



NEW SETTLEMENT  
**PARENT ACTION  
COMMITTEE**



# RESTORING JUSTICE TO OUR SCHOOLS

*Community Research and Solutions to End School Pushout*





**NEW SETTLEMENT  
PARENT ACTION  
COMMITTEE  
COMITÉ DE PADRES EN ACCIÓN  
Bronx, NY**

*"...because every child deserves an excellent education."  
"...porque todo niño merece una educación excelente."*

## About the New Settlement Parent Action Committee

The New Settlement Parent Action Committee (PAC) is an award-winning multicultural organization of concerned parents and community members fighting for educational justice for young people and families in the South Bronx and Citywide. Founded in 1996 by parents at a struggling elementary school, PAC is one of the City's oldest and most respected parent organizing groups. We have fought and won campaigns for teacher leadership and mentoring, school facility improvement, and reductions in school-based arrests, summonses and suspensions. Since 2012, PAC has coordinated Bronx School Justice (BSJ), a multi-stakeholder coalition seeking to negotiate increases in positive discipline practices that is comprised of parents, the New York City Department of Education, the New York Police Department's School Safety Division, and community advocates. The accomplishments of BSJ include reductions of more than 60% in school-based arrests and summons in the Bronx, the first community-led trainings on the school-to-prison pipeline for more than 1100 NYPD School Safety Agents, and in 2015, the launch of the Bronx School Exchange on Positive Discipline Alternatives. PAC's diverse membership and partners are united by a deep belief that every child deserves an excellent education in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment, and that the best way to guarantee this right is to improve the quality of neighborhood schools.

## Executive Summary

New York City is at a critical crossroads for school discipline reform. Since the first release of Student Safety Act Data in 2012, there has been growing recognition on the part of both policymakers and educators of the need to move away from punitive, zero-tolerance models of school discipline. This tenuous consensus is reflected in the impressive reductions in arrests, summonses and suspensions across the City in the last three years. However, securing these gains will require deeper investments in alternatives to punitive discipline practices. Schools that have already made progress need additional resources to scale up positive discipline and restorative justice. And schools that have struggled to reduce suspensions will continue to rely on them unless they have concrete alternatives.

This report brings the voices of parents and students to the forefront of the debate around how to sustain change in school discipline. The New Settlement Parent Action Committee undertook a six-month Participatory Action Research project to develop a deeper understanding of how school climate and academic culture lead to student pushout, and to determine the resources schools need to support individual students and successfully build alternative models, transforming schools into respectful, supportive and safe spaces for staff, students and community members. This is what we learned:

### **Students who are academically and socially disengaged are at a higher risk of being pushed out.**

- 44% of students who do not enjoy school academically and 52% of students who do not enjoy school socially have been disciplined in the past four years.
- Students who do not enjoy school academically are twice as likely to think that the purpose of school is to take tests.

### **Students who are not engaged don't trust school staff, don't seek help from teachers and are less likely to access school programs and services.**

- When asked who they turn to when they are having a hard time at school, students who do not enjoy school academically are twice as likely as other students to respond that they would “never” turn to a teacher (59.3%). 56.6% would never turn to a social worker, 72% would never turn to administration and 74% would never turn to a School Safety Agent.

### **The vast majority of students depend on their friends and family for support.**

- 79% of students report that they “always” or “sometimes” turn to their classmates when they are having a hard time at school.
- 70% of all students report that they “always” or “sometimes” turn to family members.

We concluded that transforming school climate and culture and ending school pushout requires empowering students as change agents. We recommend implementing five solutions identified by community members:

1. **Invest in student and parent leadership in the implementation of restorative practices in place of punitive discipline.**
2. **Provide targeted support to at-risk students.**
3. **Expand the traditional roles of social workers.**
4. **Be transparent about how budgetary resources are distributed.**
5. **Use portfolio-based assessments to prepare students for college while reducing barriers to graduation.**



## Introduction

Student J couldn't pass the Regents.

Student I's mother died, and he needed to work to support the family.

Student F was left back.

Student K could not transfer his credits from out of state when he moved back to New York.

Student G fought with students from other schools in his colocated school after he was taunted at the bus stop. An administrator told him that he needed protection and initiated a safety transfer. But Student G didn't want a transfer.

Students like these focus group participants might say that they dropped out, but their stories show that they were pushed out: disengaged, distracted, disciplined, and dismissed long before they stopped attending.

Student J completed class work.  
"But when it comes to the test, I forget."

Student I admits that before his mother passed away, he didn't do class work. "I got distracted," he said.

Student F felt unprepared for exams, and believed that no one was helping them.

Student K was suspended for two weeks after he defended himself during a fight in the cafeteria.

And student G was not enrolled in the classes he needed to graduate.

**“You can’t come back,” [she said.] “So hell, you don’t want me to come back, I’m out with that. I drop. And that’s what I did.”**

How could schools have changed the endings of these students’ stories? To find the answer, the New Settlement Parent Action Committee conducted a six-month Participatory Action Research project to understand why students are pushed out, determine how academic engagement affects students’ persistence to graduation, and identify the supports students need to succeed. We collected almost 400 surveys from Bronx students, parents and educators, conducted four focus groups and engaged youth, community members, and advocates to help us identify solutions.

What we learned confirmed that the stories we heard from Students J, I, F, K and G were not unique. Students who are disengaged are at greater risk of pushout: they are more likely to be disciplined, less likely to attend school, and do not seek out support from teachers and school staff or access the minimal services available to them.

But students and communities have the answers. As policymakers and educators work to improve graduation rates and shift school discipline and policing practices, we believe it is critical to take into account the voices of those directly affected: students, families and community members. This belief has shaped not only our research process, but also our recommendations for how to address school pushout. To transform our schools, we recommend that schools re-empower students and community members as change agents by implementing five strategies:

- 1. Invest in student and parent leadership in the implementation of restorative practices in place of punitive discipline.**
- 2. Provide targeted support to at-risk students.**
- 3. Expand the traditional roles of social workers.**
- 4. Be transparent about how budgetary resources are distributed.**
- 5. Use portfolio-based assessments to prepare students for college while reducing barriers to graduation.**

Students who have been pushed out of school know first hand how high the stakes are for young people. They understand just how urgent it is that we take action to ensure all students graduate ready for college and career, even though it is too late for them. At our focus group, an interviewer explained to participants that we planned to write a report to share students’ experiences and call for change.

**“That could help other people in school,” Student K responded.  
“Because for us, we out of school already.”**

## The Landscape of School Culture and Climate Reform in New York City

New York City is at a critical crossroads for school discipline reform. Since the first release of Student Safety Act Data in 2012, there has been growing recognition on the part of policymakers and administrators of the need to move away from punitive, zero-tolerance models of discipline. This tenuous consensus is reflected in the impressive reductions in arrests, summonses and suspensions across the City in the last three years. In 2012, the Bronx had the highest number of school-based arrests and suspensions in the City. By the end of the 2014-2015 school year, the NYPD had reduced Bronx-based arrests and summonses by 66 and 64 percent respectively. The Department of Education has also agreed to sweeping changes to the Discipline Code, emphasizing the importance of guidance interventions in place of suspensions for minor infractions.<sup>ii</sup> The Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline, a working group of City officials, unions, advocates, and parent and student representatives, is poised to announce additional reforms to school discipline policy and practice.

