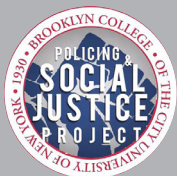


CANCEL THE CONTRACT

ALTERNATIVES TO SCHOOL POLICING



ALEX S. VITALE
THE POLICING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT

2024

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ABOUT

The Policing and Social Justice Project at Brooklyn College, CUNY is a collaboration of faculty, students, and community based organizations that uses research and advocacy to produce safer and more just communities.

Alex S. Vitale is Professor of Sociology and Coordinator of the Policing and Social Justice Project at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center. He has spent the last 30 years writing about policing and consults community based movements, human and civil rights organizations, and governments internationally. Prof. Vitale is the author of *City of Disorder: How the Quality of Life Campaign Transformed New York Politics and The End of Policing*. His academic writings on policing have appeared in *Policing and Society*, *Criminology and Public Policy*, *Police Practice and Research*, *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, *The American Journal of Sociology*, *Mobilization*, and *Contemporary Sociology*. He is also a frequent essayist, whose writings have been published in *The NY Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *The Nation*, *Vice News*, *Fortune*, and *USA Today*. He has also appeared on CNN, MSNBC, CNBC, NPR, PBS, *Democracy Now*, and *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*.

Acknowledgments

This report would not have been possible without the cooperation of the grassroots membership of the *Cancel the Contract Campaign*. They provided hours of testimony about conditions in the schools and a vision of what they want so that children in the Antelope Valley can have safe and productive learning environments. Research assistance was provided by Florian GRIESE at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Kate Dempsey at Brooklyn College. Layout was done by the Project's Technology Fellow Anna Sipek. Financial support for this report came from the California Endowment and the Paving the Way Foundation.

PREFACE

Having a law enforcement presence in the form of School Resource Deputies (SRDs) on elementary, middle, and high school campuses has had a demonstrably negative impact on Black students, Latino students, and students with disabilities and is a driving force of the school-to-prison pipeline. Countless young folk are subjected to pervasive law enforcement surveillance and contact on a near daily basis, justified under the guise of “school safety.” School districts’ reliance on SRDs creates a false sense of security for members of the community who are not affected by police violence and allows districts to avoid engaging in the hard work of creating and implementing a true safety model that protects all its students.

The formation of Cancel The Contract stemmed from the deep frustration and anguish felt by the Black community. It’s heartbreaking to see how little value is placed on Black lives, both locally and nationally. The tragic murders of Michael Floyd and two others in the Antelope Valley, allegedly at the hands of law enforcement, have deeply shaken our community.

These incidents sparked outrage among advocates, activists, clergy, and community leaders. The murders of a senior citizen and a stroke victim at the hands of the LA County Sheriff’s Department (LASD), as well as the horrifying death of Robert Fuller, who was found hanging from a tree in the courtyard of City Hall, left the community reeling. These devastating events prompted us to come together, united in our demand for justice and an end to the long history of brutality and discrimination in the Antelope Valley. For over a decade, the LASD in the Antelope Valley has violated the civil rights of our Black and Latinx citizenry, prompting the United States Department of Justice to intervene and establish a settlement agreement to force LASD to engage in constitutional policing.

Cancel The Contract Antelope Valley (CTCAV), a grassroots coalition, is leading the charge as the first local organization to have dedicated staff and community members working full-time to address police brutality and advocate for reimagining school safety without the presence of law enforcement. In response to the concerning behavior of law enforcement officers in schools, high school teachers, administrators, and parents have united to demand the removal of School Resource Deputies (SRDs). We at CTCAV have witnessed firsthand the harm inflicted by law enforcement on students, which has galvanized our efforts to prioritize care over policing in our educational institutions.

Cancel The Contract has worked tirelessly for the past three and a half years to create a nurturing and safe learning environment that prioritizes the well-being of students and communities. With the expertise of Alex Vitale, we strive to inform and educate local school systems and communities about alternative school and community safety approaches and remove all SRDs from the Antelope Valley Schools.

Trustee Waunette Cullors,
Keppel School District and Executive Director of Cancel The Contract AV

Raquel Derfler
Campaign Coordinator, Cancel the Contract AV

INTRODUCTION

The Antelope Valley has undergone significant changes over the last 40 years, but its political leadership has failed to respond to the needs of a changing population that too often was viewed with hostility. Section 1 looks at this long history and describes how local elites continue to double down on law enforcement centered strategies to address problems in the communities and the schools. This approach has resulted in the needless criminalization of young people in ways that have seriously harmed their future well-being. Too often school leaders view their own students as threats rather than young people in distress who need support. We have an opportunity for a major shift in policy direction. We can follow the lead of cities throughout the country who have invested in essential services and support for children in need in ways that have produced safer and more successful schools.

Since 2020 dozens of cities have scaled back or eliminated their school police departments. Districts in LA County, California, and the rest of the country have decided that school police are not the most effective way to keep their kids safe, in part because there are significant negative consequences of bringing police into schools, such as racial profiling, police violence and harassment, and the driving of children into the criminal justice system, where their life outcomes are negatively affected. Section 2 explores examples of what other cities have done in districts big and small.

We have lots of options other than police to make school safe. Section 3 contains a review of some of the best evidence-based practices that are available to produce safe, healthy, and educationally successful schools. Drawing on research from across the country, this menu of options provides the possible building blocks for locally created strategies to enhance student safety and achievement. When school districts invest in these strategies as alternatives to school policing students perform better and are safer.

Parents, students, teachers, and community members have very real fears about the safety of children in school. Through a series of listening sessions parents expressed concern about the presence of gangs, the possibility of school shootings, the risks of sex trafficking, inadequate mental health and substance misuse services and harassment by school police. Section 4 details solutions to these problems that involve developing specific new services and targeted interventions that aren't rooted in the criminalization of children. By investing in these evidence-based strategies, the Antelope Valley can both make their children safer and reduce the inherent risks involved in relying on police.

BACKGROUND

The Antelope Valley is about 70 miles north of the City of Los Angeles in Los Angeles County and includes the cities of Palmdale, Lancaster and several surrounding unincorporated communities such as Little Rock and Lake Los Angeles. Historically, the Valley was a largely White area with a close connection to the defense industry and the military. Today, over 15% of the population is African American compared to 9% in the rest of the County. The Latino population is over 40% with Non-Hispanic Whites now a minority of the population.

Law enforcement in the Valley is provided by the LA County Sheriff's Department (LASD) under contract through substations in both Palmdale and Lancaster. There are approximately 400 deputies in the 2 stations. In 2023, the city of Lancaster also created a local police department, which has invested heavily in new technologies such as Shotspotter and aerial drones.¹ They have hired 8 officers and intend to bring the force up to 20-30 officers.² Starting pay will be over \$100,000 a year, costing the city several million dollars a year.³

There is a long history of racial antagonism and racist policies and behaviors by local officials. The Antelope Valley has long been a home to extreme

right wing White supremacist organizations such as the John Birch Society and the Ku Klux Klan. Over the last 30 years, the area has experienced numerous acts of racially motivated violence and has had the highest rate of hate crime reports in the state of California.⁴ A 2013 Department of Justice investigation documented numerous hate crimes including killings and the firebombing of a church by avowed White Supremacists.⁵

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Valley experienced high levels of residential segregation. Blacks were steered to the unincorporated Sun Village, which lacked basic services and received limited support from County officials.⁶ In addition, much of the Valley operated as “sundown towns” in which Blacks were at risk of arrest or vigilante violence for being seen outside after dark.⁷

In the 1980s, the number of African Americans and Latinos began to significantly increase with people searching for more affordable housing and access to jobs. There was a great deal of resistance to this influx from the conservative White majority. One of the mechanisms that helped Blacks and Latinos move to the Valley was the availability of Section 8 vouchers, which are federal housing subsidies for the poor managed by the County. The vouchers allowed people to seek affordable housing anywhere in the County that they could find a willing landlord. It is against the law for landlords to discriminate against those seeking housing with a voucher, however, discrimination was rampant.

In addition, local elected leaders, LA County Sheriffs, and County housing officials conspired to discriminate against non-white renters with vouchers through intensive enforcement of minor violations of the housing code or voucher conditions in hopes of evicting tenants

1 “Public Safety Department | City of Lancaster.” n.d. [www.cityoflancasterca.org](https://www.cityoflancasterca.org/our-city/departments-services/public-safety). <https://www.cityoflancasterca.org/our-city/departments-services/public-safety>.

2 “Whatever It Takes to Reduce Crime’: Why Lancaster Is Creating a Police Department.” 2023. Los Angeles Times. September 12, 2023. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-09-12/new-lancaster-police-department-los-angeles-county-sheriffs>.

3 Drake, Julie. 2023. “City Sets Pay Scale for Police Department.” Antelope Valley Press. December 5, 2023. https://www.avpress.com/news/city-sets-pay-scale-for-police-department/article_56927682-9327-11ee-9fa8-cb4f5ffa5940.html.

4 Ho, Vivian. 2020. “The Confederacy of California’: Life in the Valley Where Robert Fuller Was Found Hanged.” The Guardian. The Guardian. June 27, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/27/california-racism-policing-robert-fuller-antelope-valley>.

5 “Justice Department Releases Findings on the Antelope Valley Stations of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.” 2013. Justice.gov. June 28, 2013. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-releases-findings-antelope-valley-stations-los-angeles-county-sheriff-s>.

6 Simmons, Ann M. 2012. “For Sun Village and Littlerock, Historic Distrust Persists.” Los Angeles Times. September 23, 2012. <https://www.latimes.com/local/la-xpm-2012-sep-23-la-me-sun-village-20120924-story.html>.

7 Loewen, James W. 2018. *Sundown Towns : A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*. New York: The New Press.

and driving them out of the Valley. This led to the filing of a lawsuit by the NAACP and the Community Action League in 2008 that resulted in a \$2 million settlement in 2015 in which the County Housing Authority and the cities of Lancaster and Palmdale agreed to stop harassing voucher holders.⁸ A similar lawsuit targeting the LASD resulted in a settlement of \$725,000 for violation of the Fair Housing Act in working to drive voucher holders out of their homes.⁹

A 2013 report from the Department of Justice also found that the LASD engaged in patterns of excessive use of force, biased policing practices, including housing discrimination, and unlawful searches and seizures.¹⁰ As part of the settlement the LASD agreed to:

- Improve collection and analysis of policing data and to identify instances and patterns of unlawful police-civilian contact, such as stops without adequate legal basis;
- Improve training and supervision to prevent biased or discriminatory actions by deputies;
- Improve use-of-force investigations and develop better methods to identify and correct problematic patterns of force;
- Create new use of force policies that support officers who report misconduct, prevent retaliation, and improving the field training program to ensure that officers develop the necessary skills to use force in a lawful and effective manner, with an emphasis on de-escalation and use of the minimal amount of force necessary;
- Create standards for conducting objective, thorough and timely investigations;
- Improve supervision: including holding supervisors accountable for close and effective supervision; and providing guidance on effective accountability systems;
- Ensure proper limits on deputy involvement in searches of Section 8 voucher holders' homes for compliance with program rules; and

- Strengthen civilian involvement in setting policing priorities; public information programs to keep civilians informed of policing activities; requirements for community interaction at all levels of LASD; and establishing community advisory entities to ensure that meaningful feedback is obtained from the community.

A monitoring process was established to oversee the implementation of this agreement. However, the LASD has failed to meet many of the requirements. A monitoring report in the summer of 2023 found the LASD had not reduced the number of racially discriminatory stops, had not changed use of force policies, implemented new training, or improved use of force investigations, had not developed data collection or analysis capabilities to address patterns of excessive or discriminatory force, continued to have a culture of impunity in which inappropriate behavior is excused and explained away, and was broadly resisting reform within the Antelope Valley LASD stations.¹¹ In addition, local political leaders have stated that the consent decree is tying the hands of deputies and in response, the City of Lancaster is increasing both the size and scope of operation of its new local police department, threatening to reproduce the problems that motivated the lawsuit.

A 2021 study conducted by Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County and California State University, Northridge, found stark racial disparities in LASD traffic stops and pedestrian stops based on "reasonable suspicion." While Blacks make up only 17% of the population in Lancaster and Palmdale, they were the target of 33% of all stops. These stops frequently led to searches, seizures, detentions and arrests. Blacks were almost twice as likely to be searched as Whites during these stops despite being less likely to be found with contraband. Blacks were handcuffed in 20% of all stops and 79% of those who had a gun pointed at them by police were

8 Winburn, Jim E. 2015. "Group Speaks out on \$2 Million Settlement of Section 8 Discrimination Case." The Antelope Valley Times. July 25, 2015. <https://theavtimes.com/2015/07/25/community-group-speaks-out-on-2-million-settlement-of-section-8-discrimination-case/>.

