BUILDING SAFER SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Findings and Recommendations from the Joint Task Force on School Safety and Justice

NOVEMBER 2023

IACP
International Association of Chiefs of Police

Council *of the* **Great City Schools**
THE NATION'S VOICE FOR URBAN EDUCATION

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OVERVIEW

Gun violence and school shootings have become more prevalent in recent years, and beginning in 2017, firearm-related injuries became the most common cause of injury-related death for children ages 1 to 24[1]. Students also face the threat of bullying, gangs, racism, drugs, and abuse. In recognition of the need for collective action, the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) established a joint task force early in 2022 centered on identifying models for collaboration between police and school districts to address the safety of students in communities and schools throughout the United States.

The impact of crime and violence in schools and communities goes beyond the immediate threats to student safety. Students who experience or witness crime and violence often face lasting trauma that may impact their long-term mental health and academic achievement. For instance, researchers have found a relationship between students who witness violence and physical aggression[2], and have connected living in communities of violence with negative student outcomes, including lower course completion rates, lower standardized test scores, increased student absenteeism, and lower school engagement.[3]

In response to these threats, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act was passed into law by Congress in the summer of 2022.[4] The Act seeks to help keep schools safe and reduce the threat of violence across the country. Included in the Act are: funds to encourage the creation and administration of state laws that help keep deadly weapons out of the hands of individuals deemed to be a danger to themselves or others; protections for the victims of domestic violence and a clarified definition of 'federally licensed firearms dealer'; enhanced processes for people under 21 years of age to purchase firearms; funds for community-based violence prevention initiatives; and investments in mental health services for children and families. While this legislation provides needed funding and support, additional plans and actions are essential to improve safety in our communities and schools.

This document proposes new and innovative approaches to reducing incidents of violence in schools and communities with a focus on shifting mindsets and reframing relationships and practices related to schools, police, and communities.

TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL SAFETY AND JUSTICE MISSION STATEMENT

To work together to build safer and more just schools and communities for school children so all students have opportunities to learn and thrive.

The Joint Task Force on School Safety and Justice

The issues of crime and violence facing our students go well beyond the school day and school building. The dangers they face in schools are a reflection—and often a continuation—of the dangers they face in their homes and communities, and vice-versa. Therefore, an effective blueprint for mitigating crime and violence will require the perspective and insight of community leaders, local law enforcement, and education leaders.

The IACP-CGCS Task Force is composed of district superintendents, school district police leaders, and community police chiefs working together to develop, identify, and share effective practices, tools, and resources. Over the course of one year, the Task Force met to articulate the challenges facing students and communities and identify approaches to improve student safety in areas across the country. The resulting blueprint is both a culmination of this work and a joint action plan for moving forward and building safer communities and schools for our students and their families.

About CGCS

The Council of the Great City Schools is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. Composed of 78 large city school districts, its mission is to promote the cause of urban schools and to advocate for inner-city students through legislation, research, and media relations. The Council's member districts serve almost 8 million students across 14,000 schools. Over 70% of students are Black or Hispanic, and over 70% are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch. The organization also provides a network for school districts sharing common problems to exchange information, and to collectively address new challenges as they emerge to deliver the best possible education for urban youth.

About IACP

The International Association of Chiefs of Police is the world's largest and most influential professional association for police leaders. With more than 33,000 members in over 170 countries, the IACP is a recognized leader in global policing, committed to advancing safer communities through thoughtful, progressive police leadership. Since 1893, the association has been serving communities worldwide by speaking out on behalf of law enforcement and advancing leadership and professionalism in policing worldwide.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

The members of the IACP-CGCS Task Force:

- **Todd Axtell,** *Chief of Police (Retired July 2022), St. Paul Police Department (MN)*

- **Cerelyn (CJ) Davis,** *Chief of Police, Memphis Police Department (TN)*

- **Mitchell Davis,** *Chief of Police, Hazel Crest Police Department (IL)*

- **Joe Gothard,** *Superintendent, St. Paul Public Schools (MN)*

- **Pedro Lopez,** *Chief of Police, Houston Independent School District (TX)*

- **John Mina,** *Sheriff, Orange County Sheriff's Office (FL)*

- **Rodolfo Perez,** *(Left district in May 2023) Adjutant to the Chief of Police, Los Angeles School Police Department (CA)*

- **Leslie Ramirez,** *Chief of Police (Retired July 2022), Los Angeles School Police Department (CA)*

- **Maria Vazquez,** *Superintendent, Orange County Public Schools (FL)*

A LOOK AT THE DATA:
Prevalence, Impact, and Responses to Crime and Violence in Communities and Schools

Prevalence

The prevalence of guns, weapons, and violence in schools often mirrors what is seen in the broader community. While violent crime rates in large US cities have been steadily declining over the past two decades, the decline has been uneven. Some major cities and neighborhoods continue to experience violence at disproportionate rates, with little change in rates of violence over time.[5]

