

Exploring Trauma-Informed Education in the US: Initial Findings and Reflections

A compendium detailing the organizations we interviewed, including points of contact and interview notes.



WPI

*These materials were created by Tyler Jones, Gaby Mazzoni, and Kate Wheeler in conjunction with Banksia Gardens Community Services.
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Interview Contacts and Interview Notes

Trauma Learning and Policy Initiative, *Marissa Del Rosario*

Website: <https://traumasensitiveschools.org/>

Email: mdelrosario@massadvocates.org

Phone: (617) 998-0109

Interested in Following up: Yes

Topics of Interest: Trauma-Informed Public Policy, Education Reform, Coalition Building, Research and Report Writing, Individual Case Representation (for students who's traumatic experiences are interfering with their disabilities)

Background:

Marissa is the Trauma-Sensitive schools specialist for TLPI, as well as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and has her Master's Degree in Social Work with a focus in Political Social Work. She began as an elementary school teacher in an urban area (New Orleans, LA) and had a particular interest in overcoming barriers to success for children. She then became a social worker and worked for 19 years in urban and rural school districts, focused on trying to remove barriers for students. At TLPI, her position works on the policy and school level, trying to remove structural barriers and help introduce trauma-sensitive strategies into school.

Organization Highlights:

- TLPI was established in 2004 but has roots that go back several years before that with MAC (Massachusetts Advocates for Children) and Lesley University
- TLPI was responsible for developing the Flexible Framework for trauma.
- Partners with Harvard Law School students to help advocate for laws, policies, and funding streams that will help enable schools to implement trauma-sensitive policies.
- Has published two volumes of *Helping Traumatized Students Learn*; books geared towards educating about trauma and its effects on neurobiology and learning, as well as how trauma-sensitive classrooms can help students.
- TLPI operates an online learning community that allows educators from schools they have worked in to communicate and share ideas, as well as offer advice.



Interview Notes

- **How did you get involved with TLPI?**
 - She was an elementary school teacher in an urban area → interested in trying to figure out barriers to success → students she was drawn to were those that struggled
 - Got a masters in social work and became a school social worker - and worked in different public schools and focused on trying to remove barriers for students
 - Saw a job opening in TLPI which brought together both interests -- structural barriers and how important trauma is on education
 - Works on the policy and school level
- **In your own words, what do you think is the root problem that TPLI is trying to address?**
 - Policy initiative in education reform to trying to make schools more supportive
 - Advocates for specific laws that allow grants for schools to engage in a process
 - The second book is a guide on how to make a trauma-sensitive environment -- educators to address norms and values to guide their actions
 - Education reform issues
- **Do they deliver professional development or do they just offer resources?**
 - They do both
 - Small team - multidisciplinary - a team of 7 people
 - Work in schools doing prof development and training
 - Attorneys -- work with individual students and families
 - Learn what it's really like for a student in schools who have experienced it and what it's like for a teacher to carry this work open and then lift the perspective up to policy change
 - Do work within MA in schools, resources for people outside states and the country because they don't have the personnel to help everyone that comes to them
 - Offices are at Harvard Law School and they work with Harvard Law Students
- **Do teachers and schools go to them or do they actively recruit?**
 - They do both
 - They respond to those that go seeking the work
 - They're trying to build a community of practice - start with the people who raise their hand that want to do it and that will lead others, rather than forcing everyone in the beginning
 - The first publication is about the research and trauma in schools -- they talk about starting by building a coalition
 - Find people that this clicks for - find school leadership that want to participate too (not just teachers)
 - A locally tailored set of actions - it's solving individual problems

- Focus on a set of values
 - See what you can offer - afterschool, curriculum
 - Values drive where it goes
- **How do you measure the success of your program?**
 - Their work is about a process, not a program
 - Schools need to develop a sense of understanding within the entire staff
 - The staff need to identify something that is urgent for them (ie attendance or too many kids being sent to the office or suicides)
 - Create an action plan - what actions are we going to take to fix it
 - The schools need to determine their own success - use both qualitative and quantitative data
 - The work is a process - want to pay attention to markers along the way
- **What is the biggest challenge they've faced?**
 - Law and order, crime and punishment mindset (might just be a US thing) students are overly disciplined for trauma response -- lack of mindset it's not breaking the rule it's breaking the relationship -- how can we help the students restore everything instead of just punishing them -- make sure all kids stay connected -- understand of trauma -- MINDSET SHIFT IS A LARGE BARRIER
 - Systemic structures that are in place in schools -- accountability measures are barriers
 - Schools moved to remote learning and trying to keep kids connected and developing the relationship with a teacher -- hard to do remotely
 - department of education was super good about focusing on emotional stuff -- but that got separated from time on learning -- which means the emotional stuff gets lost
- **Professional development -- what does it look like?**
 - Kick-off training - 90 minutes
 - ACE study and prevalence of traumatic experience - and COVID data
 - Help people understand that it's prevalent in every school
 - Neurobiology part in a school focused way - the impact of trauma on the brain and behavior in school
 - How do we get there - norms and **attributes** of trauma friendly schools - the culture that supports all of it
 - All adults work together no matter the role -- all share responsibility for all kids
 - Action plans
 - Schools take it up after that - they have a 3 question survey after the kick-off
 - Staff weighs in on urgency and barriers in the way
 - The steering committee is formed by schools that determine the future prof dev

- Then schools can focus on PD that focuses on their urgency
 - Once a steering committee is formed they go to some of the meetings to help with that
- **Would they be interested in working with a partner with Australia?**
 - Queensland college -- they've worked with them
 - Look into Leslie university - Leslie institute for childhood trauma
 - 4 course certificate
 - They figured out how to teach it to teachers
 - What they do is very different
 - Not focus on strategies
 - But rather focus on a set of values that make them think about the strategies and if they're trauma-informed
 - Elementary schools used to use the traffic light system for managing behavior -- a teacher brought up how they might be embarrassing kids moving them to red and reflecting on it and brought it up to the steering committee -- they switched the traffic lights to different zones of their emotions - green ready to go, yellow feeling distracted, red angry
 - Not crime and punishment -- it's learning about understand the emotions and managing the emotions -- disciplinary stuff decreased significantly
 - Reflect on your own actions and make changes that you can control that will move you closer to being more trauma-sensitive

Alive and Well Communities, *Jennifer Brinkman*

Website: <https://www.awcommunities.org/>

Email: jbrinkmann@awcommunities.org

Phone: (314)-898-4049 ext. 700

Interested in Following up: Yes

Topics of Interest: Racial Inequity and Discrimination, Addressing Trauma and Toxic Stress, Process-Based Approaches, Increasing Public Awareness

Background:

Jennifer is the current President of Alive and Well Communities. She started out working at the St. Louis regional health commission with a focus on reducing health disparities in the community. She assisted with a program that would help increase health coverage for those enrolled, and found that most enrollees in the program were minorities or low income, which sparked an interest into what factors contribute to differences in outcomes for people. This led her to Alive and Well Communities, where she can directly have an impact on the lives of people in the community.

