

# Second Response **School Resiliency Program**



**A Pilot Program To Cultivate Resilience  
& Social-Emotional Intelligence in  
Connecticut Public Schools**



# THE TRAUMA CLIMATE || our children's world

A gun has been fired on school grounds nearly once a week since the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School of December of 2012.<sup>1</sup> Highly trained school psychologists have become commonplace in public school settings. Many schools now have assigned uniformed and armed resource officers, and all have bomb threat protocols and lock-down drills. One of every four students reports being bullied during the school year with associated negative impacts on their academic, emotional, social and physical well-being.<sup>2</sup> There are also new guidelines for suicide prevention in response to 16% of students nationwide who seriously consider suicide.<sup>3</sup> **The accumulation of stress and trauma our children experience is daunting.**

**Schools are the center of communities and teachers are on the front line of every issue that arises each and every day for our children.** The responsibility of schools to prepare our children for the future has never been greater, yet nearly half of K-12 teachers report high daily stress during the school year.<sup>4</sup> Teachers are focused not only on their students' academic success but on their safety and social-emotional development as well. School districts have begun to implement social-emotional curriculum after realizing the urgent need for better tools to address the unparalleled rise in trauma exposure our children now face.

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**The School Resiliency Program will serve as a model for other schools in the district, in the state and ultimately, across the country to adopt.**

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Second Response develops social-emotional intelligence by teaching tools to cultivate personal and social awareness, self-regulation strategies and safely supported emotional externalization. We believe our methodology could significantly alleviate the challenges schools face.

After an evaluation by a school superintendent and curriculum expert, we have determined that our methodology aligns to the Common Core Standards which the majority of public schools in the country utilize.

Now, in partnership with six Connecticut schools, we have developed a pilot School Resiliency Program to offer critical new tools for social-emotional development in the classroom. The model seamlessly integrates the methodology into their physical education curriculum, while also meeting Common Core requirements.



## PILOT ROLL-OUT || evaluated & approved

The strategic plan to roll-out and expand Second Response's School Resilience Program is already underway.

Accomplishments:

- Evaluated methodology to ensure alignment with Common Core Standards
- Established partnerships with physical education teachers and guidance counselors in six Connecticut schools for the pilot program
- Coordinated the Mentor and School Facilitator Trainings in early November 2016
- Developed a road-map for the on-going support with on-site mentorship and a web-based resource center
- Outlined an evaluation protocol including a process and impact assessment
- Developed a long-term plan for expansion

*“With the alliance of guidance counselors and Second Response Mentors, physical education teachers will be able to offer children a secure place to safely express their emotions in a manner that uniquely aligns with children’s primary processing strategy – with their bodies and in play.”*

Jaye Stuart, Physical Education and Health Teacher

### Participating Schools

1. The Burnham School in Bridgewater
2. Washington Primary School in Washington Depot
3. Booth Elementary in Roxbury
4. Immanuel Lutheran School in Bristol
5. The Boys and Girls Club in Bristol
6. Immanuel Lutheran School in Danbury

## OUR METHOD || playing to heal mind & body

PLAYshops are 30-45 minute facilitated group experiences consisting of non-verbal exercises presented as simple fun and games. Grounded in theater training, biopsychology and somatic research, these specially designed physical exercises improve circulation and respiration, regulate internal body rhythms, revitalize muscle tone and restore flexibility to joints.

While children and adults often separate from their emotions and body in response to fear, our methodology brings them back into their body, helps them reconnect to fear-response emotions, and thus promotes full expression and release of potentially harmful, deeply-held trauma. This approach facilitates unconditional acceptance of the range of reactions to trauma, rather than insisting they be dismissed, or worse, denied altogether. **Ultimately, the experience helps children regain their innate sense of security and joy.**



# SCHOOL RESILIENCY PROGRAM || cultivating well-being

## 1. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Teachers are accustomed to utilizing curriculum with their classes that specifies standards, objectives, scope and sequence, and measurement tools to determine success and allows for measurement of accountability. The School Resiliency Program curriculum will include a delineation of all known standards and objectives and the accompanying rationale for each activity in a teacher-friendly format.

