

School Safety in North Carolina: Realities, Recommendations & Resources

Commentary for the N.C. Center for Safer Schools

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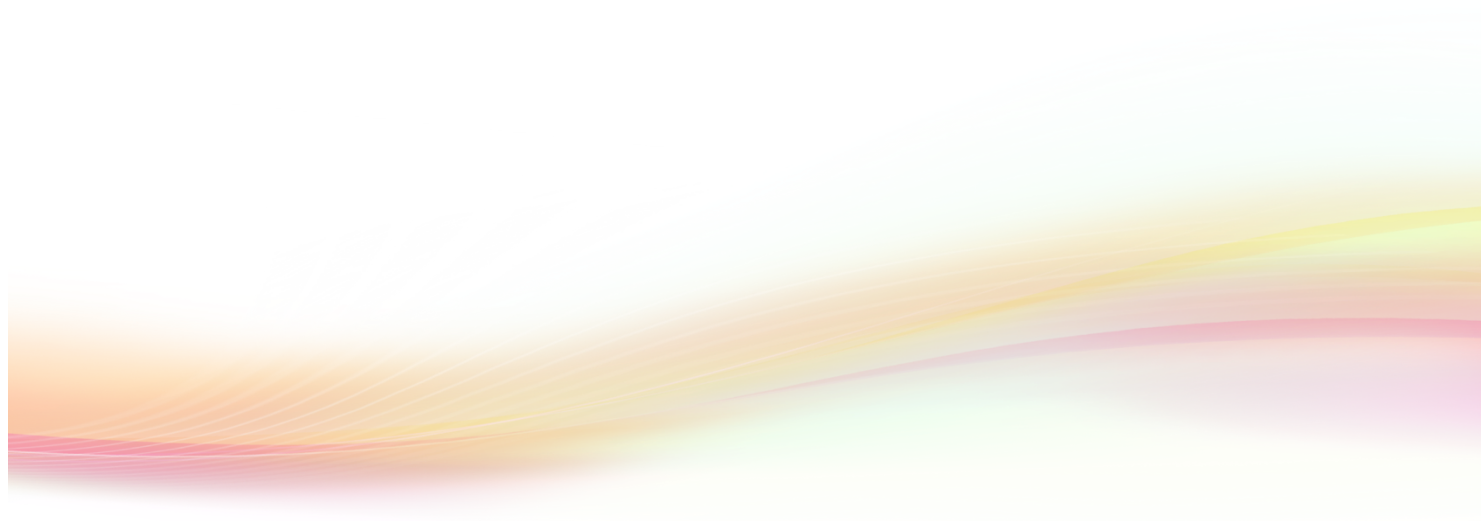
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Endorsements

Action for Children North Carolina
Action NC
Advocates for Children’s Services (a project of Legal Aid of North Carolina)
ACLU of North Carolina
Advancement Project
Beloved Community Center
Black Workers for Justice
Campbell Law School—Juvenile Mediation Clinic
Center for Death Penalty Litigation
Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School
Citizens Advocating for Racial Equity (CARE)
Coalition of Concerned Citizens for African American Children
Covenant with North Carolina’s Children
Dignity in Schools Campaign
Disability Rights North Carolina
Duke University School of Law—Children’s Law Clinic
Durham People’s Alliance
Education Justice Alliance
Education Law Center (New Jersey)
Education Law Center (Pennsylvania)
Geeta Kapur, Attorney and Counselor at Law
Great Schools in Wake
Hidden Voices
International Institute for Restorative Practices
Justice Policy Institute
Justice Served NC
Juvenile Law Center
Law Office of Kellie Mannette
Mecklenburg ACTS
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
National Juvenile Defender Center
NCCU School of Law—Juvenile Law Clinic
NC DREAM Team
NC HEAT (Heroes Emerging Among Teens)
NC NAACP
NC Student Power Union—North Carolina State University Chapter
North Carolina Justice Center
Office of the Juvenile Defender
Organizing Against Racism Alliance
Our Children’s Place
Parents Supporting Parents
Prison Policy Initiative
Project Ricochet
Public Schools First NC

Endorsements (Continued)

