

**MASTERS CHILD WELFARE EDUCATION PROGRAM
2015-16 ANNUAL REPORT**

**LESSONS LEARNED AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT**

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LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ONGOING PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The Masters Child Welfare Education Program (MCWEP) is a partnership among the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF), the New Jersey Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-NJ), and a consortium of three graduate social work programs – The Monmouth University School of Social Work MSW Program, the Rutgers University School of Social Work MSW Program, and the Stockton University MSW Program. In the Spring of 2016, we welcomed Kean University's Master of Social Work Program to the Consortium. However, Kean's first cohort of MCWEP students will enter in the Fall 2017 semester, so no data included in this report

Descriptive Data - A total of seventy-four (74) students were funded during the first four years of the program. The following tables provide some descriptive data about the students admitted to cohorts 1, 2, 3, and 4.

SUMMARY DATA ON MCWEP STUDENTS

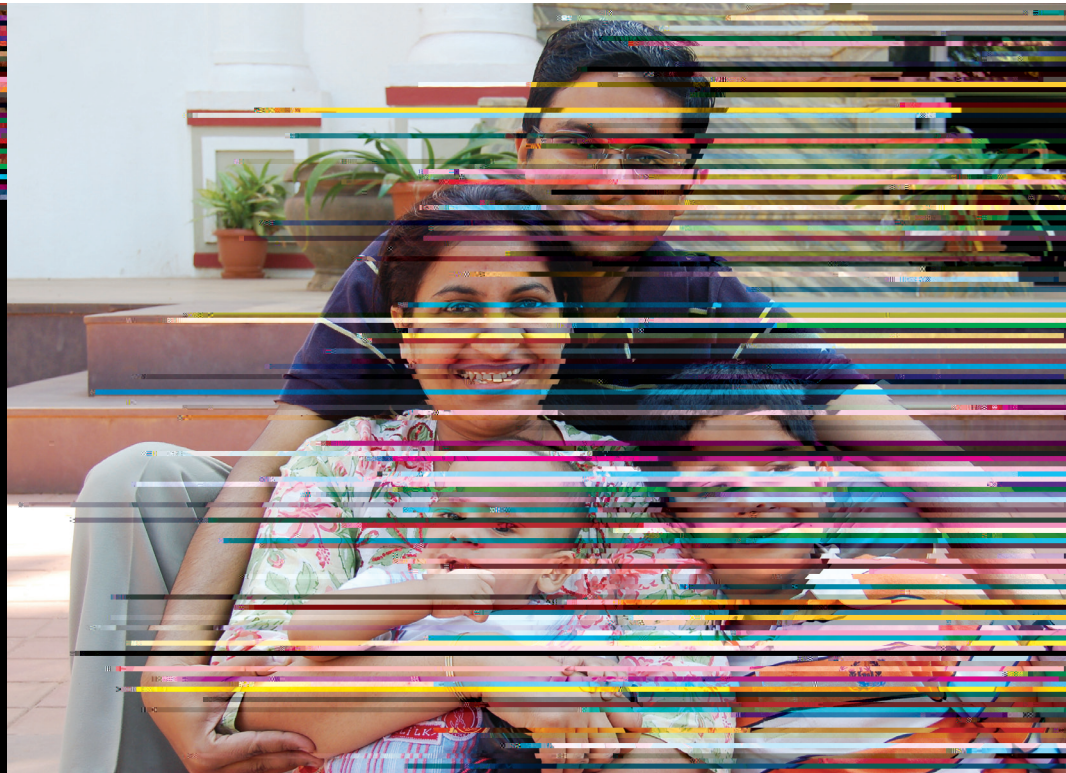
	# of Students				
AGE GROUP	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	TOTAL # (% of Total)
30-35	7	3	1	1	12 (16%)
36-40	6	5	10	5	26 (35%)
41-45	4	4	5	4	17 (23%)
46-50	2	3	3	5	13 (18%)
>51	1	3	1	1	6 (8%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	74
	# of Students				
GENDER	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	TOTAL # (% of Total)
FEMALE	18	16	17	11	62 (84%)
MALE	2	2	3	5	12 (16%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	74
	# of Students				
ETHNICITY	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	TOTAL # (% of Total)
African American	8	7	3	9	27 (36%)
Caucasian	6	8	5	2	21 (28%)
Latino	6	3	8	4	21 (28%)
Other/Unknown	----	----	4	1	5 (7%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	74

