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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

# Safe and Supportive Learning Environments in Juvenile Justice Systems

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## **The National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth**

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## Goals of the NDTAC Professional Development Briefs

In 2017, the National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth (NDTAC) released its first in a series of professional development briefs that focus on the professional development needs and interests of neglected or delinquent (N or D) State coordinators, correctional educators, and providers of Title I, Part D (Part D) programs and services. These briefs are intended to inform the planning, design, and delivery of professional development for individuals working in Part D and correctional education programs. The goals of the briefs are to raise awareness and understanding of how professional development can enhance the quality of Part D services, build capacity for staff charged with addressing the needs of youth who find themselves in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and improve outcomes for this population of youth.

The first brief highlighted the key characteristics of effective professional development and emphasized the importance of ensuring that professional development is responsive to the characteristics of the N or D population. The second professional development brief focused on increasing practitioners' knowledge about effective transition planning for youth moving into, through, and out of the juvenile justice system and presented ideas for professional development offerings centered on the topic of transition. This third professional development brief seeks to foster a shared understanding of the fundamentals for creating and sustaining safe and supportive learning environments in juvenile justice settings and includes potential ideas for professional development offerings that may enhance the conditions for learning plus social and emotional learning (SEL) opportunities.

## Introduction

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) released *Guiding Principles for Providing High-Quality Education in Juvenile Justice Secure Care Settings*. The report expands on prior guidance from ED and DOJ and presents five guiding principles for

providing high-quality education in juvenile justice secure care settings. The first guiding principle underscores that educators, staff, and administrators of juvenile justice facilities at all levels have as part of their core mission to continually focus on how to best create and sustain “a safe, healthy facility-wide climate that prioritizes education, provides the conditions for learning, and encourages the necessary behavioral and social support services that address the individual needs of all youths, including those with disabilities and English learners” (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 2014c, p. 8).

Creating safe and supportive learning environments requires planning and capacity building to systematically and consistently produce conditions that foster safety; a supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environment; and respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community (Yoder, 2014). During interviews conducted with a small group of Part D State coordinators in 2016, the coordinators agreed that high-quality professional development is needed to ensure that educators in juvenile justice settings can respond to the needs of the N or D population. The coordinators highlighted the importance of educators in secured settings being able to work with students who (1) have a history of poor academic achievement, (2) have high rates of mental health issues, and (3) are more likely to have experienced traumatic events or episodes that result in trauma that may impact them into adulthood. The coordinators also agreed that knowledge of effective instructional practices is necessary but not sufficient to be successful with youth in N or D programs. They emphasized the importance of being familiar with relevant best practices from disciplines such as psychology, juvenile justice, and family engagement to respond effectively to the needs of the N or D student population (Keleher, 2017).

Part D State coordinators' ideas for creating a more cohesive approach to professional development centered on the use of facility-wide trainings. They expressed generalized support for increased use of facility-wide professional development that brings together educators, counselors, social workers, administrators, youth engagement specialists, and security staff and provides common opportunities to

learn new practices and engage in collaborative problem solving. The coordinators indicated that facility-wide professional development could (1) improve the collective capacity of facility staff to address students' needs and (2) increase the consistency of student-staff interactions. They suggested training the entire staff on skills and practices that foster the creation of a positive and healthy climate so that the teaching-learning process can take place. They noted the value of facility-wide trainings that help establish the definitive set of strategies and language that adults will use to manage student behaviors (Keleher, 2017).

An effective approach to creating a safe, positive, and healthy climate is to implement facility-wide SEL strategies. SEL refers to the process of learning, practicing, and building competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2017). These vital competencies developed through SEL are not secondary to the mission of education but concrete factors in the success of both teachers and students (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). By providing students with support that addresses their social and emotional needs and builds strong social and emotional conditions for learning, staff in N or D settings can help improve learning outcomes that cannot be addressed by academic remediation alone (Osher, Penkoff, Sidana, & Kelly, 2016).