Racial Justice Initiative of TimeBanks USA
Rebound NC
Rural School and Community Trust
Southern Coalition for Social Justice
Southern Juvenile Defender Center
Southern Poverty Law Center
SpiritHouse
Track My Steps
Trustin Law
UNC Center for Civil Rights
UNC School of Law—Civil Legal Assistance Clinic
UNC School of Law—Juvenile Justice Clinic

Introduction

The primary mission of North Carolina schools is to provide students an excellent education. To fully achieve this mission, schools must not only be safe, but also developmentally appropriate, fair, and just.¹ Unfortunately, many so-called “school safety” proposals in the wake of the tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut have been shortsighted measures inspired by political expediency but unsupported by data. We aim to provide a more thoughtful approach informed by decades of research and centered on the mission of public schools.

This issue brief responds to the newly established N.C. Center for Safer Schools, which has requested public input on “local concerns and challenges related to school safety” and has made available the opportunity to submit written comments.² The first section of the brief debunks common myths and provides essential facts that must provide the backdrop for the school safety debate. The second section offers proven methods of striving for safe, developmentally appropriate, fair, and just public schools. It also provides examples of reforms from other cities and states. The third section makes note of resources that we encourage Center staff to study carefully.

This brief rests on several key premises. First, “school safety” includes both physical security of students as well as their emotional and psychological well-being. Many of the proposals following the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School have had an overly narrow focus on physical security at the expense of this broader picture of holistic student well-being. Second, public education in this state needs more funding in order for schools to even have a chance of achieving their core mission. North Carolina consistently ranks among the worst states in the country for funding of public education.³ Schools need more resources to implement measures that can truly ensure student safety. Third, student well-being depends on a coordinated effort by all the systems that serve youth. For example, school safety will be helped by laws that keep guns off school property and by full funding of the child welfare, mental health, and juvenile justice systems. Finally, this issue brief is not intended to be a comprehensive set of suggestions. Instead, our focus is on providing the Center important context that we view as missing from the current debate.

Realities

Any debate regarding school safety must proceed from fact as opposed to anecdote or belief. What follows are key facts that must inform the current considerations of policy:

- 1) **Myth:** Schools are dangerous places for children.

Reality: Schools are among the safest places for children. School violence that results in death is extremely rare.⁴ Young people are much more likely to be harmed in the home or on the street than they are in schools.⁵

- 2) **Myth:** Schools must implement harsh, zero tolerance, “tough on crime” approaches in order to best protect students from harm.

Reality: Students have developmentally unique characteristics that render them less deserving of the harshest punishments. Psychology and neuroscience make clear that students are more cognitively and emotionally immature, impulsive, and susceptible to peer influence than are adults.⁶ The U.S. Supreme Court has noted these differences four times in the last decade in holding that youth are entitled to heightened protections against the state.⁷ Policymakers should incorporate these insights in safety proposals.⁸

Reality: Too many students – disproportionately Black students – are already pushed out of school as a result of out-of-school suspension. During the 2011-12 school year, North Carolina schools gave out 258,197 short-term suspensions (i.e., suspensions lasting one to 10 school days) to 134,522 different students; 1,609 long-term suspensions (i.e., suspensions lasting 11 school days or more) to 1,581 students; and 30 expulsions (i.e., indefinite removals). Students missed over 790,000 school days as a result of out-of-school suspensions. Tens of thousands more students were suspended from the school bus and/or placed in inadequate in-school suspension rooms and alternative schools and programs.⁹ Black students were 4.2 times more likely than White students to be short-term suspended, and 4.1 times more likely to be long-term suspended.¹⁰

There is no evidence to suggest that suspension and expulsion make schools safer,¹¹ improve student behavior,¹² effectively deter misbehavior,¹³ or benefit non-suspended students academically by improving the learning climate.¹⁴ The reality is that suspension and expulsion cause significant damage to youth development and school safety. Suspension and expulsion are associated with negative educational outcomes,¹⁵ including less time for learning,¹⁶ grade retention,¹⁷ poor academic performance,¹⁸ failing to graduate on time or dropping out,¹⁹ and less satisfactory school climates.²⁰ Additionally, suspension and expulsion make schools and communities less safe by:

