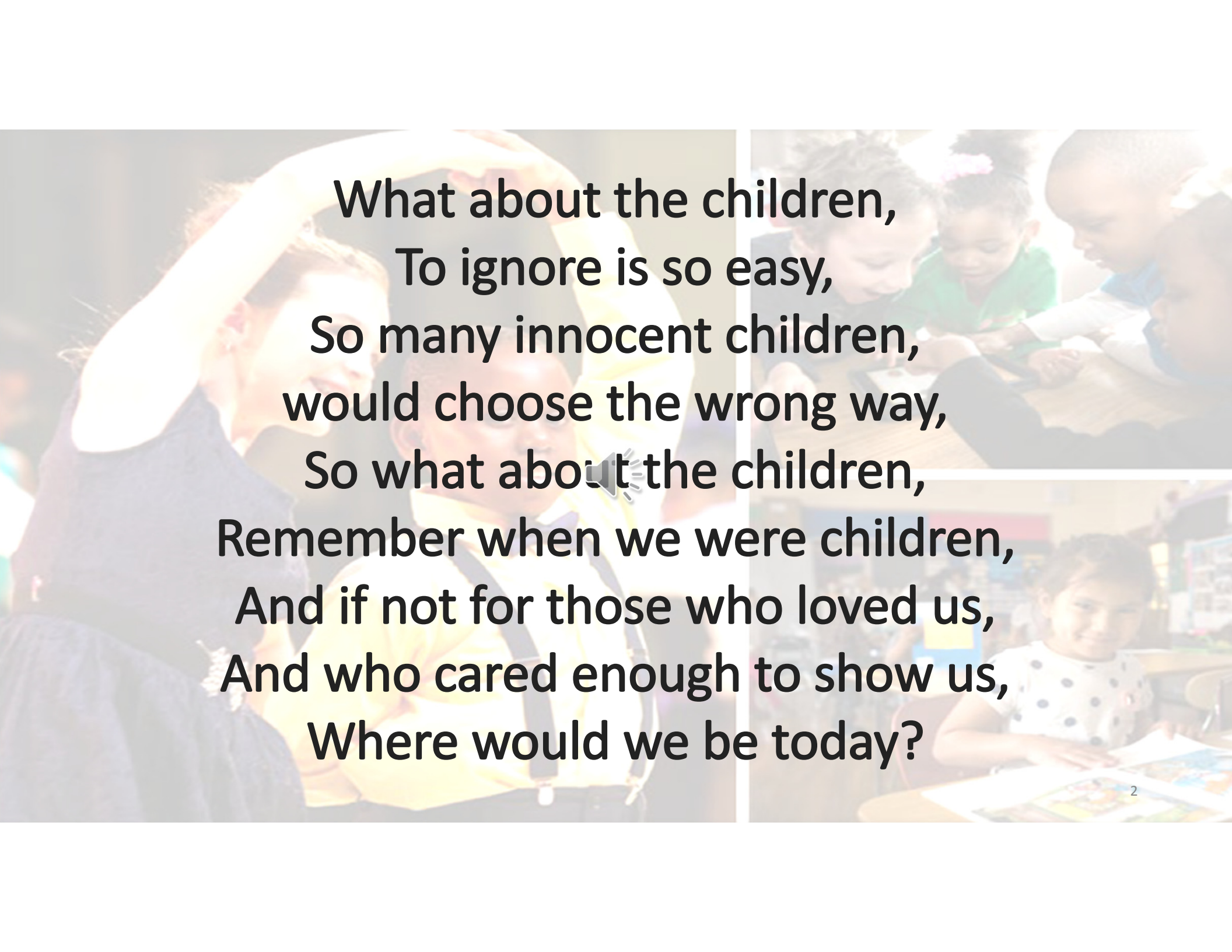




**Positive and Supportive School Culture:  
Recommendations for Reducing Exclusionary Discipline for Early Learners**  
Education Committee, November 8, 2017

Expect great things.



The background of the slide is a collage of three photographs. The leftmost photo shows a woman with blonde hair hugging a young child from behind. The top right photo shows a group of four children sitting around a table, focused on a task. The bottom right photo shows a young girl with dark hair, wearing a white shirt with black polka dots, smiling at the camera while sitting at a table with papers and colorful items.

**What about the children,  
To ignore is so easy,  
So many innocent children,  
would choose the wrong way,  
So what about the children,  
Remember when we were children,  
And if not for those who loved us,  
And who cared enough to show us,  
Where would we be today?**

# A Moment for Reflection

Our goal is to enter this work with our children at the center. We want you to just take a moment to think about what resonated with you when you listened to and saw the lyrics from the song “What About the Children.”

Expect great things.

