

Re-Imagining School Safety

Maryland's Campaign for Police-Free Schools, with
Counselors Not Cops



School Police: Origins and Purpose

- 1950's – First school police programs created in Flint, MI and Los Angeles, CA following Great Migration and school integration
- 1970's-80's – War on Drugs
- 1990's – Zero Tolerance approach to crime & student discipline
- 1999 – Columbine school shooting → \$750 million federal COPS grant puts 6,500 more police in schools nationwide
- 2013 – Sandy Hook school shooting → expansion of COPS program; 4X as much federal funding for school police vs. school counselors
- 2018 – Great Mills shooting → Safe to Learn Act creates \$10 million/year fund for SROs.

The stated intent behind putting police in schools is to address instances of extreme violence /shootings and keep students and educators safe.

When Schooling Meets Policing, The Atlantic, Sept. 21, 2015, <https://bit.ly/32OB84M>

Maryland Center for School Safety: Annual Report, 2019, <https://schoolsafety.maryland.gov/Documents/Reports-Docs/School%20Safety%20Annual%20Report-2019.pdf>

No Safety Benefits

- No national or Maryland study has found that the presence of school police decreases violent incidents at school
- Police presence does not prevent school shootings; research shows that armed police have failed to deter active shooters from entering campus or stop shootings once they start
- One study found that increasing school police officers did not result in a decrease in any offense type
- Black students, in particular, report that police presence in schools makes them feel less safe, given police violence against communities of color

Chongmin Na & Denise Gottfredson, Police Officers in School: Effects on School Crime & the Processing of Offending Behaviors, *Justice Quarterly* (2011)

Anya Kamanetz, Why There's a Push to Get Police Out of Schools, *National Public Radio* (June 23, 2020)

Alex Yablon, Do Armed Guards Prevent School Shootings?, *The Trace* (April 2019)

Criminalization of Minor Behaviors

Compared to students in police-free schools, students in schools with police are...

- 5 times as likely to face arrest for “disorderly conduct”
- Twice as likely to be arrested/referred to law enforcement for fistfights not involving weapons

In Maryland, ~70% of school-based arrests are for fistfights not involving weapons and lesser offenses like disruption/disrespect, trespassing, alcohol/tobacco; remainder are mostly for simple drug possession

Dignity in Schools Campaign, A Resource Guide on Counselors Not Cops (2016), http://www.dignityinschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Resource_Guide-on-CNC-1.pdf

Na & Gottfredson, Police Officers in School

MSDE, Maryland Public Schools Arrest Data, School Year 2018-19

Academic Harm

A single police encounter increases the odds that a student drops out of school.

Long-term exposure to police in schools leads to . . .

- 2.5% drop in high school graduation & 4% drop in college enrollment (TX study)
- Lower standardized test scores for Black boys starting at ages 13-15 (NYC study)

Stephanie Ann Wiley, The Amplification of Deviance Following Police Contact: An Examination of Individual and Neighborhood Factors among a Sample of Youth, 35 (July 2, 2014)

Emily K. Weisburst, *Patrolling Public Schools: The Impact of Funding for School Police on Student Discipline and Long-Term Education Outcomes*, 38 *J. Pol'y Analysis & Mgmt.* 338 (2019)

Jeffrey Fagan and Joscha Legewie, *Aggressive Policing and the Educational Performance of Minority Youth*, 84 *Amer. Soc'l Rev.* 220 (2019)

Physical Assault

- Suitland High School, PGCPs, 2014 – A school police officer knelt down to pray, and then punched a 17 year old student in the face for allegedly possessing drugs
- Sherwood High School, MCPS, 2016 – A school police officer placed a student in a headlock and pinned her to the floor at her senior prom because he believed she was intoxicated
- Additional examples:
 - 3 officers break up a fistfight by tackling 11th grade girl to ground, holding her arms, pressing on her neck, kneeling her back while she screamed that she was in pain
 - Principal and school security tackle hold down 13 year old who allegedly trespassed when he entered office to use phone; detain him until school police escorts him away

Alliance for Educational Justice, #AssaultAtMap, <https://wecametolearn.com/>

Black students are more likely than white students . . .