9 "Justice Department and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Agree to Policing Reforms and Settlement of Police-Related Fair Housing Claims in the Antelope Valley." 2015. www.justice.gov. April 28, 2015. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-and-los-angeles-county-sheriffs-department-agree-policing-reforms-and>.

10 Baca, Leroy. 2013. https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/crt/legacy/2013/06/28/antelope_findings_6-28-13.pdf.

11 <http://www.antelopevalleysettlementmonitoring.info/content/documents/reports/16%20Semi-Annual%20Report,%20June%202023.pdf>

Black or Latino.¹²

More recently, reports have emerged of LASD sheriffs being members of organized gangs within the department. A 2023 report from the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission indicated that there were numerous gangs throughout the Sheriff's Department including in the

CASE STUDY: TERRELL PINA

Terrell "T.J." Pina was a 15-year-old freshman at Quartz Hill in December 2018 when he was detained by the campus deputy in a "reasonable suspicion" stop after a fight with a white student. Pina, a special education student, told school staff that the white boy had been bullying him and calling him the N-word. Terrell was charged with felony assault and spent two weeks in juvenile detention before his first hearing, his mother, Richelle Bankhead, said.

The sheriff's data indicates that only Pina was arrested for the fight. When asked why the other student wasn't arrested, John Lecrivain, the Lancaster Sheriff's Station captain who took over this year, said he could not comment on individual cases involving juveniles. "The school district had the Sheriff's Department snatch him up and drag him through the mud like he was a criminal," Bankhead said.

The felony charge against Pina eventually was reduced to a misdemeanor. He was sentenced to perform community service.¹

1 <https://laist.com/news/criminal-justice/antelope-valley-schools-sheriffs-deputies-discipline-black-teens-bear-the-brunt>

Antelope Valley.¹³ These gangs were found to represent a danger to other sheriff's deputies and the public. Two gangs, the Rattlesnakes and Cowboys, were specifically identified as operating out of Antelope Valley substations. They were found to have distinctive tattoos and to engage in violent behavior in furtherance of the gang's identity and activities. An investigation by Knock LA found internal memos from the LASD that indicated that one deputy was shot by another as part of a gang dispute in 2015.¹⁴ An extensive examination of LASD gangs by Knock LA found a culture of corruption and cover ups throughout the department as incidents were not investigated despite whistleblowers from within the department.¹⁵

SCHOOL POLICING

The Antelope Valley has several school systems that serve students in Palmdale, Lancaster, and some surrounding communities.

The Antelope Valley Union High School District serves 22,000 urban, suburban, and rural students in one of eight comprehensive high schools, three alternative high schools, and an early college high school in partnership with Antelope Valley Community College.¹⁶ Each of their high schools has a full time sheriff's deputy assigned at a cost of \$2.1 million.

The Palmdale School District serves 20,000 mostly elementary school students. Currently, they pay for five sheriff's deputies and 14 school safety officers, costing approximately \$1.21 million.

The Lancaster School District which serves 15,000 elementary and middle school students employs 3 sheriff's deputies at a cost of \$750,000.¹⁷

12 "NOT JUST STOPS: Mapping Racially Biased Policing in the Antelope Valley." 2021. https://nlsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Mapping-Racially-Biased-Policing-in-the-AV_compressed.pdf.

13 2023. Lacounty.gov. 2023. https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/commissionpublications/report/1138014_DeputyGangsSpecialCounselReporttoCOC3.2.2023.PDF.PDF.

14 Castle, Cerise. 2024. "Lawsuit Reveals Details of LASD Deputy Shooting off Colleague's Tattoo." LA Public Press. LAPP. January 9, 2024. <https://lapublicpress.org/2024/01/villanueva-deputy-gang-promotion/>.

15 "A Tradition of Violence: The History of Deputy Gangs in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department." n.d. Knock LA. <https://knock-la.com/tradition-of-violence-lasd-gang-history/>.

16 "About - Antelope Valley Union High School District." n.d. www.avdistrict.org. <https://www.avdistrict.org/about>.

17 "Website Filtered." 2024. [Avpress.com](https://www.avpress.com). 2024. <https://www.avpress.com/news/lancaster-district-oks-deputies-pact/arti>

In 2020, a group of concerned residents started a petition drive demanding that Antelope Valley Union High School District end its contract with the LASD. The petition pointed out the racial disparities in enforcement action by LASD SRDs and the ways this drives youth of color into the criminal legal system. Over 4,000 signatures were collected, but the District renewed the contract anyway.

In 2021, KPCC/LAist and ProPublica did an analysis of 2019 police stop data at high schools in Lancaster. They found that these stops highly disproportionately targeted Black young men. Black teenagers accounted for 60% of the deputy contacts on campuses but made up only about 20% of the enrollment in those schools. The reason given for the vast majority of these stops was “reasonable suspicion of criminal activity.” Seven percent of all police stops in Lancaster occurred on high school campuses. They also found evidence of a culture of intimidation of teachers and staff who spoke out against harsh disciplinary policies.

In 2021, a Sheriff’s deputy SRD was caught on film body-slaming a female student to the ground at Lancaster High School after she refused to hand over her phone to him. When she returned to school the deputy “continued to engage in highly inappropriate conduct by mocking, teasing, and harassing” her. The student filed a lawsuit against the department because she was afraid to go back to school after the traumatic incident and ongoing harassment. The deputy was removed from his SRD position but no charges were brought or disciplinary measures taken.¹⁸

In 2021 the Equal Justice Society and Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles filed a lawsuit against the California Department of Education alleging a statewide pattern of disciplinary bias against disabled students of color. The suit highlighted the Antelope Valley Union High School District as one of the worst offenders.

As a result, an official complaint was filed with the California Department of Education in March of 2022. The Complaint includes allegations in the following areas:

- disproportionate identification and placement of students with disabilities (SWDs) and Black SWDs in segregated settings, including restrictive and punitive placements such as the special day class – behavior (SDC-B) program and Desert Pathways Special Education Center School
- excessive and disproportionate use of exclusionary disciplinary actions towards SWDs and Black SWDs, including out-of-school and in-school suspensions
- disproportionate expulsion and transfers of SWDs and Black SWDs for disciplinary reasons, and shortcomings with the procedural safeguards (manifestation determination reviews) to prevent SWDs from being inappropriately transferred to more restrictive placements due to behaviors related to their disability
- excessive and disproportionate referrals of SWDs and Black SWDs to law enforcement for disciplinary matters—many that are disability related—that leads to restraint, citation, and arrest
- the role of campus security in addressing student discipline and escalating student behaviors, and their disproportionate and excessive use of traumatic interventions, such as searches, restraints, and citation of SWDs and Black SWDs
- noncompliance with the requirements for addressing, documenting, and reporting emergency behavioral interventions, including restraints and seclusions of SWDs and Black SWDs
- lack of overall positive behavioral supports as well as social emotional and mental health supports and services in IEPs of students who are experiencing behavioral challenges and receive exclusionary disciplinary actions
- inappropriate disciplinary referrals of SWDs to probation officers and law enforcement for

cle_686de868-6037-11ef-93db-ff63c17d3c37.html.

¹⁸ Dugdale, Emily Elena. 2022. “Lancaster Deputy Filmed Body Slamming Teen No Longer Works at High School.” LAist. June 23, 2022. <https://laist.com/news/criminal-justice/lancaster-deputy-lasd-sheriff-antelope-valley-school-officer>.



Cancel The Contract is a non-profit community group advocating for the end to city and school contracts with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department in Antelope Valley.

students who require threat assessments¹⁹

“It is outrageous that so many generations of students have had their futures harmed by discriminatory discipline practices. Black and Latinx students deserve so much more from us and have the right to learn in an educational environment free from discrimination.”

Alexandra Santa Ana, Staff Attorney, Equal Justice Society²⁰

In April 2023, The Disability Rights Center and Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles commissioned a report on high school discipline from Jaime E. Hernandez, Ed.D. and Associates,

Inc. The report found that in the 2021-22 school year the district:

- Suspended Black students at rates four times higher than their white peers.
- Suspended students with disabilities twice as often as those without disabilities.
- Suspended 7.5% of students overall, a suspension rate double the state average and more than 25 times that of the largest school district in the state, Los Angeles Unified.²¹

They also found a “shadow discipline system,” where students are transferred to continuation schools or independent study programs that don’t meet their academic or social and emotional needs.

¹⁹ “Investigation into Various Compliance Complaints against the Antelope Valley Union High School District | Disability Rights California.” n.d. Www. disabilityrightsca.org. <https://www.disabilityrightsca.org/latest-news/investigation-into-various-compliance-complaints-against-the-antelope-valley-union-high>.

²⁰ “Lawsuit: Black and Disabled Students Suffer Discrimination & Banishment in Antelope Valley.” 2023. Equal Justice Society. May 25, 2023. <https://equaljusticesociety.org/2023/05/25/lawsuit-avuhsd/>.

²¹ Dale, Mariana. 2023. “Families of Black and Disabled Students Sue Antelope Valley Schools over Discipline Policies.” LAist. May 24, 2023. <https://laist.com/news/education/antelope-valley-union-high-school-district-discipline-lawsuit-black-students-students-with-disabilities-racial-discrimination>.

In response to these findings, Cancel The Contract and five high school students brought a lawsuit against the district in 2023 alleging bias against Black students and students with disabilities.²²

“We will not stand by while our children are systematically punished and shoved out of the public schools they are entitled to attend,” said Waunette Cullors, cofounder and Program Director for Cancel the Contract Antelope Valley. “It’s time for the district to give all of its students a full and fair education.”²³

The LA County Board of Supervisors has also taken a growing interest in the issue since it must approve contracts between school districts and the Sheriff’s office. In 2022 they received a report from the LA County Office of the Inspector General on “improving school climate and safety.”²⁴ The report stated that existing contracts failed to lay out any specific guidelines for the ways in which sheriff deputies operated in the schools and expressed concern that the lack of clear guidelines was contributing to racially disparate disciplinary and law enforcement outcomes. They also stated that “Black high school aged youth in Lancaster were contacted by law enforcement, arrested, cited, suspended, and expelled at disproportionately higher rates than other racial groups.”

The Civilian Oversight Commission for the LASD also issued a report in October of 2023 about problems with school policing. In conjunction with the LA County Human Relations Commission they interviewed students at schools with Sheriff’s Deputies and found that most students had negative views about the deputies. Students stated that deputies were intimidating in their militarized uniforms, do not have friendly conversations, are aggressive in their demeanor, make students feel targeted for

their appearance or identity, cause unnecessary incidents and escalate them, antagonize students to get a reaction out of them, and fail to mediate situations that arise.²⁵ They also met with parents and school personnel and found that in general people wanted to restrict deputies from being involved in disciplinary matters on campus. As a result they recommended including specific guideline language into future contracts that restricts and clearly defines the role of deputies on campuses and that restorative justice approaches be put in place to limit interactions between students and deputies.

“There’s an impact on every student who has to learn in an environment where any mistake could result in them getting humiliated in class, excluded from class, suspended, expelled, or even at worst, subjected to criminal consequences.”

Chelsea Helena, Associate Supervising Attorney of the education rights practice at Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County.²⁶

In August 2024, LA County Supervisor Holly Mitchell brought a motion to amend the contract that was then under consideration. The motion called for much more specific guidelines for deputies. It included language that restricts deputies from enforcing disciplinary issues as opposed to criminal matters and reduces contact between students with disabilities and deputies. It also prohibits the use of handcuffs unless there is a specific threat of violence. The contract was also to be limited to only one year instead of the usual three so that the Supervisors could look into additional specifications in the duties of school based deputies.²⁷ The motion passed unanimously and the changes were made to the contract before it was approved.

22 “DocumentCloud.” 2024. Documentcloud.org. 2024. https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/23823994-5242023_petition-and-complaint_ctc-v-avuhd?responsive=1&title=1.

23 “Lawsuit: Black and Disabled Students Suffer Discrimination & Banishment in Antelope Valley.” 2023. Equal Justice Society. May 25, 2023. <https://equaljusticesociety.org/2023/05/25/lawsuit-avuhd/>.