	# of Students				
DCP&P TITLE	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	TOTAL # (% of Total)
SFSS1/CWS	5	8	4	2	19 (26%)
SFSS2	14	10	16	14	54 (73%)
LOM	1	----	----	----	1 (1%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	74
	# of Students				
YRS In Current Position	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	TOTAL # (% of Total)
1-5 years	8	5	6	9	28 (38%)
6-10 Years	8	8	13	2	31 (42%)
11-15 years	4	4	1	5	14 (19%)
16-20 years	----	1	----	----	1 (1%)
>20 years	----	----	----	----	0 (0%)
TOTAL	20	18	20	16	74
	# of Students				

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Competency-Based Assessment

Program assessment in MSW education focuses on student outcomes (the extent to which students demonstrate competencies and associated practice behaviors), rather than inputs



Assessment of Student Learning – Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice

Students were asked to rate the degree to which they agree with the listed statements regarding Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice Behaviors. Mean scores are reported below (1 = Very Much Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Very Much Agree):

Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Competencies	Mean Score			
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
1. I am able to integrate the concept of “child traumatic stress” in case practice and supervision by knowing what types of experiences constitute childhood trauma and utilize a trauma-informed lens to manage child welfare cases.	4.71	4.71	4.82	4.94
2. I am able to apply knowledge of how traumatic experiences affect brain development and memory and understand the relationship between a child’s lifetime trauma history and his or her responses through comprehensive case planning.	4.29	4.47	4.55	4.76
3. I can articulate how trauma has an impact on the behavior of children over the course of childhood and how child traumatic stress is exacerbated over time by ongoing stressors (including separation from/loss of caregivers, and/or foster placement) in a child’s environment and within the child welfare system.	4.43	4.65	4.36	4.82
4. I am able to identify and promote the utilization of trauma-sensitive interventions such as strategic referrals to timely, quality, and effective trauma-focused interventions and trauma-informed case planning with multi-disciplinary teams.	4.29	4.41	4.45	4.76
5. I can articulate how the impact of traumatic stress can be prevented and/or mitigated by trauma-informed responses of child welfare workers and child welfare systems.	4.43	4.35	4.36	4.71
6. I am able to consider how cultural factors influence the manner by which children may identify, interpret, and respond to traumatic events during the case practice process.	4.43	4.35	4.45	4.71
7. I am able to identify the impact of secondary traumatic stress (STS) on child welfare workers and employ appropriate interventions.	4.43	4.41	4.27	4.71
8. I support Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) goals of safety, permanency, and well-being by increasing skills to effectively serve children and families (biological and resource) in the child welfare system that have experienced traumatic stress.	4.57	4.71	4.36	4.71

Assessment of Student Learning – Leadership and Supervision in Child Welfare

Students were asked to rate the degree to which they agree with the listed statements regarding Child Welfare Leadership and Supervision Competencies. Mean scores are reported below (1 = Very Much Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Very Much Agree):