- To attend schools with police officers
- To attend a school with more officers/security personnel than mental health professionals
- To be perceived as blameworthy when they engage in the same behaviors as peers

→ Black students receive 56% of school-based arrests in Maryland, despite comprising a third of the student population

Students with disabilities face arrest for challenging but non-violent disability-related behavior, e.g. disorderly conduct

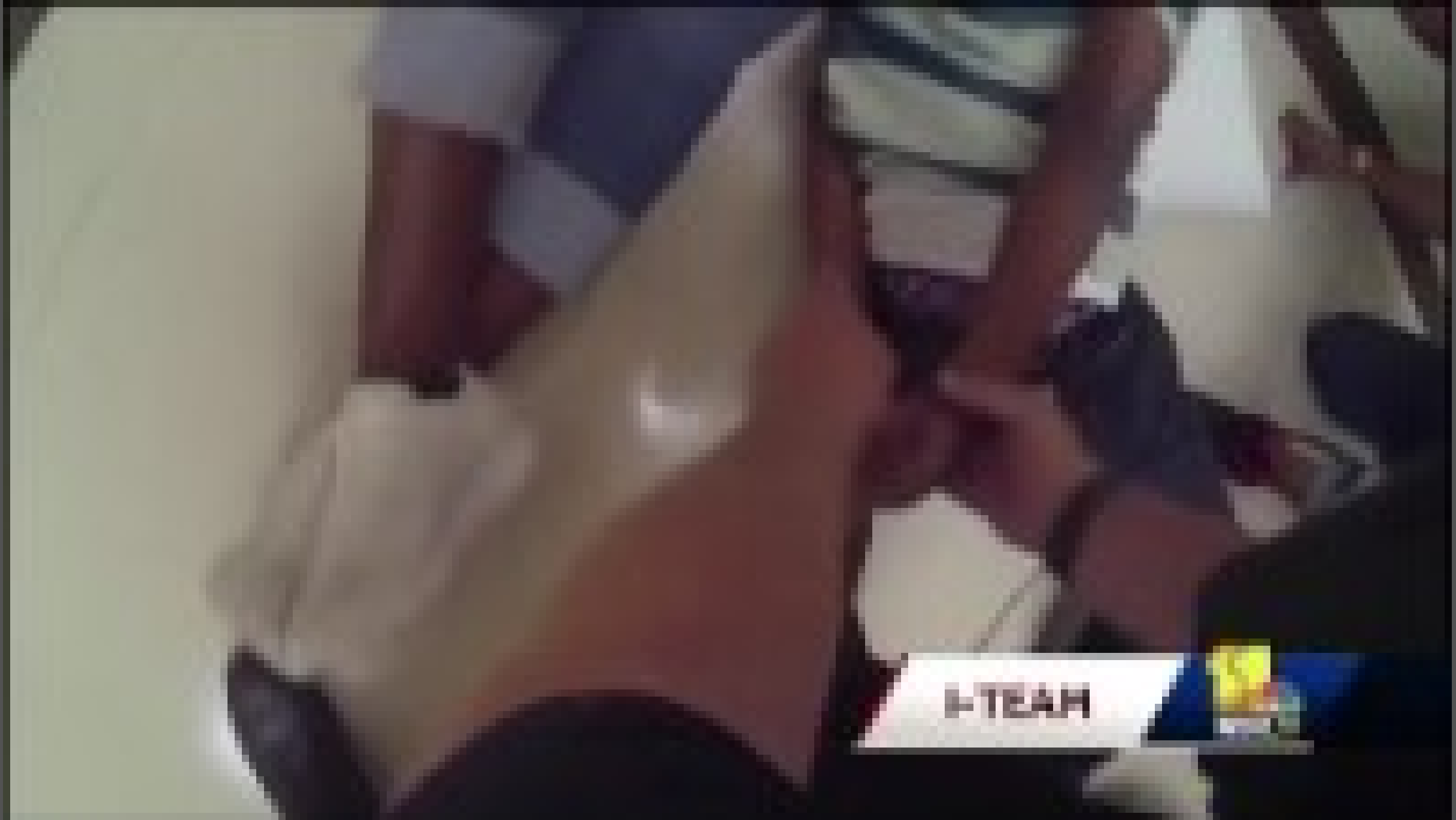
→ Students with disabilities (IEPs) receive 23% of school-based arrests, despite comprising 12% of the student population

Kristen Harper & Deborah Temkin, Compared to White Majority White Schools Majority Black Schools Are More Likely to Have Security Staff, Child Trends (2018)

MSDE, Maryland Public Schools Arrest Data, School Year 2018-19



Disparate
Impact



B-TEAM

School Safety Reimagined: Restorative Approaches

- Builds positive relationships among students and staff to prevent conflict, and repair harm and impose accountability when conflict does occur
- “We conclude that results from case studies, district-wide correlational studies, and experimental trials **convincingly demonstrate** that when schools implement a restorative initiative, their out-of-school suspension rates decrease” and “restorative initiatives have promise to **narrow racial disparities** in suspension”
- Reliance on police is “fundamentally at odds” with a restorative approach

