

IEA Awesome Podcast Episode 16 – Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- 00:01 *Kelsey:* Welcome to the Awesome IEA Podcast brought to you by the Illinois Education Association.
- 00:05 *Diana:* The podcast for curious well-informed association members.
- 00:08 *Kelsey:* I'm one of your hosts, Kelsey Harms, a Computer Specialist from the IEA Program Development Department.
- 00:13 *Diana:* And I'm Diana Zaleski, one of your Instructional Resource and Professional Development Directors from IEA Teaching and Learning.
- 00:19 *Kelsey:* The goal of this podcast is to educate our members about important new educational policy initiatives in a brief and hopefully entertaining format.
- 00:27 *Diana:* Today we are going to speak with Kristine Argue-Mason, IEA Instructional Resource and Professional Development Director. Kristine, thank you for being with us today.
- 00:35 *Kristine:* Well, thank for having me.
- 00:37 *Kelsey:* To begin, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you came to the Illinois Education Association?
- 00:42 *Kristine:* Sure. So, I have been with the Illinois Education Association since 2009. And, prior to that I did a brief stint in Minnesota as a UniServ Director. But, before that I was a high school English teacher and at one point, my involvement in the union started to kind of get in the way of my teaching. And then, my teaching started to get in the way of my union involvement. So, I transitioned out and went through an intern program with the National Education Association and ended up here as a staff person
- 01:14 *Diana:* That's great. So we know that one of the many areas of expertise that you bring to the IEA is your knowledge of adverse childhood experiences. What are adverse childhood experiences and how do these adverse experiences impact our students?
- 01:27 *Kristine:* So, I think the easiest way to say it is that all of us in our lives experience trauma. Right? And, if we're lucky enough, we have people or events in our lives that serve as buffers between the trauma or the stresses that we experience.
- 01:45 When we don't have those buffers in place, that stress become toxic stress which we would call an adversity. And, there has been a great study through Kaiser Permanente and the Center for Disease Control and it's called the ACES study. And, they took a look at the impact of adversities in childhood and how that impacts neurological development, social emotional development, and cognitive development.
- 02:15 *Kelsey:* So, Kristine, how might those adverse experiences impact our students while they're working through their school days?

- 02:21 *Kristine*: So, adverse childhood experiences really started out as research on the physiological impact, right? So, we have people who experience certain types of diseases or social problems, etc., as a result of the adversities that they have experienced. In the classroom, though, we now are seeing students who are having difficulty with self-regulation, maybe being able to self-monitor or manage their behavior, and then also some real cognitive delays.
- 02:53 But, I think what's really important is to help people to understand that we are not trying to diagnose people with adverse childhood experiences. The Kaiser Permanente study identifies ten. That's what they base their study on. But, the truth of the matter is that there could be any number of things that a young person could experience and without a buffer in between those stressors, it's going to be toxic and it's going to be an adversity.
- 03:21 *Kelsey*: So, can you tell us more about your work with our members concerning these ACEs, or adverse childhood experiences?
- 03:28 *Kristine*: Sure. So, a lot of our members are expressing concern over the challenges or the difficulties they're facing in working with students. And, what we've done is put together professional development sessions that really help them to unpack the brain science behind adverse childhood experiences. We recognize that if we don't know the brain science behind it, we might rush to solutions that won't work.
- 03:54 We've also been working with our members to understand the social emotional learning standards that have been outlined by the Illinois State Board of Education. And, we've been talking about frameworks or context that can be used to elevate or strengthen the competencies that are needed in social emotional learning.
- 04:11 Actually, today, we're in Bloomington and in the room next door we have about 65 members from Unit 5 Education Association that are going through a three-day training on adverse childhood experiences and how to become trauma informed and trauma sensitive schools.
- 04:28 *Diana*: That's exciting that we're offering these trainings for our members. Can you talk a little bit more about what additional resources are available for members on this topic and how our members can get more involved in this important work?
- 04:42 *Kristine*: So, let's talk about how our members can get more involved in this work first. When we talk about adverse childhood experiences, it's important to understand that we're talking about a public health crisis. Statistics show, research shows, that about 63 percent of our population have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience. And, if a person has experienced one adversity, the likelihood of them experiencing two is pretty much expected.
- 05:13 So, what we need to do, because we're looking at it as a public health crisis, is to approach it in a public sort of way which means we need to raise the level of awareness. So, we have a lot of resources that provide the background knowledge about the brain science that all of our members should take care to utilize in their spheres of influence and their portals of entry, just so we're speaking the same language about adverse childhood experiences.
- 05:40 People what to know right away, so what do we do about it? How do we fix it? Well, we fix it first by letting people know what it is. In terms of resources, we have a variety of resources that

are on our website. We also have professional development opportunities. We have screenings of *Resilience*, which is about a sixty-minute documentary that really explains the brain science behind adverse childhood experiences.

- 06:08 We also have screenings of *Paper Tigers* which is about, I don't know, less than two-hour documentary about a high school that transformed itself from being a traditional alternative school to becoming one that is trauma sensitive.
- 06:25 And, those are some of the tools we use to raise the level of awareness. And, then if people are interested, we have a three-hour professional development session. We've been doing a number of them throughout the regional offices in Illinois.
- 06:40 And, then if there are teams within school buildings in various districts throughout the state, we offer an opportunity to participate in a three-day training. In addition to that, as far as professional development goes, this year will mark year four of our one-day conference that's typically centered around creating trauma informed schools.
- 07:03 *Kelsey*: Thanks for sharing that. So, how many members have to be on a team for them to reach out? And, do they reach out to you? If a member is interested in getting this training brought to them, what does that process look like?
- 07:16 *Kristine*: So, that's a really good question. And, the truth of the matter is that there are a variety of ways to have IEA work with your local or school district on this topic. Ideally, the local leadership should contact their UniServ Director who can then contact me. But, I think members should also feel comfortable contacting me directly to say that they're interested in the work.
- 07:40 And, through conversations, we can determine what the ultimate goal or vision is for their workspace for becoming trauma sensitive. It might not be starting with a three-day training. It might be a three-hour session. It might be a sixty-minute session. But, members should be comfortable reaching out through the IEA website under the Teaching and Learning tab to make a request for professional development. That will eventually make its way to me and I will circle back and contact that person and then connect with the local leadership and the UniServ Director to make sure that we're all working together to make sure their professional development needs are met.
- 08:21 *Kelsey*: So, Kristine, is there anything else you would like to add or make sure our members know before we conclude the podcast?
- 08:27 *Kristine*: Yes, and thank you for asking me that. So, I know that we're talking about teaching and learning. I know that we're talking about professional development. But, when we're talking about adverse childhood experiences and the potential to eradicate that, we have to understand that there are some policies that we need to impact.
- 08:51 And, this isn't just about teachers or educators learning what to do in their classroom or in their spaces where they're working with students. This is bigger than us, as educators, and we need to work to breakdown silos. So, it isn't enough just to get the professional development for the individual to have impact in their classroom. More importantly, it is about individuals getting

that information and recognizing that they have spheres of influence where they can get in and raise the level of awareness about the topic.

09:22 That is the only way that we will be able affect policy change. And, affecting policy change is the only way that I believe we will be able to impact the challenges we're facing as a result of adverse childhood experiences.

09:40 *Diana*: Thank you so much for bring up those incredibly important points. Thank you so much for joining us. If you have any questions, comments, or feedback, please check out the contact section on the podcast page on the IEA Website.

09:53 *Kelsey*: Special thanks to Mark for the audio help, Amanda for the transcription, and Dan for the website. As always, thanks so much for being a member, and thanks for joining us!

10:01 End