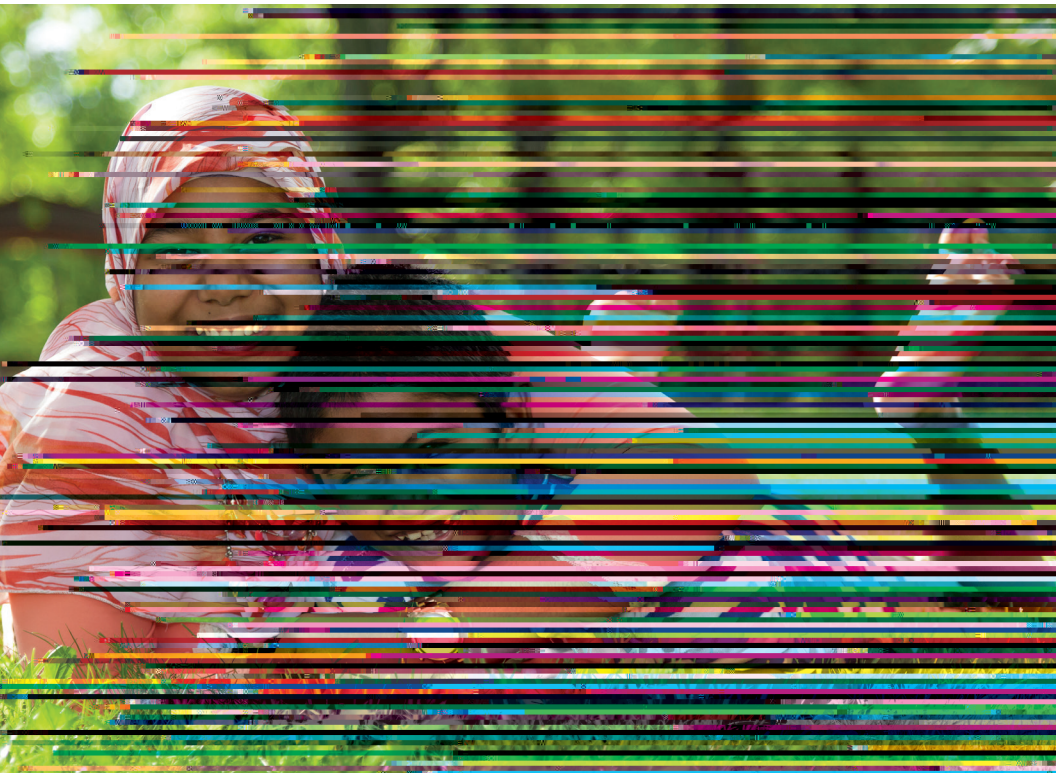
Learning Community Assessment

The Learning Community is an integral component of MCWEP designed to enhance students' MSW classroom and field learning experiences and meaningfully connect these experiences to child welfare practice and supervision. The purpose of the MCWEP Learning Community is to foster a state-wide network of MCWEP participants to disseminate educational information related to child welfare and encourage dialogue among participants regarding MSW education and translation of educational outcomes to workforce experiences. The Learning Community also provides an avenue for process evaluation of the needs of student participants in MCWEP.

The Learning Community has two components in which MCWEP participants are expected to be involved. In the online discussion board, students respond to discussion threads posted by Learning Community Coordinators. The second component involves quarterly in-person meetings where students have opportunities to gain further education, disseminate information in group presentation format, and engage in process evaluation.

After each Learning Community Meeting, an evaluation was administered to capture how effective the meeting was. Mean scores for each of the items were above 4.47 in all cases, indicating that students were highly satisfied with their experiences in the Learning Community.

The following data represent information gathered from each of the four (4) Learning Community Meetings that took place during the 2015-2016 academic year:



Learning Community Evaluation Results

Learning Community	Activities	Evaluation	Mean Score (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
August 14, 2015 9:00am – 4:00pm DCF Professional Center New Brunswick, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation to MCWEP mission/ purpose/structure • Keynote Speaker – Allison Blake, Commissioner, New Jersey DCF • Recognition of MCWEP Graduates • Self-care and Success in Graduate School 	1.	
		Orientation to MCWEP miC ()TJEMC /	

Learning Community Evaluation Results (continued)

Learning Community	Activities	Evaluation	Mean Score (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

The Learning Community evaluations also included open-ended questions. These questions were:

- 1. In your opinion, what were the strengths of this Learning Community?
- 2. What suggestions would you offer to improve this Learning Community?
- 3. What will you do differently in your practice/employment as a result of this Learning Community?
- 4. What was the most important thing you took away from today's Learning Community Activities?

The following tables report the themes identified in a content analysis of student responses to the open-ended questions and the frequency with which the themes were mentioned. Following the table are examples of the students' comments in their own words.