24 https://assets-us-01.kc-usercontent.com/0234f496-d2b7-00b6-17a4-b43e949b70a2/6e218997-05d1-4bd1-a6aa-6e0573d153c6/Report%20Back%20on%20Improving%20School%20Climate%20and%20Safety_Final.pdf

25 2024. Lacounty.gov. 2024. <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/AdHocReport-LASDSchoolResourceDeputies10.19.2023.pdf>.

26 Dale, Mariana. 2023. “Families of Black and Disabled Students Sue Antelope Valley Schools over Discipline Policies.” LAist. May 24, 2023. <https://laist.com/news/education/antelope-valley-union-high-school-district-discipline-lawsuit-black-students-students-with-disabilities-racial-discrimination>.

27 Mitchell, Holly J. 2024. “Motion to Amend the Agreement for School Law Enforcement Services.” Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. August 6.

MOVEMENTS AGAINST SCHOOL POLICING

Over the last few years, dozens of cities, large and small, have eliminated school policing programs and replaced them with a variety of student services and alternative disciplinary systems. Here in LA County, across the US, and internationally, communities are rethinking their reliance on school police to produce safe and successful schools. These movements have been led primarily by parents and students themselves and have occurred mostly in communities of color.

LA COUNTY

In February 2021, The Los Angeles Unified School District voted unanimously to significantly reduce the size of its school police force. The district reduced the number of officers by 133 positions, reduced the police budget from \$77.5 million to \$52.5 million and removed all police from within school buildings. That savings, plus additional resources went into a “Black Student Achievement Plan” that included:

- \$4.4 million for curriculum and instruction, including expanding diverse representation, inclusion of Black authors, and social justice connections;
- \$2.4 million for teacher professional

- development;
- \$2 million for school curriculum grants for schools to supplement their curriculum to make it more inclusive to Black students;
- \$2 million for community partnership to work with organizations that have demonstrated success with Black students;
- \$30.1 million for school climate and wellness to reduce over-identification of Black students in suspensions, discipline and other measures through targeted intervention;
- \$7.9 million for psychiatric social workers;
- \$7.6 million for counselors;
- \$2.9 million for school climate coaches;²⁸
- \$6.5 million for restorative justice advisors; and
- \$5.2 million for flexible climate grants.²⁹

In 2023, they issued a blueprint for safety called Every School Safe.³⁰ The plan calls for:

- Safe Passage teams to assist students getting to and from school
- Partnerships with community based groups to provide youth supports
- Restorative Justice practices³¹
- Enhanced mental health and wellness services
- Mentoring programs

Organizations like Students Deserve,³² that demanded these changes remain concerned that the district has not done enough to bring in community based strategies and support services, especially for the highest needs students.

In 2020, the Claremont Student Equity Coalition,³³ a conglomerate of student organizations, and Claremont Change,³⁴ a local grassroots group, began calling for the removal of SROs from local schools and replacing them with student centered support services. That

28 Champlin, Caroline. 2021. “Who Are ‘Climate Coaches’ LAUSD Plans to Hire in Place of Cops?” LAist. February 18, 2021. <https://laist.com/news/who-are-climate-coaches-laUSD-plans-to-hire-in-place-of-cops>.

29 Shuttleworth • •, Margaret. 2021. “LA School Board Unanimously Votes to Remove Officers from Campuses, Approves Black Student Investment.” NBC Los Angeles. February 17, 2021. <https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/la-school-board-unanimously-votes-to-remove-officers-from-campus-es-approves-black-student-investment/2528512/>.

30 “Every School Safe LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT 2023-26 Blueprint for Safety.” n.d. <https://www.lausd.org/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/1236/ESSBlueprintForSafety2023-26.pdf>.

31 Seshadri, Mallika. n.d. “LAUSD Celebrates 10 Years of Restorative Justice, but Progress Remains Uneven.” EdSource. <https://edsources.org/2023/lausd-celebrates-10-years-of-restorative-justice-but-progress-remains-uneven/692985>.

32 “Home.” n.d. Students Deserve. <https://www.studentsdeserve.org/>.

33 sro presentation. 2019. “Sro Presentation.” Google Docs. 2019. <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1cqYYPuFlM4PTU2kvh58Tg8nSC-Z282H-BRezH2mt0i70/edit#slide=id.p>.

34 <https://www.claremontchange.org/>

November, the City Council created a working group to study the issue.³⁵ In July 2021, the Claremont City Council voted unanimously to end its funding of the SRO program. In its place they have created new mental health and social support services and increased training for teachers and staff to better manage conflicts and disruptive behavior.³⁶



Claremont Student Equity Coalition member Jayla Sheffield, with megaphone, leads more than 30 people in chants to protest funding for a school resource officer in the Claremont Unified School District in front of City Hall in Claremont on Monday, July 12, 2021. (Photo by Terry Pierson, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

Also in July 2021, following a 4 year campaign led by Gente Organizada, the Pomona Unified School District voted to end its school policing program and to replace it with proctors trained in de-escalation techniques.³⁷ These proctors are often parents or former students. In addition, resources were transferred into efforts to acclimate students to coming back to school following Covid shutdowns. In 2022, a more conservative School Board was elected that brought back the contract with the Pomona Police Department to provide

school police.³⁸ Organizers remain committed to removing officers permanently from their schools.

CALIFORNIA

In June of 2020, the West Contra Costa County Unified School District Board voted unanimously to end contract services with local police agencies and transfer the money to efforts supporting African American students. This was the result of 3 years of organizing by the Contra Costa County Racial Justice Coalition³⁹ and the RYSE Youth Center which pressured the district to pass a Positive School Climate Policy⁴⁰ in 2017 that put in place restorative justice programs and social emotional support⁴¹ for students. Following the killing of George Floyd they initiated a campaign to fully remove police under the banner “#CCC4RacialJustice.”⁴²

“These votes do more than register our protest symbolically; they take action to move this District away from using the punitive presence of law enforcement to a more supportive and restorative model that protects students from the threat of police surveillance and violence in our schools.”

Stephanie Hernandez-Jarvis, School Board President, West Contra Costa, CA⁴³

The \$1.5 million that had been budgeted for police services in the 2020-21 school year was reallocated toward supporting African American student achievement. They also directed the superintendent to develop antiracist policies and

³⁵ Jang, Anne. 2021. “Claremont Appoints Working Group on School Safety - PublicCEO.” PublicCEO. December 20, 2021. <https://www.publicceo.com/2021/12/claremont-appoints-working-group-on-school-safety/>.

³⁶ Weinberger, Matt. 2021. “Commission Elects to ‘Redesign’ School Safety, Eliminate SRO | Claremont COURIER.” Claremont COURIER. July 13, 2021. <https://claremont-courier.com/city-government/commission-elects-to-redesign-school-safety-eliminate-sro-39084/>.

³⁷ Gomez, Melissa. 2021. “Pomona Schools Defund Police, Re-Imagine School Safety.” Los Angeles Times. July 2, 2021. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-07-02/pomona-unified-defund-school-police>.

³⁸ Twitter, Instagram, Email, and Facebook. 2021. “Pomona Defunded School Police. But after a Shooting, Campus Officers Are Coming Back.” Los Angeles Times. November 5, 2021. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-11-05/pomona-schools-defunded-police-a-shooting-brings-them-back>.

³⁹ “CCCRJC.” 2023. Facebook.com. 2023. <https://www.facebook.com/CCCRJC/>.

⁴⁰ School, Positive. 2020. “Educational Services / Positive School Climate Policy.” Wccusd.net. 2020. <https://www.wccusd.net/Page/10830>.

⁴¹ “Contra Costa County Office of Education - Educational Services.” 2019. K12.Ca.us. 2019. <https://www.cccoe.k12.ca.us/Departments--Schools/Departments/Educational-Services/index.html>.

⁴² Richmond Standard. 2020. “Hundreds of Cars Caravan across Richmond for Racial Justice.” YouTube. June 9, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7vOgwQIx0Y>.

⁴³ Board. 2020. “Board Votes to End Contracts with Police Agencies, Shift Funds to Support African American Students.” Wccusd.net. 2020. <https://www.wccusd.net/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=24&ModuleInstanceID=19750&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=74884&PageID=13440>.

procedures and provide training for teachers, staff, and administrators to understand racism and its impact on teaching, learning, and knowledge transmission.⁴⁴ In 2022, more social workers and counselors were hired and a long term plan was released to create civilian School Climate and Safety Teams that would coordinate enhanced social emotional learning, partner with community based organizations to support students, and invest in mental health support.

“It’s time to take the \$6 million to \$8 million per year the district spends on its police force and move it to other programs and services that have been proven more effective in supporting the well-being of students and keeping schools safe.”

Lange Luntao, School Board Trustee,
Stockton, CA

The Stockton Coalition for Shared Safety⁴⁵ has been working for several years to eliminate police from their local schools. A March 2015 study by the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice found that in 2012 there were 1,800 arrests in a school system of only 40,000 students, 94% of whom are non-white, including 182 under the age of 10.⁴⁶ These findings prompted an investigation by the California Department of Justice’s Bureau of Youth Justice, which found a pattern of abuse including excessive use of force, unconstitutional searches and seizures, and large numbers of arrests of students with disabilities.⁴⁷ In 2019, the Stockton Schools Initiative successfully advocated for a resolution of the School Board calling for restorative justice approaches to school discipline. In June 2020, a proposal to eliminate the Stockton Unified School District Police and

replace them with wellness centers, behavioral and mental health specialists, the expansion of ethnic studies, and the creation of restorative justice programs was proposed.⁴⁸ While the proposal did not pass, it laid the groundwork for additional organizing.



Demonstrators gathered outside the Stockton Unified School District Police Department to call for defunding the police. (Photo by: Rich Ibarra)

Oakland’s Black Organizing Project (BOP) started a campaign to remove police from schools in Oakland in 2011.⁴⁹ They began organizing around the issue following the murder of Raheim Brooks by Oakland school police. In 2013, they issued a report detailing the racial disparities in the policing of Black students and provided survey data that showed that students did not feel safe with school police and wanted alternative school safety systems put in place. Over the next several years BOP worked with students, parents, and community members to document the harms of school policing and identify alternatives. In 2019, BOP issued a People’s Plan for Police Free Schools.⁵⁰ The plan calls for:

- Divesting in school policing by eliminating the Oakland School Police Department (OSPD)

44 Board. 2020. “Board Votes to End Contracts with Police Agencies, Shift Funds to Support African American Students.” Wccusd.net. 2020. <https://www.wccusd.net/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=24&ModuleInstanceID=19750&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=74884&PageID=13440>.

45 “Stockton Coalition for Shared Safety.” 2022. Facebook.com. 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/209sharedsafety/>.

46 “STOCKTON, SAN BERNARDINO SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICERS HAVE ARRESTED over 90,000 YOUTHS.” n.d. Accessed October 18, 2024. http://www.cjcj.org/uploads/cjcj/documents/final_childcrime-stockton_supplement.pdf.

47 “California Decision Aims to End Aggressive Policing in Schools.” n.d. YES! Magazine. <https://www.yesmagazine.org/democracy/2019/02/14/california-decision-aims-to-end-aggressive-policing-in-schools>.

48 Dickman, Cassie. 2020. “Proposal to Defund SUSD Police Moves to Discussion.” The Stockton Record. The Record. June 24, 2020. <https://www.recordnet.com/story/news/education/2020/06/24/proposal-to-defund-susd-police-moves-to-discussion/112803052/>.

