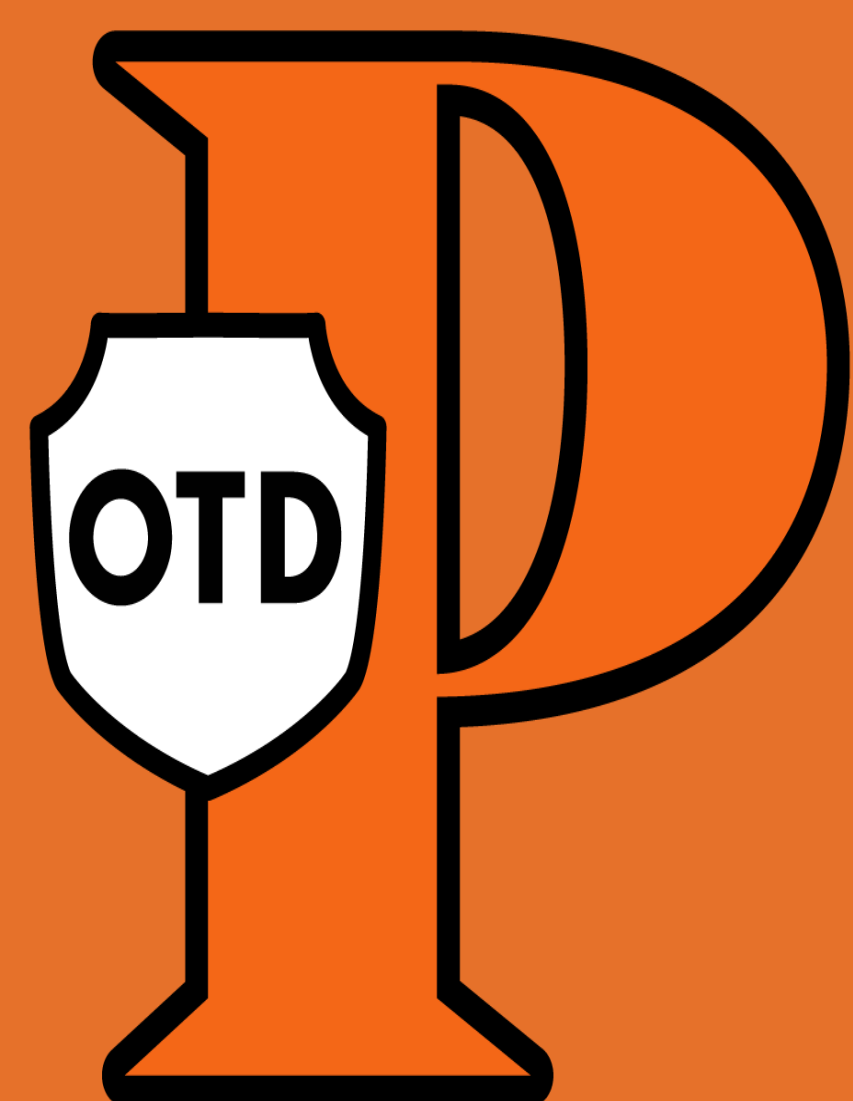
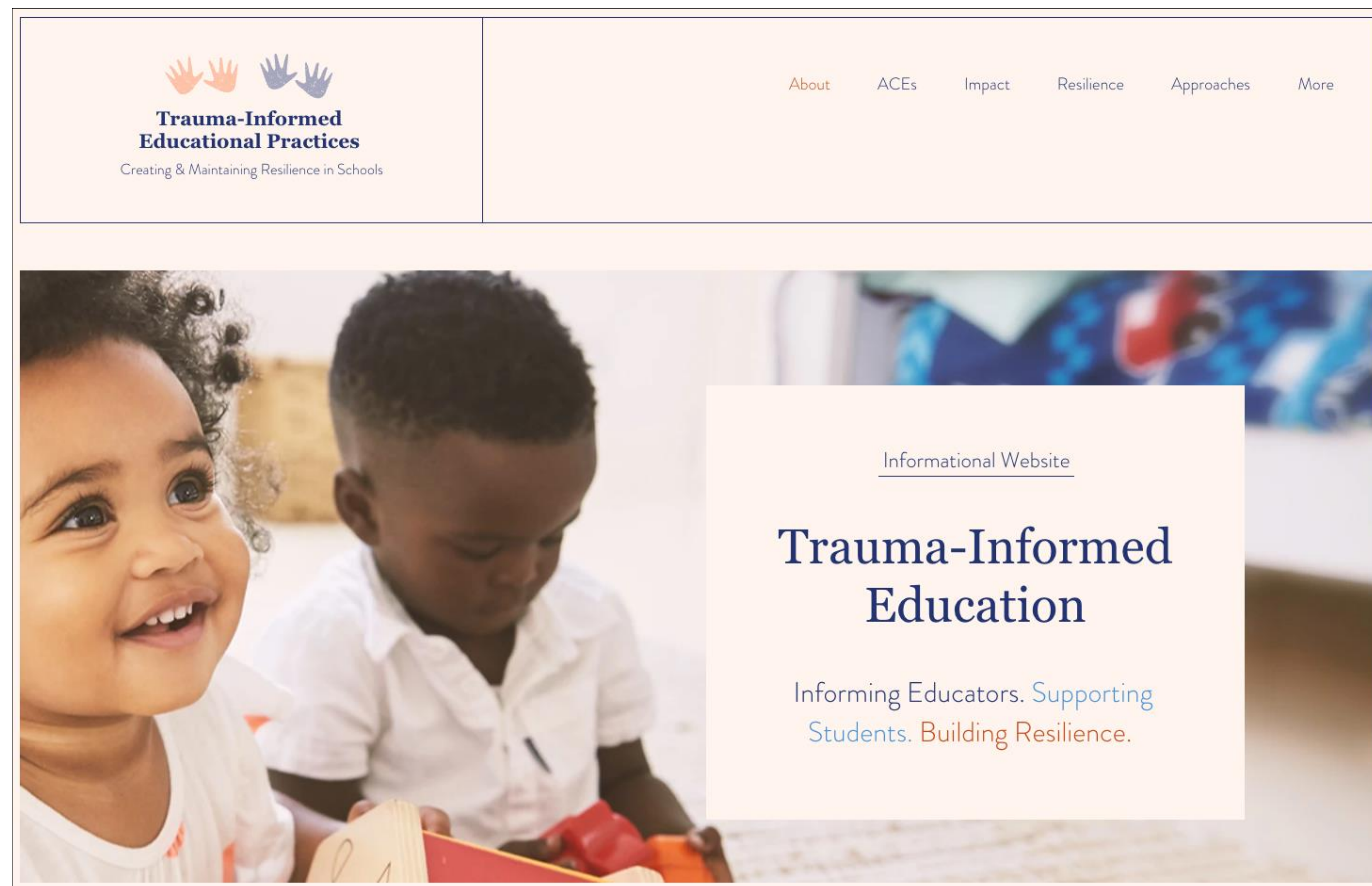
Children at a young age are still learning how to communicate, recognize and manage their emotions, and cope with stressors. Adults need to teach children new skills so that they are better able to communicate their needs.