Gun violence, specifically, continues to be of great concern across America, particularly among young adults and Black males. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, males were six times more likely to die by gun violence than females, making up 86% of gun deaths in America in 2019.[6] Black males are disproportionately impacted by gun violence and have the highest rate

of gun death, nearly twice as high as the second-highest rate of gun death among American Indian/ Alaska Native males.[7]

In addition, Black males were more than twice as likely to die by guns than white males. In terms of age, young adults (ages 15-34) are most impacted by gun deaths. As noted earlier, gun-related injuries have surpassed car crashes and are now the leading cause of death for children and teens in America. According to a study published in the American Academy of Pediatrics:

In 2021, firearms continued to be the leading cause of death among US children. From 2018 to 2021, there was a 41.6% increase in the firearm death rate. In 2021, among children who died by firearms, 84.8% were male, 49.9% were Black, 82.6% were aged 15 to 19 years, and 64.3% died by homicide. Black children accounted for 67.3% of firearm homicides, with a death rate increase of 1.8 [percentage points] from 2020 to 2021. [Black children make of 13.9% of the population of children in the US.] White children accounted for 78.4% of firearm suicides. From 2020 to 2021, the suicide rate increased among Black and white children, yet decreased among American Indian and Alaskan Native children. Geographically, there are worsening clusters of firearm death rates in Southern states and increasing rates in Midwestern states from 2018 to 2021. Across the United States, higher poverty levels correlated with higher firearm death rates.[8]

As of September, 2023, there have been 30 school shootings this year, with 16 people killed and 32 people injured (Exhibits 1 and 2).[9] These numbers do not account for the shootings, deaths, and injuries in the communities around the country.

There are also increased reports in the 2019-2020 school year, compared to the 2009-10 school year, of students being threatened or injured; being offered, sold, or given an illegal drug; or being afraid of attack or harm at school than away from school.[10] More students also reported avoiding places in school because they thought someone might attack or harm them. In 2017-18, NCES found that nearly 80 percent of public schools recorded incidents of violence, theft, or other crimes, which equates to a rate of 29 incidents per 1,000 students enrolled (Exhibit 3). In 2019, data collected from students ages 12–18 revealed that a higher percentage of students experienced more nonfatal criminal victimization, and this has been particularly problematic in the return to learning after pandemic school closures.
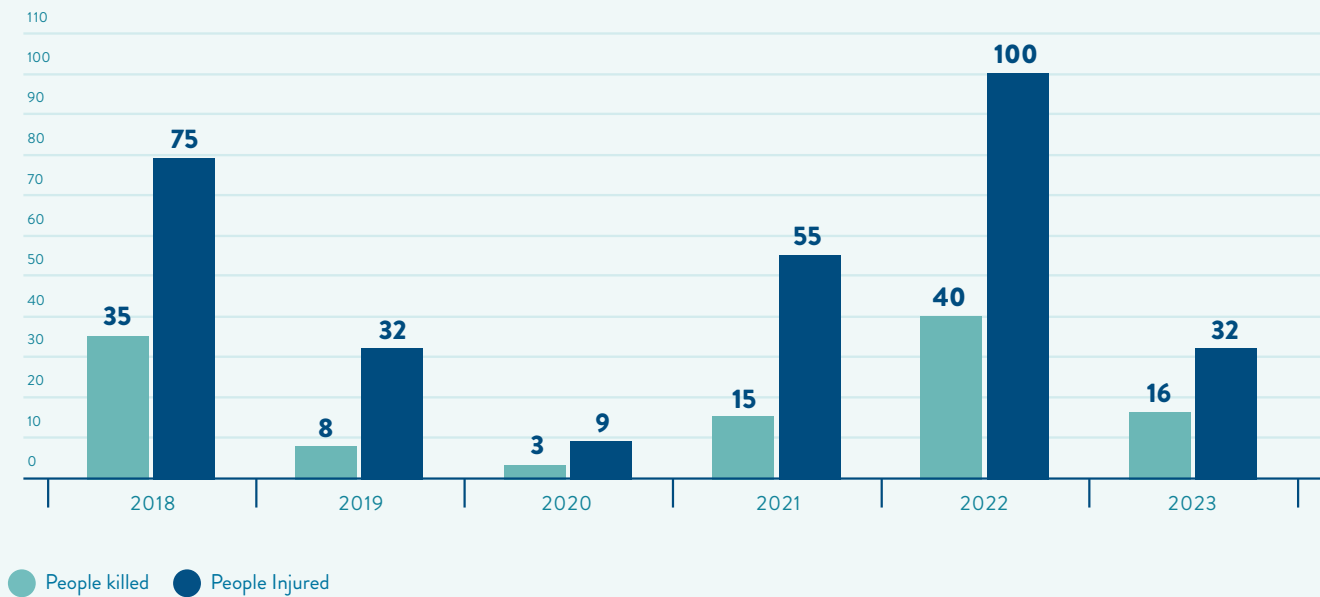
In addition, according to a recent federal report on school crime and safety, cyberbullying was on the rise in the 2019-20 school year, with the number of cyberbullying reports doubling from what was reported a decade ago.[11] This is consistent with the corresponding rise in social media and student access to handheld devices and the internet.

