



TRAUMA INFORMED DRILLS

POUDRE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Unexpected situations or shifts in routine can activate a stress response based on our individual histories and experiences. As educators, we need to conduct drills in a brain-based, inclusive, and trauma-informed manner. This ensures that all students can effectively return to learning following drills.

- **Page 1:** A quick guide for conducting trauma-informed drills.
- **Page 2:** Explanations and examples of strategies that are appropriate for Preparation, During, and Reintegration phases.

PREPARATION

- Practice classroom-based regulation activities on a daily basis (Universal Tier 1). Pre-teach and practice emotional regulation strategies for unexpected events.
- Identify and plan support for impacted populations (Targeted Tier 2 and Intensive Tier 3) including students who have experienced trauma or violence, students with disabilities, and students with cultural and language considerations.

DURING

- Take a moment to regulate yourself (remember to put your oxygen mask on first!).
- Co-regulate with your students during the drill, using deep breathing techniques, fidgets, rhythmic movement, and sensory activities.

REINTEGRATION

- Administrators announce universal regulation opportunity time in the classroom (regulate).
- Conduct a brief classroom check in circle or opportunity for students to connect and debrief with peers (relate). Use all available accessibility and translation tools to ensure these conversations include all students.
- Reiterate the class schedule and expectations for the rest of class (reintegrate & reason).
- Counselors, Psychologists, Mental Health Specialists, Social Workers, and other support staff facilitate additional check-ins with students who require targeted (Tier 2) or intensive (Tier 3) interventions.



ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

In PSD, we strive to align our practices with brain-based principles. In order to learn, recall, exercise self-control, and tap into our creative capabilities, we must first be physically safe (regulated) and then emotionally connected (relate). We regulate to mitigate the stress response and then relate to enhance a sense of belonging. Only after we regulate and relate (in that order) are we able to learn and thrive as staff and students (reason).

PREPARATION

Why do we prepare our students for drills? Rehearsal builds confidence and competence during potentially disregulating events. Emotional and physiological regulation require the same kind of repetition that we provide for academic skills. Repeatedly practicing regulation activities ensures 'muscle memory' recall even when we are in heightened emotional states.

- Remind students drills can be expected and unexpected; even when a drill is expected, it can bring up unexpected or unpleasant feelings.
- Explain the purpose of the drill to students, including what to expect during the drill.
- Demonstrate and practice simple deep breathing techniques (slower breathing from the belly, through the nose and out the mouth. "Smell the flower, blow out the candle.").

DURING

Why do we model regulation throughout a drill (otherwise known as co-regulation)? Regulated individuals have access to the logical parts of their brains. Drills and actual emergencies require problem-solving from all involved. Staff regulate themselves first and then lead regulation activities during a drill to assist students.

- Practice simple deep breathing techniques ("Smell the flower, blow out the candle". Box breathing -drawing a square with your anger, inhale for four seconds, exhale for four seconds, inhale for four seconds. Repeat 3-5 times.).
- Allow access to fidget tools as necessary (stress ball, a smooth stone, play dough. etc.).
- Encourage students to silently count their own heartbeats (10-20 beats).
- Model positive self-talk (I am safe, my teacher is here to help me).
- Encourage students to use deep pressure techniques (giving self hug, press hands to knees or drawing knees into chest if seated)
- Use grounding techniques (silently identifying things you can see, feel, hear, smell, and taste). Incorporate a rhythmic beat with hands (tap thumb to each nger tip in sequence, add counting or words to engage the brain).

REINTEGRATION & REFLECTION

Why do we have to scaffold reintegration efforts after a drill? Most humans need at least 20 minutes to recover from a stress response activation. We can strategically guide our students from the bottom of the brain where stress responses start to the top of the brain where learning occurs.

- Encourage students to color or draw.
- Facilitate a group check in or a restorative circle to debrief/process.
- Provide a space for calming activities (listening to soft music, drawing, etc.)
- Lead a whole class stretching sequence or regulation walk.
- Know when to move back into learning.