# Agenda

- Context
- Scope of Work
- Committee Members
- Process
- Recommendations
- Timeline of Next Steps

# Context

- PPS Strategic plan emphasis on positive and supportive school culture (Strategic Theme #1).
- PPS discipline data warrants innovative approaches to reducing suspension data trends (comparative statewide data, racial disaggregation data, students with exceptionalities data, etc.).
- Need for greater consistency as a system with comprehensive understanding, documenting, reporting and responding to disciplinary-based situations and potential solutions.

# PITTSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## 2017–2022 Strategic Plan Framework

### Strategic Plan Framework Long-Term Outcomes

Increase proficiency  
in literacy for all students

Ensure all students are  
equipped with skills to succeed  
in college, career and life

Increase proficiency  
in math for all students

Eliminate racial disparity in  
achievement levels of African-  
American students

### Strategic Theme #1 Create a positive and supportive school culture.

1. Meet the holistic needs of all students.
2. Establish a shared commitment and responsibility for positive relationships with every student, family, and staff member.
3. Create effective family and community partnerships in every school.

#### Strategic Initiatives

- PHASE 1**
- 1a. Establish a system-wide Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) process, that includes Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and restorative practices, implemented through high-functioning Student Assistance Program (SAP) teams in every school that are equipped to follow the process with fidelity.
  - 2b. Develop and communicate explicit and consistent expectations for staff interactions with students and families.
  - 3b. Implement a tiered and phased community schools approach.
- PHASE 2**
- 1b. Embed elements of social-emotional learning into academic instruction.
- PHASE 3**
- 1c. Develop individual student success plans for all students.
  - 3a. Develop effective partnerships among schools, students, families, and community organizations, utilizing a research-based framework that fosters collaboration for student success.

### Strategic Theme #2 Develop and implement a rigorous, aligned instructional system.

#### Objectives

1. Establish a rigorous District-wide curriculum and assessment framework that is culturally inclusive.

#### Strategic Initiatives

- PHASE 1**
- 1a. Develop and design a common curriculum framework.
  - 1b. Develop a comprehensive assessment system aligned to grade-level expectations.
  - 1c. Implement an instructional system with aligned and equitably distributed resources.

#### District Vision

All students will graduate high school college, career and life-ready prepared to complete a two- or four-year college degree or workforce certification.

#### District Mission

The Pittsburgh Public Schools will be one of America's premier school districts, student-focused, well-managed, and innovative. We will hold ourselves accountable for preparing all children to achieve academic excellence and strength of character, so that they have the opportunity to succeed in all aspects of life.

### Strategic Theme #3 Provide appropriate instructional support for teachers and staff.

#### Objectives

1. Impact student outcomes by increasing teacher knowledge through a cohesive system of instructional support.

#### Strategic Initiatives

- PHASE 1**
- 1b. Align instructional support efforts to ensure collaboration between school administrators and staff around the school's professional development focus.
- PHASE 2**
- 1a. Ensure that all professional development for teachers and staff follows research-based and culturally relevant practices.
  - 1c. Provide differentiated instructional support that is based on data and deployed through school-based, district-wide, and online learning opportunities.
  - 1d. Ensure that supervisory and support staff who engage in instructional conversations with teachers receive differentiated learning opportunities to be effective in their roles.

### Strategic Theme #4 Foster a culture of high performance for all employees.

#### Objectives

1. Attract and retain high-performing staff who hold high expectations for all students.
2. Enhance District-wide systems that promote shared accountability, high expectations, and continuous growth for all employees.

#### Strategic Initiatives

- PHASE 1**
- 1a. Develop and broaden teacher pipeline and recruitment efforts to yield a diverse, culturally competent and effective workforce.
  - 1b. Develop a rigorous selection and hiring process that ensures the most effective workforce.
- PHASE 2**
- 2b. Review and modify performance management systems to maximize impact on professional growth and student outcomes.
- PHASE 3**
- 1c. Promote retention and reduce negative effect of turnover.
  - 2a. Create comprehensive professional learning environments to both facilitate role-specific learning and to enable employees to grow and develop.

Expect great things.



Phase 1: Launching now through June 2017  
Phase 2: Launching in the 2017–2018 School Year  
Phase 3: Launching in the 2018–2019 School Year

Expect great things.

# Board Resolution

## June 21, 2017

- ✓ The Administration shall identify and convene a working group made up of no less than 10, but no more than 20 members.
- ✓ The working group shall include at least one of each of the following: Board member, administrator, principal, teacher, student, parent or guardian, Equity Advisory Panel member, Local Task Force member and another community representative.
- ✓ The working group shall be identified and convened no later than July 15, 2017.

# Board Resolution

## June 21, 2017

- ✓The working group will define non-violent minor disciplinary infractions.
- ✓The working group will develop and present the definition of non-violent minor disciplinary infractions.
- ✓The working group will recommend supports and services needed to implement a ban on the use of out of school suspension for students enrolled in grades below the third grade.
- ✓The definition and recommendations will be presented to the Board no later than the November 2017 Education Committee meeting.

