ENGAGING AT-RISK YOUTH & FAMILIES

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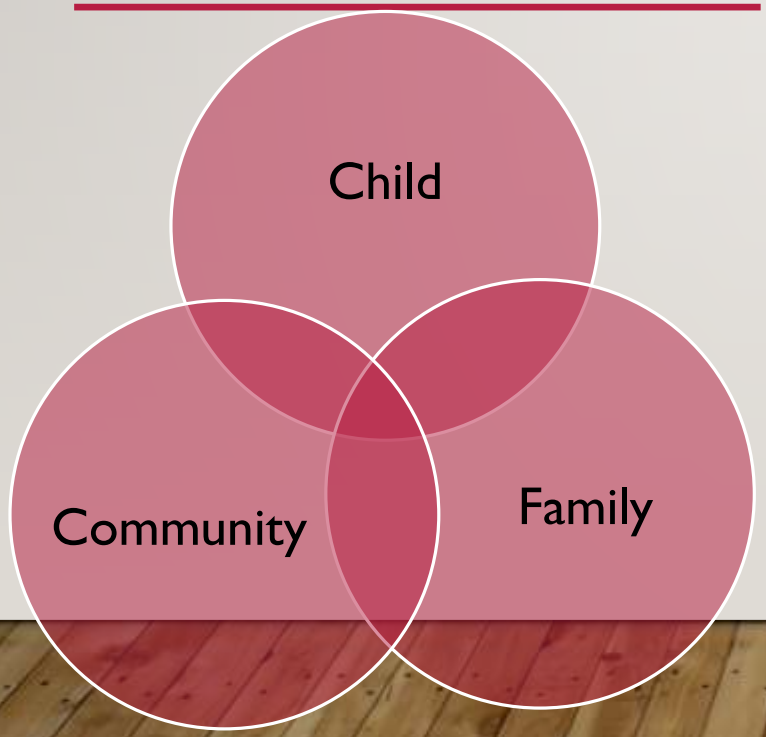
ARE YOU ANY OF THE FOLLOWING? (PLEASE STAND)

- Teachers, educators, administrators
- Foster parents, adoptive parents, family placements
- Caseworkers, Practitioners, Therapists, interventionists
- Involved adult in the life of a child that may be experiencing at-risk situation(s)

THANK YOU!

You make a difference & we need you!

AT RISK… WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?



The definition we will use today:

- **<u>At-risk</u> refers to a higher probability that an individual youth will *not* transition successfully to adulthood.**
- An individual experiencing an at-risk situation(s) may find that they are unable to avoid interruptions to adult success through situations including substance abuse, incarceration, domestic violence, poverty, homelessness (and housing insecurity), and chronic unemployment.

Stepping on my soapbox…

It's not the youth that are at-risk…it's us, it's our community!

We are at-risk of losing a priceless resource - our ***precious potential future***. We are at-risk of missing out on loving parents, amazing innovators, educators, brilliant doctors, and artists.

We are at-risk of great loss if we don't step up and speak out for all of our children!

AT RISK… HOW DO WE MEASURE THAT?

- Poverty
- low level of parental education
- large number of children
- not owning a home
- single parenthood
- welfare dependence
- family dysfunction
- abuse
- parental mental illness
- parental substance use
- family discord or illness

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACE SCORES)

- An ACE score is a tally of different types of abuse, neglect, and other hallmarks of a rough childhood. According to the Adverse Childhood Experiences study, the rougher your childhood, the higher your score is likely to be and the higher your risk for later health problems.

Measures of community risk might include rates of poverty, crime, unemployment, or teen parenthood in the community.

ACE SCORE TEST

(**TRIGGER WARNING-THESE QUESTIONS CAN BE UPSETTING TO SOME INDIVIDUALS**)

#1
Before your 18th birthday, did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often…
swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you?
or
act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?

#2
Before your 18th birthday, did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often…
push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?
or
ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?

#3
Before your 18th birthday, did an adult or person at least five years older than you ever…
touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?
or
attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?