Exhibit 1. Number of School Shootings Since 2018 by Year

School Shootings by year:
- 2018: 24
- 2019: 24
- 2020: 10
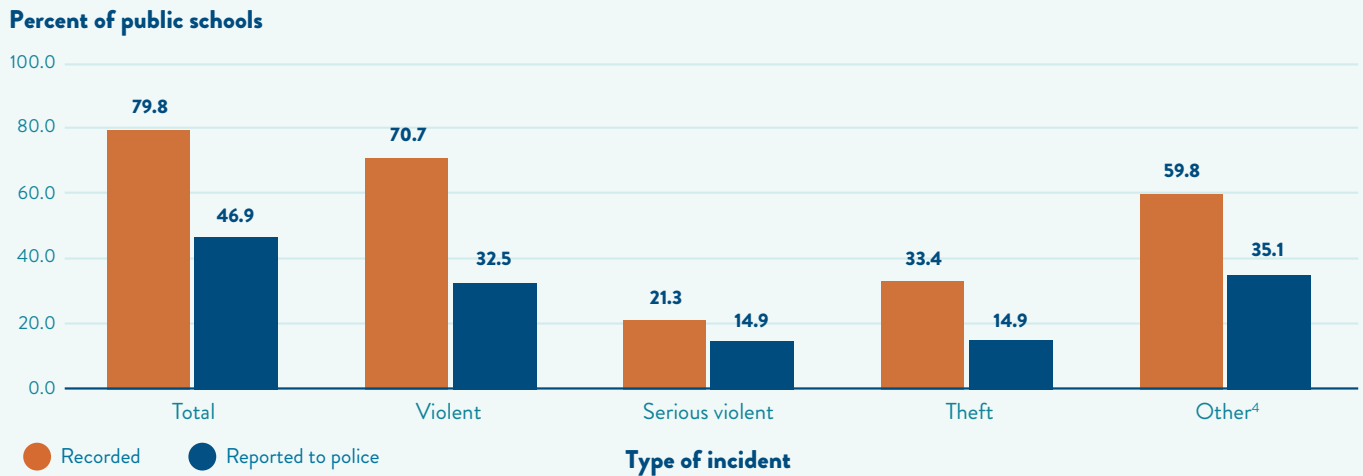- 2021: 35
- 2022: 51
- 2023: 30
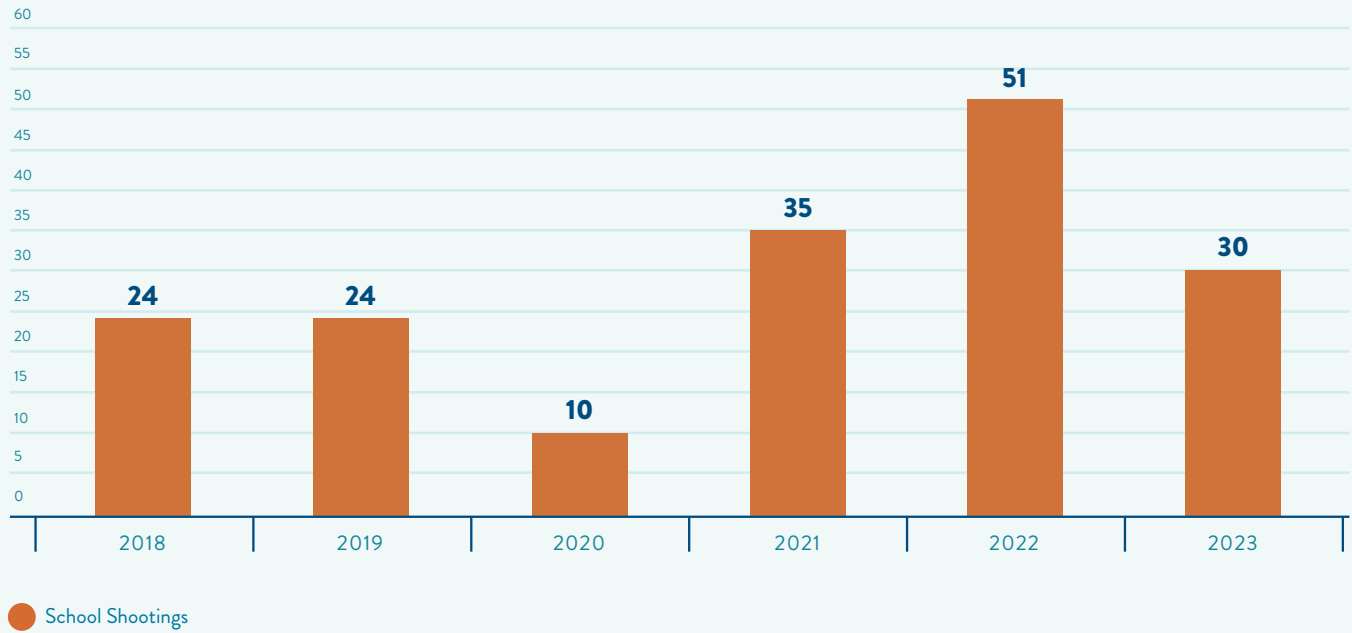
● School Shootings

