

Action4Equity

Culturally Relative Trauma Related & Whole Child Community Care Policy Recommendations in Response to COVID-19.

Updated: February 2, 2021

As we turn the corner on one year of living with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, a crystal clear picture of the inequities that plague our city and country continue to be illuminated by the bright light of crisis. We have been witness to a surge of charitable and philanthropic efforts to address the basic needs of communities of color, who by design, have been marginalized and neglected as the community gained a deeper understanding that the system is designed to fail these communities in both calm and crisis.

Action4Equity reaffirms the call for a radical (at the root) effort to adequately address the status quo which prevents real and meaningful systemic change to take place in Winston-Salem Forsyth County. As we continue to advocate for equity for students in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools in academic achievement, access to high quality instruction, and safe and healthy school environments, we believe a radical change must be invoked from a deep understanding of racial inequity and an acceptance of the historical context in which it was manufactured and bred. In addition, we believe the disproportionate inequities plaguing our marginalized communities perpetuates trauma impacting the psychological, developmental, social, and emotional well being of children residing in these communities.

In order address the holistic needs of children who have experienced trauma in relation to the systemic forces that impact their lives, which COVID-19 has exasperated, we ask the WS/FC School Board, the City of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County to immediately act upon the following recommendations in order for every student to be healthy, safe, engaged and supported in order for them to reach their full potential in spite of the current pandemic:

We ask the following of **Winston-Salem / Forsyth County School Board:**

1. To support a collaborative community and culturally responsive effort in the implementation of the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model (WSCC), which uses an integrated, collaborative approach to address barriers and supports related to learning and health¹ per the WSFC/SS strategic plan:

WS/FCS will eliminate barriers so that factors of achievement predictability do not impact students' equitable access to learning opportunities.

WS/FCS will build and strengthen partnerships and communication with families, local businesses, educational organizations, community agencies and advocacy groups in order to engage families and community stakeholders in the entire educational process for all students.

WS/FCS will foster an inclusive climate that values the safety and well-being of all students, faculty and staff and foster an environment that creates a sense of belonging..

2. To Encourage And Support The ASCD Whole Child Initiative: Healthy School Communities (HSC)²

¹ [NC State Department of Instruction, Whole Child, K-12 STANDARDS, CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION, 4/10/2020](#)

² [ASCD Learning, Teaching and Living in Healthy School Communities](#)

Principal leadership matters. In fact, the recent evaluation of the Healthy School Communities (HSC) pilot project showed that the role of the principal was the most critical piece of the puzzle in implementing meaningful school change and school improvement. Other elements were crucial—such as an understanding that health improvement supports school improvement, authentic community collaboration, and the ability to make systemic rather than merely programmatic change—but these pieces more often than not arose via the influence and role the principal took in the implementation of HSC.

Encourage and utilize the findings of community collaborative platforms, such as Forsyth Family Power, to inform how decisions are being made at the system-level regarding education, parent engagement, and student need. Evidence-based models like FFP engage community organizations and members in the joint assessment and engagement in solving problems and identifying and sharing resources, within the HSC framework.

3. To Establish Best Practices That Foster Authentic Parent Engagement³

Design schools to provide healthy development by designing culturally responsive outreach to families as part of the core approach to education, including home visits and flexibly scheduled student-teacher-parent conferences to learn from parents about their children; outreach to involve families in school activities; and regular communication through positive phone calls home, emails, and text messages.

4. Ensure Educator Personal Support And Learning For Developmentally Supportive Education⁴

*Prioritize and Invest in Employee Wellness: mental and physical wellness of the entire educational team through strong preparation and mentoring that improve efficacy and reduce stress, mindfulness and stress management training, social-emotional learning programs that benefit both adults and children, and supportive administration. **Take immediate and drastic steps to respond to the trauma and crisis of the entire educational team in response to COVID reopening.***

Address the impact of compounding trauma on the Social and Emotional School Climate: Design pre-service preparation programs for both educators and administrators that provide a strong foundation in child and adolescent development and learning; knowledge of how to create engaging, effective instruction that is culturally responsive; skills for implementing social-emotional learning and restorative justice programs; and an understanding of how to work with families and community organizations to create a shared developmentally supportive approach. Include supervised clinical experiences in schools that model how to create (and for administrators, how to design and foster) a positive, developmentally supportive school climate for all students.