- exacerbating behavior problems,²¹ anti-social behavior,²² and developmental problems;²³
- creating a self-fulfilling belief that the student is incapable of abiding by the school's social and behavioral codes;²⁴
- causing some students to view confrontational discipline as a challenge to escalate their behavior;²⁵
- leaving students with more time unsupervised;²⁶
- preventing students from receiving needed treatment or assistance at school;²⁷
- providing students with more opportunities to socialize with peers who are negative influences;²⁸
- isolating students from supportive peers and adults;²⁹
- eliminating the possibility of school serving as a protective factor against delinquent conduct and violence;³⁰ and
- breeding distrust³¹ and alienation,³² thereby resulting in psychological damage and negative mental health outcomes for students.³³

- 3) **Myth:** School policing is the most effective means of preventing school violence and making the school environment safe.

Reality: Positive relationships among students, families, teachers, administrators, and staff are the most effective tools in creating a safe school environment. Research shows that, even in high-crime, high-poverty communities where schools are typically viewed as being the most dangerous, teachers and students alike report the highest levels of perceived safety in those schools where students indicate feeling that “their teachers care about their learning and overall well-being and listen to them.”³⁴ In addition to creating a safe school climate, positive relationships between students and school staff can effectively prevent the most dangerous of school violence. The U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education conducted a study of school shootings, the results of which indicate that, prior to most of the shootings, other students knew about the planned attacks but did not seek out a trusted adult at school.³⁵ In those cases, the shooting may have been prevented if students had strong, trusting relationships with adults in school in whom they felt comfortable confiding.³⁶

Despite the above-noted research, **North Carolina has a shortage of support staff who can intervene before violence occurs.** During the last school year for which data were published, North Carolina public schools had only:

- 871 psychologists (one per 1,677 students);
- 3,795 counselors (one per 385 students);
- 188 dropout prevention counselors (one per 7,771 students);
- 1,236 social workers/attendance counselors (one per 1,182 students);
- 838 nurses (one per 1,743 students); and
- 107 community-school coordinators (one per 13,653 students).³⁷

In light of drastic cuts to funding for public education since this data were published for the 2008-09 school year,³⁸ public schools presumably now have even fewer support staff.

Reality: There is a lack of reliable evidence that “school resource officers” (SROs) make schools safer.³⁹ From 1995-96 to 2008-2009, there was a 249% increase in SROs in North Carolina,⁴⁰ and recent school shootings have resulted in calls for further increases in police in schools. However, even though hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars have been spent on SROs, there has never been a comprehensive study of the effectiveness of SROs in North Carolina. Notably, research conducted in other states has produced **evidence showing that SROs can actually have negative impacts on students and schools.** Studies have shown that SROs can:

- increase arrests and court referrals for minor misbehavior that should instead be treated as teachable moments by educators;⁴¹
- disrupt and damage the learning environment by creating an atmosphere of hostility, suspicion, fear, and control and negatively impacting student morale;⁴² and
- undermine the authority of teachers and school administrators.⁴³

Furthermore, **students in schools are at risk of being seriously injured by weapons carried by SROs.** Students in North Carolina and throughout the United States have been injured by SROs who have used pepper spray and TASERS.⁴⁴ During the most

recent school year for which data is available, 97% of SROs carried a TASER and/or pepper spray.⁴⁵ TASERs, also known as stun guns, work by delivering a high-voltage, low-current electrical shock to cause uncontrollable muscle spasms and paralysis. The TASER is shaped like a gun and loaded with cartridges that shoot two small hooked metal electrodes into the skin or clothing to prevent removal and distribute a charge of about 1200 volts in electrical pulses at a rate of 19 pulses per second.⁴⁶ TASERs have been linked to hundreds of deaths across the country,⁴⁷ including many in North Carolina.⁴⁸

Many school districts also employ their own security staff and/or contract with private companies for security officers. For example, the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) employs its own “Senior Director” of security, “Senior Administrator” of security, and six “Security Administrators”; contracts with AlliedBarton, a private security firm, to provide 61 security guards at a cost of over \$1,300,000 per year; and has 64 SROs employed by local police departments and the county Sheriff’s Department.⁴⁹ The WCPSS Board of Education is considering paying AlliedBarton an additional \$835,000 per year to station security guards in each of the district’s elementary schools.⁵⁰ As with the SRO program, there has been no study to determine the effectiveness of these security officials in reducing school violence.