# Scope of Work

- Establish a Working Group Committee to:
  - Define non-violent minor disciplinary infractions for grades K-2
  - Develop and present the definition of non-violent minor disciplinary infractions and its recommendations for supports and services needed to implement a ban on the use of out of school suspension for students enrolled in grades below the third grade.

# Committee Members

- 7 Community Members
- 2 Board Members
- 2 Central Office Members
- 2 Central Office Facilitators
- 2 Teachers
- 6 Principals
- 2 Students



- ☐ Meetings to occur every other week starting in August through the end of September (*extended through October*)
- ☐ Complete any necessary pre- work and assignments to facilitate the effectiveness of meeting discussions
- ☐ Make final recommendations to the Board

# Process

- Independent Facilitator:  
Ron Porter of RDP  
Consulting
- 8 meetings were held  
between August through  
October 2017
- Additional principal and  
teacher input was solicited  
in response to preliminary  
recommendations



# Reference Materials

## Articles

- Eight Behaviors for Smarter Teams
- Instead of Suspension
- Ten Alternatives to Suspension
- Rethinking School Discipline
- Racial Disproportionality and Implicit Bias in School Discipline
- Kicked out of Kindergarten

## Data

- PPS Suspension Data
- Education Rights Network Infraction Code Data

## School District Benchmarking

- Houston Independent School District
- Oakland Unified School District
- Denver Public Schools



 Expect great things.

# Crime of Violence Defined

## 18 U.S. Code § 16

The term “crime of violence” means—

- **(a)** an offense that has as an element the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force against the person or property of another, or
- **(b)** any other offense that is a felony and that, by its nature, involves a substantial risk that physical force against the person or property of another may be used in the course of committing the offense

# Focus of Working Group Violent/Nonviolent Offenses

Offense Level	Current Code of Conduct Status	Working Group Role
Level One Offenses	Offenses that do not lead to an out-of-school suspension	Not addressed by working group
Level Two Offenses	Offenses that may lead to an out-of-school suspension	Focus of working group for defining violent/nonviolent offenses
Level Three Offenses	Offenses that lead to an out-of-school suspension	Not addressed by working group

# Level One

(Offenses that do not lead to an out-of-school suspension)

- Tardiness
- Truancy and Class Cuts
- Inappropriate Personal Property
- Pestering, Teasing, or Bothing Other Students
- Inappropriate Language or Gestures
- Minor Disruption of School/Bus
- Refusal to Comply with Posted/Published School Norms & Regulations
- Possession of Pagers, Lasers, Radios and Certain Electronic or Telecommunication Devices
- Disruption of Class



# Level Three

(Offenses that lead to an out-of-school suspension)

- Assault on a School Employee
- Assault on a Student or Other Person not Employed by the School
- Weapons and Dangerous Instruments
- Drugs
- Arson

# Recommendations for Distinguishing Non-Violent and Violent Level 2 Offenses

Level 2 offenses deemed by the Working Group as *Non-Violent*:

- Unauthorized presence of students during school hours (school or private property)
- Possession or use of tobacco or electronic smoking devices
- Academic dishonesty
- Misuse of computers/electronic device
- Undesirable group activity
- Profanity & vulgarity/verbal altercation (to student)
- Profanity & vulgarity/verbal altercation (to staff)
- Inappropriate sexual behavior
- Repeated level I or II infractions
- Terroristic threats or conspiracy to commit violent acts



# Recommendations for Distinguishing Non-Violent and Violent Level 2 Offenses

Level 2 offenses deemed by the Working Group as ***Violent***:

- Damage, destruction or vandalism of property
- Harassment
- Fighting
- Bullying/Cyberbullying
- Hazing
- Physical Aggression/Altercation
- Theft/Robbery

*These offenses align with 18 U.S. Code § 16 Definition of Violence and/or PA Criminal Code.*

# Violent/Nonviolent Alignment

Offense	Aligns with 18 U.S. Code § 16 Definition of Violence	Aligns with PA Criminal Code
Damage, destruction or vandalism of property	X	X
Harassment	X	X
*Fighting	X	(Disorderly Conduct)
Bullying/Cyberbullying	X	X
Hazing	X	X
*Physical Aggression/Altercation	X	(Disorderly Conduct)
Theft/Robbery	X	X

Fighting and Physical Aggression fall under "Disorderly Conduct"  
in PA Criminal Code

# Top 5 Recommendations: Supports

The most frequent recommendations included:

1. One counselor and one social worker for every school according to national standard of 1:250 student to staff ratio outlined by the American School Counseling Association and the National Association of School Social Workers.
2. All staff should be provided professional learning in the areas of mediation, anger management and de-escalation strategies (before they are on the job and ongoing).
3. A minimum of two general education paraprofessionals/classroom assistants in every building. Ideally, one of the paraprofessionals should have specific expertise in addressing the needs of learners with IEP's.
4. A cool-down room in every building with a full-time practitioner that uses restorative practices strategies. There should be a designated intervention classroom led by a certified regular education and special education teacher.
5. One Restorative Practices Coordinator/staff member in every building according to Oakland (CA) Unified and Houston School Districts.

