The Problem
We know from our classroom experiences that student trauma is far too common. Research confirms our observations: Between half and two thirds of all school-aged children experience trauma. Trauma weakens a student’s ability to cope and disrupts brain development, making it difficult for a student to learn, which, in turn, widens opportunity and achievement gaps.

When schools and educators create a safe and supportive school environment through a trauma-informed lens, they can become powerful agents in helping break the cycle of trauma. Therefore, it is imperative that state and local education policy foster trauma-informed schools that build upon students’ resilience. The following recommendations are grounded in research and, more important, the experiences of nearly 400 public school teachers from across Boston.

Our Recommendations

Deepen practitioner competencies
- Prioritize professional development of school-based staff in trauma-informed practices by developing standards on trauma-informed competencies.
- Equip school leaders with the resources to facilitate their schools’ shift to trauma-informed practices.
- Support educators’ learning opportunities by creating a district-wide professional learning network focused on trauma-informed teaching.
- Assist educators in implementing culturally competent behavioral interventions by providing anti-bias training.

Cultivate a trauma-informed community
- Set a district-wide vision for a trauma-informed school community.
- Designate trauma-informed teacher-leaders on School Support Teams to ensure that school culture is strengthened using a trauma-informed lens.
- Empower families and community members with training to understand the impact of trauma on students’ learning and behavior.

Reinforce schools with resources
- Provide learning opportunities on trauma to educators as a required component of all preparation and recertification programs.
- Establish a statewide minimum school counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250 and a school psychologist-to-student ratio of 1:700.
- Create a statewide school funding structure that is responsive to the increased cost of educating vulnerable student populations.

Conclusion
As educators, we know that schools can be healing places that break the cycle of student trauma. Many of our students are coping with trauma, yet we are often working in schools where educators have not yet received the training and resources needed to support students. For schools to truly shift into trauma-informed communities, educators must have a critical voice in leading this work. Massachusetts and Boston have long been national leaders in providing students a quality public school education, and now we have the opportunity to once again lead the nation by fostering and creating trauma-informed school communities for all students.

Learn more and read the full recommendations at e4e.org/schoolsthatheal