Organization Highlights:

- Alive and Well began as a social media campaign to make people aware of the effects of trauma and toxic stress, which interested schools in the community. This led to them partnering with doctors to try and help schools and eventually adopting the Missouri Model to help schools more directly.
- During their first year of operation, they had the target goal of finding six schools to start in. However, they ended up with 26 schools volunteering to join the program that year.
- They use the ARTIC (Attitudes Related to Trauma-Informed Care) evaluation tool, a psychometrically valid survey, for assessing progress in schools.
- Alive and Well is a nonprofit and has a variety of local funders, including: the Missouri Foundation for Health, St. Louis Mental Health Board, the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City, and the REACH Health Care Foundation.



Interview Notes

- **How did you get involved with this field?**
 - She was working at St Louis regional health commission - trying to reduce health disparities
 - Missouri was not a Medicaid expansion state, they were trying to provide coverage for primary health care -- improving health care
 - 75% of people who enrolled were African American -- segregated neighborhoods and redlining still have huge impacts
 - What was contributing to difference in outcome
 - ACE study and toxic stress - it gave them a construct on how to think about things -- it's not the people that are broken, but rather the community and system is broken causing the bad outcomes
 - Michael Ferguson was shot and killed → Ferguson commission to figure out what was driving the civil unrest
 - How there were 2 St Louis's
 - Alive and Well was originally a media campaign to make people aware about trauma and toxic stress → schools became super interested, they knew it was a problem and then wanted to improve
 - Partnered With Doctors to try and help schools - Missouri model for trauma-informed care
 - Learning collaborative with the goal of 6 schools, but 26 schools ended up wanting to be part of it in 2016
 - Partners across the state in Kansas City and started making it bigger
 - Started an independent nonprofit whose sole purpose on addressing trauma and toxic stress
 - Work in education is a big part of what they do
- **What led them to using the Missouri Model as their primary framework?**
 - She wasn't involved in the development of it -- there were folks that we're already working in it
 - She had talked to national consultants asking about what was the best option
 - Someone from the Missouri mental health development
 - Developed by doctors in mental health field → they knew the science and then they wanted to make schools more trauma-informed
 - They knew schools did training in trauma → it's not about a training it's about organizational change that takes many steps
 - Implement and take it to the next level throughout the state
- **Do you just provide external training or do you work with schools directly?**
 - It works best when they provide continuous support

- They provide early training and then they have the schools form a “trauma team” → and the team leads the school in making things more trauma friendly → but Alive and Well is an external coach they can always turn it for guidance
 - Not all schools need the same amount of support
 - Not all schools change at the same speed
 - Principal buy-in → if the principal supports it usually goes fast
 - Under vs well resourced school → inequity → it takes longer for under-resourced schools
- **What are the success rates? Metrics used for assessment?**
 - Organizational assessment
 - Based on Missouri model → it’s a self-assessment, gives them a general idea of where they are
 - ARTIC
 - Psychometrically valid survey
 - Give to staff to see where it they are at with
 - 12 indicators
 - Action plan → pick which indicators you want to focus on first and ID short term and long term goals
 - Based on indicators you pick you can pick what metrics to focus on
 - Covid has slowed it down (people are in the survival mode) and accelerated (mindset shift changes)
- **Biggest challenges and advice?**
 - Mindset → need a cultural mindset
 - It’s not what teachers know and they don’t trust it
 - Is there a best way to cause this mindset shift?
 - The training is designed to do this
 - The biggest key to success is getting people to see themselves in it (not about other people or the students) → trauma and toxic stress affects everything
 - They say to the teachers that they want to focus on teachers being healthy and well and not stressed → it’s about making the community a better place for you to teach in
 - The demand of time on educators → they don’t have the time to focus on this and to do it
 - In the states teachers are focused on teaching to the test, to do well on standardized tests, when kids aren’t well you don’t get the academic outcomes you want, but teachers need to realize this
 - There’s a balance, however, it’s not clear where it is or what it should look like

- **Is there anyone you know that we can possibly talk to in schools?**
 - The executive director of a school district → she's going to give us an introduction
- **Thinking about how racism and discrimination does impact outcomes**
 - Talking about trauma generically brings more people in, but people who live in systems that oppress them have extra layers of trauma and that needs to be addressed otherwise it won't get fixed→ something they've had to shift to in Missouri to make sure they're addressing it

Community Resilience Initiative, *Theresa Barila*

Website: <https://www.CRIresilient.org>

Email: teri@CRIresilient.org

Phone: 509-301-2488

Interested in Following up: Yes

Topics of Interest: Building resilience within students and staff, Educating professionals on trauma-informed practices

Background:

Theresa (Teri) is the co-founder and current CEO of CRI. She has an MS in Fisheries Management and a BS in Biology, which helped her develop a strong research background. Teri is involved heavily with training and consulting schools, writing and researching in the area of trauma, resilience, and community capacity building. Her work in building resilience and helping curb the effects of trauma predated the initial ACE study, and they were one of the first organizations doing this type of work in the United States

Organization Highlights:

- CRI developed the KISS framework for trauma education as a reflection of the work they had done for the past 10-12 years with Lincoln High School.
- CRI holds a number of online and in person training sessions to help individuals and schools become more trauma-informed, along with a yearly conference on trauma.
- They put a large emphasis on evaluation and publishing papers. Currently they have had two papers published in national journals and have had an external evaluator certify their program as ‘evidence-based.’
- CRI has an annual conference that focuses on a different topic every year



