

# **A perspective on ACEs in Education: lessons from Walla Walla**

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# Our agenda

1. An introduction to WAVE Trust
2. Why Walla Walla?
3. Focus on Lincoln High School
4. Key lessons from Walla Walla
5. Trauma-informed schools outside Walla Walla
6. Discussion

# WAVE Trust

- ACE prevention
- The first 1001 days
- Pioneer Communities
- 3-Nation ACEs Network
- 70/30 Prevention Campaign



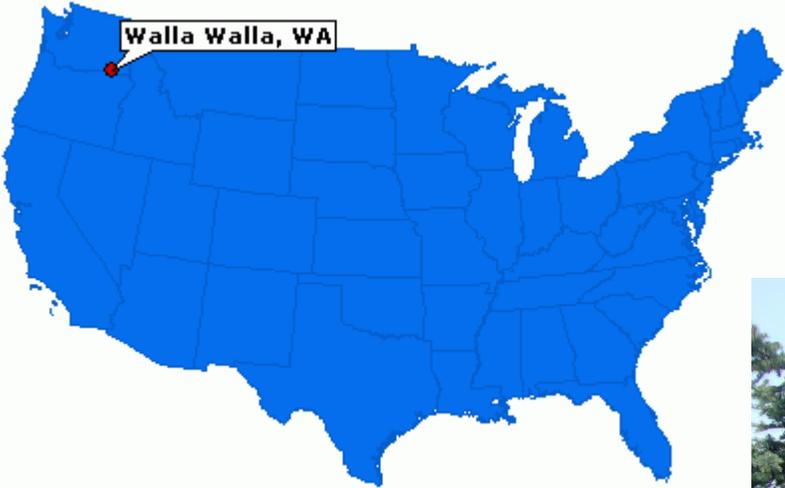
## The 1001 Critical Days

The Importance of the Conception to Age Two Period



# Why Walla Walla?

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## An overview of ACEs work in Walla Walla



# Focus on Lincoln High School

# Focus on Lincoln High

- ACEs movement started in Walla Walla by community coalition called Children's Resilience Initiative
- The group enrolled key stakeholders in their movement, including Lincoln High staff
- They provided school staff with training and direction to become ACE-aware
- Previously an alternative school (equivalent to EOTAS)
- Transformed in to most popular school in region through ACE-awareness and trauma-sensitivity

# Focus on Lincoln High

- They start by building relationships with the students – trust, transparency, feeling of being ‘on their side’
- Teachers accept that poor behaviour is probably a response to something else in student’s life
- Teaching methods adapted for students’ needs
- Students who have time and space to process emotion are much more able to learn
- Resilience = solution to discipline

# Focus on Lincoln High

- Disciplinary methods much less punitive, more about helping students identify and control emotions
- Look into underlying causes of behaviour
- Pupils *not* screened for ACEs – it is assumed they require trauma-sensitive care
- Ask not ‘what’s wrong with you?’ or ‘why did you do that?’, but ‘what’s happened to you?’ or ‘what are you going through?’
- Specialist staff on-site to help students to cool down, regulate emotions, and attain stability and safety

## **‘Resilient: the school discipline revolution in Walla Walla’**



# Picking out a few key lessons from Walla Walla

# Lessons from Walla Walla

1. Put into practice the prioritisation of students' wellbeing and rounded development
2. Manage behaviour in a collaborative and supportive way
3. Establish and make use of cooperative relationships with other agencies

# Lessons from Walla Walla

## I. Put into practice the prioritisation of students' wellbeing and rounded development

- Prioritise students' safety, stability, trust and relationships, collaboration, and the emotional and social needs of children
- Reflect these by talking about brain development, practising mindfulness together, and providing a facilitative physical environment
- Understand that conventional schooling can exacerbate trauma's effects, and actively cause harm and re-traumatisation
- Respond to this by sending students to spaces/clinics where they can rest, re-teaching lessons, postponing testing, and referring to counselling

# Lessons from Walla Walla

## 2. Manage behaviour in a collaborative and supportive way

- Train staff to interpret students' behaviour as a way of communicating and as symptomatic of deeper root causes
- Focus on understanding and recovery rather than punishment
- Use expulsion in only the most extreme cases where no alternatives exist
- Employ a behavioural intervention specialist whose role is to help stressed students and try to provide stability in living and learning circumstances

