**An Evaluation of the Safe and Supportive Schools Program**

**2018-2019 School Year**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2018, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) contracted with the Research and Evaluation Department of the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) to evaluate the FY2019 Safe and Supportive Schools Grant Program (SSSP). This grant program is administered by DESE and is intended to support schools and districts in developing plans to support a safe, positive, healthy, and inclusive whole-school learning environment.

During the 2018-2019 school year (FY2019), 40 school districts received funding from DESE through the SSSP. This funding was awarded through two grant codes:

* Fund Code 335: This fund code was competitive, and had two components.
  + The first component, known as Option One, awarded funds to districts and schools to complete the Safe and Supportive Schools Self-Reflection Tool, and develop an action plan based on the results. Funding through this component was awarded to   
    21 districts, with awards ranging from $7,500 to $20,000.
  + The second component, known as Option Two, awarded funds to districts that agreed to provide mentoring supports to the Option One districts (this process is described in more detail in the full report). Funding through this component was awarded to nine districts, with awards ranging from $7,500 to $10,000.
* Fund Code 337: This was a non-competitive grant program to provide continuation funding to districts that had received funding to complete the Tool and develop action plans during the 2017-2018 school year. Ten districts received funding through this fund code, with awards ranging from $5,000 to $20,000.

DESE requested that the FY2019 **evaluation focus on two overarching questions**:

* What are the best practices around, facilitators of, and barriers to effective mentoring?
* What are the best practices around, facilitators of, and barriers to effective action plan implementation and implementation monitoring?

### METHODOLOGY

CES gathered information about districts’ participation in the Safe and Supportive Schools Program in a variety of ways, including:

* A brief survey of Option One grantees (i.e. mentees) to determine the extent to which they have engaged with mentoring.
* Telephone interviews with nine Option One districts and schools concerning their engagement with and need for mentoring supports.
* Two online focus groups with representatives from mentoring districts. Mentoring districts were given the choice of which group to attend, and representatives from seven of the nine districts participated.

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* Telephone interviews with the grant contact person (and, in some cases, additional key personnel) at each of the ten implementation districts.
* A telephone interview with the Safe and Supportive Schools program coordinator at DESE, to explore DESE’s expectations for mentoring.
* A review of documents related to mentoring, including communications between DESE and districts, scheduling of mentoring opportunities, and participation from both mentors and mentees.

### MAJOR FINDINGS

Grantees were very positive about the impact of the Safe and Supportive Schools program on their schools and districts. For many, the grant provided a valuable opportunity to work as a team and to identify the ways in which their schools and districts can promote safe and supportive learning environments. While the funding amounts were small, they provided time for research and planning, and in some cases outside consultation, to develop and implement their plans. Some districts were able to leverage this funding into additional funding for continuing and expanding this work. Most grantees have been effective in linking their SSSP action plans with districtwide improvement plans.

In addition, several representatives from districts providing mentoring supports reported that the process of mentoring helped to strengthen their own implementation of their action plans. Some of the Option One district representatives who interacted with mentors at DESE-sponsored events reported that they benefitted from hearing from people who had done the work in prior years.

Some opportunities for growth that this evaluation uncovered include:

* A lack of clarity, on the part of both mentoring and mentee districts, on the roles and expectations around mentoring supports;
* A lack of resources to support mentoring districts as they provide assistance to districts using the Tool for the first time;
* The compressed timeline of the grants, which made it difficult to build and sustain momentum; and
* A need for additional support with progress monitoring for districts implementing their action plans.

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**INTRODUCTION**

## FULL EVALUATION REPORT

In the fall of 2018, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) contracted with the Research and Evaluation Department of the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) to evaluate the FY2019 Safe and Supportive Schools Grant Program (SSSP). This grant program is administered by DESE and is intended to support schools and districts in developing plans to support a safe, positive, healthy, and inclusive whole-school learning environment.

This grant program began in FY2014 and was continued in FY2016 through FY2019. For each of these years, DESE provided funds to districts and schools to support their use of the Safe and Supportive Schools Self-Reflection Tool (“the Tool”), an online assessment developed by DESE to help schools and districts document current practices around behavioral health, assess where gaps exist, and develop strategies to address these gaps. Schools and districts receiving funds were expected to complete the Tool and use the results to develop an action plan that addresses gaps identified through this process. Beginning in FY2018, DESE also provided funding for implementation of action plans developed through this process to districts that had received funding in prior years.

During the 2018-2019 school year (FY2019), 40 school districts received funding from DESE through the SSSP (See Appendix A for a map of FY2019 grantees by category). Based on evaluation findings from school year 2017-2018, DESE introduced a system of mentoring supports from districts that had already completed the Tool and, in most cases, had also already received DESE funding for implementation of their action plan. These districts received funds to continue to implement their action plans, and were expected to serve as mentors to Option One districts as well, supporting new grantees in gaining familiarity with the Tool and with effective systems for implementing the assessment, planning, and implementation phases.

This funding was awarded through two grant codes:

* Fund Code 335: This fund code was competitive, and had two components.
  + The first component, known as Option One, awarded funds to districts and schools to complete the Tool, and develop an action plan based on the results. Funding through this component was awarded to 21 districts (see Appendix B for a list of FC 335 Option One districts). Awards ranged from $7,500 to $20,000.
  + The second component, known as Option Two, awarded funds to districts that agreed to provide mentoring supports as described above. Funding through this component was awarded to nine districts (see Appendix C for a list of FC 335 Option Two districts). Awards ranged from $7,500 to $10,000.
* Fund Code 337: This was a non-competitive grant program to provide continuation funding to districts that had received funding to complete the Tool and develop action plans during the 2017-2018 school year. Ten districts received funding through this fund code (see Appendix D for a list of FC 337 districts). Awards ranged from $5,000 to $20,000.

#### 3

DESE requested that the FY2019 **evaluation focus on two overarching questions**:

* What are the best practices around, facilitators of, and barriers to effective mentoring?
* What are the best practices around, facilitators of, and barriers to effective action plan implementation and implementation monitoring?

### MENTORING PILOT

The mentoring pilot was developed in response to the findings of the FY18 evaluation of the Safe and Supportive Schools Grant Program, in which some districts expressed a need for greater support while going through the Tool and developing their action plans. DESE was interested in providing continued implementation funds for districts that had already received previous grants, and also saw the need for greater supports for new grantees. They decided to couple continued implementation funding with an expectation that district staff with Tool experience act as mentors for new grantees. Some districts had already been doing this informally in response to individual requests from DESE; the DESE program staff decided that the new grant cycle would be a good opportunity to formalize these expectations and make available a pool of experience from which new grantees could draw. See Appendix E for a logic model that describes the mentoring process.

This program is in its first year, and it is too soon to address its overall effectiveness in supporting grantees in their Tool use and action planning. This evaluation focuses instead on the processes for mentoring that are currently in use, the frequency and type of interaction between mentoring and mentee districts, the areas of support needed, and the overall value of mentoring supports.

### Methodology

The mentoring pilot was assessed through several different methods. These included:

* A brief survey of Option One grantees (i.e. mentees) to determine the extent to which they have engaged with mentoring (see Appendix B for participants, Appendix F for the survey questions and Appendix G for a summary of survey responses). The survey was conducted in April 2019.
* Telephone interviews with nine Option One districts and schools (see Appendix B for a list of districts that were interviewed) concerning their engagement with and need for mentoring supports (see Appendix H for the protocol). These interviews were conducted in May 2019. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes.
* Two online focus groups with representatives from mentoring districts (see Protocol in Appendix I). Mentoring districts were given the choice of which group to attend, and representatives from seven of the nine districts participated (see Appendix C). These focus groups were conducted in late April 2019. Each focus group lasted approximately one hour.
* A telephone interview with the Safe and Supportive Schools program coordinator at DESE, to explore DESE’s expectations for mentoring.
* A review of documents related to mentoring, including communications between DESE and districts, scheduling of mentoring opportunities, and participation from both mentors and mentees.

