



RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES IN NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Sponsors: Dr. Kaliris Salas-Ramirez, Lacey Jordan, Vandana Bonilla and Lawanda Joyner

WHEREAS, restorative justice in schools focuses on repairing harm and rebuilding relationships rather than simply punishing students, based on principles of empathy, respect, and accountability that encourage students to understand the impact of their actions and take responsibility;¹ and

WHEREAS, the goal of restorative justice is to "build community and repair relationships while supporting reflection, communication, and problem-solving skills for staff and students,"² and

WHEREAS, schools implementing restorative justice report significant reductions in suspensions, improved student behavior, and better overall school climate;³ and

WHEREAS, Community School District 4 has 23 schools in the district and had a total of 533 suspensions recorded for school year 2023-2024⁴; and

WHEREAS, decades of evidence have demonstrated the negative short- and long-term effects of suspending students and placing them on the school-to-prison pipeline. One study found that 12 years after a suspension, suspended youth were less likely than non-suspended youth to have earned high

¹ Jean Croteau, "What Is Restorative Justice In Schools? Everything Educators Need to Know", We are Teachers [2024] available at <https://www.weareteachers.com/restorative-justice/>; George Mason University College of Education and Human Development, "Restorative Practices: An effective alternative to being punitive" [2024] available at <https://cehd.gmu.edu/features/2024/02/27/restorative-practices-an-effective-alternative-to-being-punitive/>.

² "What Is Restorative Justice In Schools? Everything Educators Need to Know."

³ See *Generally* Trevor Fronius, et. al., "Restorative Justice in U.S. Schools - An Updated Research Review" West Ed Justice and Prevention Research Center [2019] available at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED595733.pdf>; Akiva Liberman & Michael Katz, "Restorative Justice Conferencing in Rhode Island: Summary Report" [2021] available at <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/302164.pdf>; Denver School-Based Restorative Practices Partnership, "School-Wide Restorative Practices Step-by-Step" [2021] available at <https://thecommons.dpsk12.org/cms/lib/CO01900837/Centricity/Domain/52/Denver%20School%20Based%20RPP%20Implementation%20Guide%202017%20REV%208.17.pdf>; Reed Sweir & Pharo Cranston, "The Power of Restorative Justice in Our Schools: Testimony in support of New York State's Solutions Not Suspensions Act" [2023] available at <https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/power-restorative-justice-our-schools-testimony-support-new-york-states-solutions-not>.

⁴ Suspension reports: <https://infohub.nyced.org/reports/government-reports/suspension-reports>

school diplomas and bachelor’s degrees, and were more likely to have been arrested and on probation;⁵ and

WHEREAS, there is clear evidence that racial disparities in exclusionary discipline do not stem from differences in misbehavior but rather that students of color are more likely to be surveilled⁶ and are exposed to harsher and more formalized forms of discipline;⁷ and

WHEREAS, a study of 44 Pittsburg schools found that restorative justice reduced suspension days by 16% overall and significantly reduced suspensions amongst Black students, low-income students, girls, and students with disabilities;⁸ and

WHEREAS, in Oakland, one school saw an 87% decrease in suspensions within three years, and the program was so successful that the entire district adopted restorative justice as their standard approach;⁹ and

WHEREAS, in Denver Public Schools, the overall suspension rate dropped from 10.6 percent to 5.6 percent after implementing restorative justice, and other studies show suspension reductions ranging from 40% to 84% across different schools;¹⁰ and

WHEREAS, after implementing restorative justice practices, Black students and LGBTQ students had similar perceptions of bullying as their White and straight peers, whereas prior to implementation, Black students were more likely than their White peers to indicate that there was bullying in the school, and LGBTQ students were more likely than straight students to indicate that there was bullying or harassment;¹¹ and

⁵ Janet E. Rosenbaum, “Educational and criminal justice outcomes 12 years after school suspension” 52 *Youth Soc* 515 [2020] available at <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7288849/>; see also Elizabeth Pufall Jones, et. al., “Disciplined and Disconnected: How Students Experience Exclusionary Discipline in Minnesota and the Promise of Non-Exclusionary Alternatives” Center for Promise [2018] available at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED586336.pdf>.