Parent Action Committee (PAC) parent leaders have been active partners in this work. When the School Safety Act Data was first released, parents organized high-energy actions to bring attention to the disproportionate number of arrests and summonses in the Bronx. The campaign culminated in a People's Hearing on School Justice, which brought leadership from the NYPD School Safety Division and the Department of Education's Office of Safety and Youth Development (OSYD) to hear the testimony of students, parents, and advocates. At the conclusion of the event, OSYD and NYPD agreed to partner with PAC to implement the recommendations of community members.

The resulting partnership, Bronx School Justice, is a model of multi-stakeholder engagement, and PAC leaders recognize the commitment of leaders from both NYPD and DOE. Outcomes of the work of Bronx School Justice include the first community-led workshops for School Safety Agents and the Bronx School Exchange on Positive Discipline Alternatives, a peer-learning program including school staff, students, parents and School Safety Agents for Bronx schools. Through the Bronx School Exchange, PAC leaders have met progressive school leaders and educators dedicated to building positive school environments.

However, PAC leaders have seen that transforming school climate and securing the impressive gains of the past few years will require deeper investments in alternatives to punitive discipline practices. Schools that have made progress need additional resources and supports to scale up positive discipline and restorative justice practices, and schools that have struggled to reduce suspensions must build their capacity to implement solutions successfully.

This report brings the voices of parents and students to the forefront of the debate around how to sustain changes in school discipline. PAC parent leaders formed the Bronx Research Action Team with two goals in mind:

- Develop a deeper understanding of how school climate and academic culture lead to student pushout and contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline in Bronx schools.
- Pinpoint the resources schools need to support individual students and successfully build alternative models, transforming schools into respectful, supportive and safe spaces for staff, students and community members.

We have made a conscious decision to focus not on school policing practices, but rather on other underlying factors impacting school climate that must be addressed to create supportive and inclusive school cultures. The stories of student focus group participants confirm what our data and experience have taught us: punitive discipline and policing frequently map on to existing challenges within school communities. Student K was struggling academically long before a suspension precipitated his decision to leave school. While there is important and critical work being done to change policing practices and discipline policy, our research suggests that policymakers and educators must also address these underlying factors in order to transform school climate and culture in New York City.

## Methodology

PAC leaders and organizers made use of the tools of Participatory Action Research in developing this report. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is rooted in the belief that those directly affected by policy and practice have untapped knowledge and expertise rooted in their experiences. There is an abundance of academic literature examining issues of education reform in poor communities of color, much of which treats students and families as objects of study rather than engaging them as partners. PAR seeks to reverse this dynamic by involving students, parents, and community members in designing, implementing, and analyzing original research without losing focus on the urgent need for action.

To spearhead this project, in February 2015 PAC formed the **Bronx Research Action Team (BRAT)**, a group of students, educators, and parents, to ensure a range of voices in developing and implementing our research project. We began by exploring our underlying assumptions about what leads to school pushout, working together to map out the school-to-prison pipeline alongside our vision of an alternative “school-to-liberation” pipeline. Through this process, we charted the parallel and intersecting experiences of educators, parents, and students.

Together, we developed a shared hypothesis that academic culture, particularly the emphasis on high-stakes testing, plays a key role in school pushout. School safety is frequently analyzed through the lens of policing practices and disciplinary consequences. When academics are addressed, researchers focus on the gaps in education that result from suspensions, arrests, and time spent in court. BRAT team members wanted to understand the root causes of what leads students to become disengaged in school, consider how standards and instruction affect student experiences of school, and learn if the supports schools currently offer are effective.

We used three research strategies to explore our hypothesis:

**Surveys** BRAT crafted a multi-stakeholder survey to capture the experiences of students, parents and educators. Our group created the questions together, with topics ranging from the emotional state students experience as they sit for high-stakes exams to who students reach out to if they are experiencing challenges. Parallel versions were created for parents and educators that took their unique vantage points into account. For example, how do parents talk about failure on state exams with their children? The completed surveys were administered in Spanish and English. Between April and June 2015, BRAT Members collected almost 400 surveys from across the Bronx. To ensure that our sample was representative, we surveyed at parent meetings, outside of schools, at neighborhood parks and restaurants, and at train stations and bus hubs. The educator survey was distributed online through personal networks and social media. Our hard work paid off: The students, parents and educators who completed the survey represent over 50 Bronx schools.

**Focus Groups** To complement our quantitative research and contextualize our findings, the Bronx Research Action Team also facilitated four focus groups with young people at three community organizations, including students in a GED program who had experienced school pushout first hand. This group filled a critical gap in our survey data, allowing us to integrate the perspective of students who did not persist to high school graduation.

**Literature Review and Model Research** After we completed both surveys and focus groups, we convened an advisory committee of parents, students, educators and advocates who had not been involved in our research to share the data we had collected and brainstorm more solutions. We also conducted a literature review of academic writing on school pushout to identify potential models, and researched promising programs in New York City and across the country.

## Community Findings

### Students who are disengaged academically and socially are at a high risk of being pushed out.

The good news is that more than half of the students we surveyed enjoy school both academically and socially, and many students see a clear purpose to attending school: to prepare for college, to become an independent adult or learn the value of hard work. But the 21 percent of students who do not enjoy school academically are more likely to experience punitive discipline, be unprepared for the Regents exams, and give classroom instruction as a reason for not attending school.

- 44% of students who do not enjoy school academically and 52% of students who do not enjoy school socially have been disciplined in the past four years, compared with 35% of students who DO enjoy school academically and 37% of students who enjoy school socially.

#### Students who DO NOT enjoy school

Academically

**44%**

Socially

**52%**

have been disciplined in the past four years.

#### Students who DO enjoy school

Academically

**35%**

Socially

**37%**

have been disciplined in the past four years.

- Students who do not enjoy school academically are twice as likely to think that the purpose of school is to take tests.
- Students who are not engaged academically report feeling unprepared for Regents exams. Only 21% of students who dislike school academically feel prepared for Regents, compared with 72% of students who like school academically. 52% wrote that they are “anxious and stressed” when they take the Regents. In contrast, only 6% of students who enjoy school academically reported feelings of stress and anxiety.
- 57% of students who do not enjoy school academically say that what they learn in the classroom does not make them want to go to school.

**“I feel pressure when I take a math test ‘cause I been struggling with math since I was like in 5th grade,” one focus group participant said. “But every math class, I don’t go. I just run the halls.”**



In focus groups, students who had been pushed out of school remembered feeling unprepared and unsuccessful in school. While their ultimate decision to leave may have been precipitated by a death in the family, a fight or suspension, or being left back, the majority of students noted that passing the Regents was a significant obstacle, and they did not receive adequate support from teachers and family members. “When I get to the test, I get nervous and forget everything,” one student said. “The testing was difficult, and what they would teach you was not on the test,” added another.