49 Black Organizing Project, www.blackorganizingproject.org

50 Black Organizing Project. (2019). A People’s Plan for Police Free Schools. <https://blackorganizingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/The-Peoples-Plan-2019-Online-Reduced-Size.pdf>

and barring any future contracts with law enforcement;

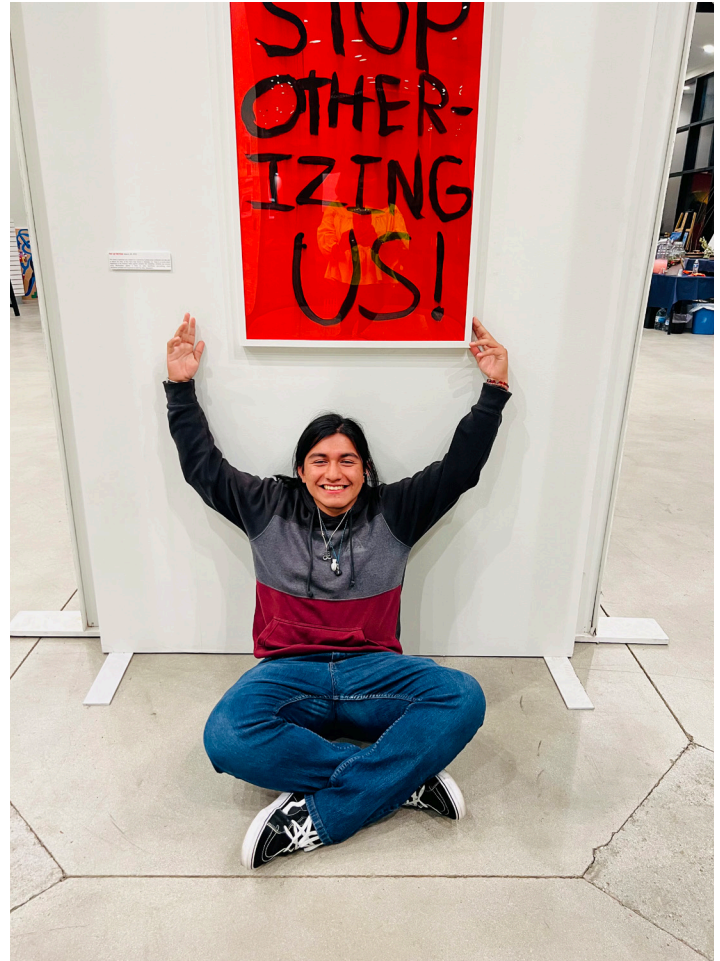
- Placing Campus Security under the Department of Equity and Behavioral Health;
- Restructuring the duties of security personnel to become mentors and peace/culture keepers;
- Reinvesting the \$2.3 million OSPD budget into hiring additional mental health and special education staff; and
- Establishing a community Oversight Committee to review complaints of misconduct by school police and security personnel.

In June of 2020, the Oakland School Board voted unanimously to pass the George Floyd Resolution⁵¹ which disbanded the Oakland School Police Department and outlined a planning process for developing school services and procedures that would serve as alternatives to relying on police. As part of this process they created unarmed Culture and Climate Ambassadors and Culture Keepers who come from community based organizations near the schools and have existing relationships with students and their parents. They utilize deescalation and mediation practices to deal with students and members of the community who come onto campus. Since then, calls to police have gone from 2,128 in 2019-20 to 200 in 2022-23.⁵²

In 2022, Oakland allocated \$2.4 million to reduce violence at 7 high schools through its School Violence Intervention and Prevention Program.⁵³ The initiative gives grants to community based organizations to hire life coaches, mentors, violence interrupters, and gender-based violence

specialists.

In addition, there have been successful campaigns to end or dramatically scale back school policing in several other California school districts including San Francisco,⁵⁴ Baldwin Park,⁵⁵ Palm Springs,⁵⁶ Hayward,⁵⁷ and San Rafael.⁵⁸



Student gestures to sign which reads: "STOP OTHERIZING US," in protest of school policing programs.

⁵¹ "George Floyd Resolution - Black Organizing Project." 2021. Blackorganizingproject.org. July 18, 2021. <https://blackorganizingproject.org/george-floyd-resolution/>.

⁵² Velez, Monica. 2024. "Going Police-Free Is Tough and Ongoing, Oakland Schools Find." EdSource. June 7, 2024. <https://edsources.org/2024/going-police-free-is-tough-and-ongoing-oakland-schools-find/713280>.

⁵³ "School Violence Intervention and Intervention Program." 2024. City of Oakland. 2024. <https://www.oaklandca.gov/projects/school-violence-intervention-and-intervention-program>.

⁵⁴ "San Francisco Unified School District Votes to Remove Police from City's Public Schools." 2020. Cbslocal.com. CBS San Francisco. June 25, 2020. <https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2020/06/24/san-francisco-unified-school-district-votes-to-eliminate-police-from-citys-public-schools/>.

⁵⁵ Nelson, Joe. 2021. "Baldwin Park Unified Moves to Disband Police Department as Part of Sweeping Budget Cuts." San Gabriel Valley Tribune. March 15, 2021. <https://www.sgvtribune.com/2021/03/15/baldwin-park-unified-moves-to-disband-police-department-as-part-of-sweeping-budget-cuts/>.

⁵⁶ Damien, Christopher. 2021. "Palm Springs Unified School Resource Officers out for Now, as District Rethinks School Policing." The Desert Sun. Palm Springs Desert Sun. August 4, 2021. https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/crime_courts/2021/08/04/psusd-decides-against-school-resource-officers-2021-district-rethinks-police-campus/5486044001/.

⁵⁷ Hegarty, Peter. 2021. "Hayward Schools to Eliminate Police Officers on Campuses." East Bay Times. January 28, 2021. <https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2021/01/28/hayward-to-eliminate-police-officers-on-school-campuses/>.

⁵⁸ Rodriguez, Adrian. 2020. "San Rafael Ends School Resource Officer Program." Marin Independent Journal. September 18, 2020. <https://www.marinij.com/2020/09/18/san-rafael-ends-school-resource-officer-program/>.

Leaders Igniting for Transformation led the effort to eliminate school policing in Milwaukee.⁵⁹ They issued a report entitled, “From Failure to Freedom”⁶⁰ in 2018 that documented that the 50% of Black students made up 84 percent of all police referrals. The report laid out an agenda for police free schools. Building on the work of the Center for Popular Democracy, the report calls for a “Youth Power Agenda” that includes eliminating school police and harsh disciplinary policies and replacing them with restorative justice programs, smaller class sizes, culturally responsive teaching practices, increasing the number of school counselors, and providing a range of student supports.⁶¹

“Milwaukee Teachers Education Association will continue to fight for safe, well-funded public schools that surround our students with support and care rather than the wrongheaded impulse to force armed cops into our schools to police students whose needs they are not familiar with,”

Amy Mizialko President, Milwaukee Teachers Education Association said. Milwaukee, WI⁶²

In the wake of the George Floyd protests, the Milwaukee Board of School Directors voted in 2020 to end its contract with the Milwaukee Police Department. In an unusual move, the Milwaukee police department expressed its support for the move prior to the vote.⁶³ However, they later changed course and began lobbying the Republican state legislature to require Milwaukee

schools to bring back 25 officers at their own expense despite the lack of any evidence of their effectiveness. Milwaukee Teachers Education Association president Amy Mizialko said the school district should not have to pay for the unfunded mandate.

In June of 2020, under pressure from students, parents, teachers and the organization WA-Block, the Seattle School Board voted to suspend a partnership with Seattle Police that assigned five armed police officers at Seattle schools.⁶⁴ In addition, the Seattle police were prohibited from using school grounds as a staging area for protests and called for the use of unarmed rather than armed police officers for security at district events, and directed the superintendent to create a stronger anti-racism policy, an Office of African American Male Achievement, and a Black studies curriculum.⁶⁵

“Given the facts of our highly-dangerous national and state systems of policing, supervision and incarceration, by being housed in our high schools — no matter how helpful and beloved they are — police are a real risk to many of our students and they contribute to stress and bad health for hundreds of children,”

Deborah Kilgore, School Board President, Edmonds, WA⁶⁶

In June of 2021, the school system initiated an Academic and Student Well-being Plan that addressed student and family involvement, overall student well-being, professional learning, on-going assessment, and community partnerships. It also authorized the creation of

59 ben@hoanmarketing.com. 2024. “Freedom to Thrive | Leaders Igniting Transformation | the Future Is Young, Black, Brown, and LIT!” Leaders Igniting Transformation. October 2, 2024. <https://litwi.org/our-work/issue-based-organizing/freedom-to-thrive/>.

60 “From Failure.” n.d. <https://www.populardemocracy.org/sites/default/files/FailureToFreedom.pdf>.

61 https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59babf0451a584437bc6f6c/t/5acd2909758d467950cc5229/1523394831500/MKE_STP+%281%29.pdf

62 Hess, Corrinne. 2024. “Police Officers Are Coming back to Milwaukee Public Schools.” WPR. January 3, 2024. <https://www.wpr.org/education/police-officers-are-coming-back-milwaukee-public-schools>.

63 Fox, Madeline. 2020. “Milwaukee Public Schools Terminates Contract with Milwaukee Police Department.” Wisconsin Public Radio. June 18, 2020. <https://www.wpr.org/milwaukee-public-schools-terminates-contract-milwaukee-police-department>.

64 “Police Presence at Seattle Public Schools Halted Indefinitely.” 2020. The Seattle Times. June 24, 2020. <https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/police-presence-at-seattle-public-schools-halted-indefinitely/>.

65 “Black Lives Matter in School Background Information and Teacher Guide Background.” n.d. https://www.seattlewea.org/file_viewer.php?id=10521.

66 MyEdmondsNews. 2020. “Edmonds School Board Votes to Remove Police Officers from Three Schools; Will Decide on Fourth Later This Year - My Edmonds News.” My Edmonds News. June 24, 2020. <https://myedmondsnews.com/2020/06/edmonds-school-board-votes-to-remove-police-officers-from-three-schools-will-decide-on-fourth-later-this-year/>.

a comprehensive “Culture of Care” plan, which emphasized using community partnerships to enhance and better coordinate mental health, counseling, and mentoring support as well as creating more restorative justice practices, trauma recovery services, and emotional learning supports.

In response to large protests in June 2020, a joint agreement was reached between the Charlottesville, VA city government, school board, and police department to remove all police from schools there.⁶⁷ In May of 2021, a New Model Plan⁶⁸ for safety was agreed to as an alternative, which included a new system of emotional supports for students such as “Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports” programs, more small group and one on one instruction for high needs students,⁶⁹ the hiring of social emotional counselors, as well as the creation of new unarmed Care and Safety Assistants to help work with young people in crisis.⁷⁰ It also includes training for all staff in trauma and culturally informed practices, adult social emotional learning, and restorative justice practices. Finally the plan calls for partnerships with community based organizations to provide additional services.

“Our public school system is an institution that mimics the prison-industrial complex rather than a safe space where students are able to unlock the jewels within their minds. SRO’s are simply one element that highlights this fact. We must commit to the creation of a paradigm that replaces this current institution that has continuously failed Black children since desegregation,”

Nikuyah Walker, Mayor,
Charlottesville, VA⁷¹

REIMAGINING PUBLIC SAFETY

New York City’s Public Advocate, is an elected city-wide official who acts as a watchdog for city government. In March 2021, the Public Advocate issued a whitepaper on Reimagining School Safety² that called for replacing police infrastructure, culture, and practice with youth, parents, and educator-led solutions that center liberation and restorative justice. New York City currently has over 5,000 school resource officers and armed school police in schools, which is greater than the number of counselors of all kinds combined. The whitepaper lays out the case for a variety of interventions that together would be more successful at producing safe schools than the current system. It includes:

- Hiring 3,500 school counselors over 3 years;
- Creating and expanding robust Restorative Justice disciplinary systems;
- Creating new Student Success Centers;
- Expanding funding for Community Schools;
- Implementing Culturally Responsive Education practices;
- Enhancing arts programming;
- Connecting students with summer employment;
- Expanding college and career counseling; and
- Providing free public transportation for students.

1 <https://advocate.nyc.gov/reports/white-paper-on-reimagining-school-safety/>

In June 2020, Minneapolis, MN terminated its \$1.1 million contract with the Minneapolis Police Department. For decades parents and students and the NAACP have complained about abusive

67 News, 29. 2020. “Charlottesville Discontinuing Use of School Resource Officers.” <https://www.29news.com>. 29 News. June 12, 2020. <https://www.nbc29.com/2020/06/11/charlottesville-discontinuing-use-school-resource-officers/>.

68 “School Safety Report.” 2022. https://s3.amazonaws.com/scschoolsfiles/3437/safety_model_presentation_may_5_2022.pdf.

69 Schools, Charlottesville City. 2022. “Charlottesville City Schools.” [Charlottesvilleschools.org](http://charlottesvilleschools.org). 2022. <http://charlottesvilleschools.org/supports>.

70 Marcilla, Max. 2021. “Charlottesville City Schools Approve New Safety Plan after Removing School Resource Officers.” <https://www.29news.com>. 29 News. May 7, 2021. <https://www.nbc29.com/2021/05/06/charlottesville-city-schools-approve-new-safety-plan-after-removing-school-resource-officers/>.

71 News, 29. 2020. “Charlottesville Discontinuing Use of School Resource Officers.” <https://www.29news.com>. 29 News. June 12, 2020. <https://www.nbc29.com/2020/06/11/charlottesville-discontinuing-use-school-resource-officers/>.



Madison activists march in favor of MMSD's board terminating its contract with the city's police department for school resource officers on Thursday, June 25, 2020. (Photo by: Shawn Johnson, WPR)

and racially discriminatory treatment by school police. Surveys indicated strong support for alternatives to policing such as hiring more social workers and mental health staff and creating restorative justice programs.⁷² A 2022 teachers strike included demands that these services be expanded to include full time staff located at individual schools rather than part time roving staff.⁷³ As a result, several new positions were created. They are also partnering with Minneapolis's Nonviolent Peaceforce⁷⁴ to provide conflict mediation training to students.

The Madison, WI Metropolitan School District voted to cancel its contract with the Madison Police Department in June of 2020⁷⁵ following years of complaints from organizations such as Freedom Inc.⁷⁶ In February 2021, The Board of

Education adopted a set of 16 recommendations from its Safety and Security Ad Hoc Committee made up of 29 community members and 2 board members. In response the district made plans to hire several restorative justice experts and 35 new counselors, social workers, and psychologists. In March 2023, the reformulated Safety & Student Wellness Ad Hoc Committee recommended⁷⁷ further increases in mental health services for students.

⁷² Sheasley, C. In a roiled Minneapolis, Schools are Testing new model for safety.

⁷³ Kian. 2022. How do Strikers envision improving the mental health.

⁷⁴ Content Creator. 2021. "Project Launch: Building Peaceful Schools." Nonviolent Peaceforce. August 23, 2021. <https://nonviolentpeaceforce.org/building-peaceful-schools/>.

⁷⁵ Fox, Madeline. 2020. "Madison School Board Votes to End Contract with Police Department." WPR. June 29, 2020. <https://www.wpr.org/education/madison-school-board-votes-end-contract-police-department>.

⁷⁶ "Home - Freedom, Inc." n.d. Freedom-Inc.org. <https://freedom-inc.org/>.

⁷⁷ 2023. Boarddocs.com. 2023. <https://go.boarddocs.com/wi/mmsd/Board.nsf/files/CPWQ32673712/>.

ALTERNATIVES TO SCHOOL POLICING

No one intervention will single-handedly replace school police. What is needed is a constellation of programs that address the specific needs of specific school settings. As the needs of these schools change, so should the programmatic responses. Therefore, what is most needed is not a one size fits all ready-made program, but instead a menu of alternatives that can be drawn upon to address the safety needs of different schools at different times. The options below represent evidence-based practices that school systems across the country have undertaken in different combinations and intensities to improve school safety.

IMPROVE CLASSROOM TEACHING AND SUPPORT

Funding for public schools has too often fallen behind the needs of young people. Teachers have been left to manage large classes with limited support and a growing number of students facing major challenges. The first step in producing a healthy, safe, and successful educational experience for all students is to fully staff classrooms with high quality teachers, teachers' aides, and support staff. This means reducing student to teacher ratios and bringing in support personnel able to deal effectively with the learning needs of every student in the classroom in a way that gives them the most access to a mainstream learning environment. This can include more learning specialists, special

education professionals, and teachers' aids as well as an increase in the number of fully credentialed teachers.

There is extensive research showing that improving teacher student ratios leads to better outcomes for students including less disruptive behavior, less absenteeism, and higher test scores.⁷⁸ A review of 11 separate class size studies showed decreases in anti-social behavior and increases in pro-social behavior. In North Carolina, disciplinary referrals decreased sharply in the two years after small classes were implemented, with a 26% drop in the first year and a 50% drop in the second year.⁷⁹ Tennessee's STAR program, which reduced class sizes, resulted in lower suspension rates in later grades among students who had been in small classes in the early years. Tenth grade students who had been in small classes in K-3 were suspended on average half the number of days as students in "regular" classes. Similarly, school attendance was significantly improved.⁸⁰

"When you are spending \$1.6 million on law enforcement in our schools, what you are saying to that population out the gate is 'we see you as criminals. We see you as less than.'"

Chris, Lancaster High School graduate

Keeping kids in school both increases their safety and reduces the likelihood that they will become involved in serious criminal behavior. Children are much safer in school than they are at home or in the community. Rates of serious injury and death are much higher as a result of violence, abuse, and neglect at home than in a school setting.⁸¹ Also, when students are forced out of school as a result of disciplinary punishments or school failure, they are more likely to become involved in community violence. When students miss school because of low

78 NCTE. (2014). Why Class Size Matters Today. <https://ncte.org/statement/why-class-size-matters/>

79 Finn, J., Pannozzo, G. and Achilles, C. (2003). The "Why's" of Class Size: Student Behavior in Small Classes. Review of Educational Research, Fall 73(3), 321-368.

80 Wilson, V., (2002). Does Small Really Make a Difference? A review of the literature on the effects of class size on teaching practice and pupils' behaviour and attainment. The SCRE Center, June.

81 Silberberg, N., Silberberg, M. (1971) School achievement and delinquency. Review of Educational Research 41:17-33.

academic performance, this can also lead to more disruptive and harmful behavior by that young person when they are in school. Therefore, keeping kids in school by providing better classroom based academic support significantly increases the safety of children.

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS

Most school districts have significantly reduced the number of school counselors available to assist students facing significant life challenges that can interfere with their ability to stay in school in ways that are healthy for themselves and their peers. School counselors help students address a variety of social and mental health challenges by keeping them in school and promoting a safe and healthy learning environment.

Most significant harmful behavior by young people is driven by the existence of major adverse childhood experiences (ACE).⁸² Direct and indirect exposure to violence, parental neglect, sexual abuse, inadequate nutrition, and bullying are all major factors in producing harmful behavior. In California, 61.7% of adults have experienced at least one ACE and one in six, or 16.7%, have experienced four or more ACEs.⁸³ A well funded school counseling program works to identify young people in crisis and provide them with support and resources to better manage their problems so that they can play a positive role in school.

Central to any effort to stabilize school violence should be a robust effort to assist students who have experienced trauma. Young people who

have witnessed or experienced violence, sexual assaults and psychological abuse are much more likely to be disruptive, engage in high risk behaviors, and commit violence. A trauma informed school should train all school staff to identify the signs of trauma in young people and direct them to appropriate school and community based services. The California Department of Education offers a variety of resources to assist such efforts.⁸⁴

Ideally, schools should have one counselor for every 250 students and an ever lower ratio for students in high need schools.⁸⁵ In addition, the National Association of School Psychologists recommends a 1 to 700 ratio for school psychologists⁸⁶ and the National Association of Social Workers recommends a 1 to 250 ratio generally, and a 1 to 50 ratio for students with intensive needs.⁸⁷ On average, though, there is only one counselor for every 450 students in US schools, and 1.7 million children go to schools with school police but no full time counseling staff.⁸⁸

“I see my colleagues working so hard. They don’t have enough counseling staff or supports for students. The presence of School Resource Officers is not necessary. They are making the assumption that these students are criminals.”

Beth, teacher at AV High School

Recent research shows that improving the ratio of school counselors and social workers can reduce disciplinary problems, weapons-related incidents, and student suspensions.⁸⁹ In addition, students

82 Balfanz, R., Byrnes, V., Fox, J., (2014). Sent Home and Put Off: The Antecedents, Disproportionalities, and Consequences of Being Suspended in the Ninth Grade. *Journal of Applied Research on Children*. 5:2. Article 13.

83 Center for Youth Wellness. (2014). A Hidden Crisis: Findings on Adverse Childhood Experiences in California. <https://centerforyouthwellness.org/wp-content/themes/cyw/build/img/building-a-movement/hidden-crisis.pdf>

84 “Supporting Resilience in Schools - Mental Health (ca Dept of Education).” n.d. www.cde.ca.gov. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/mh/resilientschools.asp>.

85 American School Counselor Association. <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios>

86 ACLU. (2019). Cops and No Counselors: How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff is Harming Students. 11. <https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline/cops-and-no-counselors>

87 National Association of Social Workers, NAWs Standards for School Social Work Services (2012), <https://www.socialworkers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=1Ze4-9-Os7E%3D&portalid=0>.

88 ACLU. (2021). Cops and No Counselors: How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff Is Harming Students.

<https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline/cops-and-no-counselors#:~:text=As%20this%20report%20reveals%2C%20millions,police%20but%20no%20school%20psychologists>

89 Carrell, Scott., Carrell, Susan. (2006). DO Lower Student to Counselor Ratios Reduce School Disciplinary Problems? Contributions to Economic Analysis and Policy. 5:1. Article 11. Lapan, R., Gysbers, N., Stanley, B., (2018). Missouri Professional School Counselors: Ratios Matter, Especially in

report feeling safer and more positive about school and teachers report fewer disruptions in the classroom. The benefits are particularly strong in schools with high percentages of students of color.

EMOTIONAL LEARNING SUPPORTS

Young people need help in developing healthy emotional responses to challenging situations. Emotional learning supports young people in this effort. It should be integrated into classroom learning for all students and can be augmented through counseling interventions and transformative justice processes.

In Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), students and teachers work together to develop a variety of life skills to help them deal with conflict and be more effective at school. These programs aim to strengthen communication skills, self-control, and collaborative problem-solving practices to reduce aggression, increase social competencies and develop positive relations between students as well as students and teachers.⁹⁰ They are guided by five principles that are instilled through the process: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. The best known implementation of this approach is the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP), begun in 1995.⁹¹ The program, which has been active in New York City schools⁹² and dozens of others, uses interactive methods to teach children skills in anger management, negotiation, mediation, cooperation, and intercultural understanding. Behavioral Monitoring and Reinforcement⁹³ is a primarily middle school program designed to help students who are at high risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system, using drugs, or dropping out. This program relies

on positive reinforcement and empowerment strategies. Students in the program had higher grades and better attendance compared to students in a control group. A one year follow-up study showed that students in the program had less self-reported delinquency, drug abuse, suspension, absenteeism, tardiness, academic failure, and unemployment compared to control students. A five-year follow-up study found that these students had fewer county court records than students in the control group.⁹⁴

“I don’t want shootings to happen. I don’t want anything like that. But I want school to be a safe place not just for me as a teacher, but for our students, especially students of color. Having cops on campus can derail their entire life. At the end of the day, I want them to be able to get an education, not incarceration.”

James, teacher at Eastside High School

Extensive research shows that these programs consistently improve both school discipline and educational outcomes.⁹⁵ An analysis of 213 SEL programs found improvements in skills, attitudes, and behaviors. Other studies show that social emotional and mental health programs and strategies assist students with coping skills, self-esteem, and emotions management to curb aggressive or violent behaviors.⁹⁶ A recent large-scale study found that SEL programs that focus on self-management have the greatest potential for improving student outcomes. A Columbia University study found that children receiving RCCP instruction from their teachers developed more positively than their peers: they saw their social world in a less hostile way, saw violence as an unacceptable option, and chose nonviolent

High-Poverty School. Professional School Counseling, 16:2.

⁹⁰ Prevention Institute. (2001). Preventing and reducing school violence fact sheet #3: Strategies, resources, and contacts for developing comprehensive school violence prevention programs.

⁹¹ Resolving Conflicts Creatively, CASEL Program Guide, <https://pg.casel.org/resolving-conflict-creatively-program-rccp/>

⁹² “Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (New York City) | Youth.gov.” n.d. Youth.gov. <https://youth.gov/content/resolving-conflict-creatively-program-new-york-city>.

⁹³ “Behavioral Monitoring and Reinforcement Program (BMRP) Recent Implementation Developments in Promotion, Training, Fidelity, and Certification Blueprints Conference 2014.” n.d. https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/conference/presentations/2014/T7-C_Bry.pdf.

⁹⁴ “Promising Programs – Behavioral Modification and Reinforcement Program – BSCC.” 2024. Ca.gov. 2024. http://bscc.ca.gov/s_cppeppromising-behavioralmodification/.

⁹⁵ Jennifer Selfridge (2004) The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program: How We Know It Works, Theory Into Practice, 43:1, 59-67.

⁹⁶ Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students’ social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. Child development, 82(1), 405-432.

ways to resolve conflict. They also scored higher on standardized tests in reading and math.⁹⁷

The California Department of Education is a strong supporter of SEL based programs.⁹⁸ Dozens of districts have such programs already and more are in development. In response to the Covid pandemic, the Department of Education undertook a major study and found that SEL programs were needed more than ever and that they should be fully integrated into the core educational strategies of California schools.⁹⁹

ENHANCED HEALTH SERVICES

Students who have their physical and mental health needs met are going to be more positively engaged with school. Millions of students go to schools that have school police but no school nurse. Mental health support consists of intensive interventions for students in need of long-term mental health or acute behavioral support. Interventions include individual and group therapy as well as integrated support systems at school and in the community provided by counselors, community mentors, and social workers. School-based mental health clinics have been shown to reduce fights, suicides, and absenteeism. These services should be connected to in-school counseling programs and community based providers to ensure continuity of care.