Interview Notes

- **How did you get involved in CRI?**
 - She founded it
 - She became aware of the huge impact that adverse childhood experience on why the community can be fragile and also robust
 - Protective side of resilience for the community - teach how to understand how the brain and body works as a system we can then understand why the behavior occurs (bc u don't feel safe) -- you don't know what else to do to feel safe
 - Teaches people how to recognize the patterns in the people who lose trust in society
 - Event and interpretation of the event -- interpretation can determine the outcome
 - Can't change the event, but you can change how they interpret it and how they grow from it
 - She looked for patterns and tried to understand why the patterns developed and understand how you view things, so that people weren't being labeled bc they didn't have the social-emotional learning
 - Resilience -- not a characteristic, it's whether you have the capacity to develop it
 - It used to just be thought of as a characteristic
 - Mindset change
 - Goals and pathways to the goals and resources to get there
- **How did you develop the KISS framework? And what evidence did you use to support it?**
 - KISS framework came as a reflection from the 10-12 years of work they originally did→ it came from reflecting and learning from the past
 - Scaffolded from 20 years of community engagement, community practice, community development
 - Macro-Level - kids don't learn resilience out of a book, they learn it from important people in their lives modeling it
 - How you live in your community will make or break a child being resilient -- it's how you move through your domains in life that will allow you to learn
 - Originally -- helping to frame common language so that every partner would understand the framework so that no matter where the person went they would see the same concept
 - Paper Tigers -- documentary in Walla Walla
 - Lincoln high school -- social-emotional support
 - They easily picked up the concept of resilience -- the community needs to care
 - Everything they do is based on solid science -- evidence-based

- Dr. Hopkins and Dr. Cataelon - uni of Seattle and Washington -- study on risk and **protective factors**, higher risk lower protective factors, higher risk of bad behavior -- a community of cares
 - This is their foundation
 - When they started that work the ACE's study wasn't done yet
 - They focus on **protective factors** - social support networks
 - It's not the ACE score - it's your resilience score
 - You don't live only in risk
 - Need to learn how to deal with emotions
- They're in the 4th wave of understanding research on understanding resilience
- The worst thing you can do is to tell a kid they don't have resilience and that they aren't worth it
- Witness phenomenon -- the reason to learn about child history to then witness adult and be like look at how well you've done despite all this, I witness you and value you -- what else can I do to help you
- **Does CRI only provide external resources or do you work directly with schools?**
 - Everything they do is based on the fact they did it in Walla Walla
 - They learned it from doing it in person
 - Intersection of science and practice -- learn from what you're doing
 - Long term record of evaluation is something they do well
 - Adjusting when they need to is key
 - Recently published their history
 - If you can document the validity of what you're doing
 - What metrics did they look at?
 - Using brain science
 - Lincoln high school principal was sitting with her talking to a neuroscientist -- when student's fight or flight is activated they can't listen bc they're in survival mode
 - Can't have a conversation when you're in survival mode
 - The principal would allow them time to calm down before he would talk to them, he modeled the question "what's going on that created that kind of reaction?"
 - Learning to model what the science tells you
 - Don't start lecturing when people are in fight or flight
 - Disciplinary stuff - changing the rules
 - ISS - in school suspension -- need to hold the student accountable -- not excusing it, but giving them a chance to feel safe
 - Not called that anymore -- it's a safety room

- Looking at do I really need to suspend this kid? Just sending them back to the streets? Need to hold them accountable, but not isolating them from the community
 - Used Dr. Mattson and Dr. Abel - FSU - metrics - they're are 4 of them
 - Mastery of skills - attachment piece, optimism, and learning what you need and how to get there, there is a future
- The biggest issue - when a staff (not just a teacher) doesn't understand their effect on the student
 - A lot of their work is to help people understand their own values and belief, helping the adult recognize the contribution they put onto the kids, usually blame everything on kids and don't focus on how to change it
- Harvard's center on the developing child
 - Video called building adult capabilities to then affect children's outcomes
- The parole officers that were most successful was based on their assumption if the kids were capable or not
 - It makes it super hard bc you don't know what you're biases are, but they 100% affect the other people
- ROLES - if you can't recognize your own interior state, you're not going to be effective
 - When you are contributing to the assumption that they have to be like you, you aren't going to make it
- Metrics have shifted based on their learning
- It depends on the organization, they're never stopping evaluating the work
 - Their newest one is the story capturing process -- they're going to interview 3 of their agencies (CPS, and 2 other things)
 - They want to ask how CRI has changed their stuff so they can understand their organizational influence, **need systemic support to make lasting changes**
 - Need the worker bee engaged you also need the supervisor engaged -- you can't do this work if you're not going to be supported by your administration - it took 8 years to get a superintendent that understood the KISS framework and implemented throughout all levels
- **What are the biggest challenges?**
 - Mindset shift - what the I in KISS captures
 - If you cannot move into empathy or compassion (it pisses teachers off to hear this) watch you punish one kid one way and a different kid another way -- you need to figure out why one kid pisses you off and similar

behavior in another doesn't rub you the wrong way → need to understand where

- Need to look at the patterns -- on the adult to look and make the change
 - The systems level -- it gets more and more challenging to make these mindshift
- They would love to talk to Banksia
 - She would love to come to our presentation
- They started it way before ACEs was published
- They have an annual conference - much more participation from around the world bc it was webinar-based - UK, Scotland, aussie
 - Attracting communities to evaluate how they're doing
 - Integration of science and practice - and products and community mobilization
 - They focus on the training in science and community engagement which leads to community mobilization, product development to share the learning

Lincoln High School, *Jim Sporleder*

Website: <https://jimsporlederconsulting.com/>

Email: jrsporleder@yahoo.com

Phone: N/A

Interested in Following up: Yes

Topics of Interest: Consulting work with schools and school districts, supportive disciplinary policies

Background:

Jim Sporleder was the principal of Lincoln High School, an alternative high school in Walla Walla, WA until 2014. In the mid-2000's he attended a conference called 'Hope to Resilience,' which was the first time he had heard about many of the concepts relevant to trauma-informed education, such as toxic stress, fight flight or freeze, and the effects of trauma on students. He realized he needed to change his disciplinary model and learned the power of being a caring adult that can wrap support around students, rather than punish them. He now runs a consulting business for schools looking to become more trauma-informed.