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Outcome #3



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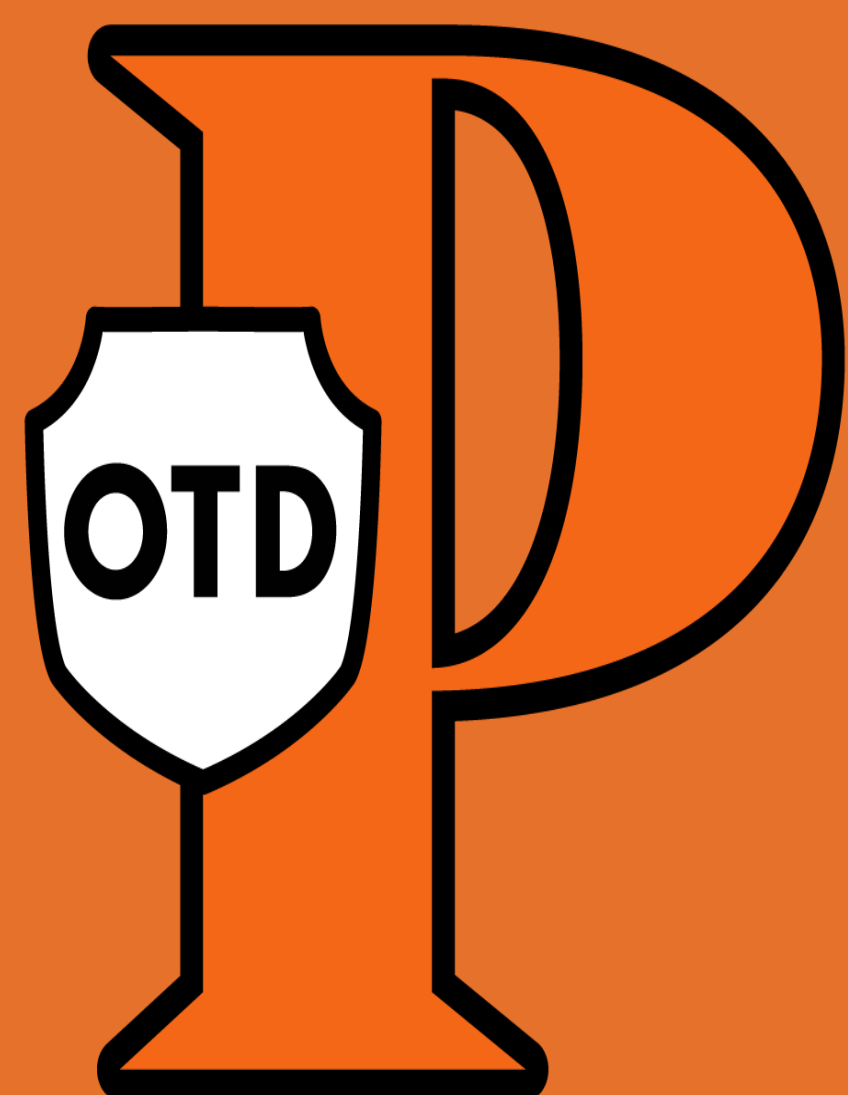
Discussion

Head Start:

- Dissemination to all users delayed due to school year concluding
- Feedback: accessible, legible, comprehensive, clean, appealing
- Distribution to future parents and educators

Broader Audience:

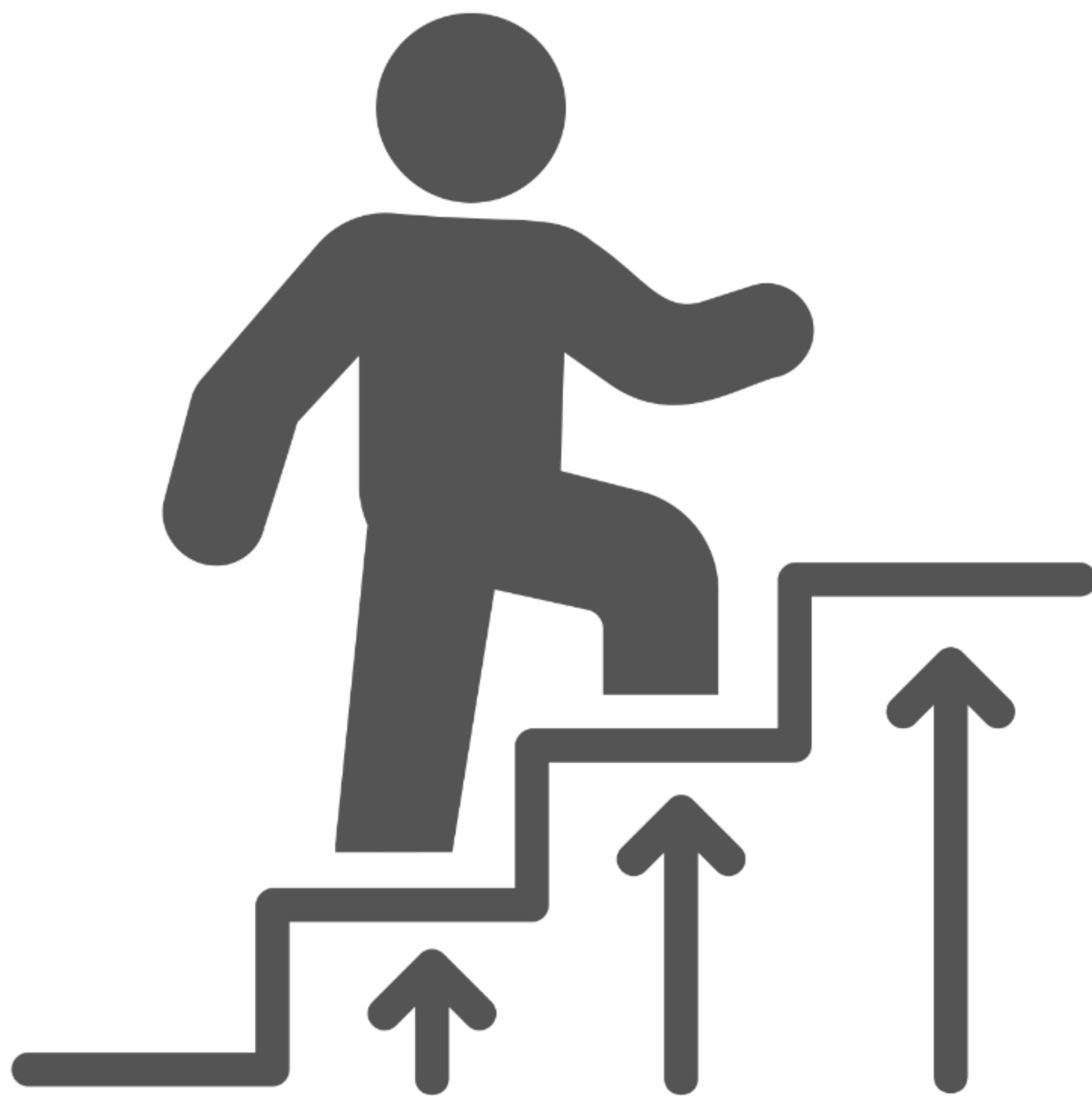
- Program built to be utilized in various school settings and educational institutions
- Expand resources for collaboration with other community partnerships



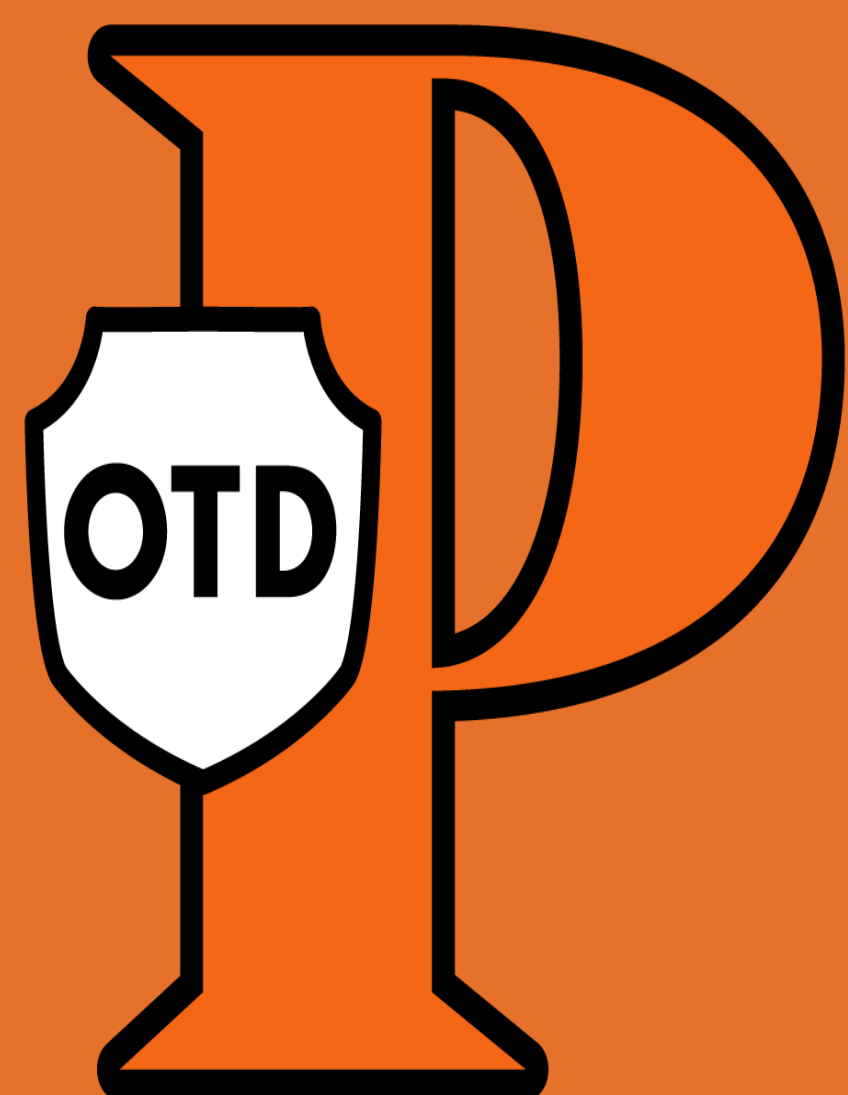
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Impact