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### Findings

**Mentoring Processes**

**Origination:** As previously stated, mentoring was developed over the summer of 2018, in response to a need expressed for additional supports from experienced districts in the FY18 evaluation. The process was developed by then-SSSP coordinator Stacy Cabral Diaz, in collaboration with the Safe and Supportive Schools Commission. Later that summer, Emily Taylor replaced Stacy Cabral Diaz as the SSSP Coordinator. At the time that Emily became the coordinator, the RFP describing the mentoring process had been drafted but had not yet been released. Emily had the opportunity to edit the draft RFP. She reported that the information about mentoring was purposely not explicit because DESE did not know who would respond or what their level of expertise would be. It was Emily’s understanding that this first year of mentoring would be experimental. After an assessment (this evaluation), DESE would further refine and develop the process for future grantees.

**Communication:** Mentoring was introduced to grantees through the initial RFP for Option Two districts. The RFP requested that applicants describe “successes and challenges in utilizing the Tool and creating action plans, which you could share with new Tool users,” and to indicate which topics from a provided list “on which you would be prepared to mentor a new Tool user.” DESE also hosted an informational webinar for potential FC335 grant applicants which described mentoring.

Option One grantees did not receive formal notification of mentoring availability, although they had access to the RFP for Option Two districts and to the webinar mentioned above. Once the grant was operational, Emily Taylor provided contact information of mentors to Option One districts that reached out to her for support in certain areas, but this was done on an ad-hoc basis. Option One districts were invited to the following events hosted by DESE, all of which provided opportunities to interact with mentors:

* Two parallel webinars for Option One grantees, held in December 2018
* A breakout session specifically for Option One grantees at a statewide convening, held in March 2019
* Two regional gatherings, in June 20191

Option Two grantees were asked to describe their Tool use, action planning, and implementation processes at the above events. Emily Taylor sent them emails, typically a month or so before the event, inquiring about their availability. They were also invited to two meetings of the SSSP Commission, in April 2019 and May 2019, to present on their work. These presentations were considered as mentoring because they provided information to the Commission that will help shape future iterations of the grant program.

Emily Taylor reported that participation in one or more of these events was DESE’s sole expectation for mentors.

**Participation and Type of Interaction:** Twenty of the 21 Option One districts (95%) at least registered for, and likely attended, at least one event that exposed them to mentoring supports.

1 Three regional gatherings were planned, but none of the Option One grantees in the central/metro area of Massachusetts were able to attend on the selected date. Events were held in western Massachusetts (Montague) and Cape Cod (Falmouth).

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Eighteen of 21 Option One districts (86%) registered to participate in one of the December webinars, and eleven (52%) registered to participate in the March convening2, although only four districts were represented at a breakout session where they had an opportunity to talk directly with an Option Two grantee. Nine Option One districts (43%) participated in

one of two regional gatherings held in early June.

Despite this high level of participation, only one Option One grantee reported on the survey that her school had engaged with mentoring supports. When asked for more detail, she described participating in the December webinar as well as attending a DESE workshop about using data. Her district also worked with a consultant who is not associated with an Option Two district.

Option Two grantees’ engagement with mentoring varied considerably (see Table 1, below).

##### Table 1: Option Two Grantee Mentoring Participation

*“For us, besides doing the phone calls we did in the beginning where we explained our process and then let people ask questions, there hasn’t been much mentoring. It’s seemingly going to happen in May and June, where there may be a site visit and a meeting up of mentors and mentees on action planning.” Option Two grantee*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **District** | **December Webinars** | **March Convening** | **Commission Meetings** | **Regional Gatherings** |
| Arlington |  |  |  |  |
| Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School |  |  |  |  |
| Chelsea Public Schools |  |  | Y |  |
| Gill-Montague | Y |  |  | Y |
| Milton |  |  | Y |  |
| Monomoy | Y | Y3 |  | Y |
| Quaboag Regional School District | Y | Y | Y |  |
| Triton Regional School District |  |  |  |  |
| Wilmington Public Schools |  |  |  |  |

2 It is not known how many Option One districts actually participated in the webinars or attended the Convening. 3 Monomoy presented at a breakout session during the March convening that was open to all attendees, not just Option One grantees.

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For most Option Two focus group participants, interaction with mentee districts was limited to presentations at these events. There were a few exceptions. One Option Two grantee (from a district that has not participated in the DESE events listed above) reported that she has had several in- depth telephone conversations with a district; however, that district is not an SSSP grantee4. Another mentor, who has participated in DESE events, has also supported schools new to the SSSP process within her own district as they work through the Tool and develop action plans. She said that no other district has reached out to her for support, and she assumed that working with schools internally would satisfy DESE’s mentoring requirement.

Most of the focus group participants reported that no one has reached out to them for support. Only two of the grantees, both of whom have done presentations, reported that districts reached out to them for more information following their presentations. Both of them shared resources that provide support with using the Tool. Both also reported that they have not had ongoing communications with these districts; the support they provided was through a one-time interaction.

### Strengths of the Process: Flexibility and a Limited Commitment of Time and Resources for Mentors

The process of invitations to structured events allowed mentoring districts to choose how and when they would engage with districts needing support. Representatives of mentoring districts indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to accept or decline invitations to participate in events according to what their schedules allowed. They also appreciated that the mentoring time commitment was not large, and that the mentoring-grantee option gave them an opportunity to access additional funds for implementation.

*“After speaking with them, I’m not sure where those folks are, or what they’re doing . . . I wouldn't have expected someone to call back and say "hey, that worked really well, and this is what we've done so far" because it does take a lot of focus to pay attention to it and to do the work in your district.” Option Two grantee*

*“The design of (the process) is nice -*

* *if it was mandated, I’m not sure how many people might apply for the grant, thinking about how much time they might have to spend in addition to their already cumbersome duties.” Option Two grantee*

A potential benefit of mentoring is also its cost-effectiveness, but determining this requires further exploration and/or a cost-benefit analysis. By investing state funds in continuation grants and requiring them to mentor new grantees, this model may be building dual capacities and providing a cost-effective approach to supporting new grantees. Further study would need to explore the costs and benefits of this process as well as of possible alternative models, such as expending funds on professional development or expert technical assistance for new grantees.

4 The district receiving support is a grantee for a similar DESE program that is part of the larger Safe and Supportive Schools program, but through a different fund code.

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**Opportunity to Strengthen the Process: Clear Communication about Availability of Mentoring Supports, and Expectations for Providing This Support**

**Availability of Mentoring Supports:** Option One district representatives who responded to the online survey indicated a lack of awareness about the availability of mentoring supports (see Appendix G for a summary of survey responses). About half of respondents indicated that they were not aware that districts had offered to serve as mentors to districts currently using the Tool and developing an action plan.

However, interviews with Option One district representatives, all of whom completed the survey, showed a greater familiarity with the supports. Most interviewees indicated that they were aware of the support being offered at webinars or convenings, stating that they heard about it via email or at the December meeting. Only one grantee was completely unaware, and he speculated that this might be because of a leadership transition in the district and a resulting break in communication links about SSSP.

Receipt and recall of communication among Option One grantees seems sporadic, for reasons that are not entirely clear and may vary from district to district. One grantee reported in an interview that he would have loved to have worked with mentors, but didn’t know how to make this happen. While he participated in the December webinar and became aware of

mentoring supports, he left without any information about who the mentors were or how to contact them. Still others reported receiving email reminders and invitations, although in many cases actual awareness of mentoring lagged until they interacted with mentors at the March convening, and they were more likely to recollect this interaction during interviews rather than on the survey.

*“It was after the fact, about a month ago [April 2019], we got an email that there were schools we could reach out to. It was nowhere near the beginning of this process.” Option One grantee*

Because mentoring was not clearly defined, Option One grantees may have not realized what was available to them as it was being communicated. Among survey respondents who participated in DESE events involving mentors (the survey was confidential but not anonymous), all but one indicated on the survey that they had not made use of mentoring supports.

