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Capstone Reflection

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This design-based capstone project was very insightful and was great for me because as I would learn new information or strategies, they could be incorporated into my classroom. While I was using my research to help me become trauma informed, I had the luxury of experimenting in my own classroom.

When I was beginning to think about my capstone project, I wanted to do something that would be relevant, something that I could use to improve my practice. In thinking about the changes in behavior and social-emotional issues in combination with the global pandemic of Covid-19, I knew moving forward having the understanding about the impact of trauma and its long lasting effects was going to add expertise to my practice Doing this research gave me the hope, and the knowledge to say, “I can make change and now I know how to do it.”

Listening to Dr. Nadine Burke Harris gave me great insight about the fact that maybe we are misdiagnosing kids and I couldn’t agree more. In reading Dr. Bruce Perry’s books and listening to him as well, taught me about brain development and how trauma can completely change the way a child learns and lives. And it also showed me the effects can be long lasting into adulthood so we need to help to rewire their brain for academic, social and emotional success. In all the data and statistics that I have read, it gave clear indication that almost all adults suffering with mental health issues had one or more adverse childhood experience early in life.

Building relationships to help buffer trauma was at the forefront of most of my reading.The importance of human relationships and the presence of trust was a common thread in all the resources that I have used. Being in a society that is technology based, it is becoming harder and harder for people to form relationships. Dr. Bruce Perry calls this “relational poverty.” Although this year has been extremely difficult for relationship building, somehow, I feel, that I have a good relationship with all of my students and their families.

Although our educational system continues to have a heavy focus on the cognitive part of the brain, I have learned that the social emotional health has to be a focus. Incorporating it into our lessons is a must. I am trying to weave SEL into each lesson and it has been working out well. Learning that the social emotional health of the brain is actually the precursor to executive functioning we need to embrace this need first before we can have a laser focus on improving test scores.

It is my hope that this will change in the future but, I am skeptical. However, I feel ready to continue to embrace these challenges of trauma, and help my students to feel safe, build strong relationships, and form a bond of trust. In my classroom there will be change. With the research and learning that has taken place throughout my capstone design-based project it has given me the opportunity to learn and incorporate strategies to help build a foundation of calmness,coping strategies, and the love of learning that I hope my students will carry with them into adulthood.