ACE SCORE TEST

(**TRIGGER WARNING-THESE QUESTIONS CAN BE UPSETTING TO SOME INDIVIDUALS**)

#4
Before your eighteenth birthday, did you often or very often feel that…
no one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?
or
your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?

#5
Before your 18th birthday, did you often or very often feel that…
you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you?
or
your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?

#6
Before your 18th birthday, was a biological parent ever lost to you through divorce, abandonment, or other reason?

ACE SCORE TEST

(**TRIGGER WARNING-THESE QUESTIONS CAN BE UPSETTING TO SOME INDIVIDUALS**)

#7
Before your 18th birthday, was your mother or stepmother:
often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her?
or
sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?
or
ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?

#8
Before your 18th birthday, did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?

#9
Before your 18th birthday, was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?

#10
Before your 18th birthday, did a household member go to prison?

SO, NOW WHAT?

Remember this, too: ACE scores don't tally the positive experiences in early life that can help build resilience and protect a child from the effects of trauma. Having a grandparent who loves you, a teacher who understands and believes in you, or a trusted friend you can confide in may mitigate the long-term effects of early trauma, psychologists say. -Laura Starecheski, npr.com

- Don't reinvent the wheel. There are supports within your school, district, community, and State/National PTA…make use of them!
- Step up but don't overstep.
- Find ways to ENGAGE students & parents and WELCOME them into the PTA family!
- Support the adults in the child's life including:
  - Parents, grandparents, foster parents, teachers, aides, social workers, counselors, nurses, administrators, coaches, tutors, etc.

VIDEO

What is Toxic Stress and how does it affect children?

MEET MY BUNNY GIRL AND MY MUNCHKIN

HOW DO WE ADDRESS AT-RISK SITUATIONS & HELP?

Resources to reduce the sources of stress including:

- Basic needs – food, housing, diapers, etc
- Connections – for help with substance abuse, mental illness, violent/toxic relationships, etc
- Education and intervention – teaching life skills and exposing families to middle-class concepts including financial planning, health and wellness, job and career assistance.
- Support responsive relationships – with parents, caregivers, and involved adults in the child's life. Family engagement is at the core of PTA's platform and advocacy efforts!

Ideas for practical steps for a PTA:

