



**ONE STEP AT A TIME:
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
SCHOOL COMMUNITY TO
IMPROVE SAFETY**

YOUTH
JUSTICE
BOARD

A Project of the Center for Court Innovation

Youth Justice Board

This publication was written by the Youth Justice Board. Launched in January 2004, the Youth Justice Board is a team of young people from throughout New York City who study and propose solutions to public safety issues. The Youth Justice Board brings youth voices into the public debate on topics—like juvenile justice and school safety—that most affect New York City teenagers.

The Youth Justice Board is a project of the Center for Court Innovation, a public-private partnership between the New York State Unified Court System and the Fund for the City of New York that works to improve public confidence in justice. The recipient of an Innovations in American Government Award from the Ford Foundation and Harvard University, the Center is an independent, non-partisan think tank that works to reduce crime, aid victims, and strengthen neighborhoods. The Center's demonstration projects include the award-winning Red Hook Community Justice Center and Midtown Community Court.

The Youth Justice Board is supported by the Surdna Foundation, W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation, W.T. Grant Foundation, the Helena Rubinstein Foundation, the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, and the New York City Council.

Points of view and opinions in this document are the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Center for Court Innovation or the above named foundations.

January 2006

The cover photo and all photos in this report were taken by the members of the Youth Justice Board over the course of the 2005-2006 school year.

Dear Reader,

Over the past few years, school safety has become a major issue with many perspectives and “solutions.” One perspective that hasn’t been fully explored is that of the youth who deal with the public school system everyday.

You might have the impression that school safety simply involves adding more cops and metal detectors, or that school safety strictly concerns “bad students.” However, the definition and concepts behind school safety are complex. A suspended student waiting weeks to be placed in a suspension center, tensions between schools sharing a campus, and a lack of after-school activities are among the many circumstances that contribute to the deterioration of a school’s safety conditions.

We, the Youth Justice Board, bring the voice of youth into the discussion. We are a group of 16 teenagers from high schools all over New York City who came together to explore the complicated issue of school safety. We want to improve our high schools—for ourselves, for other students, and for our younger siblings.

Our recommendations have resulted from looking at daily occurrences within our own schools. From this we realized that these problems can not be solved with just one solution, or a quick-fix approach. Things must be taken one step at a time, as our title suggests.

As a reader, you are already taking the first step by becoming more informed on the issue. Through this report, we hope that you will be encouraged to give us a helping hand in improving safety conditions in New York City high schools.

Sincerely,
The Youth Justice Board:

Eevee Cabrera, The Bronx Guild
Elizabeth Canela, Midwood High School
Kevin Cedeño, Adlai E. Stevenson High School
Tabetha Cody-Ritter, Acorn High School for Social Justice
George Espinal, Washington Irving High School
Victoria Fúnez, Townsend Harris High School
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Chrisana White, Midwood High School
Mandy Yeung, Stuyvesant High School
Maurice Young, Business Computer Applications
Entrepreneurship Magnet High School

A column of handwritten signatures in black ink, corresponding to the names listed on the left. The signatures are written in a cursive, personal style. From top to bottom, they appear to be: Evelyn Cabrera, Elizabeth Canela, Kevin Cedeño, Tabetha Cody-Ritter, George Espinal, Victoria Fúnez, Reynold Martin, Nelson Perez, Maria Prass, Victoria Richardson, Jordan Rivera, Zirida Sankar, Smaragda Theodoridou, Chrisana White, and Maurice Young.

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Executive Summary

What is the Youth Justice Board?

Launched in January 2004 by the Center for Court Innovation, the Youth Justice Board is an after-school program that brings together young people from throughout New York City to propose solutions to the public safety issues that affect them and their peers. The goal of the Youth Justice Board is to provide a credible vehicle through which young people, ages 14 to 18, have a voice in the debate about public safety policy in New York City. At the same time, the Youth Justice Board is a leadership development program that seeks to supplement classroom lessons with experiential learning, helping participants learn by doing rather than through books or lectures.

This year, 16 teenagers from high schools throughout the city investigated school safety. Over the course of 10 months, the Youth Justice Board met with school and law enforcement officials, interviewed experts in the field, conducted focus groups of their peers, interviewed staff and students in their schools, and researched best practices in school safety. Their analysis culminated in a set of policy recommendations that they will present directly to relevant officials. The goal of the Youth Justice Board is to suggest concrete, realistic reforms and to work collaboratively with decision makers to make a difference.

Guiding Principles

Based on their research, the Youth Justice Board identified two principles that are critical for safe schools:

Small things make a difference

While schools must obviously pay attention to serious incidents of misbehavior, on a daily basis it's the small things (a humiliating comment on the way to school, a shove in a crowded hallway) that make the difference between a school that feels safe and one that doesn't. Left unchecked, these incidents often escalate. Schools should respond to early signs of trouble by teaching students how to deal with conflict constructively. Schools should also make sure that they respond to small (and big) incidents in ways that help students stay connected to their schools instead of feeling punished and alienated.

The perception of fairness is crucial

We agree that there should be consequences for our actions, but in order for students to respect authority, students must feel they are being treated fairly. Students often think school rules are not applied uniformly. And several studies have shown that students of color are disciplined more often and more harshly than other students. In addition, a lot of times conflict in schools involves ethnic and racial tensions, gender stereotypes and the labeling of some students (by school staff and other students) as "troublemakers." Administrators need to do much more to actively fight all forms of discrimination in their schools.

Summary of the Youth Justice Board’s Recommendations

Building on these principles, the Youth Justice Board developed 10 specific recommendations, grouped into three action areas, to help reduce disruptive behavior, prevent crime, and improve the safety of New York City schools:

Action Area A: Make positive relationships a school safety priority.

1. Improve relationships between school safety agents and students by organizing joint activities and training agents to recognize and acknowledge positive behaviors as well as negative ones.
2. Build relationships among schools sharing the same campus by creating campus-wide councils and activities.
3. Help students feel connected to their schools through activities like poetry slams and community projects, organized by the students themselves, that focus on creative expression and strengthen the school community.

Action Area B: Expand responses to conflicts and negative behavior.

4. Designate an on-site Conflict Advisor who would teach students nonviolent ways to handle conflict, coach staff on strength-based responses to student misbehavior, and suggest appropriate disciplinary consequences to administrators.
5. Provide training to all school staff on methods to defuse problems when they first begin brewing.
6. Respond to fights with a problem-solving approach that helps students deal with the underlying issues and avoid fights in the future.
7. Assign suspended students a Suspension Counselor to help them keep up with homework, keep their parents informed about the suspension process, and ease the transition back to school.

Action Area C: Give students a bigger voice and keep them informed

8. Set up Student Safety Advisories that would give students a say in safety policies and establish an ongoing dialogue between students and adults.
9. Create simple, confidential, and meaningful procedures for students to report problems with the performance of staff and school safety agents, as well as commend outstanding behavior.
10. Add information to school report cards about the number of school safety agents and police officers assigned to a school, bullying incidents, and the school’s safety policies.

Introduction

What is school safety?

Each of us has our own perspective on school safety. However, we all believe that **school safety means being in a safe environment that is conducive to learning.**

Fights, gangs, and weapons are problems in our schools. But school safety is more than that. It is what students deal with on a daily basis, like bullying, threats, and taunts. It is the negative responses and attitudes we get from adults, the policies that make us feel like criminals, and the little things—like a security desk too far away from the school’s entrance—that contribute to students feeling unsafe in school.

All members of the school community bring different perspectives. When thinking about safety, parents might worry about their children being around armed police officers. Teachers are troubled by disrespectful and aggressive students, and principals may be concerned with the number of students they suspend. The New York Police Department (NYPD) and the Mayor’s office might focus on crimes committed and the amount of arrests made. The definition of school safety will continue to evolve as long as someone new speaks on it.

Although “school safety” is a broad term, we learned a lot from our interviews, focus groups, and other research about the specific incidents in schools that affect how safe a school feels. Below is a list of incidents we see occurring in our schools.

- Fights, including:
 - ◆ Gang fights
 - ◆ Fights between different ethnic groups
 - ◆ Physical and verbal fights between teachers and students
- Truancy
- Hostility between students and school safety agents
- Disagreement among school authorities on how to handle incidents
- Inappropriate sexual behavior by male staff towards female students
- Students treating *each other* unfairly based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, social group, and other differences
- Students being treated unfairly *by adults* based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, and other differences
- Weapons inside the school (such as guns, knives, and razors)
- Theft by students of other students’ property
- Tensions in crowded hallways and classrooms
- Bullying, harassment, and intimidation
- Students repeatedly getting into trouble
- Difficult and unsafe entrance and exit procedures

What is the impact of safety problems?

We might adapt to what's happening in our schools, but that does *not* mean we feel safe. Safety problems impact the whole school environment and detract from a school's main purpose: education. If you have a school environment that is unsafe, it means you must now deal with that issue instead of staying focused on learning. Instead of asking your child "What did you learn in school today?" parents ask "Did you see a fight today?" Once the safety of a school is in question, attention on education and other important activities such as arts and sports is pushed to the side, and it's too easy for a negative environment to take over. On the other hand, in an environment where students are welcomed and feel they are important, the school is a much easier place for them to learn.

School safety involves an academic environment where a student feels just as safe there as at home. It involves an environment where the student does not feel like he or she is in prison. Linkage to the school, as well as understanding the value he or she presents to it, is an important factor as well.

— Vicky, YJB member

"School is the extension of the community."

—SPARK counselor

Safety problems affect the entire school community. This includes anyone who is involved in or has a stake in how a school operates—students, principals, deans, assistant principals and teachers, school safety agents and their

supervisors, police officers in the schools, guidance counselors, support staff, parents, and any other people who are involved in a school's structure and activities. It also includes the neighborhood and communities involved in the school—for example, the neighborhood residents and businesses that are near the school, or the community students come from.

"Everything happens outside the school in an alleyway a couple of blocks away."

—Student

How did we come up with our recommendations?

The YJB program has four phases: Training, Fieldwork, Recommendation Development, and Presentation. We all met for the first time at a kick-off retreat in January 2005, and continued to meet twice a week for 10 months.

Training

One of our first—and most important—activities was coming up with our Community Practices. These practices were our guidelines for helping us work together and respect one another even when we disagreed.

To begin thinking about school safety, we explored what it means to feel safe and unsafe and factors that contribute to a safe or unsafe school environment (such as police presence, metal detectors, student/teacher relationships, and the neighboring

Some of our community practices

- Respect one another
- One person speaks at a time
- No put-downs
- Agree to disagree
- Be inclusive of others
- Keep confidentiality
- Don't hold grudges

community). We each created a “school profile”—a visual representation of the various factors in our individual schools. We also reviewed and discussed safety data from our schools, such as the number of suspensions and police-involved incidents. We found that we had a wide range of opinions and experiences with schools and safety.

Throughout the Training phase, we learned skills that we would use in our fieldwork—note-taking, listening, interviewing, and building confidence for interviewing or speaking in public. We also learned a lot of background information, such as how the school system works, the role of different agencies (the Mayor’s Office, the New York City Police Department, the Department of Education, non-profits, state agencies), and how policy is developed in New York City.

During Training, also we conducted group interviews with the Criminal Justice Coordinator’s Office, the Deputy Mayor’s Office, and a conflict mediation program.

Fieldwork

Our Fieldwork phase had four parts: group interviews, school-based interviews, focus groups, and literature review.

Group Interviews

First, we broke into teams of four members and conducted interviews. Each team designed the interview goals and questions, and conducted the interviews. Afterwards, the team wrote interview reports, presented information to the whole Board, and led discussions about what was learned. We interviewed government officials from the Department of Education (DOE), the New York City Police Department (NYPD), and the City Council, as well as research groups, advocacy groups, non-profits, and other students.

School-Based Interviews

Next, we conducted over 30 one-on-one interviews. We independently interviewed people in our schools—principals, deans, teachers, school safety agents, guidance counselors, social workers, and students. This way, the Youth Justice Board gathered information on how different administrators think of and deal with their school’s safety, what the security staff do about safety issues, what teachers and students think, and the personal experiences of the school staff.

We collected information from a range of different schools: schools with police, schools with safety technology (such as surveillance cameras and metal detectors), specialized schools, Impact Schools, smaller schools inside big schools, and schools that share a campus.

Focus Groups

Next, we conducted focus groups of:

- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth
- High-achieving students in Impact Schools
- Students who had been suspended
- Girls

We recruited participants for the focus groups and talked to potential participants about what to expect. We also designed the protocols of how each focus group would be run, and facilitated the conversations.

We decided on these groups because we thought they would help us understand the issues from important perspectives. And in the case of students who had been suspended, we were able to learn directly from students who had been through the suspension process and had ideas that are not usually heard.

Literature

Throughout the 10 months, we read articles, press releases, and independent research reports to expand our knowledge of school safety.

Recommendation Development

Our ultimate goal was to create policy recommendations. First, though, we had to define what the actual problems were. School safety is a broad issue—we had to find a focus for our recommendations. Through discussion and collaboration, we identified eight key problem areas that we wanted to address (see page 22 for a description of the problem areas). Then, we brainstormed ideas for recommendations. In some cases we learned of something a school was already doing that we wanted to see more schools do or that could be combined with a new idea to make it even better. Some ideas came from intense debate, and some came from inspiration. We went back to our initial work on what creates a safe environment, and we considered how each of our schools could better handle the problem areas. Also, we kept in mind the different perspectives of everyone involved—not just our points of view as students, but also those of teachers, administrators, and school safety agents.

We had more ideas than we could possibly include. To help us select what recommendations to focus on, we came up with criteria for our recommendations. Each recommendation had to meet at least some of these criteria:

- Impacts adults and students
- Impacts the most students
- Affects the students most in need
- Implementation is realistic/feasible
- Cost to implement is inexpensive and reasonable
- Brings in a new perspective
- Reflects our work
- Is convincing
- Creates opportunity for change

We then used the criteria to focus on just 10 recommendations. This was one of the hardest parts to complete because members felt strongly about certain issues and compromises had to be made. We worked for hours and hours throughout many days and finally came up with 10 recommendations that everyone agreed upon and felt were important.