**Compounding the risk of push out, students who are not engaged don't trust school staff, don't seek help from teachers, and are less likely to access school programs and services.**

- When asked who they turn to when they are having a hard time at school, students who do not enjoy school academically are twice as likely as other students to respond that they would “never” turn to a teacher (59.3%). 56.6% would never turn to a social worker, 72% would never turn to administration and 74% would never turn to a School Safety Agent.

**Never turn to a Teacher 59.3%**    **Never turn to a Social Worker 56.6%**    **Never turn to a Administration 72%**    **Never turn to a School Safety Agent 74%**

- Even when in need of academic help, students who do not enjoy school academically are less likely to seek support from their teachers. 52.8% of students who DO enjoy school academically always seek help from teachers when they are confused, while only 18.9% of students who do not enjoy school academically say that they always seek out help. 20.8% of these students say they never seek help from teachers.

**52.8%** Do Enjoy School and Get Help From Teacher    **18.9%** Do NOT Enjoy School and Get Help From Teacher    **20.8%** Do NOT Enjoy School and Never Get Help From Teacher

- Students who do not enjoy school academically say that teachers rarely check in with them. Just 7.4% of students say that teachers always check in on them, while 50% of students say teachers never check in. In contrast, 83.3% of students who do enjoy school academically responded that teachers always or sometimes check in on them.

**7.4%** Teachers Always Check In On Them    **50%** Teachers Never Check In On Them    **83.3%** Teachers Always or Sometimes Check In

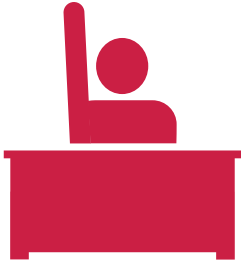
- 46% of students who do not enjoy school academically say that they “sometimes or always” cut class when they do not understand the material, compared with 26% of students who do enjoy school academically.

**46%** Understand The Material “Sometimes or Always”    **26%** Understand The Material “Sometimes or Always”

There are certainly many teachers and staff in schools who are deeply concerned about students and anxious to ensure their success, and clearly many students who DO feel engaged in school see these adults as a critical source of support. However, our findings suggest that many disengaged students feel that adults do not actively advocate for them or provide the support they need to be successful academically. Student participants in focus groups underscored this lack of trust. When asked who looks out for him in the classroom when he makes mistakes in the classroom, one student responded: “If I do make a mistake, it’s not really. . . support that I usually get. It’s more of a talk, like oh, you shouldn’t be the one doing that, or, you know what you’re doing is wrong. . . . So I mean, if you wanna call it support, then yeah, that’s support, but. . . I don’t really consider it support because they don’t try to fight my battles for me.”



"If you could ask Mayor de Blasio to make one change to New York City Schools that would make them more supportive places for students, what would you ask him to do?"



*Well one thing I would tell the mayor to change about public schools would be at least put teachers that you know is gonna sit there and try to at least help the students. I'm not saying all teachers don't help students, but there are some teachers who just give the students some work and then have them work on that. And the student might not know what they were given and so once the student is out of commission, he's like "I need help," and the teacher's like, this should have been done already, or whatever. Or at least put in more academics. Don't always just make it a boring class. . . . Have them do projects where they're able to go to a museum, or . . . somewhere and they can interact with something about the project they were given. Just make it interactive, more than more of a just read and write, and "I say, you do" kind of class. Because not a lot of students are really gonna learn that way.*

# Why do students cut class?

## Parents

*“They have fallen so far behind and they think they will never catch up. Or they are bored.”*

*“They don’t understand the work.”*

*“They are not challenged enough in the classroom, or the teachers do not really care about what is going on in their lives. Give them something that they can be passionate about. Give them a chance to make that decision themselves.”*

## Students

*“The class is unnecessary or a waste of time.”*

*“There is no other choice if the teachers don’t help you.”*

*“It has nothing to do with their lives.”*

## Staff

*“They feel disengaged from school, don’t feel that they will learn well in the class, don’t have a good relationship with the teacher, or are overwhelmed with other issues.”*

*“One reason is fear. It’s the fear that they will be a failure and looked upon as such. Failing or not doing well carries a stigma among classmates. Also, sometimes students don’t know how to ask for help.”*

**Who do students trust? The vast majority of students depend on their friends and family, not on school staff.**

Both students who do enjoy school academically and those who don't rely on their peers for support.

- Overall, 79% of students report that they “always” or “sometimes” turn to their classmates when they are having a hard time at school.

**Overall 79% Always or Sometimes Turn To Classmates**

- Students who do not enjoy school academically also report turning to their classmates. 75.5% of students reported that they “always” or “sometimes” turn to their classmates.

**Students who do not enjoy school academically 75.5% Always or Sometimes Turn To Classmates**

- Students who do not enjoy school academically turn to family more than teachers or school staff. 58% of students “always or sometimes” seek support from their families. In contrast, only 43% say they “always or sometimes” turn to a social worker, and just 41% say they ask for help from a teacher.

**Students who do not enjoy school academically 58% Always or Sometimes Turn To Family**

**Students who do not enjoy school academically 43% Always or Sometimes Turn To Social Worker**

**Students who do not enjoy school academically 41% Always or Sometimes Turn To Teacher**

In the words of a student focus group participant,

**“If you don't trust your parents, then who can you trust?”**



*“The one who supports me in my school is my mom. . . . She's always going to my school if something happens . . . She's always been there for me.”*





## Community Recommendations

To address school pushout, we believe that both the City and the State should support schools to implement these five community solutions.

### 1. Invest in student and parent leadership in the implementation of restorative practices.

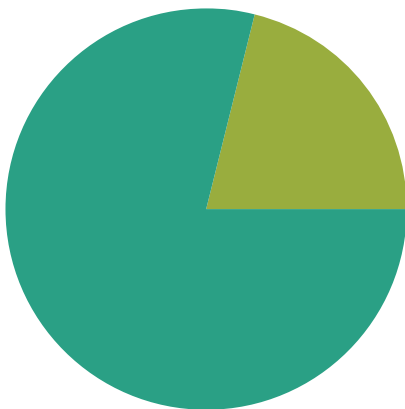
Restorative practices represent an invaluable solution and a viable alternative to punitive discipline because they address the root causes of push out: the lack of trust between students, teachers and school staff, and the prevalence of punitive discipline approaches. Restorative practices aim to address conflict through collective accountability and community healing in place of individual discipline and punishment.<sup>iii</sup> Community building is an essential first step in the implementation. Schools that have moved to adopt restorative practices make use of a range of strategies, from community circles to restorative conferences to prevent and resolve conflict with the ultimate goal of keeping students in the classroom.

As a growing number of Bronx schools explore these alternatives, it is critical that they have access to resources to ensure that all stakeholders participate in implementation, but particularly students and parents. Our research shows that disengaged students depend on their classmates and families for support, and that student leadership represents an untapped resource in schools. **To ensure that the students who need it most benefit from restorative practices, schools should train and support parents and students to facilitate restorative practices alongside school staff.** In this effort, they can draw on successful models around the country that provide a compelling road map for New York City schools.