⁶ Walter S. Gilliam, “Do Early Educators’ Implicit Biases Regarding Sex and Rac Relate to Behavior Expectations and Recommendations for Preschool Expulsions and Suspensions?” Yale Child Study Center [2016] available at <https://files-profile.medicine.yale.edu/documents/75afe6d2-e556-4794-bf8c-3cf105113b7c>.

⁷ Mariella Arredondo, et. al., “New and Developing Research on Disparities in Discipline” [2014] available at <https://search.issuelab.org/resource/new-and-developing-research-on-disparities-in-discipline.html>; Russel Skiba, et. al., “Where should we intervene? Contributions of behavior, student, and school characteristics to suspension and expulsion.” In *Closing the School Discipline Gap: Research for Policymakers* [2014] available at <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9dh9k3bq>.

⁸ Catherine H. Augustine, et. al., “Can Restorative Practices Improve School Climate and Curb Suspensions” An Evaluation of Impact of Restorative Practices” RAND Corporation [2018] available at https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2800/RR2840/RAND_RR2840.pdf.

⁹ Michael D. Sumner, et. al., “School Based Restorative Justice as an Alternative to Zero-Tolerance PoliciesL Lessons from West Oakland”, Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice [2010] available at <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/thcsj/10-2010-School-based-Restorative-Justice-As-an-Alternative-to-Zero-Tolerance-Policies.pdf>.

¹⁰ Myriam L. Baker, et. al. “Truancy Reductions: Keeping Students in School” Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [2001] available at <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/188947.pdf>

¹¹ Claudia G. Vincent, et. al., “School-wide Positive and Restorative Discipline (SWPRD): Integrating School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports and Restorative Discipline” in *Inequality in School Discipline* [2016].

WHEREAS, after implementing restorative justice, the suspension rate dropped for Black Denver students from 17.6 percent to 10.4 percent and for Latino students from 10.2 percent to 4.7 percent;¹² and

WHEREAS, traditional zero-tolerance policies have pushed students out of school without improving safety and have contributed to a "school-to-prison pipeline" that disproportionately affects and students;¹³ and

WHEREAS, Healing-Centered Schools recognize that social-emotional well-being is necessary for learning and work to remove harmful practices while implementing trauma-responsive and culturally-responsive approaches that address the root causes of student challenges;¹⁴ and

WHEREAS, schools in NYC implementing restorative justice and supportive environments strategies reported a reduction in arrests by approximately 35% and out-of-school suspensions by 18%, with increases in student and staff perceptions of school safety¹⁵; and

WHEREAS, building effective restorative justice programs requires years of training, relationship-building, and cultural change that cannot be easily replaced once dismantled; and

WHEREAS, the June CCHS resolution seeks to suspend all restorative justice practices and immediately redirect \$16.8 million in funding away from these proven programs, despite clear evidence that restorative justice reduces suspensions, improves school climate, and helps close racial discipline gaps;¹⁶ and

WHEREAS, the resolution cherry-picks negative data, incorrectly applies research from the criminal justice context, and dismisses student and teacher testimony that consistently demonstrated throughout the June meeting that these practices help them feel safer and more supported in school; and

WHEREAS, the CCHS resolution's claims about harm to victims ignored testimony that restorative practices are voluntary, carefully facilitated by trained staff, and designed with victim safety as a priority, while their argument that suspension reduction as a metric doesn't matter fails to recognize that keeping students in school and learning is the ultimate goal of education; and

WHEREAS, the CCHS limited public comment to one minute per-speaker, significantly restricting community participation and preventing meaningful input from students, families, and educators who have direct experience with the benefits of restorative justice practices in their schools; and

¹² Thalia González, Socializing schools: Addressing racial disparities in discipline through restorative justice. In *Closing the school discipline gap: Equitable remedies for excessive exclusion* [2016] available at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2728960.