Organization Highlights:

- In 2015, Lincoln High was the center of a documentary called *Paper Tigers* which told the story of the school and their journey with trauma-informed learning.
- Sporleder focused highly on hiring staff that was passionate about supporting students, rather than teachers that were the most qualified on paper. When they made the transition to trauma-supportive policies, almost every staff member was on board.
- Tracked quantitative measures such as attendance, graduation rates, testing scores, and GPA, number and type of disciplinary referrals, to measure success of the new measures.
- Despite being an alternative high school, they found that their graduation rates and test scores actually went above the state average after implementing these new policies.
- Emphasizes the need for teachers to apologize to students when they react poorly to situations with students.



Interview Notes

- **We talked to community resilience initiative and they said that you did work with them, we were wondering how you got involved with them?**
 - So when he first retired he voted to get involved with CRI for about a year and then he started getting international requests to help people so he split off and started doing his own consulting
 - When he was working at lincoln- no one came to him and asked him if he wanted to be trauma informed, and at the time teri (head of cri) invited him to a conference and then he went and attended
 - The conference was called ‘hope to resilience’ and he has previously heard a little about the ACE study but it was at this cof that he listened to john medina as the speaker and it was the first time he heard about toxic stress ,fight flight freeze, and the effects and how students couldn’t learn like this
 - It hit him pretty hard- he came out of the keynote and realized his model of discipline was really punishment rather than change
 - Realized the power of a caring adult relationship and how he needed to wrap support around the kids
 - He knocked suspensions way down and instead of reacting and telling kids that what they were doing was wrong, he started asking WHY they did what they did, that was what helped
- **Besides the drop in discipline rates, were there other metrics that you used to measure success?**
 - Very basic but practical tools- took the year prior to implementation as the baseline, and then tracked behavior, attendance, grad rate, daily attendance, GPA, testing scores,
 - After the first year of implementation, the numbers got crazy better, they never even thought that was something that would happen and each year since they’ve just continued to get better
 - This improvement is what keeps driving them to do more
 - Looks at the current disciplinary infractions and reasons
 - Fights went down 75% that year
 - Despite being an alternative high school, grad rates and test scores went above the state average
 - It was all about the commitment of the staff to build success
- **Besides changing the way you disciplined, did you make any other changes to classrooms?**
 - All teachers understood ‘the power of one’ - one caring adult relationship

- For kids that come from trauma, just one caring adult can change their path from hopelessness to hope, so each staff member should try and strive for this
 - Each member of staff was always seeking positive interactions with kids
 - Called themselves ‘the lincoln family’ and the kids started contributing to the culture as well
 - “The kids gave us even more than we gave them”
- **How did you get the teachers to "buy into" this method?**
 - By the time he went to the conference, it was his third year and he had hired about 40% of the staff, so by him being able to hire new staff, he was able to hire people with the qualities that he wants
 - Looked for teachers and staff really focused on relationships-” relationship first” educators- teachers with this quality will be good teachers and the good curriculum will come
 - So when he came back from the conference, most bought in
 - For the few that pushed back, he would meet with them individually
 - They would change the approach, staff would do the same thing he was doing - having staff ask what was going on instead of telling them what they were doing wrong,
 - Makes sure to still hold them accountable, but bring the consequence up at the end of the conversation so it’s not in their face the whole time
 - By valuing the kid’s voice and feelings, you make them feel cared about and the students would want to make what they did right
 - Then keeping the kids in school as much as possible
 - The research is clear that the traditional practices are harmful
- **What are the key elements of professional development that will impact how the teachers interact? What specifically in professional development helps teachers better interact with the students?**
 - Their staff development was back in 2010/2011- there wasn’t really any school trainers at the time so their training came from mental health professionals and was a lot of theory- so they had to come up with practice from the theory
 - Came out with three things- not taking the kid on in the moment but giving them time to come down, went into a teachable moment once they calmed down (teaching about the brain, how stress impacts the brain, they need to reach out before blowing up, how to catch their triggers), giving them ways to stay regulated before they blow up (because with regulation kids can actually learn)- allowing kids to take time outs if they need
 - Focuses on getting kids into a position where they can learn
 - Knowing that by following the first two steps, they could do the third

- Created a ‘me with you’ situation where they were really building relationships
 - Who got the training? Every single staff member has something to offer and has their own gifts and talents, so the entire staff was included in the trainings, not just teachers
 - One practice- students of concern- the staff would come together and talk about the students they were most concerned about and came up with ways to wrap support around them
 - Right down the the secretaries and custodians- everyone was an active member of the family
 - Only had 4 naysayers out of the 32 staff that didn’t want to cooperate, but the majority of the staff agreed and that was what mattered
 - Found that kids were sharing really impactful things and really teaching them how to communicate and support them more effectively
 - Watching kids learn how to manage their own regulation and then be able to advocate for themselves was a really amazing and powerful thing
- **What were the most challenging parts about transforming Lincoln High School?**
 - When they first started, one of the most common infractions was a student getting upset and telling them to f*** off
 - And for teachers, it’s so hard for them to keep regulated in that moment
 - But practicing these skills is key
 - If a teacher does go off on a kid and doesn’t regulate himself, he should bring the kid back in and explain that he should’ve taken the time to calm down and he blew it- apologize and start over to show there isn’t a double standard and start a new conversation
 - Told kids they loved them <3 forming a family culture
 - For teachers- was there consistent resources for training
 - Usually teachers would know after submitting the behavior referral that it was partly the teachers fault for pushing them, and would want to change the consequence to just talking to the kid
 - Would give teachers time to process with the kid after school
 - Really stops the ‘me against you’ mindset- also found that kids were really forgiving
 - Everything is a teachable moment, even for the teachers
 - The strength was in responding to the kid and seeking understanding and making sure kids knew they had a choice when they felt like they were going to blow up
 - Always reinforcing their growth - “look at you, a few months ago you would’ve never asked for a time out but now you do” and then telling

them you're proud of them and how they handle situations so they feel cared about