A study of the Emotional and Behavioral Health–Crisis Response and Prevention program to address student emotional and behavioral health showed significant effects on decreasing bullying, referrals, and suspensions.¹⁰⁰ Another recent study of elementary school-age children who received both targeted and curriculum-integrated mental health treatments in school found

improved mental health and fewer disruptive behaviors.¹⁰¹

INCLUSIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

If we want students to feel invested in a positive school environment, we need to send them a clear message that they are wanted. Too often young people feel excluded because of discriminatory behavior by teachers, administrators, and fellow students. We must ensure that students have access to an inclusive school environment that nurtures them regardless of their identity. To achieve this, schools need to rework curricula to be more inclusive by utilizing methods like Culturally Responsive Education that fosters student centered critical thinking skills responsive to the real lived experience of students.¹⁰² Programs like this have shown positive results in improving retention and reducing disruptive behavior in schools.

In addition, schools should take active steps to more fully include LGBTQ+ young people in the life of the school. Some districts have created safe spaces on campus with appropriate counselors and support staff.¹⁰³ A recent review of 15 studies found that the presence of a safe space significantly lowered self-reported homophobic victimization, fear for one’s safety, and hearing homophobic remarks.¹⁰⁴ The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network found that the listing of specific populations in school policies contributes to lower rates of student victimization and increases the likelihood of teacher intervention on targeted students.¹⁰⁵

A school-based needs assessment of 180 racially and ethnically diverse LGBTQ+ students found that students articulated a need for broadly

97 Aber, J. L., Brown, J., Joshua L., Henrich, C. L. (1999). Teaching Conflict Resolution: An Effective School-Based Approach to Violence Prevention. Research Brief. National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/teaching-conflict-resolution-effective-school-based-approach>

98 “Social and Emotional Learning - Teaching & Learning (ca Dept of Education).” n.d. www.cde.ca.gov/ci/se/.

99 Education First. (2020). Advance SEL in California Final Report and Recommendations. California Department of Education. September. <https://education-first.com/library/publication/advance-sel-in-california-final-report-and-recommendations/>

100 Bohnenkamp, J. H., Schaeffer, C. M., Siegal, R., Beason, T., Smith-Millman, M., & Hoover, S. (2021). Impact of a school-based, multi-tiered emotional and behavioral health crisis intervention on school safety and discipline. *Prevention Science*, 22, 492-503.

101 Sanchez, A. L., Cornacchio, D., Poznanski, B., Golik, A. M., Chou, T., & Comer, J. S. (2018). The effectiveness of school-based mental health services for elementary-aged children: A meta-analysis. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 57(3), 153-165.

102 “Culturally Responsive Education Hub.” n.d. Culturally Responsive Education Hub. <https://crehub.org/>.

103 Sadowski, M. (2017). More than a safe space: How schools can enable LGBTQ students to thrive. *American Educator*, 40(4), 4-9, 42. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1123878.pdf>

104 Marx, R. A., & Kettrey, H. H. (2016). Gay-straight alliances are associated with lower levels of school-based victimization of LGBTQ+ youth: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 45(7), 1269-1282.

105 Sadowski

safe schools (and communities) that go beyond the “pockets of safety” created by GSAs and safe zones by nurturing supportive peers and adults who consistently “have their back,” and developing supportive, culturally sound resources for their families.¹⁰⁶ Findings like this have led some districts to create networks of supportive faculty and staff and to establish connections with community based organizations. New York City recently hired an LGBTQ+ community liaison to better connect the school to larger social institutions that foster and promote the wellbeing of these students.¹⁰⁷

Throughout the school, services should be delivered in ways that are culturally appropriate and respectful. This means having school staff available that speak the language that students and their parents speak at home, offering culturally enriching clubs and after school activities and ensuring that teachers, administrators, and fellow students are expected to behave in ways that are inclusive. Ensuring inclusive and affirming curricula, providing ongoing teacher and staff training that moves from “cultural competence” to “structural competence,” and affirming student perspectives are crucial.

WRAP AROUND SERVICES

Students in crisis are the most likely to be involved in harmful and seriously disruptive behavior in schools. These students need extensive support that addresses their needs holistically. This involves individualized care for the student and support for their families. This can include things like housing support, mental health services, academic tutoring, nutritional support, trauma counseling, and substance misuse treatment. The services need to be tailored to the specific needs of each student and require intensive case management to ensure that the right supports are in place and are producing

results. This means hiring case managers, social workers, on-campus mental health staff and developing relationships with community based service providers as well as developing partnerships with local government departments that provide social and health services.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Another approach rooted in inclusiveness is the Community Schools model, in which the school is seen as a central community resource that could be better utilized to support students and their families in ways that help the community more broadly and the learning environment specifically.¹⁰⁸ Community schools began in the US during the 1990s as a way to better serve new immigrant families and address student challenges through community partnerships and philanthropic organizations.¹⁰⁹

The Community Schools model involves opening up the school during non-school hours to provide support services for students and their families. In many communities, the most trusted institution is the school, which could be utilized to encourage families to embrace support services like health screenings, nutritional supports, mental health services, family counseling, English as a second language classes, homework support for students, etc. When families have their survival needs better addressed and feel more connected to schools, student achievement improves.

This model has been embraced by the National Educational Association (NEA) and the American Federation of teachers (AFT) and is being used in several cities. Baltimore has forty-five community schools serving an overwhelmingly poor and minority student body. These schools have improved attendance rates and, with restorative justice programs, have reduced suspensions.¹¹⁰ Additional research has found community

106 Craig, S. L., McInroy, L. B., & Austin, A. (2018). “Someone to have my back”: Exploring the needs of racially and ethnically diverse lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender high school students. *Children and Schools*, 40(4), 231–239.

107 McIntyre, Erin. 2016. “NYC Schools Hire First LGBT ‘Community Liaison.’” *K-12 Dive*. February 4, 2016. <https://www.k12dive.com/news/nyc-schools-hire-first-lgbt-community-liaison/413290/>.

108 Oakes, J., Maier, A., & Daniel, J. (2017). *Community schools: An evidence-based strategy for equitable school improvement*. National Education Policy Center.

109 Lubell, E. (2011). *Building community schools: A guide for action*. Children’s Aid Society. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED540950>

110 Payne, A. A., Gottfredson, D. C., & Gottfredson, G. D. (2003). *Schools as communities: The relationships among communal school disorder, student*

partnerships with wrap-around services produce positive long-term social outcomes and economic benefits.¹¹¹

New York City has over 300 community schools that provide a wide range of services to students and their families.¹¹² Funded by local, state, and federal government and foundations, they offer arts, sports, academic tutoring, medical services, mentoring, tutoring, adult education classes, parent training, and access to social services. A recent study of New York City’s program showed that it improved graduation rates and reduced absenteeism and disciplinary incidents.¹¹³

The Long Beach Unified School District has four Family Resource Centers. They offer free student services that include individual and group counseling. They also work collaboratively with families to connect them to community resources, school-based services, and parent education workshops.¹¹⁴

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

The rise of “zero tolerance” disciplinary strategies has been a major contributor to the rise in school policing, pushing high needs students out of school, and criminalizing students. Even more flexible disciplinary systems tend to be heavily punitive in orientation in ways that further alienate young people from their schools. The alternative is to develop disciplinary systems that look to repair harms and help students who engage in harmful and disruptive behavior to be a more positive part of the school community.

Restorative justice practices are based on a variety of indigenous practices from around the world that predominate in traditional, close-knit communities, in which problems need to be resolved in ways that encourage community

stability, cohesion, and self-sustainability. These practices are being implemented in many forms, including peer juries, problem solving circles, community service, and conflict mediation.

To be truly effective, these programs need buy-in from teachers and administrators over time in order to build student trust. At the core of all these mechanisms is the desire to make schools a welcoming place for young people regardless of the problems they bring to school and to try to work out those problems cooperatively in a way that is in the best interest of the student and the larger school community.

“Removing police presence and infrastructure from schools is only one step in the process to create safe, supportive schools where children can thrive. Creating schools that are truly safe requires a cultural shift away from punitive punishments and carceral practices, and an emphasis instead on healing, accountability, equity, and restorative justice.”

Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate,
New York City, NY¹¹⁵

The National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and the Advancement Project have teamed up to promote these efforts by producing a guide for teachers. *Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships and Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools* lays out basic principles, such as resolving conflicts in ways that demand that people take meaningful responsibility for their actions and work to change them, build healthy relationships throughout the school, reduce

bonding, and school disorder. *Criminology*, 41, 749–778.

111 Maier, A., Daniel, J., Oakes, J., & Lam, L. (2017). *Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence*. Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/productfiles/Community_Schools_Effective_REPORT.pdf

112 <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/learning/programs/community-schools>

113 Johnston, W. R., J. Engberg, I. M. Opper, L. Sontag-Padilla, and L. Xenakis, *Illustrating the Promise of Community Schools: An Assessment of the Impact of the New York City Community Schools Initiative*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3245.html.

114 “Family Resource Centers - Long Beach Unified School District.” 2024. [Lbschools.net](https://www.lbschools.net). 2024. <https://www.lbschools.net/departments/student-support-services/family-resource-centers>.

115 <https://advocate.nyc.gov/reports/white-paper-on-reimagining-school-safety/#endnote-85>

harmful behaviors, repair harms, and restore positive relationships.¹¹⁶

These programs take resources. Teachers need to be trained and class time needs to be set aside. Further, schools that are undergoing stress from budget cuts and chasing after test scores to stay open will find it difficult to cultivate a supportive and caring atmosphere and will be reluctant to take the time away from instruction necessary to implement these programs in an effective way.

Restorative practices successfully promote dialogue and accountability, create a stronger sense of community, improve relationships, reduce exclusionary discipline referrals, and increase equity in discipline. A recent review of the research literature concluded that restorative practices produced safe and successful learning environments.¹¹⁷ An evaluation of ten studies found that restorative practices reduced the use of suspensions, lowered rates of bullying, and increased measures of students' social skills and self-esteem.¹¹⁸ A case study of restorative justice programs in Pennsylvania schools found that one “persistently dangerous,” school had a “60% decrease in assaults on students and a 72% decrease in incidents of disorderly conduct” after implementing restorative justice practices.¹¹⁹ School districts that use restorative justice practices instead of traditional school discipline measures have cited overall drops in in- and out-of-school suspensions. The Dallas Independent School District experienced a 70% decrease in in-school suspensions, a 77% decrease in out-of-school suspensions, and a 50% cut to the number of students sent to an alternative place of learning.¹²⁰ Following the replacement of

school police with restorative justice practices in Toronto, Canada, school officials reported that suspensions decreased by 25% and expulsions were cut in half with no increase in disruptive behavior by students.¹²¹ A randomized control trial by the RAND Corporation in Pittsburg showed that restorative justice practices improved teachers' assessment of working conditions and student learning outcomes.¹²²

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

When young people are engaged in positive after school activities it improves their safety, reduces the level of harmful juvenile behavior in the community, and improves student behavior in school. Students are at much greater risk of becoming involved in violent behavior or being the victims of violence during unsupervised after school hours than they are while enrolled in high quality afterschool programs.¹²³ This can include organized athletics, tutoring, arts, and intellectual enrichment programs.

“The police in public high schools shouldn't have that much money to begin with. It is taking away from the resources and values that could actually be helping out students.”

Bakari, SOAR High School graduate.

These programs can lead to improved social emotional skills, better attendance, improved attentiveness in class, and better cooperation with fellow students.¹²⁴ A review by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning

116 The Advancement Project et al. (2014). Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships and Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools. <https://advancementproject.org/resources/restorative-practices-fostering-healthy-relationships-promoting-positive-discipline-in-schools/>

117 DePaoli, J. L., Hernández, L. E., Furger, R. C., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2021). A restorative approach for equitable education. Learning Policy Institute.

118 Katic, B., Alba, L. A., & Johnson, A. H. (2020). A systematic evaluation of restorative justice practices: School violence prevention and response. *Journal of School Violence*, 19(4), 579–593.

119 Justice Policy Institute. (2011). Education Under Arrest: The Case Against Police in Schools 28, http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/educationunderarrest_fullreport.pdf

120 Long, C. (2016, August 25). Restorative Discipline Makes Huge Impact in Texas Elementary and Middle Schools. NEA Today. <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-fromnea/restorative-discipline-makes-huge-impact-texas-elementary-and>

121 Belsha, K. (2020). Canada's Largest School District Ended Its Police Program. Now Toronto May Be an Example for U.S. Districts Considering the Same. Chalkbeat. June 19.

