

Effectiveness study among teachers

Trauma-informed teaching: The positive results of a pilot



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Does trauma-informed teaching help improve relationships between teachers and pupils, and the performance of pupils in the classroom? That is what Augeo wanted to study in a pilot at three schools in The Hague. Although we cannot draw firm conclusions, the preliminary results are positive.

Teachers

For this study, we asked teachers at three schools in The Hague to select one or more pupils whom they know have suffered adverse experiences. These teachers selected pupils who, for example, had been abused or neglected at home, whose parents had separated acrimoniously or with violence, who had a parent with severe psychiatric or addiction problems, or who were bullied at school. Teachers filled out a questionnaire about the pupil or pupils on three occasions. The questionnaire consisted of a section with questions about the relationship between the teacher and the pupil, and a section with questions about how the pupil was functioning at school. Between the second and third survey, teachers followed the 'trauma-informed teaching' online course.

When it comes to the relationship between the teacher and the pupil, the results point towards a positive effect. Before the course, teachers already rated their relationships with pupils about whom they completed the questionnaire as positive. After the course, they said that the relationship has become even more positive. They reported fewer conflicts, and said that they had been able to get a little closer to pupils.



“Provide as much security, positivity, structure and clarity as possible, so no unexpected situations.”

- Juf Marjolein -



In terms of the impact of the course on how pupils functioned at school (aspects such as motivation, task orientation, work rate and social position of the pupil), we are unable to say anything specific, at least not yet: the period was probably too short, and the group studied too small to be able to observe clear effects. Only pupils from the more senior classes seemed to show slight improvements in their performance in these areas, although any difference is small.

Children with adverse experiences

We also wanted to know the extent to which children themselves say they are doing better if the teacher takes a trauma-informed approach to teaching. All the children in groups 5 to 8 (ages around 8 to around 12) completed a questionnaire. The answers from children who indicated that things were not going well for them personally, either occasionally or more frequently, were analysed.

Negative interactions

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions about the extent to which children feel that their teachers are supporting them. The analyses show that pupils indicate that the number of negative interactions has declined; these might be for example, a pupil feeling that the teacher is blaming him or her, that the teacher says nasty things to the child, or that the teacher is demanding things which are in fact too difficult. This effect could be seen after the second questionnaire was completed, so before the teachers followed the course. Apparently, bringing the topic to their attention and filling out a questionnaire already contributed to reducing negative interactions.

Perceived stress

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions about how pupils functioned mentally and physically; for example, whether they feel calm and relaxed in the classroom, if they cry a lot or become angry, or if they have physical symptoms such as abdominal pain or fatigue. During the course of the study, the pupils indicated that they improved in both mental and physical aspects. This effect can already be seen after the children have completed the first two questionnaires. Focussing on feelings in the class has, therefore, already had a positive effect on these feelings, for teachers and pupils alike. This effect is reinforced after the teachers follow the course, especially in physical terms, but also mentally; children feel a little better after their teachers follow the course in trauma-informed teaching.

General functioning

The third part of the questionnaire contained questions about how pupils were functioning emotionally, socially, and at school. The results were the same: after the second survey, in other words before teachers followed the course, an improvement can already be observed. Students function better in both emotional and social terms. Focus on this issue and filling out questionnaires about it already creates a positive effect.



Conclusion

We can say with some caution that a small positive effect can be seen in both teachers and pupils. This positive effect was partly put in motion by getting pupils and teachers to complete questionnaires, which focussed their attention, albeit unconsciously, on undergoing adverse experiences and trauma-informed teaching. Some effects are reinforced after teachers follow the course on trauma-informed teaching. As far as the teachers are concerned, we can say that they have a slightly more positive relationship with their pupils with adverse experiences, especially when in terms of limiting conflicts and increasing feelings of closeness. With the pupils, we can also cautiously observe an effect; they experience fewer negative interactions with the teacher, feel better in the classroom in both physical and mental terms, and function better emotionally.

Would you like some more information about the results of this study, or courses available from Augeo academy?

Then please send an email to info@augeoacademy.nl

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