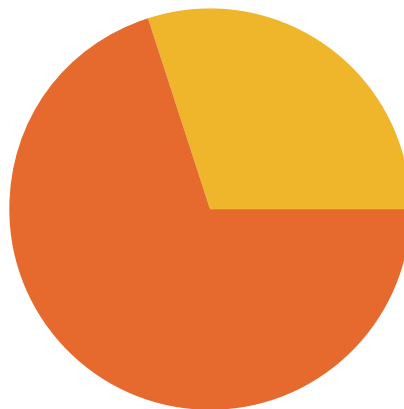
This recommendation is based on more than data. It is based on our core belief that community members, families, and youth are the experts in their own lives and should always be at the table when decisions are made. Families and students are the most affected by policing in schools, unsupportive school climates, and high-stakes testing; they must be at the center of creating alternative solutions to these educational policies that push them out and lock them up.

### Key Data

*79% of all students report that they “always” or “sometimes” turn to classmates when they are having a hard time at school.*



*70% of all students report that they “always” or “sometimes” turn to family members.*





**“If you could ask Mayor de Blasio to make one change to New York City Schools that would make them more supportive places for students, what would you ask him to do?”**

*“Let students have a say in the education system”*

*“I would ask him to make social groups in school where kids can open up and talk about their problems and for school not to be mainly based on tests...”*

### **Model 1: Community Organizing and Family Issues**

Models of successful parent and student leadership in Restorative Discipline span school districts across the country. Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) runs “Peace Centers” in Chicago Public elementary and high schools, where trained parents and community members use Restorative Practices to de-escalate conflict and build strong relationships among students, teachers, and school staff. Teachers and staff can refer students to the Peace Centers, or students can elect to drop in during their recess and lunch times. Because the Peacekeepers are members of the community, they establish a strong sense of trust with students.<sup>iv</sup> School staff and administration have come to see the value of the model. Teacher Stephanie Harris noted, “I am so glad we that have a Peace Center here at Melody [Elementary School]. It has really reduced the amount of office referrals that I have to fill out and eliminated that need for my students to always be suspended.”<sup>v</sup>



### **Model 2: Oakland Restorative Justice Initiative**

In 2010, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) adopted Restorative Justice as a district-wide alternative to zero tolerance policies. OUSD’s Restorative Justice strategy includes Whole School Restorative Justice programs with school wide, group- and individual-level interventions, in addition to Peer Restorative Justice (Peer RJ), which empowers young people to lead group-level interventions. Interest and participation in Peer RJ circles far surpassed OUSD’s predictions. OUSD set modest goals of serving 400 students in community building circles and 1000 students through peer mediation in 2013-2014.<sup>vi</sup> However, more than 6,300 students participated in community building circles and over 2000 students participated in peer-led conflict mediations.<sup>vii</sup> At the time of the evaluation, 76 percent of students had successfully resolved the conflict. Twenty-two percent of the mediations were still in progress, and only 2 percent of the conflicts were deemed unresolved or referred to administration.<sup>viii</sup> While the student-led work was an unqualified success, staff identified additional training for community members and parents as potential areas for expansion: “Our RJ coordinator is spread too thin. We need more community members to have the training.”<sup>ix</sup>



## 2. Provide targeted supports for disengaged students

### The students who need help the most are less likely to ask for it.

While we know that students who don't enjoy school academically are more likely to skip class or experience punitive discipline, they are also less likely to turn to teachers and school staff, access tutoring, seek out help from social workers, or get involved in extracurricular activities. Student participants in focus groups felt that teachers and staff did not know how to help them emotionally or support them academically, compounding their frustration with school. When describing the pressure to live up to adults' expectations, one student focus group participant expressed feelings of incapability: "I just try to do the best, and then when it don't work out, I get frustrated."

There is an urgent need to develop models of targeted support for students who are academically and socially disengaged. In addition to helping them build trust with school staff, these models should provide academic and social-emotional support, and unleash their untapped potential. Support for at-risk students should be rooted in the principles of positive youth development, an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances youths' strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.\* Two models -- one an independent high school, the other a school-based intervention -- offer a road map for how services can build on the assets and strengths of young people.

### Key Data

- 59% of students who don't enjoy school academically won't turn to teachers if they are having problems in school, and 50% say teachers never check in on them.

Students who do not enjoy school academically

59% Won't Turn To A Teacher

50% Teacher Never Checks In

- 56% of students who don't enjoy school academically would "never" turn to a social worker.

Students who do not enjoy school academically

56% Never Turn To A Social Worker

- 95% of educators always or sometimes refer students to tutoring, but 54% of all students say they never attend tutoring during lunchtime, after school or on the weekend. When students who don't enjoy school academically prepare for the Regents, they are more likely to ask their teachers for help directly or to reach out to a classmate than attend tutoring.

Educators Refer Students to Tutoring

95% Always or Sometimes

- 39% of students who DON'T enjoy school academically do not participate in any extracurricular activities, compared with 14% of students who DO enjoy school academically. 86% of students who enjoy school DO participate in sports or arts programs.

39% Students who DON'T enjoy school academically DON'T participate in any extracurricular activities

14% Students who DO enjoy school academically DON'T participate in any extracurricular activities

86% Students who enjoy school academically DO participate in sports or arts programs

\* <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>



**“If you could ask Mayor de Blasio to make one change to New York City Schools that would make them more supportive places for students, what would you ask him to do?”**

*“I would ask Mayor de Blasio to make schools less strict and overwhelming because that’s what causes students to drop out.”*

*-Student Survey*

*“More activities and support groups in order to keep students motivated and get them involved.”*

*-Student Survey*



*“(Students) should be able to get more free time to express how they feel. If they can’t express it in words, or anything. If they’re good at something, and that’s how they know how to express it, then the anger would be relaxed. . . . Like me, I’m not very good expressing my feelings, so I express it in music, or drawing. Whatever I can with all my anger.” -Student Focus Group Participant*



*“(Students cut class because) there aren’t enough resources to help them stay in school and to find the enthusiasm to want to learn and realize that school is a place to learn new things and not only for objective exams.” -Parent Survey*



*“If students don’t understand, help them. . . . If (students) want to drop out have a meeting, don’t just sign a paper.” -Student Survey*







## Model 1: FREE LA High School Los Angeles, California

Fight for the Revolution that Will Educate and Empower Los Angeles High School (FREE LA) is a part of the Youth Build Charter School network. The Youth Justice Coalition founded the school in 2007.<sup>x</sup> YJC organizes young people and families previously or currently involved in the juvenile justice system. FREE LA's explicit social justice framework comes from the belief that there are systemic inequities that have pushed young people out of traditional public schooling. Designed for overage and under-credited students between the ages of 16 and 24, FREE LA firmly believes that students are agents of change who can transform the educational landscape for those who come after them. Organizing and advocacy to transform the criminal justice system is an integral part of the school's mission and vision.