122 Augustine, C, Endberg j, Grimm G et al. (2018). “Can Restorative Justice practices Improve School Climate and Suspensions? An Evaluation in a Mid-sized Urban School District. RAND Corporation.

123 Afterschool Alliance. (2009). America After 3PM: The most in-depth study of how America's children spend their afternoons. Washington, D.C. http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3_Full_Report.pdf.

124 Joseph A. Durlak, Roger P. Weissberg, and Molly Pachan, (2010). “A Meta-Analysis of After-School Programs That Seek to Promote Personal and Social Skills in Children and Adolescents,” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 45, no. 3–4:285–293.

found that youth who participate in after school programs showed significantly improved emotional well being, behavioral adjustment, and school performance.¹²⁵ A 2007 evaluation report found that children attending the after school program LA's BEST are 30 percent less likely to participate in criminal activities than their peers who do not attend the program.¹²⁶ This program is made available to students in Los Angeles's highest needs communities and engages children creatively, emotionally, intellectually and physically, empowering them to explore and discover the opportunities in their lives.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

Climate change poses a variety of threats to the health and safety of everyone in the school community. Extreme temperatures, flooding, smoke conditions, and tornados are all expected to increase in frequency and intensity as the climate continues to warm. In 2018, one million California students missed school because of forest fire conditions.¹²⁷ In addition, young people report very high levels of anxiety and depression in relation to the declining climate conditions.¹²⁸ Students exposed to high heat levels can suffer significant health effects and lower learning outcomes.¹²⁹ The Government Accountability Office found that over half of public schools need at least two major infrastructure systems updated or replaced, meaning they are less resilient to the impacts of climate change. Schools must take steps to improve the physical and social infrastructure of schools to withstand these threats.

School districts should invest in low carbon infrastructure upgrades that allow them

to maintain power in times of crisis, resist flooding, and provide a safe and healthy learning environment free from extreme temperatures. A report on conditions in California schools calls for upgrades including highly efficient air filtration and cooling systems; equipping schools with solar panels, batteries, and electric appliances so they can operate on clean power sources rather than gas if power is disrupted, and constructing schoolyards with shade and drought-resistant landscaping to give children safe outdoor spaces.¹³⁰

Schools also need to develop support systems that address the material and emotional needs of young people in a time of crisis. As part of the Community Schools model, schools could serve as hubs for disaster recovery. This means going beyond opening schools as emergency shelters by adding health and social services components, which could include interventions like trauma and grief counseling and assistance getting relief funds. In addition, students should be educated in methods of environmental resilience that help them to mitigate the causes of climate change and adapt to their impacts. This includes a robust climate change curriculum such as the one put out by Stanford University¹³¹ and resilience oriented student projects like rainwater gardens.¹³²

125 Durlak, J and Weissberg, R. (2007). The Impact of After-School Programs that Promote Personal and Social Skills. Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED505368.pdf>

126 Goldschmidt, P. and Huang, D. (2007). The Long-Term Effects of After-School Programming on Educational Adjustment and Juvenile Crime: A Study of the LA's BEST After-School Program. National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA.

127 Cano, R. (2018). "School Closures from California Wildfires This Week Have Kept More Than One Million Kids Home." Cal Matter. November 15. <https://calmatters.org/environment/2018/11/school-closures-california-wildfires-1-million-students/>

128 HickmanC, Marks E, Pihkala P, et al. (2021). "Climate Anxiety in Children and Young People and their Beliefs about Government Responses to Climate Change: A Global Survey." The Lancet Planetary Health. 5 (12) e863-873.

129 Eitland, E, Klingensmith, L, MacNaughton p, et al. (2020). "Foundations for Student Success. How School Buildings Influence Student Health, Thinking, and Performance." Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health.

130 Patel, L. et al. (2023). "Climate Resilient Schools: Safeguarding Children's Health and Opportunity to Learn in TK-12." <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED629533.pdf>

131 "The Role of Schools in Climate Solutions." 2024. Project Drawdown. July 2024. https://drawdown.org/news/insights/the-role-of-schools-in-climate-solutions?gad_source=1&gclid=CjoKCOjwkdOoBhDxARIsANKNcrfkSuDnF9SdaMrDzdxBK4H-hicDCFHBT_cdVOWFGPoyjVUEHON1WT4aAm-hTEALw_wcB.

132 "Rain Gardens for Schools | 12,000 Rain Gardens." n.d. <https://www.12000raingardens.org/build-a-rain-garden/schools/>.

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC THREATS

TRUANCY, CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM, AND DROPPING OUT

Dropping out of school is a major predictor of diminished economic attainment and involvement in crime. Truancy measures unexcused absences; chronic absenteeism measures high levels of both excused and unexcused absenteeism, which can lead to dropping out before the completion of high school.¹³³ This problem affects students of color, English language learners, and very low income students at much higher rates.¹³⁴ Lancaster Elementary and middle schools report chronic absentee rates around 40% and for Palmdale over 20%.¹³⁵

There are many factors that drive student absenteeism including lack of childcare, poor transit, illness, economic challenges at home, mental health issues, bullying, and dissatisfaction with the educational experience.¹³⁶ Punitive models utilizing truancy officers or attempting to penalize parents have low success rates and further alienate students and parents from the school system.

The key to improving attendance is to engage families and students through supportive outreach that is non-punitive and attempts to directly address the reasons students are missing school. This could include transit vouchers, childcare access, mental health services, and tutoring.

Part of this process is enhancing the sense of connection of families and students to schools.¹³⁷ Students feel more connected when there is an adult in the school that they believe cares about their well being, have supportive friends, and are engaged in extracurricular activities they enjoy.

One of the ways to encourage this is the development of community schools.¹³⁸ By offering students and families activities and support services after hours and on weekends, community schools help build positive relationships and connect families with important resources and support. Services include ESL classes, food pantries and laundry services, homework tutoring, and youth clubs, all tailored to local needs.

Some students need more individualized support in the form of mentors or success coaches,¹³⁹ who help identify and address specific challenges to school attendance and help foster overall improvements in academic success and non disruptive behavior.

Some states have developed holistic efforts including home outreach programs to develop relationships with families and identify and address impediments to attendance.¹⁴⁰ Connecticut's Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) program addresses student absenteeism through home visits to

133 Cineas, Fabiola. 2024. "Why so Many Kids Are Still Missing School." Vox. January 9, 2024. <https://www.vox.com/2024/1/9/23904542/chronic-absenteeism-school-attendance>.

134 With, Joshua, Janet Childs ;, and Rosenbaum. 2023. "University of Texas at Austin; Cecelia Leong, Vice President of Programs, Attendance Works." https://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/r_mcneely-march2023.pdf.

135 California Department of Education. 2023. "California School Dashboard (ca Dept of Education)." www.caschooldashboard.org. 2023. <https://www.caschooldashboard.org/>.

136 "Root Causes." 2022. Attendance Works. September 2022. <https://www.attendanceworks.org/chronic-absence/addressing-chronic-absence/3-tiers-of-intervention/root-causes/>.

137 "School Connectedness | Healthy Schools | CDC." 2022. www.cdc.gov. August 25, 2022. https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/school_connectedness.htm.

138 Bryant, Jeff, and Our Schools. 2023. "How Community Schools Can Fix Growing Absentee Rates." [Alternet.org](http://alternet.org). May 11, 2023. <https://www.alternet.org/community-schools-fix-absentee-rates/>.

139 "Learn More: Student Success Coaching | the National Partnership for Student Success." n.d. <https://www.partnershipstudentsuccess.org/success-coaching/>.

140 "Parent Teacher Home Visits - a Home Visit for Every Learner." n.d. <https://pthvp.org/>.

establish trusting relationships, help return them to a more regular form of school attendance, and assist with placement in summer, after school, and learning programs. A recent evaluation¹⁴¹ showed significant improvement in attendance rates for program participants.

In California, several districts are working to approve attendance. Fresno Unified decreased their chronic absences between 2021-22 and 2022-23 by 15 percent.¹⁴² The district used social workers to engage in targeted communication with families through phone calls, home visits, and follow-ups in schools, as well as referrals to counseling services.

Los Angeles Unified has a team of over 500 Pupil Services and Attendance (PSA) Counselors.¹⁴³ They assist students who face challenges in attending school regularly due to social-emotional, home and community-related obstacles. PSA Counselors are master's-level Child Welfare and Attendance Specialists who address barriers to school attendance by conducting visits to student homes in efforts to initiate assessments and tailor resources and interventions, organizing conferences with parents and students, and providing linkage to the appropriate interventions.

GANG VIOLENCE

There are many misconceptions about gangs. While some young people describe themselves as being in a gang and have some level of group cohesion, this does not mean that it is helpful to attempt to suppress gangs as such. Many so-called gangs are informal social groupings that have no organized relationship to violence or other serious organized criminal activity beyond or within school. Most violence between young people is driven by interpersonal disagreements, rather than group versus group ones. This fact is made more complicated though by the fact that most violence has a social component in that a

young person may engage in violence in support of friends or to appear tough or to maintain a sense of respect within a larger peer group. None of this requires labeling the behavior as gang related.

Police-led efforts to reduce violence lead to both intensive criminalization of young people, which results in long term involvement in the criminal justice system and predicts more not less involvement in violence in the future. Efforts to suppress gangs are rarely successful and can actually enhance gang identification and encourage riskier and more violent behavior.

The best strategies for reducing youth violence and other harmful group behavior is to address the drivers of this behavior among young people and their peers. This involves a combination of providing essential life support for young people in crisis, utilizing credible messengers to mediate disputes, long term mentoring, and social inclusion strategies.

A very small percentage of young people are responsible for the most seriously harmful behavior whether or not they are in a formal organization. These young people have typically experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences including direct and indirect exposure to violence, neglect, and serious accidents. These young people need to be identified through non-punitive screening practices and then offered services to stop ongoing harms and help them recover from past traumas. This can include the use of mental health therapies to help with trauma recovery and a range of family services. It might also involve direct cash assistance to help stabilize entire families in crisis.¹⁴⁴

Credible messenger programs can help break the cycle of retributive violence that is a significant driver of youth violence. This can be done through real time crisis intervention, mediation

¹⁴¹ "Center for Connecticut Education Research Collaboration." n.d. Accessed October 18, 2024. https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/CCERC-Report-LEAP_01_24_2023_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁴² Zhong, Leqi. 2024. "Giving Kids a Ride to Class Increases Attendance. Fresno Schools Succeeds with Novel Idea." Fresno Bee. April 16, 2024. <https://www.fresnobee.com/news/local/education-lab/article286151536.html>.

¹⁴³ Home. 2022. "Pupil Services & Attendance / Home." Lausd.org. 2022. <https://www.lausd.org/page/12605#spn-content>.

¹⁴⁴ and, Crime. 2023. "Paying Youth in After-School Program Cut Crime, Study Finds." NCJA. December 15, 2023. <https://www.ncja.org/crimeandjusticenews/paying-youth-in-after-school-program-cut-crime-study-finds>.

DRUGS

practices, and long term mentoring of youth at high risk for involvement in violence. Credible messengers can be utilized both inside the school and in the community to create “safe passage” for young people to get to and from school.¹⁴⁵

Young people form gangs and other peer organizations because they are looking for social support that may be lacking at home. This is often a reasonable response to a difficult situation. Most such groupings do not start as violence prone, beyond wanting to provide mutual protection for group members. Rather than attempting to eradicate or criminalize these groupings, they should be harnessed as a potential locus for positive youth organization. So-called “social inclusion” strategies work with these groups and try to push them to engage in pro-social activities such as cultural expressions, community support activities, and involvement in political decision making processes about the delivery of essential services.¹⁴⁶ These young people know very well the challenges their families and communities face and could be viewed as allies in addressing them efficiently and effectively. Such efforts have shown significant success in reducing violence.¹⁴⁷

LA County’s Office of Violence Prevention has recently undertaken efforts to implement some of these strategies. They are attempting to create partnerships between schools and community based organizations to assist with credible messenger programs, mentoring, trauma recovery, and safe passage efforts. Organizations like the Helper Foundation provide these services but school officials in the Antelope Valley have been resistant to building partnerships with them. The Antelope Valley also has several existing organizations that could be expanded and brought into the schools to provide youth mentoring, counseling, and other services such as Youth Build, Friends of the Children, Project Joy, Power of Positive Inc, and the Nehemiah Project.