National Education Policy Center, The Starts & Stumbles of Restorative Justice in Education: Where Do We Go From Here? (2020), https://nepc.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Revised%20PB%20Gregory_o.pdf

School Safety Reimagined: Social- Emotional Learning

- Curriculum focused on developing youth's self-awareness (recognizing emotions), self-management (regulating emotions), social awareness (empathy), relationships, and responsible decision-making
- Based on recognition of "character" as a skill not a trait
- Has demonstrated short-term and long-term impacts on student behavior and relationships – including decreased emotional distress and violent behaviors/conduct problems

Taylor, R. Oberle, E., Durlak, J. & Weissberg, R. , Promoting positive youth development through school-based social emotional learning interventions: A meta-analysis of follow-up effects. *Child Development*. 88(4), 1156-1171. (2017).

School Safety Reimagined: Trauma-Sensitive Practices

- “In which all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported, and where addressing trauma’s impact on learning on a school-wide basis is at the center of its educational mission.”
 - Focus on students’ physical, social, and emotional safety
 - Shared understanding among staff about impact of trauma
 - Positive, culturally-responsive discipline policy and practice
 - Access to comprehensive school mental health and behavioral services
 - Effective community collaboration
- Trauma-sensitive schools saw decreases in student behavior crises & disciplinary referrals and felt “safer” and “calmer”

Wehmah Jones et al, Trauma & Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI): Trauma-Sensitive Schools Descriptive Study, American Institutes for Research (2018), https://traumasensitiveschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/TLPI-Final-Report_Full-Report-002-2-1.pdf

National Association of School Psychologists, Trauma-sensitive schools; Brief tips and policy recommendations. <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/mental-health/trauma-sensitive-schools>

Staffing School Safety

To implement alternatives to keep students and educators safe, schools need enough:

- School counselors (1:250 students)
- School social workers (1:250 students)
- School psychologists (1:700 students)
- School nurses (1:750 students)
- Restorative approaches practitioners
- Community school coordinators

ACLU, Cops & No Counselors: How the Lack of School Mental Health Services is Harming Students (2019),
https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf

Maryland is not meeting recommended benchmarks

- x 1 Counselor for every 383 students
- x 1 Social Worker for every 2,324 students
- x 1 School Psychologist for every 1,198 students
- x 1 Nurse for every 917 students
- x The vast majority of schools have no restorative approaches staffing or community school coordinator

ACLU, Cops & No Counselors: How the Lack of School Mental Health Services is Harming Students (2019),
https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf

Staffing School Safety: Maryland

National Movement for Police-Free Schools

Districts around the country are removing police from schools.

- Denver
- Charlottesville
- Portland
- San Francisco
- Minneapolis
- Rochester
- Milwaukee
- West Contra Costa (CA)
- And more...

Local governments and school boards in many of these districts are reallocating funding from police towards alternatives and services for students

Case Study: Toronto Public Schools

In 2017, TPS removed all their on-site police officers following Black Lives Matter protests.

- Most students said that officer presence made them feel safer, but district officials “put greater stock in what students who’d been most affected by the program had to say, even if that was a minority of students.” And affected students felt less safe with officers present.

Results have been positive.

- No increase in school-based violence
- Declines in suspensions and expulsions
- Declines in police involvement in student disciplinary incidents
- Unarmed “safety monitors” w/o arresting powers walk the halls and de-escalate/resolve issues

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

Prince George's County

- School Board Resolution introduced
- Tabled in July → report due September 14, vote soon after
- Superintendent supports school police

Montgomery County

- Advocacy targets County Council, where grassroots leaders successfully halted increase in school police funding last year
- School district touts lower arrest numbers – but disproportionality is significant

Howard County

- Students gathered stories and signatures for [petition](#) demanding anti-racism action from district, including removal of school police

Police-Free Schools in Maryland: Local Efforts

Police-Free Schools in Maryland: State Law

Safe to Learn Act (Educ. 7-1508 et. seq. & COMAR 14.40.04)

- Each public school must have a “school resource officer” or a plan for “adequate law enforcement coverage”
- Training – 40 hours on de-escalation, disability awareness, implicit bias, constructive interaction w/students
- SRO Fund – Governor “shall appropriate” \$10 million per year for school police and law enforcement coverage
- Every district has SROs, 1 for every 4 students statewide

Baltimore School Police Force Statute (Educ. 4-318)

- Creates an independent police force specifically for Baltimore City Public Schools

Re-Imagining School Safety: 2021 State Legislation

Counselors Not Cops (Sponsor: Jheanelle Wilkins)

- Redirects the \$10 million/year SRO fund towards student mental health services, wraparound supports, and restorative approaches – so that districts can hire counselors, social workers, school psychologists, restorative approaches practitioners, community school coordinators, and implement trauma-informed practices
- Requires reporting on the use of force by school security and on calls to City or County police for incidents in school.
- Strengthens the School Safety Subcabinet Advisory Board to include families impacted by school-based arrest, and experts in student mental health and conflict resolution.

