

EXPERT PITCH

Contact:

Janey Cink
Communications Manager
724-710-0929
jcink@cispac.org



CISPAC Expert Available to Comment on Student Trauma as Children Transition into New School Year

PITTSBURGH (July 16, 2020) – What can families do now to prepare children for the transition into the new school year? Whether schools reopen or remote learning continues, students may need supports and interventions to deal with the trauma of the last several months, said Bridget Clement, executive director of Communities In Schools of Pittsburgh – Allegheny County.

When schools closed during the pandemic, it not only disrupted learning, it separated students from friends, teachers and in some cases, basic supports like regular meals, Clement said. Students living in poverty, especially those representing vulnerable Black and Brown communities, were already more likely to face educational inequities and economic turmoil, as well as heightened levels of stress and anxiety.

“Already traumatized kids are experiencing another level of trauma not knowing what to expect when they go back,” said Clement, who is available to comment on students returning to school, amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Student progress will depend on how we support their emotional and mental health. While reopening may instill a sense of hope in some children, it may be extremely stressful for others, she noted.

Clement is currently serving on the Pittsburgh Public Schools “All In to Reopen Our Schools” planning team. For the past five years, she has led CISPAC, which is part of a national network recognized for its best practices and work within public and charter schools. The organization’s mission is “to surround students of the greater Pittsburgh region with a community of support empowering them to achieve in school and succeed in life.”

A longtime nonprofit executive, Clement has dedicated her career to empowering children, youth and families to create positive lives for themselves. She was previously the director of development at the Pauline Auberle Foundation and director of operations at the Three Rivers Adoption Council. She can be reached at bclement@cispac.org.

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About Communities In Schools of Pittsburgh – Allegheny County

CISPAC is part of the Communities In Schools® network that ensures all students have what they need to stay in school and on a path to a brighter future. Working directly inside more than 2,500 schools and community sites across the country, we connect 1.62 million students to caring adults and community resources designed to help them succeed in school and life. With a proven mix of evidence-based practice and human capital, we do whatever it takes to empower kids to realize their full potential. To learn more about CISPAC, visit cispac.org. Follow @cispac on Twitter.