*Source: *Education Week*, September 2023

Exhibit 2. Number of People Killed or Injured in School Shootings since 2018 by Year

People killed / People Injured by year:
- 2018: 35 / 75
- 2019: 8 / 32
- 2020: 3 / 9
- 2021: 15 / 55
- 2022: 40 / 100
- 2023: 16 / 32

● People killed   ● People Injured

*Source: *Education Week*, September 2023

Exhibit 3. Percentage of public schools recording incidents of violence, theft, and other crimes at school; Percentage reporting these incidents to the police (2017-18)

Percent of public schools

Type of incident	Recorded	Reported to police
Total	79.8	46.9
Violent	70.7	32.5
Serious violent	21.3	14.9
Theft	33.4	14.9
Other[4]	59.8	35.1

● Recorded   ● Reported to police

Type of incident

*Source: Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2021

The data show that these issues of violence and crime disproportionately impact students of color—particularly African American and Latino males. These students often already face the challenges of poverty, racism, and marginalization, creating exponential obstacles to learning and perpetuating longstanding gaps in academic achievement and social and economic opportunity.

Data from cities across the country show that Black and Hispanic students are disproportionately impacted by school discipline policies.[12] Specifically, Black and Latino males are suspended at rates far exceeding their peers.[13] The data presented here reinforce the need for joint support between schools and local law enforcement to address the needs of our children.

The Impact of Violence and Trauma on Student Learning

We know that violence in schools has profound short- and long-term impacts on student outcomes. For example, students in schools that have experienced gun violence are more likely to be chronically absent from school or repeat a grade, and less likely to graduate high school, enroll in college, earn a bachelor's degree, or hold a job as an adult,[14] and NCES has connected the presence of physical violence in schools to lower scores in reading, mathematics, and science.[15]

The data are also clear about the effects of wider community crime and violence on student outcomes. Researchers have connected exposure to violence with a variety of negative student outcomes, including lower course completion rates, lower standardized test scores, lower school engagement, and increased student absenteeism.[16] According to NCES, the top reported problems in school neighborhoods in 2016 were crime, selling or using drugs or excessive drinking in public, neighborhood violence or gangs, and tensions based on racial ethnic or religious differences.[17] Students in communities where these problems were largely or somewhat concerning had lower scores in reading, mathematics, and science.

Students often bring the trauma of being exposed to crime and violence at home into schools and classrooms. For example, researchers have found a bidirectional relationship between witnessing violence and physical aggression, and between witnessing violence and negative life events.[18] Overall, the findings highlight the need for interventions that break the connection between exposure to violence and aggression during adolescence.

School and Law Enforcement Responses

Issues of crime and safety in schools are often handled through disciplinary actions imposed upon students. In recent years, schools have also increasingly implemented various security measures including the hiring of school resource officers (SROs)/security staff or the use of security cameras and metal detectors in schools. In fact, there has been an increase in the percentage of public schools using security cameras, up from 19 percent in the 1999-2000 school year to 83 percent in the 2017-18 school year.[19] Public schools have seen an increase in the use of security staff and/or SROs present at least once a week from 42 percent in the 2005-06 school year to 61 percent in the 2017-18 school year, with a greater presence in high schools (84%) and middle schools (80%) compared to elementary schools (51%).[20]

As crime and violence among children within schools and in the community have evolved over the years, so has the interaction between school districts and law enforcement personnel. While methods of response have varied, common challenges impacting effectiveness have emerged. Examples include:

- Inconsistent guidelines regarding student infractions, causing confusion about/around when discipline warrants a response from school administrators versus law enforcement personnel.

- Fragmented reporting of incidents between school districts and law enforcement personnel.

- Vaguely-defined role and purpose for school resource officers (SROs).

- The need to expand early intervention strategies, proactive mental health support, and prosocial skills for the community.

DEFINING A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Any comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing violence in schools and communities must begin with a focus on providing mental health support, helping students develop critical social emotional skills and characteristics, and building resilience, mindfulness, and self-regulation. It will also take the combined and coordinated efforts of a range of community stakeholders to provide the ideas, supports, services, and resources necessary to build safe, nurturing schools and communities.

In sum, we propose a framework for action built on the following three pillars:

I. Expand mental health support and social emotional skills development for students, families, and communities.

II. Rethink school discipline policies and practices to ensure fair and equitable practices for all students.

III. Promote community partnerships and broad-based collaboration to ensure student safety and support.

I. Expand mental health support and social emotional skills development for students, families, and communities.

The adoption of proactive instructional strategies helps students better regulate their behavior, resolve conflicts, and employ other behavioral skills, and equips them with the essential tools for personal growth, academic success, positive social interactions, and overall well-being. These pro-social skills are invaluable for their present and future lives, enabling them to navigate challenges, build healthy relationships, and contribute positively to society.