Professional development aimed at strengthening the social and emotional skills of teachers and staff at N or D facilities can help set the conditions for positive connections between students and teachers to more easily develop. Thoughtful application and modeling of social and emotional skills by teachers and staff can have a significant impact on improving students' behavioral and academic functioning while helping students develop these skills in themselves, which are indispensable to achieving long-term positive outcomes in their lives (Osher, Berg, Berlinski, & Elias, 2018).

## Characteristics of the Neglected and Delinquent Population

Students who participate in N or D programs have characteristics that differentiate them from students in traditional education settings. Based on nationally reported data for the 2015–16 school year (NDTAC, 2017), students participating in N or D programs can be described as follows:

- **Disproportionately male.** Male students account for 83 percent of the population served by Part D, Subpart 1 and 72 percent of the population served by Part D, Subpart 2.
- **Disproportionately minority.** Students from minority backgrounds account for 67 percent of the population served by Part D, Subpart 1 and 67 percent of the population served by Part D, Subpart 2.
- **Disproportionately eligible for special education services.** Significant portions of participating students qualify for special education services. Students with disabilities account for 31 percent of the population served by Part D, Subpart 1 and 24 percent of the population served by Part D, Subpart 2.

## Fostering Physical and Emotional Safety

For a learning environment to be considered safe, it must not only provide freedom from physical harm and threats of physical harm but also freedom from emotional harm (such as teasing and bullying; Osher et al., 2016). Individuals in a safe school environment share a sense of mutual trust and respect. In addition, a safe school environment fulfills students' core psychological needs, including the need to belong, be autonomous, and be physically secure (Osher et al., 2016). Research shows that when basic psychological needs such as these are fulfilled, students are more apt to align with and commit to the school community's norms and rules (Osher et al., 2016). Given the demographics of the N or D population, it is important to consider the following elements in fostering physical and emotional safety among students, faculty, and facility staff in secured settings:

- Cultural and linguistic responsiveness.**  
 Incorporate students' cultural backgrounds into the classroom by making discussions relevant to their lived experiences by using students' real-life experiences and display words in the students' heritage language may serve to establish a stronger connection of school learning to students' lives (Klevan & Villavicencio, 2016; Krasnoff, 2016). Additional examples that help illustrate how to provide a culturally comfortable, safe, and responsive setting include having trained interpreters who speak the same language as family members, allowing families to bring their own types of food for the youth, and providing students with grooming supplies that are suited to their skin and hair.
- Accurate records transfer and intake screening.**  
 Ensure that accurate and complete student records are transferred to and from the facility as soon as possible, which is vital to addressing the specific needs of each student and delivering proper services in a timely manner. Meeting student needs contributes to their sense of personal security (Osher et al., 2016).
- Mental health and substance abuse screening.**  
 Prioritize effective interagency coordination and collaboration to ensure that proper screenings and evaluations are conducted upon arrival at the facility and that mental health services and substance abuse programs, if required, are available.
- Appropriate youth placement/separation.**  
 Decisions regarding youth placements in the facility should consider gang affiliation (if any); gender; and the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth. Faculty and staff should learn about and be able to identify local gang signs because students may need to be separated. Separation based on gender also is a vital step in creating a safe, secure, gender-responsive, and trauma-informed environment (Osher et al., 2016).

## Fostering a Supportive Facility-Wide Learning Environment

Given the demographics of the N or D population, it is important to consider the following factors when

seeking to identify the right resources and implement adequate professional development initiatives to foster a supportive facility-wide learning environment.

### Social and Emotional Learning

To help youth who are N or D combat and overcome many of the psychosocial obstacles to learning they commonly experience, educators should find ways to strengthen their students' skills related to problem solving and decision making to bolster their ability to deal with and resist negative pressures in a youth-guided, culturally responsive manner (Osher et al., 2016). In large measure, SEL begins with the adults in the classroom and other adults in positions of authority establishing a culture that displays and explicitly instructs core social-emotional competencies that help cultivate in students an awareness about how they think, feel, and interact with their thoughts and feelings.

An SEL program also requires that clear boundaries for expected behavior be set, with the logical consequences for negative behavior clearly understood by all students. These boundaries and consequences should serve to support each student's ability to reflect on the impact that individual behavior may have in interactions with others. For example, in a situation where a student's behavior may need redirecting, the teacher may want to ask the student to reflect on how his or her specific behavior has affected others, in both positive and negative instances—thereby converting those interactions, whether positive interactions or negative social mistakes, into an opportunity to broaden social and emotional awareness.