- **Self:**
 - Knowledge of trauma-sensitivity
 - Improve self-reflection practices
 - Opportunity for collaboration
 - Adaptability, problem-solving, time-management
- **Occupational Therapy Profession:**
 - Holistic needs of clients across practice settings
 - Resilience = occupational participation
 - Create safe environments and relationships for rapport building and therapeutic outcomes
- **Site:**
 - Educator application of trauma-sensitive tools
 - Generalization of social emotional skills



Future Implications

1

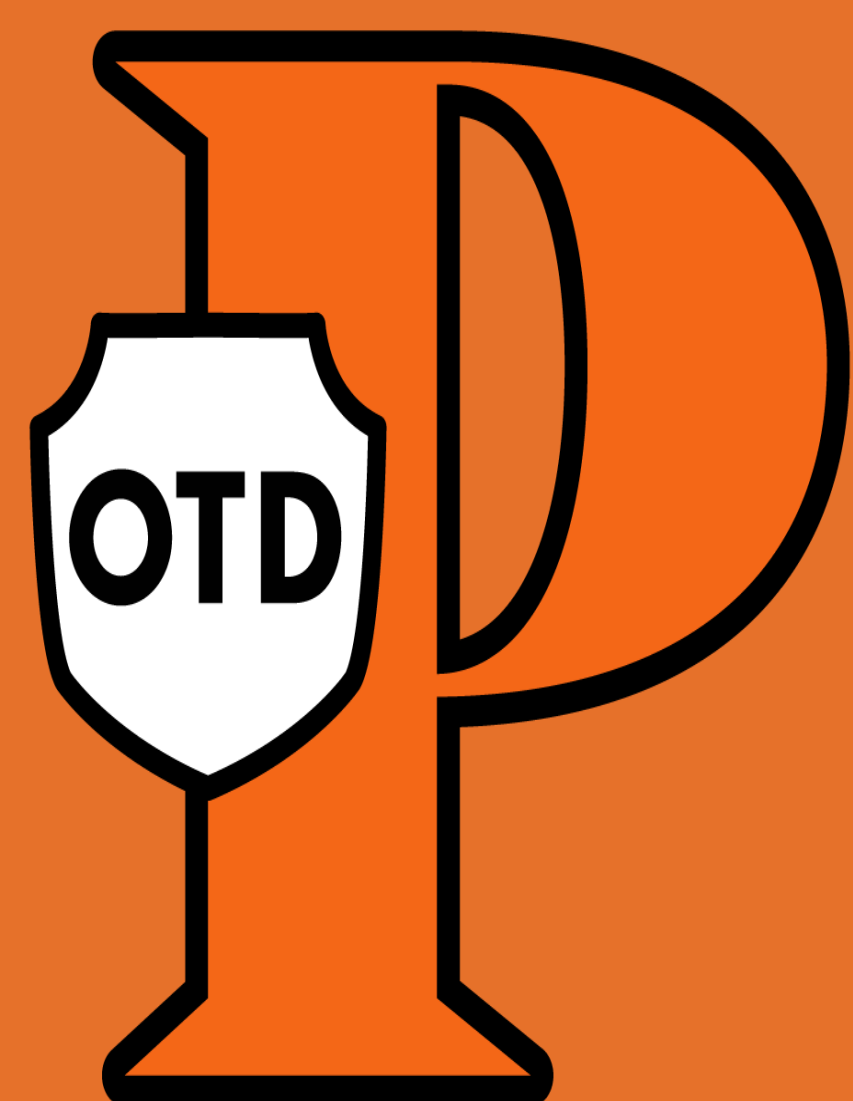
- Initiate **dissemination** of this program to various school districts
- Expansion to support educational programs that do not have the access to resources like Head Start

2

- Direct training and **consultation** to educators and parents to collect greater feedback on program effectiveness, outcomes, and fidelity

3

- **Advocacy** for trauma-informed practices
- Involve policy makers and community members about the integration of practices into existing curriculums



Acknowledgments

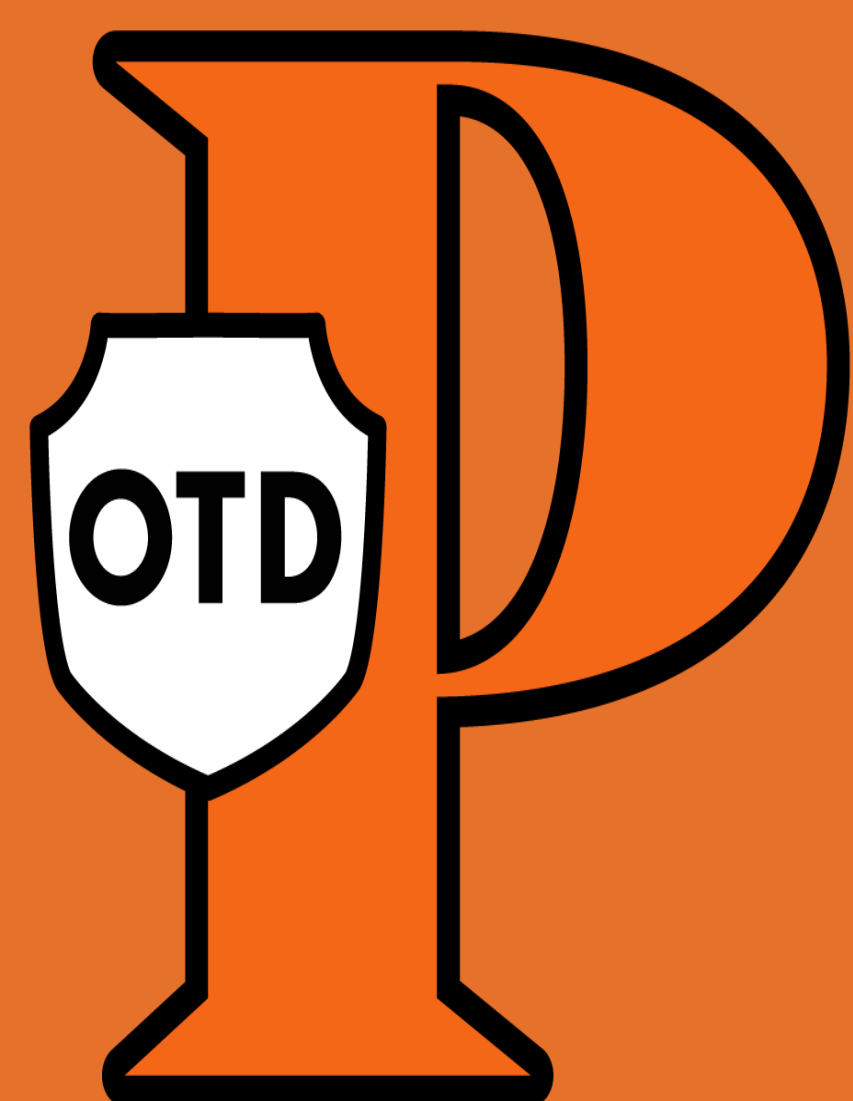
SETA Site Supervisor: Kelly Sprake

SETA Head Start Staff: Intervention & Trauma Specialists,
Site Supervisors

UOP Mentor: Tailar Johnson

2024 Cohort

Thank you!



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