- 4) **Myth:** Only the most dangerous students end up in court as the result of incidents at school.

Reality: Too many North Carolina students – disproportionately Black students and students from low-income families – are funneled into the juvenile system as a result of minor misbehavior at school that should be treated as “teachable moments” by educators.⁵¹ In 2011, 43% of all delinquency complaints were school-based.⁵² Over 16,000 school-based delinquency complaints were filed against students age 15 and younger.⁵³ During state fiscal year 2010-11, 46.2% of school-based delinquency complaints were filed against Black students,⁵⁴ although they were only 26.8% of public school students.⁵⁵ That same year, 2,190 complaints were filed for disorderly conduct and 1,203 for status offenses (i.e., being truant, ungovernable, or a run away).⁵⁶

Because of its rehabilitative focus, the juvenile system is superior to the adult system for those youth who must be prosecuted. Nevertheless, the system remains a dumping ground for youth with issues that could be better – and more inexpensively – handled in the education, child welfare, or mental health systems. Once in court, young people miss valuable class time, sometimes falling behind, or further behind, their peers as a result.⁵⁷ The prosecution process can be demeaning and demoralizing, with judges pronouncing youth to be “juvenile delinquents” if they are adjudicated.⁵⁸ Being branded in this way can lead to lasting harm at a time of crucial identity development.⁵⁹ On top of this stigmatization, prosecution and adjudication can trigger school exclusion, lead to academic failure, make a young person ineligible for higher education loans, cause a reduction in future employment opportunities, lead to a family’s eviction from public housing, and imperil a young person’s chances at naturalization.⁶⁰

- 5) **Myth:** Students who are arrested at school or referred to court from school receive needed services from a non-punitive juvenile system.

Reality: All students age 16 and older who are arrested at school, or subject to a complaint for something that happened at school, are sent to the adult criminal system, which creates negative lifelong consequences that imperil their future. North Carolina is the only state in the country that treats all 16- and 17-year-olds, in every circumstance, as adults when they are charged with criminal offenses.⁶¹

Children and youth who become involved in the adult criminal system are deprived of age-appropriate, rehabilitative services that would be available to them in the juvenile system.⁶² Moreover, unlike in the juvenile system, parents of youth in the adult system have no formal role.⁶³ Additionally, youth prosecuted in the adult system must bear lifelong consequences of criminal convictions, even though research shows that most young people grow out of adolescent offending.⁶⁴ Furthermore, sixteen- and 17-year-olds are prosecuted and incarcerated alongside hardened adult criminals. They bear a heightened risk of sexual assault in adult jails and prisons.⁶⁵ Finally, research shows that young people prosecuted and incarcerated in the adult system are much more likely to reoffend than are young people processed in the juvenile system.⁶⁶

Recommendations

Because the reality of student well-being in school is more complex than the current debate suggests, we recommend that the Center consider and promote the following array of measures that would truly ensure student safety. These include:

- 1) **Involve stakeholders in creating school safety plans that have a balanced approach and ensure students are healthy in every sense.** Teams that include students, family members, teachers, administrators, support staff, security staff, and representatives from community agencies should formulate the plans using data, research, and input from stakeholders. The plans should be treated as living documents that are revisited regularly.
- 2) **Invest in the prevention of violence by students before it erupts.** Student safety is unquestionably of paramount importance. However, in ensuring that students are kept safe, it is crucial that the limited funds allocated to schools actually be spent on *proven* methods of improving school safety.⁶⁷ Proven preventive measures include:
 - small classes and schools that students and staff experience as communities and where students and staff know each other well and feel responsible for one another;
 - high-quality, varied, lively, engaging instruction;
 - staff who are positive, compassionate, nurturing, caring, and respectful; model appropriate behaviors; create a climate of emotional support; and are committed to maintaining strong, positive relationships with all students;
 - Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which is a prevention-oriented “framework for assisting school personnel in adopting and organizing evidence-based behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum”,⁶⁸