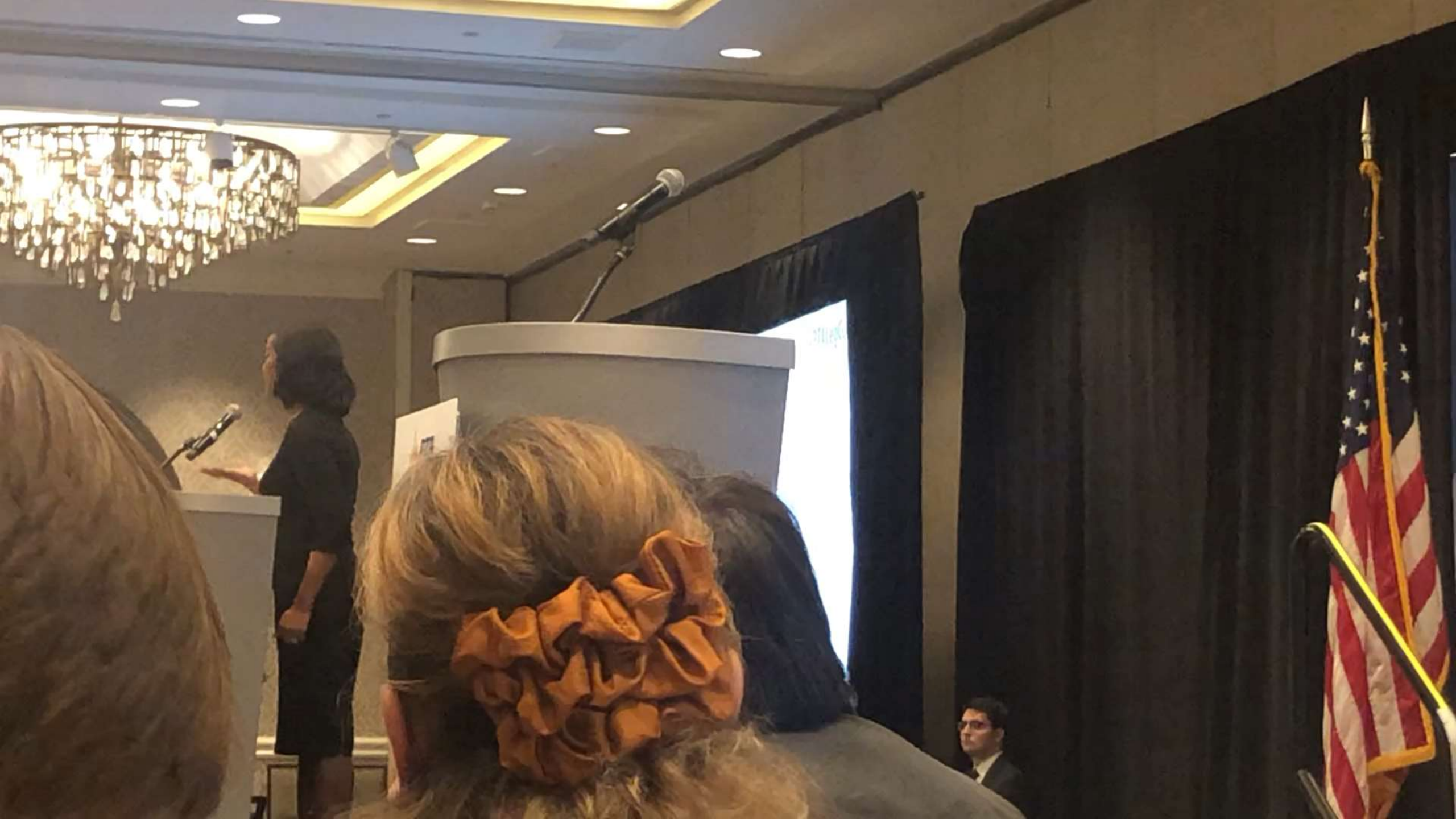
- Support family engagement events and efforts…or plan your own!
- Familiarize yourself and your PTA members of local resources (substance abuse treatments, energy/food/medical assistance, domestic abuse resources, foster care services, parenting classes, etc.
- Support the professionals in your school district that address these issues daily!
- #BeTheOne - Studies prove that children with high ACE scores can overcome their situation with resilience if they have at least ONE involved adult on their side. Volunteer! Mentor! Be the ONE for a child!

GROUP EXERCISE: MEET YOUR KIDS

Alex, Brienna, and Carson (names are fictional but situations are based on real-life children) are now your kids. They are students at your school in your community. Work with your group to identify intervention opportunities along their timeline.

- **Within your group, answer the following questions about your kiddo:**

1. What at-risk situation(s) may apply to this child?
2. How could you identify needs and resources for this child?
3. Who are the supportive adults in this child's life? What role(s) do they play?
4. What entrance points did you find along the timeline? What interventions or supports would you offer and when?
5. Remember: you may not have any power/ability to directly intervene (**student privacy is protected** in many instances). We must also be careful to **avoid judgement** based on our preconceived ideals that may not be shared by other parents who are just as loving toward their children as we are-but may approach parenting differently.
   This is an awareness activity-the more we know, the better we can advocate for our children!



RESOURCES

Cited research for this presentation:

https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/aces-and-toxic-stress-frequently-asked-questions/

https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/riskprotectivefactors.pdf

https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/03/02/387007941/take-the-ace-quiz-and-learn-what-it-does-and-doesnt-mean

https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2006/01/DefiningAtRisk1.pdf

http://schoolengagement.org/school-engagement-services/at-risk-youth/

- Resources for you to check out:
  - https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/03/02/387007941/take-the-ace-quiz-and-learn-what-it-does-and-doesnt-mean
  - https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/aces-and-toxic-stress-frequently-asked-questions/
  - https://www.facebook.com/childtrends/
  - Missouri PTA Facebook page and website
  - National PTA Facebook page and website