##### Expectations for Providing Mentoring Support: Many

*“There was a phone call in the beginning, then nothing for quite some time, and then I was asked to present at the DESE SSSP conference. So there hasn't been tons of information.” Option Two grantee*

of the mentoring district representatives indicated that the lack of clarity about expectations attached to mentoring was problematic for them. Several expected that they would be assigned a mentee district. There was no indication in the RFP about how much time successful applicants should be prepared to spend on mentoring, or what form that mentoring would take. Nor was there any subsequent communication from DESE to the Option Two

awardees about overall expectations for mentoring; rather, they just received invitations to specific events. There were varying levels of understanding among mentoring districts about how many events they were expected to attend and what DESE would expect them to do once they were there. Emily Taylor, the SSSP grant administrator, confirmed in an interview that beyond what was stated in the RFP (as described above), no expectations concerning mentoring were shared with mentor districts.

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*“When will this stop? When can I take a breath and know that I won't be called out to do something else?” Option Two grantee*

Some mentoring district representatives also expressed confusion about the type of support they were expected to give at the events they attended. One indicated that she had agreed to attend certain sessions, but didn’t hear until very close to the event any details about what she would be doing when she got there. She felt like she had to

“wing it” at presentations and this was very stressful for her. Others expressed concern about the parameters and expectations around a “final meeting” that they had heard referenced as a future opportunity to provide mentoring supports.

At the time of the online focus groups with mentoring grantees, held in late April, some district representatives were concerned that they had not yet been able to attend any mentoring opportunities offered by DESE, and that they did not

know how many opportunities would remain or when

they would be held. They questioned how helpful and effective they could be at the end of the grant period, and also expressed concern that the end of the school year is a busy time and they might not be able to attend future events.

*“The follow-up to help you prepare for what you should do was not necessarily the strong part of the grant.” Option Two grantee*

However, it should also be noted that one Option Two grantee preferred the unstructured approach to the mentoring expectations*. “It really wasn’t set up where we had to do x, y, and z and then something got in the way of it,”* she reported. *“There weren’t enough expectations put out in the beginning to even think about it. If this had been a mentoring grant, and we were paid to mentor, that would have been one thing, and it would have looked like we weren't doing very much. But as a component of this grant, it’s been fine to say ‘we can answer some questions, we can be available for a site visit.’"*

### Supports from Mentors for Option One Schools and Districts

As noted above, only one Option One grantee reported on the survey having received support from more experienced districts. She referenced a DESE webinar that was helpful in thinking through creating a team and using the Tool. She also referenced a DESE workshop about using data, and working with a consultant (not from a mentoring district). The areas in which she reported receiving help included:

* + The role of district-level personnel in the process
  + Forming effective school based teams that encompass the whole school/district community
  + Facilitating school based or district teams to utilize the Tool
  + Analyzing results from the Tool to create priority areas for next steps
  + Writing an effective and measurable action plan

Some Option One grantees have not yet engaged with mentoring supports, but indicated that there areas in which they would like additional help or think other grantees might need support. These included:

* + Exemplars and shared resources, including recordings of webinars and event presentations, that are easy to access, along with reminders of where they are and perhaps a workshop on the resources available

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* + Site visitors from mentors, who can help them think about how their space can be adapted to their needs
  + A clear explanation of DESE’s goals for this work and why it is important, to share with staff and the community
  + A clear, step-by-step outline of the first year process and procedures- forming a team, getting a login, filling out the survey as a group, and so on, along with a recommended timeline
  + How to form a team
  + A clear outline of how to use the Tool, available online for access as needed
  + Developing an action plan and transitioning to implementation
  + Family and student engagement and participation

It should be noted that most Option One grantees who

*“Mentoring could be helpful -- but right now, we just want to know where to submit the stuff and how to move on.” Option One grantee*

### Mentor Needs for Support

were interviewed did not feel the need for support when using the Tool because they found that process to be straightforward. Some also noted time constraints as a reason to not seek out additional help. Still others are in districts with other schools that have gone through the Tool already, and they were able to get support from administrators within the district.

Emily Taylor reported that DESE did not provide resources to mentoring districts regarding how they could support Option One grantees. Some of the Option Two focus group participants felt that they did not need these supports, because of the minimal expectations associated with mentoring. Others reported that have been involved in other work that involves mentoring and have received support through that work, so they are not in need of additional support.

The Option Two focus group participants who indicated they would have liked more support from DESE gave several examples of the kind of support that would be helpful to them. Their responses mostly echoed the above desire for more clear expectations of them as mentors. One Option Two grantee mentioned the 21st Century Community Learning Center program, which has written standards and processes for mentoring and explicitly state what types of things must be done by the end of the year. Others participating in the focus group agreed that this would be helpful for them.

Option Two Grantees also would have liked some SSSP-specific tools and resources that they could share with grantees. They mentioned a compilation of timelines and processes that other schools and districts have used, examples of action plans, and summaries of which schools and districts are working in which areas along with what they are doing and how they have assessed progress.

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**Value of Mentoring**

All of the Option Two grantees agreed that they would engage in mentoring again, if given the opportunity. They listed a variety of reasons why they wanted to be mentors, and what benefits it has brought to them. These included:

* + The opportunity to share expertise in order to help others
  + Appreciation for SSSP and its benefits, and desire to help other schools gain these benefits as well
  + A deeper understanding of their own SSSP work, developed as a result of helping others
  + A desire to continue with their own implementation, and to engage in mentoring others as a condition for getting funds to do so

One Option Two grantee talked about how the presentations and public speaking she has done has been good for her both personally and professionally - *“It has helped me to be brave.”*

### Mentoring Recommendations

*“I think it was helpful for them to hear that real people did it and hear how we did it, and how we did it differently from* *’s people, and how other people have done it, to help wrap their heads around the process.” Option Two grantee*

*“The more we can share across the state to their schools about developing positive behavioral and mental health supports in the schools, the more we can do our kids justice.” Option Two grantee*

**Change the language, or change the model.** A question that was raised among CES evaluators regarding mentoring supports was: Is the current model for providing support to new grantees what DESE wants to continue in the future? If so, a language shift is needed. The word “mentoring,” particularly in the education field where teachers receive close, personalized support from a more experienced educator as they begin their careers, led both Option One and Option Two grantees to expect that mentoring would consist of matching up districts and guidance of Option One districts through the Tool and action planning. However, there was no structure provided for doing this, and with limited exceptions there was little interaction of Option One and Option Two districts outside of events.

A better term for the type of interaction that happened during the pilot year would be “support” or “resources” provided by experienced districts. On the other hand, if DESE wants to set up a true mentoring relationship that matches experienced and new grantees together for ongoing guidance, this system will require careful planning, support in effective mentoring for Option Two districts, and, likely, additional funding for the mentoring districts because of the more intensive time commitment.

*“It would be good if they put more thought into putting out a calendar of opportunities for mentors to connect earlier in the year, instead of a month or a month and a half in advance, just planned a little more in advance.” Option Two grantee*

**Provide clear information about supports to grantees.** DESE should communicate early on in the grant period with both Option One and Option Two districts about the process and expectations for the supports that Option Two districts will provide. Should the current model of providing supports be maintained, all Option One districts should be informed up front who the Option Two district representatives are, their contact information, and their areas of expertise, along with a list of events at which Option One grantees will have the opportunity to connect with them in person.

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Again assuming that the current model is retained, at the start of the grant period, Option Two grantees should be given clear expectations of what is required of them - the number of events they should plan to attend, when and where these events will be held, and what participation at each event will entail.

**Consider matching new and experienced grantees by district type.** If DESE is willing to explore a new model of mentoring, the one for which CES heard significant support involved a pairing of new grantees with more experienced ones, with the expectation

*“In the future years, if they could say, “there will be a minimum of 5 opportunities, and these are some of what they'll be, and there’s an expectation of X amount of participation" it would help people plan ahead better.” Option Two grantee*

that there would be communication among these small groups. Participants in the Option Two focus group were in favor of this model, with an emphasis on matching by type and size rather than proximity. This was also mentioned as a workable model by at least three Option One districts, one of whom mentioned that they would like to see more active development of relationships among districts by DESE, such as identifying ways in which districts faced similar challenges. This matching process, while demanding an initial investment of time from DESE, would likely lead to more frequent interactions and ongoing relationships among districts.

