



Platform for Positive School Discipline in New York City Schools

The Dignity in Schools Campaign-New York is a coalition of students, parents, advocates and educators calling for positive, school-wide approaches to discipline that improve school climate and increase learning.

Research shows that current school discipline policies which rely on suspensions, widespread police presence, and other punitive practices do not reduce conflict, and instead increase the likelihood that students will fall behind, drop out and/or become incarcerated. Punitive policies disproportionately affect low-income students of color and students with disabilities. These practices have a negative impact on school climate by undermining positive relationships between students and trusted adults and contributing to conflict on school campuses.

The Dignity in Schools Campaign-NY works to reduce suspensions and school-based arrests and implement positive alternatives to protect students' human rights to education and dignity. Our goal is to create safe and supportive school climates in all New York City public schools without the need for school police or metal detectors, where young people are not suspended and removed from class, and where teachers and students have training and support to prevent and resolve conflicts in positive ways. The NYC Department of Education has taken steps to change the Discipline Code and offer training, but there is still much more to be done.

Therefore, we call on the Mayor, the New York City Department of Education, the New York State Education Department, and City and State legislators to:

1. Implement and fund positive school-wide discipline policies in all schools by incorporating approaches such as restorative practices, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and peer mediation.

- a. **Begin implementation in the highest need schools** by providing resources, training and technical assistance for schools.
- b. **Fund, designate, and train a staff person in each school**, beginning with the highest need schools, to serve as a Restorative Discipline Coordinator who will help develop and oversee implementation of a school-wide plan, and provide ongoing support and coordination for teachers and students.
- c. **Require training for all teachers, principals, counselors, school aides**, and other support staff on how to implement positive interventions, and engage students, parents and educators to help design and lead the trainings.
- d. **Consult regularly with students, parents, and other community members** about the development of school discipline, climate, and safety practices to involve the entire school community.

- e. **Create and train a Restorative Discipline Team at the NYC DOE** to ensure that schools are implementing and sustaining positive school-wide discipline policies, and to provide technical assistance and support.

Highest need schools include schools that are heavily policed, schools with metal detectors, cameras, and large numbers of School Safety Officers, schools with high suspension, expulsion, and arrest rates, schools with a population of students at risk of dropping out, and Impact Schools. They also include schools in low income communities of color, where we see a correlation between the criminalization of students inside and outside of schools.

2. Reduce suspensions by no less than 50% by September 2013, eliminate suspensions of more than 10 days, and reduce school-based arrests by revising the Discipline Code, Chancellor's Regulations, and other policies.

- a. **Require the use of positive interventions**, such as mediation, counseling, restorative circles or fairness committees, *instead of suspensions* except where suspensions are required by law.
- b. **Adopt a policy that schools must take certain steps before they can suspend a student**, such as using positive interventions, or meeting with the student and/or the student's guardian to discuss disciplinary options.
- c. **When a student returns from a suspension, require that schools provide academic support and implement positive interventions** to reintegrate the student into the school community.
- d. **Require schools to strictly uphold students' due process rights** and provide remedies for violations of those rights.
- e. **Decriminalize students by minimizing police presence and arrests**, eliminating use of metal detectors in schools, and giving schools control over school safety.

3. Monitor the use of suspensions, removals, arrests and positive interventions in all schools.

- a. **Hold schools accountable for reducing high suspension and arrest rates**, not through punitive measures, but by providing technical assistance and support to implement positive approaches.
- b. **Ensure that schools do not use suspensions in cases prohibited by the Discipline Code**, such as wearing a hat and other infractions under Level 1 of the Discipline Code.

Members of the Dignity in Schools Campaign-New York include: Advocates for Children of New York, Center for Community Alternatives, Children's Defense Fund-New York, Coalition for Gender Equity in Schools, Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), Future of Tomorrow, Make the Road New York, Mass Transit Street Theater, National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI), New Settlement Apartments Parent Action Committee, New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), Pumphouse Projects, Sistas and Brothas United, Teachers Unite, Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC), Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, Youth on the Move and Youth Represent.

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