- teacher training in culturally responsive behavior management, recognizing signs of trauma, working with students with mental health issues, and communicating and building trust with students and families;
 - conflict resolution, bullying prevention, and social and emotional learning programs – programs that help students learn self-awareness, self-management, stress management, problem-solving, communication skills, empathy and how to recognize emotions in others, responsible decision-making, and social skills;
 - parent involvement initiatives, such as parent resource centers, parents trainings, and parent liaisons;
 - high-quality individualized education programs (IEPs) and personal education plans (PEPs) so that students are more likely to receive needed services and experience academic success and stay in engaged; and
 - teacher assistants who can help keep students engaged and manage behavior.
- 3) **Invest in a continuum of interventions and alternatives for students who demonstrate risk factors for acting violently or a propensity for misbehavior, including:**
- adequate numbers of support staff, such as school social workers, psychologists, nurses, counselors, and mentors (and ensure that support staff are not pulled away from their primary duties to assist with testing and administrative duties, such as creating class schedules and monitoring student attendance);
 - high-quality functional behavioral assessments (FBAs) and behavior intervention plans (BIPs);
 - student support teams that include the student, the student’s family, teachers, administrators, support staff, community-based service providers, and other supportive individuals in the student’s life;
 - peer mediation, restorative justice, school-based mental health, and substance abuse treatment programs; and
 - continuums of high-quality alternative schools and placements.
- 4) **Reduce unnecessary out-of-school suspensions** by implementing the measures outlined in recommendations two and three, as well as by prohibiting out-of-school suspension for minor misbehavior and *requiring* school administrators to consider mitigating factors and developmentally appropriate interventions and alternatives.
- 5) **Reconsider the necessity of having SROs and security guards in schools and ensure all SROs and security guards are well-trained, have a clearly defined scope of authority, and are accountable to students, parents, staff, and policymakers** by:
- requiring SROs and security guards to have training in safe restraint techniques, students’ rights, adolescent development, recognizing trauma, working with students who have disabilities and mental health issues, sexual harassment, cultural competencies, the effects of court involvement, and utilizing community-based services and alternatives to arrests and complaints;

- prohibiting SROs and security guards from being involved in disciplining students for minor misbehavior, including making arrests or filing complaints; filing complaints against students for manifestations of their disabilities; searching students without probable cause; conducting strip searches; interrogating students without a parent or guardian present; and using force unless there is a clear threat of serious injury or death; and
 - establishing clear, well-publicized, readily available complaint procedures for students, parents, and school staff to use when SROs and security guards misbehave.
- 6) **Improve the quality of data** by annually collecting and publishing school-level, disaggregated data (e.g., offense, school, grade, race, gender, disability status, limited English proficiency status, and free and reduced priced lunch status), that includes in-school suspensions, bus suspensions, placements in alternative education programs and schools, out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, school-based arrests, school-based delinquency complaints, school-based criminal complaints, use of force, and complaints against SROs.
- 7) **Involve *all* stakeholders in conducting and publishing a comprehensive study of SROs** that includes:
- an overview of SROs (e.g., qualifications to become an SRO, the schools to which they are assigned, their employers, and the weapons they carry);
 - a detailed accounting of expenses related to SROs (e.g., salary, benefits, equipment, and training);
 - a review of mandatory and voluntary training for SROs;
 - a review of SRO activities (i.e., what are they *actually* doing during the school day);
 - an analysis of data listed in recommendation six; and
 - the results of surveys administered students, parents, teachers, principals, support staff, and SROs to solicit their feedback about school safety and policing.
- 8) **Prevent gun violence in schools** by prohibiting anyone from carrying a gun on school property. The presence of guns in schools increases the likelihood of accidental shootings, unjustified shootings, and shootings of innocent bystanders.
- 9) **Prevent further criminalization of schools** by prohibiting metal detectors, high fencing, barbed wire or razor wire, and bars on windows.

Examples

The following are helpful examples of reforms from other cities and states that are moving away from exclusionary, punitive discipline and criminalization of youth.

