Massachusetts Safe and Supportive School Commission:

Updates and Future Considerations for Our Schools

MA Administrators for Special Education (ASE) Conference :
June 5, 2017 at the College of the Holy Cross, Worcester

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MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Creating and maintaining
safe and supportive schools
is an increasingly important focal point for communities across the Commonwealth,
beyond an essential focus on academic success.

Preparing all students for success *in school, the workplace, and civic life includes developing students' social emotional competencies and attending to their health and wellbeing.*

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Session focus:

I. Safe and Supportive Schools Commission

II. ESE's strategic priority work related to supporting social-emotional learning, health, and safety

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

I. Safe and Supportive Schools Commission

A) Safe and Supportive Schools (SaSS): Commission & Definition Established

B) Commission Membership & Responsibilities

C) Framework & Self-Assessment Tool and Action Plans

D) Current Areas of Focus

E) SaSS Grant Program

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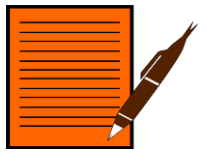
Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law

- Provisions of ***An Act Relative to Safe and Supportive Schools*** were adopted by the MA legislature as part of An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence. Chapter 284 of the Acts of 2014 was signed into law by the Governor on August 13, 2014 (House Bill 4376) and became:



MA General Laws, Chapter 69, Section 1P:

Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law

- Informed by the work of the 2008-2011 Behavioral Health and Public Schools Task Force (per the Act Relative to Children's Mental Health: Chapter 321 of the Acts of 2008).

Safe and Supportive Schools Definition

…Schools that foster a **safe, positive, healthy and inclusive whole-school learning environment** that:

- enables students to develop positive relationships with adults and peers, regulate their emotions and behavior, achieve academic and non-academic success in school and maintain physical and psychological health and well-being; and

- integrates services and aligns initiatives that promote students' behavioral health, including social and emotional learning, bullying prevention, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, children's mental health, foster care and homeless youth education, inclusion of students with disabilities, positive behavioral approaches that reduce suspensions and expulsions and other similar initiatives.

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Commission Membership

- Commission members primarily represent educational roles and organizations

  (e.g., administrators, teachers, students, professional support personnel, collaboratives, school committees, recovery high schools, as well as a few advocacy groups)

Commission Responsibilities

- Responsibilities include making recommendations to the legislature and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

  (e.g., on topics such as improvements to the Framework/Tool; administrative capacity; professional development; access to services, family engagement; integration into school improvement planning, and more)

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Safe and Supportive Schools Framework

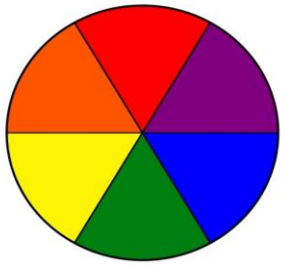
- The law directs ESE to develop a **Safe and Supportive Schools Framework** that provides guidance to schools on the creation of safe and supportive schools that improve education outcomes for students. It can help communities organize, integrate and sustain school and district-wide efforts, and coordinate and align student support initiatives.

- The BESE (Board) shall develop procedures for updating, improving, or refining the framework and tool, in consultation with the Commission.

- Consistent and informed by with the one created by the Behavioral Health and Public Schools (BHPS) Task Force.

Framework Organization

The Framework addresses six key areas of school operations. Using school operations to develop an action plan allows schools to focus on making each aspect of the school safe and supportive. The framework is an integrative, whole-school process, rather than a fragmented program as schools can use operations organization to implement this framework within its existing planning process.



- **Leadership**
- **Professional development**
- **Access to resources and services**
- **Academic and non-academic strategies**
- **School/district policies, procedures, protocols**
- **Collaboration with families**

Safe and Supportive Schools Self-Assessment Tool

- *A **Self-Assessment Tool** for schools, aligned with the Framework that schools may use to:*

  (i) **assess the school's capacity** to create and sustain safe and supportive school environments for all students;

  (ii) **identify areas where additional school-based action, efforts, guidance and support are needed** to create and maintain safe and supportive school environments; and

  (iii) **create action plans** to address the areas of need identified by the assessment.

Action Plans

- Developed by principal (or appointed team with broad representation of school/community), in consultation with the school council (c. 71, s.59C), and incorporated into the annual school improvement plan (c.69,s.1I), and posted online, or as otherwise approved by superintendent.