##### Let Option Two districts shape the support they

*“It would have probably been helpful to do direct mentoring with a couple of schools - to be more connected with two schools, and then have a conference call with them and say "Hi, this is my name, do you have any questions…". I think people might have used that more instead of it being kind of these mentors that are out there for just occasional use, for DESE-directed use.” Option Two grantee*

**provide.** Regardless of the model used for providing supports in the future, consider involving experienced districts in an early discussion of how best to provide mentoring supports. Option Two focus group participants suggested that they work together to determine the best way to meet grantees’ needs, given their skills, experiences, and resources, with initial meetings and then regular check-ins. They agreed that they would appreciate the opportunity to talk to other mentors, divide up the work according to their strengths, and learn from each other how to be effective mentors.

**Provide concrete resources that Option Two districts can share with Option One districts.** Both Option One and Option Two districts requested that DESE provide more experienced districts with resources that they can share with new grantees. Resources requested included guidelines for creating a team, the timelines that other districts followed, the types of strategies that previous districts developed, and the ways that other districts measured progress.

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### ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING

During the FY18 grant-making period, ten districts received funding from DESE to use the Tool and to develop action plans to address their findings. In FY19, all ten of these districts received continuation funds (through FC 337) to implement their action plans (see Appendix D for a list of districts). These districts are referred to in this report as implementation districts.

### Methodology

CES conducted telephone interviews with the grant contact person (and, in some cases, additional key personnel) at each of the ten implementation districts. The interviews were conducted in late April and in May of 2019. The interview protocol is attached as Appendix J.

### Findings

**Implementation Progress**

Implementation districts are generally on track with implementing their action plans. Their action plans and timelines were not overly ambitious and could realistically be accomplished in one year. Many districts credited the feasibility of their plans to the effectiveness of their work during the planning grants. No district reported major roadblocks or an inability to complete significant portions of their action plans.

Most action plans included at least one of the following components, and many included several:

* + Professional development for teachers and other staff
  + Purchasing subscriptions or curriculum materials
  + Revised policies and procedures
  + Restructuring the school day and/or physical spaces in the schools
  + Reviews of systems already in place and how they can be improved
  + Committee work focused on planning future interventions

Some action plans also included progress monitoring measures such as surveys and focus groups as well as tracking systems; these are discussed further in the “Progress Monitoring” section, below.

### Implementation Strategies

In many cases, the key people implementing the action plans are similar to those who were part of the SSSP process the previous year, although as implementation progressed the field of key players sometimes narrowed. Key players mentioned repeatedly included:

* + School principals and assistant principals
  + Teachers
  + Counselors
  + Directors of Student Services

Some other districts mentioned superintendent involvement - depending on the size of the district and the level of its involvement with SSSP, this involvement could be significant, ancillary, or non-

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existent. One district has also used outside consultants to move the work forward, and one district has involved students in planning committees.

For many districts, having the right people at the table was a key part of their strategy. If both decision-makers (principals/assistant principals/superintendents) and implementers (teachers and counselors) are part of the process and have buy-in, the work usually flows smoothly.

For districts that do not have decision-makers and/or implementers tied closely to the process, a strategy has been to

find ways to link the SSSP work to the school’s and/or district’s priorities. An example of this is showing how the SSSP work supports academic achievement, for a district that is highly focused on academic outcomes. Another district noted the importance of helping teachers see the connection between developing their own resources around supporting behavioral health and more effective classroom management and teaching.

Other strategies for moving the work forward included:

*“We need to bridge the gap between teachers and behavioral health - let them see what skills they already have, what skills they still need” Implementation grantee*

* + Having a coordinator who keeps track of all the work in a shared document, with assignments and timelines
  + Regular team meetings to discuss progress and next steps
  + Referring to previous plans and established recommendations, for benchmarking of progress

Finally, a significant strategy for districts was to link the SSSP work with broader work that the school and/or district is doing. This strategy is discussed further below, in **Integration of SSSP Work with Other District Work.**

### Facilitators to SSSP Implementation

*“Our superintendent has given 100% support, also principals . . . the work needs that level of commitment, or else it falls apart.” Implementation grantee*

Districts reported many factors which helped their SSSP implementation. Examples include:

* Support from high-level administrators in the district
* A shift in the education community toward recognizing the importance of addressing social and emotional learning (SEL)
* Outside consultants providing professional development and facilitation
* The autonomy given by DESE to districts in deciding how to manage their implementation

Facilitators they noted that were provided by DESE included:

* + Learnings and connections with other grantees from DESE-sponsored conferences and regional meetings
  + Telephone support from Emily Taylor about available resources and related DESE work
  + Rebecca Shor of DESE’s Systems for Student Success Office
  + Results from the Views of Climate and Learning (VOCAL) survey, administered annually by DESE

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* + A DESE-provided inventory tool for textbooks, addressing whether they incorporate diverse voices

One district mentioned that the Tool itself was a helpful support to them in their action plan implementation. It helped them to identify and then focus their work on areas of need that were revealed through a collaborative and data-intensive process. Other districts, although they did not identify the Tool as a support to them, indicated that they would not change the way in which they had used the Tool and developed their action plan during the previous year.

Districts also were positive about the support that they receive from DESE and particularly from Emily Taylor, the SSSP Coordinator. “My experience working with this department at DESE has been wonderful, especially from the human side. I feel like they’re really trying to help, not just a bureaucracy,” said one grantee.

As with effective strategies, integration of SSSP work with other school and district priorities was an important facilitator of the work. This strategy is discussed further below, in **Integration of SSSP Work with Other District Work.**

### Barriers to SSSP Implementation

The most common barrier, mentioned by three districts, was the lack of time and having too many initiatives during a single year, especially given the number of demands on teachers’ time during a typical school year.

Two districts each noted the following barriers to effective SSSP implementation:

* + Staff resistance to the work, based on the perception that this is one more area in which they will be assessed and potentially asked to improve their practices
  + Lack of funding, with one district noting that they were not able to implement professional development to the extent that they desired, and one saying more generally that the district’s budget makes it difficult to implement everything that they would like to do
  + Staff turnover and the difficulty of carrying the work forward when new teachers and administrators need to be brought up to speed on what is happening

One district also mentioned a challenging political atmosphere, in which community members do not always value the need to provide social-emotional supports, and one mentioned tensions with some parents concerning the use of SEL assessments with students, particularly when results were stored online. A meeting with the parents helped to alleviate their concerns.

### Integration with SSSP Work with other District Work

*“[The SSSP grant] was perfectly timed - we had decided to make SEL a focal point. Using the Tool helped us identify key areas where we needed work.” Implementation grantee*

All of the implementation districts noted that their SSSP work is integrated into broader work that their school and (in most cases) their district is prioritizing. For most districts, a focus on social and emotional learning fits well with the needs that they are seeing in classrooms, as well as work that is being prioritized by DESE and by funders.

The relationship of SSSP with broader work varied by district. In some cases, the SSSP work predated the other

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work, with needs identified by the Tool then becoming a focus of school/district improvement plan development and the development of related initiatives. In other cases, the SSSP action plan was informed by work already being addressed in larger school or district initiatives or planning. Several districts were able to parlay the work done through the SSSP

grant into successful applications for outside grants that have allowed them to expand their work beyond its original scope. One district representative reported that the SSSP work has helped them look at existing work through a new lens that helped them connect this work into a web of support for students.

*“Because of our work with the grant, we’re going to change some of the activities we do with the PBIS team in school.” Implementation grantee*

In general, implementation districts were clear about the importance of linking work on smaller grants and initiatives such as SSSP with larger school or district priorities. They recognize that to have any real impact, this work needs to be part of a larger picture and supported, both financially and attitudinally, by resources and partners beyond the SSSP grant. Rather than pursuing each new funding opportunity for its own sake and in a vacuum, they seek to align all of their work with larger goals.

### Progress monitoring

An initial review in March 2019 of the implementation district action plans, which were developed by districts during the 2017-2018 school year after using the Tool, showed an inconsistent approach to inclusion of progress monitoring in the plan. Some districts gave specific examples of how they would monitor their progress, while others did not address this in their plans or addressed it very generally.