Youth Justice Board Fieldwork

Interviews

New York City Department of Education

Office of School Intervention and Development

Elayna Konstan, Deputy to the Senior Counselor
Sandra Mummolo, Deputy to the Senior Counselor

Office of Youth Development and School-Community Services

Michele Cahill, Senior Executive
JoEllen Lynch, Executive Director
Shane Santo Mulhern, Chief of Staff

New York Police Department

School Safety Division

Audie Cruz, Associate School Safety Manager
Ramon F. Garcia, Director
Cynthia Francis, Lieutenant
Lawrence Mannion, Deputy Chief
Mark Moodie, Lieutenant
Gerald Nelson, Assistant Chief
Sheila Skinner, Associate School Safety Manager
Melissa White, School Safety Agent, PS 140

Office of Management Analysis and Planning

John K. Donohue, Deputy Inspector

Other Government Agencies and Elected Officials

The City of New York, Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator

Michele Sviridoff, Deputy Coordinator for Research and Policy
Jennifer Chalifoux, Juvenile Justice Counsel

The City of New York, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Policy

Gitte Peng, Education Policy Advisor

New York City Council

Emily Merrill, Chief of Staff, Council Member Eva Moskowitz, District 4 (Education Committee Chair)
Annabel Palma, Council Member, District 18

New York City Department of Probation

Associate Commissioner Pamela Hardy, Family Court Services
Audrey Wilson, Executive Assistant, former Supervising Probation Officer

Non-government Agencies and Organizations

Advocates for Children

Elisa Hyman, Deputy Director
Eve Madison, Attorney
Ana Espada, Advocate

CASES, Community Prep High School

Kareem Hendrix, Community Advisor, Youth Programs

Center for Court Innovation

Chris Watler, Program Manager, National Technical Assistance

Center for Employment Opportunities

Mindy S. Tarlow, Executive Director (former Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget)

Crown Heights Community Mediation Center, School Justice Center

Laura Fleisher, Program Coordinator, School Justice Center

The Door, Second Opportunity School

Susan Davis, Program Supervisor
Joel Alvin, Senior Counselor
Students

Educators for Social Responsibility, Metropolitan Area

Tom Roderick, Executive Director

Vera Institute

Ajay Khashu, Director of Research, The After School Corporation (formerly Senior Research Associate for the Vera Institute of Justice)
Annie Salsich, Program Associate, Vera Institute of Justice

Independent School-based Research

Interviews: principals, assistant principals, deans, school safety agents, teachers, students, and guidance counselors.

Bronx:

Adlai E. Stevenson High School
The Bronx Guild High School, Stevenson Campus
Mount St. Michael Academy

Brooklyn:

Acorn High School for Social Justice
Academy of Urban Planning, Bushwick Campus
James Madison High School
Midwood High School
Samuel J. Tilden High School

Manhattan:

School for the Humanities, Bayard Rustin Educational Complex
Mother Cabrini High School
Stuyvesant High School
Washington Irving High School

Queens:

Business, Computer Application and Entrepreneurship Magnet High School
Townsend Harris High School
William Cullen Bryant High School

Focus Groups

- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth
- High-achieving students in Impact Schools
- Students who had been suspended
- Girls

The Current Situation

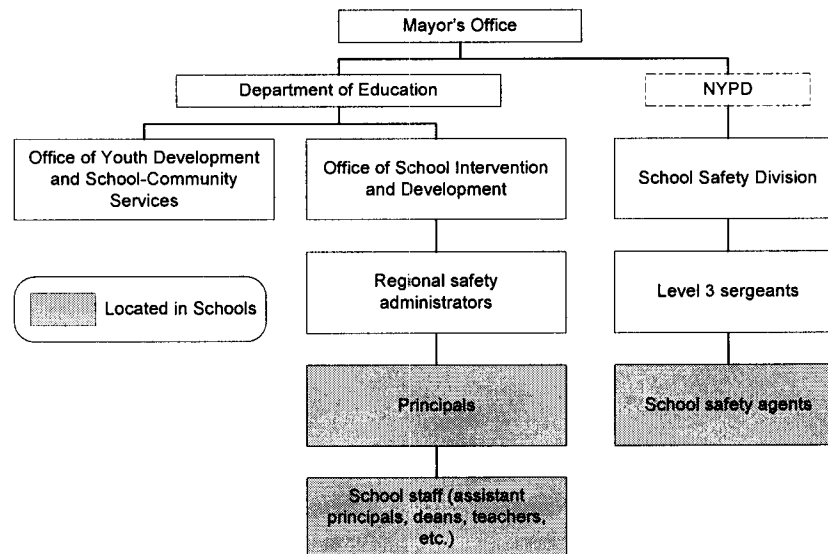
What follows is a summary of key information about New York City school system procedures and policies on school safety.

Some basic facts about New York City high schools:

- In fiscal year 2005, there were 293,019 high school students.¹
- In fiscal year 2005, there were over 16,000 criminal and non-criminal² incidents in all New York City public schools.³
- During the 2002-2003 school year, there were 15,916 suspensions in all New York City high schools.⁴

Who is responsible for the safety of our schools?

Below is a simplified organizational chart of the key offices and people responsible for the safety of New York City public schools. This is not a comprehensive chart, but a guide to some of the offices and people we reference in our report.



¹ The City of New York. Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor. "Mayor's Management Report Fiscal 2005". September 2005.

² Criminal incidents are incidents that result in an arrest. Non-criminal incidents are any incident when police are involved, but do not result in an arrest—such as investigations of incidents and safety emergencies.

³ The City of New York. Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor. "Mayor's Management Report Fiscal 2005". September 2005.

⁴ "Keeping Track of New York City's Children." Citizen's Committee for Children. February 2, 2006. <<http://www.ccnnewyork.org/aboutkt.html>>.

Department of Education

The Department of Education (DOE) is overseen by Chancellor Joel I. Klein.

Office of School Intervention and Development

The Office of School Intervention and Development is the central office responsible for the school system's approaches to safety and security. It works closely with the NYPD and other DOE offices to coordinate all policies on school safety. The office's responsibilities include assessing every school, approving each school's safety plan, and reviewing incident reports filed by principals and school administrators.

This office is also responsible for the publication and distribution of the Discipline Code. The Discipline Code specifies the range of disciplinary responses that schools can take for a variety of unacceptable behaviors and incidents. Behaviors are grouped into five levels; each level has a set of appropriate responses. To view an example of the Discipline Code, see Appendix A.

Regional Safety Administrator

The city's schools are divided into 10 regions, and each region has a regional safety administrator who reports to the Office of School Intervention and Development. The regional safety administrator works with local instructional superintendents and principals to determine what kind of safety assistance and emergency planning each school needs.

School Administration

The principal of a school has decision-making authority for disciplinary responses in the school. In many schools, the principal designates another administrator (often a dean or assistant principal) to be responsible for school safety. If there is a behavior or safety problem at a school, an adult who sees the incident (a teacher, a school safety agent, or other staff person) will bring it to the attention of the school administrator responsible for safety. The school administrator will then decide on the appropriate responses to be taken based on the Discipline Code. The administrator also files a report on the incident and response, and submits it electronically to the Office of School Intervention and Development. School administration does not have any authority over whether a student is arrested for a school incident.

Office of Youth Development and School-Community Services

This office's mission is to support schools in addressing students' developmental and academic support needs, as well as environmental, familial, and social challenges.⁵ Two examples of this office's responsibilities are guidance counseling and mental health

⁵ "Office of Youth Development and School-Community Services." NYC Department of Education. New York City Department of Education. December 15, 2005.
<<http://www.nycenet.edu/Administration/Offices/youthdev/default.htm>>.

services. This office is also responsible for supervising “out of school” suspensions—suspensions where students report to an education facility other than their own school.⁶

New York City Police Department

School Safety Division

The New York City Police Department (NYPD) has control of all security in New York City public schools. The NYPD’s School Safety Division is responsible for all non-school safety personnel and equipment in the schools.

School Safety Agent

School safety agents are civilian employees of the NYPD. They are stationed in every public school in New York City and are the safety staff students interact with most. (They are commonly referred to as the “security guards.”) Unlike police officers, school safety agents do not carry guns. School safety agents are responsible for:

- Patrolling entrances, exits, and pathways between school and transportation areas;
- Running any security technology (such as ID scanners, cameras, and metal detectors);
- Patrolling hallways and common areas;
- Checking student and staff ID; and
- Making arrests and calling in police officers when appropriate.

Level 3 Supervisor

The school safety agents in each school report to a NYPD sergeant, known as the Level 3 supervisor. Each Level 3 supervisor supervises all of the school safety agents in one or more schools, and decides where they are stationed within the school. The supervisor also works directly with the school administration to address safety issues.

School Safety Task Force

The School Safety Task force is made up of 200 uniformed police officers and supervisors. These officers are deployed in the schools with the most incidences of crime, and can be called to other schools as needed by school administrators or school safety agents. Non-task force police officers can also be called in to address safety incidents as needed.

Collaboration

Obviously, the NYPD and DOE must work together to address issues of safety. Their relationship was formalized about four years ago through a Memorandum of Understanding between the DOE and the NYPD. “We have a very strong cooperative

⁶ There are two kinds of suspensions. A Principal’s suspension is a period of suspension that runs one to five days, typically served in an “in-house” suspension facility. A Regional Superintendent’s suspension is a period of suspension that exceeds five days and may be as long as one year. Students serve their suspension in an off-site alternative educational facility.

relationship,” says Sandra Mummolo, Assistant to Senior Counsel, Office of School Intervention and Development, DOE. At the central level, the two departments collaborate in several ways, including DOE participation in school safety agent training and NYPD participation in safety assessments.

At the local school level, there are three kinds of meetings:

- Daily safety meetings. Principals, assistant principals or deans of security, and the Level 3 supervisor discuss the previous day’s incidents and absences. Deployment of the school safety agents is discussed among all present, but the final decision is made by the Level 3 supervisor.
- Campus meetings. When more than one school occupies a building or a campus, the principals from all the schools get together once a week to discuss building and campus safety issues.
- Monthly safety meetings. Once a month, the principal and Level 3 Sergeant meet with the local NYPD precinct to discuss safety issues. Also invited to these meetings are local businesses, neighborhood organizations, and the school’s parent coordinator.⁷

Safety information for each school

Each year, the DOE publishes a “School Report Card” for every public school based on guidelines set by the New York State Education Department (which requires report cards for all schools in New York state). Data that are published include test scores, attendance rates, extracurricular activities provided, and student demographics.⁸ For schools that share a campus or building, the information is presented by location, not the individual schools. School safety related data includes:⁹

- Principal’s suspensions (suspensions that run one to five days and can be served within the school).
- Number of police department incidents—any time the police are called in or when on-site officers make a report, including:
 - ♦ Number of “major crimes”—the most serious personal and property crimes, such as burglary, grand larceny, murder, rape, robbery, and felony assault.

⁷ The Parent Coordinator is a DOE staff position. For each school, the Parent Coordinator is intended to be parents' first stop in their search for information about their child's school, the system in general, or for issues or concerns which need to be addressed at the school. "Parent Coordinators" NYC Department of Education. New York City Department of Education. <<http://www.nycenet.edu/NR/exeres/2402B42E-8417-485E-9C08-F0DD6E5EB0EF.htm>>.

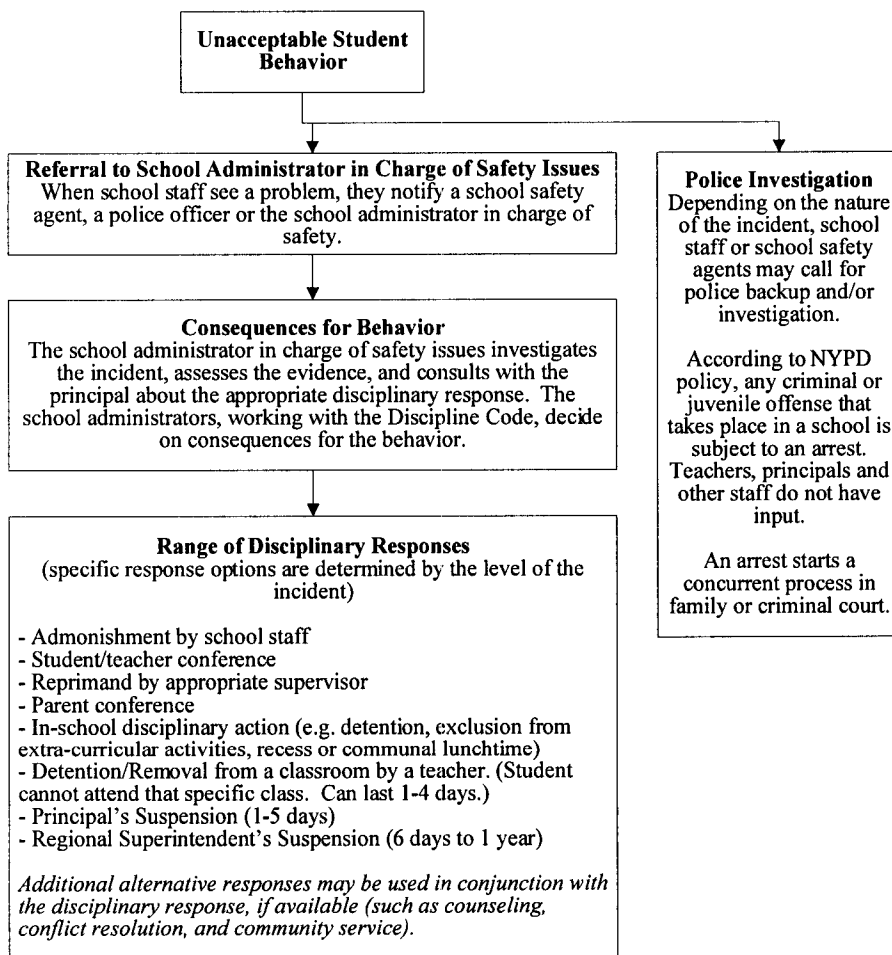
⁸ "Annual School Report Cards." NYC Department of Education. New York City Department of Education. December 21, 2005. <<http://www.nycenet.edu/Parents/Essentials/CurriculumInformation/SchoolReportCards.htm>>.

⁹ "School Location Incident Data For 2003-2004 As Reported By The NYPD School Safety Division." NYC Department of Education. New York City Department of Education. December 21, 2005. <<http://www.nycenet.edu/ourschools/SchoolSafety.htm>>.

- ◆ Number of “other crimes”—including arson/explosion, misdemeanor assault, criminal possession or sale of a controlled substance, criminal mischief, reckless endangerment, sex offenses, and weapons possession.
- ◆ Number of “non-criminal incidents”—actions that are not crimes but are disruptive to the school environment, such as disorderly conduct, harassment, loitering, possession of dangerous instruments, and trespassing.

What happens when there is an incident?

Below is a simplified representation of what happens when a student does something that breaks the Discipline Code at school.



What are current school safety strategies?

