

girlsfirst

Preparing students for a successful future
but letting them be *girls first.*

Girls First

Alyssa Franklin, Director of Education

Areas of Discussion

- What is Girls First?
- Unique Approach:
Arts, SEL, &
Trauma-Informed Lens
- Discussion Questions

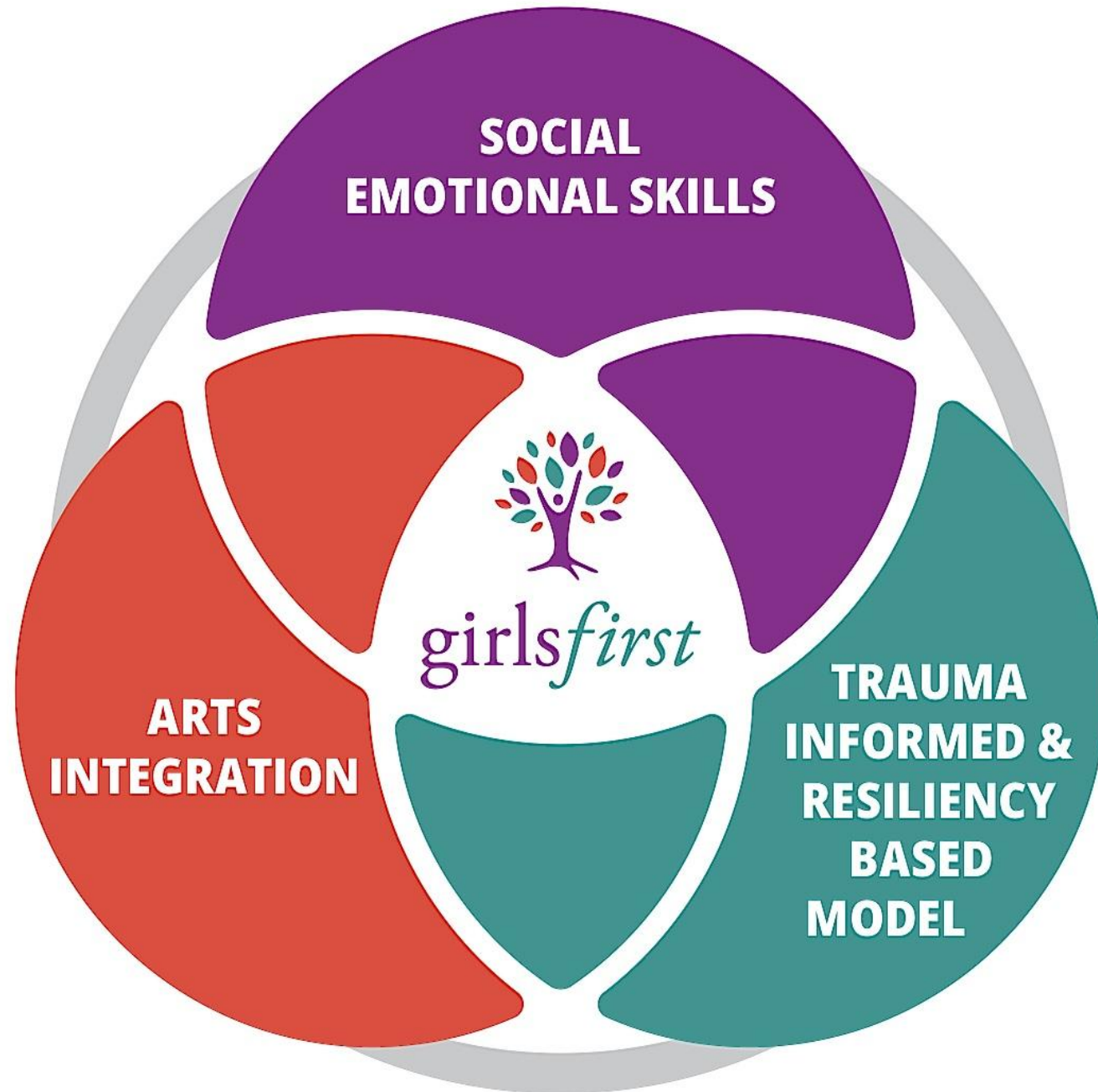




What is Girls First?

