The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) is continuing to develop and share this newsletter during the COVID-19 pandemic and throughout the 2020-2021 school year. As schools, districts, teachers, students, and families navigate an especially challenging school year, we hope that these resources are helpful and welcome any feedback.

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, please email the Office of Student and Family Support at achievement@mass.gov.

Student Engagement Guidance
Promoting Student Engagement, Learning, Wellbeing and Safety During Remote and Hybrid Learning (Winter 2020): The Department is providing this document for districts to use to continue to engage with students and their families, and to connect students and families with additional supports they may need during remote and hybrid learning. The document compiles excerpts from previously released documents as well as new Department guidance, resources, and recommendations.

Elementary School Principals PD and Networking – March Book Discussion

The Elementary School Principals PD and Networking Series flyer is now available on our Early Learning website with more dates and details.

The Department's Early Learning Team and the Massachusetts School Administrators' Association (MSAA) is hosting a series of networking and professional development opportunities for elementary principals (Preschool-3rd grade) during the 2020-2021 school year. The theme for this year’s series is Creating a Caring Community: Caring for Ourselves and Our Staff Using a Trauma-Informed Lens.

As part of this year’s series, in March, we will be hosting a two-part book discussion on Zaretta Hammond’s Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain. Save the date for the book discussion on March 10 and 17, 2021. Registration will open in February.

Please contact a member of the Early Learning team (achievement@mass.gov) with any questions.

Youth Mental Health First Aid Training

There is has been a strong interest in mental health professional development throughout the pandemic but also prior to this difficult time. In 2018, 85% of lead health education teachers said they would like to receive professional development regarding emotional and mental health, and 76% reported receiving it, according to the School Health Profiles survey.

The Department is working with Walker Therapeutic and Educational Programs to schedule additional Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training sessions for 2021, and we are taking requests for district-specific sessions for later this year. You can sign up to be notified when additional sessions are

Family engagement is foundational to a healthy school community, especially during a pandemic. The Department has teamed up with Pinnacle Partnerships to work with schools and districts to harness the power of engaging families in culturally competent and innovative ways to help spread the message about COVID-19 mitigation. Following the workshops held in other regions, the final Lunch and Learn in this statewide series of immersive workshops is targeted to Northern Massachusetts districts but OPEN TO ALL District, School and Family/Community Partners who would like to learn more about the opportunity to join a Community of Practice.

The Winter-Spring Community of Practice for Covid-R.E.L.I.E.F. with Pinnacle Partnerships will continue to help school health communities across the state engage families in meaningful partnerships. Please register below. The Lunch and Learn will run from 12:00-1:30 p.m. and is open to families, school personnel, and administrators.

- **Friday, January 29:** Northern Massachusetts (open to all Northeast family/school partners who have previously participated in a Lunch and Learn, as well as any new partners from across the state who are interested in joining a Community of Practice this winter/spring)

High Quality Remote Learning for Young Students (Preschool up to Grade 3) Webinar Recordings

The MA Executive Office of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Early Education and Care, hosted a four-part webinar series on high quality remote learning for the Commonwealth’s youngest learners, Preschool up to 3rd grade for public school and community-based administrators and educators. Recordings and presentation slides for the following topics will be posted to the
Department's Early Learning Resources website in February:

- Part I - Incorporating Engaging Instructional Approaches that are Responsive to the Developmental Needs of Students
- Part II - Building Strong Collaborations Between Public Schools and Community-Based Programs to Support Young Students and their Families
- Part III - Engaging Students with Disabilities and English Learners
- Part IV - Culturally Responsive Approaches to Engaging with Families During and After the Pandemic

Bullying Legislation and Data Webinar

School and district administrators are invited to join Anne Gilligan from the Office of Student and Family Support and Shelagh Peoples from the Office of Planning and Research for a one-hour webinar on bullying at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 28. Anne will discuss the current bullying legislation in Massachusetts and update administrators on the latest data reporting requirements that relate to this legislation. Shelagh will summarize key findings from the latest bullying research brief; these findings are based on students' perceptions of school climate. Meeting details are provided in the registration form.

Strengthening School Mental Health - Professional Development Sessions

Informed by requests from those who’ve signed up to learn about school mental health related opportunities, and by efforts through ongoing work with a comprehensive school mental health Collaborative Innovation and Improvement Network (CollIn), the MA School Mental Health Consortium (MASMHC) and MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) are jointly sponsoring PD trainings on topics that support comprehensive school mental health efforts. These will be led by John Crocker, MASMHC founder and Methuen Public Schools Director of School Mental Health & Behavioral Services. Register online for either or both sessions.

- Tuesday, February 9, 12:00-2:00pm: Using Psychosocial Data to Improve Identification and Evidence-based Interventions (Screening and Progress Monitoring).
Tuesday, March 2, 2:00-3:30pm: **Tier II Therapeutic Supports:**
*Establishing a Group Therapy Program.*

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**For Your Information**

**CASEL Reopening with SEL Document:**
New #SEL Brief: SEL remains more important than ever as students and adults face new transitions in 2021. Refocus on our #SELRoadmap with @caselorg for guidance & actions for a successful 2nd semester [https://casel.org/reopening-with-sel/](https://casel.org/reopening-with-sel/)

**Family-Friendly Resources for Help with Mental Health:**
To assist in getting the word out about [HandholdMA.org](http://HandholdMA.org), a user-friendly website for Massachusetts families who are worried about their children’s mental health, one-page handouts (printable posters) are available for schools to send families through "virtual" or real backpacks. These handouts are available in English, Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, and simplified Chinese. A 30-minute [recorded webinar](http://recordedwebinar) is also available and shows key features and how to use the website to locate mental health resources for children in Massachusetts. [HandholdMA.org](http://HandholdMA.org) is designed to help families figure if their child’s behavior is something to worry about and if so, what next steps can they take.

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Learn more about [Deeper Learning](http://DeeperLearning).