Specific action steps to support students, staff, and communities may include:

▪ Adopt or develop a social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and materials that are age-appropriate across K-12— K-2; 3-5; 6-8; 9-12. Begin to provide lessons and support students, families, and community members with developing the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to significantly reduce community and school violence. There are many examples across Council member districts of SEL implementation.

❯ IN PRACTICE

- Atlanta Public Schools provides an overview video on their SEL implementation throughout the district.

- St. Louis Public Schools provides an online toolbox with resources for implementing SEL at elementary, middle, and high schools. They also include resources for families and school staff and administrators.

- Los Angeles Unified School District provides an overview of SEL, an instructional unit on SEL for students, and a parent/caregiver roadmap for social-emotional well-being and academic success.

- Clark County School District developed a site with resources that include a framework for Developmental Assets, an approach to positive youth development. These checklists are available for elementary, middle, and high school students.

- Tulsa Public Schools incorporated SEL into their school reopening plans during the COVID-19 pandemic. This article describes how they incorporated SEL strategies into the reopening and how they worked to engage students and families during school hours and out-of-school time.

- Establish processes and systems that allow school leaders to identify early warning indicators and proactively support the most at-risk students. Consider deploying school-based mental health staff to each campus to facilitate early invention and targeted support for at-risk students. Also consider enlisting community-based mental health providers to fill gaps in district staff capacity. Grant opportunities from the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act may provide funding for these programs.

- Connect students and their families who are involved in or witness violent crimes to local community resource organizations to assist with post-traumatic stress and other mental and physical health issues. Providing support services to victims, friends, and family that address the need to retaliate, and equip them with strategies for coping through other means, can help to avoid escalating community violence. Students who are exposed to trauma in their community may also need additional support to ensure their needs are met and they do not turn to inappropriate responses.

❯ IN PRACTICE

  - Handle with Care is a trauma-informed collaboration between local law enforcement, schools, and the Juvenile Assessment Center in the state of Colorado. The program ensures that designated school personnel are notified when a child is exposed to a traumatic event, and appropriate interventions and support is provided.

- Promote conflict resolution, resilience, and mindfulness for students, staff, and families.

❯ IN PRACTICE

  - Metro Nashville Public Schools provides de-escalation spaces for high school students.

  - Memphis-Shelby County Schools provides presentations with embedded videos and links to additional resources for staff on de-escalating challenging behaviors.

  - Conflict Resolution Education Connection has curated a list of resources for teaching and promoting conflict resolution in K-12 schools. Sample classroom activities, videos, and conference presentations are included for review.

  - See pages 17-18 for examples of districts implementing Restorative Practices, an approach to conflict resolution.

- Build a broad-based coalition to provide opportunities for pro-social skill development for students and parents outside of school. These sessions and activities may be provided or led by community organizers, faith-based leaders, social service agency staff, community-based social workers.

❯ IN PRACTICE

- The [Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches](#) leads initiatives to support the community with programming around well-being, youth development, and food insecurity. The initiative includes working with community members to improve their lives.

- The [Faith-Based Mental Health Initiative of Atlanta](#) provides opportunities for community members to access mental health supports, with the goal of promoting recovery from trauma and providing a positive outlook.

- [Detroit Public Schools Community District](#) launched a faith-based initiative to support students, families, and school communities.

Historically, public schools have recognized the importance of nurturing well-rounded citizens—of developing essential social skills and behaviors alongside academic proficiency. Educating students on self-regulation, conflict resolution, and other behavioral skills is essential for several important reasons:

1. Personal Development: With these skills, students become responsible, self-aware, and emotionally intelligent individuals. Self-regulation skills enable students to manage their emotions, control impulsive behaviors, and make thoughtful decisions. Conflict resolution skills teach students how to handle disagreements, negotiate compromises, and find peaceful solutions, fostering healthy relationships and personal growth.

2. Academic Success: Behavioral skills are closely linked to academic success. When students can regulate their emotions, concentrate on tasks, and manage their time effectively, they are better equipped to engage in learning and excel academically. Conflict resolution skills also contribute to a positive learning environment, allowing students to focus on their studies.

3. Social Interaction: Behavioral skills are essential for successful social interactions. By teaching students how to regulate their behavior and emotions, schools empower them to navigate social situations effectively, form healthy relationships, and collaborate with others. Conflict resolution skills enable students to resolve disputes peacefully, communicate assertively, and appreciate diverse perspectives, fostering empathy, tolerance, and teamwork.

4. Life Skills: Self-regulation, conflict resolution, and other behavioral skills are crucial life skills that extend beyond the school environment. Students who learn these skills are better prepared to handle the challenges and conflicts they may encounter throughout their lives. They develop the ability to manage stress, adapt to changing circumstances, and maintain positive relationships.

5. Bullying Prevention: By educating students about self-regulation and conflict resolution, schools can play a vital role in preventing bullying, including cyberbullying. Students who have strong self-regulation skills and can empathize with others are less likely to engage in aggressive or bullying behaviors. Additionally, conflict resolution skills teach students how to address conflicts productively, reducing the likelihood of escalating bullying.