However, interviews with implementation districts, conducted in April and May of 2019, revealed that most of the implementation districts have developed a plan for progress monitoring, although in some cases their implementation is not far enough along to have begun this monitoring. Some examples of ways in which districts are monitoring their progress include:

* + Behavioral tracking systems such as Performance Matters and EWIS
  + Screening and benchmarking tools
  + My Learning Plan to track teacher and staff participation in professional development
  + Attendance data
  + Academic data
  + School climate surveys, conducted with students and staff
  + Videos and walkthroughs to assess implementation fidelity
  + Feedback forms for parent and community events

That said, some districts do see this as an area in which they

need more support. Depending on their action planning, it might be difficult for them to conceptualize ways to effectively monitor their progress. While all districts and schools collect data, analyzing the data to show progress - particularly in areas of social and emotional learning - can be challenging. This is an area in which DESE might be able to provide additional support.

*“We know what our actions are, but we’re not clear about what the impact will be on students, and how to measure this.” Implementation grantee*

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**Unexpected Benefits and Challenges**

Districts reported that they have experienced both unanticipated benefits and also unexpected challenges in their SSSP work. Three districts spoke of strengthened relationships among team members, and two districts mentioned that the work has led to a more cohesive approach to school climate and safety, either within the school or across participating schools. The work has also positioned some districts to apply for and receive additional funding. One implementation district reported that staff were not expecting significant benefits from the professional development in which they participated, but that they were surprised at how effective it has been in managing classroom behavior.

*“[The professional development} has been so effective in supporting struggling students. Some staff initially just saw this as one more thing, but now they are pleased with results, and this has increased buy- in overall.” Implementation grantee*

Only a few districts experienced unexpected challenges. One talked about the funding timeline and the need to use the funds by the end of the school year. Another district, which was focusing on racial equity as part of their implementation plan, reported that their work stirred a backlash among some white members of the community, who believe that this work is a waste of taxpayer dollars. Finally, an unexpectedly high turnover rate among administrators within one district has caused the work to proceed more slowly than anticipated, although the district is on schedule overall with its implementation plan.

### Additional Supports Needed

Most, although not all, districts expressed a need for more or continued funding to continue to support this work.

Additional support needs included:

* + Resources and support around SEL work in secondary schools

*“I’m a big believer in the Train-the- Trainer model, but you need time to model the work, provide a structure for delivering the content.” Implementation grantee*

* + A site visit from DESE to explain the work directly to staff and lend it their authority
  + Reference sheets with best practices
  + Regular meetings among implementation districts in the same region of the state, and/or contact information for other districts doing similar work
  + A focus on safe and supportive environments in teacher preparation programs

### Outputs and Short-Term Outcomes

All of the implementation districts were able to identify outputs from the work that they have been doing this year. Some of the outputs from action plan implementation have included:

* + Teacher and staff participation in professional development opportunities
  + The adoption and implementation of screening and tracking systems
  + An audit of current systems
  + Practice changes such as restorative circles and advisory models
  + Coaches supporting teachers and other staff in implementation

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* + Staff working together on collaborative problem-solving using case studies

While for some districts it is too early to see positive outcomes, some were able to identify positive practice or behavioral changes. Examples include:

* + - A positive impact on children’s behavior,

*“We’re thinking more broadly about behavioral health . . . Some are already shifting their practice.” Implementation grantee*

### Sustainability

captured through behavioral and disciplinary tracking systems

* Shifts in language, including teachers asking kids “How are you taking care of yourself?”
* Teachers making plans to address chronic disciplinary issues going forward, rather than just responding to individual issues
* Positive shifts noted in school climate survey results
* Community members in marginalized populations attending school-related events in greater numbers and providing positive feedback

Sustainability is more of a concern for some implementation districts than for others. While all of the

districts have connected their SSSP work to other work happening in the district, some are concerned that as the next year’s budget is shaped, their work might be left underfunded or unfunded.

Districts have different strategies for ensuring sustainability.

*“We need continued funding to sustain our momentum” Implementation grantee*

Some were able to ensure that most if not all of the work has become part of the district’s ongoing budget. Others are relying on large outside grants to continue the work beyond this school year. Still others spoke of moving money around within the budget, and ways that they can prioritize certain components of the SSSP work if there is not enough funding for all of the work they would like to do.

### Implementation Recommendations

**Consider providing multi-year implementation grants.** It is difficult for districts to effect change within one school year, particularly when funding awards are not made until the fall and funds do not become available until even later. Several districts mentioned that two-year or three-year grant cycles would address this concern, allowing them to make longer-term plans and carry the work over the summer. A rolling grant cycle, with new districts receiving multi-year funding each year, would also allow more experienced districts to share their learnings with districts that are new to implementation.

**Consider a structure that supports districts in revisiting the Tool.** One implementation grantee noted that, after several years, it probably makes sense to revisit the Tool and work through it again; however, there is no structure for doing that. If future implementation grants are spread over several years, this work could include funding for reflecting on progress using the Tool and refining action plans accordingly.

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**Provide additional support for progress monitoring.** This is an identified need that DESE can support through resources, webinars, and in-person workshops. One SSSP grantee already mentioned attending this type of workshop, and it is likely that other similar resources already exist. These should be provided to districts, along with a specific expectation that progress monitoring is an important part of the SSSP implementation process.

**Work with other DESE departments to coordinate and promote the SSSP work.** DESE has other funding streams that support social and emotional learning in schools; this presents an opportunity for larger-scale networking and sharing of information than is currently happening. Coordinating this work can also help inform districts of other funding opportunities available through DESE that will support the work that they are already doing, such as FC336.

A second part of this recommendation is larger than the SSSP Commission and DESE SSSP grant staff can do on their own. CES heard from two grantees that they felt that this work is not consistently supported by DESE as a department overall. One mentioned that deadlines and events often conflict with other DESE programs, and should be integrated into a DESE-wide calendar that prevents these conflicts. Another spoke more broadly about the language that is used on MCAS and other DESE materials and how it does not always support the ideals of Safe and Supportive Schools (her example was an MCAS writing assignment that asked students to write in the voice of a racist character from a reading passage, with emphasis on authenticity of voice). While this work is large- scale and long-term, CES thought it should be brought forward for consideration.

### CONCLUSION

SSSP grantee districts universally expressed gratitude for the support they have received. Most of them view the funding as seed money -- an opportunity to collaboratively identify, clarify, define, and focus on specific issues at play in their schools. While the funding opportunities are small, many regard them as enough to purchase the time necessary for collaborative research and planning, as well as to support occasional outside consultation. Further, the implementation grants helped to ensure that action steps arising out of a year of planning will be supported with a year of additional funding.

While some have pondered whether the small grant making approach can be truly effective to leverage a long term cultural change in a school, CES evaluators rarely heard feedback that this money was too little to effectively plan for a change. Sustainability remains a concern for some, and many reported that more funding would be helpful. At the same time, many districts recognize that in order for their strategies to be sustainable in the long run, the district needs to embrace the efforts not only at a cultural level, but through continued district-level funding.

In summary, the SSSP grants are likely effective at initiating positive momentum in Massachusetts public schools toward a focus on safe and supportive schools. There are foundational strengths that can be built upon to refine the program to even better serve schools and students. Further, funding in previous years has grown significant capacity within schools in our state to support each other through sharing of information of resources. Through streamlined coordination and communication of the many resources available in our state, these grants can continue to support positive change in schools.

