

MOLLOY UNIVERSITY
School of Education and Human Services
Department of Teacher Education

EDU 5900-XX- Early Childhood Trauma and its Impact on Education
(3 credits)

Summer 2026

Instructor: Amanda Behrens

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Office hours: Upon request

Course Description:

This course provides early childhood educators, teachers, and school-related professionals with a comprehensive understanding of early childhood trauma and its profound effects on a child's development, learning, and behavior. Participants will explore trauma-informed practices to help build a safe and supportive learning environment that promotes resilience and positive outcomes for all students. This course is designed for all early childhood specialists, special education, general educators and parents of children who require these support services.

***This course may be used as the first of three courses towards a certificate in XXX**

Shared Vision:

The Molloy University Teacher Education faculty has derived its vision for the exemplary teacher from the University's mission statement, the four pillars of the Dominican tradition, comments and input from the Professional Education Unit's Advisory Board and degree candidates as well as numerous faculty discussions rooted in the department's knowledge base which undergirds the initial and advanced programs' curriculum, pedagogy, and values.

The teaching professionals who complete Molloy's teacher preparation programs are distinguished by their ability to exemplify and promote core values in their own teaching. These values include:

1. Belief that all children can learn
2. Learner-centered and value-centered curriculum and pedagogy
3. Ethics and spirituality
4. Intellectual curiosity
5. Independence and risk taking, while promoting collective identity and responsibility
6. Diversity, multiculturalism and pluralism, including divergent thinking
7. Passion for teaching
8. Commitment to students and their communities
9. Civic responsibility through the promotion of social justice and interdependence
10. Commitment to democracy

Course Objectives:

1. Define early childhood trauma and identify its various types.
2. Explain the neurobiological effects of trauma on brain development and learning.
3. Recognize the behavioral and emotional signs of trauma in young children.
4. Discuss the link between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and long-term educational outcomes.
5. Develop and implement trauma-informed practices within the classroom.
6. Apply strategies for building resilience in students affected by trauma.
7. Understand the importance of self-care and addressing secondary traumatic stress as an educator.

Course Format:

This course will be offered online through Canvas, Molloy's learning management system and is entirely asynchronous. The course will open two days before the start date and close one week after the last day of class. This section is offered in the Summer of 2026, dates TBD.. There will be daily activities and discussions that must be completed by the due date listed. Additional time to complete the final project is available.

Required Readings, Videos, and Other Materials:

All materials will be provided throughout the course.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Module 1: Foundations of early childhood trauma (10pts)

- Defining trauma: A review of different types of trauma, including abuse, neglect, community violence, and disasters.
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Introduction to the landmark ACE Study and its implications for education and lifelong health.

- Developmental and relational trauma: Understanding the specific impact of trauma experienced during the critical early years of development.

Module 2: The neurobiology of trauma (10pts)

- Brain development: Exploration of how trauma disrupts normal brain development, particularly affecting areas related to executive function, memory, and emotion.
- Stress response system: Understanding the "fight, flight, or freeze" response and how it is chronically activated in traumatized children, impacting their ability to learn.
- Toxic stress: Discussion of how prolonged, unresolved trauma creates toxic stress, leading to long-term physical and mental health issues.

Module 3: Trauma in the classroom (10pts)

- Academic impact: How trauma affects attention, memory, problem-solving, and other cognitive abilities necessary for learning.
- Behavioral manifestations: Identification of common classroom behaviors (e.g., aggression, withdrawal, anxiety) that may be coping mechanisms for trauma.
- Social and emotional challenges: Understanding difficulties with emotional regulation and relationships with peers and adults.

Module 4: Creating a trauma-informed environment (10pts)

- Key principles of trauma-informed care: Focusing on safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment.
- Building a safe classroom: Strategies for establishing consistent routines, clear expectations, and predictable environments to increase a child's sense of security.
- Culturally responsive practices: Exploring how cultural background influences the expression of trauma and how to integrate culturally responsive practices into the classroom.

Module 5: Strategies for supporting students (10pts)

- Relationship building: The critical role of caring, stable adult-child relationships in buffering the effects of trauma.
- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): Integrating SEL into the curriculum to teach valuable skills like self-regulation, empathy, and responsible decision-making.
- Positive behavioral support: Implementing restorative and supportive disciplinary approaches instead of relying on punitive measures.

Module 6: Educator self-care and school-wide implementation (10pts)

- Secondary traumatic stress: Understanding and addressing the impact of vicarious trauma and burnout on educators.
- Mindfulness and well-being: Techniques for promoting self-care and emotional well-being among staff.

- School-wide framework: Developing a systemic, school-wide approach to trauma-informed care that involves all staff, families, and community partners.

Module 7: Partnerships with families and communities (10 pts)

- Engaging families: Strategies for building collaborative and trusting partnerships with families affected by trauma.
- Community connections: Linking families with essential community services and resources to create a holistic support network.

Assignments and Assessments (30pts)

- Module reflections: Short written reflections and group discussions on key concepts and personal learning.
- Case study analysis: Applying trauma-informed principles to analyze real-world scenarios involving students.
- Classroom implementation plan: Developing a detailed plan for incorporating trauma-informed practices into a classroom or school setting.
- Final project: A presentation or paper detailing the impact of trauma on a specific aspect of education, based on course learnings.

Molloy University and School of Education and Human Services Policies and Supports:

Expectations of Academic Integrity for All Students

[Honor Pledge and Academic Honesty Policy](#)

Course Withdrawals

View [Withdrawal Policy](#) for potential financial implications

View [the Academic Calendar](#) and/or the course syllabus for the last day to withdraw dates

Incompletes

[Incompletes Policy](#)

Health and Wellness

[Student Health Services](#)

[Student Counseling Center \(SCC\)](#)

Center for Access and Disability (Access)

[Center for Access and Disability](#)
Technical Support

[Student Account, Technology and Canvas](#)

Ally for Canvas

[Supportive Tools and Resources/ Ally](#)

Use of Proctorio for Exams/Quizzes (if applicable)

[Proctorio Resources for Students](#)

Email Accounts

Students are to utilize their Molloy e-mail account or via Canvas when communicating throughout the semester. Those who use a non-Molloy account may miss important messages. Students are responsible for responding to all methods of communication in a timely fashion relating to this course. Instructors will respond to emails from students within 24 hours. When/ if you email the instructor(s), please indicate what course you are in with the course number and section.

APA Manuscript Style

All manuscripts in the field of education are written in the style format of the American Psychological Association. Candidates in the Graduate Education Programs are required to purchase the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.). (2010). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

All papers written in every course must adhere to the manuscript prescriptions defined in this manual.