- 1) In **Baltimore, Maryland** a Discipline Policies Working Group, made up of teachers, school administrators, leaders of community-based advocacy organizations, and parents revised the code of conduct to reduce suspensions. The new code, implemented in 2008, focused on creating positive learning environments, detailed students' and parents' rights,

capped the number of days students could be suspended, and detailed specific intervention strategies and alternatives to removal from school. As a result of the new code, suspensions decreased from 16,500 three years ago to 9,721 in 2011-12; the on-time graduation rate for Black males increased from 51% in the 2006-07 school year to 57.3% in the 2009-10 school year; and the overall graduation rate increased from 60% in 2006-07 to 66% in 2009-10.⁶⁹

- 2) In three **Connecticut** communities, Manchester, Windham, and Stanford, parents and teachers worked with the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance to reduce in-school arrests. A group of non-profit organizations, along with the juvenile courts, partnered to ensure that arrest was a last resort for in-school misbehavior, increasing in-school safety at the same time. They accomplished this outcome by having the courts return to schools many cases referred to them for minor offenses; researching and authoring a model memorandum of agreement for school systems and police departments to make clear the roles and responsibilities of each in school discipline; and linking schools to mental health resources. As a result, the communities have issued recommendations that serve as models for the rest of the state.⁷⁰
- 3) In six **New York** high schools, administrators have rejected the use of zero tolerance and police tactics in ensuring and maintaining safety and school discipline. They instead view school discipline as an educational matter, in which principles of adolescent development guide policy and policing does not dominate but is viewed only as a last resort. Students have a voice in school rules, and students' nonacademic needs are met. These schools have higher graduation rates, lower drop-out rates, fewer acts of violence, and fewer suspensions than schools that use harsh discipline and policing tactics.⁷¹
- 4) The **Oakland Unified School District** has implemented a Restorative Justice Initiative that includes professional development and coaching for staff, integration with PBIS and social and emotional learning at participating sites, inclusion of parents and families, and alignment with community-based programs. The Initiative has resulted in dramatic reductions in suspensions.⁷²
- 5) The **Minneapolis Public Schools** has prioritized the use of positive interventions by implementing policies requiring each school to "develop and implement a school-wide behavior plan with input from teachers, administrators, other staff, students and families." The plan must address quality instruction; caring relationships and teaching expectations; use of data for problem solving, continuous improvement and accountability; a continuum of interventions; and building cultural competence and addressing racism.⁷³
- 6) Oxford Gardens, a K-8 school in **Roxbury, Massachusetts**, was "plagued by violence and disorder" and "blighted." Backpacks were banned because of the fear of weapons in the school. In 2010, the new principal – the sixth in seven years – got rid of all the security guards, reinvested the money used for security infrastructure into the arts, and made other changes (e.g., a longer school day and collaboration with outside nonprofits). Three years later, Oxford Gardens has a thriving arts program and one of the fastest improvement rates in the state.⁷⁴