*Girls First is a tuition-free, out-of-school program for girls in grades 1 through 4 that offers academic, social and emotional support through creative studies in **dance, visual arts, drama and music.***

*We provide a safe, stable environment where students practice respect for self and others, discover new skills and talents, and develop tools that will allow them to achieve **greater success in school and beyond.***



Our Program is Designed to Help Girls:

- **Feel safe and secure** while building positive relationships
- **Learn new** social, emotional, academic, and creative **skills**
- **Increase their confidence**, regulation, efficacy, empathy, & agency
- **Increase their resiliency and perseverance**
- **Break cycles of adversity**



Why Girls?



GIRLS FIRST EMPOWERS GIRLS BECAUSE:

1. **Empowered girls are key to breaking the cycle of poverty for families**
 - *Every additional year of school increases a girls' eventual wages by an average of 12% – earnings she invests back into her family. Empowered, educated girls have healthier, better-educated children and higher wages – **helping to break the cycle of poverty.***
2. **Empowered girls strengthen economies**
 - Increasing the number of women completing secondary education by just 1 percent could increase a country's economic growth by 0.3 percent.
3. **It is the right thing to do**
 - Girls First is working to improve the lives of women, children and families in the region by investing in our girls and their futures.

Areas That Make Our Program Unique

1. Use the Arts as a Vehicle for Teaching
2. Focus on Social and Emotional Support
3. Use a Trauma-Informed Approach





1. Arts As a Vehicle

- **Arts are a vehicle** by which we teach our students **life skills and coping techniques**
- Students who have access to the arts have better academic results, workforce opportunities, and more civic engagement
- Our curriculum provides interventions for students who experience overwhelming **feelings of stress, anxiety, and anger**, delivered in a universally beneficial way



2. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

- SEL is an integral part of education and human development
- It's the process through which people:
 - **Acquire** and apply the knowledge, **skills**, and attitudes **to develop healthy identities**
 - **Manage emotions**, achieve personal and collective goals
 - **Feel and show empathy** for others
 - **Establish** and maintain **supportive relationships**
 - **Make responsible and caring decisions**



ARTSEE CURRICULUM YEARLY BREAKDOWN



<p><u>YEAR 1:</u> <u>PRACTICING SELF REGULATION</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Understanding Emotions- Understanding Stress Responses- Emotional Regulation- Impulse Control- Calming Strategies- Setting Goals	<p><u>YEAR 2:</u> <u>DISCOVERING PERSONAL AGENCY</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Decision Making- Identifying Choices- Understanding Solutions/Consequences- Self Advocacy
<p><u>YEAR 3:</u> <u>BUILDING SELF EFFICACY</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Trying New Things- Facing Challenges- Setting Goals- Reframing Obstacles- Acknowledging Accomplishments	<p><u>YEAR 4:</u> <u>CULTIVATING EMPATHY</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Develop Emotional Literacy- Build Moral Courage- Hone Social and Emotional Intelligence- Practice Active Listening- Perspective Taking



3. Trauma Informed Approach

- Understanding that there is a significant probability that **any person you interact with has experienced trauma or adversity.**
- **Trauma and stress can change a child's brain, but providing resources, safety, and connection can mitigate those effects.**
- Prolonged stress changes a child's brain affecting their memory and emotional center – this **causes brain shrinkage, problems with memory, learning and behavior**
- A child does not learn to regulate emotions when living in a state of constant stress, and it can lead to **long-term health implications and social issues**

Several Types of Trauma

- There are several types of trauma:
 - **Acute** – single traumatic event limited in time
 - **Chronic** – experiencing repeated and prolonged exposure
 - **Complex** – exposure to multiple traumatic events
 - **Historical** – historical event or prolonged experience that continues to have an impact over several generations
 - **Secondary** – exposure to the trauma of others by those in close contact with the traumatized individual

We recognize that not every student we serve has experienced trauma, but that trauma-informed care — **safety, connection, regulation, and learning adaptive responses** — are equally beneficial

