**Rethinking School Discipline Professional Learning Network 2016-2017**

**October 28, 2016 Session in Leominster**

**SUMMARY**

On October 28, 2016 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) staff and teams from schools and districts in the Rethinking School Discipline Professional Learning Network (PLN) participated in the PLN’s first in person gathering. The event commenced with a keynote, “Building a Positive School Climate Through a Continuum of Student Support,” delivered by Sandra Williamson, Director of the National Center of Safe, Supportive Learning Environments and a Vice-President at American Institutes for Research (AIR). Participants then chose to attend one of the four sessions detailed below, met in cross-district groups, and concluded the day with information about action plans that will be required to be submitted to the Department. The action plan will be due in two stages: this winter (to outline work during 2016-2017), and this summer (to provide outcome information from 2016-2017 and plans for 2017-2018). These action plans are required through 603 CMR 53.14 (4). The Department will soon be confirming the types of support and offerings that will be available to PLN participants during the remainder of this school year.

**Rethinking School Discipline Breakout Sessions**

**Key Elements for Student Engagement and Preventing School Exclusion**

*Facilitated by Dr. Karla Estrada*

This session discussed ways in which the opportunities and the achievement that our students experience in school are deeply dependent on how they are able to be successfully engaged in school. The key data indicators that consistently reflect exclusionary practices that impede this positive engagement is suspension data and attendance data, especially among students of color, students with disabilities, and English learners. During this professional learning session, participants learned the key elements for preventing school exclusion and student engagement found in research and learned in practice.

*Dr. Karla Estrada is the Deputy Superintendent of the Office of Academic and Student Support for Equity Team (ASSET) in Boston Public Schools. She has spent 20 years in education as an educator and administrator committed to creating educational opportunities for all students. As an educational leader, Dr. Estrada is committed to ensuring the educational success of all students. She believes that being an education partner with students, families, communities, and fellow educators is essential to creating the opportunities needed to achieve this success for all.*

**Addressing the Root Causes of Disparities in School Discipline**

*Facilitated by Sandra Williamson*

This session provided an overview of a set of tools schools can use to assess and systematically address disparities in school discipline. Participants reviewed how to carry out a descriptive analysis of disparities in school discipline and how to conduct a root cause analysis to systematically address school-based factors that contribute to disparities.

*Sandra Williamson is a Vice President at the American Institutes for Research in Washington, D.C. She leads several technical assistance projects for improving school based services for children and youth with social emotional and behavioral needs. She is the Director for the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, funded by the U. S. Department of Education which provides support for measuring and implementing programs that address school safety and school climate. She is also the project director for the National Resource Center on Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, a cooperative agreement funded by SAMHSA that supports Project LAUNCH grantees and Safe Schools Health Students state grantees. She also serves as Principal Investigator for several other projects related to developing social emotional multi-tiered supports in schools, accessing mental health services and community based programs; school based mental health services; district evaluations of implementations of evidence based programs including positive behavioral supports and school discipline.*

**Introduction to Restorative Practices in Schools: More than Repairing Harm**

*Facilitated by Kara McLaughlin*

This session provided participants an interactive overview of Restorative Practices. Participants became knowledgeable with Restorative Practices and its benefits in strengthening school climate and restoring relationships with members of the school community. Furthermore, participants learned how this initiative has been implemented throughout current Massachusetts schools.

*Kara McLaughlin is the Project Director for the Gill Montague Community School Partnership. Kara has been working in Gill-Montague for over 10 years and started as a peer mediation coordinator in both the middle and high schools. Her work has centered around improving school climate and school connectedness- including supporting the advisory program, starting the Gay Straight Alliance and bringing restorative practices to the middle and high schools. She also consults training numerous Western Massachusetts schools in restorative practices. Her previous work includes conducting restorative justice panels at the Brattleboro Community Justice Center in Vermont; event planning at the Global Alliance for Women's Health in Manhattan and teaching for WorldTeach Costa Rica 1999. She holds a Masters of Arts in Intercultural Relations with a concentration in Conflict Transformation from the School for International Training and is a Certified Prevention Specialist in MA.*

**Understanding Trauma and Building a Trauma Sensitive School**

*Presented by Ryan Powers*

This session focused on how schools could transform themselves into safe and supportive learning environments while maintaining high academic standards and achievement.  Participants reviewed trauma and its impact on learning, practical strategies that schools could implement to support all students (not just those struggling with behavioral health), and create community partners to aid schools in creating safe and supportive learning environments.

*Ryan Powers is currently the Assistant Superintendent of Bridgewater-Raynham Regional School District. Ryan began his career as an educator teaching 6th grade in Wrentham for eight years and then transitioned into school leadership as an assistant principal in Brockton for three years. He then became a principal at two different elementary schools in Brockton for ten years where he focused on transforming the most recent school to be trauma sensitive. Ryan holds a Bachelors from Stonehill College and a Masters from Cambridge College, and currently serves as an adjunct faculty at Lesley University for their Trauma and Learning program.*

**Student Speaker**

Kalise Osula, Boston Community Leadership Academy Alumna, presented during lunch about her experiences as a student advocate and active participation with the youth-led organization Youth on Board. During the presentation and Q & A that followed, Osula emphasized the importance of listening to students and including them in the conversations around discipline and policy updates.

 **Cross District Conversations**

After lunch, participants met in cross-district groups to engage in collaborative conversations. Participants were grouped by type of school/district (middle school, high school, alternative school, charter school, and district), and discussions were facilitated by Sandra Williamson and by Department staff from the Offices of Student and Family Support; Special Education Planning and Policy; Charter School and School Redesign; and College, Career, and Technical Education. This session provided participants with an opportunity to discuss both successes and challenges with rethinking discipline work in their respective schools and districts.