

Pottstown Trauma Informed Community Connection

Working Together to Overcome the Impact of Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences on Our Children and Families

“Pottstown is a safe, stable, healthy and prosperous community where a network of organizations and agencies promote trauma informed knowledge, awareness and practices so that residents have access to the supports and resources to achieve optimal social and emotional health.”

Pottstown, Pennsylvania is a high risk urban community with associated problems of poverty, violence and chronic health issues. Many of our community’s children and their families face complex and multi-faceted barriers, including homelessness, transience, unemployment, substance abuse, and domestic violence. These individual, family and community-level problems have direct and long-term negative effects on children’s ability to be healthy, happy and safe.

A landmark study of the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) on adult health and well being showed a direct link between childhood trauma and adult onset of chronic disease and mental illness. ACES are traumatic experiences in a person’s life occurring before the age of 18 such as child abuse or domestic violence. About two-thirds of the adults in the study experienced one or more types of ACES. Of those, 87% experienced two or more types which resulted in a higher risk of medical, mental and social problems as an adult.

The study looked at a community similar to Pottstown and showed that 25% of the population had four or more ACES which can decrease lifespan by 20 years. This underscores the importance of taking a coordinated community-wide approach to understanding and responding to the impact of trauma in order to improve public health.

We seek to transform our community to impact the number of ACES our young people experience and to fundamentally change the trajectory of their lives. We believe not only is community-wide change possible but such an initiative undertaken in a small but diverse community like Pottstown could provide a model that is quantifiable, scalable and replicable beyond our community. Significant research is available on the neuroscience of trauma and the economic costs of the effects of ACES which makes a clear and compelling economic case to invest now to avoid long-term damage that erodes the fabric of our community and requires significantly more funds to repair. This collaborative will start the process of looking at our families through a lens that begins mitigating the impact of early negative experiences.

For more information on Pottstown’s work related to trauma and adverse childhood experiences, visit www.pottstownmatters.org.

Pottstown Trauma Informed Community Connection

- Pottstown School District
- Borough of Pottstown
- Consultation Center at Yale
- Creative Health Services
- Lakeside Educational Network
- Montgomery Early Learning Centers
- Penn Project for Civic Engagement
- Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation
- Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities
- Pottstown Family Center
- Pottstown Mercury Fit for Life
- Pottstown Police Department
- Scattergood Foundation
- The Salvation Army
- United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey

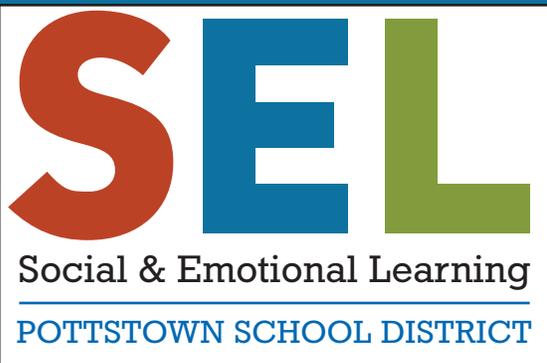
In Pottstown...
connection matters, belonging matters, your story matters.

In Pottstown...
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) matter.

In Pottstown...
we are committed to a culture of safety, understanding, and responsiveness to ACEs for children, families, and our community.



www.pottstownmatters.org



Social and Emotional Learning

A Preventative Health Approach for the Pottstown Community

SEL = Necessary Skills for Learning and Life

The Center for Academic Social and Emotional Learning Skills has identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective and behavioral competencies.

- Self-Awareness** – knowing your strengths and limitations
- Self-Management** – ability to stay in control and persevere through challenges
- Social awareness** – understanding and empathy
- Relationship Skills** – ability to work in teams and resolve conflicts
- Responsible Decision-Making** – making ethical and safe choices

What Does the Research Say about Social and Emotional Learning Programs?

- Increased academic achievement
- Increased social and emotional skills
- Improved attitude toward self and others
- Improved positive social behaviors
- Decreased conduct problems and emotional distress

Numerous research studies have documented that educational efforts to promote social and emotional skills increase students' capacity to learn; that students are more motivated to learn and more committed to school; students are less likely to act out in class, get suspended or be held back; and are less likely to participate in risky behaviors such as alcohol, drug use, pregnancy and violence.

“Social and Emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which we learn to recognize and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behavior ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships and avoid negative behaviors.”

Pottstown School District's Social and Emotional Learning Plan

Explicit Instruction – Pottstown School District and PEAK will adopt an aligned social emotional curriculum from Pre-K through 12th grade which will focus on teaching the essential SEL skills. By using the same curriculum at all grade levels, there will be a common language and SEL skills will be reinforced and expanded each year for students.

Climate and Culture – We will build on the current positive activities happening at our schools focusing on a positive climate and incorporate new strategies to create a sense of belonging and acceptance.

Integration – SEL will be integrated into all subject areas and parts of the day. Effective implementation of school wide SEL means that the skills are reinforced in the cafeteria, on the playground, during art or gym class and in any interaction with staff.

Family and Community – The SEL work will extend from the school buildings to the community as we work with families on how to incorporate SEL skills into parenting and interactions in the community.



A Preventative Health Approach

Focusing on helping young children develop SEL skills provides a strengths-based, developmental approach to addressing the high rates for mental health challenges and increasing young people's resilience so that they are better equipped to handle future challenges. The SEL competencies build the skills and supports required to move children toward optimal mental health. For children exposed to trauma or toxic stress, the SEL skills are protective factors to help improve internal regulation, healthy peer relationships and ultimately healthy development. A child who learns to cope with difficult situations when they are young will be able to cope with other adversities when they come along. As one researcher has stated, "Strong SEL skills contribute to good mental health for all children."

“We need to ensure SEL is a core aspect of every child's education. By doing so, we can support teachers in their critical work that helps children thrive not just as students, but also as leaders, dreamers, entrepreneurs, and citizens.” CASEL

We welcome you to join us as we transform our community. For more information on Pottstown's approach for a comprehensive social and emotional learning program, contact the PEAK Coordinator at 610-970-6655 or visit

www.peakonline.org