This commitment is reflected in both the school's structure and curriculum and the supports that are offered to students. In addition to English, math, and science, students study community organizing. Project-based and experiential learning is integrated into every subject. Transformative justice is the guiding framework for all discipline and conflict resolution practices. Upon graduation, students receive support to apply for college, connect with Workforce Investment Sites, or are invited to continue organizing as youth organizers with the Youth Justice Coalition. Childcare is provided for all parent participants. In a PBS documentary on the school, one student described how the experience had changed their life:

**“What keeps me motivated is knowing that I could reach my goals... that I'ma be there one day and that I'll be able to change my community slowly but surely.”**

## Model 2: Community Connections for Youth and United Playaz of New York

United Playaz of New York (UPofNY) is a violence prevention and youth development organization based out of Community Connections for Youth in the South Bronx. Rooted in the belief that “it takes the hood to save the hood,” UP of NY builds young people's leadership skills to prevent violence in their community.<sup>xii</sup> Based on the model of the United Playaz organization in San Francisco, UP of NY works with young people who have been involved in the juvenile justice system as well as their families. At the heart of their work is the idea that young people who have experienced the juvenile justice system firsthand or secondhand are the experts on their own community, and that tapping into this expertise is a critical step to create change.

In addition to community based programming and street outreach, UP of NY partnered with Health Education and Research Occupations High School and the Bronx Studio School for Artists and Writers to create a targeted support system within schools.<sup>xiii</sup> Twice a week, UP of NY youth mentors provide 90-minute leadership development workshops, conduct mediations and mentor students who have cut class, participated in fights and received suspensions. All UP of NY staff mentors have themselves been pushed out of school or have been involved with the criminal justice system, allowing for authentic trust building and connection between students and staff. Each mentor has a caseload of just four students. The schools completely fund this partnership through an allocation of resources for violence prevention.

# UP★

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End School  
Pushout

Educators are seeing results.

“Students working with United Playaz are consistently showing me strong work across the board,” wrote one teacher. “This greatly reduces the pressure on me in the classroom and is making the work that I’m doing with UP students a joy. They’re really leading the way.”



### 3. Expand the Role of Social Workers

Schools need more social workers, but they also need to transform the traditional role of social workers to incorporate the principles of positive youth development. When we began our research project, we assumed that our research would unequivocally demonstrate that schools required additional social workers to address the social and emotional needs of students. However, what we learned from students surprised us. As noted above, students are much more likely to turn to peers and family when they face obstacles in school. Moreover, students who are disengaged from school are much less likely to seek out support from social workers than students who enjoy school academically. Students did not ask for social workers in the surveys or in focus groups, even when they called for more help for students who are struggling.

In contrast, parents and educators did identify additional social workers as a critical need. Data released by the Department of Education corroborates their concern. In February 2015, there were just 107 full-time guidance counselors and social workers for the 35,604 students in Bronx District 9.<sup>xv</sup> Only 13 of them are bilingual.<sup>xvi</sup> While some schools do have additional guidance counselors and social workers, many schools only employ one part-time social worker for hundreds of students. It is unfair to expect that just 107 full-time staff can meet the needs of 35,604 students from diverse cultural backgrounds and with distinct challenges and needs.

#### Key Data

- There are 35,604 students in Bronx District 9. There are just 159 full-time guidance counselors and social workers, and only 26 of them are bilingual.

**35,604** Students in District 9

**159** Guidance Counselors and Social Workers

- Of the students who do not enjoy their experience at school academically, 57% say they would never turn to a guidance counselor or social worker when they are “going through a hard time in school.” Just 11% report that a guidance counselor or social worker always checks in. 56% report that social workers never check in.

Students who do not enjoy school academically

**57%** Never Turn To A Guidance Counselor Or Social Worker

**56%** Social Workers Never Check In

**11%** Guidance Counselor Or Social Worker Always Check in

- The majority of educators and staff see social workers as a critical resource. 67% of parents identified a meeting with a social worker as an appropriate response when a family is in crisis. 61% of staff thinks a meeting with a social worker is an appropriate response when a family is in crisis.

### Identified a meeting with a social worker as an appropriate response.

Parents **67%**      Staff **61%**

Why call for more social workers rather than guidance counselors? While survey participants use these terms interchangeably, the role of social workers is more directly relevant to the supports parents, students and staff want. Guidance counselors are charged primarily with providing academic support and guidance, while social workers are tasked with providing social and emotional support. Parents and educators who completed our survey specifically named the need for social and emotional support for young people.

While we recognize the need for more social workers, it is critical to shift the role of social workers to ensure their effectiveness in working with disengaged youth. Indeed, social workers are key to the successful implementation of our recommendations. Additional social workers should be hired to coordinate restorative-justice and youth-leadership programming and to develop specific supports for disengaged students that are rooted in the principles of positive youth development.



"If you could ask **Mayor de Blasio** to make one change to **New York City Schools** that would make them more supportive places for students, what would you ask him to do?"

*"More counselors and teachers that are there to actually help students. Also to make more things in schools that will make students want to succeed and make good grades." (Student)*

*"Reduce the numbers of suspensions in NYC schools and offer more support for students (more guidance counselors, more social workers, more mental health personnel.) (Parent)*

*"Fund programs that support teachers and students to address socio-emotional development, including restorative practices, more counselors and social workers, and better conditions for teachers to be able to provide better support for students." (Staff)*

*"Hire thousands of youth workers to take on caseloads of students to support them and teachers in all schools. Every NYC student should have a qualified, trained youth developer working with him/her." (Staff)*



## Model: Cornerstone Academy for Social Action

Founded in 2009, Cornerstone Academy for Social Action (CASA) is a middle school located in the Bronx that has made restorative justice and social-emotional supports a top priority. Reflecting this commitment, CASA has hired additional guidance counselors reduce the ratio of students to staff, and has thoughtfully positioned them in multiple positions of school leadership that are not normally associated with their traditional role. This role includes convening critical stakeholders within the school community. In addition to providing individual counseling for students, the guidance counselor acts as the advisor to the Student Government Association, chairs the Restorative Practices Committee, and is the Parent Teacher Association staff point person. The guidance counselor also develops relationships with community-based organizations and other external partners to provide socio-emotional and academic enrichment opportunities for students, families and the community at large. In these roles the guidance counselor is uniquely positioned to support the leadership of students, identify parent and community concerns, and build community around the implementation of restorative practices with the goal of continuous improvement. But even with additional staff, guidance counselors and social workers find it difficult to juggle the requirements of mandated counseling with critically important preventative work, including family and group work that can strengthen students' social networks. Splitting the roles between staff could be one strategy to address this challenge and ensure that staff are not overstretched and overburdened. CASA illustrates not just the importance of hiring additional staff but also crafting distinct roles for each social worker and guidance counselors that reflect their range of functions within the school community. This is an essential step to build the capacity of schools to move beyond the model of social workers and guidance counselors as providers of mandated services.

### 4. Be transparent about the distribution of budgetary resources

Each school's online portal includes a nondescript link below the "About Us" heading to "Statistics and Budget." Click on it, scroll down to the bottom of the page and you will find yet another link to the school's budget report. The report leads you to a list of unexplained acronyms that link to memos detailing the distinct sources of school funding. This illusion of transparency masks the impenetrability of the data presentation, obscuring the reality that the only information provided is on revenue, not expenditure.