- And then if kids need disciplinary consequences, made sure they always understood they need to be held accountable
 - Trauma informed teaching doesn't mean not holding kids accountable, it's teaching them boundaries with empathy and compassion because they don't know what the boundaries are
- **Advice?**
 - They're facing the same thing that we did, but in AUS- the 'chokehold on traditional practices'- where in AUS they always have a problem getting teachers beyond the punishment
 - This was an issue in the US too and it's hard to overcome
 - "If u ever told me to f off you better put your seatbelt on"
 - But now he drops his personal mirror and asks the kid what's going on
 - RARELY ever was the kids stress coming from school, but was rather manifesting in school
 - This is so hard because the kids behavior isn't about us, but it's what they're going through
 - So the issues and the push back isn't personal, it's not directed at the teacher
 - Found that once educated, kids wanted to apologize without being asked, and they would want to do it on their own time and by themselves
 - If we're going to punish kids, we're creating a 'me against you'
 - Punishment (out of school suspension) leads to incarceration- the research shows this, they don't make it through school
 - But once we go trauma responsive, it gets so much better and they can look at their future with optimism
 - **We talked to community resilience initiative and they said that you did work with them, we were wondering how you got involved with them?**
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 - "The kids gave us even more than we gave them"
- **How did you get the teachers to "buy into" this method?**
 - By the time he went to the conference, it was his third year and he had hired about 40% of the staff, so by him being able to hire new staff, he was able to hire people with the qualities that he wants

- Looked for teachers and staff really focused on relationships-” relationship first” educators- teachers with this quality will be good teachers and the good curriculum will come
 - So when he came back from the conference, most bought in
 - For the few that pushed back, he would meet with them individually
 - They would change the approach, staff would do the same thing he was doing - having staff ask what was going on instead of telling them what they were doing wrong,
 - Makes sure to still hold them accountable, but bring the consequence up at the end of the conversation so it’s not in their face the whole time
 - By valuing the kid’s voice and feelings, you make them feel cared about and the students would want to make what they did right
 - Then keeping the kids in school as much as possible
 - The research is clear that the traditional practices are harmful
- **What are the key elements of professional development that will impact how the teachers interact? What specifically in professional development helps teachers better interact with the students?**
 - Their staff development was back in 2010/2011- there wasn’t really any school trainers at the time so their training came from mental health professionals and was a lot of theory- so they had to come up with practice from the theory
 - Came out with three things- not taking the kid on in the moment but giving them time to come down, went into a teachable moment once they calmed down (teaching about the brain, how stress impacts the brain, they need to reach out before blowing up, how to catch their triggers), giving them ways to stay regulated before they blow up (because with regulation kids can actually learn)- allowing kids to take time outs if they need
 - Focuses on getting kids into a position where they can learn
 - Knowing that by following the first two steps, they could do the third
 - Created a ‘me with you’ situation where they were really building relationships
 - Who got the training? Every single staff member has something to offer and has their own gifts and talents, so the entire staff was included in the trainings, not just teachers

- One practice- students of concern- the staff would come together and talk about the students they were most concerned about and came up with ways to wrap support around them
- Right down the the secretaries and custodians- everyone was an active member of the family
 - Only had 4 naysayers out of the 32 staff that didn't want to cooperate, but the majority of the staff agreed and that was what mattered
 - Found that kids were sharing really impactful things and really teaching them how to communicate and support them more effectively
- Watching kids learn how to manage their own regulation and then be able to advocate for themselves was a really amazing and powerful thing
- **What were the most challenging parts about transforming Lincoln High School?**
 - When they first started, one of the most common infractions was a student getting upset and telling them to f*** off
 - And for teachers, it's so hard for them to keep regulated in that moment
 - But practicing these skills is key
 - If a teacher does go off on a kid and doesn't regulate himself, he should bring the kid back in and explain that he should've taken the time to calm down and he blew it- apologize and start over to show there isn't a double standard and start a new conversation
 - Told kids they loved them <3 forming a family culture
- For teachers- was there consistent resources for training
 - Usually teachers would know after submitting the behavior referral that it was partly the teachers fault for pushing them, and would want to change the consequence to just talking to the kid
 - Would give teachers time to process with the kid after school
 - Really stops the 'me against you' mindset- also found that kids were really forgiving
 - Everything is a teachable moment, even for the teachers
 - The strength was in responding to the kid and seeking understanding and making sure kids knew they had a choice when they felt like they were going to blow up
 - Always reinforcing their growth - "look at you, a few months ago you would've never asked for a time out but now you do" and then

telling them you're proud of them and how they handle situations so they feel cared about

- And then if kids need disciplinary consequences, made sure they always understood they need to be held accountable
 - Trauma informed teaching doesn't mean not holding kids accountable, it's teaching them boundaries with empathy and compassion because they don't know what the boundaries are
- **Advice?**
 - They're facing the same thing that we did, but in AUS- the 'chokehold on traditional practices'- where in AUS they always have a problem getting teachers beyond the punishment
 - This was an issue in the US too and it's hard to overcome
 - "If u ever told me to f off you better put your seatbelt on"
 - But now he drops his personal mirror and asks the kid what's going on
 - RARELY ever was the kids stress coming from school, but was rather manifesting in school
 - This is so hard because the kids behavior isn't about us, but it's what they're going through
 - So the issues and the push back isn't personal, it's not directed at the teacher
 - Found that once educated, kids wanted to apologize without being asked, and they would want to do it on their own time and by themselves
 - If we're going to punish kids, we're creating a 'me against you'
 - Punishment (out of school suspension) leads to incarceration- the research shows this, they don't make it through school
 - But once we go trauma responsive, it gets so much better and they can look at their future with optimism
- Amazing to see a kid all of a sudden find out that there's someone they're meant to be, rather than just being someone defined by their trauma

Patricia Jennings, *Professor of Education at the University of Virginia*

Website: <https://curry.virginia.edu/patricia-jennings>

Email: tishjennings@virginia.edu

Phone: 434-924-1279

Interested in Following up: Yes

Topics of Interest: Sharing teacher support programs (CARE) and mindfulness for students

Background:

Patricia noted that she has a trauma history herself and it interfered heavily with her learning, but at the time, educators were not yet aware of the effects of trauma on students so she received little support. As a result, she became passionate about helping kids get through school and went on to become a Montessori teacher. She later became a teacher educator and saw that the stress of teaching was negatively impacting the relationship between teachers and students, and worked to develop the CARE program and other support programs for teachers.

