**Rethinking Discipline Professional Learning Network -**
**School Year 2022-2023 Update**

**Initiative Purpose:**

Since 2016, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has partnered with schools and districts across the Commonwealth in the Rethinking Discipline initiative. This initiative has included a Professional Learning Network (PLN) designed to assist schools and districts with reducing the use of long-term suspension and expulsion for all students, and with decreasing disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion for students with disabilities and students of color.

 **SY2022 Update:**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools and districts shifted to widespread remote and hybrid learning during the second half of school year 2019–2020 (SY2020) and SY2021. Associated with this shift, the student removal data submitted by districts through the School Safety and Discipline Report (SSDR) for that time period was very different from prior years. In consideration of these circumstances, and after conducting an analysis that included SY2021 SSDR data, the Commissioner did not identify any new schools and districts for the Rethinking Discipline initiative in SY2022. The analysis was performed utilizing the previously established [methodology](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/calculations-sy2021.docx).

 **Phase Two:**

During SY 2023, DESE is transitioning to a second phase of the Rethinking Discipline initiative, in light of what we have learned through Phase One as well as recent amendments to state law (see below). Department staff are engaging with stakeholders to help inform the next phase of the initiative. More details will be available during winter/spring 2023. Likely changes include:

* Starting with a new SY2022 data baseline, and likely basing preliminary identifications in SY 2023 on SY2022 data.
* Moving to a multi-year data analysis again in SY2024.
* Defining more clearly the duration of a school or district in “identification” status to be for two calendar years – generally the second half of a school year to draft an action plan, then a full school year to implement the action plan, then the first half of the next school year to transition to sustainable practices and cohort completion.
* On the top of the next page is a sample timeline for when multiple years of data would again be available:



**Professional Development Offerings:**

The Department will continue to make available professional development opportunities during SY 2023 to previous initiative participants and interested others. The professional development is geared towards increasing student engagement and creating safe and supportive learning environments. The [Equity Imperative](https://www.equityimperative.org/) will continue to facilitate DESE’s professional development opportunities for participants. One opportunity is a series of virtual three-part professional development webinars aimed at building participants’ capacity to develop and implement action steps that incorporate a culturally responsive approach to alternatives to discipline by creating anti-racist practices to improve and restore relationships with students. The other opportunity offers yearlong asynchronous learning modules that participants complete at their own pace on hope and healing through anti-racist practices. Visit the [Student Discipline Resources webpage](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/) for more information regarding the [SY 2023 professional development](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Fsfs%2Fdiscipline%2Fpd-calendar.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) offerings.

 **Rethinking Discipline–Related Expectations in the New Mental Health Law:**

*An Act Addressing Barriers to Care for Mental Health* was signed into law as [Chapter 177 of the Acts of 2022](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2022/Chapter177) and took effect on November 8, 2022. Provisions include required alternative remedies prior to suspensions and expulsions (Section 29). The section replaces paragraph (b) of M.G.L. c. 71, s. 37H-3/4 and requires school authorities to consider and employ alternative remedies to reengage students in the learning process before suspending or expelling a student, except in specific documented circumstances. Alternative remedies include mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and collaborative problem solving. The law also calls for implementation of school- or district-wide models to re-engage students in learning. The Department has informed school and district leaders about the changes to the law and anticipates providing more guidance to school districts in 2023. As a part of this, DESE plans to incorporate additional professional development on alternative remedies into the ongoing professional development opportunities described above.