- Action Plan components:

  i) strategies and initiatives for addressing needs identified through the tool

  ii) implementation timeline

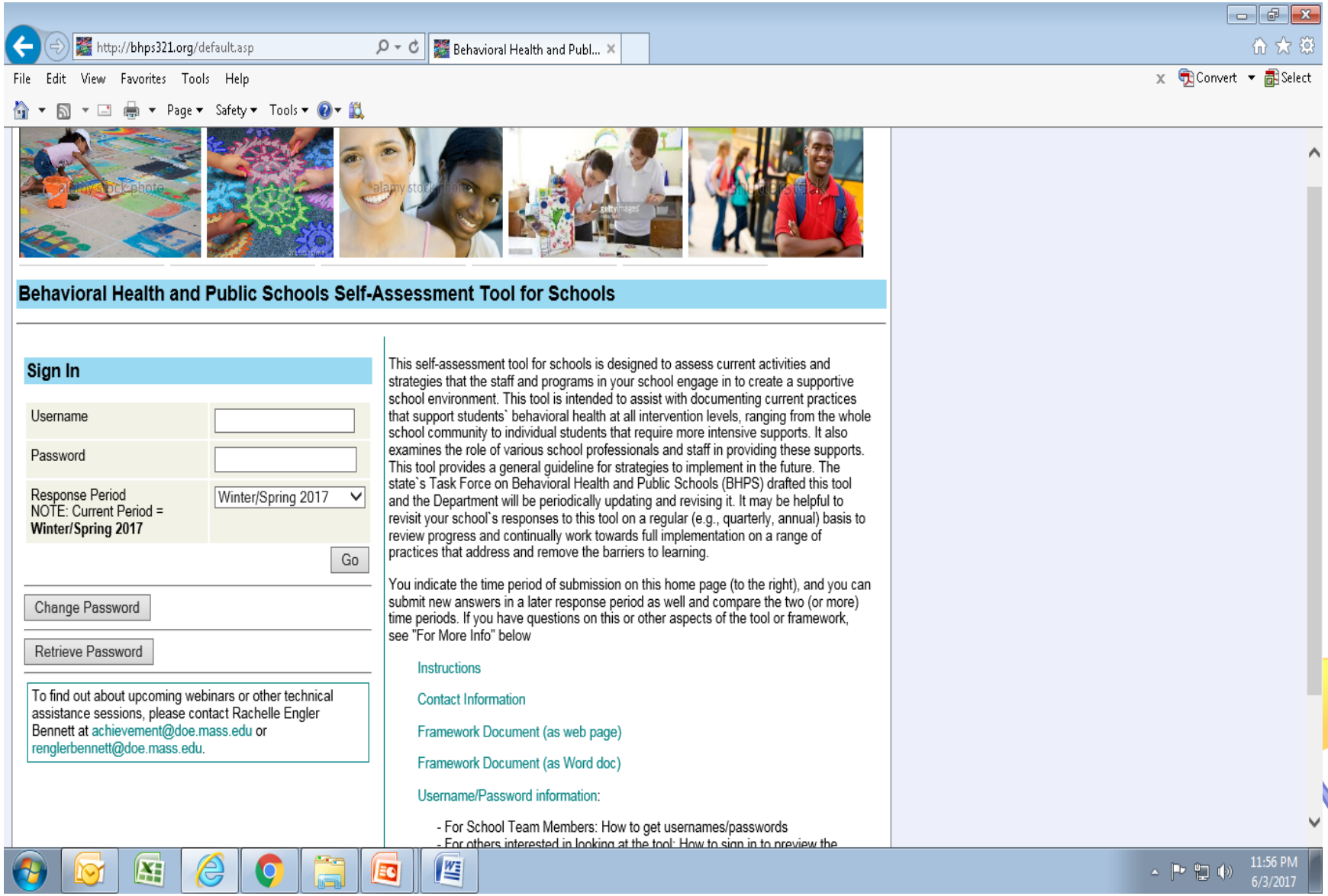
  iii) outcome goals and indicators for evaluating effectiveness

  iv) process and schedule for review (e.g., annually) and updating (e.g., within 3 yrs.)