Perhaps this presentation is the reason neither staff nor parents know exactly how the school budget is spent. On the survey, 74 percent of parents did not know how many social workers their child's school employs, and 76 percent did not know how much was spent on School Safety Agents (SSAs) as compared with social workers. An even higher percentage of staff, 83, did not know how expenditure on social-emotional support compared with investment in SSAs.

Schools are public institutions, and students, parents and staff are entitled to know how public dollars are spent. The distribution of resources in public institutions is a political question, and stakeholders should play a role in deciding which programs and practices are prioritized. To ensure that all community members are engaged in this process, the Department of Education should develop a new system for reporting budget information online that includes both school revenue and expenditure that makes the budget more accessible. The old School Expenditure Reports released by the DOE online through 2012 could serve as a starting point. However, a more engaging interface would need to be developed to explain each line item while highlighting the percentage expenditure in for each item. Additionally, the Department of Education should offer training for interested stakeholders on how to read and interpret a school budget, either through annual trainings for parent leaders and staff at a school or across each district.



These changes are critical in part because parents and staff DO believe that funding social-emotional supports for students should be a priority. Both staff and parents were asked what percent of the school's budget should be spent on social-emotional learning, including counseling, conflict resolution, and peer mediation. Fifty percent was the median amount named by parents, and 43 percent was the median identified by staff. If stakeholders had their way, resources in our schools would be distributed differently.

## Key Data

- 74% of parents do not know how many full-time social workers are employed at their children's school.
- 76% of parents did not know how much was spent on social workers instead of agents at their child's school.
- While 89% of staff did know how many social workers are employed, 83% did not know how much was spent on guidance counselors instead of agents at their school.
- When parents were asked what percent of the budget should be spent on social-emotional learning, the median percentage suggested was 50%. The median percentage suggested by staff was 43%.

**“There should be better budgets for schools. As well, programs for students to express their feelings about their problems.”**  
Student Survey



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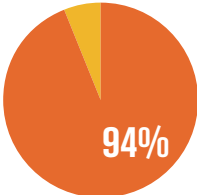
## 5. Use portfolio-based assessments to prepare students for college while reducing barriers to graduation

The link between academic disengagement and risk factors for school pushout is one of the key findings of our report: students who do not enjoy school academically are more likely to experience punitive discipline, be unprepared for the Regents exams, and give classroom instruction as a reason for not attending school. Both academic researchers and advocates similarly connect the increasing reliance on high-stakes testing with the rise of zero tolerance discipline.

In both surveys and focus groups, students clearly identified New York’s Regents exam as a major barrier to graduation and called for change. Portfolio-based assessments offer a powerful alternative to high stakes testing, moving away from standardized exams without sacrificing rigorous academic standards that prepare students for higher education. In place of exams, students prepare dossiers including research papers, original science experiments and lab reports, and examples of higher-level mathematical work. While New York State has capped the number of portfolio-based assessment schools, some visionary schools, like the well-respected Internationals Network and the 28 schools in the New York Performance Standards Consortium, have adapted the model to meet the needs of their students. Beyond alternative assessments, these schools emphasize the principles of active learning, including discussion-based classrooms and student choice, and multiple ways for students to express and exhibit learning, including oral and artistic presentations. By emphasizing original academic work in place of test preparation, portfolio-based assessment puts critical thinking and exploration back at the center of the academic experience. This is precisely what students want and need; the City and State should make it easier for them to get it.

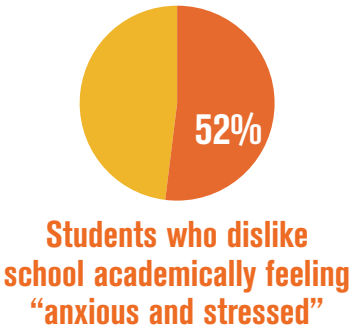
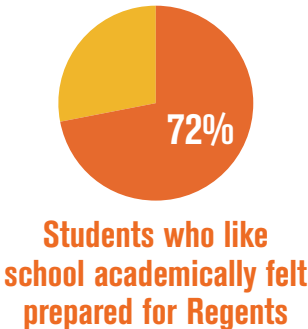
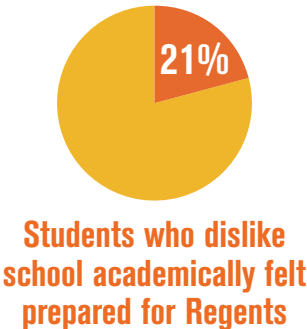
### Key Data

- 94% of school staff indicated that they believe report cards and exams do not reflect the values students should be developing and learning.



**School staff indicated that they believe report cards and exams do not reflect the values students should be developing and learning.**

- Students who do not enjoy school academically are twice as likely to think that the purpose of school is to take tests.
- Only 21% of students who dislike school academically felt prepared for Regents, compared with 72% of students who like school academically. 52% of students who dislike school academically reported feeling “anxious and stressed” when they take the Regents.





"If you could ask **Mayor de Blasio** to make one change to **New York City Schools** that would make them more supportive places for students, what would you ask him to do?"

*"I would ask him to take out the requirements for the Regents so you could graduate."*

*"To help me prep for Regents."*

*"Omit Regents! New York State is the only one that has this horrible thing. It's time to get rid of it!"*

*"To not care too much about test scores but to care about learning and understanding the work."*

*"I would ask Mayor de Blasio to personalize our school curriculum to best fit the way individual students learn and to get rid of the standardized test."*

*"Mayor de Blasio should cut budgets on state test and invest more in extra curricular activity. And focus on portfolio work to show the students growth over the past few months and how they can apply that to the real world. Tests are only numbers- portfolios shows students in ACTION."*

### **Model: Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School**

Located in the South Bronx, Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School is one of 28 schools in the City that are members of the New York Performance Standards Consortium, a set of schools that have a waiver to opt out of Science, Math, and the History regents. (The English Regents is still a requirement.) Instead, students graduate by presenting projects and portfolios on a specific topic of choice within a subject area like mathematics which they must defend in to a panel of teachers. Maintaining the portfolio assessment system requires real commitment from educators and staff. Developing curriculum built around inquiry-based learning and teaching in-depth courses means significantly more work for teachers, but also allows them to personalize learning both in their classroom teaching and through the portfolio assessment process. Students must navigate two tiers of mastery; in both the 9th and 10th grades they must complete portfolios that reflect the class's essential questions as well as their own learning goals. They must also demonstrate mastery of the "Habits of Mind" in their 11th and 12th graduation portfolios. Students also have agency in selecting projects and developing the curriculum. One recent project required students to work with a neighborhood business of their choice to create an app to increase their sales. At Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School, the lack of Regents does not detract from academic rigor.