School Safety Initiative

There was a rash of very high profile school disturbances toward the end of 2003, and after decreasing steadily for several years, major crimes in schools increased by 11 percent from fiscal year 2003 to fiscal year 2004.¹⁰ Mayor Bloomberg convened a team to study the situation—the team included people from the DOE, the New York City Department of Probation, the Mayor’s Criminal Justice Coordinator’s office, and the NYPD, among others. As a result of the study, in January 2004 DOE Chancellor Klein and Mayor Bloomberg announced a new School Safety Initiative. The main points of the policy initiative were:

- The creation of Impact Schools. Using NYPD data on school crime, the schools with the most police incidents and other warning signs (such as poor attendance) were identified. In 2003, 12 schools were labeled Impact Schools—these 12 schools were responsible for 13 percent of all major crimes in city schools in 2003, but only represented one percent of the student population.¹¹ An intervention team was created for each Impact School. Using a “best practices” checklist, the team conducted an in-depth assessment to identify the specific problems and needs of the school. The assessment focused on more than 100 variables including entry and exit procedures, hallway conditions, Discipline Code enforcement, passing between classes, school facilities, and detention and suspension rooms.¹² Then the team developed a school safety strategy plan for the school that included:
 - ♦ Enhanced security technology such as metal detectors, ID scanners, and surveillance cameras.
 - ♦ Increased number of police officers and school safety agents (150 new officers were assigned across the first 12 Impact Schools).
 - ♦ Closer ties between Impact Schools and local NYPD precincts.This assessment process has been expanded, and is being conducted in all public schools.
- More rigorous enforcement of the Discipline Code.
- Revised responses to “problem students.” The DOE tried to streamline its responses to students with the most disciplinary problems, making it easier for administrators to suspend or transfer those students who repeatedly commit serious infractions.

¹⁰ The City of New York. Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor. "Mayor's Management Report Fiscal 2004". September 2004.

¹¹ The Impact List was revised in April 2004 and in January 2005. If a school improves significantly it is removed from the list. Other schools have been added. Since the inception of the list there have been 22 Impact Schools and there are currently 11 schools on the list.

¹² New York City Department of Education (January 3, 2005). *Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein, and Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly present progress report for first year of school safety initiative.* Press release.

- Streamlined Regional Superintendent's suspension process.¹³ Changes attempted to streamline the suspension process to reduce delays and provide more alternative education facilities.

Safety Technology

A variety of safety technology is used in schools, including:

- Security cameras
- ID scanners
- Metal detectors (similar to the equipment used at airports)
- Bag screening (similar to the equipment used at airports)
- Wand metal detectors (handheld devices)

Currently, 155 NYC public schools have security cameras, and 82 schools have metal detectors. According to Deputy Inspector John Donohue, every morning more than 100,000 students are scanned in 90 minutes. For each school, the DOE and NYPD collaborate to determine what technology is needed. NYPD provides and maintains all safety technology.

Results

The first year of the School Safety Initiative, January 2004 to January 2005, showed the following results:

- In the Impact Schools, robberies fell 68 percent, felony assaults dropped 38 percent, and weapons offenses declined by 76 percent.¹⁴
- Across all NYC schools, major crimes dropped by 3 percent.¹⁵
- In the Impact Schools there was 31 percent increase in Principal's suspensions (one to five days) and a 41 percent increase in Regional Superintendent's suspensions (six days to one year) as compared to the first four months of the previous school year.¹⁶
- It is unclear from the available data whether the School Safety Initiatives resulted in an increase in juvenile arrests. But anecdotally, attorneys who represent youth—such as the Legal Aid Society and Advocates for Children—reported an

¹³ A Regional Superintendent's Suspension is a period of suspension that exceeds five days and may be as long as one year. A student may be given a Superintendent's suspension when a principal believes that the student is so disruptive that s/he prevents the "orderly operation of classes or other school activities" or poses a "clear and present danger of physical injury" to him/herself or others. If the suspension is upheld, the student must be provided an alternative education - often at an off-site facility. Advocates for Children. "High School Superintendent's Suspension Guide for Parents of NYC Public High Schools." New York: Advocates for Children.

¹⁴ New York City Department of Education (January 3, 2005). *Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein, and Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly present progress report for first year of school safety initiative.* Press release.

¹⁵ The City of New York. Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor. "Mayor's Management Report Fiscal 2005". September 2005.

¹⁶ New York City Department of Education (January 3, 2005). *Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein, and Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly present progress report for first year of school safety initiative.* Press release.

increase in the number of school-related cases for minor offenses. For example, students who fight in a school may now be more likely to be arrested for assault, and a student who takes another student's notebook may be arrested for robbery.¹⁷

In the second year of the School Safety Initiative:

- In the Impact Schools, data showed a drop in incidents: major crimes dropped 26 percent, minor crimes have dropped 26 percent, and non-criminal incidents have dropped eight percent.¹⁸

According to a report released in August 2005 by a joint committee of school, city and police officials, the number of non-criminal incidents at the original Impact Schools initially increased after the implementation of the Impact strategy.¹⁹ (Incidents included cheating, disrupting class and harassment.) These numbers have since dropped, and do not imply that the Impact strategy caused more incidents. However, the data “highlight how troubled the most dangerous schools were beyond serious crime, and suggest that schools without the extra officers may be experiencing similar problems.”²⁰

The School Safety Initiative has clearly helped reduce crime at some of the most troubled schools. However, more work needs to be done to improve the safety of all of our schools. The current strategies don't do enough to address the full range of safety problems, particularly at non-Impact Schools. In addition, some of the solutions themselves have created some negative consequences that must be addressed. These issues are outlined in our next section.

¹⁷ Albrecht, Leslie. "Cracking Down on Shaquanna: Mayor's School Safety Initiative Affects Kids." *Columbia Journalism News*. 2005.

¹⁸ Andreatta, David. "'Dirty' Gettin' Clean." *New York Post*. January 13, 2006: 15.

¹⁹ Saulny, Susan. "Noncrime Disturbances Rise at Tough Schools." *The New York Times*. August 3, 2005: Metropolitan Desk.

²⁰ Ibid.

What Are the Problems?

We looked at the information from our research—the interviews, the focus groups, our school-based research, reports, articles, and our own experiences—and decided to focus on some specific problem areas. School safety is a broad and complicated issue and we recognize that each school has its own set of challenges. But we found that some issues really stood out.

Major conflicts between students are often preceded by minor incidents

Negative student behavior usually escalates from minor conflicts to major ones. Minor conflicts can begin with a minor push or an evil stare. At this early stage, if there is no intervention by the people involved or an outside party, the conflict will likely increase and only gets worse. Sometimes tensions escalate quickly over a single day and sometimes it takes days or weeks to build up to a physical fight.

Fights are a good example of negative student behaviors that are the result of earlier conflicts. Students fight because of tensions, arguments, misunderstandings, bullying, theft, or to protect their reputations. To reduce unwanted behavior, we have to prevent this escalation and address underlying problems. Sometimes, what is seen as a problem is actually a response to something else. For example:

- Bullying makes students want to carry weapons to school and puts everyone—especially victims—on edge.
- Students are often pressured to fight because of their reputations and because of gossip.
- Theft in school makes students feel uneasy and unsafe.

“I don’t feel safe when someone else is threatening. School safety agents don’t stop it in some cases, but do in other cases.”

—Student in our focus group

“[Non-criminal incidents like cheating, disrupting class and schoolyard harassment are] the more everyday problems that make school very dysfunctional,” said City Councilwoman Eva S. Moskowitz, the chairwoman of the Council's Education Committee. “High-profile crime is a concern, but so are the shoving matches and fights that break out where the police aren't necessarily called.”²¹

During our research, there was a violent fight at one of our schools. An overage senior girl was stabbed by a younger girl. The fight made the papers, and the school got lots of negative attention. We broke down the incident into three stages:

²¹ Saulny, Susan. "Noncrime Disturbances Rise at Tough Schools." *The New York Times*. August 3, 2005: Metropolitan Desk.

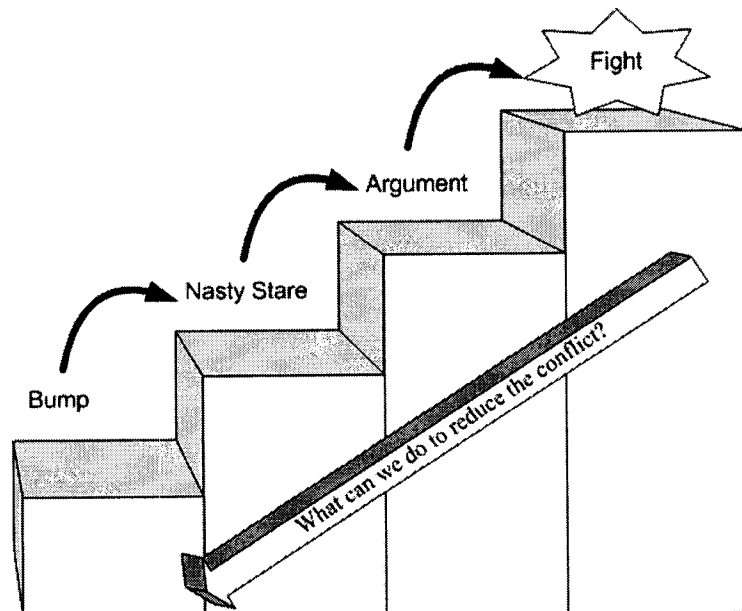
- **The History:** Before the fight that resulted in a stabbing, there was a history of bullying, verbal arguments, and an escalation of conflict between the two students that had grown over the course of years.
- **The Incident:** During the fight, no one seemed to intervene, although it took place in multiple hallways and in the stairwell.
- **The Response:** After the incident, the girl who did the stabbing was removed from the school and more police were brought into the school the next day.

We thought about how the incident could have been prevented, how the actual moments of the fight could have been handled, and how we would have liked authorities to respond. There are a lot of ways that this incident—and more common incidents such as fights—might be handled differently.

We used the metaphor of an escalator to describe how tensions can grow from small problems to major conflicts.

It's easier for people to go up the escalator than to come down. But we believe that there are definitely ways to help people go down the escalator, preventing major incidents from happening.

Through our recommendations, we want to focus on preventing and changing negative student behavior.



Too often, school safety agents and students don't get along

School safety agents play a major role in keeping the school safe and are an important part of the school community. They are usually the first adults students see during the school day, and teachers and other school staff rely on them to keep the school safe.

However, we repeatedly heard from students, school staff, and advocates that there are often tensions between school safety agents and students. Many students don't respect, trust, or take school safety agents seriously. Many students won't go to them when there is a problem. There are also a lot of misperceptions about what school safety agents

should and shouldn't be doing, and what is expected of students. On the other side, school safety agents feel they have a hard time doing their job properly.

We investigated why these two groups have tensions. Students reported:

- ...school safety agents are too aggressive, yell at them, and don't show them respect. For example, when school safety agents scan students, they shout "Take off your Belt!" or "Take out your I.D.!" Students characterize many school safety agents always yelling, even if students aren't doing anything wrong.
- ...some school safety agents interact with students with favoritism and targeting—showing preferential treatment to some students, and unfairly giving other students a hard time.
- ...inappropriate behavior between male school safety agents and female students, such as flirting and sexual attention.

City Council members Palma and Moskowitz also told us that these are frequent complaints they hear in their districts.

From the school safety agents, we heard:

- ...students don't follow school policies.
- ...students don't treat them with respect. (Students call them "flashlight cops," for example.)

When students don't listen to them and don't respect their authority, it makes their jobs harder.

Many students can also identify school safety agents they respect and trust. When students talked about those positive relationships, they said that the school safety agents were respectful, were not as negative in tough situations, and sometimes had things in common with the students like hobbies or coming from the same community. But students stressed that they didn't want school safety agents to act like their friends—just to be respectful while still being in a position of authority.

We also heard about tensions between school safety agents and other school staff. Some principals are frustrated that school safety agents are a part of the NYPD system, not employees of the DOE. This means principals may have rules or strategies that conflict with what school safety agents understand to be their responsibilities. Administrators at one school told us that they invited schools safety agents to participate in school-wide meetings on school safety and other school events, but that agents were told by their supervisor that they could not attend. Also, there have been incidents where school safety agents were supposed to arrest a student, but the principal wanted to handle the matter by using school disciplinary procedures, creating a conflict over authority. This creates tension among adults within the school, and students respond to that tension.

"Some of the things that affect school safety are inconsistent application of the school rules and poor communication between the stakeholders and the school safety agents."

—Principal

Bias, prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination impact safety

At school, not only do we receive an academic education but we also learn morals, lessons, and hopefully see role models. However, school environments are full of prejudices and biases—and behaviors that are influenced by them.

Students see examples of this through all aspects of school life:

- Students fight because of groups they identify with. According to our experience and the experiences of other youth we spoke to, in some schools it feels inevitable that ethnic groups will keep fighting each other, or that specific groups within a school will always threaten each other.
- Students see preferential treatment based on race or ethnicity. For example, focus group participants stated that the Hispanic school safety agents would show favoritism to Hispanic students and the same with Black school safety agents and Black students, causing students to mistrust school safety agents who are “different” from themselves.
- Students are treated differently by school staff based on their reputation. For example, suspended students reported (and other students agreed) that they were subject to negative assumptions and stigmas once they returned to their home school. They said this affected their behavior, treatment, and academic performance.
“You get suspended, teachers look at you like, oh, yeah, he’s the bad guy because he got suspended or whatever. But I don’t worry about that, I just try to do my thing.”
—Student in our focus group
- Girls are subjected to sexual attention by male adults.
- Boys face social pressure to “act tough” and “like a man” by fighting.
- Neighborhood residents near a school distrust students because of class and racial stereotypes, and tensions rise—especially when students are walking between school and subway stations.
- A study by the National Center for Schools and Communities at Fordham University found that New York City schools with a high percentage of minority and low-income students are likely to have fewer resources, such as books, computers, and qualified teachers. It found a relationship between lack of resources and negative student behavior, such as poor attendance and misconduct.²²
- One study of Impact Schools found that the average Impact School, relative to the average city high school, had: more students over-age for their grade, a more heavily poor and black student population, a much larger student body, an

²² Eskenazi, Michael, Gillian Eddins, and John M. Beam. "Equity or Exclusion: The Dynamics of Resources, Demographics, and Behavior in the New York City Public Schools." National Center for Schools and Communities, Fordham University, October 2003.

- increase in overcrowding, and less per capita spending on direct services to students and a smaller increase in this spending.²³
- Studies have consistently found that school suspension is disproportionately used for minority students. One study found that the chances of suspension for African Americans were more than twice as high as those for whites or Asians and Pacific Islanders.²⁴ African American students are more frequently subjected to harsher disciplinary responses, and less likely to receive less punitive alternatives when referred for a disciplinary issue. According to researchers, it's not that minority students have "worse" behavior, but that more often school staff will respond to that behavior with a referral to administration. Studies have also shown that students are aware of this disproportionate response.²⁵
 - Teachers from non-minority backgrounds may respond to stereotypes or might misunderstand the physical and verbal communication styles of African American students, leading to increased tensions and more referrals to administration.²⁶

Bias and discrimination can exacerbate or cause conflicts between students or between students and adults, and erode feelings of respect and trust. Problems of prejudices and discrimination need to be considered when creating school safety policies.

Inadequate physical conditions set the stage for conflict

The physical structure of a school has a big impact on safety issues. Also, a new initiative—creating small schools—is changing how some school buildings are being used. The Department of Education is reforming many large, traditional middle and high schools by replacing them with small schools of no more than 500 students. (By 2007, the Department of Education plans to open 200 small schools in New York City.²⁷)

One result of this initiative is the creation of "campuses"—a building or facility that houses more than one school. Frequently, when a small school is created it is located on a campus with other small schools. It is also sometimes on a campus with a large school, that may be an Impact School. Currently, about 45 percent of all New York City secondary and high schools share a facility.²⁸

We focused on three consequences of the schools' physical structures that have a significant impact on safety:

²³ Drum Major Institute for Public Policy. "A Look At The Impact Schools." June 2005.

²⁴ Thomas M. Smith. "The Condition of Education, 1997." National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. June 1997.

²⁵ Russell J. Skiba, Robert S. Michael, Abra Carroll Nardo and Reece Peterson. "The Color of Discipline: Sources of Racial and Gender Disproportionality in School Punishment." Indiana Education Policy Center and University of Nebraska-Lincoln. June 2000.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Fifty-three new schools were created in 2004 and another 52 schools will be created in the fall of 2006. The Council of the City of New York. Gifford Miller, Speaker. "Sharing Space: Rethinking the Implementation of Small High School Reform in New York City" August 2005.

²⁸ Ibid.

Overcrowding

Overcrowding is an important issue—we kept coming back to it as one of the central causes of safety problems in our schools. Some of the impacts are:

- Crowded hallways: In a packed school, just going from one class to another causes problems. Students experience a lot of pushing in the halls, are afraid they will be late and, as tensions rise, fights are likely to erupt. If students are late to class because of crowded hallways—and especially if they get in trouble for being tardy—they get angry or feel disrespected, and tensions increase in the classroom. Crowded hallways also make it easier for misconduct to go unnoticed or unchecked.
- Crowded entrances and exits: Overcrowded entryways make it harder for school safety agents to run necessary security procedures.
- Crowded classrooms: When classes are overcrowded it is harder for the teachers to manage the classroom and get to know their students, allowing class disruptions to occur more easily. (And in classrooms where there are not enough supplies, students are more likely to lose focus on the lessons.)

***“The larger the class,
the harder it is to
control the students.”***
—Teacher



A class meets in the gym, due to the lack of classroom space.

Physical Infrastructure



A school window is broken and covered by graffiti.

In our schools we see unsafe conditions such as dark stairwells, locked bathrooms, empty classrooms, and unguarded entrances. These problems—in addition to creating unsafe situations—send the message to students that the school is not cared for. Also, many of the students we spoke to who attend a school with scanning equipment reported long lines to get into school—many school buildings aren't designed to handle the lines and equipment, creating crowded and chaotic entrance procedures.

Shared Space

Campuses have yet to fully work out how to share space. Some problems we identified on campuses include:

- Schools can have different rules and security policies.
 - ♦ Principals sharing a campus can have different visions for how to manage the discipline of their individual schools so students, teachers, and administration sharing a campus work under different expectations.
 - ♦ School safety agents are assigned by campus and not by school, and therefore are faced with balancing different rules and school cultures.
 - ♦ Students regularly see there is confusion and conflicts between principals and school safety agents.
- Students resent perceived inequities. Students we spoke to who attend schools on a shared campus reported various sources of tension and conflicts between the groups, including:
 - ♦ The DOE has a system-wide ban on students bringing cell phones to school, but some schools allow cell phones as long as they are not used. Some schools allow students to bring cameras, art supplies, and other equipment—while another school in the same building bans them. Students see the disparity, and feel it's unfair.
 - ♦ Students in the small school resent that the larger school's negative reputation harms their image.
 - ♦ Students in the larger school see students in the small schools getting resources they don't.

- ♦ Students in the small schools see that the larger school may have more say in how common areas are used.
- ♦ Students notice and react to disparities in class size and the high proportions of special needs and English Language Learning students in larger schools as compared to the small schools.²⁹

Lack of respect between students and teachers creates a negative school environment

When we asked our peers whether they felt respected by adults—especially teachers—many said no. Lack of respect comes out in daily incidents, like when a teacher is agitated by a student and then yells at him. It results in the student feeling disrespected.

“Fear leads to respect.”
—Teacher

On the other hand, students lack respect for teachers as well. Students may sometimes be rude to an adult, to make himself look powerful in front of his friends. For example, a student will enter a classroom 15 minutes late and make a spectacle out of himself. The teacher is already upset the student is late, but then the entire class is distracted and the teacher’s authority is undermined.

“Deans don’t get respect if they don’t respect us.”

—Student from our focus group

Often, the problem is miscommunication. Many students assume teachers are making them feel bad when sometimes they are trying to reach out to them; teachers just may be doing it in a way that comes across as disrespectful. When someone feels disrespected by another it stays with them. They may choose to retaliate by disrespecting that person back.

When this goes back and forth between students and teachers, it affects the school environment. If students don’t respect teachers they may continually target these teachers by disrespecting them in front of other students, which makes classes even harder to control and teach. And since teachers also have responsibility for maintaining order outside the classroom, this winds up affecting how students respect their authority in hallways, cafeterias, and other areas of school. Students who feel that they are disrespected by teachers may refuse to go to any teachers for help because they don’t trust they will be treated fairly. This makes it hard to help students or intervene when there are problems.

²⁹ Ibid.

Not enough students are engaged in school

We also heard that in many schools students don't have pride in their school. They don't have the feeling "I belong to this school, and I'll be proud of both myself and the school I am attending." There are many reasons why this might happen. A bad reputation, poor educational services, lack of school activities, and not feeling safe were often mentioned by students and staff as causing negative feelings about a school. Unfortunately, for some students, being from a "bad" school is a source of pride—the only thing they feel they can boast about their school.

When students don't feel engaged by their school, negative behavior can increase. Students might start skipping school, they might not be involved in the school community (socially and academically), and they might have negative interactions with other students and with adults in the school.

On the other hand, a positive school culture can improve safety conditions. "Safe schools are characterized by a positive school atmosphere; have high levels of student, staff, and parent participation; have students who are attached to their school; and have clear and high expectations for student performance and behavior. Students have self-respect, mutual respect for each other, and appreciate diversity."³⁰ In our recommendations, we try to address school pride and engagement along with safety.

A lot of students say their schools feel like prisons

Many students, and some teachers, feel their schools have a prison-like environment. Students see their school as restrictive and punishing. We often heard students use the term "prison" or "jail" to describe how their school feels to them. The presence of police officers creates an environment of intimidation and their guns make many students nervous. And while school safety agents are not police officers, students often don't distinguish between the two. Students feel their privacy is invaded by safety technology like metal detectors and x-ray machines, especially if they go to a school where they must remove clothing and are patted down. Overall, many students feel mistrusted and presumed guilty.

"It is understandable not to want weapons in schools, but think of the psychological messages given off when a student spends three or four years going through metal detectors in high school."

—SPARK counselor

³⁰ "Caregivers' Guide to School Safety and Security." National Crime Prevention Council. October 6, 2005



A school safety agent at his post outside a school.

Difficulties with current safety strategies have a direct impact on how students feel about their school. When they see faulty safety technology and equipment, students worry and lose confidence in their school's safety system. When students have to wait in long lines to get through security, tensions increase (even more when they are late to class because of those lines). Also, every student we spoke to who attended a scanned school reported it was widely known how to get banned items past the metal detectors. This doesn't mean there shouldn't be scanning, but currently students don't have confidence in and respect for the existing system.

Now that school safety is the responsibility of the NYPD, incidents that might have been handled by school administration are now being handled by police and sometimes school-based incidents result in a police response. "Using a profanity, I'm not supposed to suspend a child for that," said [Bronx Guild] principal, Michael Soguero. "Yet an officer can issue a summons for that and even put a child in cuffs and call it disorderly conduct."³¹ Students don't distinguish between school safety agents and police officers—they respond to the general presence of uniformed officers in their school. In response, some youth and advocacy groups (such as the Prison Moratorium Project and the Urban Youth Collaborative) are mobilizing to have police officers removed from schools.

School safety means having a school with no metal detectors, no scanning or cameras. A school that you feel comfortable in with a safe learning environment that staff and students can bond in.

— Maurice, YJB member

As City Council member Annabel Palma noted in our interview with her, metal detectors and scanners can be useful in preventing weapons from getting into schools, but students shouldn't be subjected to humiliation in the process. Similarly, Council member Eva Moskowitz reported that students describe daily problems with school safety agents, long lines for scanning, throngs of police officers, and checkpoints in schools.³²

³¹ Bell, Dan. "Lockdown High: Inside the City's 'Impact Schools'." *City Limits WEEKLY*. June 13, 2005.

³² The Council of the City of New York. Eva Moskowitz, Chair, Education Committee. "From the Mouths of Babes: New York City Public School Kids Speak Out". May 9, 2005.

Not all students think increased police and technology are the problem—some think police help the schools get under control. Many students and staff feel safer because of police presence in their school. And scanning strategies do, in fact, catch a lot of weapons—we heard from the School Safety Division, for example, that scanning catches at least one gun every week. The results at the Impact Schools show that the strategy does reduce crime. But is there a way to make schools safer without students feeling like they are in a prison or being treated like criminals?

School safety is basically the overall environment of the schools. Students should ultimately feel as though there is nothing preventing their education. One should enter a school free of harassment, violation or the feeling of being incarcerated.
— Elizabeth, YJB member

One YJB member describes his experience entering his school: an Impact School with scanning and police officers.

“In the morning, we wait in line. We remove our belts, scarves, and hats. Three security guards are at the door with their radios. My pants are sliding off my waist, and my belt, coat, scarf, and hat occupy one hand while I swipe my ID with the other. Just before we approach the scanners there are two police officers standing with their hands on their guns. After I place my things on the baggage scanner I walk through the metal detector (with a sigh of relief that I completed my high school entry within 45 minutes). The police officer and school safety agent observing the metal detectors yell at me, “You! Go get scanned!” My heart races, not knowing why I am being singled out. The police presence gets stronger as I walk to where my body gets completely searched with “the wand.” The school safety agent grabs my hands and extends them and places his right foot between my legs and spreads them as he passes the wand across my body. The wand beeps near my left pocket. The school safety agent signals nearby police officers as he grabs the external portion of the jeans and commands me to remove the object. As I pull out the object—a forgotten pen with a metal cap—the school safety agent watches closely. He realizes that it’s just a pen and he calls off the surrounding police officers. I can finally go to my first class.”

Teachers and administrators would like more parent involvement

This was an issue of a lot of debate for us. According to principals, teachers, school safety agents, deans, and city officials, more parent involvement is needed. For example, if a student gets into trouble with a teacher for misbehaving, teachers sometimes want to work with the parent to respond to the problem. Some teachers and school administrators would prefer to work with the parent when deciding on a disciplinary response, and feel parents know how to discipline their children better than the schools and have a greater affect on their behavior. Several school staff we spoke to said that they want some sort of communication to happen with parents to keep them informed about their child. Research

has also documented that parental involvement improves a child's school performance and behavior.³³

Students, however, have conflicting opinions. Some high school students—including ourselves—feel that we should be able to handle our school life on our own because we are old enough and have earned that right. Many students don't want or think it's necessary to have their parents in their school life. Also, many of us believe that getting a parent involved can create more problems if the student and parents have a troubled relationship.

Also, although many parents would like to get involved, we see the difficulties they face. Many of our parents are tackling multiple jobs and it's hard to keep on top of their children. Sometimes, parents don't know how to get involved. And for a lot of parents, there is a language or cultural barrier between them and the school's administration.

Overall, we think it's possible to involve parents in a positive way, but it must be both helpful to the school and respectful of a high school student's need for independence.

³³ "The importance of parent involvement has been documented by many researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. A significant body of research (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Olmstead & Rubin, 1983) indicates that when parents participate in their children's education, the result is an increase in student achievement and an improvement of students' attitudes. Increased attendance, fewer discipline problems, and higher aspirations also have been correlated with an increase in parent involvement." Caplan, Judith, Greg Hall, Stephanie Lubin, and Robin Fleming. "Literature Review of School-Family Partnerships." North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. January 1997.

Our Recommendations

Based on all our research and discussions, the Youth Justice Board has developed a set of principles and recommendations for safer schools. We believe our schools would be much safer if these recommendations were implemented.

First, we think school safety policies should be guided by two principles:

Small things make a difference. While schools must pay attention to serious incidents, on a daily basis it's the small things (a humiliating comment on the way to school, a shove in a crowded hallway) that make the difference between a school that feels safe and one that doesn't. Left unchecked, these incidents often escalate. Schools should respond to early signs of trouble by teaching students how to deal with conflict constructively. Schools should also make sure that they respond to incidents in ways that help students stay connected to their schools, instead of feeling marginalized.

The perception of fairness is crucial. We agree that there should be consequences for our actions, but in order for students to respect authority, they must feel they are being treated fairly. Students often think school rules are not applied uniformly. And several studies have shown that students of color are disciplined more often and more harshly than other students. In addition, a lot of times conflicts in schools involve ethnic and racial tensions, gender stereotypes, and the labeling of some students (by school staff and other students) as "troublemakers." Administrators need to do much more to actively fight all forms of discrimination in their schools.

Action Area A: Make positive relationships a school safety priority.

1. Improve relationships between school safety agents and students.
2. Build relationships among schools sharing the same campus.
3. Provide more opportunities for student engagement and self-expression.

Action Area B: Expand responses to conflicts and negative behavior.

4. Establish a Conflict Advisor to support the entire school community in handling conflicts.
5. Train and support school staff to intervene when problems are brewing.
6. Respond to fights with a problem-solving approach.
7. Provide a Suspension Counselor to support suspended students.

Action Area C: Give students a bigger voice and keep them informed.

8. Set up Student Safety Advisories to give students responsibilities and a voice in their school's safety policies.
9. Create simple and meaningful ways for students to speak up on staff performance.
10. Add more information to school report cards and make them more accessible.

Action Area A: Make positive relationships a school safety priority.

Through our interviews and focus groups we heard again and again that students and adults regularly experience disrespect and miscommunication from each other. Also, when relationships between adults and students break down, well intentioned policies are less effective because students tend to ignore them. We need to improve relationships in our schools if we want schools to be safer.

When we spoke to senior staff at DOE and NYPD, they placed a lot of emphasis on the strong collaborative relationship between their staffs, and on the training that school safety agents receive to work constructively with students. Unfortunately, there seems to be a difference between the intention of policy makers and what actually happens in our schools.

In a safe school, “Each student has a trusting relationship with at least one adult at school, part of a general school-wide program of ‘connectedness.’”³⁴ We know from our own experience that when students respect their teachers, they’re more likely to be engaged in class, reducing classroom disruptions and conflicts. Adults that students have good relationships with recognize when students don’t act like themselves and notice when they are having problems or are worried. Students are more likely to go to these adults if they’re having a problem with another student. As we heard from Laura Fleisher, former coordinator of the School Justice Center in Brooklyn, the way adults speak to students influences how comfortable students feel reaching out to and talking with adults. (Adults tend to know the students who put themselves out there, who are involved in their school, or who are interested in class. But we also have to think about students who do not stand out or who stand out for negative reasons.)

Students also feel safer when they feel connected to other students and their school. Conflicts can be resolved more easily and without violence because students feel a responsibility to intervene in small conflicts themselves, stopping the problems from escalating.

“When people I care about is around me, I feel safe.”
—15 year old female student

Finally, when students want to go to class and are proud of their school they will keep trying to make it safe. They are less likely to “act out” in class and more likely to reinforce positive behavior. We heard from various interviews that positive relationships don’t just happen, even if the idea or intention is good—support and training for relationship building in the school community is needed.

³⁴ "Caregivers' Guide to School Safety and Security." National Crime Prevention Council. October 6, 2005.

Recommendation 1: Improve relationships between school safety agents and students.

Reason:

Imagine walking into school and having someone yell at you. How would this make you feel? What effect would this have on the rest of your day? Unfortunately, what we heard in our interviews and focus groups is that many students experience this every day. If a student has a conflict with a school safety agent, is late because of scanning, or feels unfairly treated, that affects how he or she treats other students and staff throughout the school day.

“We would like to have a more open relationship with the students. They shouldn’t be afraid to talk to me or any other school safety agent.”

—Level 3 supervisor

As we heard from the School Safety Division, the mission of the Schools Safety Agents is to keep the school safe—but they can’t do that if there is tension between them and students. Students and school safety agents usually interact only if there is a problem, which means students are going to be negative towards them as authority figures. Students also don’t always understand why school safety agents do what they do—students need to be better informed about what school safety agents are supposed to be doing and why.

We know that not all school safety agents are unfair or overly aggressive to students, and there are positive relationships between school safety agents and individual students. However, it only takes one or two poor agents to create a bad atmosphere.

“School safety agents should be friendlier towards students, and try to get to know all the students in the building.”

—Student

We feel by improving relationships between school safety agents and students, the overall school environment will be improved, and school safety agents and students can work together to make schools safer.

Implementation:

Change school safety agent training:

- Include students in NYPD’s school safety agent training. Right now, school safety agents role-play safety scenarios using other adults. Involve youth to give school safety agents more authentic behavior to respond to, and get feedback from actual students.
- Emphasize the use of positive reinforcement techniques. Studies show that saying or doing something positive after a student exhibits a desirable behavior can increase the

likelihood that the student will continue the behavior, seek additional positive support, and avoid future negative behaviors.³⁵

Build strategies at each school for ongoing communication and positive interactions.

- At the beginning of the year, and whenever there is a major change in safety procedures, conduct an assembly where school safety agents introduce themselves, their jobs, and their expectations. Include a lot of opportunity for students to ask questions.
- Organize activities where school safety agents and students can interact with each other, like a field day or school sports day. Or include and encourage school safety agent participation in school clubs and teams. For example, we learned how a probation officer helped coach a basketball team, giving students a chance to spend time with him in a positive setting—they learned to trust and respect him, and see him as more than just someone who responded when there is a problem with a student.
- Avoid rotating school safety agents between schools whenever possible.
- Each school should work with their students to come up with ideas (see page 56).



Students leave school while school safety agents observe from their post on the sidewalk.

School safety means having an environment of unification where the education of the students is the #1 priority. Mutual respect between administration, students, and school safety agents is shared and communication and respect is ALWAYS the key. When students can enter into school and get an "at home" atmosphere.

— Jordan, YJB member

³⁵ Ajay Khashu, Thomas Mariadason, Daniel Currie, and Robin Campbell. "Reinforcing Positive Student Behavior to Improve School Safety: An Evaluation of Affirm," Vera Institute of Justice, September 2003.

Recommendation 2: Build relationships among schools sharing the same campus.

Reason:

It's not always easy living with the people in your home—even if everyone has their own room, they still have to get along under the same roof. It's like that with high schools that have to share space.

As explained earlier, there is tension between students that attend different schools on a campus. They act on this tension in a variety of ways. We heard reports of defaced school projects and bullying that targets students at another school. There is a general air of hostility and competition, especially in common areas, such as entrances, gyms, cafeterias, hallways, and school grounds.

School safety is an environment where children feel safe and the atmosphere is conducive to education. Where the environment covers the needs of the children and staff—an environment and a support system where children can feel at home and not in discomfort, to promote well being in education.

— George, YJB member

A dialogue between YJB members Eevee and Kevin:

Eevee attends Bronx Guild, a small school that is housed within the Stevenson Campus. Kevin attends Stevenson High School, a large high school that used to be the only school on campus.

Kevin: My life at school was easier before small schools invaded my school. Small schools inside a large school's campus make it very crowded.

Eevee: Well, what's up with Stevenson's rules? *We* can't bring our cameras, art supplies, or computer disk for our project work because Stevenson doesn't allow them.

Kevin: I feel that the standards and rules that Stevenson has had over the years should be followed by any school, staff, or administrator who enters our campus.

Eevee: Okay, but that's asking me to give up my school culture and my school culture is why Bronx Guild is so unique.

To improve these relationships, we recommend a two-step approach. First, help schools build an individual identity, because having a sense of place and community has a big impact on the overall school culture. Second, develop a campus-wide culture—create opportunities for students to have positive interactions with other schools on their campus.

As we outlined in our findings, school pride and a positive school culture are key for a safe school environment. If schools are going to have to share space, that culture needs to be approached on a school and a campus-wide basis.

Implementation

Create campus-wide student councils

- Create a campus council where students from every school gather to discuss and solve problems on campus, as well as work on joint projects.
- Principals already have campus meetings to discuss campus-wide issues. Those decisions should be shared with the students—such as what rules apply to which schools, what rules apply to everyone and why.

Reduce tensions around shared space.

- Whenever possible, give each school their own space in the campus, such as their own floor with their own classrooms, hallway, and bathrooms.
- If each school can't have their own non-academic space such as the gym, cafeteria, or auditorium, make sure only one school uses these spaces at a time.
- Make different schedules for students in the different schools so they don't enter and exit at the same time.

Create opportunities for campus-wide activities. Some ideas are:

- Campus-wide clubs.
- Campus-wide activities by grade level—for example, all freshman from every school work together on a project.
- Projects that pull students together from the different schools. (One YJB member's campus cafeteria was redone by a design team made up of students from all the schools.)
- Organized, special campus-wide events such as dances or music events.
- Sports teams increase pride in a school community, and create events for students to come together. There are two ways sports and team-based activities can be used on a campus:
 - ♦ Make sure each small school has at least one individual team, with their own name and mascot, separate from the other schools' teams.
 - ♦ Create campus-wide teams with students from all the campus schools. Small schools don't always have enough students to support a large team, such as a football team. This gives students the opportunity to play large team sports and create relationships with students from the other schools. (But it's important that the team represent the whole campus—this can be a challenge if there is one large school that may have a lot more students, or has the same name as the campus itself.)

Recommendation 3: Provide more opportunities for student engagement and self-expression.

Reason:

We want schools that students want to attend. If students want to be at their school, and if they like their school and the other people in the school community, they'll care about what happens there. When students describe their schools, they don't think just about academics or how well the school did on test scores. Youth talk about things like sports, clubs, art and music programs, poetry slams, and the people we are close to.

But many students feel disconnected from their school community. For many students, going to school is very boring. Imagine going to work every day to a job that you don't enjoy. Students can't and won't want to learn when they feel forced to work all day on things they do not find interesting or challenging. Many students also have stresses in their lives outside of school—those problems aren't left behind when students walk in the school door. They follow students into school and build up to major tensions. When students don't have outlets for venting these tensions they are more likely to act out in class or get into fights.

"School is family during the day."

—SPARK counselor

When students have a way to express their feelings, it has a positive affect on the overall "flow" of the day, allowing them to enjoy their job of going to school. Academics can't be the only way to make students want to come to school or like it. Often, academics are a very stressful part of school life and can hinder the expressive, engaging spirit that can bind a school community together. Some students have other talents that can be used to express themselves, create school pride, and build bonds among the school community.

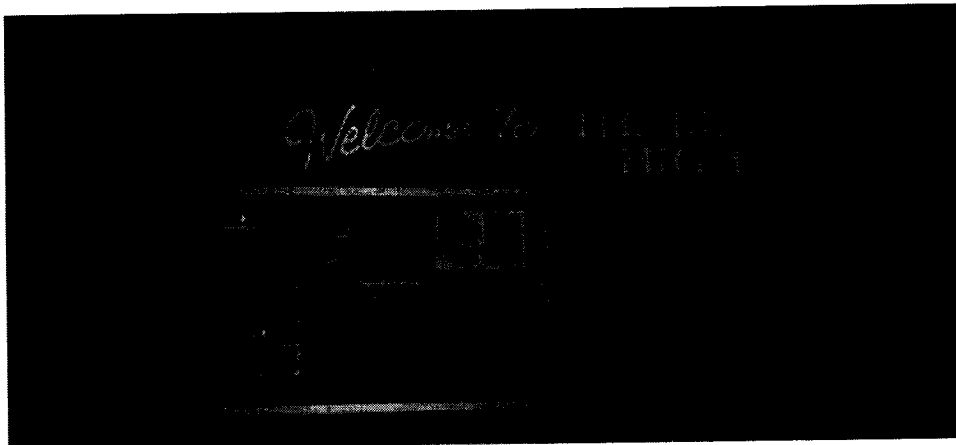
It is especially important to engage students who may be struggling or not interested in academics. Attendance is one of the most useful indicators of student behavior—associated with lower drop out rates, lower suspensions, and lower ninth-grade repeats.³⁶ By giving those students more incentives to come to school and attend class, administrators also give them a chance to improve their overall success in school and become more involved in the school community.

There are extra-curricular programs in many schools, but students and school staff told us that often the programs that do exist often don't interest enough students or reach the students who really need them the most.

³⁶ Eskenazi, Michael, Gillian Eddins, and John M. Beam. "Equity or Exclusion: The Dynamics of Resources, Demographics, and Behavior in the New York City Public Schools." National Center for Schools and Communities, Fordham University, October 2003.

Implementation

- **Create activities that appeal to students.** Every school is different. The most important thing is to hear directly from the students what they would like to do in their school. A student committee could conduct a survey to see what projects or activities students are interested in. They should make sure to survey students who are not usually engaged in school activities. Staff and families should also be surveyed in order to find projects that can help build relationships between students and staff, and between the school and community.
- **Support adult and youth partnerships.** Provide support for teachers and adult staff to help organize and participate in activities. Provide training as needed for adults to work with youth in non-academic situations. Encourage adults to work in partnership *with* students on projects instead of just leading.
- **Encourage student participation.** Advertise projects and activities to all students, give extra credit or other incentives for participation whenever possible, and frame projects as competitions and provide prizes.



Photographs of students and school activities greet students at the Bronx Guild High School.

- **Some examples of projects and activities:**
 - ♦ Students can create things they are proud of and fix things they dislike—for example, create a mural in the cafeteria or improve a local train station.
 - ♦ Increase and encourage basketball, dance, and other physical activities.
 - ♦ Produce one-time projects, like murals, dances, shows, or poetry slams.
 - ♦ Get groups together who normally avoid each other or don't get along to work together on a creative project.

Action Area B: Expand responses to conflicts and negative behavior.

In addition to the responses outlined in the Discipline Code, school administrators have a lot of autonomy in deciding how to respond to incidents. Many schools include problem-solving and preventative measures in their policies. But, in practice, the most frequent responses to safety incidents are only punitive—such as detention, suspensions, or removal from class. We learned about some examples of problem-solving and preventative measures, but they are not happening in enough schools, or getting enough support.

In this set of recommendations, we focus on three goals:

- **We want to see more interventions and responses that will really help students learn to change their behavior—not just punish them.** We do think that punishment is an appropriate response in many cases, but punishment alone won't prevent problems from reoccurring.
- **Schools must develop better non-punitive interventions and responses to small incidents.** The recent school safety initiatives have brought down the number of “big” problems in Impact Schools—crimes like weapons, theft, and violence. Now, we need to find ways to lower the frequency of problems that may not seem like incidents—like arguing, negative gossip, and small fights—but do impact a school's safety climate. It's not just that small problems impact students and staff on a daily basis, but small problems will escalate if not dealt with or taken seriously.
- **Any school safety initiatives must be fair to all students and communicated clearly.** We as students will respect something more if we think it's fair and if we are given the reasons behind the policies.

School safety means only having to worry about having your homework done and getting to class on time. It means not worrying about dark stairwells and getting cut.

— Victoria, YJB member

Recommendation 4: Establish a Conflict Advisor to support the entire school community in handling conflicts.

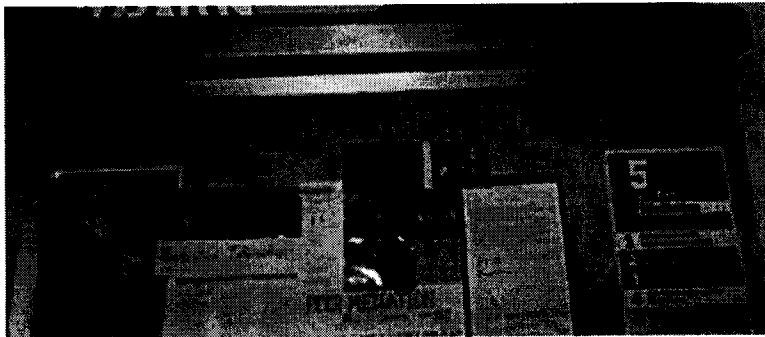
Reason:

Schools have teachers who specialize in specific subjects, guidance counselors to provide advice on academics, and coaches who are experts in sports. We want a staff person whose has the specialized job of focusing on increasing positive behavior and using problem-solving approaches to behavior problems. We propose every school should have a Conflict Advisor.

As we mentioned earlier, we use the image of an escalator to think about how conflicts escalate. Both adults and students need support in making better decisions concerning tensions and discipline. They need training and support to walk down that escalator, intervene in problems and resolve conflicts. The earlier the intervention happens, the greater the likelihood that the conflicts will be solved without a need for disciplinary actions.

School safety means a healthy environment in the school where attention is focused on learning through interaction between peers, teachers, and principal. Kids don't have to come into school wondering if weapons will be brought into the building—instead, they can just focus on education.
— Mandy, YJB member

A Conflict Advisor would help lessen the number of incidents, teach students life-long social skills, and provide staff with the tools and support to manage tensions and conflicts.



A bulletin board advertises a school's conflict resolution program.

responsibility to intervene when there are conflicts. But in general, there isn't a specific person within a school who is responsible for a comprehensive dedicated approach to managing conflicts.

