

20 - 22 March 2026

Lisbon , Portugal

Supporting Trauma-Informed Teaching Through a Community of Practice

Matty Hillman

Selkirk College, Canada

Abstract

Trauma-informed (TI) approaches are increasingly recognized as essential in post-secondary teaching and learning, given the widespread prevalence of trauma and its understood impact on learner engagement, safety, and academic success. Yet many educators report uncertainty about how to meaningfully implement TI pedagogy beyond possessing a foundational awareness. While workshops and micro-courses offer valuable introductions, they often lack the ongoing relational support, reflective space, and opportunities for collaborative learning required for sustained pedagogical change. This applied research project, conducted through the 2024–25 BCcampus Research Fellows program, explored the potential of a community of practice (CoP) model to deepen educators’ understanding and application of TI teaching principles. Over one academic semester, a group of instructors of diverse teaching fields met monthly to examine TI topics, share perspectives and strategies, engage with invited speakers on aligned subjects such as learner accessibility and Universal Design for Learning. Mixed-method data were collected through pre- and post-surveys and observational field notes. Findings indicate both a measurable increase in participants’ knowledge and intention to implement TI practices, and a strong qualitative theme: the CoP itself functioned as a protective, supportive learning environment mirroring the same values of safety, transparency, collaboration, and empowerment that are foundational to the TI pedagogical shift participants were pursuing. Fittingly, this project suggests that TI pedagogy is best cultivated not through isolated professional development events, but through sustained relational practice. Building educator wellness and opportunities for community-based professional development should be seen as essential to fostering trauma-informed learning environments for students.

Keywords: Community-Of-Practice; Education; Pedagogy; Trauma; Trauma-Informed-Education