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**LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Map of SSSP Districts

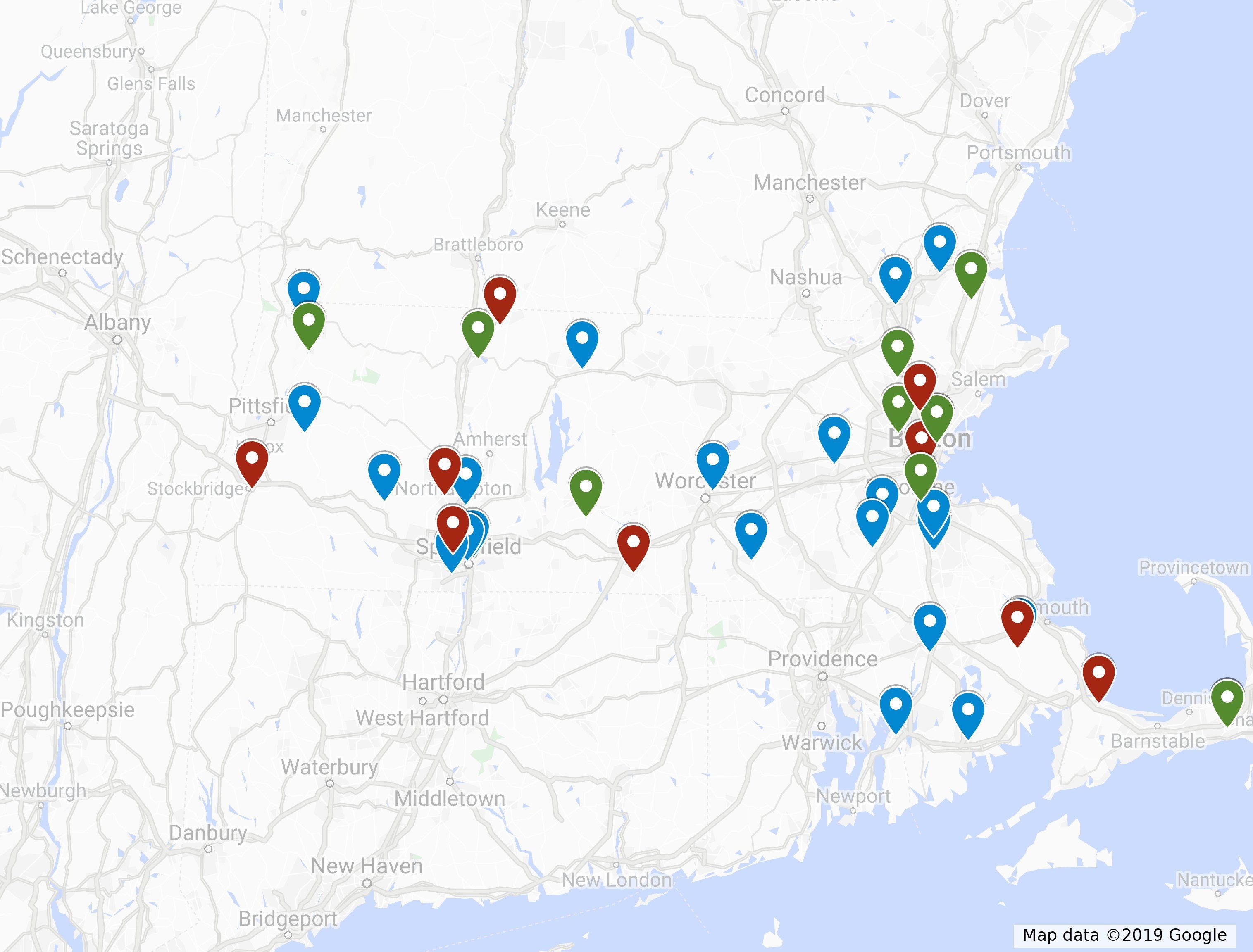
Appendix B: Fund Code 335 Option One Districts and School Appendix C: Fund Code 335 Option One Districts

Appendix D: Fund Code 337 Districts Appendix E: Mentoring Logic Model Appendix F: Survey for Option One Districts

Appendix G: Summary of Fund Code 335 Option One Survey Responses Appendix H: Option One Interview Protocol

Appendix I: Online Focus Group Protocol Appendix J: Fund Code 337 Interview Protocol

# Appendix A: 2019 SSSP Grantees

Option 1 Grantees

 Avon

 Bristol-Plymouth Carver

 Central Berkshire  Fall River

 Gateway

 Global Learning Charter  North Adams

 Northbridge Norwood

 Phoenix Charter-Chelsea  Phoenix Charter-Springfield  PVPA

 Randolph Worcester Springfield Walpole Wayland Whittier Agawam Athol

 Methuen

Option 2 Grantees

 Arlington

 Berkshire Charter  Chelsea

 Gill Montague  Milton

 Monomoy Quaboag Triton

 Wilmington

Continuation Grantees

 Berkshire Hills  Boston

 Carver

 Easthampton Monomoy

 Pioneer Valley  Sandwich

 Southbridge Stoneham

 West Springfield

### Appendix B: Fund Code 335 Option One Districts and Schools

Fund Code 335 Option One Districts and Schools received funding for BHPS Tool completion and action plan development. Most of these districts are new to SSSP, but some have participated before and are extending the work to additional schools within the district.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **District** | **Participating Schools** | **Survey Completed?1** | **Interview Participant?2** |
| Agawam Public Schools | * Agawam Junior High * Agawam Senior High | X |  |
| Athol/Royalston Regional School District | * Athol Community Elementary School * Athol/Royalston Middle School | X | X |
| Avon Public Schools | * Avon Middle High School * Ralph D. Butler Elementary School | X | X |
| Bristol-Plymouth Regional School District | * Bristol-Plymouth Regional Technical School | X | X |
| Carver Public Schools | * Carver Middle High School | X |  |
| Central Berkshire Regional School District | * Craneville Elementary School * Kittredge Elementary School * Becket Washington Elementary School * Nessacus Regional Middle School * Wahconah Regional High School | X | X |

1 Surveys were sent to contacts at both the school and district level, for all Option One districts. This field indicates whether at least one representative from that district, at either the school or district level, completed the survey. Some districts had more than one respondent.

2 Not all districts were selected for interviews. The selection process was based on survey responses, type of districts (charter school, vocational school, or traditional district), geographic location, and grade level of implementation. In some cases, district personnel were selected to be interviewed, and in some cases school-level personnel were selected. This field indicates that one person from the district was interviewed.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **District** | **Participating Schools** | **Survey Completed?1** | **Interview Participant?2** |
| Fall River Public Schools | * Greene Elementary School * Durfee High School | X |  |
| Gateway Regional School District | * Gateway Regional Middle School /High School * Littleville Elementary School * Chester Elementary School | X |  |
| Global Learning Charter Public School | * Global Learning Charter Public School | X | X |
| Methuen Public Schools | * Methuen High School | X | X |
| North Adams Public Schools | * Brayton Elementary School * Greylock Elementary School | X | X |
| Northbridge Public Schools | * Northbridge High School * Northbridge Middle School | X | X |
| Norwood | * Norwood High School * Coakley Middle School * Balch Elementary School * Callahan Elementary School * Cleveland Elementary School * Oldham Elementary School * Prescott Elementary School | X |  |
| Phoenix Charter Academy Network | * Phoenix Charter Academy - Chelsea * Phoenix Charter Academy - Springfield |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **District** | **Participating Schools** | **Survey Completed?1** | **Interview Participant?2** |
| Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School | * Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public School | X |  |
| Randolph Public Schools | * Young Elementary School * Lyons Elementary School | X |  |
| Southern Worcester Regional Vocational Technical High | * Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High |  |  |
| Springfield Public Schools | * Deberry Elementary School * Kensington International School | X |  |
| Walpole Public School | * Walpole High School * Johnson Middle School |  |  |
| Wayland Public Schools | * Claypit Hill Elementary * Happy Hollow Elementary * Loker Elementary * Wayland Middle School * Wayland High School | X | X |
| Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School | * Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School |  |  |

### Appendix C: Fund Code 335 Option Two Districts

Fund Code 335 Option Two Districts are districts that had received funding for BHPS Tool completion, action plan development, and an initial round of implementation. During the 2018-2019 school year, these districts received additional funding to continue their implementation and to act as resources for current Option One districts.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **District** | **Online Focus Group Participant?** |
| Arlington Public Schools | Y |
| Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter Public School | Y |
| Chelsea Public Schools |  |
| Gill-Montague Public Schools | Y |
| Milton Public Schools | Y |
| Monomoy Public Schools | Y |
| Quaboag Regional Schools | Y |
| Triton Regional Schools |  |
| Wilmington Public Schools | Y |