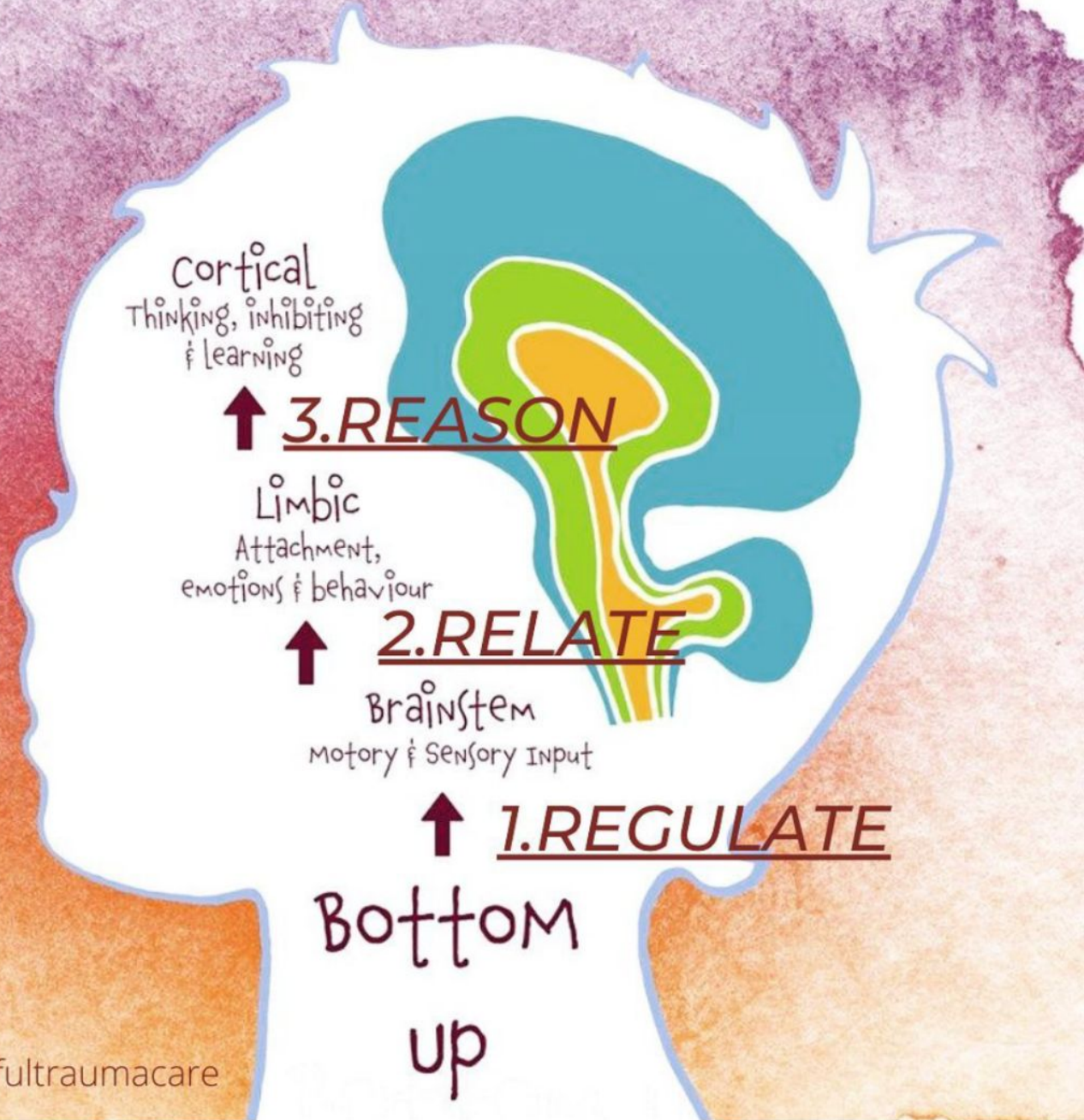


Key Principles of Trauma-Informed Practice:

- ENSURING SAFETY
- BUILDING TRUST
- PROVIDING CHOICES
- FOSTERING COLLABORATION
- NURTURING EMPOWERMENT



EMOTIONAL REGULATION



How Do We Bring It All Together?



We structure the program day to mimic the sequence of brain development and architecture for maximum impact.



Following mealtime, movement and breathing, **students engage in classes from our ARTSEE curriculum**, rotating every trimester to try dance, drama, visual arts and music.



Alternative afternoons, we offer activities such as STEAM Club, Cooking Club, and other Creative Explorations led by staff and community partners such as Drexel University's medical students, Theatre Horizon and Rotation Records. We then wrap up with homework help/quiet center time/free play.

Discussion Questions

- How do you utilize the arts as a vehicle for learning at your organization? How have you witnessed the power of the arts and creative expression in your work?
 - How do you support social and emotional learning at your organization?
 - What types of training and supports does your organization have in place to create safety, trust, choice, collaboration, & empowerment?
 - *Recognizing that many people drawn to this type of work often carry trauma themselves, are vulnerable to secondary trauma, and we are all collectively processing a global event...*
- How do we conduct trauma-informed training without (re)traumatizing our staff?



Alyssa Franklin
alyssa@girlsfirst.org