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*“So basically, what it’s like is, what they set up for you is just what you gotta learn. Like it doesn’t have anything to do with the test, have anything to do with the test they give you. So it’s like...it’s set up for you not to pass at all because you do what you do in class but then when you go to take state tests and stuff, you bomb it.” Student Focus Group Participant*

*“First of all, when it comes to classes, I don’t want teachers like, be acting like the guy from the Dry Eyes commercial, alright. I want them to actually like, be alive. Make games out of it. Like, do anything that makes people go, ohh. I want to learn this subject, instead of having them like, oh, I’m not gonna even get up out of my bed to go to that school. Like, be active, think of ways to keep people on their feet. Don’t just have them like, slouched and all, oh, we gotta write another essay.” Student Focus Group Participant*



## Call To Action

New York City schools are at a crossroads. There is growing recognition that punitive discipline policies simply don't make young people safer. In fact, these policies disproportionately push young people of color out of school. While educators and policymakers have reduced suspensions, arrests and summonses, **much work remains to transform our schools into truly inclusive and supportive places and ensure that all students graduate college and career ready.**

Addressing the systemic causes of student pushout will not be easy. Reversing decades of punitive discipline requires real commitment from all stakeholders. It will also require a comprehensive strategy to scale up restorative practices and substantive investment in student and parent leadership, targeted services for disengaged students, and expanding both the quantity and role of social workers to build stronger social-emotional supports in schools. There must also be a reconsideration of alternatives to high-stakes testing. It should be easier for schools to shift to portfolio-based assessment if all stakeholders agree that it make sense for their school community. **While these strategies will require time and resources to be successful, the cost of not reforming our schools is counted in the dreams and hopes of young people.**

In Participatory Action Research, data and analysis is just a means to an end: action. **We are committed to working hard to ensure that our recommendations become reality, and we call on educators, policymaker, and members of our community to work alongside us.** Educators can work with stakeholders at their school to initiate restorative justice and youth and parent leadership programs. Policymakers should invest substantive resources in pilot programs to build strong models of youth and parent led restorative practices, and targeted supports for disengaged students. They can also ensure that schools that implement restorative justice and positive discipline receive the support they need to deepen their practice and build their capacity, while changing rules and regulations to make it easier to implement innovative solutions like portfolio-based assessments.

**Students, parents and allies, we call on you to organize to restore justice to our schools so that every young person has an empowering education. Our communities cannot wait.**

# Student Survey

1. What is the purpose of school? (Check your top three answers only)
- To take tests
  - Become college-ready
  - Learn how to build relationships with others
  - Create change in the world
  - Keep young people out of trouble
  - To make some people successful and other people poor in the world
  - Have fun
  - Prepare to be an independent adult
  - Learn the value of hard work
  - There is no purpose. It's a waste of time.
  - Teach people what it means to be a valuable citizen

2. Do you enjoy your overall experience at your current school?
- Socially  Yes  No
- Academically  Yes  No
3. Do you enjoy what you are learning in your classes?
- Yes  No

If "No" answer: Question 3a. Otherwise move to Question 4:

3a. If you don't like what you learn in class, does this make you not want to come to school?

Yes  No

4. Does what you learn in the classroom make you want to go to school?
- Yes  No

5. My grade point average (GPA) is around: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Everybody has problems. When you are going through a hard time in school, you often turn to ...

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classmates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidance Counselor/Social Worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School support staff (including coaches, school aides, paraprofessionals, maintenance staff, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School administration (Principal, Assistant Principal, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Safety Agents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. In your school, who checks in on how you're feeling on a regular basis?

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classmates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidance Counselor/Social Worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School support staff (including coaches, school aides, paraprofessionals, maintenance staff, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School administration (Principal, Assistant Principal, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Safety Agents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Have you taken state/Regents exams?  Yes  No  
If "Yes" answer: Question 8a. Otherwise move to Question 9:

8a) during these exams, how have you felt overall? (Check your top three choices only)

- Prepared  Neutral  Tired
- Angry  Unprepared  Easily irritated
- Confident  Calm
- Anxious/stressed  Physically sick

9. How many hours per week are spent on state test/Regents preparation in your classes?

- Less than 1 hour  1-2 Hour  3-4 Hours  5 hours or more

10. By not passing the state/Regents exams, students may be... (Check all that apply)

- Indifferent (they don't care)  Motivated to do better
- Embarrassed  Perceived as a bad student
- Angry  At risk of repeating the grade
- Facing punishment/negative consequences at school  Facing punishment at home
- Depressed  Totally fine

11. At your school, which of the following activities do you take part in? (Check all that apply)

- Sports  Other: (please fill in): \_\_\_\_\_
- Art  These options don't exist at my school
- Music  None of these
- Dance

# Student Survey

12. At your school, which students get to participate in activities outside of core classes?

- All students no matter what their grades are
- Only students with good grades
- No One

13. When students are removed from class for behavioral issues (just for one period), what are they asked to do?

- Worksheets/classwork
- Homework
- Talk to counselor/dean/administration about their behavior
- Reflect on behavior and how to prevent problem from occurring again
- Nothing
- Other (please fill in): \_\_\_\_\_

14. Have you ever been involved in any type of disciplinary issue during testing period?

- Yes
  - No
- If "Yes", what happened? \_\_\_\_\_

15. When you feel confused in class about your classwork...how often do you:

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Stay for tutoring after school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stay for tutoring during lunch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attend Saturday tutoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sleep in class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cut class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ask a classmate for help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ask my family member for help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ask my teacher for help	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talk and play around with classmates during class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
End up in conflicts with the class' teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Go to the class high	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please fill in): _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Students cut class because:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## About Me:

1. The name of my school is \_\_\_\_\_

2. I have a condition that would be considered a disability (like a mobility disability, blindness, deafness, ADHD, and/or a learning disability)

- Yes
- No

3. My age is \_\_\_\_\_

4. I am currently in grade: \_\_\_\_\_

5. In the **last four years**:

Circle the number of times you have been **Suspended** 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+

Circle the number of times you have been **Expelled** 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+

Circle the number of times you have been **Given a summons/ticket** 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+

Circle the number of times you have been **Arrested** 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+

6. I identify as:

- Male
- Female
- Trans (gender/sexual)

7. My race and/or ethnicity is: (Check all that apply)

- Black or African American
- White
- Latino/Latina or Hispanic
- English is my first language:
  - Yes
  - No
- Asian, South Asian or Pacific Islander
- Afro Caribbean
- Middle Eastern
- Native American or American Indian
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

8. English is my first language:

- Yes
- No

If "No", are you in an ESL class?  Yes  No

9. I have a job outside of school:

- No I don't
- Full time (20+ hours)
- Part-Time (20 or less Hours)

**Finally...**

If you could ask Mayor de Blasio to make one change to New York City schools that would make them more supportive places for students, what would you ask him to do?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU!!!**

# Staff Survey

1. What do you think is the purpose of school? (Check your top three answers only)
- To take tests
  - Become college-ready
  - Learn how to build relationships with others
  - Create change in the world
  - Keep young people out of trouble
  - To make some people successful and other people poor in the world
  - Have fun
  - Learn the value of hard work
  - Prepare to be an independent adult
  - Teach people what it means to be a valuable citizen
  - There is no purpose. It's a waste of time

2. Do report cards and exams reflect the values students should be developing and learning?

Yes  No

If you chose "Yes" how? If you chose "No" why not?

3. Do you know how:

	Yes	No
much money is spent on counselors compared to agents at your school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
much time gets spent on test preparation as compared to counseling at your school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
many full-time social workers are employed at your school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. If the pie represents a Schools entire budget.