[The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#) developed an integrated SEL framework for educators and leaders in the field to guide initiatives at the classroom and institutional levels that are foundational to establishing a culture that promotes intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competence at all levels. This framework is centered on the following five core SEL competencies:

- Self-awareness.** The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one's strengths and

limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a growth mindset.

- **Self-management.** The ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations, effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. It is the ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.
- **Social awareness.** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. It is the ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
- **Relationship skills.** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. Relationship skills include the ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.
- **Responsible decisionmaking.** The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. It also includes the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.

## Consider Poverty

Often, parents and other family members important to students cannot afford the travel costs or get the required time off work to visit students at a facility. Providing students and their families with various alternatives to remain connected, such as having computers or devices at the facility with access to services such as Skype or providing bus fare for parents and family members to visit students, are ways of helping families remain engaged and provide vital familial support to students.

## Strong Special Education Services Component

Indistinct of whether they are incarcerated, all students with disabilities are entitled to the free appropriate public education guaranteed to them under

the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). If a facility is unable to obtain from prior records a youth's individualized education program, or if a youth is suspected of having a disability and needs special education and related services, then the youth must be evaluated under the IDEA within the specified time period applicable in the State. If it is determined that the youth has a disability, he or she must then be provided with an individualized education program that meets the requirements of IDEA—provided that parental consent has been obtained.

To obtain additional information and guidance, see the December 5, 2014, [\*Dear Colleague Letter on IDEA and Students With Disabilities in Correctional Facilities\*](#) (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 2014b). The letter provides a detailed explanation of IDEA requirements applicable to State education agencies, local education agencies, and other educational and noneducational public agencies that are responsible for providing special education and related services for eligible youth with disabilities at juvenile correctional facilities.

## Academic Supports

As presented in the first professional development brief in this series, when planning professional development initiatives, it is vital for practitioners to consider that youth in the juvenile justice system tend to have lower grades and lower standardized achievement scores and are more likely to be retained (Stone & Zibulsky, 2014). In addition, youth who are incarcerated have been found to have more trancies, grade retentions, and suspensions than the general population (Baltodano, Harris, & Rutherford, 2005). Socioeconomic factors, disabilities, mental health diagnoses, and school histories characterized by suspensions and dropping out are some possible reasons for poor academic achievement among youth (Leone & Weinberg, 2012).

Given the high rates of academic difficulties, the population may be best served by learning environments that include the following:

- Ongoing approaches to increase student motivation strategies, persistence, and self-regulation of effort and supports that help students better incorporate

academic success into their personal identity (Matthews, 2014; Stone & Zibulsky, 2014)

- Individualized instruction and extended opportunities to practice new skills (Reglin, Royster, & Losike-Sedimo, 2014). It also suggests that youth may benefit from learning activities that provide scaffolding and supports that enable them to engage in the content, even if they are not reading on grade level.
- Inform teachers how positive student-teacher relationships and emphasizing the value of students' experiences can facilitate academic growth (Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016).

## Engagement and Challenge

In addition to having available help to meet students' social, emotional, behavioral, and academic needs, support also encompasses students' sense of connection and attachment to adults in the facility and being cared about and treated well and respectfully (Osher et al., 2016). Resulting from the many adversities that youth who are N or D have faced, some may be wary, skeptical, or mistrustful of the adults who are there to care for and support them. These perceptions may affect their ability to learn from the adults whom they encounter. Providing caring support may be even more crucial than for other adolescents, yet it is less accessible (Osher et al., 2016).

Research by Junlei Li and Megan Julian in 2012 hypothesized that a significant presence of the elements found in developmental relationships may be the principal "active ingredient" in effective academic interventions targeted to reach youth who are at risk. Building on that work, Pekel et al. (2018) defined developmental relationships as those that express care, challenge growth, provide support, share power, and expand possibilities. Pekel et al. also found that young people from marginalized communities or youth who are at risk have less access or can count on significantly fewer developmental relationships outside their family than youth from other nonmarginalized communities.