6. Emotional Well-Being: Learning behavioral skills contributes to students' emotional well-being. Self-regulation skills help students manage stress, anxiety, and other emotions, promoting mental health. Conflict resolution skills empower students to express themselves assertively and deal with interpersonal conflicts constructively, leading to healthier emotional experiences.

II. Rethink school discipline policies and practices.

Ill-designed and inappropriately implemented school safety and disciplinary policies can have negative impacts on students.

In order to address disproportionality and reduce exclusionary discipline practices, it is recommended that schools, law enforcement, and communities take the following steps:

▪ Conduct an analysis of district policies and student behavior data across all schools and grades, to identify any disproportionality that may be based on student age, race/ethnicity, school location, grade level, etc. Partner with the district's research department to visualize the data and analyze trends.

▪ Establish a working group that includes principals, parents, teachers, and secondary students to engage in discussions around how any disparities in district policies and student behavior data could be mitigated. Some items to consider:

  - Are there student groups disproportionately impacted by exclusionary discipline practices that remove students from the classroom environment?

- How might staffing allocations and other resources be implemented to mitigate observed trends?

- Have you partnered with your special education/exceptional student department to gather their feedback and suggestions?

- How will you gather feedback from students, families, and teachers ahead of redesigning or restructuring discipline policies?

▪ Survey students, staff, and families annually to capture feedback on school discipline policies and practices. (These items can be embedded within existing stakeholder surveys.)

▪ Implement Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) school-wide, an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting students' behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. When implemented with fidelity, PBIS improves student outcomes and teacher health and well-being.

❯ IN PRACTICE

- St. Paul Public Schools provides an overview of PBIS for their schools.

- Portland Public Schools provides an overview of their behavioral health program, including Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), PBIS, and Restorative Practice.

- Clark County School District provides an overview of their framework for MTSS, including PBIS.

- Cleveland Metropolitan School District provides an overview of their PBIS framework.

- Jefferson County Public Schools has a video explaining PBIS and why they use it in their district. They also have web pages that describe their implementation.

▪ Review restorative practices and consider implementing them in your district as an approach to conflict resolution and alternative to out-of-school suspensions and other exclusionary discipline models.

❯ IN PRACTICE

- Dallas Independent School District piloted Reset Centers as an alternative to suspensions during the 2021-22 school year. Preliminary data showed promising outcomes, with few students returning more than once to the Reset Centers. Continued expansion in additional schools for

the 2022-23 school year and further analyses of data will provide additional insights. This local news story highlights the Reset Centers.

- Atlanta Public Schools (APS) has instituted restorative practices in their schools in partnership with the APS Police Department. All officers receive extensive training and contribute to the establishment of a positive school environment.

- St. Paul Public Schools provides an overview and the four core objectives of their restorative practices program.

- Pinellas County Schools describes how to introduce and conduct restorative circles in K-8 schools in this video.

- Kansas City Public Schools shows how they use restorative discipline practices in their schools in this PBS news story.

- Jefferson County Public Schools provides an overview of restorative practices in the district.

- San Francisco Unified School District has a video describing the restorative practices being implemented across all grades in the district.

- Denver Public Schools has developed an implementation guide for restorative practices.

- Succeed Boston is a Boston Public Schools (BPS) program that provides a comprehensive approach to bullying and violence prevention and intervention. Since 1986, Succeed Boston has provided support to more than 35,000 students through restorative alternatives to out-of-school suspension including opportunities to connect with caring adults, reflect, and develop coping strategies through individual and group counseling. Reports have shown that these programs and reforms have contributed to a decrease in BPS' suspension rate.

▪ Develop memoranda of understanding/intergovernmental agreements between the school district and local police departments to distinguish between school-based disciplinary behavior and actions that warrant juvenile justice referrals. Ensure there are policies and procedures established that provide guidance on when law enforcement is to be called by school staff. Consider policies that allow opportunities for student misbehavior to be corrected and redirected as a learning experience, rather than an

"Make additional resources the consequences for poor behavior."

— TASK FORCE MEMBER

interaction with the juvenile justice system. As one Task Force member noted —*"Make additional resources the consequences for poor behavior."*

❯ IN PRACTICE

- Los Angeles Unified School District provided schools a guide with "Frequently Asked Questions" about when to engage law enforcement for the 2021-22 school year. That was the first year the schools did not have school-based resources officers.

- In Durham, North Carolina, a diversion program for offenders under 21 allowed any first-time misdemeanor offense by someone 21 and under to be diverted, with no record. The offender had to submit to a 12-month program facilitated by a juvenile court judge. In the first year, of the 360 offenders, 99% of them did not re-offend. A key to success was collaboration with the school system, where many of the monitoring tasks were conducted. More information on the program is available [here](#).

▪ Create innovative opportunities for collaboration between law enforcement, teachers, and students. For example, Atlanta Public Schools pairs school officers with district SEL staff to provide training and lessons on conflict resolution, de-escalation, and other prosocial behaviors.

