

Support the DSC-NY 2014 Goals for Positive Discipline in NYC Schools!

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

We call on the New York City Mayor and Department of Education (DOE) to:

1. Mandate Guidance Interventions in All Schools

DOE should revise the 2014-2015 Discipline Code to require that schools use Guidance Interventions before they can suspend a student. For the most serious Level 5 infractions where there is a serious immediate threat to safety, a school would have the option to suspend right away, but must always combine the suspension with a Guidance Intervention.

Schools should develop a protocol for how to use Guidance Interventions that includes strategies for de-escalating conflict, holding meetings with students and parents, using interventions like counseling, mediation or community circles, and tracking the use of Guidance Interventions.

2. Provide Training on the Purpose and Use of Guidance Interventions

All school staff, including administrators, teachers, counselors and other support staff, must receive trainings at least twice a year on how to use Guidance Interventions, such as mediation, conflict resolution and restorative circles, as the primary response to behavior infractions. Schools must hold school-wide conversations where all school stakeholders, including students and parents, can be introduced to Guidance Interventions, share perspectives on safety and school climate and build relationships with one another.

School Safety Officers should also be educated about and committed to the importance of Guidance Interventions. SSOs should receive trainings from educators, students and parents on how to work with students, de-escalate conflict and refer school discipline matters to school staff for Guidance Interventions. Schools must hold a safety committee meeting at least one time during the school year that is open to parents and community members to meet with SSOs.

3. End Suspensions for “Defying or Disobeying Authority”

DOE should revise the 2014-2015 Discipline Code to eliminate suspensions for Infraction B21, “Defying or disobeying authority,” the second most common behavior for which NYC students are suspended. Many districts around the country, such as Los Angeles, now prohibit suspensions for these types of behavior and instead use Guidance Interventions, such as meeting with a counselor, participating in a mediation session or completing community service.

*Guidance Interventions are a range of prevention and intervention strategies and support services listed in the Discipline Code that are provided for students during and/or after school hours throughout the school year in order to promote positive behaviors.

I/We support the Dignity in Schools Campaign-NY Goals for Positive School Discipline

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