Approximately two-thirds or 67 percent of the students who participate in N or D programs are from minority communities. A substantial number of those students come from African-American and Hispanic communities. A recent study (Reeves, Rodrigue, & Kneebone, 2016) showed the following:

*Hispanics are almost 10 times more likely than whites to be low-income, without a high school degree, and uninsured (9.6 percent vs. 1.2 percent). On the other hand, black adults are 7 times more likely than white adults to be low-income, live in a high-poverty area, and reside in a jobless household (7.4 percent vs. 1.3 percent). (p. 10)*

Given the disproportionate presence of minority youth in the N or D population and the general socioeconomic data presented here, researchers have suggested that it is highly likely that youth who are N or D from those communities have less access than their White counterparts to a wider range of opportunities to form supportive high-quality relationships with adults within their communities and obtain the social and emotional support to help guide and sustain their growth and development. Closing that supportive high-quality relationship gap by providing those youth who are N or D with caring support can have a positive, long-lasting impact in the lives of these youth.

Offering professional development to educators and other facility staff on ways to effectively engage and challenge youth who are N or D by enhancing bonds of trust and respect between the youth and those who are there to serve them can help counter previous adverse circumstances that they may have experienced and help develop a more positive attitude toward learning and academic achievement. Pekel et al. (2018) developed a Developmental Relationship Framework with each of the five elements explicated by specific actions through which each element is expressed and experienced (see Table 1). Although this specific research effort is ongoing, the framework is included in this brief because it may serve as a guide for educators and practitioners when developing strategies to help foster supportive high-quality relationships with their students who are N or D.

**Table 1. Developmental Relationship Framework**

Elements	Actions	Definitions
<b>Express care</b> Show me that I matter to you.	<b>Be dependable</b> <b>Listen</b> <b>Believe in me</b> <b>Be warm</b> <b>Encourage</b>	Be someone I can trust. Really pay attention when we are together. Make me feel known and valued. Show me you enjoy being with me. Praise me for my efforts and achievement.
<b>Challenge growth</b> Push me to keep getting better.	<b>Expect my best</b> <b>Stretch</b> <b>Hold me accountable</b> <b>Reflect on failures</b>	Expect me to live up to my potential. Push me to go further. Insist I take responsibility for my actions. Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks.
<b>Provide support</b> Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.	<b>Navigate</b> <b>Empower</b> <b>Advocate</b> <b>Set boundaries</b>	Guide me through hard situations and systems. Build my confidence to take charge of my life. Stand up for me when I need it. Put in place limits that keep me on track.
<b>Share power</b> Treat me with respect and give me a say.	<b>Respect me</b> <b>Include me</b> <b>Collaborate</b> <b>Let me lead</b>	Take me seriously and treat me fairly. Involve me in decisions that affect me. Work with me to solve problems and reach goals. Create opportunities for me to take action and lead.
<b>Expand possibilities</b> Connect me with people and places	<b>Inspire</b> <b>Broaden horizons</b> <b>Connect</b>	Inspire me to see possibilities for my future. Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places. Introduce me to people who can help me grow.

*Note.* Because relationships are, by definition, bidirectional, each person in a strong relationship engages in and experiences each of these actions. However, for clarity, the framework is expressed here from the perspective of one young person.

## Professional Development on Creating a Safe and Supportive Facility-Wide Environment

From a systemic perspective, professional development goals should be geared toward creating a common understanding and sharing of beliefs among practitioners about how to best create a safe and supportive learning environment for the youth who are N or D under their care. It also should serve to increase practitioners' knowledge and skills, focusing on specific approaches designed to foster physical and emotional safety and supportive learning environments.

This section includes a list of ideas to assist practitioners as they think about and prepare plans for

implementing professional development initiatives focused on creating safe and more supportive juvenile justice environments.

### Ideas for Advancing Physical and Emotional Safety

#### *Conduct Effective Intake Interviews*

The intake interview is vital to getting to know each student and beginning to assess the student's specific needs. This information will inform educators and staff about the levels of support and services that the youth will need. Information that should be obtained directly from the student include answers to questions such as the following: What is your favorite school subject? What subject do you struggle with? What are your short- and long-term educational goals? This



information should give the interviewer a sense of the youth's strengths, needs, and educational and career goals.