In Your Opinion, What Were the Strengths of This Learning Community?

Linking MSW curriculum and Learning Community content to child welfare practice

- Providing subject matter that was useful and related to our current positions. Also providing useful and powerful speeches.
- The speaker gave good information regarding the bigger picture of how to improve the child welfare system.
- It heightens and brings reward to social work practice and values.
- Learning the various personality types and how they may relate to our workers and personal relationships.
- Topics are directly related to DCP&P work
- A feeling that this is a shared experience—reaffirming what s taught and the importance of applying it to our jobs.

Skill Development

- It continued to address important issues like stress and time management
- Group activities, learning to work in teams
- Team building and collaboration exercises
- Listening to different strategies in order to be successful
- I really enjoyed student presentations and getting feedback, talking what we've learned
- The MCWEP community provides a comprehensive, strength-based approach on what we do, and the field of social work in general.

What Suggestions Would You Offer to Improve This Learning Community?

Theme	Frequency Mentioned
Further information on specific topics	9
Suggestions/preferences for content delivery/learning modalities	8
Suggestions for more self-care, information on Secondary Traumatic Stress, stress management	6

Further information on specific topics

- I would like to learn more about DCP&P policy
- I would like to learn more about new exit plan
- More practical field tips for dealing with challenges and barriers in the office
- To present to upper administration RE: what is needed to make MCWEP successful and how our leaning can be implemented over time to make or create a stronger impact on DCP&P

Suggestions/preferences for content delivery/learning modalities

- More hands-on activities
- More contributions from students
- Continue to use videos
- More outside speakers
- More video interactions and presentations by practitioners in other social work fields.

Suggestions for more self-care, information on Secondary Traumatic Stress, stress management

- Stress management and self-care
- We could have some training on PTSD, STS, and compassion fatigue
- Give suggestions on integrating self-care

What Will You Do Differently in Your Practice/Employment as a Result of This Learning Community?

Theme	Frequency of Responses
Integrate/apply content to practice	14
Share content with Staff/supervisees	13
Further exploration or research into area of content	5

Integrate/apply content to practice

- Making sure that I am aware of my actions when interacting with families
- I am reinvigorated to continue to do what is right as it pertains to the NASW and cultural competency values
- Remember to be proximate to our social problems and remain hopeful
- Make sure we do not lose sight of the fact that the child must be our focus
- Continue to apply what has been learned throughout my time in the program
- Implement systems to monitor the standard of care
- Think and discuss the needs of our agency
- Look at cases though various lenses (trauma, client perspective, etc).
- Continue to be a hopeful advocate for change.

Share content with staff/supervisees

- Incorporate a discussion with my workers about proximity
- More encouragement for my supervisees, and encouraging self-care
- I want to use the challenge activity at my staff meeting to promote teamwork
- Engage my supervisees to be more culturally competent
- I would like to share info from the presentation with my staff
- Use an icebreaker activity and personality test to help with unit engagement

Further exploration or research into area of content

- I am going to review the info provided regarding the exit plan, etc.
- Think about ways to contribute to the success and sustainability of our new plan
- Continue to be an advocate for change and progressive development
- These events keep me appreciating what I do and why I do it.

What Was the Most Important Thing You Took Away from Today’s Learning Community Activities?

Theme	Frequency of Responses
Tangible skills	15
Direction for future practice	13
Hope/Inspiration/Support	9

Tangible skills

- The importance of gathering info and being able to present professionally
- Tips on how to engage staff and stay committed to the process
- The break down and review of federal laws pertaining to child welfare
- The use of the Myers-Briggs assessment, an understanding of my own personality type.
- How to commence the usage of clinical supervision and collaborative approaches toward team-building
- The importance of self-care and time management

Direction for future practice

- Building connections
- Push for social justice
- Our state is not the only one that has had struggles with the child welfare systems
- Continue to advocate for change and improvement within DCP&P
- The child is the center of our case- work.