▪ Develop protocols to allow students to declare and dispose of weapons without criminal punishments. For example, drop boxes can be provided for students to turn in weapons anonymously before they enter the school building. When students voluntarily turn in weapons brought to school accidentally, consider lesser consequences than when these weapons are discovered through searches or weapons detection.

▪ If not already in use, create anonymous tip lines that include not only phone lines, but also app-, text- or other non-call-based ways for tips to be provided.

III. Promote community partnerships and broad-based collaboration to ensure student safety and support.

The Task Force discussed the relationships between communities and law enforcement and identified ways that schools, community leaders and law enforcement could begin to strengthen these relationships. However, the need for action and collaboration goes well beyond the school and law enforcement sectors. Keeping students safe and ensuring their long-term health and well-being will require a multi-stakeholder approach by all members of the community. This includes parent groups, local government agencies and social services, community organizations, business leaders, local philanthropies, faith-based groups, and out-of-school-time providers (such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, etc.).

To ensure broad-based collaboration on behalf of students and communities, the following steps are recommended:

▪ Identify ways in which preventive and collaborative communication can occur. Engage community members in stakeholder meetings about policies and procedures relating to community safety.

▪ Establish relationships with community organizations – local PTAs, Healing Streets, and others – to promote safer communities and stem the spread of gun- and gang-related violence.

▪ Conduct outreach and advance communication to build stronger partnerships among community leaders, the school district, and local law enforcement agencies. These relationships can be leveraged for safe passage programs, wraparound social services, and other anti-gang and anti-violence campaigns.

⊙ IN PRACTICE

- In Philadelphia, the school district is expanding funding for a Safe Passages program, where community members are paid to keep children safe on their way to and from schools. Additionally, the district is providing grant funding to expand and enhance police safety zones around the schools most affected by gun violence. This article discusses the expansion of the program in February 2023.

- Jefferson County Public Schools has curated a list of community organizations that offer outreach and education services for students. Included are organizations offering conflict resolution and other prosocial behavior trainings.

- Faith and Blue is a nationwide initiative that aims to re-calibrate police-community relations through solutions-focused, in-person, activities that are organized jointly by faith-based or other community groups and law enforcement agencies. They seek to create safer, stronger, more just and unified communities.

▪ Ensure the district's family and community engagement strategy effectively supports students and families and fosters strong school communities.

> ⊙ IN PRACTICE

- The Office Family and Community Engagement in The School District of Philadelphia has resources for families, including workshops, videos, and recorded webinars.

- Cleveland Metropolitan School District provides a range of resources and support for families.

▪ Collaborate with community groups and students to address truancy issues, identifying supports that students may need to attend school regularly.

> ⊙ IN PRACTICE

- Orange County Public Schools has a process for identifying, addressing, and mitigating truancy that involves early truancy intervention procedures, parental notifications, and a range of sanctions that are designed to avoid over-criminalizing students or families.

- The Los Angeles Unified School District offers parent education and incentives for students to reduce truancy.

- In St. Paul Public Schools, credit recovery is routinely offered so students do not fall insurmountably behind in their coursework. Additionally, students can repeat specific parts of missed classes, rather than having to repeat the entire course. These actions seek to reduce dropout rates and encourage students to remain enrolled in high school.

▪ Convene regular meetings with city leadership (the mayor, city council chair, etc.), the police chief, and the school district superintendent to discuss and review community safety and violence prevention efforts on ongoing basis.

▪ Establish policies and protocols for incident command in the case of emergency response between schools and law enforcement, including developing protocols for outside agencies engaging with

schools and regular drills to practice emergency response plans for each school. The protocols should be known by all stakeholders – school leaders, local law enforcement agencies, school security, and community members. Particularly where multiple agencies may be involved, clear communication is essential.

❯ IN PRACTICE

- In Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), there are over twenty law enforcement agencies with jurisdiction. There is a process in place to ensure a unified message when incidents occur – communications are coordinated with the municipal agency, the LAUSD school police, and the LAUSD district office.

- In Orange County Public Schools (OCPS), there is a protocol for communications related to incidents. There is a script for principals to use. The district communications team and police department are informed. The Executive Policy Group of OCPS pushes out an alert.

▪ Promote safe storage of legal weapons in the home. Develop and launch a communications campaign aimed toward students and parents to encourage safe and proper storage of weapons at home and discuss gun safety and violence prevention.

❯ IN PRACTICE

- Houston Independent School District shares a form with every family about gun safety at the beginning of each school year or upon student registration midyear.

- A group in Texas has a website with more information about safe gun storage, with a Toolkit and set of Resources for districts to use when informing families about safe gun storage.

- An organization in Texas offers free gun locks to local residents.

- Brady United has a program to "End Family Fire," including a video about safe storage and responsible gun ownership.

- The Be SMART for Kids program offers a framework and additional resources for families.