In addition, the interviewer should seek to obtain from the student as much information as possible related to any previous mental health or other medical services the student may have received, educational attainment, language assistance services, history of special education, family dynamics, career and technical training, and work experience.

### ***Improve Understanding of and Compliance With Federal Laws***

Professional development planning must integrate capacity-building efforts for administrators, educators, and other staff at juvenile justice facilities to improve their understanding of and expand their ability to comply with the various Federal laws that guarantee services and protections to youth who are N or D. This process is important because adherence and compliance with these laws are crucial components for youth who find themselves incarcerated and their families to gain a sense of confidence that their legal rights and protections are being defended and respected. Building that sense of confidence is a vital component of any effort to foster a safe and supportive learning environment in juvenile justice settings.

It must be underscored that without distinction, the Federal civil rights laws, regulations, and guidance that prohibit discrimination against students based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, and disability in traditional public schools also apply to educational services and supports offered or provided to youth in juvenile justice facilities (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 2014a). Administrators, educators, and other staff at juvenile justice facilities would benefit from professional development opportunities that build their understanding and enhance their ability to comply with the following laws:

- **Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (PREA).** In 2012, the DOJ promulgated the final rule establishing national juvenile facility standards to prevent, detect, and respond to prison rape pursuant to PREA. Additional resources, guidance, training and technical assistance can be found at the [National PREA Resource Center](#).<sup>1</sup>
- **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI).** This law prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance.<sup>2</sup>
- **IDEA.** Federal law makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children. The IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.<sup>3</sup>
- **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504).** Section 504 states that “no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under” any program or activity that either receives Federal financial assistance or is conducted by any executive agency or the United States Postal Service.<sup>4</sup>
- **Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX).** This Federal law prohibits discrimination based on sex in any federally funded education program or activity. The principal objective of Title IX is to avoid the use of Federal money to support sex discrimination in education programs and provide individual citizens effective protection against those practices.<sup>5</sup>
- **Title II of the Americans With Disabilities Act.** This Federal law prohibits State and local governments from refusing to allow a person with

<sup>1</sup> For the PREA national juvenile facility standards final rule, see <https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/sites/default/files/content/preafinalstandardstype-juveniles.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2008-title42/html/USCODE-2008-title42-chap21-subchapV.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statuteregulations/>.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>.

<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.justice.gov/crt/title-ix-education-amendments-1972>.

a disability to participate in a service, program, or activity simply because the person has a disability.<sup>6</sup>

- Title I, Part D of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act. The purpose Title I is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Trauma-Informed Care***

Professional development on trauma-informed approaches for educators and staff working with this population help them understand the behaviors these youth demonstrate and the difference between types of defensive or aggressive behaviors that youth who have been impacted by trauma may display. An excellent start to become more trauma informed is to offer staff development opportunities in the areas of what is trauma, data on the high prevalence of youth in the justice system who have experienced extensive trauma, what it means to become trauma informed, and what is a trauma-sensitive communication style, in addition to becoming a trauma-informed school for youth who are in the N or D systems.

### ***Build Capacity to Measure and Track Key Indicators That Serve the Objective of Creating a Safe and Supportive Facility-Wide Environment***

Administrators and other facility staff could benefit from professional development opportunities on designing and administering surveys to the youth at the facility and to family members with questions intended to obtain additional information about the youth, educational needs and strengths that may go deeper and beyond what is found in the written record, feedback on how family members feel about the services a student is receiving, how safe a student feels at the facility, and how a student is being treated at the facility. This information can then be used to help identify needs and drive improvement initiatives at the facility.