Interview Highlights:

- Has multiple peer-reviewed papers on the CARE program and the CARE program is currently being studied to examine its effectiveness when given as a shorter and online program.
- Tish also has a book, called *The 3 Keys to Compassionate Teaching*, which details the need for concepts such as supportive relationships, safe spaces, and teacher mindfulness in the classroom.
- Believes that CARE, if used in conjunction with a trauma-informed program, would be extremely beneficial for teachers and help them through the transition.
- Although the training is very long for CARE, she also has a book detailing the process for teachers that may not have the time for the lengthy training.
 - She is also currently working on a study with a shorter version of CARE



Interview Notes

- **How did you get involved with this type of work?**
 - She has a trauma history herself and it interfered with her learning and no one was aware of what trauma does to kids so she didn't get much support - as she got older she became passionate about helping kids getting through school. She became a Montessori teacher. And then became an teacher educator -- saw the stress of teaching was interfering with the connection between teachers and students -- went back to school. Realized that no one studied why teaching was super stressful and providing support for students. At the same time thinking about how to help students who have experienced trauma. She realized that in order for teachers to use these trauma sensitive approaches teachers have to be aware of their own emotions and how they're expressing them to children. Otherwise students can become retraumatized. 2 really common ways for kids to respond to trauma (1 acting out bc they feel threatened or 2 is shutting down) neither work well in school (it might work well at home) they cause problems at school, if teachers don't understand that about kids they can unintentionally trigger kids and then blame the kids, ruining the relationship.
 - Find ways to communicate with the student without being threatening. Punitive culture in the US. Teachers learn early on that they need to control the kids, which isn't actually a thing because you can't control people, so when kids are acting out the teacher feels their control is threatened so then they overreact and then the kids overreact and it's a bad cycle. Makes the kid feel like a failure bc they don't feel like they have any support
 - Shutting down -- teachers don't notice kids like that bc they're not misbehaving. Often diagnosed with attention problems because they're not there. It's super hard to learn bc your working memory isn't working bc your not mentally there and then teachers feel like your stupid. Teachers don't usually identify this in kids and just brush them off as stupid, which just reinforces that adaptive function. If you learn how to dissociate and then that's a cycle of you not being there. But you're not learning.
 - Teachers own SEL need to be super mindful of them so they can be present for a student where they are instead of slipping into these automatic tendencies to be a teacher which doesn't work for traumatized students
- **Do you think these results would be similar if this was a mandated program?**
 - The programs combine 2 things to be able to manage your own emotions. When you do research like that you need to make it volunteer. So basically she doesn't know. Over time as mindfulness is more popular, she thinks it would be easier to do today because people are more open to mindfulness and they know it is good for your health. They successfully recruit teachers by making it about supporting

the teachers for stress. No one ever gives teachers support for their own wellbeing; they just have more demands. So teachers like when you are focused on them.

- **What elements do you think were most critical/effective in convincing schools/teachers to participate in CARE programs?**
 - She has a book - the 3 keys to compassionate teaching
 - Building supportive relationships - it needs to be the entire community - from top down (administration) everyone needs to build relationships that feel safe and open and transparent -- you need to build a safe community. The administration has to do it
 - Creating safe spaces - making sure the school feels safe to the kids - being careful of how spaces are organized (so people don't feel stuck or trapped). Finding ways to give choice about what you're doing. Kids who are exposed to trauma are forced in a place where they don't feel safe can trigger the kids. The bells that ring in school can be triggering. Setting up systems that there are safety plans in case of emergency -- adults too. Discipline policies that aren't punitive. The zero tolerance policies are not good, they can cause serious problems with serious kids because they don't allow consideration of other factors. Discipline policies need to be restorative.
 - Recognizing strengths in kids and promoting self awareness - oftentimes schools have a very narrow definition of what success is - it doesn't promote diversity of ways people learn, in the way people's minds work. Every student has strengths -- you need to find them and allow them to feel like they can make a valuable contribution no matter what they do -- it's not just high achievement. Teaching adaptation skills - how to calm down and how to focus. For kids who are acting, help them recognize the signals in their body when it starts to happen, so they can help control it. Don't pathologize it, make sure they know it's normal. For kids who are dissociating make them feel safe and they belong so that they can thrive.
 - Building resilience in the adult community - today trauma is ubiquitous everyone is trauma → creating environments that are trauma supportive is what our culture needs
- **Do you think CARE would have beneficial/similar effects if it was implemented in conjunction with a trauma-informed education program?**
 - Yes - 100% without giving the teacher the skills it would be very hard to make a trauma-informed classroom
 - Shift understanding that teachers can play a really important role in helping kids to recover from trauma, but they can provide an adult role model. They're not going to be therapists

- It's not just sitting mindfully, but bringing mindfulness to your interactions, so when a student does something, you don't automatically assume they're bad, but you can be like what does this kid really need
- **The study involved quite a large time commitment from educators in order to participate in CARE- do you think a smaller scale professional development program would still be effective so that CARE could be more accessible to the average teacher?**
 - She doesn't know - they've been struggling with it
 - She wanted to be able to show that this kind of approach would change teachers and their interaction with students, and also the students. But it required a very heavy dosage for training, which is why it's so long. It's not very feasible. They did a zoom version in a new study and they shortened it quite a bit. So they're going to see if it works anywhere as well.
 - She wrote another book so teachers wouldn't have to go to the super long training

Massachusetts Department of Education, *Emily Taylor*

Website: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/safety/>

Email: emily.m.taylor@state.ma.us

Interested in Following up: Yes

Topics of Interest: Finding ways for schools to implement trauma-informed programs that don't require money, formal evaluation metrics for schools that implement programs

Background:

Emily is the Early Learning and Safe and Supportive Schools Specialist for the Massachusetts Department of Education. She coordinates the Safe and Supportive Schools grant program and has overseen its operation since its start in 2018. She works heavily with evaluating grant applications and helping schools come up with action plans.

Organization Highlights:

- The SaSS program provides prospective schools with a framework that details the 8 essential elements of a safe and supportive school- a framework developed with behavior health experts in schools and TLPI.
- The SaSS program also provides schools with an evaluation tool that allows them to enter information about their school and reflect on their current practices and how trauma-informed concepts can help them.
- The program offers two types of grants: the first year grant, and a continuation grant. The continuation grants are for the second year and every school is automatically eligible to apply for it as long as they submit their new action plans for the second year. Every school that has received a first year grant also received the continuation grant.
- Currently, the first year grant has been awarded to 61 schools.
- The program currently does not formally evaluate the progress of schools, but this is an area they may expand on in the future.