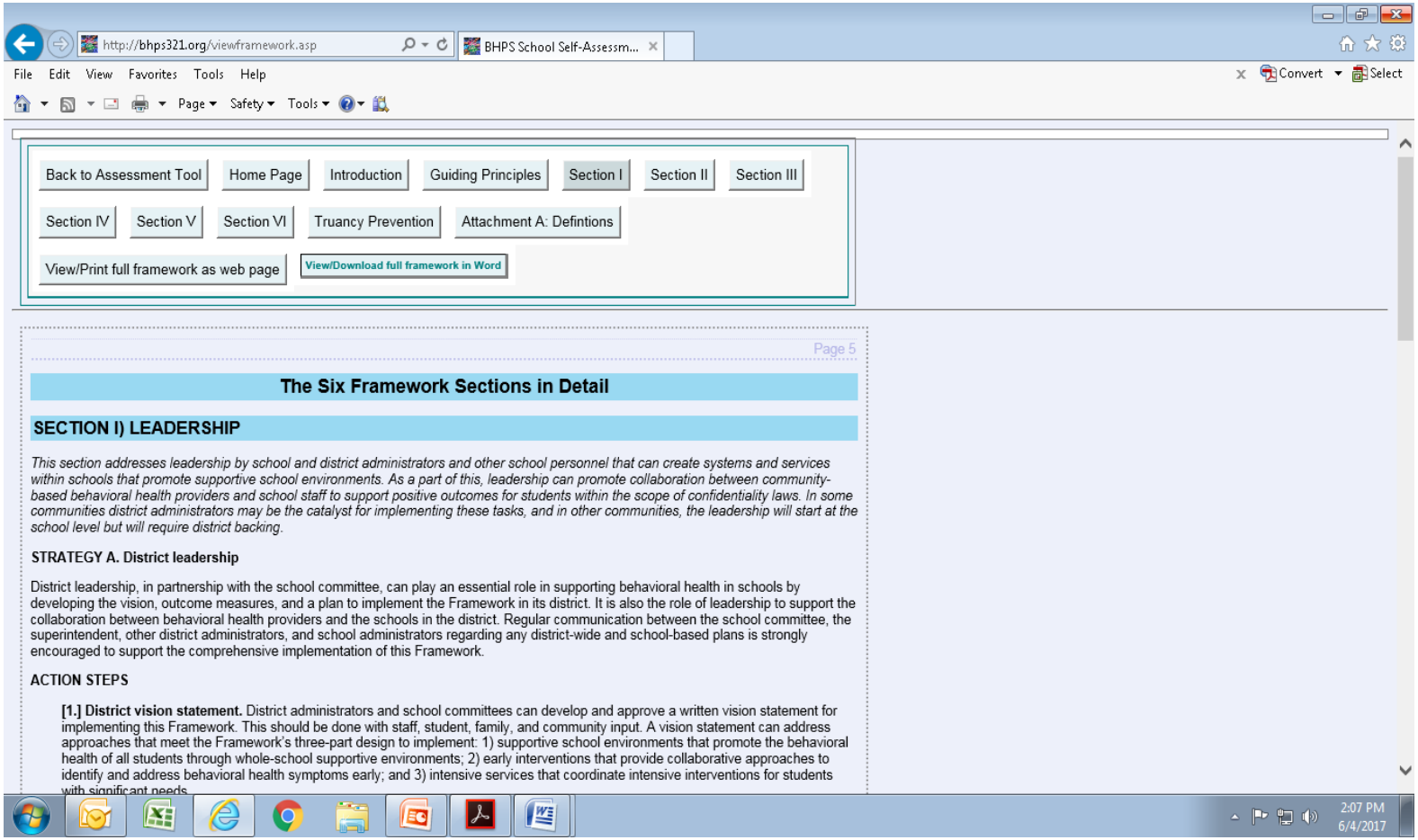
- Locally determined priorities

A Peek into the Framework/Tool

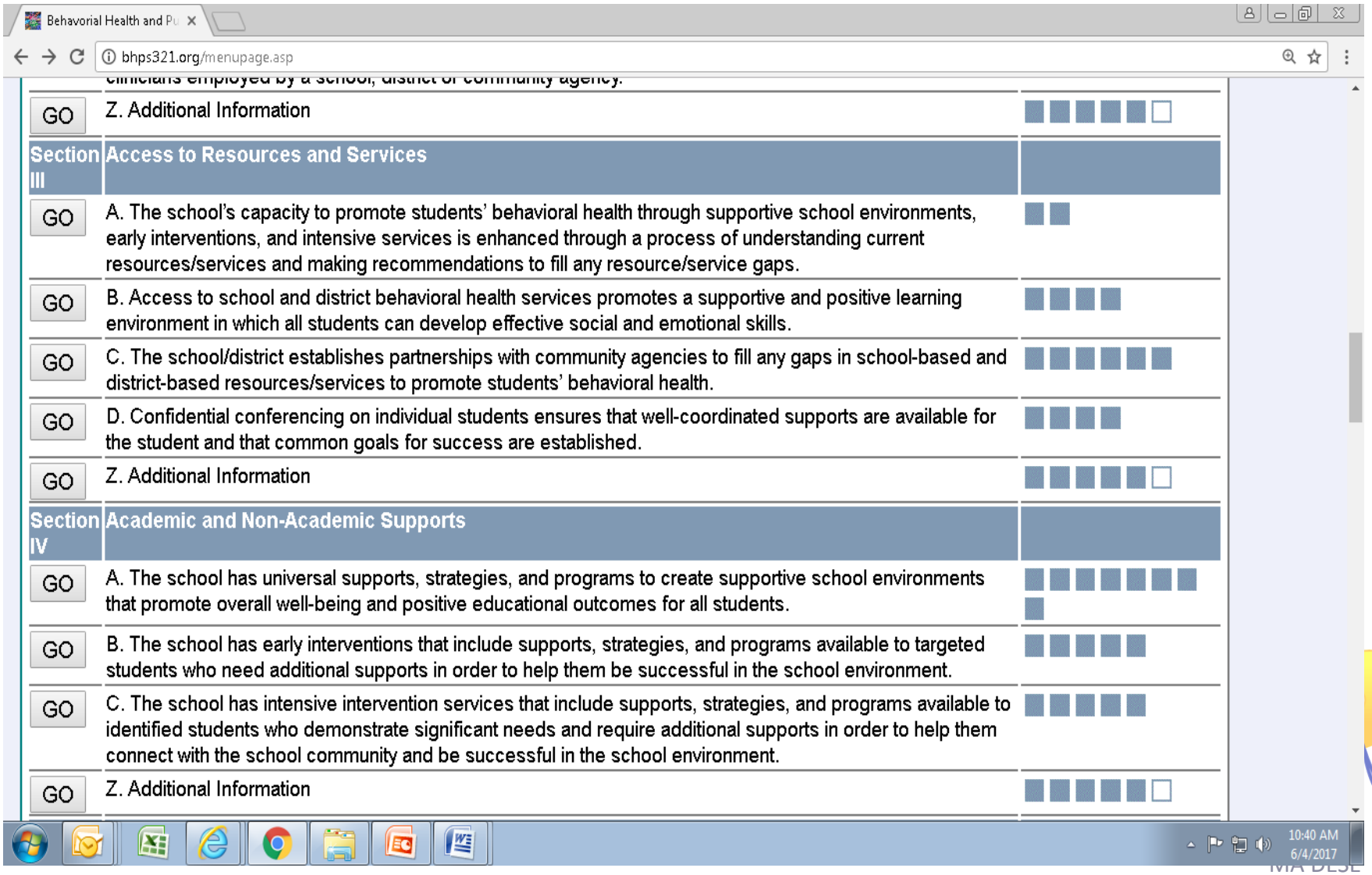
To View Framework or Tool
http://BHPS321.org (TEST1 as Username/Password)



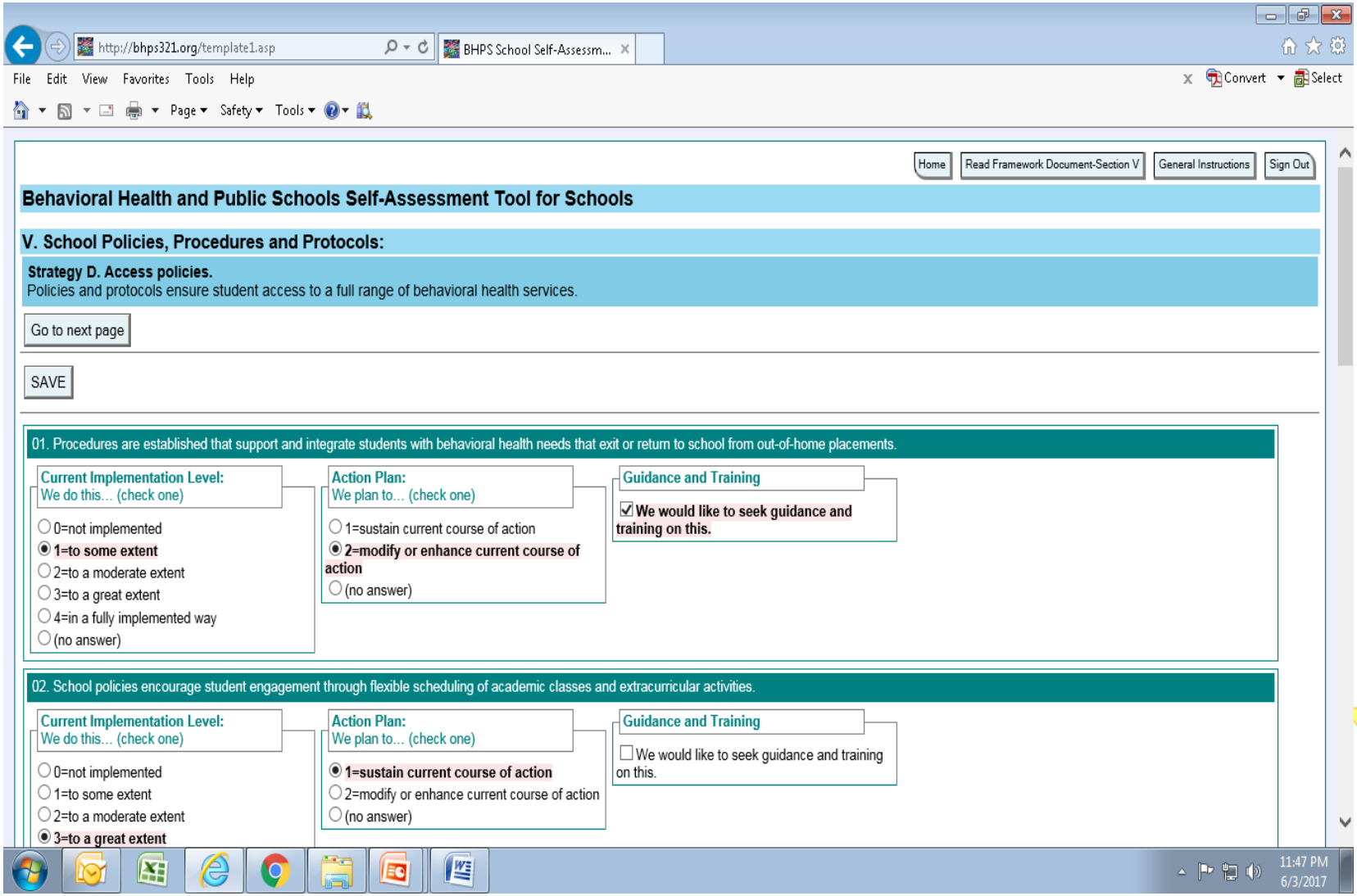
Framework
(Strategies and Action Steps within each Area)



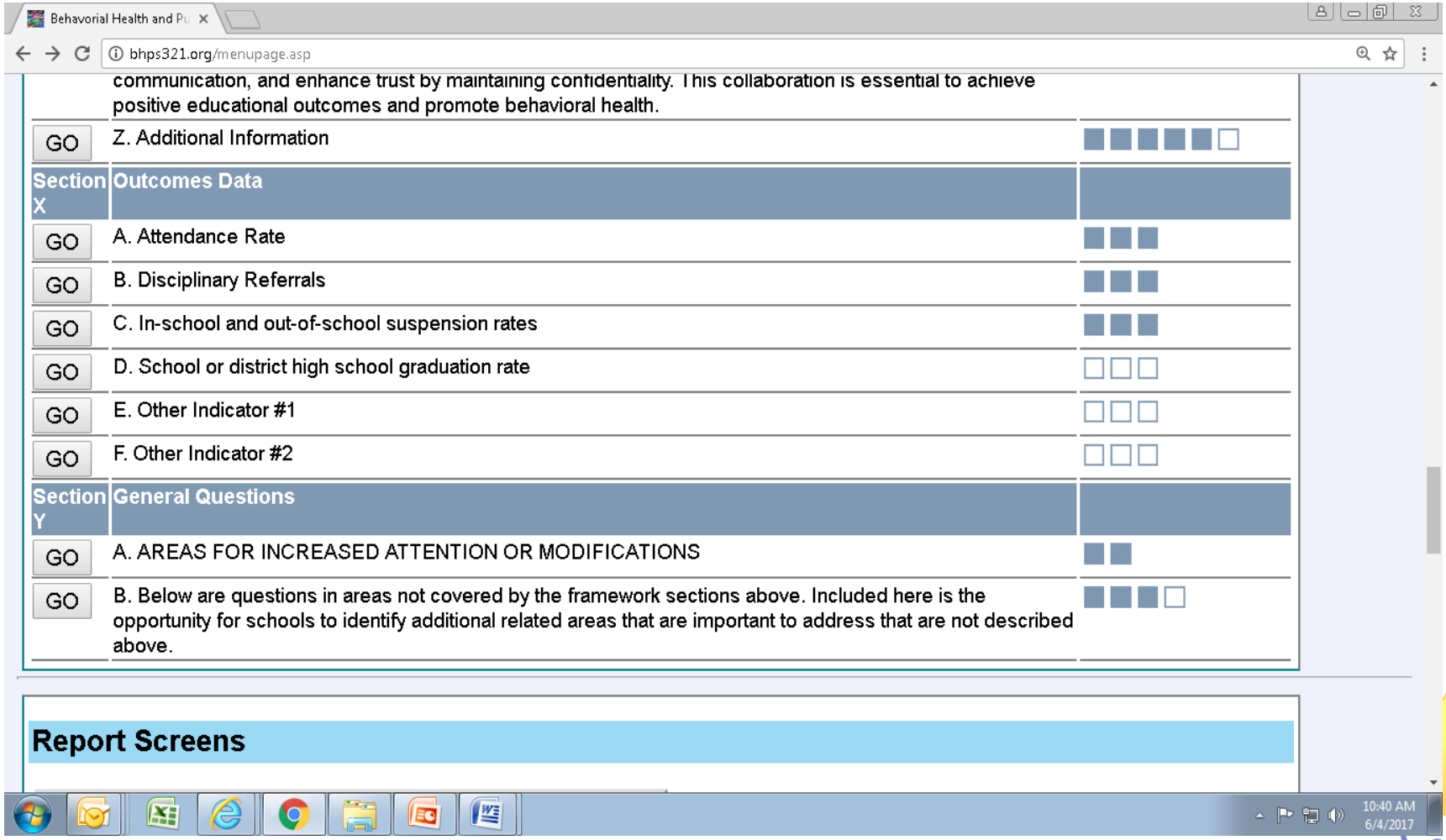
Strategies within each Area



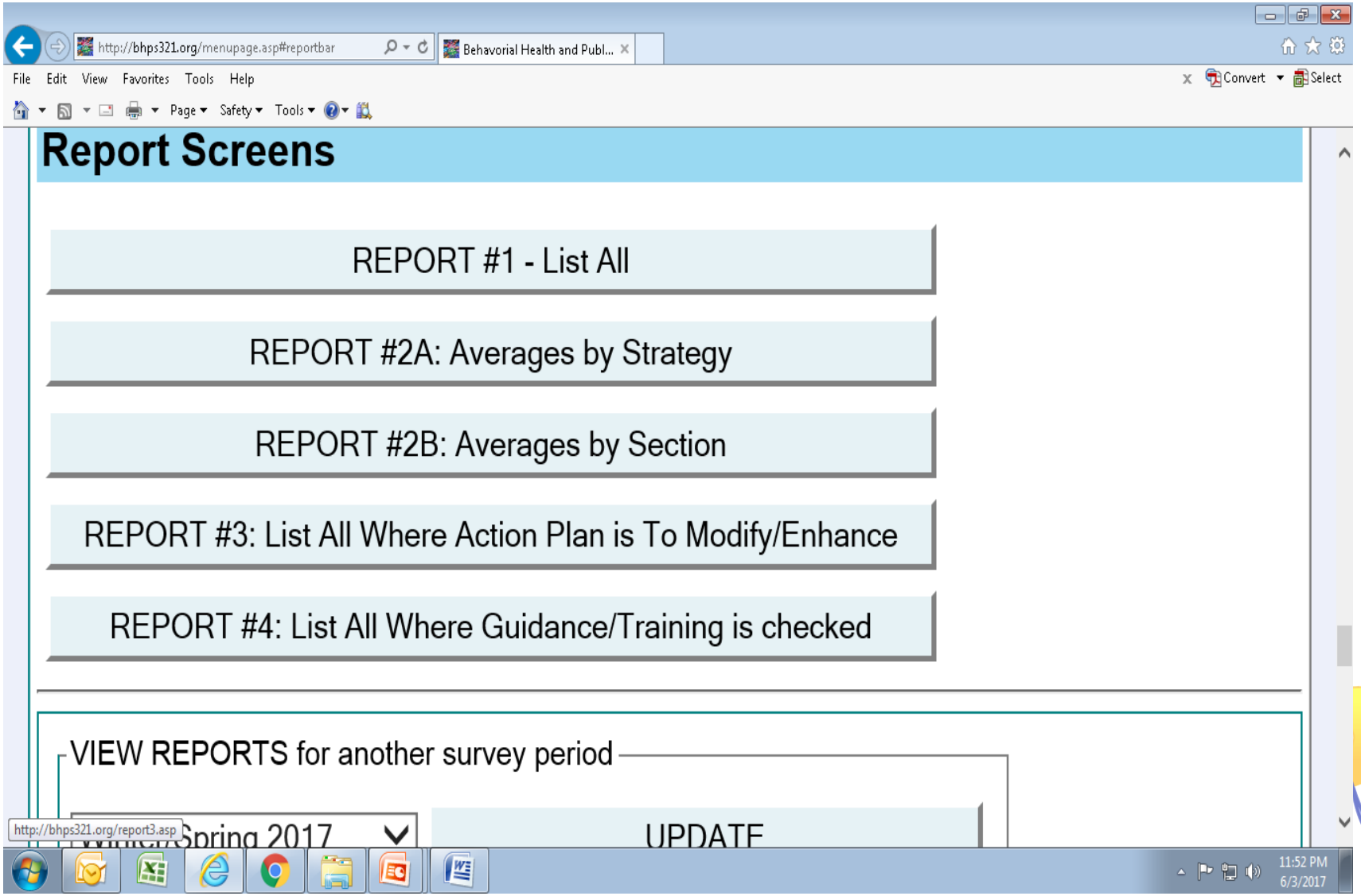
Action Steps within each Strategy and link to Framework for more details



Outcomes Data and General Questions



Available Reports



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Primary Commission Focus Areas in 2017

1) *updating, refining & improving the framework/tool*

2) *integrating initiatives, including how the framework/tool can be part of the school improvement process and Planning for Success (PfS)*

3) *focus groups to inform legislative recommendations*

Focus Groups on Family Engagement

*Seven focus groups conducted by Harvard's Education Law Clinic and TLPI. Still a work in progress, but some **examples** of emerging themes include:*

- Parents desire more frequent, consistent and welcoming communication from teachers and schools regarding their children, including what and how they are learning, and what role family members can play in their child's education, and beyond exceptional circumstances, and how to contribute to decision making at school.
- Elementary schools communicate more frequently than middle or high.
- Increased support staff, and more consideration to the needs of working families could improve family engagement.
- Parent leaders are not representative of the school population, and two-way communication is particularly difficult for non-English speaking families.
- Using technology to communicate can be helpful, if families are supported to access the technology and it is available on the devices they typically use.