## **Ideas for Advancing a Facility-Wide Supportive Environment**

### ***Include the Youth's Voice and Family Engagement***

Best practices in both juvenile justice and special education include involvement in person-centered planning and student choice making (Cavendish, 2013). An approach that a facility can consider for involving the youth's (and his or her family's) voice in a meaningful way is to establish advisory boards or committees that weigh in on various areas related to the daily operations of the facility. This type of initiative can be effective in promoting a sense of connection and partnership between facility staff and families to best serve the youth. Additional steps that facilities can take to be more open and welcoming to families is to provide tangible resources that reduce barriers to family engagement and partnering. Resources might include providing bus fare for family members to travel to the facility and facilitating child care for visiting family members who cannot afford child care services and therefore need to bring infants and toddlers with them when visiting an older child at a facility.

To help guide families, NDTAC's [\*Family Guide to Getting Involved in Your Child's Education at a Juvenile Justice Facility\*](#) (Osher, Huff, Colombi, & Gonsoulin, 2012) provides practical strategies that a family can use to build a relationship with their child's facility school program and keeping their child on track to complete school and become a successful young adult. For instance, strategies include recommending that parents or legal guardians visit the facility and take a tour of the facility before or after the youth is placed and giving the facility school staff all relevant contact information. The guide recommends approaching facility school staff in a positive way and showing them that you believe they can help your child get back on track to complete his or her education, graduate, move toward independence, and prepare for work. The guide also encourages parents and family members to ask about ways they can get involved in a youth's schooling at the facility (Osher et al., 2012).

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.ada.gov/pubs/adastatute08.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html#sec1001>.

***Using Motivational Strategies***

Because youth who are N or D are likely to have experienced academic difficulties, they may need additional support to fully engage in the process of learning. “Educators would benefit from knowledge of approaches to teaching and learning that provide students with a sense of control over their own learning, incentivize taking on additional responsibility for learning and harness student interests” (Keleher, 2017, p. 6). Students tend to respond well to approaches that provide them with explicit opportunities to make decisions about their learning, which allows students to develop a sense of self-directed ownership of their learning. Applying this recommendation can be as simple as affording the youth choices in selecting lessons. For example, a teacher may provide a student with a choice of spending classroom time completing 15 mathematical problems or reading science material and completing a study guide.

Career inventories and assessments are useful tools that can help students determine how their specific interests, skills, and values fit into specific occupations or academic majors. Educators can create and assign activities in the classroom to engage students in exploring careers and seek information from colleges. Educators can support their students by helping them learn the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to succeed in a given career in which they may be interested or in choosing a specific major in college. Juvenile justice programs in some States permit dual enrollment, where students earn high school diplomas while obtaining credits toward graduation through career-training programs. As students complete the courses in the career program and earn the vocational certificates, they make progress toward earning their diploma. Combining a high school diploma with vocational training certification or college credits can be highly motivating for youth who find themselves in the juvenile justice system because they can understand how holding a high school diploma and a vocational

certificate from an accredited program significantly expands the opportunities they will have for employment after being released from the facility.

**Conclusion**

This brief has presented key concepts aimed at fostering a shared understanding among practitioners working with youth who are N or D of the fundamentals for creating and sustaining safe and supportive learning environments in juvenile justice settings. The brief also presents potential ideas for professional development offerings for practitioners charged with the education and care of youth involved in the juvenile justice system that serve to enhance the conditions for learning and SEL opportunities.

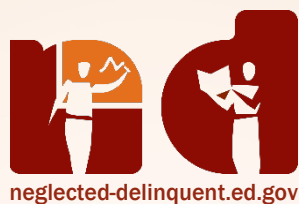
Important characteristics of the population of children and youth who are N or D need to be considered when planning professional development. Minority males are disproportionately represented among youth involved in the juvenile justice system. These youth tend to be poor, have higher rates of mental health issues, and are more likely to have experienced trauma. Educators, counselors, social workers, administrators, and all other facility staff can benefit from professional development offerings that enhance their collective capacity to understand and respond in a culturally and linguistically competent manner to the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic needs of their students. A facility-wide approach based on shared understandings is vital to creating a safe and supportive climate for the teaching-learning process to take place.

Providing physical and emotional safety, teaching and modeling core social and emotional competencies, and encouraging the development of supportive high-quality relationships between youth and caring adults at a facility that engage and challenge students to thrive are all indispensable ingredients to creating a safe and supportive learning environment.

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