Police-Free Schools (Sponsor: Gabriel Acevero)

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- Strengthens the School Safety Subcabinet Advisory Board to include families impacted by school-based arrest, and experts in student mental health and conflict resolution.
- Prohibits school districts from contracting with police departments to station police at schools.
- Repeals creation of Baltimore City Public Schools standalone police force.

Re-Imagining
School Safety:
2021 State
Legislation

The bills do NOT:

- Prohibit school districts from calling City or County police in an emergency.
- Prohibit school districts from developing “adequate law enforcement coverage” plans with City or County police.
- Remove school security guards who are unarmed and do not have the power to arrest students.
- Prevent schools from installing door locks or other non-personnel safety measures.

Re-Imagining School Safety: 2021 State Legislation

Police-Free Schools in Maryland: FAQs

Can we train school police not to over-arrest, harass etc.?

The function of police is to enforce the law, make arrests when they see crime, even when kids are involved – e.g. fighting (assault), taking another child’s backpack (theft/robbery), horseplay (disruption of education activities). Districts have been training before and under Safe to Learn – it’s not enough.

Can we improve district-police department MOUs?

Studies show that school-police MOUs typically operate as pro forma documents that do not guide day-to-day activities and officers do not know about. Also, MOUs cannot alter school police officers’ basic job function – to enforce the law.

Can we let school districts to decide whether they want police?

Safe to Learn enshrines the school police model into state law by investing \$10m in state funds per year towards school police rather than supporting effective behavior and conflict resolution supports. Without a change in state law, districts will have a strong financial incentive to keep police in schools.

Lisa H. Thurau & Johanna Wald, Controlling Partners: When Law Enforcement Meets Discipline in Public Schools, 54 N.Y. L. SCH. L. REV. 977 (2009-2010)

Don't school police effectively serve as counselors, social workers anyway?

Counselors, social workers, school psychologists receive years of training and certification in a range of topics relevant to student development and behavior. School police do not – their 1-week training does not cover these topics in depth, and they are not qualified to provide mental health or case management services. If we want counselors and social workers, we should hire them.

Aren't school police great mentors?

Some school police officers may mentor some students, though research shows that this is not where they spend the bulk of their time. Even when an officer does play a mentoring role, the officer's main job is to enforce the law – including arresting students with whom the officer has a mentoring relationship. Students who want an officer mentor can seek those opportunities in the community – e.g. through police athletic leagues, where participation is voluntary (unlike in school).

The problem isn't school police, it's educators who rely on them too heavily. Right?

We need to support educators to resolve student conflict and behavior challenges in a manner that de-escalates and teaches students how to conduct themselves. But as long as we provide educators with the crutch of an officer down the hall, it will always be easier to call that officer to remove the student than to do the harder work of de-escalation and youth development, particularly in schools where educators are already overstretched.

Health & Medicine Policy Research Group, Cross-Sector Collaboration for Police-Free Schools (July 24, 2020), <http://www.hmprg.org/events/webinar-cross-sector-collaboration-for-police-free-schools/>

Police-Free Schools in Maryland: FAQs

Learn More

- Dignity in Schools - <https://dignityinschools.org/interactive/counselors-not-cops/#>
- www.wecametolearn.com

Follow/Support Local Efforts

- Howard: Anti-Racist Education Alliance, Black Lives Matter in School 365 Alliance, HoCo for Justice, Peers Not Perps
- Montgomery: MoCo Against Brutality, Racial Justice Now, Young People for Progress
- Prince George's: Mount Rainier Organizing for Racial Equality, Prince George's Changemakers, Prince George's NAACP, Schools Not Jails, Teens for Justice, Stand Up
- Participate in the CRSD school police committee

Join the Police-Free Schools Legislative Campaign

- Email cherayilm@publicjustice.org
- Ask your lawmaker to sign these [5 police reform demands](#)
- Follow Public Justice Center on FB or @PubJusticeCntr on Twitter

Get Involved!

Questions?