# Lessons from Walla Walla

## 3. Establish and make use of cooperative relationships with other agencies

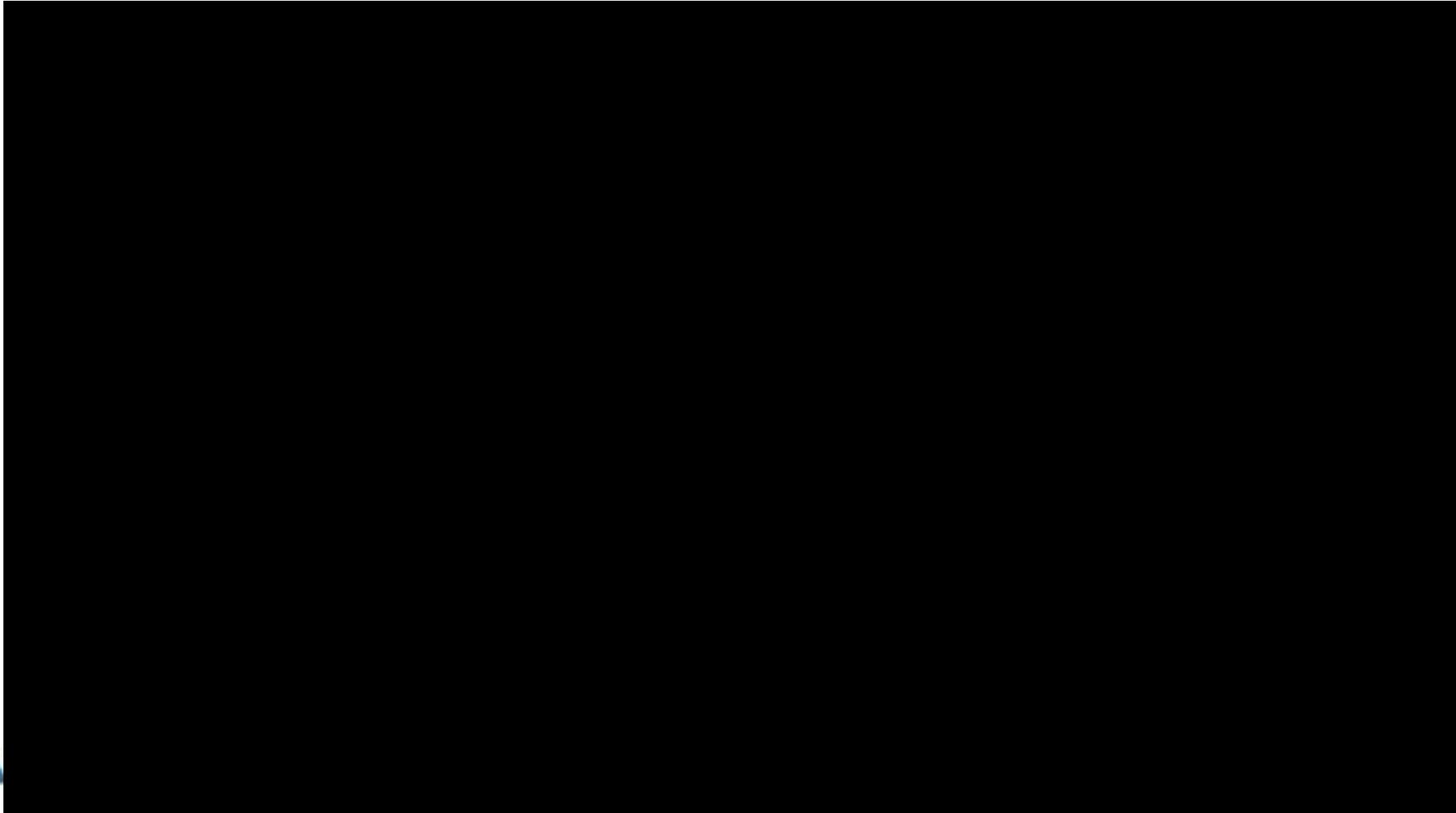
- Maintain dialogue and feedback with physical and mental health services. Co-locate if possible, or facilitate regular visits and check-ups
- Invite police to have a presence in schools from early years in order to encourage good relationships and emphasise police role of support
- Set up a system whereby emergency services alert school whenever a student suffers an ACE/trauma event
- Provide or facilitate family counselling sessions, therapists and crisis intervention specialists

# TI schools outside Walla Walla

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- Menominee Tribe in Wisconsin integrated trauma-informed practices and ACEs science into high schools (inc. historical trauma)
  - Graduation rates have risen from 60% to 99%
  - Cannabis use down 30%, cigarette use down 49%, alcohol use down 64%
- Schools in Dalles, OR focus on after-school programmes, mental health and crisis intervention across school ages
  - Expulsion now much less common
  - Where it does occur: multi-agency involvement, focus on ‘what’s happened’ to the child, always accompanied by plan for child and family
  - Students report less alcohol use, fewer physical fights, heightened feelings of safety

# TI schools outside Walla Walla



# Discussion