Hope/Inspiration/Support

- Keep hope that change is possible. Continue to do the good work I do because it matters
- Change is a process and we cannot lose hope.
- The fact that I am not alone in doing this program
- Feeling support from the program and others in my cohort
- Don't give up

Summary of Student Feedback

In sum, students indicated that they are acquiring gainful critical thinking skills, knowledge, and practice techniques. Students have developed a strong sense of solidarity and collegiality amongst their cohorts and MCWEP program staff. The transfer of skills and knowledge through their MSW courses is reinforced with specific enhanced learning opportunities derived from the learning communities. Students are eager to apply their learning, whether it be from specific content areas, or applicable approaches, to their work setting and with their supervisees.

OVERALL PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

To elicit information about current students’ perceptions of the MCWEP program as a whole – MSW programs’ curriculum, MCWEP elective courses, field placement experiences, and the Learning Community meetings — students were asked to respond to several open-ended questions in a questionnaire given to them at the end of the Academic Year.

1. What are the strengths of MCWEP?
2. How well do you think MCWEP is preparing you to be a more impactful supervisor at DCP&P (consider your MSW coursework, The Learning Community Meetings, and the MCWEP electives, if taken [Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice, and Child Welfare Leadership & Supervision] all as a part of MCWEP)?
3. Is there anything about MCWEP that you think should be changed? If so, what and why?
4. Do you feel you are being prepared to play a role in the transformation of New Jersey’s public child welfare system? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
5. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about MCWEP?

Students offered a great deal of insight about the program, their experiences, and their aspirations for moving forward in the organizations transformation. Their ideas and trepidations are a major component in our considerations for MCWEP program enhancement.

The following tables describe themes identified in students’ responses to the open-ended questions and the frequency with which those themes were mentioned. Following the tables are specific examples of students’ responses, in their own words.

What are the strengths of MCWEP?

Themes Identified	Frequency Mentioned
Knowledge/ Academic Enhancement/Learning Communities	14
Support Received – students, staff, administrators	12
MCWEP Structure/Academic Opportunity	10

Knowledge/Academic Enhancement/Learning

- The classes are very beneficial because the classes can be immediately applied to supervisory work that is currently being conducted between supervisors and their supervisees.
- The MCWEP program is self-motivating, and utilizes strength-based practice which is essential in dealing with all humans.
- The strength of MCWEP is in the Learning Community. Although many times I do not want to come I always get something out of the process. MCWEP has given me the opportunity to increase my knowledge about social work and relate some critical concepts to my profession.
- MCWEP is also providing us with “a bigger picture” with regards to person-in-environment and how it all relates.
- MCWEP has allowed Supervisors to apply critical thinking skills in order to improve upon case practice while servicing children and families...by providing courses and informational sessions through the learning community to have a working knowledge of the research in regards to child maltreatment and how to apply that knowledge in working with children and families.
- MCWEP provides supervisors with the ability to learn skills that can have a direct positive impact on the families we serve.
- You learn so much and it is a great opportunity to learn and grow to help the families that we work with.

- Learning communities allow staff opportunities to connect, share experiences and ideas, network and focus learning to our day-to-day job responsibilities
- I think a strength is the emphasis on helping supervisors see how families are impacted by being part of the system. It opened my eyes to many social justice concerns. It helped me to critically think about my role in the child welfare system and be more mindful about how my decisions impact families and the way my workers think about the families we serve.
- The opportunity to further myself in a way that directly impacts my work is the biggest strength of the MCWEP program. The MCWEP staff are supportive and huge advocates for the program. Another strength is the gathering together of the DCPD staff that are involved to share experiences from the three schools.

Support Received – students, staff, administrators

- It provides a support team for the students, provides information that is beneficial to our job as well as internship. Provides us with access to the individuals involved with the program, able to have any questions answered and if issues arise, it can be dealt with in a timely and positive manner.
- The MCWEP is a very coordinated program and is very cohesive. This is why the program has high retention rates of high rates of DCPD graduates.
- I think a big strength is the support from MCWEP.
- The program offers a great deal of support from the MCWEP team.
- MCWEP provides community and support.
- One of the main strengths that comes to mind is how supportive the program is. I enjoy the learning communities as it contributes to our learning experience and we have others that can relate to our obstacles. I enjoy that there is unity and I feel comfortable in reaching out whenever I have a question.
- I enjoy the “close knitted” community of MCWEP. They are so supportive that you are so motivated to do well. I appreciate them monitoring our progress by meeting quarterly. It also allows me to check in with them and just talk about my experiences.