CONCLUSION

The problems facing our students and communities were not caused overnight. Exposure to domestic and community violence, the uptick in crime and drug abuse, and enforcement and discipline policies that negatively impact students of color have affected our schools and communities for decades. It will take long-term planning and work to address them. However, by fostering communication and collaboration between schools, law enforcement, students, and families; rethinking school security and discipline policies; building stronger community relationships; and focusing on resilience, mindfulness, and restorative practices, we can and will improve the lives of our students and their families.

A reduction in neighborhood crime rates, reduced access to lethal weapons, an increase in mental health supports, and the implementation of fair school discipline policies leading to improved outcomes for students will take the collective support of the entire community. This will require a coalition of community leaders including mayors, city council members, grassroots community leaders, parents, families, and others, in addition to the superintendents and law enforcement leaders.

As a next step, national, state, and local leaders are invited to create coalitions focused on implementing solutions that work best for reducing crime and violence in their contexts. The solutions provided here may serve as a foundation for dialogue and joint action.

If you would like to learn more about any of the initiatives or information shared, please feel free to reach out to the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) or the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). We stand ready to build on our work together and advance local and nationwide efforts on behalf of students and communities.

ENDNOTES

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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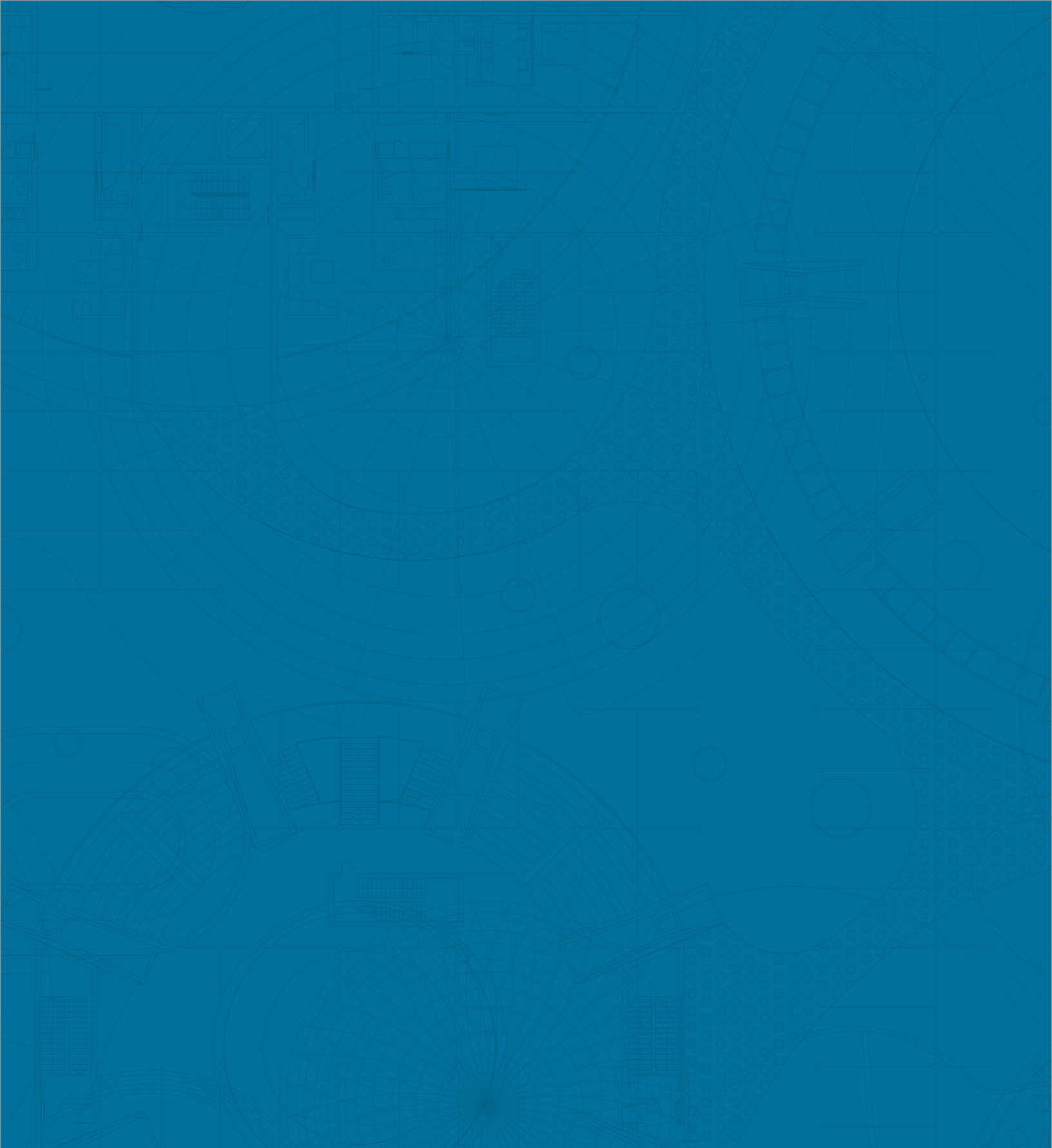Tonya Harris
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