¹³ *Supra* n 5.

¹⁴ Office of the Public Advocate, "Healing-Centered Schools" [2022] available at <https://advocate.nyc.gov/community-engagement/education-opportunity/healing-centered-schools>.

¹⁵ <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/New%20York%20City%E2%80%99s%20Wounded%20Healers-%20A%20Cross-Program%2C%20Participatory%20Action%20Research%20Study%20of%20Credible%20Messengers.pdf>

¹⁶ Citywide Council on High Schools, "RESOLUTION TO SUSPEND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES IN NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS" [2025] available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iHqKAwky9c1KK7D9mOvEEhakpvMhb23/view>

WHEREAS, suspending these practices would force schools back to punitive approaches that research shows disproportionately harm students of color and students with disabilities, with staff biases potentially leading to unequal discipline for vaguely defined offenses such as "disrespect," "willful defiance," and "disruption";¹⁷ and

WHEREAS, eliminating restorative justice funding would particularly harm in schools with historically marginalized communities, which have significant populations of Black and Latino students and students with disabilities who have historically been overrepresented in school discipline statistics; and

WHEREAS, A rigorous evaluation of 10 public high schools in District 18 (Brooklyn) randomly assigned five to receive full restorative justice supports, including: A full-time restorative justice coordinator per school, ongoing training for staff and implementation of RJ circles and community-building practices. This intervention resulted in measurable reductions in suspension events and improvements in school climate compared to control schools¹⁸; and

WHEREAS, The Manhattan Institute's more recent critique¹⁹ argues that RJ policy without infrastructure has failed to reduce serious incidents or improve school climate, however suspension counts have dropped in our schools. DOE explains that if anything there have been implementation failures and that philosophy is not at fault;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Community Education Council 4 (CEC4) strongly condemns the CCHS resolution to suspend restorative justice practices in New York City Public Schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CEC4 calls upon the New York City Public Schools to maintain and expand funding for restorative justice practices. This includes maintaining consistency and accountability within our schools and a promise to ensure each school has a restorative justice coordinator and/or work with community based organizations, like The Circle Keepers and the Healing Centered Workgroup, to support practices in schools. These have been proven effective through rigorous research in reducing overall suspensions and addressing racial and disability disparities in school discipline; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Council urges NYCPS continued investment in training and support for educators implementing restorative practices, as research shows that schools fully committed to these approaches see real positive change and meaningful reductions in the racial discipline gap; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Council advocates for integrating restorative practices with trauma-informed and culturally responsive approaches to create truly healing-centered schools that address systemic inequities affecting all marginalized student populations; and

¹⁷ Russell J. Skiba, et. al. "The Color of Discipline: Sources of Racial and Gender Disproportionality in School Punishment" 34 The Urban Review [2002] available at http://www.fixschooldiscipline.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/29.Color_of_Discipline.2002.pdf.

¹⁸ https://www.innovatingjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Summary_RJ_schools.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹⁹ <https://manhattan.institute/article/the-cost-of-restorative-justice-in-new-york-city-schools>

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Council calls upon other Community Education Councils throughout New York City to join us in defending proven, effective approaches to school discipline that promote equity for all students and support rather than punish our diverse student body.

This Resolution was approved at D4 CEC Calendar Meeting held on November 12th, 2025, by 7 votes.

Council members as follows:

Dr. Kaliris Salas-Ramirez (Yes), Sophie Oulai (Yes), Lacey Jordan (Absent), Johanna Dominguez (Yes), Elizabeth Soto-Cardona (Yes), Adriana Tlacomulco (Absent), Lawanda Joyner (Yes), Vandana Bonilla (Yes) and Tia Jackson (Yes),

YES- 7

NO- 0

ABSTAIN- 0

ABSENT- 2