

Portfolio Artifact: Helping Children Succeed

Korianne T. Juluke

Department of Education, Mary Hardin Baylor University

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Dr. Darrell Becker

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HELPING CHILDREN SUCCEED

What Works and Why

BY PAUL TOUGH

What should we do to improve the lives of children growing up in adversity? Presenting a new strategy based in the emerging science of success.

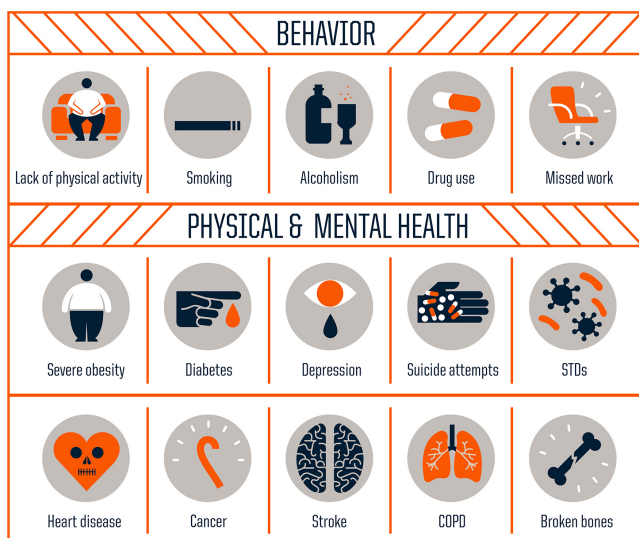
In my Managing the P-12 Curriculum course, our first reading was the book left, *Helping Children Succeed*. The image links to Mr. Tough's website, where one can read the book in its entirety free of charge. There are twenty-two topic chapters that discuss critical areas that education should focus on for the betterment of the children and families served. Some topics, such as dealing with adversity, stress, and

pedagogy, are widely addressed in the education world. Those are buzz phrases in the education industry, as everyone who works in the field knows. However, what will we do with our knowledge about those words? Tough gives context for varied experiences and points of view to expand the services we deliver to our students and families. He does so with a uniqueness to their community and its needs rather than the one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter quick fixes typically implemented.

For the remainder of this review, I will discuss how trauma is among the most significant barriers students encounter as an educational barrier and some practical strategies to address this issue. The Oxford dictionary defines trauma as "a very distressing or disturbing experience." Trauma can manifest itself in various ways, leaving visible and invisible scars. Let us look at how it might affect children's development and adulthood. Paul discusses how Adverse

Childhood Experience (ACE) ratings can reflect numerous elements in a person's life in the Trauma chapter. Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic events during childhood (0-18 years) (Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences |Violence Prevention|Injury Center|CDC, 2021; STARECHESKI, 2015). ACEs can have long-term adverse effects on health, well-being, and life opportunities such as education and careers (Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences |Violence Prevention|Injury Center|CDC, 2021; STARECHESKI, 2015). So much so that, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's webpage](#) under Violence Prevention, having an ACE score of 1 might negatively impact a child's life. I will look at how ACE scores can be utilized in educational settings to determine the level of trauma our children have had in their lives to give them a better educational experience and, eventually, a better life.

I had never heard of an ACE score prior to reading this book. As a result, I decided to take the [ACE exam](#) myself to see how I did. My score was a 5/10, but it could have been a 7 or 8 if the questions had not explicitly asked about my mother or household because I have witnessed certain things at other family members' homes that I would consider traumatic. So why is it that I never had any academic or behavioral school problems? However, my siblings were constantly in battles academically and behaviorally throughout our formative years through high school.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (retrieved from NPR)

Credit: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

So, how do children suffer as a result of trauma? In my case, I understood I needed to be astute enough to ensure that my adult world was not the same as my childhood one. I did not have any

visible scars, but it was an emotional battle every day. I internalized the majority of it till I reached a breaking point where I cried. Since we were little kids, the thought of someone disrespecting my brother would make him fight no matter who it was or where we were. To spend as little time as possible at home, my sister was a member of every sport and dancing team. Looking back, I believe we were all in "Flight or Fight" mode daily. We simply displayed it in various ways.

My trauma did not appear to be preventing me from succeeding academically, but it did limit the amount of energy I could devote. I provided just enough to get by most days, and I had nothing to give to others, but you would not know since I did not show it. According to the CDC (2021), 61% of adults had an ACE score of 1 or above in a study including 25 states. Four out of five persons who answered a discussion article in which I talked about how trauma has influenced me as a child and into adulthood with my cohort colleagues said they had experienced some form of childhood trauma. The fifth individual has not personally suffered childhood trauma, but they have seen the effects of trauma on their students.

So what can we do? [We Can Prevent ACEs](#) As shown in the graphic above, we may proactively work toward prevention now that we know the behaviors to look out for as ACE



adverse effects. Here are some ways that I feel ACE scores could assist in better students' educational journeys and develop connections with them. 1.

Establishing genuine connections with your students. I attempt to build relationships with my classroom students as if they are all coming in with trauma (particularly since COVID), and I strive to show grace.

2. Create a family-friendly community within your school and classroom. Maintain an open channel of communication with parents and make them feel welcome. 3. Provide critical services to kids and their families; this is crucial because most ACE questions include a lack of necessity in the home.

This list could go on and on, but the main point I want you to remember is that each state, district, institution, family, and student in the world will have unique needs. The purpose of the educational setting and policies should be to find out what those needs are and address them. ACE scores are a method that can help determine a student's and family's needs in a school setting. It gives an overview of how an ACE score might negatively impact a person's life and a strategy for overcoming those effects. I intend to use my knowledge from Helping Children Succeed and my ACE scores to further my professional development as an educator.

References

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<https://www.paultough.com/helping/web/>