By creating an accessible written curriculum in the format in which teachers and school administrators are accustomed, the School Resiliency Program is expected to be easily incorporated into classrooms enabling a successful Connecticut pilot and ultimately **establish the groundwork for becoming mainstream in schools across the country.**

## 2. PROGRAM TRAININGS

We designed a 5-day intensive training to develop 10-12 school-ready Second Response Mentors. The training program for this cohort is scheduled for November 9-14, 2016. Led by our expert faculty of somatic specialists, health care professionals and counselors, attendees will be trained in *PLAYshop* methodology, learning the in-depth skills and background information.

On November 14th, we will hold the first School Facilitator Training in conjunction with the Mentor Training. Veteran facilitators and newly trained Mentors will lead the School Facilitator Training. This offers Mentors additional practice and an opportunity for them to build connections with the teachers with whom they will be working.

The School Facilitator Training will include a study of the somatic biological shifts, as well as the psychological and emotional impact that arises after a traumatic or stressful experience for various developmental stages. **With this foundation, we will continue to teach the School Facilitators how to implement the methodology alongside explanations of the supporting mechanisms and research behind it.** They will also have opportunities to practice and lead to develop an experiential understanding of *PLAYshop* methodology.

In the spring, we will hold a Mid-Program Training with all participating school staff and active Mentors.

*“You can rebuild the infrastructure and the school buildings, but unless the inner landscape of the children is attended to, any recovery effort will fail.”*

Educator and former Connecticut school superintendent

*“These engaging exercises are an incredible way to build resiliency in children. The fact that they address core curriculum standards is a huge bonus for schools. Those eager for meaningful integration of standards will appreciate *PLAYshop* methodology.”*

Dr. Anne Stulhman, curriculum writer and former principal

*“This is a safe space, a place where you can move, laugh, cry, be silly, dance.”*

Teacher, 2013 Typhoon Yolanda

*“What you are doing is emotional medicine.”*

Head of an orphanage, 2015 Nepalese Earthquakes

# SCHOOL RESILIENCY PROGRAM || cultivating well-being

## 3. PROGRAM SUPPORT

In addition to the primary curriculum materials, we will develop a supporting School Resiliency Program Manual and Online Resource Center. The Manual will provide detailed explanations of the biological, psychological and somatic-based mechanisms and research supporting the curriculum, in addition to extensive diagrams and supporting facilitator resources. The Resource Center will be a password-protected, fully-equipped website with digitally interactive curriculum and program materials, including video presentations of the exercises, as well as a community forum for real-time support among participating teachers and Second Response Mentors.

**The art of *PLAYshop* facilitation takes practice. We will ensure successful implementation of the methodology with an on-going mentoring component.**

Tailored mentorship will be established for each new School Facilitator. Initially, each workshop conducted during school will be supported with one to two Second Response Mentors present. During these early workshops, we also will suggest, when possible, that the school have additional staff present who can support the process, learn simultaneously, and increase buy-in within the school.

All School Facilitators will be supported as they develop the confidence to fully implement the methodology independently. The role of the Mentor will be to offer guidance through leading exercises, supporting as a participant, offering feedback and answering any questions any school staff may have. All of the lessons learned and questions asked on-site also will be digitally posted to assist others who may have similar queries.

## 4. EVALUATION PLAN **The evaluation design will include a process and impact assessment for Phase 1.**

### **Process Assessment**

*What worked well, and what could have worked better?*

We will analyze feedback from all stakeholders, including School Facilitators, other supporting school staff, Mentors and Second Response staff. The assessment will include informally offered feedback, as well as formal data collection of training surveys, pre- and post-program questionnaires and post-program recorded interviews.

### **Impact Assessment**

*How did the program impact the students and school staff, and overall school culture?*

In Phase 1, we will analyze impact through the perspectives of school stakeholders. The assessment will include formal data collection of training surveys, pre- and post-program questionnaires and post-program recorded interviews. In later phases, we will partner with university researchers to develop a quasi-experimental study across schools.

## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE || one teacher at a time

**The pilot program will propel the conversations of the benefits of the methodology through targeted publicity and teacher-to-teacher outreach.** Teachers prefer vetted processes of instructional delivery that are tried, true and ready-to-use. Potential future School Facilitators from neighboring schools and districts will be invited to observe a *PLAYshop* in action at one of the pilot schools. Additional opportunities to participate in an Introductory School Resiliency Training will then be promoted for these potential future School Facilitators to join. These trainings will serve as a professional development program for which the school districts will provide funding for each teacher.

We will copyright and trademark the resulting program materials, which include logo, name, curriculum, manual and on-line resources to establish a foundation for secured future revenue as we expand.

## QUALIFICATIONS OF KEY STAFF || biographies

**Anne Stuhlman, PhD, Educational Leadership:** Anne has served in educational leadership roles in Missouri, Texas, and Connecticut over the past 28 years. These include both public and private school principalships as well as directorships in curriculum, instruction, assessment and accountability. Dr. Stuhlman has written curriculum and led strategic curriculum planning for schools around the country. Each curriculum piece has been tailored to the specific needs or desires of the requesting school or district. Currently, Dr. Stuhlman serves as a curriculum consultant for Exemplary Education Inc. Her educational career preparation includes a Bachelor of Science from Lincoln University in Elementary Education, a Master of Science from Texas A & M University in Educational Administration, and an Educational Doctorate from Baylor University in Educational Leadership with a focus on curriculum and assessment.

**Jaye Stuart, MS, Exercise Science:** Jaye has served as a physical education and health educator for 37 years in Vermont and Connecticut. Her experience in this capacity has included lead curriculum development roles as well as senior capstone coordinator. Currently, Mrs. Stuart is a Physical Education and Health Teacher as well as the Capstone Coordinator for Regional School District 12. Mrs. Stuart's educational career preparation includes a Bachelor of Science degree from Springfield College Science and Physical Education, a Master of Science degree from Southern Connecticut State University in Exercise Science, and a 6th Year in Educational Leadership.

**William Spear, Founder and Executive Director, Fortunate Blessings Foundation:** William is an international lecturer, consultant and writer on integrative health, self-development, end-of-life care, and leader of trauma relief teams following disasters throughout the world. His frequent articles in *The Huffington Post* touch upon some of these subjects. His work with the Center for Living with Illness and Dying and Yale University Hospital in 1978 led to his association and in-depth training with Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. William is the founder of the Fortunate Blessings Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit based in Litchfield, CT, whose Second Response initiative helps stabilize the emotional health of individuals, especially children, and their communities recently traumatized as a result of disasters.

*For a full staff list and bios, please contact us.*



## SECOND RESPONSE || since 2004

In the days after the devastating Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004, Fortunate Blessings Foundation, a US 501(c)(3) secular non-profit educational organization, launched Second Response, an initiative to address the emotional needs of thousands of the disaster victims. The mission of Second Response is to stabilize the well-being of individuals, groups and communities exposed to trauma by restoring the mind-body capacity for resilience. Second Response serves caregivers, first responders, health care personnel, teachers, parents, veterans and disaster relief agencies helping them to manage their own secondary trauma, build their somatic social-emotional intelligence and reinforcing community disaster preparedness that is cost-effective and replicable. We currently run three programs: Introductory Community PLAYshop Trainings, Caring for the Caregiver and, now, the School Resiliency Program.

## NOTES || background research

- 1 [graphics.latimes.com/school-shootings-since-newtown/](http://graphics.latimes.com/school-shootings-since-newtown/)
- 2 [pacer.org/bullying/resources/stats.asp](http://pacer.org/bullying/resources/stats.asp)
- 3 [cdc.gov/healthcommunication/toolstemplates/entertainmented/tips/suicideyouth.html](http://cdc.gov/healthcommunication/toolstemplates/entertainmented/tips/suicideyouth.html)
- 4 <http://www.gallup.com/services/178709/state-america-schools-report.aspx>



**SECOND  
RESPONSE**

Second Response is an initiative of  
Fortunate Blessings Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit.