



MPS Foundations: De-escalation and Personal Safety Training

October 24, 2025

MASE Fall Leadership Conference
Madden's on Gull Lake



MINNEAPOLIS
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Session Presenters

Mr. Andrew Meierding

- ❖ andrew.meierding@mpls.k12.mn.us
- ❖ Director, Special Education



Dr. Meghan Hickey

- ❖ mhickey1@sowashco.org
- ❖ Executive Director of Student Support Services (formerly MPS)



Welcome

Introduce yourself to someone nearby you do not know and share:

- Name
- Pronouns (if you use them)
- Role
- District
- What are you curious about in this session?



Goals and Objectives

- **Understand the Development and Initial Implementation of a school district developed de-escalation and personal safety training program:**
 - Gain insights into the strategic planning and foundational steps required to establish a district developed de-escalation and personal safety training.
 - Explore statutory requirements and legal guidelines for restrictive procedures to identify key success factors and potential challenges.
 - Develop actionable strategies for initiating and sustaining a de-escalation and personal safety training within your district.

Agenda

- Connection to MPS Mission, Vision, & Values
- Overview of de-escalation and personal safety
- Creating MPS Foundations
- Training Data
- Looking ahead/future planning
- Reflection
- Questions?

Connection to MPS Mission, Vision, Values

MPS Strategic Plan



Goal 1

Academic Achievement



Every student achieves their full potential through equal access to programming that is academically rigorous and connects learning with student experiences.



Goal 2

Student Well-being



Every student's physical and mental well-being is addressed as an integral part of their education.



Goal 3

Effective Staff



School and central office staff approach all work centered on students and equity.



Goal 4

School and Building Climate

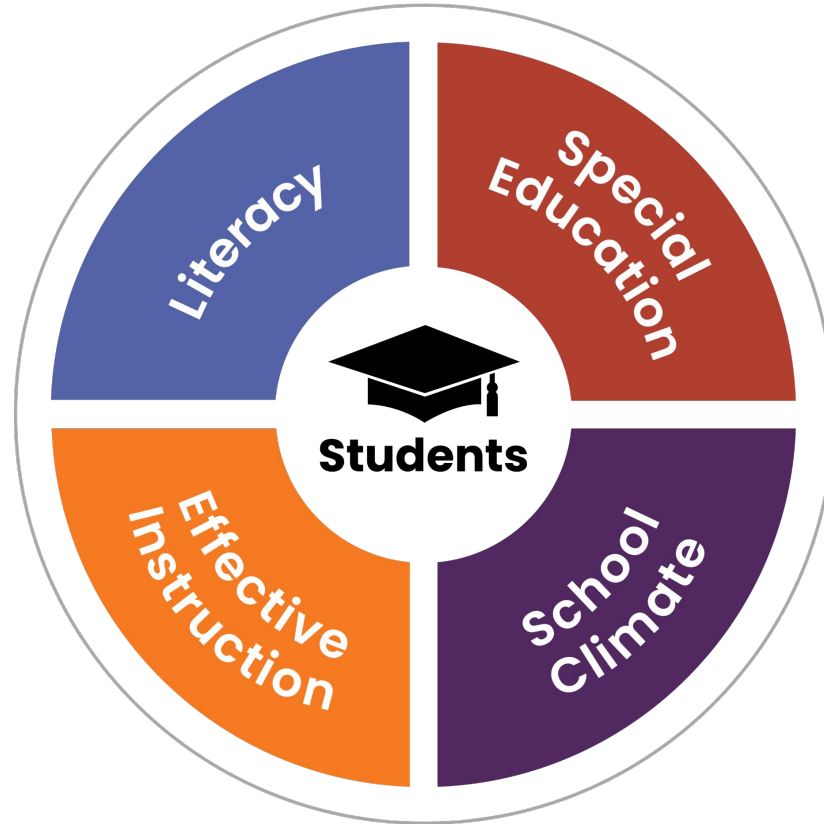


MPS is known by our community as welcoming, responsive, and connected.



MINNEAPOLIS
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MPS Focus Areas for SY 25/26



Vision, Mission, Commitment, & Values

Vision

All students — regardless of their background, zip code, and individual needs — will receive an anti-racist, holistic education that builds essential knowledge to prepare students for future success.

Mission

Minneapolis Public Schools exists to provide a high quality, anti-racist, culturally responsive education for every Minneapolis student.

Commitment

To achieve our vision, we will intentionally focus and prioritize resources and actions to significantly improve the experiences and outcomes of Black students, Indigenous students, students of color and their families.

Values

Equity, representation,
& anti-racism

Physical and emotional
safety, and wellbeing

Relationships, trust and
communication

Shared decision making
and voice

Transparency and
accountability

Evidence-based strategies

Overview of De-escalation & Personal Safety

Restrictive Procedures Definition

"Restrictive procedures" means the use of physical holding or seclusion in an emergency. Restrictive procedures must not be used to punish or otherwise discipline a child.

"Physical holding" means physical intervention intended to hold a child immobile or limit a child's movement, where body contact is the only source of physical restraint, and where immobilization is used to effectively gain control of a child in order to protect a child or other individual from physical injury. The term physical holding does not mean physical contact that:

- (1) helps a child respond or complete a task;
- (2) assists a child without restricting the child's movement;
- (3) is needed to administer an authorized health-related service or procedure; or
- (4) is needed to physically escort a child when the child does not resist or the child's resistance is minimal.

–Minn. Stat. 125A.0941

Restrictive Procedures

- Physical intervention/restrictive procedures/physical holding may only be used in an emergency to prevent harm to the student or someone else.
- **Every** time we physically stop or restrain a student, it's considered a "Restrictive Procedure".
- When there's a physical hold of any kind the hold, is a restrictive procedure and is guided by district [Restrictive Procedures Plan](#).

Statutory Training Requirements

Subd. 5. **Training for staff.** (a) To meet the requirements of subdivision 1, staff who use restrictive procedures, including paraprofessionals, shall complete training in the following skills and knowledge areas:

- (1) positive behavioral interventions;
- (2) communicative intent of behaviors;
- (3) relationship building;
- (4) alternatives to restrictive procedures, including techniques to identify events and environmental factors that may escalate behavior;
- (5) de-escalation methods;
- (6) standards for using restrictive procedures only in an emergency;
- (7) obtaining emergency medical assistance;
- (8) the physiological and psychological impact of physical holding and seclusion;
- (9) monitoring and responding to a child's physical signs of distress when physical holding is being used;
- (10) recognizing the symptoms of and interventions that may cause positional asphyxia when physical holding is used;
- (11) district policies and procedures for timely reporting and documenting each incident involving use of a restricted procedure; and
- (12) schoolwide programs on positive behavior strategies.

Commercially Available Programs



Creating MPS Foundations

Why MPS Foundations?

- Commercial products lack ability to adjust content based on staff input, data
- Representation of district staff, students, community members in training content
- Alignment to district mission, vision, values
- Trailblazing with innovative approach
- Cultivating and respecting internal experts
- Money & time

The Road to Launch

CPI/iNCI

Purchase
agreement

Spring 2023

RFP

No responses.
Actively sought out
local company

Summer 2023

MPS Foundations (V1)

Leveraging
internal experts

August 2024

MPS Foundations (V2)

Collaborated with
district
Instructional
Design team to
revise

Summer 2025



MINNEAPOLIS
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MPS Foundations: De-escalation and Personal Safety

MPS Foundations is a verbal de-escalation and, as a last resort, physical intervention training for MPS staff. MPS Foundations replaces previous “CPI,” “NCI,” and “iNCI” training. MPS uses this training to meet the Minnesota State statute requirements of “[restrictive procedure](#)” training for staff who work with students with disabilities as well as to provide tools to prevent physical intervention whenever possible.

Offered as a training to all staff as a tier 1 approach to restrictive procedures, de-escalation, & personal safety

Version 1

- 7 hours for training length
- Focused extensively on adult behaviors, anti-racism, and identity development
- Content developed by emergency management safety & security (EMSS) team & special education staff
- Physical intervention skill focused on personal safety & reasonable force physical intervention skill
- Received feedback that content was redundant, introduced concepts without explaining and did not spend enough time on physical interventions
- Not enough time on technical skills such as how to report a restrictive procedure
- Physical intervention training didn't feel "serious" enough



V1 Learning Targets

OBJECTIVES



I will be able to use self-awareness, humility, growth, and an attuned sense of balance to recognize and successfully manage that which I am able to influence.

I will be able to use knowledge of others - and factors that potentially impact them - to inform how I engage, especially during moments of escalated emotions and/or behavior.

I will understand the legal, ethical, policy, and procedural obligations required for behavioral interventions and physical support.



Version 2

- Streamlined content to focus on critical skills related to de-escalation and personal safety
 - 6 hours of training content
- Collaborated with instructional design and training team
- [MPS Foundations: De-escalation Handouts](#)
 - Developed a handout for participants to guide participation
- Increased training opportunities for all staff to be trained

MPS Foundations (v2) Learning Targets



- 1** Recognize human needs and related functions of behavior.
- 2** Identify signs of regulation and emotional dysregulation.
- 3** Implement strategies for de-escalation.
- 4** Comprehend legal and ethical obligations for reporting.

Content Sample: Understanding Escalation

Present impact of Past Experiences



“Something” happened:

- too much
- too little
- too fast

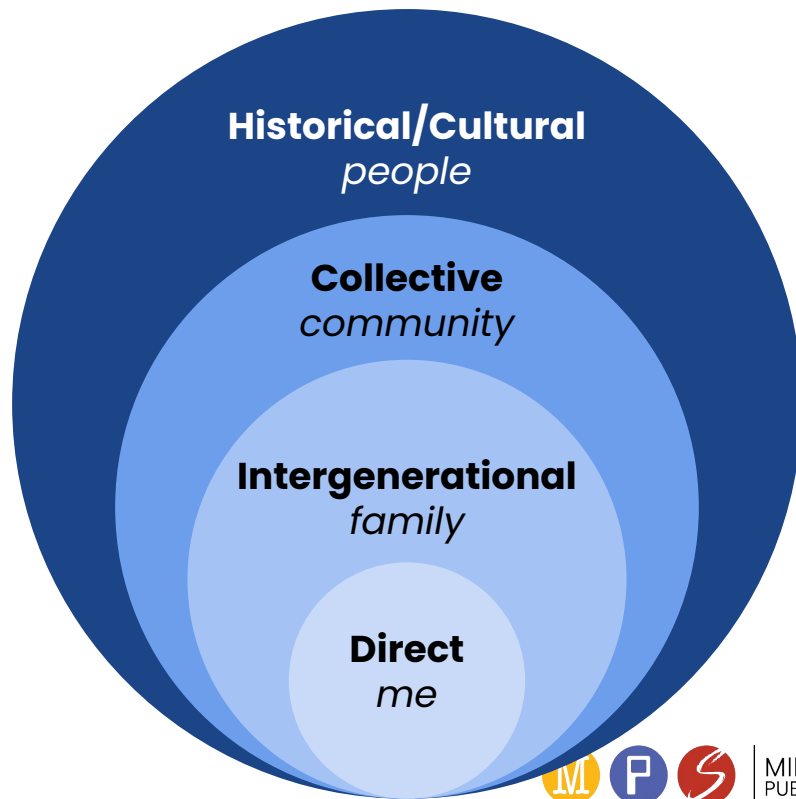
What are the present impacts of that “something?”

Trauma Overview

Trauma occurs when a person experiences an **event**, or a series of events, that they perceive as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening. These **experiences** can lead to long-term negative **effects** on their mental, physical, emotional, social, or spiritual health and overall ability to function.

Historical, Intergenerational, and Collective Trauma

- Can be a result of ongoing practices, policies, and histories
- Can impact families and can be passed down generationally through epigenetics
- Impacts Groups



Trauma Impacted Youth

1. React to normal circumstances as if they're life and death.
2. Process events irrationally.

Can have difficulty with:

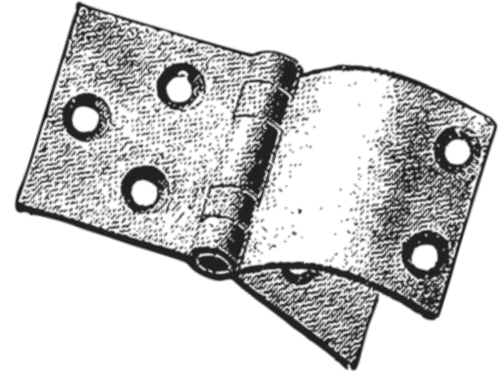
- managing big emotions
- chronic irritability/anxiety that interferes with problem-solving
- empathy
- expressing concerns/needs in words
- taking into account the wider context of a situation
- appreciating how one's behavior impact other people
- working in groups/connecting with others

Hinge Points

What happens when we **know**
our own hinge points?

What happens when we **don't**
know our own hinge points?

-Lori Desautels, 2024



Content Sample: Understanding and Practicing De-escalation



Strategy: Using your presence



1. Check your energy and intention.
2. Give full attention.
3. Put away your phone.
4. Turn toward them or position yourself in a way that feels supportive.
5. Drop to their height or lower.
6. Stand or sit in a way that is welcoming and inspires trust.
7. Distance between you.
8. Touch – always ask permission. Touch on the shoulder is less likely be considered threatening than grasping a hand or arm.

Strategy: Listening With Empathy

- Allow student to speak without interruptions.
- Listen to understand, and not to respond.
- Listen without judgment.
- Acknowledge what has been said by:
 - Reflecting
 - Paraphrasing
 - Summarizing



Communication

- Mirror the behavior you expect.
- Consider how you say what you say.
 - Less is more.
 - How's your tone and volume?
- Listen to what students are saying to you.
- Summarize what you're hearing students say.
- Acknowledge feelings.

Strategy: Verbal Communication



- Choosing neutral or positive language.
- Monitoring not only what you say, but also how you say it.

Strategy: Avoiding Power Struggles

- Defending authority or credibility:
 - Examine power balance.
 - What is your emotional reaction?
- Button pushing:
 - What are mine? What are theirs?
 - Do you take the bait?



Content Sample: Physical Intervention

Video Demonstration



Team Interventions

Physical De-escalation

This content is solely intended as training for MPS personnel.

mpschoools.org/de-escalation

Disengagement

- 1** Move away.
- 2** Continue verbal interventions.
- 3** If necessary, re engage physically.

Physical Intervention with Multiple Students

- **Maintain situational awareness.**
 - Take a moment.
 - See the situation.
 - Allow time for more staff to arrive.
- **Continue verbal intervention.**
 - Direct students to move apart.
 - Engage in crowd control.

Physical Intervention with Multiple Students

- **Provide physical intervention as a last resort when there are an appropriate number of staff available for the number of student involved in the situation.**
 - Make space between youth in an incident.
 - Identify if there is a particular student more receptive to intervention.
 - Break the line of sight between youth in an incident.
 - Help soothe youth until they can self-regulate.

Restrictive Procedure Reporting

- Aligned reporting of restrictive procedures in student information system for all students
- Provided training and supademo of how to accurately report a restrictive procedure
- This was intended to increase the accuracy of our data reporting practices and analysis

Handle With Care

- Handle With Care's program teaches staff to develop and use their management and relationship skills to reduce tension, create and maintain a calm and safe environment for all. Our verbal training prepares you to use the power of the relationship to de-escalate the tension level of someone in crisis and avoid physical intervention whenever possible. Handle With Care's physical training enables you to manage critical events when the only appropriate response is the prompt skillful use of physical restraint. We believe that physical intervention is something that is done "for" a person and not "to" them.
- Offered as a training to specific buildings and staff members based on data and input from site and district leadership as a tier 2 or 3 approach to restrictive procedures, de-escalation, & personal safety
- Currently have 10 trained facilitators districtwide

Training Data

Year One

- 916 Staff trained
 - Primary audience special education assistants (per contract), special educators, related service professional and administrators
- Planned for 1160 total seats ~83% of seats filled
- 27 sessions offered between August-March
- Trained Facilitators:
 - EMSS (20), SPED & Student Support Services Dept (10)
- Offered 1 official Train the Trainer session

Year Two

- 455 staff trained through October 2025
 - Open to all staff across the district
- Planned for 1690 total seats
- 31 sessions offered between August–May
- Trained Facilitators:
 - district staff (5), speciality site teams (7), EMSS (19), SPED & Student Support Services Dept (34)
- Offered 2 official Train the Trainer sessions

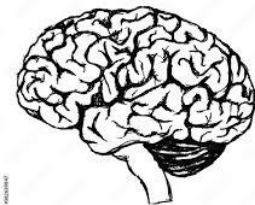
Looking Ahead

What's Next

- Goal to train all district staff
 - Add to yearly required compliance training series
- Development of recertification process
 - Asynchronous content test yearly for all staff and recertification of holds training every 2 years
- Continue to analyze participant and facilitator feedback to adjust content
- Enhance usage of Handle with Care training for targeted supports in buildings

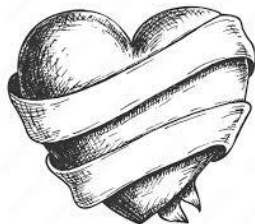
Reflection

Head, Heart, Feet Reflection



Head

What new things have you learned?



Heart

How are you feeling about this experience?



Feet

As a result of this experience, what do you plan to do?

Questions?

Session Presenters

Mr. Andrew Meierding

- ❖ andrew.meierding@mpls.k12.mn.us
- ❖ Director, Special Education



Dr. Meghan Hickey

- ❖ mhickey1@sowashco.org
- ❖ Executive Director of Student Support Services (formerly MPS)

