

If We Don't Support the Whole Child, Violence in School Will Continue

By Shawnta S. Barnes - September 20, 2018



Recently in schools, there has been a push for social-emotional learning (SEL). Some parents and educators equate SEL to sitting in a circle and singing Kum By Yah. This misconception is why students that need SEL don't have this in their schools.

I assert if we don't address managing and regulating emotions more

violence will take place in schools. Recently, a girl stabbed another girl to death at a high school in Michigan over a boy. How did it get to this point?

When these tragedies occur, it makes you wonder what could have been done differently to avoid these outcomes. Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, in a TED talk, speaks about adverse childhood experiences and the effects it has on the child. Trauma changes how children respond in situations. Even if a child has not faced trauma or has only had minimal trauma, all children can benefit from learning about social-emotional health.

If it is implemented correctly, students will be able to implement strategies to calm down, think through problems, and respond appropriately. When they don't respond appropriately, restorative conversations happen to think through the situation and correct any issues. If a

child has a meltdown and knocks stuff over, then the child cleans up the mess. SEL is not a consequence-free philosophy. The focus is to teach the child how to respond differently.

I am hoping more schools will consider addressing mental health through SEL. If schools don't, more tragedies will occur.