Focus Groups on Family Engagement

(continued)

- Participants believe that more and better connections to the local community and to each child's home environment would lead to better school relationships with students and families.
- Caregivers would like to see their cultures reflected in the diversity of staff at the school, as well as in school events and programming.
- Some caregivers perceive cultural stereotypes , experience significant language barriers in their attempts to communicate with their child's school, or perceive being treated differently because of their family's intergenerational reputation in very small communities.
- At IEP meetings, caregivers appreciate the presence of an outside provider.
- Many parents are very knowledgeable about their child's learning style and would like to be asked how their children learn best, and to be able to give input into their child's education.

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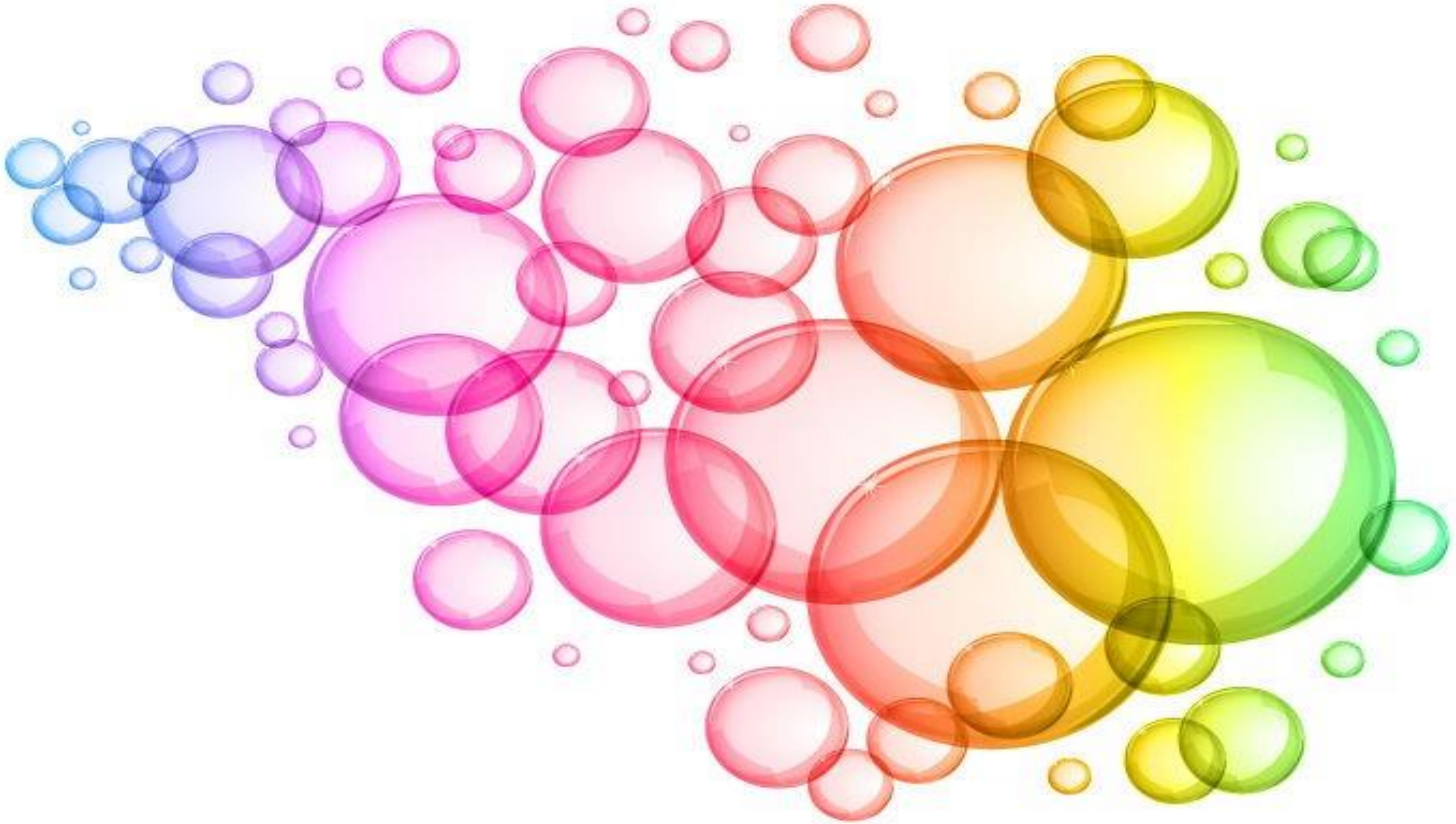
Safe and Supportive Schools Grant Program

- The FY17 Safe and Supportive Schools Grant (Competitive) offered districts up to $10,000 per selected school (approx. 30 schools in 17 districts) to use the BHPS Framework/Tool to develop action plans that organize, integrate, and sustain school and district-wide efforts to create safe and supportive school environments and coordinate and align student support initiatives.

- Pending appropriation, ESE anticipates offering an FY18 grant funding opportunity as well for planning and implementation work. Details when available will be posted on the main ESE grants pages as well as the SaSS Grant Page.



