



**NYSTEACHS.org**

The New York State Technical Assistance  
Center for Homeless Students

## Matrix of Trauma-Sensitive Strategies of School Success

Essential Element	Strategy	Related Action
<b>Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment</b>	Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively Listen</li> <li>• Normalize the reaction to the experience</li> <li>• Minimize self-blame</li> <li>• Avoid giving direct advice</li> </ul>
	Strengths-based approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliberately point out actions and characteristics that are positive, unique, or valuable</li> <li>• Guide a student towards recognizing and using his or her strengths</li> <li>• Redirect a challenging behavior by focusing on what you know the student can do well</li> </ul>
	Predictability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be clear about expectations</li> <li>• Follow through</li> <li>• Keep a consistent routine</li> <li>• Talk through changes</li> </ul>
	Prevention rather than punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help the student identify triggers and create appropriate coping plans</li> <li>• Teach or demonstrate what “should” be done</li> <li>• Avoid punishment and isolation</li> <li>• Reward positive behavior to encourage and build confidence</li> <li>• Teach mindfulness</li> </ul>
	Welcoming building environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure that classrooms and hallways are bright and clean</li> <li>• Don’t corner someone</li> <li>• Consider having a “safe corner” or a “peace room”</li> <li>• Greet students at the door</li> <li>• Make sure transition times are supervised</li> </ul>
	Connection to school community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institute a peer buddy program</li> <li>• Institute a student/adult mentorship program</li> <li>• Deliberately connect students to extracurricular activities</li> <li>• Use a team approach</li> </ul>
	Partnership, not power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid power/control struggles</li> <li>• Do not “corner” someone emotionally</li> <li>• Help individual students find coping strategies for stressors</li> </ul>

<b>Fostering Secure Attachments</b>	Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be available</li> <li>• Be consistent</li> <li>• Make sure the student knows that he can go to you in a crisis</li> <li>• Encourage self-motivation</li> <li>• Help students set goals and create strategies for reaching those goals</li> </ul>
	Help children identify safe people to talk to in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post the names and roles of key school staff</li> <li>• Let students know <i>how</i> to contact a safe adult</li> <li>• Set clear expectations and boundaries</li> </ul>
	Be patient and consistent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give unconditional support</li> <li>• Set high expectations</li> <li>• Lead by example</li> </ul>
	Family programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host family nights or other events</li> <li>• Make an effort to meet the caregivers where they are</li> <li>• Don't engage in negative conversation about a family</li> </ul>
	Helping a child to cope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breathing for relaxation</li> <li>• Positive distractions</li> <li>• Promote leadership</li> <li>• Encourage peer support</li> <li>• Ensure children have a healthy diet</li> <li>• Ensure children have plenty of exercise</li> </ul>
	Use a team approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stress inclusiveness and shared purpose</li> <li>• Share updates and successful strategies with other staff as appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>Strengthening Non-Cognitive Skills</b> <i>(i.e. social-emotion skills and self-regulation.)</i>	Focus on “what happened to you” rather than “what is wrong with you”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask more questions and listen to the answers</li> <li>• Watch for patterns and triggers</li> <li>• Keep in mind the student’s history</li> </ul>
	Encourage resiliency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on strengths, not deficit</li> <li>• Praise effort, not just outcomes</li> <li>• Focus on “should” rather than “should not”</li> </ul>
	Teach coping techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk about self-soothing</li> <li>• Talk about self-regulation</li> <li>• Help the student identify triggers and strategies</li> <li>• Show students where/how they have control</li> </ul>
	Empower students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage intrinsic motivation</li> <li>• Build self-confidence</li> <li>• Promote leadership</li> </ul>