**Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

**Rethinking Discipline Professional Learning Network -**   
**School Year 2024-2025 Update**

**Initiative Purpose & Post Pandemic Update:**

Since 2016, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) has partnered with schools and districts across the Commonwealth in the Rethinking Discipline initiative, associated primarily with state law ([Chapter 222](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartIII/TitleI/Chapter222)) and regulations ([603 CMR 53.00](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr53.html)).

This initiative includes 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 by race/ethnicity and disability status. [Information about a number of related Department initiatives](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/indicators-4-9-10.docx) can be found on the [Rethinking Discipline](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/) webpage.

During school year 2022-2023 (SY23), the Department [transitioned to a second phase](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/pln-update-sy2023.docx) of the Rethinking Discipline initiative. The Department reset the data used in the identification process (post-pandemic) and clarified the amount of time identified schools and districts will participate in the initiative (two years for each identified cohort).

**Phase Two of the Initiative:**

In the spring of 2024-2025, the Department identified and welcomed its second multi-year cohort of Phase Two into the PLN. The SY25 identifications used a [methodology](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/calculations-sy2025.docx) that takes into consideration a multi-year analysis of School Safety and Discipline Report (SSDR) suspension and expulsion data submitted by districts to the Department (from SY22 through SY24). Identified schools and districts are required to submit an action plan (due in the fall of 2025) and are encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities, which include monthly sessions designed to support action plan creation and implementation.

**Professional Development Offerings:**

The Department continues to offer professional development (PD) opportunities to PLN members, as well as previous initiative participants and other interested schools and districts. The PD is primarily geared towards increasing student engagement and creating safe and supportive learning environments by incorporating student and family voice into (decision-making or action planning). Information about the PD opportunities are posted on the [SY25 professional development calendar](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/pd-calendar.docx), which will be updated when additional details become available.

**Rethinking Discipline Initiative – 2024-2025 PLN Participants**

Participants in the Rethinking Discipline Initiative’s Phase II, Cohort II are as follows.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **District** | **School (if applicable)** |
| Baystate Academy Charter Public School (Springfield) | Baystate Academy Charter Public School (Springfield)\*^ |
| Boston Preparatory Charter Public (Boston) | Boston Preparatory Charter Public (Boston)\* |
| Central Berkshire Regional School District | Nessacus Regional Middle School^ |
| Chicopee Public Schools | Chicopee Academy^ |
| *(Chicopee Public Schools)* | Dupont Middle School^ |
| Haverhill Public Schools | Greenleaf Academy^ |
| Lowell Public Schools | The Career Academy^ |
| Ludlow Public Schools | (district level)^ |
| North Adams Public Schools | (district level)\*^ |
| *(North Adams Public Schools)* | Drury High School^ |
| Oxford Public Schools | Oxford High School^ |
| Palmer Public Schools | (district level)\* |
| Pittsfield Public Schools | (district level)\* |
| Somerset Berkley Regional School District | Somerset Berkley Regional High School^ |
| Springfield Empowerment Zone Partnership (SEZP), which is within Springfield Public Schools | Impact Prep at Chestnut^ |
| *(SEZP)* | Rise Academy at Van Sickle^ |
| Webster Public Schools | (district level)\* |

*\*Districts with identifications associated with Special Education Compliance Indicators 4a/4b (associated with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* [*(20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(A); 1412(a)(22))*](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-ii/1416) *and the* [*State Performance Plan / Annual Performance Report (SPP- APR*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/spp/maspp.html)*).*

^*Schools/districts with identifications* associated with [Chapter 222](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2012/Chapter222), *An Act Relative to Student Access to Educational Services and Exclusion from School* and state regulations [603 CMR 53.00](https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr53.html)).

*Please note that identifications related to* [*Significant Disproportionality*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/idea2004/sig-dispro/) *are made in the Fall of each new school year.*

*For a brief reminder of the aforementioned initiatives, see this* [*overview*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/indicators-4-9-10.docx)*.*

**Rethinking Discipline–Related Expectations in the 2022 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. Section 29 addresses expectations for schools and districts related to alternative remedies prior to suspensions and expulsions. The section replaced paragraph (b) of M.G.L. c. 71, s. 37H-3/4 and requires school leaders 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 can 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. In February 2023, the Department created a guidance document describing the changes in the law (available in [English](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/updated-expectations.docx) and [Spanish](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/updated-expectations-spanish.docx)) and it can be found on the Department’s [Rethinking Discipline webpage](https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline).