



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 23, 2015
CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

DE BLASIO ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES PROPOSAL TO MAKE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS SAFER WITH FEWER STUDENT ARRESTS, SUSPENSIONS, AND SUMMONSES

Plan will be based on recommendations from the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline

Administration also releases new data on school safety and discipline

NEW YORK—City leaders, educators, and community stakeholders today presented the de Blasio Administration with recommendations to promote school safety while also reducing student arrests, suspensions, and summonses. These ten proposals, developed by the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline, aim to improve the environment at schools with high rates of arrests, summonses and suspensions; reduce racial and special education disparities in discipline; and incentivize schools to adopt discipline policies that support students' long-term success.

The Mayor, Chancellor of the Department of Education Carmen Fariña, and Police Commissioner Bill Bratton have committed to reviewing these recommendations and announcing an implementation timeline for those that will be adopted before the school year begins in the fall. The Leadership Team will continue to meet over the next six months to track implementation and develop additional recommendations.

"As a parent, there is nothing more valuable than the safety of our children at school," said **Mayor de Blasio**. "Every child, in every neighborhood across the city, deserves a safe, supportive environment that empowers him or her to learn and succeed. We are already implementing key reforms that have improved school climate and look forward to working closely with families, educators, and community leaders to ensure our students thrive both in and out of the classroom."

"Students learn best when they feel safe, challenged, and respected," said **Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña**. "Our school climate improvements are designed to create strong and inclusive school communities that encourage and support all students. By emphasizing de-escalation and conflict resolution, we can address bullying and school incidents and enable all our young people to reach their full potential."

“It is of utmost importance to the NYPD and the public that our children feel safe, secure, and supported in school. Toward that end, the NYPD commends the Leadership Team on their recommendations which serve not only to ensure safety for our children, but also ensure that each child is treated fairly,” said **Police Commissioner William J. Bratton**. “Along with an overall decline in crime in the City, there has also been a reduction in crime, arrests, and summonses in schools. While many of the recommendations for the NYPD are already being implemented, we look forward to working collaboratively with school personnel, students, families, and community members in developing policies and procedures which foster trust between the NYPD and the community we serve.”

"School should be about feeling safe and it being a safe haven for all students and educators," said **Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. "The overuse of suspensions does not improve school climate and culture. The implementation of these recommendations will create better relationships and communication throughout the school and with families as well."

"The Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline moves us in the right direction - working towards creating a safer and supportive environment in our schools. Punitive discipline does not reduce conflict or get at the root of poor behavior. The Mayor's initiative is a win for our young people, and our school communities. I look forward to working with the Mayor on his "Leadership Team" contributing and supporting his mission," said **Public Advocate Letitia James**.

After a 63 percent increase in school suspensions between 2000 and 2010, the de Blasio administration has made a concerted effort to both promote school safety and reduce overly punitive school discipline. This effort has worked: citywide, schools are becoming safer and suspensions are declining.

- There was a 25 percent decline in major crime and a 29 percent decline in all crime in NYC public schools between school year 2011-2012 and 2014-2015.
- There were nearly 36 percent fewer suspensions and the NYPD's School Safety Division made 68 percent fewer arrests and issued 72 percent fewer summonses between school year 2011-2012 and 2014-2015.
- Comparing 2013-2014 to 2014-2015 there were 17 percent fewer suspensions, 27 percent fewer arrests and 15 percent fewer summonses. Additionally, all crime dropped by 7 percent and major crime by 6 percent during the same time.
- Additionally, the DOE released the 9th annual NYC School Survey which showed 92 percent of students reported feeling safe in their classrooms, up from 87 percent in 2014 and 85 percent of students reported feeling safe in their school building, up from 79 percent in 2014.

Despite this success, a high number of suspensions and arrests are concentrated in a small number of schools and disproportionately impact students with special education needs and students of color.

- Just 10 school campuses account for 49 percent of all summonses and 19 percent of all arrests made by the School Safety Division.
- Although the average suspension rate is 4.8 per 100 students, the top 10 highest suspending schools (by rate) issue 63 suspensions per 100 students.

The strategy announced today calls for both system-wide improvements to continue positive citywide trends, as well as concentrated resources to reduce disparities and better support high-need schools and students. Recommendations include:

1. **Articulate a clear Mission Statement.** The City should commit to de-emphasize removing students from the classroom and promote de-escalation, reflection, and community building.
 - *The de Blasio administration has already adopted this recommendation. Please [click here](#) for the new Mission Statement released today.*
2. **Provide additional supports for the highest-need schools.** Approximately 10 percent of all city schools account for 41 percent of all suspensions and the vast majority of arrest and summonses issued by the School Safety Division of the NYPD. The City should invest in de-escalation resources in these schools.
3. **Increase system-wide school climate supports.** Evidence from other cities suggests that dedicated staffing will be necessary to shift toward the City's new positive disciplinary policy.
4. **Improve citywide and school-level data collection and use.** At present, no City agency captures the full number of students who are arrested, issued summonses or handcuffed in New York City schools. This impairs policy makers' ability to allocate resources effectively.
5. **Implement protocols to improve the scanning process and remove scanners where appropriate.** Despite a 48 percent reduction in total crime in NYC public schools over the last decade, virtually no schools have removed a permanent scanner during that period.
6. **Make Collaborative Problem Solving the rule, not just the practice.** In SY2012, the School Safety Division changed leadership, began emphasizing de-escalation, and trained all staff in Collaborative Problem Solving. Since then, there has been a sharp decline in arrests and summonses. This new approach should be codified.

7. **Create teams to better connect students and families with community supports.** Currently, schools with limited staff resources and capacity must piece together independent relationships with mental health, housing, preventative services, and other organizations.
8. **Reduce disparities in disciplinary practices.** Despite overall declines in suspensions, arrests and summonses, disparities have increased. Between SY2012 and SY2014 suspension disparities between Black and Hispanic compared to White students increased, as did the suspension disparities between students with special needs and general education students.
9. **Improve training of staff to better meet the needs of students with special needs.** Students with special needs were suspended 2.6 times as frequently as students without disabilities in SY2014. Moreover, many high-need schools have high rates of students with special needs and high suspension rates for these students.
10. **Promote transparency, consistency, and information sharing between schools receiving students via Safety Transfers and DOE Central.** Allowing students a fresh start at new schools is a core principle that educators share, yet students would have a better chance to succeed if their receiving school was better prepared to meet their needs.

Read the complete recommendations in the report [Safety with Dignity](#), issued today.

The Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline is chaired by Ursulina Ramirez, Chief of Staff to the Chancellor of the NYC Department of Education and Vincent Schiraldi, Senior Advisor to the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, and comprised of over 150 stakeholders including representatives from city agencies, community organizations, and unions, as well as researchers, practitioners, educators, students, and parents. A complete list of Leadership Team members is available [here](#). An update on progress in fulfilling Mayoral commitments to improve school climate and safety when he announced the formation of the Leadership Team is available [here](#).

"With the release today of the Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline's report as well as the most recent data showing declines in both crime and exclusionary discipline, the de Blasio Administration is again showing its commitment to having less crime and more decency in its schools," stated **Vincent Schiraldi, Senior Advisor to the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice and Leadership Team co-chair**. "Research and experience locally and nationally clearly show that treating students with respect and improved school safety and climate go hand in hand. I would like to thank the over 150 people who participated in formulating these interim recommendations for their hard work and diligence and look forward to the second stage of our work together."

"Implementing restorative approaches to discipline is already working in our schools," said **Ursulina Ramirez, Chief of Staff to the Chancellor and Co-Chair of the Leadership Team**. "Students are now learning in safer environments and they are benefiting from a progressive

approach to conflict resolution. These are strong recommendations and we look forward to building on the progress we've made across the City as we move forward."

"As a father of three, I can definitively say there is nothing more important to a parent than the health and well-being of their child, especially when they are away from our watchful eyes at school," said **Congressman Eliot Engel**. "Although school safety has improved dramatically over the last five years, there remains a small concentration of schools throughout the city that suffer from disproportionately high numbers of suspensions and arrests. In response to this issue, the Mayor's Leadership Team has come up with a series of measures to provide resources and support for high need schools, through increased staffing, additional training, and improved data collection, which will emphasize de-escalation to create a more positive environment. Promoting school safety while reducing suspensions and arrests is not an impossible, nor contradictory concept. I applaud the Mayor for taking this comprehensive approach to school safety reform."

"Providing a safe, secure and enriching learning environment is critical to the long-term success of New York students. I applaud Mayor de Blasio and our city leaders for developing this initiative to shift the focus away from outdated policies to common-sense practices," said **Congressman Steve Israel**.

"A safe and nurturing environment is important for students to learn and develop successfully throughout the course of their education. This proposal will help reduce the emphasis on punitive disciplinary actions in New York City schools and replace it with an approach that supports and nurtures students to ensure they thrive inside and outside the classroom. This change will strengthen our schools and help ensure our children can reach their full potential and succeed in the future," said **Congressman Jose Serrano**.

"It's been a privilege to work with Judge Kaye and New York State's Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children on this issue" said **Assembly Member Catherine Nolan, Chair of the Committee on Education**. "The work of the city's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline will be invaluable as we develop statewide legislation on this topic."

"This is a very commendable big move in the right direction by this administration. Our schools are filled with the leaders of tomorrow and we have to treat them right, nurture them properly and provide resources that adequately, and in a realistic manner, address the issues that make raising youngsters into adults such a complicated and challenging task. Pointing them towards jails and prisons, and criminalizing them before they ever get a chance to find themselves, ensures that they will never find their way to becoming successful and productive adults, and tickets and arrests were the easy 'cop-out' that was chosen by the previous administration. I am really grateful that this Mayor is bold enough to be innovative and smart enough to direct resources to properly address the problem," said **Assembly Member N. Nick Perry**.

"We have to make sure that all schools are orderly places where children can learn, and to focus with laser-like precision on the most serious infractions to deal with them quickly and fairly," said **Michael Mulgrew, president of the United Federation of Teachers**. "These recommendations target both of our goals."

“The School Climate Report is a big step in the right direction,” said **Council Member Daniel Dromm, Chair of the Committee on Education**. “Reducing suspensions and creating a culture of mutual respect in our schools is vitally important to the education of our children. I congratulate Mayor de Blasio, Chancellor Fariña and the leadership team for coming up with a good framework for improving school climates and cultures.”

“School discipline practices are crucial to our efforts to ensure students are thriving both in and out of the classroom,” said **Celeste Douglas, Principal of Ron Brown Academy MS 57 in Brooklyn**. “We want our kids to feel safe and supported in school and we do that best by creating an atmosphere of respect and by targeting key interventions to prevent and de-escalate conflicts before they spin out of control.”

“This is an exciting time for our City as the Mayor’s Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline’s first round of recommendations is released,” said **Former New York State Chief Judge Judith Kaye, head of a school-justice task force**. “These recommendations will work to ensure that schools get the resources they need, utilize best practices to create safe and effective alternatives to suspensions and arrests, and improve school climate for all members of the school community. I commend the Mayor for his leadership and urge the Department of Education and the New York Police Department to adopt the recommendations as they will help teach all of New York City’s children how to be effective citizens, while improving learning and school safety. If that isn’t at the very core of public education’s mission, I don’t know what is.”

“We are implementing restorative approaches at our school and it is making a difference in the lives of students,” said **Maria Arestin-Sampedro, Guidance Counselor at JHS 194 William Carr School**. “By encouraging de-escalation and emphasizing conflict resolution, we are helping our kids solve their problems constructively and safely.”

“Change starts at the top and by convening this task force and releasing these recommendations, the Mayor has embraced the role of agent of change – he has publicly recognized that school safety and discipline policies of the past that relied on suspensions, arrests, summonses have a devastating impact on New York City’s most vulnerable children and he has prioritized fixing the problem,” said **New York Civil Liberties Union Executive Director Donna Lieberman**. “This is a monumental step, but much remains to be done. The task force brought together stakeholders as disparate as the NYPD to the NYCLU around the shared goal of making our schools a safe place where all children can learn and be nurtured. We look forward to working with the city and all of our colleagues in this effort to now make our vision a reality.”

“These proposals will start a long overdue shift away from punishment and toward support for school leaders and teachers in helping students to exercise healthy and positive behavior,” said **Evan Stone, co-founder and co-CEO of Educators 4 Excellence**. “Student behavior is intrinsic to student learning. We cannot pull kids out of class and expect them to keep up. We cannot allow the possibility of bias to creep into disciplinary issues. And we cannot expect students and teachers to feel motivated if their school is not a welcoming and safe environment. Our students don’t need more suspensions – they need more guidance counselors, better-trained teachers, and a transparent system that makes it easy for parents to stay involved. E4E teachers, who took on this issue in their own report earlier this year, are encouraged by the proposals coming out of the

Mayor's Leadership Team, and look forward to the positive impact they will have on their schools and students."

"This report is the product of an historic collaboration that brought together a wide variety of perspectives on working with children and youth, both inside and outside the classroom," said **Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children**. "More than 150 participants committed their time and expertise to this project because they know that we can maintain school safety while keeping more kids in school."

"For too long, the discipline practices in our schools have targeted and pushed out Black, Latina/o and LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities," said **Christine Rodriguez, youth member of the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline and representative from Make the Road New York**. "Being a part of the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline has been a great opportunity to be at the table and to be a part of the development of these recommendations. The recommendations put forward by the Leadership Team are a positive step forward in reforming school discipline policies and practices and moving towards embracing a positive approach to discipline in every school. There is still much work to be done and we are looking forward to continuing to push our schools in the right direction."

"The Council of Supervisors and Administrators and other members of the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline engaged in productive and provocative dialogue about the best ways to implement the new progressive discipline approaches," said **Randi Herman, CSA First Vice President**. "We now have a strong base upon which we can build. Our goal is to provide school leaders and staff with the necessary resources and to empower principals to make the decisions they know are in the best interest of students."

"Brooklyn Community Foundation is fully committed to investing in Brooklyn's next generation, and we firmly believe that school-based restorative justice practices are critical to improving opportunities and outcomes for our young people. We are proud to be partnering with the Mayor's Leadership Team to bring these powerful tools for change to our schools, so that they can be safer, more supportive environments for all of our students," said **Cecilia Clarke, President and CEO of Brooklyn Community Foundation**.

Yesterday, Lois Herrera, Chief Executive Officer of the Office of Safety and Youth Development at the DOE, Ursulina Ramirez, Chief of Staff to the Chancellor, and Assistant Chief Brian Conroy, Commanding Officer of the School Safety Division of the NYPD, were at the White House to participate in a national conference on improving school climate and supporting effective discipline. The conference, co-sponsored by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, brought together educators from across the country to share best practices and offered new resources to help districts implement and track the progress of school climate reforms.

###