Interview Notes

- **In reading about the Safe and Supportive Schools Act, it references the 8 essential elements of a safe and supportive school, as well as a four-phase program to implement these elements. How/with whom was this framework developed? What was its evidence base?**
 - The original framework was the behavioral health in public schools developed by commission members (who themselves had expertise or consulted other's)
 - It's still undergoing revisions→ consulting with experts on the framework
 - TLPI Harvard grads looked it over and gave it a thumbs up
 - Working with vendor to make larger revision→ revisions and research backing it up
- **How many schools that apply for grants through the Safe and Supportive Schools program actually receive them?**
 - She oversees the grant (year 3)
 - The answer depends on the year→ interest has increased over the years
 - It is a competitive process
 - 2018-2019 - 30 applicants and everyone got it
 - 2019-2020 - 38 applicants and awarded 17
 - 2020-2021 - 27 applicants and awarded 14 (i think)
 - Big drop because there are 2 grant programs → continuation grants and new grants → all 30 got the continuation and that took a up lots of money
 - Continuation only continues for 1 year
- **What is it you look for in schools when trying to determine if they should receive a grant?**
 - Automatically eligible for continuation grant if they got the award grant the year before
 - They still need to apply and have a plan
 - Competitive grant
 - Need to meet the requirements of the grant
 - Score competitive grants on a rubric
 - Some people didn't understand the purpose
 - Talking about shop safety (safe saws?) not the purpose of this grant
 - Racial equity → we're talking about it in a way that made them seem prepared to address it properly
 - Without understanding racial equity people can provide things that are more harmful than good
 - <https://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/2021/335/>
 - Gives an example of the questions
- **What is the average monetary amount of the grants given?**

- All public info
- Eligible to apply for \$10000 per school or \$20000 per district
- They've given \$6500 - missed the second number
- **For schools that receive grants, is there any monitoring of their success? If so, what metrics are typically used to evaluate the success?**
 - They need to look at metrics internally during the self-reflection process
 - They don't look specifically
 - They look at the action plan and give some feedback on it
 - Does it meet the requirements of the grant? apply
 - Process is specific to each school and school district
 - No goal standard
 - Grant evaluation that occurs
 - They haven't figured out how to measure if schools are more safe and supportive
 - How people work together and stuff
 - This is an iterative process → of self-reflection, plan, implement, self-reflect
- **Has there been schools that have received grants that were unsuccessful with their programs?**
 - Part of the grant program is to include some mentoring districts
 - In the cycle, they can apply for the grants and continuation grant → once they get those they become mentor schools
 - One school gets the funds and then they decide to do it in more school (district wide) → no concrete measures → they have a district person who supports this work as a full-time position makes a difference
 - Some districts don't apply to continue the work, but no one is less successful
 - Lots of district personnel turnover → problem for some districts
 - In mass they need to write school and district improvement plans reviewed by school committee, in district improvement plan they always had safety goals → instead of just safety, also think about support
 - Once it's concretely in the district plan that makes it more likely to happen even if turnover occurs
 - District leader will go to a new district and then that district will apply → messiah of safe schools
- **What are the biggest challenges when applying and implementing these things?**
 - Funding is a huge challenge
 - The grant isn't a lot of money, you're not revamping SEL (that's not what the budget it going to cover) or PD for the entire district to do trauma-impact
 - Need to use funds they already have or align it with other budgets

- Rewriting a handbook doesn't cost money
- This is a cop-out→ there are ways to work around it
- **Are there similar programs in other states? Why isn't this as much of a priority in other states?**
 - States do this using other words
 - Some states focus on SEL → community of the school is safe and supportive
 - people don't necessarily make all the links bc everything is connected, which is somewhat a problem

Belmont High School, *Jamie Shea*

Website: <https://www.belmont.k12.ma.us/bps/bhs/>

Email: jashea@belmont.k12.ma.us

Interested in Following up: yes

Topics of Interest: Learning from other teachers, how to lessen racial inequity in the classroom

Background:

Jamie is a teacher from Gaby's high school. In the past few years, they have started to complete professional development regarding culturally responsive learning and teaching staff that brains in fight flight or freeze are unable to learn and teachers must be able to de escalate. Is passionate about supporting all students and closing opportunity gaps, as well as being able to recognize when a child is struggling.

Interview Highlights:

- The school utilized in-house learning teams where teachers could work together and share ideas as they moved through the transition.
- The professional development at the school was not necessarily geared towards reducing the effects of trauma, but rather making the school more supportive as a whole.
- Believes that teachers need to be able to work together and learn from each other, and that teachers that want full autonomy can inhibit learning and be a barrier to the process.
- Recognizes that it can be hard for teachers to apply what they have learned in professional development programs in the classroom, and that good practices need to be modelled more frequently for them.
- Passionate about integrating courses and collaborating with other teachers, because in the real work problems aren't solved in just a single discipline.
- Belmont has had their teachers do professional development with a local mental health center to educate teachers on concepts such as self care and how to support students during COVID.



Interview Notes

- **When in PD about SEL do you ever learn about the impact of trauma on the brain? or just the benefits of SEL**
 - So they started off with SEL initiative which was the first step in recognizing that if kids don't feel loved safe and supported they won't be able to learn successfully
 - After the MCAS scores came out, it showed a huge opportunity gap between students both in math and verbal
 - This was surprising to staff and they looked more into culturally responsive learning
 - Showed that three major parts of the brain are involved in a learning situation that can be activated or deactivated depending on how a student is feeling
 - Amygdala (fight or flight), threat scanning things, hippocampus gets shut down by the amygdala if someone is in a fight or flight state, making it impossible to learn
 - Could be part of perceived bias (race) or trauma
 - If students perceive threat, they are physically incapable of learning
 - Intelligence isn't fixed- it's a malleable thing, no one is born smart or unsmart
 - So if a kid is always having a negative experience in school, those intelligence growth pathways get stunted and harder to connect and grow knowledge
 - So a lot of the professional development they've had started with getting faculty to understand how emotion is inherently linked to learning
 - If a student comes in in a bad state because of failing a math class in the previous class, they won't be able to learn
 - "9 times out of ten how a kid is acting in class isn't about you as a teacher"
 - So instead of approaching that kid with hostility, ask what's up and what you could do to help them- recognize that that kid is struggling
 - So PD hasn't really been trauma training but realizing that brains under threat can't learn, and get better at recognizing when a kid is in a state of threat and how to de escalate
- **Changing the teacher's mindset?**
 - It can be hard to understand what this looks like in practice because PD in schools is usually a one off lecture or workshops, so it's hard to figure out how to take what you're learning and actually apply it
 - They had in-house learning teams where teachers could learn and share
 - Need a general culture change in schools among teachers
 - Some teachers want autonomy and don't like when other adults come in
 - But this inhibits learning and isn't good and teachers should learn from each other