Drug use among teenagers is common and it is not realistic to imagine a situation where young people do not have access to them or won’t ever use them. We should focus on the ways in which drug use increases the risk of harm either directly from their use, such as overdoses, or indirectly through things like impaired driving. The most harmful relationship to these behaviors is driven by significant vulnerabilities such as abuse and neglect in the home, untreated mental health problems, and social isolation and bullying. Schools should look to interventions that address these risk factors and provide students with a supportive and inviting learning environment.

One of the most common drug prevention programs is DARE that brings law enforcement into schools to educate young people about the potential harms of drugs and strategies to resist taking them. Unfortunately, decades of research show that this intervention has consistently failed to produce reductions in usage or the harms associated with them.¹⁴⁸

Some of the most effective interventions are family based in which students and their families receive support including access to medically based treatment, mental health services, and resources to address housing and food insecurity.

Schools should also employ a variety of harm reduction strategies. These approaches focus on getting those students who may be using drugs to do so in ways that are less likely to result in significant harm to themselves or others. This starts with educational programming that is rooted in the real experiences of young people with drugs and the reasons they use them, rather than a strict abstinence based approach, which research shows consistently alienates young people, especially those at highest risk. The Drug Policy Alliance’s Safety First curriculum is a good

145 Flores, Christian. 2022. “Safe Passage: DC’s Year-Round Program Continues to Protect Students during Summer Break.” WJLA. 2022. <https://wjla.com/news/local/safe-passage-safety-program-washington-dc-students-school-gun-violence-crime-youth-juveniles-summer-break-hired-adults-grant-money-metro-stations>.

146 Brotherton, David C., and Rafael Gude. 2020. “Social Control and the Gang: Lessons from the Legalization of Street Gangs in Ecuador.” *Critical Criminology*, May. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-020-09505-5>.

147 Brotherton, David and Rafael Gude. 2018. “Social Inclusion From Below: The Perspective of Street Gangs and Their Possible Effects on Declining Homicide Rates in Ecuador.” Interamerican Development Bank.

148 Felker-Cantor, Max. 2024. *Dare to Say No.: Policing and the War on Drugs in Schools*. University of North Carolina Press - Chappel Hill.

example.¹⁴⁹ The curriculum is scientifically based, honest about the differences between drugs, teaches students how to identify and reverse overdoses, and helps young people understand why some people take drugs. The goal is to reduce the likelihood of drug taking and reduce the harm it might cause.

Last year following a string of overdoses, Los Angeles Unified School District announced that schools would have naloxone, which can reverse overdoses, on hand and also that students would be allowed to carry it.¹⁵⁰ In the Antelope Valley, LA County funds CORECenter, which provides educational, prevention, harm reduction, and treatment services, but these are not currently being offered directly to students.¹⁵¹

SEX TRAFFICKING

Young people involved in commercial sexual activity are at great risk for abuse and exploitation. Any commercial sexual activity involving someone under 18 years old is a crime and can be considered a form of sex trafficking, even if there is no overt coercion involved. Research shows that the vast majority of young people involved in commercial sexual activity, especially those facing direct coercion or exploitation, come from extremely vulnerable circumstances. Some of the primary risk factors include being a runaway, lacking stable housing, being in the foster care system, having suffered past sexual abuse, and experiencing significant mental health challenges. Harmful substance use is also associated with these risk factors.

The key to addressing the harms of youth involvement in sex work is to reduce their vulnerability regardless of whether their involvement is voluntary or coerced. A law enforcement oriented solution is unlikely to produce desirable results. If a young person is in crisis or a friend sees a peer in crisis they are very reluctant to get the criminal legal system

involved. Even when efforts are focussed at adults involved as clients or facilitators, the hidden nature of sex work black markets mean that it is difficult for police to discover these activities. In addition, even when police are able to intervene, this rarely results in youth gaining access to the services that will help them avoid future involvement in sex work. Trusted adults and peers who are not connected to law enforcement are in the best position to identify and provide support for youth in need of services.

One of the major risk factors is being a runaway or lacking regular secure housing. This requires significantly expanding both services to families in crisis and giving students who can't safely return home access to supportive housing. Families in crisis may be dealing with mental health or substance abuse issues or violent and psychologically abusive behavior. This requires interventions that target the parents including high quality community centered mental health and substance abuse services, financial stabilization funds, visiting nurses and social workers to aid parents in establishing a safe and secure home. In some cases this is not possible and youth flee the home. In those cases, resources are needed to help older youth in establishing independent living with dignity, meaning that financial and social support may be required.

When a young person's family is in such a high level of crisis that remaining there is unsafe, even with support services, they should have access to safe, stable, and supportive foster homes. Research shows that the best outcomes are when youth are assigned to a relative. But often the foster care system fails to provide adequate support to these families, including financial resources. When a non-kin placement is made, it is essential that there be adequate systems to support foster parents to reduce the likelihood of additional abuse, another major risk factor for youth involvement in sex work.

¹⁴⁹ DRUG POLICY ALLIANCE. 2023. "Safety First: Real Drug Education for Teens." Drug Policy Alliance. March 22, 2023. <https://drugpolicy.org/resource/safety-first/>.

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.latimes.com/people/emily-alpert-reyes>. 2023. "L.A. Students Will Be Able to Carry Narcan in Schools under Updated Policy." Los Angeles Times. February 1, 2023. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-02-01/l-a-students-will-be-able-to-carry-narcan-in-schools>.

¹⁵¹ "LA County Department of Public Health - Substance Abuse Prevention and Control." 2023. [lacounty.gov](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/sapc/public/corecenter/index.htm?lang=en). 2023. <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/sapc/public/corecenter/index.htm?lang=en>.

Young people who are at risk of or become involved in sex work need high quality mental health and substance abuse services. Preexisting abuse is a major driver of vulnerability and youth who engage in sex work may suffer additional traumas. Young people often self medicate with harmful patterns of substance use to help themselves manage their mental health needs, which can increase their vulnerability.

Los Angeles County has taken some steps to address this issue, but there are significant shortfalls that need to be addressed. Their Department of Mental Health through its Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth (CSECY) program offers services to youth who have been previously involved to avoid future vulnerability.¹⁵² They offer training on identifying youth and providing them with mental health services. They also offer services to youth in the process of aging out of the foster care system in order to help them establish secure employment, housing, and access to adult benefits. Unfortunately the resources available to do this are very limited and these services do little to prevent at risk youth from initial involvement in sex work. There is also very little coordination with school officials to identify and provide essential services to this population.

There are however, examples of high quality programs operated by a variety of community based organizations that could serve as models.

Penny Lane Services,¹⁵³ which has offices in the Antelope Valley provides services to support families in crisis, supports foster youth transitioning out of care and provides substance abuse and mental health services as well as employment support. However, they do not offer housing or direct income supports or early intervention for youth at risk of involvement with sex work.

United Friends of Children¹⁵⁴ provides resources to foster youth and youth on probation to help

them secure housing, employment and essential services. This is a strong community based model, but it lacks capacity and doesn't serve youth who aren't in foster care or on probation.

My Life Choice¹⁵⁵ is a Boston based organization that provides services to youth from a peer to peer basis. They provide a broad range of prevention and treatment programs, and engage in policy advocacy to improve access to services for young people. While the focus is on survivors they also engage in prevention measures such as trainings on identifying warning signs and providing appropriate referrals.

Ideally, schools should have on-going relationships with agencies that provide both preventative services for at risk young people and specialized services for those who have been involved in sex work and need a way out.

SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

Mass school shootings have been a major justification for the expansion and maintenance of school policing. The Columbine school shooting in suburban Denver in 1999 played a key role in expanding school policing. What few know, however, was that there were armed school police on the campus when that school shooting began. Since then, school police have failed to prevent additional shootings such as the Parkland High School shooting in Florida in 2018 or intervene successfully once they begin, such as in Uvalde, Texas in 2022.

Mass shootings in schools, while incredibly tragic, remain extremely rare, hard to predict, and difficult to prevent. The presence of armed police in schools has done nothing to address the problem and may even make it worse. Over the last 12 years, 70 students have been fatally shot in a school building or about 6 per year and most of these occurred in only 5 incidents. While this is a terrible toll, it means that the chances of a young person being killed in a school shooting

¹⁵² "Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth (CSECY)." n.d. Department of Mental Health. <https://dmh.lacounty.gov/our-services/transition-age-youth/csecy/>.

¹⁵³ "Penny Lane Centers." n.d. www.pennylane.org. <https://www.pennylane.org/>.

¹⁵⁴ "United Friends of the Children - Empowering Foster Youth since 1979." n.d. United Friends of the Children. <https://www.unitedfriends.org/>.

¹⁵⁵ "My Life My Choice." n.d. My Life My Choice. <https://www.mylifemychoice.org/>.

is about 1 in 10 million.¹⁵⁶ It is a terrible mistake to build an entire security apparatus around this for two reasons. First, policing has not proven successful at preventing these shootings and second, school police can themselves place a huge burden on students. School police also kill and injure students, subject them to humiliations, harassment, and sexual assaults, instill fear, and drive too many young people out of school and into the criminal justice system.

The majority of school shootings are committed by current and former students, not intruders or outsiders.¹⁵⁷ In most of these cases, someone in the school community was aware that there was a threat. The people who knew there was a danger either failed to report it, or reported it and no meaningful action was taken by authorities. The fact is that policing is a reactive enterprise that has few tools to prevent these kinds of incidents from occurring.

While no intervention will provide complete security, we should focus on putting early warning and prevention systems in place to dramatically reduce the likelihood of these incidents. The most important intervention is to create a healthy and trusting school atmosphere in which students feel safe bringing their concerns about their own well being and threats to the school to the attention of teachers and administrators without fear that they or their fellow classmates will be ignored or criminalized. Tip lines are also being used in several areas to provide students with a way to report their suspicions.¹⁵⁸ These programs have shown success in reducing gun violence and suicides.¹⁵⁹ We must use caution, however, because if this merely triggers a law enforcement response, it will be unlikely to get young people to use it.

We also need stronger partnerships between

schools, families, community institutions, and healthcare providers. Together these institutions provide a web of protection that can help identify potential threats and take proactive steps to reduce the likelihood of school shootings. Parents, clergy, and doctors should all be seen as resources in identifying and addressing potentially threatening behavior and should be in communication with school officials. This requires creating a regularized system of information sharing and putting in place procedures for responding to threats with both greater target hardening and more therapeutic interventions. It means doing more to bring the community into the classroom, which would be aided by a community schools model that builds relationships with families and community based service providers.

Among the steps that can be taken are implementing programs like the Preventing Aggression in Schools Everyday program (PRAISE)¹⁶⁰ from Philadelphia which promotes a positive school environment in ways that attempt to reduce everyday aggressive behavior like bullying that contribute to emotional distress and isolation, which are linked to school shootings.¹⁶¹ We also need to reduce the isolation some students feel because of academic failure, bullying, problems at home, etc. When students are actively encouraged to be part of the school community they are more likely to seek help when in crisis and to report threatening behavior among their peers. Finally, we need to radically expand access to high quality culturally appropriate mental health services and to link them to services provided in the community so that there is continuity of care and awareness of potential threats.

156 Fox, James Alan. 2022. "We've Taught Kids to Fear School Shootings. But Lost Sight of How Uncommon They Are." USA TODAY. January 14, 2022. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2022/01/14/school-shooter-drills-terrify-students/9106629002/>.

157 "Charts & Graphs." n.d. CHDS School Shooting Safety Compendium. <https://www.chds.us/ssdb/charts-graphs/#shootersaffiliation>.

158 John, Monique. 2023. "Cumberland County Schools Says Digital Hotline Is Helping Save Its Most Vulnerable Students." ABC11 Raleigh-Durham. September 26, 2023. <https://abc11.com/cumberland-county-schools-sandy-hook-promise-say-something-anonymous-reporting-system-school-safety-app/13831907/>.

159 Chatterjee, Rhitu. 2024. "'Say Something' Tip Line in Schools Flags Gun Violence Threats, Study Finds." NPR. January 17, 2024. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2024/01/17/1225093182/anonymous-tip-lines-school-gun-violence-pediatrics>.

160 "Preventing Aggression in Schools Everyday." n.d. Center for Violence Prevention. <https://violence.chop.edu/preventing-aggression-schools-everyday>.

161 "Preventing Aggression in Schools Everyday." n.d. Center for Violence Prevention. <https://violence.chop.edu/preventing-aggression-schools-everyday>.