

Evaluation Summary Report: Trauma-Informed Practices (TIP) Workshop, Waikato 2023

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Executive Summary The Trauma-Informed Practices (TIP) Workshop held on November 3, 2023, in the Waikato region provided a platform for educators to explore practical strategies for supporting students impacted by trauma. With 67 participants, the workshop emphasised culturally responsive approaches, relational neuroscience, and self-regulation techniques. This report highlights the workshop's impact, key learnings, and recommendations for sustaining and expanding trauma-informed practices in educational settings. Notably, 97% of attendees rated the workshop as highly relevant, with many emphasising its transformative potential for fostering safe and inclusive environments.

Introduction The Trauma-Informed Practices (TIP) workshop held in Waikato/Hauraki in 2023 was a pivotal component of the year-long professional learning series facilitated by the Network of Expertise (NEX). The workshop aimed to empower educators with evidence-based strategies to support students affected by trauma, fostering inclusive and nurturing educational environments. This report captures the workshop's outcomes, emphasising participant feedback, key learnings, and practical applications.

Background In New Zealand, students with learning disabilities and trauma histories often face significant barriers to academic success and social integration. These challenges highlight the critical need for trauma-informed professional development. The day workshop addressed these needs, equipping educators with practical tools and fostering a deeper understanding of relational neuroscience and cultural responsiveness.

Trauma-informed education recognises the profound impact of trauma on learning and behaviour, emphasising the need for safe, supportive, and responsive environments. The Waikato TIP workshop aimed to equip educators with actionable strategies to address the diverse needs of students and create spaces where all learners can thrive. This report evaluates the workshop's outcomes, focusing on the integration of oranga-informed (wellbeing-focused) practices and the application of Te Ao Māori perspectives in trauma-informed frameworks.

Methodology The evaluation drew on:

- Surveys completed by 55 participants of the 67.
- Open-ended responses reflecting on key learnings and practical applications.
- Observational data and facilitator insights.

This mixed-methods approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the workshop's impact and areas for future development.

Participant Demographics Attendees included classroom teachers, learning support coordinators, principals, and teacher aides. Ethnic diversity was evident, with representation from Māori, Pacific Islander, and New Zealand European communities. One participant noted, "Having voices from diverse backgrounds enriched our understanding of trauma-informed practices and their cultural relevance."

Key Findings

1. Workshop Effectiveness

- **Presenter Knowledge and Engagement:**
 - 100% of participants rated the facilitator as highly knowledgeable. “The presenter’s depth of understanding made complex topics accessible and actionable,” shared one attendee.
- **Relevance of Content:**
 - 97% of participants found the workshop highly relevant to their roles. “The integration of neuroscience with cultural practices provided a holistic approach to trauma-informed education,” remarked an educator.

2. New Learnings and Applications

- **The 6 R’s Framework:** Participants highlighted the importance of Regulate, Relate, and Reason as core principles. One attendee reflected, “This framework helped me understand how to approach dysregulated students with empathy and structure.”
- **Oranga-Informed Practices:**
 - The incorporation of Te Ao Māori principles, such as purākau and kaupapa Māori practices, resonated deeply. “Connecting trauma to Māori narratives provides a culturally anchored way to support tamariki,” noted a teacher.
- **Self-Regulation and Co-Regulation Techniques:**
 - Strategies such as yoga, breathwork, and sensory tools were frequently mentioned. “Teaching students to regulate their emotions through mindfulness has been transformative in my classroom,” shared an attendee.
- **Focus on Spaces:** Participants emphasized the need for safe, calming environments. “Redesigning our classroom spaces to include quiet zones has already shown positive results,” stated a school leader.

3. Barriers to Implementation

- **Time Constraints:**
 - Many attendees cited limited time for planning and collaboration. “Incorporating these strategies requires dedicated time, which is hard to find,” observed one participant.
- **Resource Gaps:**
 - The lack of readily available tools and materials was a recurring theme. “We need a centralized hub for trauma-informed resources that are culturally responsive and practical,” suggested an educator.

Participant Reflections

- “Understanding the science behind trauma has changed how I approach my students and even my colleagues.”
- “The emphasis on connection and creating safe spaces reminded me that relationships are the foundation of learning.”

- “This workshop inspired me to rethink how we design our classrooms to support both students and teachers.”

Recommendations

1. Expand Professional Development Opportunities:

- Offer follow-up sessions focused on advanced strategies and their integration into daily practice.

2. Develop Resource Toolkits:

- Create an online repository of oranga-informed and trauma-informed resources, including templates, videos, and cultural narratives.

3. Promote Collaborative Networks:

- Establish professional learning communities to share successes and address challenges.

4. Prioritize Educator Wellbeing:

- Include mindfulness and self-regulation training for teachers to support their resilience and effectiveness.

Conclusion The Waikato TIP Workshop successfully empowered educators with actionable strategies to support students affected by trauma. By integrating cultural responsiveness, relational safety, and practical techniques, the workshop laid a strong foundation for meaningful change in educational settings. Sustained professional learning and systemic support will be essential to maintaining this momentum and fostering equitable, trauma-informed practices across Aotearoa.