- 7) In 2004, in **Clayton County, Georgia**, an innovative, cooperative agreement was developed between multiple stakeholders in an effort to ensure that misdemeanor delinquent acts (e.g., fighting, disrupting school, disorderly conduct, most obstruction of police, and most criminal trespass) do not result in the filing of a complaint, except in extreme circumstances. Pursuant to the agreement, youth first receive warnings and, after a second offense, are referred to mediation or school conflict training programs. It is not until a student commits a third or subsequent similar offense during the same school year, and the principal conducts a review of the student's behavior plan, that a complaint for school-based delinquent behavior can be filed. Elementary school students cannot be referred to law enforcement for "misdemeanor delinquent acts" at all. The protocol was implemented after Judge Steven Teske, a juvenile court judge in the county, recognized that referrals to law enforcement had skyrocketed as soon as SROs were stationed at local schools. Judge Teske led a team of stakeholders from the juvenile justice system, law enforcement, the local school system, and social services groups in creating the agreement. The team reviewed data, solicited input, and educated stakeholders on best practices. The team also created a multidisciplinary panel to assess the needs of students at risk for referral to law enforcement, and to refer the students to services outside of the school, such as family therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and wrap-around services. After the implementation of the agreement, rates of misbehavior, dangerous weapons on campus, and school-based court referrals decreased dramatically. Notably, graduation rates increased over the same period of time.⁷⁵
- 8) In **Jefferson County, Alabama**, Judge Brian Huff led an effort to replicate the protocol from Clayton County.⁷⁶ After implementing the protocol described above, the number of ungovernable, truancy, and runaway petitions, as well as school-related offenses that were filed in Jefferson County Family Court, which handles juvenile matters, dropped by nearly 40%, from 4,000 in 2007 to 2,500 in 2011.⁷⁷
- 9) In 2012, in response to citizen concern regarding police presence and misconduct in schools, the **Oakland School Police Department** enacted a policy allowing for citizen complaints. Under the policy, citizens have multiple mechanisms for filing complaints, including online, via mail, and in person. Anonymous complaints are permitted. Investigations must be conducted and written reports to complaints generally must be made within 45 days. Complainants can appeal police reports to the superintendent, who must investigate the appeal and issue written findings. Complainants may then appeal to the Board of Education, which must also issue written findings. Forms have been created in six languages for the community to report officers behaving inappropriately, to report officers who handled situations exceptionally well, and to make general recommendations. Forms and flyers explaining the process are required to be available in every school in the district. Finally, the Office of the Chief of Police is required to prepare a detailed, semi-annual complaint statistical summary that is publicly available.⁷⁸ This kind of transparency is crucial for effective relations among schools, law enforcement, and the community.

- 10) As a result of advocacy from *Padres y Jóvenes Unidos* and the Advancement Project, **Colorado** enacted in 2012 a new law aimed at ensuring positive youth development in schools. The law:
- declares that the “involvement of students in the criminal or juvenile justice systems should be avoided when addressing minor misbehavior that is typical for a student based on his or her developmental stage”;
 - requires every school district to implement “proportionate” discipline that reduces the number of out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement;
 - requires districts to implement prevention strategies, restorative justice, peer mediation, counseling, and other approaches designed to minimize student exposure to the juvenile and criminal justice system;
 - improves the collection of disaggregated data around school-based arrests, tickets, and court referrals; and
 - enhances the training of SROs.⁷⁹
- 11) In February 2013, the **Denver Public Schools** and the Denver Police Department entered into a formal intergovernmental agreement in order to address concerns that police were being used to handle minor disciplinary matters. The collaborative agreement makes clear distinctions between disciplinary issues and crimes, and requires SROs to treat them differently. Specifically, SROs are required to first attempt to deescalate situations and arrest or issue citations only in cases when it is absolutely necessary, in accordance with the district’s discipline policy, which explicitly favors restorative practices over law enforcement intervention in dealing with student behavior. Unless absolutely necessary, disciplinary problems are to be left to educators. Additionally, the agreement sets forth due process protections for students and parents in the event of law enforcement interventions at school; requires that SROs meet with community stakeholders each semester; and sets forth training requirements for SROs, recommending topics spanning youth development, conflict resolution, and cultural competency.⁸⁰
- 12) In an effort to limit excessive criminalization of its students, the **San Francisco Unified School District** revised their Student and Family Handbook to include a provision aimed at restricting the involvement of police officers in school-based offenses. The provision reads: “SFUSD recognizes the serious potential consequences for youth of juvenile court involvement and wishes to avoid unnecessary criminalization of our students...Staff members and site administrators shall only request police assistance when (1) necessary to protect the physical safety of students and staff; (2) required by law; or (3) appropriate to address criminal behavior of persons other than students. Police involvement should not be requested in a situation that can be safely and appropriately handled by the District’s internal disciplinary procedures.”⁸¹
- 13) The **Cleveland Metropolitan School District** made systematic efforts over a four-year period to improve safety, order, and conditions for learning through providing appropriate mental-health services and alternative to suspension, as well as instituting social and emotional learning protocols. These efforts included implementing universal social and emotional learning programs; establishing student support teams to identify

students exhibiting early warning signs of violence and intervene appropriately; and replacing punitive in-school suspensions with learning-oriented planning centers. Over the same period, the schools experienced higher teacher ratings of student competence, greater student attendance, improved student behavior, and reduced use of school removal.⁸²

Resources

North Carolina

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