### Appendix D: Fund Code 337 Districts

Fund Code 337 Districts are districts that received funding during the 2017-2018 school year to complete the BHPS Tool and develop action plans, and who have received additional funding for action plan implementation during the 2018-2019 school year. This was a non-competitive funding opportunity made available to all grantees who received funding for Tool completion and action plan development during the 2017-2018 school year.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **District** | **Interview Participant?** |
| Berkshire Hills Regional School District | X |
| Boston Public Schools | X |
| Carver Public Schools | X |
| Easthampton Public Schools | X |
| Monomoy Regional School District | X |
| Pioneer Valley Regional School District | X |
| Sandwich Public Schools | X |
| Southbridge Public Schools | X |
| Stoneham Public Schools | X |
| West Springfield Public Schools | X |

**Appendix E: SSSP Mentoring Component Logic Model**

**Purpose or Mission:** Facilitate effective use of the Safe and Supportive Schools Self-Reflection Tool and action plan creation by schools and districts, supported by mentoring from districts who have undertaken this process in the past.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Inputs or Resources** |  | **Activities** | |  | **Outcomes** | | |
| *What we do* | *Whom we reach* | *Short* | *Medium* | *Long* |
| Mentoring districts: prior experience, lessons learned from using the BHPS tool and developing an action plan  DESE | Mentoring webinars  Mentor districts provide samples, examples of how they did work-- included in DESE tools and resources  In-person meetings between mentors and mentee districts, at convenings or other DESE-organized events | Option One districts that are able to participate in webinars  *All grantees through DESE resources*  Grantees that are able to attend mentoring events | Mentee districts receive support in using the BHPS tool and in creating action plans based on Tool findings  Mentee districts are effective in using the BHPS tool to identify priority areas to address and develop an appropriate Action Plan | Districts implement the action plans that they develop as part of the process, including initiatives that impact teaching, learning, and school safety protocols and procedures | All students feel safe - physically, mentally, and emotionally - at school.  All students are able to achieve at higher levels because of a supportive school structure  Students can move from district to district and continue to experience a supportive environment |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assumptions**  Mentor districts will have necessary skills and capacity so that they can make themselves available to mentee districts  Mentee districts will recognize areas in which they need help and will seek out help from mentor districts  Mentee and mentor districts will take advantage of opportunities to connect with each other through webinars, telephone calls, and/or in-person meetings  Mentor districts will be able to draw on their own experiences to provide support that is relevant and helpful to mentee districts |  | **External Factors/Constraints**  Compressed timeline of FC335 (funds awarded mid-fall of 2018 and need to be expended by June 30, 2019)  Competing and/or complementary initiatives and areas that need attention in both mentoring and mentee districts |

### Appendix F: Survey for Option One districts

Intro: This is a brief (2 minute) survey that gives us an overview of the work your school or district is doing on the Safe and Supportive Schools program and the Behavioral Health and Public Schools (BHPS) self- assessment tool. It will inform our selection of districts for a later, more in-depth telephone interview that explores how districts engage with mentoring support.

Responses will only be reported in the aggregate to DESE; we will not provide any responses tied to individual districts. We just want to get a sense of where districts are with this work before we move forward with interviews.

District name (drop-down)

Name and role of person completing survey

Are you involved with SSSP at the district level or at the school level?

* + District
  + School
  + Both

SKIP LOGIC - if answer to involvement question is “District”

Have you been actively involved, or do you plan to be involved, with either the use of the BHPS tool or the creation of an action plan?

* + Yes
  + No

SKIP LOGIC - if answer to involvement question is “School” or “Both,” or if answer is “District” followed by “Yes”

At what stage is your school/district with using the BHPS tool and developing an action plan?

* + We have not begun this process
  + We have started the assessment process but have not completed it
  + We have completed the BHPS assessment tool, but have not completed an action plan
  + We have completed both the BHPS tool and an action plan

Are you aware that some districts who have gone through this process already have offered to serve as mentors to districts currently using the BHPS tool and developing an action plan?

* + Yes
  + No

SKIP LOGIC - if answer to question about awareness of mentoring is “Yes” Have you sought assistance from any of the mentoring districts?

* + Yes
  + No

SKIP LOGIC - if answer to having sought assistance is “Yes”

What type of assistance have you received? Please check all that apply.

* + Listening to presentations at conferences and webinars
  + Personal connections at events
  + Telephone calls
  + Emails
  + Visits to the mentoring district
  + Mentors visiting your district
  + Other (please specify)

In what areas have you sought mentoring assistance? Please check all that apply.

* + School level personnel role
  + District level personnel role
  + Forming effective school based teams that encompass the whole school/district community
  + Facilitating school based or district teams to utilize the Tool
  + Buy-in from District leadership
  + Gathering data sets to utilize to complete each section of the Tool
  + Creating a realistic and feasible timeline for utilizing the Tool
  + Analyzing results from the Tool to create priority areas for next steps
  + Writing an effective and measurable action plan
  + Other (Please describe)

SKIP LOGIC - if answer to having sought assistance is “No”

Do you anticipate you will seek out mentoring assistance as you continue this work?

* + Yes
  + No

SKIP LOGIC - if answer to question about awareness of mentoring is “No”

Please indicate whether you would like someone from DESE to follow up with you regarding the availability of mentoring supports.

* + Yes
  + No

Please provide contact information for follow-up.

Thank you! Your responses will help us understand the extent to which districts are engaging with mentoring supports, and will inform the next steps of our evaluation.

### Appendix G: Summary of FC 335 Option One Survey Responses

**Methodology**

The survey was sent out through Survey Gizmo on April 9, 2019, to contact people at all districts and schools receiving SSSP FC 335 Option One grants. Reminders were sent to people who had not yet completed the survey on April 16 and April 23. Of 58 school and district personnel contacted, 26 responded (45%).

**Survey Results**

Most respondents (16 of 26, or 62%) were engaging with the SSSP grant at both the school and district level. Six were school-level only and four were district-level only. Of the four district-level respondents, two have been actively involved with using the BHPS tool and/or creating an action plan and two have not been actively involved.

Of the 24 respondents who are school-level respondents and/or actively involved with the SSSP work, 18 had completed the BHPS Tool at the time of the survey, and two of these 18 had also completed their action plan. Only six had not completed the BHPS Tool.

**Table 1: Summary of Responses Concerning Mentor Supports**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes** | **No** |
| Was the respondent aware that some districts are serving as mentors? | 13 | 11 |
| Did the respondent’s school or district seek assistance from mentors? (Note - this was only asked of the 13 respondents who were aware of districts serving as mentors) | 1 | 12 |
| Does the respondent’s school or district plan to seek assistance in future? (Note - this was asked only of the 12 respondents who have not sought assistance already) | 1 | 0  The 11 remaining respondents said “not sure” |

As shown in Table 1, above, nearly half of respondents were not aware that “some districts who have gone through this process already have offered to serve as mentors to districts currently using the BHPS tool and developing an action plan.” Of the 13 who were aware of districts serving as mentors, only one respondent reported having “sought assistance from any of the mentoring districts.” This respondent, a school-level SSSP coordinator, reported that their school has:

* + Listened to presentations at conferences and webinars
  + Made personal connections at events

The areas in which the school received assistance included:

* + The role of district-level personnel in the process
  + Forming effective school based teams that encompass the whole school/district community
  + Facilitating school based or district teams to utilize the Tool
  + Analyzing results from the Tool to create priority areas for next steps
  + Writing an effective and measurable action plan

Of the 12 respondents who were aware of the mentoring but have not sought assistance, only one respondent, a school-level coordinator, responded “yes” to the question “Do you anticipate you will seek out mentoring assistance as you continue this work?” The remaining 11 respondents all reported that they were not sure whether they would seek out mentoring assistance.

**Analysis**

We know that some of these survey respondents actually have made contact with mentors. There were five Option One grantees at the March 27 convening who participated in a discussion group with Madeline Smola, in which Madeline discussed her district’s experience, answered questions, and shared contact info. Three of these discussion group participants responded to the survey and said that they were aware that some districts were offering mentoring support, but that they had not sought out support. Clearly there is a disconnect between how districts perceive these activities and how they conceive of mentoring.