MCWEP Structure/Academic Opportunity

- It's a great opportunity to grow professionally. It's also great to be in classes with individuals who have job and life experience!
- The MCWEP is collaborative, inventive, and comprehensive pertaining to how it combines fulltime Supervisors to complete a Social Work Internship Program (SWIP) - (tS a-4air)-36 (y coTJ)

How is MCWEP preparing you to be a more impactful supervisor?



Logistic/General

- The summer program was very intense and stressful. I think it would have been better to have them during a regular semester because I feel I would have taken a lot more from them. They both were very interesting. I think that all MCWEP professors and/or Stockton professors should meet students where they are in their academic career.
- I'm not sure if this is a MCWEP issue or the university's issue, nonetheless, it is still an issue. Some of us (DCP& P supervisors) have not been in school in a long time. Learning APA has been a challenge and sometimes it's an obstacle for some of us. There is a need for either MCWEP, the University or both to address this issue because it creates a conflict between the students and the professors who have high expectations. This is a Master's Program and we should all know how to write masters level papers. However, we have not had the proper training and the time is very limited to "learn as you go". For that reason, I think someone should be addressing this important issue that would alleviate the student's frustration and the professor's expectations so that everyone can concentrate on the teachings and not about the correct APA reference, citation, annotation, etc.
- Honestly, I believe that MCWEP is effective. I also believe that all information about expectations should be provided each and every learning community. It is important to reiterate important information.
- I believe more opportunities to study abroad should be included in the program as electives.
- I would like more outside speakers. I enjoyed the book that was provided to me. I liked that it was not a mandatory read but something I could read in between semesters. I think the leadership course needs to be conducted differently. We need more feedback on the work. In other classes where I did a lot of online work, there were comments about the posts to let me know that what I had posted is relevant and on track.
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Do you feel you are being prepared to play a role in the transformation of New Jersey's public child care system?



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS IN THE 2016-2017 ACADEMIC YEAR

MCWEP has cultivated and expanded its many strengths, which will continue to shape the direction and institutional capacity of the program in the future. In 2015-2016, MCWEP has had the opportunity to reflect upon the structure of the program, the needs and strengths of the students, and the demands of the agency as it shifts to its stages of the exit plan.

The program has been successful in providing an avenue for transfer of knowledge from social work programs to the DCP&P workforce for these supervisors. The structure of the program allows students flexibility to be able to matriculate in graduate courses while still being able to engage in work responsibilities. MCWEP also reinforces the need for impactful leadership and supervision through specialized electives and consistent connection between core social work courses and the future vision of DCP&P. As DCP&P moves forward in its efforts to become a trauma-informed organization, the national, evidence-based model employing the Core Concepts in Childhood Trauma (CCCT) provides students with knowledge of trauma-focused work and catalyzes the infusion of this knowledge from the mid-level out. The Learning Community component encourages students to gain confidence as social work professionals, exposes them to new research and literature in Child Welfare, and provides support and camaraderie among their peers. Finally, the program consistently encourages students to actively engage in the reform effort of the New Jersey public child welfare system, and this year highlights a new initiative reviewing policies and providing trauma-informed recommendations for improving them.

The following recommendations are made based on student feedback and MCWEP staff deliberation for fiscal year 2016-2017:

1. Students indicated in their comments in multiple evaluations, the desire for the modality of the summer elective courses exclusive to MCWEP, (Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice and Leadership and Supervision) to be delivered in a more traditional format, with minimal virtual, synchronous, or online content. Therefore, for the 2016-2017 academic year, the summer elective courses will be delivered in a more traditional format, with minimal virtual, synchronous, or online content.



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