# Recommendations: Supports (con't)

1. One counselor and one social worker for every school according to national standard of 1:250 student to staff ratio outlined by the American School Counseling Association and the National Association of School Social Workers.

# Recommendations: Supports (con't)

## Rationale:

- Current PPS process for providing needed counseling support at the elementary levels is not equitable. Some of the high need schools are under-resourced with one counselor and/or social worker for 500 students.
- Professional counseling assistance can support positive behavioral change for youth, particularly for those demonstrating challenging behaviors.
- The competencies of both counselors and social workers must include ability to address trauma induced behaviors of youth.
- Students with IEP often require specific and sometimes complex interventions. Counselors and Social Workers should be trained to address the needs of students who likely do not respond to “traditional/mainstream” interventions.

# Recommendations: Supports (con't)

2. All staff should be provided professional learning in the areas of mediation, anger management and de-escalation strategies (before they are on the job and ongoing).

# Recommendations: Supports (con't)

## Rationale:

- Educators can benefit from targeted training on verbal de-escalation.
- Several members emphasized the importance of having School Officer and Security staff fully trained in de-escalation and anger management techniques.
- Extreme disruptive and/or inappropriate behaviors can be redirected by educators who have received a comprehensive array of proactive and responsive trainings geared to build positive school culture and address challenging behaviors.
  - Positive examples of effective training within benchmarked districts: *Within Oakland Unified, there are specific and prescriptive description of roles and responsibilities for adults focused on prevention of misbehavior.*

# Recommendations: Supports (con't)

3. A minimum of two general education paraprofessionals/classroom assistants in every building. Ideally, one of the paraprofessionals should have specific expertise in addressing the needs of learners with IEP's.

# Recommendations: Supports (con't)

## Rationale:

- The classroom presence of a professional(s) with expertise in addressing the needs of youth with emotional/psychological imbalances can be invaluable to stabilizing the learning environment.
- Many Working Group members stressed the importance of having learning support expertise in the classroom. Significant numbers of elementary students do not enter school ready to learn. Learning support for these students at an early age can interrupt the long-term trajectory of a student.

# Recommendations: Supports (con't)

4. A cool-down room in every building with a full-time practitioner that uses restorative practices strategies. There should be a designated intervention classroom led by a certified regular education and special education teacher.

# Recommendations: Supports (con't)

## Rationale:

- The members of the Working Group were nearly unanimous in endorsing cool down rooms that made use of Restorative Practices. One classroom would be geared for students and there would also be a designated location for educators to also cool off.

# Recommendations: Supports (con't)

5. One Restorative Practices Coordinator/staff member in every building according to Oakland (CA) Unified and Houston School Districts.

# Recommendations: Supports (con't)

## Rationale:

- The Oakland (CA) Unified and Houston School Districts experienced success in reducing suspensions in part due to having this position in each of its schools.
- Assures that new staff members receive timely professional development and are oriented to Restorative Practices tenets; serves as a liaison with Central Office to assure consistency in implementation as well as mutual sharing of promising practices.

# Cross-Reference of Recommendations by Theme/Group

PAGE 1 OF 2

Themes from Oct 2017 Feedback	Additional Staff (para, LES, counselor, social worker, etc.)	In-School & Saturday Detention/ Restorative Programming	Social/ Emotional Skills Curriculum	Enhanced Mental Health Partnerships	IEP Support	Behavior/ Trauma/ Crisis/ Restorative Practices Training
Working Group	X	X	X	X	X	X
Network A	X	X	X	X		X
Network B	X	X	X	X	X	X
Network D	X	X	X	X		X

 Expect great things.

# Cross-Reference of Recommendations by Theme/Group

PAGE 2 OF 2

Themes from Oct 2017 Feedback	Additional Support to Schools/Teachers w/High Suspension Rates	Mentoring	Parent Involvement	Implicit Bias/ Cultural Relevance Training	Expanding Existing Services (PBIS, Restorative, Community Schools,)
Working Group	X	X	X	X	X
Network A			X		X
Network B	X		X		X
Network D		X	X		X

# Thank You to the Committee

*We want to offer heartfelt appreciation for the members of the committee who dedicated their time and expertise. Many contributed 20+ hours to participate on the committee.*