### Appendix H: Option One Interview Protocol

**Interview for Option One Districts Concerning Mentoring Support - Final Protocol**

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. CES has been hired by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to conduct a third-party, independent evaluation of the Safe and Supportive Schools grantmaking process; we are not evaluating individual grantees and will not be reporting on individual schools’ or districts’ progress to DESE. The data from these interviews will be kept confidential and only the members of the CES research team will have access. Our reporting will be general and we will not identify individual grantees.

Do you have any questions for me?

**Introduction:**

Tell me a little about why your district/school decided to apply for the SSSP grant. Prompt:

1. Does this work connect with other work that your school or district is already doing? What is this work, and where is your school/district in the process? How does SSSP support this work?

**Process:**

1. Tell me about how your team is put together. How do the different people on the team reflect the priorities of the grant and of the school/district overall?
2. Has the process (self-assessment, action plan creation, planning for implementation) rolled out the way you thought it would? Have there been any surprises or unexpected issues?
3. Did you feel like you needed more support? If so, in what area?
4. Looking back on the process, are there things that you would have done differently at the beginning?

**Supports from Other Districts:**

1. DESE has asked districts who have previously worked through the Tool and created action plans to be available to support new grantees. For example, experienced districts participated in the orientation webinars in December, and met with new grantees during a breakout session at the March convening. Were you aware of this resource?

If “yes” to awareness:

1. How did you find out about it?
2. Have you made any connections with these experienced districts?

If “yes” to connections:

1. Prompt for details - who, when, what information and supports offered, continuing relationship or one-time-only
2. Was this support helpful? How so?
3. Are there ways that this type of support could have been structured to be more helpful to you?
   * *Prompt - an explicit connection to a specific district? Regular opportunities to talk with mentors, either in person or remotely? Having mentors review plans and strategies and respond with feedback?*
4. Are there additional mentoring resources that would have been helpful?

If “no” to connections:

1. Why not? (support not needed, time constraints, not far along enough in the process, other)?
2. Do you think you might seek out this type of help later on? If so, what type of support from experienced schools might be helpful? What would be the most effective way to receive this support?
3. Are there ways that this type of support from experienced schools could have been structured to be more helpful to you?

If “no” to awareness:

1. Unpack about lack of communication:

* Do you hear anything directly from DESE about this grant (general information as well as mentoring supports)? Or is it filtered through another school or district person?
* If you are receiving communication from DESE, is it all through email? Are there other forms of communication?
* What type of communication would work best? Who is the best contact person, or are there multiple contact people in your school/district who should get information directly?

Everyone:

1. Where do you think someone new to this project would need the most support?

* Probe for self-assessment, action plan development, other

1. What advice would you give DESE about offering support to districts going through the Tool and creating action plans?

### Appendix I: Online Focus Group Protocol

Note: The same protocol was used for both online focus groups, so that district representatives could choose which session was more convenient for them to attend.

Thank you for taking the time to join this webinar today. CES is conducting an evaluation of the Safe and Supportive Schools grantmaking process; we are not evaluating individual grantees and will not be reporting on individual schools’ or districts’ progress to DESE. Our reporting will be general and we will not identify individual grantees.

Do you have any questions for me?

**Introduction/Background:**

* + Tell me about who you are, what district you’re from, and why you decided to offer mentoring support through this program.
  + What expectations or assumptions did you have when you signed up to mentor?
  + What is your current understanding of the expectations for mentors? Is this a change from your original assumptions?
  + How have expectations for mentoring been communicated to you?

**Processes and Activities**

* + Have any districts reached out to you directly for mentoring support?
  + What are the ways in which you have delivered mentoring support - webinars, visits, phone calls, conference presentations, other?
  + What are the key needs or questions with which mentees have needed help?
  + What DESE resources/materials/tools have you shared with mentees? Are there other resources/tools you’ve shared?
  + In what ways have you felt effective in supporting new grantees? With what topics?
  + Is there anyone here who has not yet offered any mentoring support? Do you have any specific plans to do so in the next couple of months, or are you waiting for someone to contact you and request support?

**Supports for Mentors**

* + Have you received any support in becoming an effective mentor, either from DESE or other sources? If so, what kind of supports, and how have they been delivered (phone calls, in person, webinars)? Prompts:
    - If you have received supports, do you feel like they have been effective? If so, in what ways have they been effective?
    - Are there supports you feel you need that you have not received? If so, what additional support would have been helpful?

**Barriers and Facilitators to Effective Mentoring**

* + For those of you who have provided mentoring, do you think you have been an effective mentor? In what ways have you been effective? What supports have seemed most valuable to grantees? What has helped you to be effective?
  + What has gotten in the way of your providing effective mentoring, or to providing mentoring at all? Do you have ideas about what is needed to help mentors get past these barriers?

**General**

* + Has the mentoring process been beneficial to you as well? If so, how?
  + What advice do you have for DESE if they continue the mentoring component for this program?

**If additional time:**

* + About how much time have you spent on mentoring? Does the amount of time you have been spending on mentoring meet your expectations?
  + Would you want to be a mentor again? Why or why not?
  + What recommendations would you have for other grantees who volunteer to be mentors?

### Appendix J: FC 337 Interview Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. CES is conducting an evaluation of the Safe and Supportive Schools grantmaking process; we are not evaluating individual grantees and will not be reporting on individual schools’ or districts’ progress to DESE. Our reporting will be general and we will not identify individual grantees.

Do you have any questions for me?

**Implementation**

(Note - prior to the interview, review the team’s action plan and any information about implementation from the applications and other artifacts)

1. I reviewed your application materials and I see that your action plan focused on

. Is that still the case? (If there have been changes, including items removed from or added to original plan, explore what they have been and the reasons for them).

1. What are you doing to put this plan in place?
   1. Who are the key players?
   2. Which of your plan’s action steps have been implemented so far?
   3. What strategies are you using to help this action plan be realized?
2. How far along are you with the implementation of your plan? What outputs, if any, can you describe for us?
3. In what ways, if any, does this plan connect with work that your school or district was already planning to do? (Probe for details about existing school or district work that the SSSP work connects with or supports.) Is the action plan implementation being driven primarily by the grant, or are there other factors moving this work forward?
4. Are there other initiatives, goals, or grant programs that you feel align with this work?
5. What has helped you with the implementation so far?
   1. Supports within your district
   2. Assistance from DESE
   3. Support from other districts or outside resources
   4. Other?
6. Has anything gotten in the way of your implementation? If so, what? How have you dealt with this?
7. Are there additional supports that would be helpful for your implementation? If so, what are they?
8. Now that you are in the implementation phase, is there anything you would change about how you did the Tool or the action planning?

**Monitoring**

(Review action plan for information about implementation monitoring)

1. Do you feel as though you have clear, well-understood goals for this work?
2. How are you tracking or documenting the work you’ve done; e.g., participants in training, new policies or practices, and participant responses?
3. Do you think that your work so far has been effective? Are there any early outcomes that are showing this?
4. Have you received any support from DESE or other sources with determining whether your programs are effective? If so, what has this looked like?
5. Do you need additional support with this? If so, what support do you need?
6. Are there some positive changes you’ve seen that you can share with us?

**Sustainability**

(Review action plan for information about integration in district-wide planning, and sustainability)

1. Is your school-level SSSP action plan integrated with a districtwide plan (either SSSP or a district improvement plan)?
   1. How do the two plans relate to each other?
   2. What was the process for integrating the two plans?
   3. Has this process been smooth? If not, what were the barriers?
2. Have you thought about how you will make the work you have done around this action plan sustainable beyond the life of the grant? How will this happen? Is there additional support you will need, within the district or from outside, for this to happen?

**General**

1. What, if any, have been unanticipated benefits to this work? What, if any, have been unanticipated challenges created as a result of this work?
2. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your implementation process?
3. What advice do you have for DESE if they continue to support implementation of SSSP action plans?