

## **Regular School Attendance Design Team**

### **Work group: Positive School Climate**

Positive school climate impacts whether children and their families feel safe, supported and welcomed at school. A sense of safety at school and feeling like you belong impacts regular school attendance. School climate factors like suspension and expulsion policies are also relevant because they can keep children out of the classroom for extended periods of time.

**Outcomes** related to Positive School Climate, as it impacts Regular School Attendance:

- Early care and education programs and schools integrate social-emotional strategies
- Suspension and expulsion policies in programs and schools are used sparingly and equitably
- Children attend elementary schools that systematically involve child care programs and families before school transition
- Students have access to programs in their native languages
- Children attend schools that reflect the socio-economic diversity of their school districts

North Carolina has a lot of assets in place! There has been a lot of excellent work already done in North Carolina around these issues. Pathways would like to lift up and leverage these assets. We have talked with some of you and surveyed the larger Pathways Partners (stakeholders) group to learn about some of the great initiatives that are helping us move towards these outcomes. Here is what we have learned.

**Positive School Climate Asset Map**, as related to Regular School Attendance:

- There is increasing conversation and reporting around the effect of trauma on learning and the importance of creating safe and supportive schools. (e.g., NC Public School Forum Committee on Trauma and Learning and the Safe and Supportive Schools Initiative, model programs around the state, like Compassionate Schools in Buncombe County Schools).
- There is pilot work to build trauma-sensitive whole school learning environments through specific professional development for educators and building students' resilience, in six school districts over a 3-year period. (Public School Forum's NC Resilience and Learning Project)
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) is expanding across the state, including effective teaching practices for Tier I Language and Literacy and Social-Emotional Health for both regular and special education teachers. Tier II and III practices for teachers and administrators are also on the horizon.
- The NC Ready Schools Initiative and toolkits offer education and training for schools and communities around all aspects of ensuring schools (PK-3<sup>rd</sup> grade) are ready for students, including leaders and leadership, family and school partnerships, transitions,

respecting diversity, engaging environments, effective curricula, teaching supports, measuring progress and quality assurance.

- There are NC recommendations around transition planning and updates on the state's progress on developing and implementing a standardized program to transition children from preschool to kindergarten, including developing and piloting a readiness measure, with information-sharing on the individual child level between Pre-K programs and public schools.
- NC has developed Early Learning and Development Progressions (0-5) based on the NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development. Learning progressions were developed for each identified goal in four developmental domains, and show the steps through which children develop skills from birth to five years. The comprehensive observation guidelines include age level, skill being observed, situation for observation of skills, strategies for eliciting the skill, if needed, what observed behavior indicates achievement of the skill, and routines-based intervention or embedded instruction. Teachers are being trained in these progressions, and there are conversations about how to use them to share information between preschools and elementary schools when children transition to kindergarten.
- The NC Healthy Social Behaviors Initiative addresses behavioral issues in young children by offering services designed to identify, prevent and modify challenging behaviors with a goal of reducing the expulsion rate and promoting social-emotional development of all children in NC licensed child care centers.
- NC DPI publishes disaggregated data annually on suspensions and expulsions in public schools
- The North Carolina State Improvement Project provides personnel development and program support services to significantly improve the performance and success of students with disabilities in North Carolina.
- The NC Infant Toddler Quality Improvement Project provides highly trained specialists across NC to help early childhood programs improve infant and toddler classrooms.