We ask that the **WS/FCS Board of Education, the Mayor's Office, City Council, Forsyth County Board of Commissioners and Winston-Salem Police Department** recognize the greater alignment of student wellbeing that includes integration and collaboration between education leaders, health sectors, justice systems, and community resources to improve each child's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. We call each of these entities to avoid the natural response of working in silos and to support Action4Equity and Triad Restorative Justice's recommendations in addressing trauma-informed, culturally-responsive systems changes. As a community we have a shared responsibility to ensure every child in a Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. When abuse of power goes unchecked, a community becomes traumatized, leaving many feeling unsafe, unheard and disrespected. Every response, including inaction, reflects the values of an institution.

In addressing this shared responsibility, Action4Equity and Triad Restorative Justice have joined with other local organizations, institutions, and the City of Winston-Salem to collaborate on a city-wide grant with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to create systems change towards a trauma resilient community. This SAMHSA initiative is called ReCAST or Resiliency in Communities After Stress and Trauma.

The SAMHSA ReCAST approach asserts that addressing trauma requires a multi-pronged, multi-agency public health approach inclusive of public education and awareness, prevention and early identification, and effective trauma-specific assessment and treatment. In recognition that trauma and trauma-exacerbating situations happen at every level of community, from family to system, participation from the Winston-Salem Police Department is necessary to mitigate and

³ [Educating the Whole Child: Improving School Climate to Support Student Success \(Darling-Hammond, Cook-Harvey\)](#)

⁴ [Educating the Whole Child: Improving School Climate to Support Student Success \(Darling-Hammond, Cook-Harvey\)](#)

transform systemic trauma in our community. **For this reason, Action4Equity, in collaboration with Triad Restorative Justice, is calling for the WSPD to commit to the following as a partner in the SAMHSA ReCAST program:**

We ask the following of Winston-Salem Police Department:

1. Acknowledge Systemic Trauma
To publicly acknowledge systemic trauma caused by the criminal justice system, with a sincere prioritization in investing time, energy, and resources to eradicate these violences that harm youth ([see here](#)).
2. Join the democratic process
In partnership with the greater community, so that collectively, we as a community can examine, eliminate and enact policies that are rooted in equity and maintained by culturally-relevant, restorative, trauma-informed practices.
3. Commit to the tenets of SAMHSA's ReCAST Program
Partner with ReCast members to develop a working concept of trauma and a trauma-informed approach and to develop a shared understanding of these concepts that would be acceptable and appropriate across an array of service systems
4. Commit to Implement Systems Change
Commit to using the results to implement system change in all of the following implementation domains, as recommended by SAMHSA: 1. Governance and Leadership 2. Policy 3. Physical Environment 4. Engagement and Involvement 5. Cross Sector Collaboration 6. Screening, Assessment, Treatment Services 7. Training and Workforce Development 8. Progress Monitoring and Quality Assurance 9. Financing 10. Evaluation

Through a culturally responsive community driven process, the WS/FCS Board of Education, the Mayor's Office, City Council, Forsyth County Board of Commissioners and Winston-Salem Police Department should establish mechanisms that will work aggressively and collaboratively with the community organizations directly working with youth and families, and stakeholders, the WSFC School system to respond to the exacerbated trauma caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic. This should be done using a democratic process, in partnership with the greater community, so that collectively, we as a community can examine, eliminate and enact policies that are rooted in equity and maintained by culturally-relevant, restorative, trauma-informed practices.

In addition, we ask that each agency begin the internal process of achieving a Culturally Responsive Community Driven Process to establish trauma informed practices within their own institutions in order to indirectly and directly address the holistic needs of WSFC children and their families - who have experienced trauma in relation to the systemic forces that impact their lives, which COVID-19 has exacerbated.