Some schools have staff who officially or unofficially take on some of these responsibilities. For example, we heard about guidance counselors students turn to when they are having a fight. Some schools have social workers who mediate conflicts. The second opportunity school at the Door and Community Prep High School have staff who have the specific

Implementation:

The Conflict Advisor would:

- Coordinate the school's policies and responses to conflict and mediate conflicts among students and adults in the schools. The Conflict Advisor would be available for students and staff on a walk-in basis.
- Teach students how to deal with conflicts without turning to violence through special assemblies, classroom instruction, or creating peer leadership groups that include students with a variety of school experiences.
- Be placed in the same office as the guidance counselors to lessen students' concern about being stigmatized by walking into the office.
- Be specialized and someone who is not academic faculty—students will not go to someone if they are worried that it would affect their grades or get back to their teachers.
- Train and support teachers and other staff to recognize problems as they arise and to de-escalate conflicts. Training should include follow-up sessions for feedback and a review of best practices.
- Collaborate with adults and students at the school to find the best way to handle both minor and more serious conflicts.
- Make suggestions to the principal about disciplinary responses to the infraction if there is an incident that requires a response.

Recommendation 5: Train and support school staff to intervene when problems are brewing.

Reason:

Most incidents, such as fights, usually have a prior history. In our experience, there are often clear indications of when a problem between students is escalating, such as arguments, classroom tensions, bullying, slurs, rumors, and body language.

Students believe adults at school often know when a fight will be going down or if someone is being bullied, but don't do anything about it. Students reported that in too many schools, adults only intervene after the fight has started, and even then staff are sometimes hesitant to intervene. Sometimes, teachers are afraid of getting hurt themselves, which we understand. But other times, students see adults just ignoring the situation. We heard about school safety agents sending students outside the school to fight, and staff avoiding hallways where fights frequently occur.

“We, as educators, are responsible for the safety of the students, and how are we suppose to do that during a fight?”

—Teacher

In most instances, students want intervention because it shows concern from adults and can prevent bigger conflicts from happening. When there is lack of intervention in small problems, students are given the impression that authority figures do not care.

Adults need more support and training in intervening before a fight even occurs. Intervention does not mean just punishing students or choosing a side. It means knowing what's up before going in. Adults should intervene when he or she sees a student not acting like him or herself, or when students do not seem to be getting along. When teachers see signs of trouble we want them, school safety agents, and other school staff to:

- Observe what is going on.
- Check in with students—it can be as simple as asking “Is everything okay here?”
- Pay attention to heated discussions and body language, but don't go in assuming that there is a conflict.
- If there IS a conflict, try to defuse the problem, or refer the students to someone who can.

School Safety: Learning, wanting to learn, happiness, excitement, respect, no fear, occupying students with other things besides what they are used to, charismatic teachers and leaders.

—Reynold, YJB member

Supporting staff to intervene as problems escalate is an important step in bringing down the number of fights and tension in a school, and is a key to building strong, trusting relationships among the school community. As we heard from Tom Roderick, Executive Director of ESR Metro, long-term change requires consistent reinforcement of new strategies, and ongoing training for staff. Therefore, there should be support and ongoing training for all adults in the school.

As we wrote in our findings, studies have shown that minority students face a disproportionate amount of suspensions and referrals for disciplinary measures even though they do not engage in proportionately more disruptive behavior. Therefore we think it is critical that adults learn to not use stereotypes or assumptions when intervening between students. Researchers at the Indiana Education Policy Center state that training in “appropriate and culturally competent methods of classroom management” is needed to address these racial disparities.

Implementation

Train teachers, school safety agents and all adults in the school to respond to conflict.

- Include training as part of regular staff development and involve youth.
- Help adults learn how to manage anger and other negative responses to disturbing student behavior, especially with students that they do not know well.
- Encourage adults to use available supports, such as other adults who may have a closer relationship with the student, services available through the school, and especially the Conflict Advisor.
- Emphasize the use of positive reinforcement techniques whenever possible.
- Include cultural competency training, giving all adults the tools to work and build trust with a culturally diverse student body. Culture doesn’t mean just race or ethnicity—it includes age, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic diversity. Again, this would be a great opportunity to include youth in the training curriculum.

Recommendation 6: Respond to fights with a problem-solving approach.

Reason:

To reduce fighting and its effect on a school's culture, we need to change responses to fights. Fighting should be punished. However, punishment alone will not prevent future fights from happening. Students must learn to not fight.

Fights are a major problem in schools. The whole school is affected—not just the people directly involved in the conflict.

- Students who witnessed the fight may feel scared or nervous.
- Bystanders, including adults, can get hurt.
- Some students watch or encourage fights because it's a form of excitement.
- Students feel responsible to help their friend in a fight.
- Students sometimes run out of class to see a fight, creating disorder—and then they can get in trouble for watching.
- The school's reputation can suffer, especially from media attention, which focuses on violence.
- Cumulatively, after viewing fight after fight, students think they are ordinary, and decide that nothing is being done to prevent them.

We learned that punishment alone is not effective. Many teachers and administrators reported that the same students get in trouble over and over again. In addition, suspended students informed us that getting suspended for fights did not prevent them from fighting again—in fact, the time away from school just made them feel more alienated when they came back.

Responses to fights need to:

- Teach students how to resolve a conflict without fighting.
- Prevent related, splinter fights that may occur between friends of students who fight.
- Be consistent and not play favorites.
- Address underlying problems of bias, prejudice, and image—such as inter-ethnic hostilities or expectations based on gender, sexuality, or social circles (such as being a “jock”).

In our research, we learned about different responses that we combined into one problem-solving approach. For example, at the second opportunity school run by The Door, crisis counselors usually put students who have fought into separate rooms to calm down, then talk to the students both individually and as a group to understand what happened. The students at the school said that having crisis counselors helped them stay out of fights and

on the right track. We heard about a similar approach used at Community Prep High School, where school safety agents are trained along with school staff in the school's restorative justice approach to discipline and fights. (A restorative justice approach focuses on a collaborative response to problems, emphasizing repairing the harm done by the problematic behavior, not just punishing the behavior. Examples of a restorative response can be community service or group mediation.) We believe that training all staff and students to consistently use a problem-solving process in response to fights will help prevent more fights from happening.

Implementation

After a fight, the students involved should be brought to the Conflict Advisor or a staff member trained with similar responsibilities, and the following steps should be taken:

- Institute a “cool down” response—an opportunity for all students and adults involved to separate, calm down, reflect, and talk to a trusted adult about what happened.
- Create a problem-solving group with everyone involved including, whenever possible, the adults from the cool down. The goals of this conversation are to: learn how the problem escalated, and discuss how it could have gone differently and how to prevent the fighting from reoccurring. The Conflict Advisor would facilitate.
- After the problem-solving group, check back in with the students. The Conflict Advisor or adult allies should follow up with the involved students at regular intervals after the incident.
- To make problem-solving approach successful, the school should conduct workshops for all staff to:
 - ◆ Learn about this process and ensure consistency so that everyone is on the same page when a fight occurs.
 - ◆ Learn how to manage cool downs and participate in the problem-solving group.
 - ◆ Learn how issues of bias, prejudice, and image influence conflict.
 - ◆ If possible, more staff could be trained to assist the Conflict Advisor in facilitating problem-solving groups.

School safety is students being in a carefree environment. Students are walking into school not worrying if a friend is going to get stabbed or beat up that day but whether or not Ms. Doe is going to give a quiz or surprise test. Students not being afraid of walking down the halls alone or without a weapon because a rival gang or enemy might catch them off guard.
— Chrisana, YJB member

We know this implementation would require time and resources. But we think the long-term effects will not just reduce fights, but also empower students to make better decisions when a conflict escalates. In order for this to work, though, there needs to be complete and ongoing support from school administrators, as well as trust-building with the students so that they believe the process is fair and consistent.

Action Area B: Expand responses to conflicts and negative behavior.

Recommendation 7: Provide a Suspension Counselor to support suspended students.

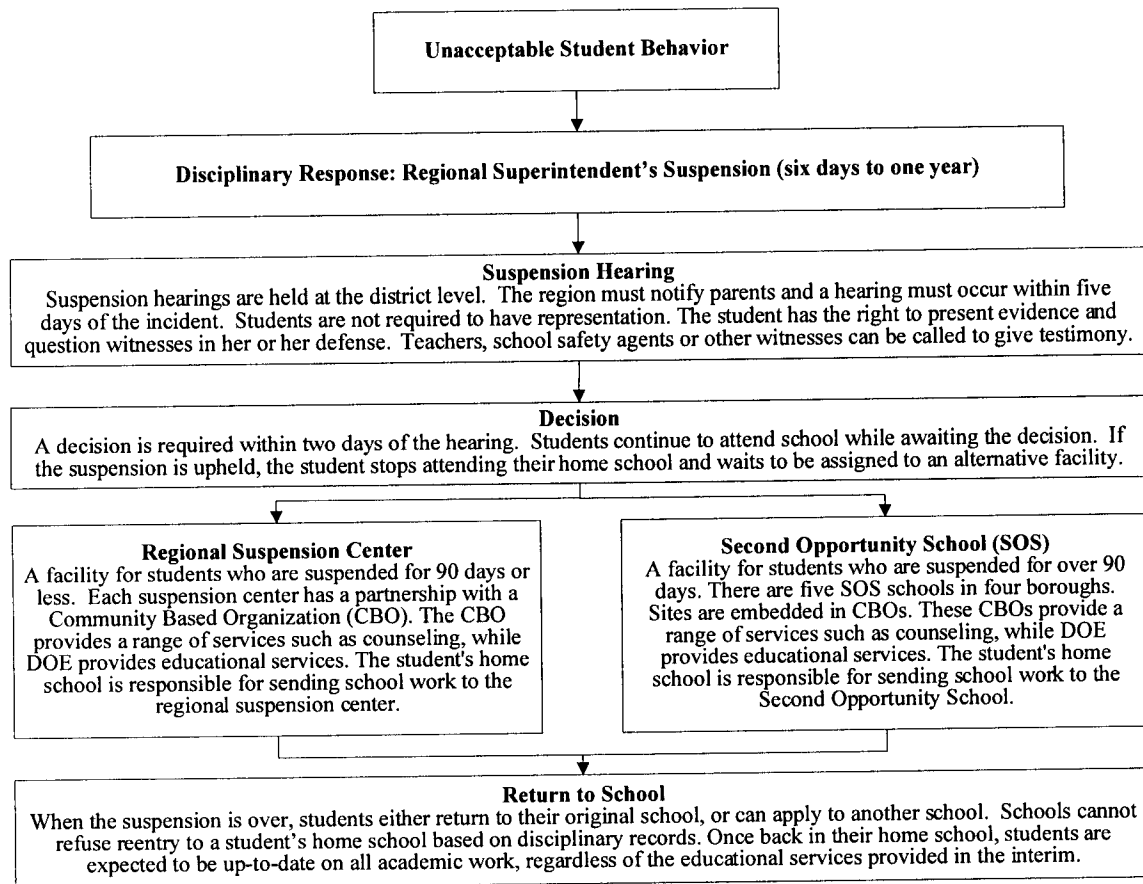
Reason:

The purpose of suspension is to remove the student from school and show others that the behavior won't be tolerated. But suspension is a confusing process, and is often not successful for either the student or the school. From our interviews with suspended students, teachers, Advocates for Children, and staff at the Second Opportunity School at the Door, we learned that right now suspended students must go through a difficult process that creates more problems than it solves.

“When I came back, it was like being suspended was serving time.”

–Student in our focus group

Overview of the Regional Superintendent’s suspension process:



While DOE policy does try to create a good process, the reality is problems are happening with alarming frequency. Some problems highlighted in our interviews with Advocates for Children, the Door's Second Opportunity School, and in our focus group with students who had been suspended were:

- The hearing process: A decision from the suspension hearing is supposed to be announced within two days, but some students wait up to six months for a decision. Many students report that during that time, they don't attend any school.³⁷ And when they do attend their home school during that time, teachers and students report that the student's presence creates disorder and mistrust of the system. In addition, parents are not receiving the evidence packet in a timely fashion.³⁸
- While serving suspension: There are long waits for placement in a suspension center or alternative educational setting. Once at the alternative educational setting, students often don't receive their academic assignments from their home school, don't receive credit for class work completed at the suspension center, and are sometimes even marked as absent from their home school even though they are attending the suspension center.
- Upon returning to school: Students are sometimes forced to wait before being accepted back into their original school as the school fights the student's reinstatement. Often, the student is behind on work because of missed time and lack of schoolwork at suspension center. In addition, students and teachers reported that students returning from suspension are often heavily stigmatized and alienated.

Suspended students face challenges before, during, and after suspension. This impacts not just that student, but the whole school community. When suspended students re-enter the school with unresolved issues—because of their original problems or frustrations with the process—the result can be more conflicts, fights, and maybe even more suspensions. Higher dropout rates are another consequence—research has shown that suspension is a predictor of a student dropping out. One study found that more than 30 percent of sophomores who dropped out of school had been suspended, a rate three times that of their peers who stayed in school.³⁹

“They made you look like a troublemaker and that’s what they do, man. It doesn’t motivate me to want to come back and do this straight.”
—Student from our focus group

³⁷ Eskenazi, Michael, Gillian Eddins, and John M. Beam. "Equity or Exclusion: The Dynamics of Resources, Demographics, and Behavior in the New York City Public Schools." National Center for Schools and Communities, Fordham University October 2003.

³⁸ The school region must notify parents and a hearing must occur within five days of the incident. Parents should get a packet with all the evidence before the hearing, but many do not receive it until the day of the hearing.

³⁹ Skiba, Russ, and Reece Peterson. "The Dark Side of Zero Tolerance: Can Punishment Lead to Safe Schools?" *Phi Delta Kappan*. January 1999: 372-376, 381-382.

At any school with suspensions, there should be a Suspension Counselor who is available to students undergoing any suspension process, regardless of the type or length of the suspension. The Suspension Counselor would be essential before, during, and after a suspension.

Implementation

Assign a staff person the responsibilities of a Suspension Counselor:

Help students and parents through the suspension process:

- Inform students and their parents/guardians about their rights and the suspension process.
- For a Principal's suspension, ensure that parents/guardians receive written notice of suspension within 24 hours, that the conference is set up, and that the student has the opportunity to explain his or her side of the incident.
- For a Regional Superintendent's suspension, ensure that the student and parents/guardians receive the evidence packet before the hearing, attend the hearing, and advocate for the student if a decision is not made within two days of the hearing as required by law.

During suspension:

- Help place the student in a suspension center or second opportunity school in a timely manner.
- Stay in contact with the student's teachers and the suspension site, making sure the student receives his or her work. Make sure students know what is expected during their suspension. Also, when possible, conduct home visits if it is suspected the student is not going to the suspension center or second opportunity school.

After the suspension is completed, help the transition for both the student and the school community:

- Prepare the student on what to expect when back at school, before he or she actually returns to the school.
- Help teachers prepare for the student—both academically and socially.
- Continue meeting with the student after he or she returns to help address issues as they come up.
- As needed, collaborate with school social workers or guidance counselors to make sure the student is getting other supportive services.

We know that new staff positions are very expensive to implement. Depending on the needs of individual schools, these functions could be part of the Conflict Advisor's responsibilities or another existing staff person's.

Action Area C: Give students a bigger voice and keep them informed.

We want to increase youth involvement in developing policies, putting them into place, and evaluating their impacts. We also want youth to be kept better informed about what is happening in their schools. Youth involvement is key to the success of any safety strategy.

Students have first-hand knowledge and experience on how their school is run and what is being overlooked. Students know what makes them feel safe and why they behave the way they do. Yet student voices are not traditionally heard or taken into account when formulating safety policies.

Students think that adults do not listen to them and adults sometimes dismiss students' opinions as uninformed or not important. As a result, many students become hesitant about giving feedback on improving their schools.

Students need to be given the opportunity to voice their observations and be taken seriously. Most schools have student councils or some other form of student representation; however, these groups have too many responsibilities to give school safety the focus it deserves. Also—and maybe more importantly—these groups rarely include students who are most likely to interact with school safety policies, the students who “get into trouble.” The “good” students (student council members, students who are friendly with

administrators) only provide one perspective on issues affecting their school. If students from different groups work together—with adults—better decisions can be made.

While there have been some efforts (such as organized student groups like councils, or information-sharing events like beginning-of-year assemblies) to keep youth informed and involved, we want to see efforts made and improvement in all schools. Also, even existing policies need improvement. For example, the Discipline Code is supposed to be distributed to every student, and used in lesson plans with the entire student body. At the start of the 2005-6 school year, of the 16 Board members, only two received lesson plans in school and only four received the actual Discipline Code.

School safety can mean a lot of things to different people. To me, good school safety means attending a school that you feel comfortable in and having a sense of security while in the building.

— Nelson, YJB member

Recommendation 8: Set up Student Safety Advisories to give students responsibilities and a voice in their school's safety policies.

Reason:

*"Who knows better the issues in NYC high schools than the students?" There aren't that many adults who'll repeat that statement. But it's true—students experience a school's safety every day. I am a proud Bronx student who does have a voice. I believe the issue of school safety is very frustrating. It seems everyone is doing what they think will make them look good rather than what's right.
— Eevee, YJB member*

Students attend schools every day and we are the ones most affected by the security procedures at our schools. Students we talked to commented on safety issues they felt were overlooked—the broken phones in the classrooms, the dark staircases, the unsupervised corners, and the security desk that is too far from the door. Students also see things that adults might miss—such as a school safety agent who holds up the lines into school by not making students step aside to remove belts or other items for the metal detectors. Some adults may not notice these problems, while others may think they are not as important to safety as physical altercations. Students see these things and sometimes have ideas on how to improve them but feel they don't have anyone or anywhere to talk about safety policies. Overwhelmingly, the students we talked to felt that adults wouldn't listen to them on these issues.

We suggest every school have a Student Safety Advisory. The Advisory would be a group of students making sure student feedback on safety procedures in the school is heard. Led by a faculty member, the Advisory would meet weekly to discuss safety concerns as they arise and what can be done to solve them. While most high schools have some sort of student leadership group (such as a student council) we think that there needs to be a group whose priority is addressing safety issues and acting as a bridge between the student body and administrators on those issues.

Implementation:

The Student Safety Advisory would:

- **Get input from the entire school body.**
 - ◆ The Advisory would organize school-wide student-led research. Each grade would have representatives who would collect feedback from students using different methods, such as surveys, a suggestion box, or just talking to other students.

- ◆ These representatives would compile the confidential feedback, verify any problems, and present a report to the Advisory.
- ◆ The research could ask students about a range of topics, including:
 - Hotspots
 - Occurrences of problems where there is limited adult presence (stairwells, lunchrooms, locker rooms, empty classrooms, and off-campus student hangouts such as parks and corner stores)
 - What makes the students feel unsafe
 - How much they know and understand current policies
 - Whether they think current policies are effective
 - What changes they would like to see take place
- **Act as a bridge with policymakers in the school.** The Advisory representatives would meet with the principal and school safety agents at least once a month to exchange feedback about safety issues in the school and collaborate on school strategies.
- **Keep students informed about the different safety procedures in the school.** The Advisory can use announcements, fliers, posters, or the school newspaper to ensure that students are not totally left in the dark about new or existing safety procedures. Also, if students are given information about incidents, harmful rumors and gossiping can be prevented.
- **Ensure that all students' perspectives are heard.** Each school should have a designated office and clearly accessible box where students can drop off their feedback at any time. Students will be encouraged to speak up and not to be afraid because responses are kept anonymous and are read by other students—not adults or administrators.
- **Involve students who have gotten into trouble.** In order to ensure that all students' experiences are represented, the Student Safety Advisory must include a diverse range of students who have had different experiences with safety in their school.

Recommendation 9: Create simple and meaningful ways for students to speak up on staff performance.

Reason:

In our focus groups and interviews with our peers we heard many frustrations about school safety agents and teachers. Many school safety agents and other staff do their job well. However, one or two bad incidents with even one adult can destroy the student's sense of trust toward all school staff. In turn, school safety agents and other staff are not able to do their job effectively when students do not respect them. When students have a problem, they usually do not know where or how to report a complaint that will be heard and effectively dealt with.

School safety should be exactly what the two words say. We should feel as safe at school as we do at our homes. Students shouldn't fear other students. Students should be able to voice their opinions to anyone just as if it were home.
— Kevin, YJB member

Right now, students can report a complaint about school safety agents through the Civilian Complaint Review Board—the same agency responsible for all NYPD-related complaints. This system does not encourage youth or their families to use their voice to address problems in the school.

No reporting system will work unless students feel that they can speak up confidentially and see results. We want it to be easier for students to speak up when there is a problem with adults in school. And once a problem is reported, it should be investigated and addressed at the regional and local levels. At the regional level, it can be reviewed by someone outside the school to ensure the students' trust in the process. At the local level, the administrators should be made aware of the problem and have the opportunity to address it. Pinpointing problems is the first step towards finding solutions and resolving the issues as soon as possible.

Implementation

Create a city-wide hotline. Council Member Annabel Palma started a hotline in her district for students and parents to report problems in schools. We support the idea of a hotline; we would like to see it become city-wide and run in collaboration with DOE and NYPD.

- Callers should be able to make reports confidentially and, if possible, anonymously.
- Similar to the 311 system, callers should get a reference number and use that number to check on outcomes from the report.
- All students, families, and staff should be made aware of the hotline service.

- All school safety-related complaints should be forwarded to both regional safety administrators and the NYPD Borough Command, so that both authorities are aware of what is happening in the schools.
- The regional safety administrator should review complaints and notify the schools of the most important and recurring complaints.
- At the school, the principal should inform the Conflict Advisor and the Student Safety Advisory. Complaints should also be reviewed at the Daily Safety Meetings (attended by school administrators and school safety agents).

We also propose a Commendation Process. Students also notice those adults who handle problems, incidents, or fights in positive and productive ways. Youth should have the opportunity to recognize those adults who impact their school's safety in a positive manner. Highlighting those adults not only gives them recognition but also lets other staff know students' perspectives on how school safety should be handled. For example, every semester the school could honor one school safety agent and one school staff member for their work in creating a safe school environment.

Recommendation 10: Add more information to school report cards and make them more accessible.

Reason:

Students and parents need to be better informed about their school. Right now, the only information about school safety in the school report cards is the number of suspensions, the number and types of police-involved incidents over the past three years, and enrollment data. This does not tell students, parents, or communities enough about what they want to know about the schools they attend or live near.

First, there is no data on incidents at an individual school if it shares space with other schools. As we explained earlier, school safety agents and other NYPD staff are assigned to a campus, not an individual school, and crimes are reported by campus. Students who go to a school that shares space with another school have no way of knowing what incidents are happening in their school.

Second, when students and teachers describe the safety of their school, they talk about things like school safety agents, scanning, and whether there are police officers in their schools. This information should be reflected in the school report cards.

Finally, there is currently no way for students or parents to know the number of fights, bullying, and other non-police-involved incidents in schools. This information is already collected by the online reporting system used by principals to report infractions to the discipline code. We think it should be made available in the school report cards.

We understand the difficulties in implementing these changes. We heard from the New York City Criminal Justice Coordinator's Office that reporting the number of school safety agents and police officers assigned to a school would not be helpful to readers, since those numbers can change over the course of the year. (For example, at the start of the school year, a school might have eight school safety agents, but changes in deployment could increase or decrease that number over the first few months. Then, students and parents would just see that they have more or less security, but not know why.) In our interview with the School Safety Division, it was explained that since there is so much shared space on a campus, it is difficult to accurately attribute a crime to a specific school. Also, the School Safety Division feels the campus is a community and therefore the data should reflect that.

School safety is an environment where a student can walk in and out of school without being afraid of getting hurt or killed. An environment with no need of security watch. An environment where students can have fun while learning. An environment that feels like a second home.
— Smaragda, YJB member

But we think the missing information should be accessible to students and parents, and efforts should be made to include it. Even with the reasons cited above, the information would be helpful to students and parents, and—since it is already available—would not be a burden to put together to include in the school report cards.

In addition, school report cards are very hard to access. If you are a parent or guardian looking for your child’s school report card you will have a very difficult time. The “best” place to get it is from the Department of Education website. But even members of the Youth Justice Board, who are very computer savvy, needed over 20 minutes as a team to find the report cards. We found the process very frustrating. (We also tried to get it through 311; the 311 operator was only able to give us the name and number of the Parent Coordinator.) The school report cards are also only available in English, which is a problem for the many parents and guardians who are not fluent in English.

Implementation

Add additional information to School Report Cards

- Number of school safety agents and NYPD stationed in the school.
- Information on safety technology, such as metal detectors, security cameras, and hand scanners.
- Bullying, fights, and other non-criminal incidents.
- Detailed summary of school safety approaches, including the alternative responses available in the school.
- The rules of the school. Beyond the Discipline Code, each school has rules such as dress codes, entry and exit procedures, and standards for behavior.

Expand data collection

- Small schools should have their own school safety data, in addition to campus-wide data.

Improve accessibility

- Make report cards easier to find on the DOE website.
- Be able to call 311 and ask for a report card to be mailed to you, or be given the exact web site address for a specific school’s report card.
- Provide report cards at the school, in the administrative office and in the library.
- Add a summary of the report card to the High School Directory.
- Make report cards available in multiple languages.

Conclusion

These recommendations are a step towards improving school safety. They also serve as a step towards bridging the disparity between youth and adult involvement in looking for solutions to the problems. School safety is often in the media spotlight and it's the Youth Justice Board's goal to make sure that youth are included in the discussion surrounding school safety. Although policy makers can make things happen, it is the responsibility of the entire school community—including students, teachers, and administrators—to make schools safe.

We hope our recommendations will encourage people to think about these issues, and spark meaningful change that will serve not only to make schools safe but to make them flourish. We have concluded that it's not just about how many police officers or school safety agents are in a school, but about whether students have pride in their schools and in themselves, and about the relationships between all the players in the school safety community.

Contact Information

We want your input on our report. What are your comments, suggestions, questions, or answers to any of the questions we ask? We welcome any feedback you may have.

Comments? Questions? Feedback? Please send them to:

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New York, NY 10018
(212) 373-8084
yjb@courtinnovation.org

Who is the Youth Justice Board?

Eevee Cabrera



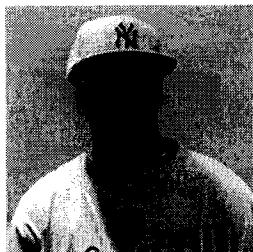
Growing up in the Bronx was the best for me. I've been through my ups and downs but always kept my head up. At Bronx Guild High School, many students pre-judged me upon my appearance before I even said "Hi." It was rough, but I do have loyal friends. The Youth Justice Board was a place that I got a chance to show people who I am. They put stereotypes and ignorance out of the picture and we were able to write policy recommendations together. We proved that high school students are better than what they're perceived to be. I am a proud young spoken word artist who plans to make something of myself. All you got to do is give me the chance.

Elizabeth Canela



Hola! My name is Elizabeth Canela and I am a senior at Midwood High School. I am 17 and live in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. I decided to be a part of the Youth Justice Board because I wanted a chance to be given a voice. Students are normally not listened to when it comes to school safety. When I learned that our topic was school safety, I was excited because I knew students definitely have a big say. We are the ones that are directly affected. Besides this, being a part of the YJB has allowed me to gain new friends. I was able to further develop and practice skills in public speaking, writing, and much more. This will be a step in achieving future goals that include college, graduate school, working with kids, and a great number of other possibilities. The sky is the limit and Youth Justice Board has aided in helping me practice the skills I will need in the future.

Kevin Cedeño



My name is Kevin Cedeño. I graduated Stevenson High School in the Bronx in 2005, and now attend John Jay College of Criminal Justice. I was interested in joining the Youth Justice Board because I believe that the voice and actions of urban youth can impact and revolutionize their communities. As positive role models and spokesmen about real issues we can bring about change where it is needed, and awareness to those who need it. We must start a positive revolution in our communities, and the Youth Justice Board is one of the ways it can begin. As an emerging community leader, I am very excited to work on bettering the future of others, and in showing them that life can be exciting and safe.

Tabetha Cody-Ritter



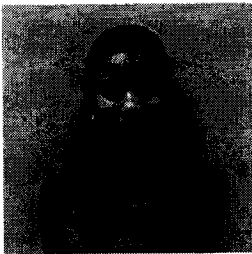
My name is Tabetha Cody-Ritter and I'm 15 years old. I attend Acorn High School for Social Justice. I'm in the 10th Grade and live in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn. My school is overcrowded and we are barely getting the education we deserve or programs or classes—that's why I joined the Youth Justice Board. YJB helped me understand there is more to school safety than just school safety agents, teachers, deans, police, and students.

George Espinal



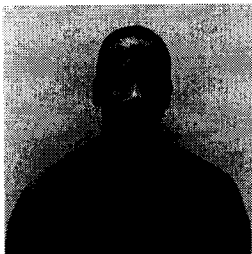
My name is George Espinal and I am 18 years old. I graduated from Washington Irving High School and am currently attending John Jay Criminal Justice College. I reside in Inwood, Manhattan, where I am a Community Youth Activist and Director of a Block Association. In my high school community everything seemed settled until it was announced as an Impact School in 2004. I became aware of my school's circumstance and worked to become more involved in my school's public safety. This is when I met Ms. Navas from the Union Square Partnership, who handed me a Youth Justice Board Application. As a member I was able to work cohesively with a diverse and wide spectrum of teens from different parts of the city. Being a Youth Justice Board member I learned three important things which I will use in my future endeavors: team work, accountability, and responsibility. I'm hoping to run for New York City Council in 2009 to collectively address concerns in different ethnic groups and communities.

Vicky Fúnez



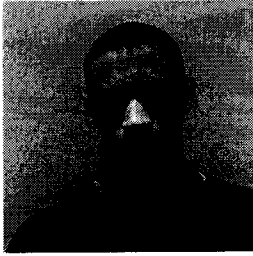
My name is Vicky Fúnez and I am 18 years old. I currently attend Townsend Harris High School in Flushing, Queens, and will be graduating with the Class of 2006. My experiences at Townsend Harris have allowed me to contribute significantly to the Youth Justice Board, especially considering the fact I feel quite secure and comfortable within its environment. The knowledge and opportunities that have emerged as a result of my experiences at the Youth Justice Board would be too much to name on paper, but I will not fail to mention that being part of it has introduced me to a set of 15 companions that I know will remain at my side as I commence the journey into adulthood. As far as my interests are concerned, I enjoy reading, writing, dancing, playing the flute, sleeping as much as I can although sleep is hard to come by, and eating all types of food. I plan to pursue a career in law as a criminal defense attorney and possibly aim towards New York State Supreme Court Justice. Throughout my life, I have strongly believed in Sophocles' philosophy that, "An unexamined life is not worth living." The Youth Justice Board has allowed me to live a life that is worth examination by all, since I can proudly say it has given me the opportunity to positively impact the community. The objective now is to keep living a life where I can continue to engrave my mark in the community and encourage others to do the same.

Reynold Martin



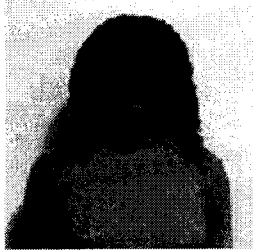
I am 17 years old, I attend the Academy of Urban Planning and am a junior in high school. Living in the neighborhood of Bushwick, Brooklyn, I wanted to be part of YJB because I wanted my voice to be heard. I wanted to help change something that affects me and to help trigger a change. YJB has helped me to be more confident and believe in more changes. It has also helped me strengthen my writing. I plan to be an author of many novels in the future. Uniting is my favorite thing to do. I have one piece of advice to everyone—"Build bridges, don't burn them. Being positive and making ties with people can help in many ways."

Nelson Perez



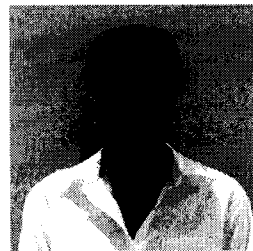
My name is Nelson Perez. I am a 17 year old senior and I attend Bayard Rustin Educational Complex in Chelsea. Being a high school student I noticed a lot of problems with the school system that needed to change. That's why I joined the YJB - to make a difference. The YJB taught me a lot of things and helped me improve my writing and public speaking skills. I would have to say this has been an experience that I will carry for the rest of my life.

Maria Prass



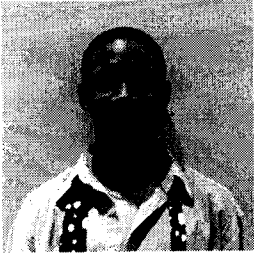
My name is Maria Prass and I am a proud member of the Youth Justice Board 2005. I am 17 years old and attend Hobart and William Smith Colleges. I was a student at Samuel J. Tilden High School when I became a member of YJB. I am from Brooklyn, New York: a place where I saw many schools suffering in the area of school safety. At SJT, I saw many things that made me uncomfortable and had me worrying whether I would get the chance to gain a proper education or if there will be chances for others after me to gain any education. There wasn't a week that passed without some conflict or another: between two students, a student and faculty, or gang related. The view of SJT in my eyes was basically an under-funded school, which accounted for the faulty metal detectors, unruly students who prevented others from learning, overcrowded hallways and a lack of respect between teachers and students. I knew that I had to at least try to do something to prevent future students from facing the same difficulties I had. The Youth Justice Board was my access to a solution. Being a part of the YJB has showed me that students have the power to make changes. It was one of the best experiences of my life. I want to leave an important message for everyone. There are many things that adults know about teens and school safety and they base the rules that they make on that knowledge. What adults need to realize is that youth are the ones who have first-hand knowledge of what affects them and therefore know how to rectify them. So to adults, listen to what the youth have to say. And to all youth, you have the power and knowledge to make a difference, so use it!

Victoria Richardson



My name is Victoria Richardson and I am 17 years old. I will be graduating from Mother Cabrini High School in June of 2006. I grew up in Brooklyn and Manhattan and have attended both public and private schools. I think the Youth Justice Board has and will continue to perform a great service. When I first came to the Youth Justice Board, I had my doubts about having a voice in school safety but I know differently now. I like serving on the Youth Justice Board because it has allowed me to make my mark, and help the people coming up behind me. Much thanks to all my friends and family.

Jordan Rivera



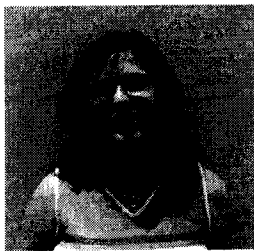
What's good y'all? My name is Jordan Rivera. I am 15 years old and I attend Mount St. Michael Academy (currently in 10th grade: CLASS OF '08 STAND UP!!) I grew up in the Bronx all my life and currently reside in Mt. Vernon. I first heard about YJB last summer. After reading about the overall goal of the Youth Justice Board and spotting that \$1000 stipend, I decided to fill out the application. I love meeting new people and I am a very charismatic person, in other words the life of the party. I found the Youth Justice Board interesting because I feel that though we are in fact "minors" in the public eye, we should not be treated as such. We are the future leaders of tomorrow, so our respect and chance should be granted and appreciated today. The Youth Justice Board was a way for me and 15 other youth to have our voice heard and speak out for the other thousands of kids in the city. More than getting our voices heard, it was, to me, a revolution in that for once teenagers take a stand for something that they believe in. This year in the Youth Justice Board, we did just that. We were a well-rounded group of teenagers that stood by the commitment we made in January and worked hard for what we wanted to change and hopefully our work will emote that. The YJB has helped me become a better person and I'm sure everyone and their mother will claim that in their bio but for me it truly has. I say this because it helped me have better people skills. Being that I'm short-tempered and always ready to curse out the most ignorant person, the YJB has helped me to see challenges and overcome them. The next thing ahead for me in my future is my modeling and singing career. My advice for adults and teens would just be that communication is the key and that the best way to get respect is to first give it.

Zirida Sankar



What caught me most about the Youth Justice Board was what the Board was all about this year, making high schools safer. Of course, I was drawn to this because I had a personal connection as well as experience because I am in high school. The Youth Justice Board has left an impact on my life like no other. The friends I made have guided me to become a better person, while our facilitators Dory and Lora have taught me to think outside the box and to be more open-minded. The Youth Justice Board has also taught me to be responsible due to our facilitators treating us as adults and not as kids, as well as gave me the skills to work well by myself or with others. My future goal is to become a lawyer and I believe that the Youth Justice Board has given me leadership skills to stand out from others. I'm Zirida Sankar and 17 years of age. I'm a senior at James Madison High School and this is my story.

Smaragda

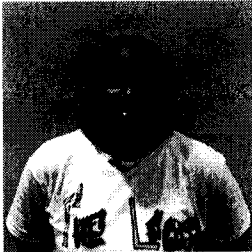


Theodoridou

Greetings Everyone! My name is Smaragda Theodoridou. I am 15 years old. I attend William Cullen Bryant High School in Astoria, Queens and I am a junior. I live in East Elmhurst, Queens. I applied to the YJB because I thought it would be an interesting experience and it would be cool to meet new people. I like to spend my time playing backgammon, chess, reading, listening to music or watching movies. All these interests have nothing to do with the careers I'm considering: a law career or a job in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in my country, Greece. When I heard that this year's issue would be school safety, I really wanted to make a difference. I come from a country where school environments are safe and the idea of metal detectors, school safety agents, and cameras in schools is totally unheard of. I just wanted to help make schools like

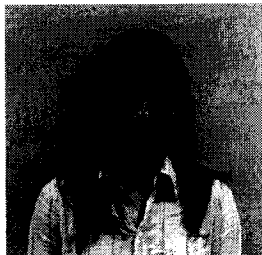
that, so students would have better school experiences. Thanks to the YJB I now know what it is like to work with a group towards one cause. Also, it helped me to be more outspoken. I am usually soft-spoken and in the YJB I learned to talk more about my opinions. I also learned what can really hide behind an issue such as school safety.

Chrisana White



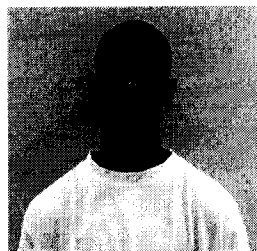
Hello, my name is Chrisana White. I am 17 years old and I reside in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn. I am a senior at Midwood High School in Brooklyn and wish to matriculate to Boston College. I joined the Youth Justice Board because of my thirst for knowledge. I kept hearing all these things on the news about Impact Schools or the "Dirty Dozen" schools and I immediately wanted to learn more about it. Everyone seemed to be voicing his or her opinion but an important perspective was left out—the STUDENTS'. I find it amazing that we are the ones who have to deal with police officers in our schools who may harass us and treat us unfairly, yet no one wants to hear our opinions and ideas. However, the Youth Justice Board gave us a way to have our voices heard and I thank them for that. Since we are a diverse group, I have learned to see things from another perspective rather than just my own. I am now more cognizant of trying to figure out not only the meaning of things I read but the meaning behind them. Thanks to the Youth Justice Board, I went from being an inhibited high school student to an outspoken young adult ready to bring about change.

Mandy Yeung



My name is Mandy Yeung and I live in Jamaica, Queens. I'm 17 years old and a senior at Stuyvesant High School. I joined the Youth Justice Board because I was interested in law at that time and YJB looked like a great way to start investigating public issues. The opportunity to study school safety made it even better because it's a topic I can relate to, though I must admit when I first started I didn't know much about the problems in the system. All I wanted to do was to get in, learn, and to help. Now, ten months and a lot of hard work later I see that YJB has helped me just as much as I've helped it. I've learned to build up important leadership skills, had tons of fun, and met 15 incredible teenagers. The different, diverse, and distinctive voices, ideas, and opinions of the Youth Justice Board members make the YJB what it is. From working as a team, we've all bonded together on different levels. All the jokes, laughs, and good times—I'd like to thank each of the YJB members for always being so positive and so much fun to work with. A heartfelt thanks to my super cool coach Meghan Holland who's always been there to guide me. I'm grateful for my friends and most definitely my mom for being so supportive throughout my time in the YJB.

Maurice Young



My name is Maurice. I am 17 years old. I go to Campus Magnet High School and I'm a senior. I live in Laurelton, Queens. I joined the Youth Justice Board because I wanted to represent all the kids I know that complain about their schools and wanted to change things. YJB taught me A LOT about the school system and how it works. I play drums and I'm in a few bands. I also enjoy playing Dance Dance Revolution.

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Youth Justice Board Staff

Lora Meilin Collier was the Co-Facilitator for the Youth Justice Board. Along with co-facilitating and planning sessions, she also developed curriculum, organized workshops, and managed administrative matters. Most importantly, she was proud to learn the meaning of growth, strength, and leadership from 16 extraordinary youth! Before joining the Youth Justice Board, Ms. Collier was a middle school Program Leader with REAL (Revitalizing Education And Learning), a classroom-based youth empowerment program in San Francisco. She also helped develop a resource library with The Association of Chinese Teachers (TACT). She received her B.A. from the University of California, Santa Cruz and is completing her M.A. at the City University of New York, Graduate Center.

Emily Feinstein is the Program Consultant for the Youth Justice Board. Ms. Feinstein is a trainer and consultant working with youth, educators and parents throughout the city. She has worked with various organizations including the Department of Education's Parent Academy, Educators for Social Responsibility and Partnership for After School Education. She is proud to be part of the project, and greatly appreciates the commitment and work that went into making the YJB a success. Ms. Feinstein is also an artist who has displayed much of her work throughout the city. She received her B.A. from Temple University and her M.F.A. from Bard College.

Dory Hack is the Project Coordinator for the Youth Justice Board. She is the lead planner and facilitator for the Youth Justice Board and is also responsible for curriculum design, program outreach, and project development. Prior to her work on with the Youth Justice Board, Ms. Hack was responsible for the planning, development and maintenance of several technology applications used by the Center for Court Innovation's projects, including designing a web-based collaboration tool for New York City's first juvenile drug court. She is honored to have worked with the young people on the Board. Ms. Hack is a graduate of Wesleyan University.

Jimena Martinez, Director of Youth Programming, is responsible for coordinating the work of the Center for Court Innovation's youth and juvenile justice programs. Her responsibilities have included launching the Youth Justice Board. Formerly, as the Project Director of the Harlem Community Justice Center, Ms. Martinez ran a community-based court. Ms. Martinez also served for three years as the Center for Court Innovation's Director of Technical Assistance, managing a team that provided assistance to hundreds of community justice projects around the country, including helping eleven cities open community courts. Before joining the Center, Ms. Martinez was director of development for Educators for Social Responsibility Metropolitan Area and a division manager at DRI/McGraw-Hill. She has a B.A. from Barnard College, Columbia University.

Appendix A: Sample of the Discipline Code

“Citywide Standards of Intervention and Discipline Measures (The Discipline Code)”.
The New York City Department of Education, 2005. p. 11.

Grades 6-12

Level 2 Infractions – Disorderly Disruptive Behaviors	Level 2 – Range of Possible Disciplinary Responses
<p>B12 Smoking</p> <p>B13 Gambling</p> <p>B14 Using profane, obscene, vulgar, lewd or abusive language or gestures</p> <p>B15 Lying or giving false information to school personnel</p> <p>B16 Misusing property belonging to others</p> <p>B17 Engaging in or causing disruptive behavior on the school bus</p> <p>B18 Engaging in a pattern of persistent Level 1 behavior* (Whenever possible and appropriate, prior to imposing a Level 2 disciplinary response, school officials should have exhausted the disciplinary responses in Level 1. Further, repeated Level 1 infractions are limited to Level 2 disciplinary responses.)</p>	<p>A. Admonishment by school staff</p> <p>B. Student/teacher conference</p> <p>C. Reprimand by appropriate supervisor (e.g., assistant principal, principal)</p> <p>D. Parent conference</p> <p>E. In-school disciplinary action (e.g., exclusion from extracurricular activities, recess or communal lunchtime)</p> <p>F. Removal from classroom by teacher (After a student is removed from any classroom by any teacher three times during a semester or twice in a trimester, a principal's suspension must be sought if the student engages in subsequent behavior that would otherwise result in a removal by a teacher.)</p> <p>G. Principal's suspension</p>

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