- Building a culture around sharing, teachers aren't here to judge each other, but to help grow and learn
 - She actually shares a classroom with another teacher and loves it
 - One of the ways to help it is to integrate courses- the way we do high school needs to be looked at, we can combine curricula as opposed to breaking everything up into separate categories
 - Because in the real world, you don't just problem solve in one discipline
 - Currently, she's teaching a course where she, as a history teacher, collabs with a math teacher to show kids there are multiple ways to look at a problem through the lenses of different disciplines
 - Learning something and actually applying it are two diff things- PD needs more modeling of things they can do
 - Teachers need to try it and make mistakes and recognize those mistakes and be able to apologize for them as well
 - Kids are not trying to be disrespectful or not learn, but they're dealing with a lot as teenagers and they need to be approached with understanding and curiosity
- **What does professional development around SEL usually entail?**
 - They get theory and examples
 - They did have a brief presentation of trauma with mcclain's, teaching kids how to 'recharge their batteries'
 - "Teaching at its base is a relational job"
 - The director of her department is very invested and therefore is very knowledgeable, so she's been able to see it in practice and if there's something they want to learn in theory the director is very invested in letting them try it in practice
 - But not sure how this is across other departments
 - Only 2 half days of PD every year in combination with some other short training (PLT... what that)
- **What are the biggest barriers in the implementation of what you learned?**
 - It's all a brain shift, and there's so much going on in a classroom during a class that the teacher is trying to keep track of
 - Trying to manage student interactions, teacher interactions, things the teacher is dealing with outside, etc
 - Giving teachers tools and letting them recenter themselves before starting class
- **Is there any post-development assessment or monitoring of if you incorporate any of the things you learn in professional development?**
 - Not specifically- there's the typical statewide evaluation system for teachers and it depends on who you evaluator is and etc

- Currently not something that evaluators are looking at specifically
- **How often do you have professional development with McLeans? And what does it usually cover?**
 - They currently have a partnership with McLeans
 - Trainings around teachers and self care and trainings around how to care and support students during COVID
 - Even students that are well adjusted will come in with some sort of trauma because of what they've experienced since COVID

Worcester Polytechnic Institute, *Chrys Demetry*

Website: <https://www.wpi.edu/people/faculty/cdemetry>

Email: cdemetry@wpi.edu

Phone: +1 (508) 831 5000 x5195

Interested in Following up: Yes

Topics of Interest: Potentially providing trauma-informed professional development resources to WPI professors

Background:

Chrys has a BS in Mechanical Engineering from WPI and is both a professor and the head of the Morgan Teaching and Learning Center at WPI, which is responsible for providing professional development to professors. Is passionate about increasing representation for women in STEM and producing better educators.

Interview Highlights:

- Although staff at WPI don't currently receive any sort of professional development pertaining to trauma-informed practices, she believes professors would be very interested if given the opportunity.
- Created the New Faculty Orientation and New Faculty Mentoring Program, as well as introduced mutual mentoring groups to help support staff.
- College professors aren't trained to teach- they're trained as researchers. As such, there's no professional development requirement for professors. However, faculty still often choose to participate in professional development programs when offered.
- Passionate about the necessity of professors being able to observe and learn from each other.



Interview Notes

- **Could you talk about the PD that WPI profs currently get?**
 - College professors aren't trained to teach, they're trained as researchers. WPI offers a course designed workshop to help faculty learn best practices and evidence based practices for designing learning experiences
 - Annual program on IQP/MQP advising to introduce them to basics of advising IQP and MQP bc it's so different from teaching a course
 - people are always available for consultation with faculty if they want it
 - Resources that are available for the prof if they want it → resources from other institutions in different topic areas
- **Do profs have any sort of PD requirement?**
 - Biggest difference between K12 and college professors (in the US) is no requirement for PD in college professors, whereas K12 needs to do professional development. Faculty still participate in PD even though it's not mandatory
 - For those that do PD, is it voluntary/how many professors take advantage of the PD that is offered
 - A typical year maybe 50% of faculty will participate in some sort professional development provided by the Morgan teaching center
 - They might participate in PD outside of WPI, but there's no way of knowing
 - This past summer there was a ton of PD on online teaching - about half of the faculty participated in a 5 week online teaching program (significant participation from faculty)
 - Annual report
- **In your experience, how do professors typically handle tough students?**
 - No PD bc it's not a huge issue for most of the student body
 - A general strategy that they use for helping faculty learn things outside their comfort zone, don't just give them resources but to use an apprenticeship type model or a community of learning type model. To watch and observe others teaching strategies. Sometimes co-teach.
- **Do you think college level professors could benefit from trauma education?**
 - She thinks some professors would take advantage of it if it was offered
 - The mindset they use - the coalition of the willing - some people would be interested in learning more about the effect of trauma on learning → begin with them and also work with some students as well → slowly word gets out and change comes over the community. Make sure a few people in each department are knowledgeable and then in their mini communities they can spread the knowledge

- Promising strategies for getting people to change are either their colleagues of their students → less effective to have someone at the top of the organization to say to do this
- **Would you be interested in talking with banksia?**
 - She would love to attend our presentation → it would be a good way for her to assess how she can use our sponsor
 - The POD organization → teachers share their stuff and she got examples and principles of being transparent about what the course is going to address (trigger warnings) → they're necessary, give alternatives to students and advanced notice so students don't get retraumatized

Other Contacts

Margaret Blaustein: mblaustein@centerfortraumatraining.org

She can't make the final presentation (she's already booked) but would love to talk in the future. She helped develop the ARC framework.

Dr. Terry Harris- harristerry@rsdmo.org, terry.harris@thecollectivestl.org

Executive director of student services at Rockwood School District, one of the largest districts in Missouri, and one of the closest partners and collaborators for Alive and Well Communities. Expressed interest in an interview, but we didn't have the time to complete one.

Lisa Drinkwater/ Emily Perry- lisa.drinkwater@education.tas.gov.au ,
etp@neurosequential.com

Emily Perry works with Bruce Perry, and when contacted about an interview, directed us to Lisa Drinkwater. Lisa is located in Tasmania and is the NME trainer. Phone number for Lisa: **0419 583 992 or 0363 269537**