II. ESE's Heart Strategy

The goal of the Massachusetts public K–12 education system is to prepare all students for success after high school. Massachusetts has identified five core strategies to accelerate the pace of school improvement towards this goal.

Core Strategies:

- **STRENGTHEN STANDARDS, CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT**
- **PROMOTE EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT**
- **SUPPORT SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING, HEALTH, AND SAFETY**
- **TURN AROUND THE LOWEST PERFORMING DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS**
- **ENHANCE RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND DATA USE**

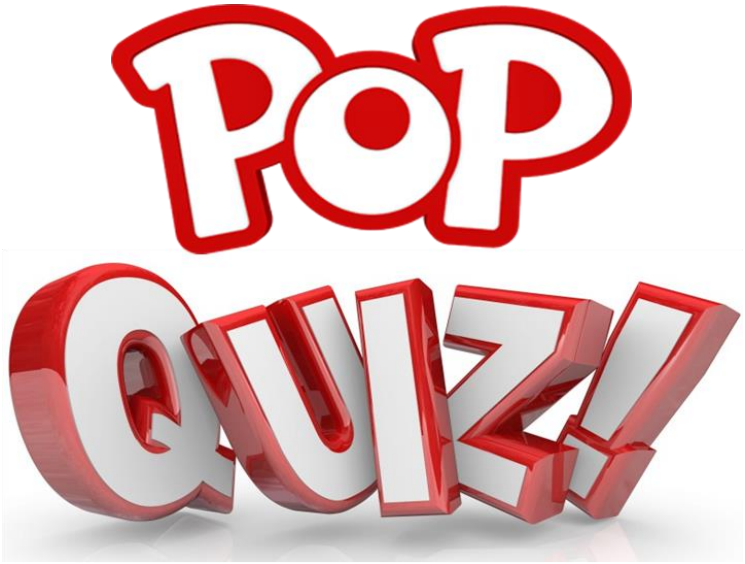
Four Areas of Focus

- School Culture and Climate
- Social and Emotional Learning Competencies
- Health, Wellness, and Safety
- Family Engagement

Support social-emotional learning, health, and safety

It is our goal to promote systems and strategies that foster safe, positive, healthy, culturally competent, and inclusive learning environments that address students' varied needs and improve educational outcomes for all.

Part I



Multiple Choice:

Academic and social-emotional competencies are _____.

a. In conflict with health and safety
b. Mutually reinforcing
c. Easily mastered by all

Part II

Fill in the blanks:

We have a goal to promote ___
that foster ___
learning environments that address ___
in order to improve ___
for ___.

WORD CHOICES:

a. all students
b. educational outcomes
c. students' varied needs
d. safe, positive, healthy, culturally competent, and inclusive
e. systems and strategies

Initiative/Resource Examples

- Building upon the state's **PK-K Standards in SEL/APL**, with Curriculum Frameworks **Guiding Principles,** and updating the **Guidelines for Implementing SEL Curricula K-12**

- Supporting **Inclusive Practice** initiatives (e.g., Guidebook for Inclusive Practice/online courses)

- Implementing the **Low-Income Education Access Project (LEAP)** to address the disproportionate identification and placement of low-income students found eligible to receive special education services.

Initiative/Resource Examples

- Improving outcomes for preschool students with IEPs with a focus on social-emotional development through an evidence-based, tiered intervention: **Preschool Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) using Pyramid strategies (Pyramid Model)** – part of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP): Early Childhood Special Education SEL Initiative

- Facilitating a Professional Learning Network on **Rethinking Discipline**

- Using student surveys for **health and climate data**

Initiative/Resource Examples

- Developing resources and supports through the **Systems of Student Success** office is to assist Level 3, 4 and 5 districts address students' barriers to learning.

- Participating in a Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning **(CASEL) Initiative** that helps us learn from work in other states and as well as consult with national experts in the field.

- Engaging in **cross-unit and agency** efforts, to advance work in all focus areas, including family engagement.

Initiative/Resource Examples

- Key drivers in this work are the definition of **safe and supportive schools** in the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law, and the associated charge for the Department and the Safe and Supportive Schools Commission to create and update as needed a Framework and Self-Assessment Tool for schools and partners, based on the current Behavioral Health and Public Schools' versions.

For all you do…

Questions or Comments

For More Information

- Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law: https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1P
- Safe and Supportive Schools Commission website: http://www.doe.mass.edu/ssce/safety.html?section=commission
- The BHPS Framework and Self-Assessment Tool: http://BHPS321.org
- Safe and Supportive Schools Competitive Grant Fund Code 335: http://www.doe.mass.edu/ssce/safety.html?section=fc335
- ESE Strategic Priorities: http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/StrategicPlan-Summary.pdf
- Rachelle Engler Bennett (ESE): renglerbennett@doe.mass.edu / 781-338-3205