In your opinion, what percentage of the budget should be spent on Social emotional learning (Counseling, conflict resolution, peer mediation, family workers, etc); Please shade in the pie and write the %

\_\_\_\_\_ %

5. Is teaching students social skills a part of classroom learning for your students? (For example, conflict resolution, healthy relationships with peers, etc)

Yes  No

6. As a teachers/staff how will you react if your student fails their state or Regents exams?

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not likely
Encourage them to do better next time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recommend them for tutoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No reaction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help them study at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speak to their parents about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feel disappointed and tell them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please fill in):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Has yours students ever been involved in ANY type of disciplinary issue during testing periods (like classroom removal, a fight in school, arrests, etc)?

Yes  No

If "Yes", what happened?

8. Do you think school is a supportive and caring place for students?

Yes  No

9. Which of the following activities exist at your school?
- Sports
  - Dance
  - Art
  - Other: (please fill in): \_\_\_\_\_
  - Music
  - These options don't exist at my school

10. At your school, which students get to participate in activities outside of core classes?

All students no matter what their grades are

Only students with good grades

No One

11. Are there enough opportunities for students to take on leadership positions at school?

Yes  No

12. At your school, how much are the following activities a part of students regular school day:

	Always	Sometime	Never
Cultural lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arts/music classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please fill in):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. At your school what kinds of supports and opportunities are available for students that have disabilities?

14. To what extent is your ability to manage your classroom affected by disruptive students?

A Great Deal  Somewhat  Not at all

15. When students are removed from class for behavioral issues (just for one period), what are they asked to do?

Worksheets/classwork

Homework

Talk to counselor/dean/administration about their behavior

Reflect on behavior and how to prevent problem from occurring again

Nothing

Other (please fill in): \_\_\_\_\_

16. In this survey, we're trying to find out what helps students to stay in school, and why some students are not in school. We want to know your opinion on this. Write a few sentences on the following: I think students cut class because...

# Staff Survey

17. If your student's family is in crisis (loss of housing, an arrest, or death, etc.), what kinds of actions would you expect your school to take?

- Do nothing
- Set up a meeting between the student and the school counselor
- Don't know
- Schedule a home visit
- Report the students' family to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS)
- Provide a referral to a community organization for support services

18. Do schools help parents support their kids during testing?  
If "yes" How?  Yes  No

19. What do you think is the purpose of an educator? (Check your top three answers only)

- To give tests/homework
- Teach students to be a valuable citizen
- Teach how to build relationships with others
- Make students college-ready
- Keep young people out of trouble
- Teach how to create change in the world
- Prepare students to be an independent adult
- There is no purpose.

## About Me:

1. I am employed at \_\_\_\_\_
2. I have been teaching/working at a school for \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months
3. I am a native New Yorker  Yes  No
  - a. What is your home state? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. How long have you lived/worked in New York? \_\_\_\_\_
4. I mostly work with children with condition that would be considered a disability (like a mobility disability, blindness, deafness, ADHD, and/or a learning disability)
  - Yes  No
5. My age is \_\_\_\_\_
6. I identify as:  Male  Female  Trans (gender/sexual)
7. My race and/or ethnicity is: (Check all that apply)
  - Black or African American
  - White
  - Latino/Latina or Hispanic
  - Afro Caribbean
  - Middle Eastern
  - Native American or American Indian
  - Asian, South Asian or Pacific Islander
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

8. If you teach a specific subject, what subject do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_
9. If you teach/support students of a specific grade (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
10. In the current school year:
 

Circle the number of times you have asked for students to be removed from class (for a single period).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11+
Circle the number of times you have asked for a particular student to be removed from class (for a single period.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11+
Circle the number of times any of your students has been Suspended	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11+
Circle the number of times any of your students has been Expelled	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11+
Circle the number of times any of your students has been Given a summons /ticket (That you know of)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11+
Circle the number of times any of your students has been Arrested (That you know of)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11+

Finally...if you could ask Mayor de Blasio to make one change to New York City schools that would make them more supportive places for students, what would you ask him to do?

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**THANK YOU!!!**

# Staff Survey

B.R.A.T staff/teacher survey | 5

## Give us your consent!

**This survey was designed and reviewed by the Bronx Research Action Team (B.R.A.T). We are a diverse research group made up of educators, parents, young people, community members and organizers.**

**We think this survey is really important, be believe that as educators, your ideas and experiences need to be included during decision making!** We made this survey so people like other teachers, parents, students, politicians' funders can hear and learn from your experience.

**Any educator or staff member working closely with young people in Bronx middle schools and high schools can take this survey.**

**Everything you share will be confidential. We don't ask for information that can personally identify you. What we learn will be used to create a report to demand policy changes in Bronx public education system.**

**Please feel free to write comments next to any of the questions if you want to provide more details or comments. Your participation in this survey is voluntary.**

Please Sign \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

If you want to stay informed/get involved and would like to know when our report is published you please share your email with us!

\_\_\_\_\_



# Parents Survey

## Give us your consent!

This survey was designed and reviewed by the Bronx Research Action Team (B.R.A.T).

Too often **parents and the things that they have to say are left out** when decisions are being made. We believe that **parent ideas and experiences need to be included!**

We promise that **everything you share will be confidential. We don't ask for anything that can identify you or your children.**

**What we learn from this project will be used to create a report to demand policy changes and more money for Bronx public schools.**

It should take you 10 minutes to complete the survey. If you want to provide more details feel free to write comments next to any of the question/answer. **Your participation in this survey is voluntary.**

Please Sign \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

If you want to stay informed and would like to know when our report is published, please share your email with us!

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1. **What do you think is the purpose of school?** (Check your top three answers only)

- To take tests
- Become college-ready
- Learn how to build relationships with others
- Create change in the world
- Keep young people out of trouble
- To make some people successful and other people poor in the world
- Have fun
- Prepare to be an independent adult
- Learn the value of hard work
- There is no purpose. It's a waste of time.
- Teach people what it means to be a valuable citizen

2. **Do you think report cards and exams are a good indicator of all the things your children should be learning?**

- Yes
- No

If you chose "Yes," why? If you chose "No," why not?

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3.

Do you know how ...	Yes	No
many full-time social workers are employed at your school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
much time gets spent on test preparation as compared to counseling at your school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
much money is spent on counselors as compared to agents at your school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. **If the pie represents a Schools entire budget. In your opinion, what percent of the school budget should be spent on Social emotional learning (Counseling, conflict resolution, peer mediation, family workers, etc):** Please shade in the pie and write the % \_\_\_\_\_%



5. **Is teaching students social skills a part of classroom learning for your child?** (For example, conflict resolution, healthy relationships with peers, etc.)

- Yes
- No

6. **As a parent how will you react if your child fails their state or Regents exams?**

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not likely
Encourage them to do better next time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Punish them (take away phone/internet, limit extracurricular activities, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Put them in tutoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No reaction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help them study at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speak to their teacher about it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feel disappointed and tell them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please fill in):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# Parents Survey

7. Has your child ever been involved in ANY type of disciplinary issue during testing periods (like classroom removal, a fight in school, arrests, etc.)? B.R.A.T Parent Survey | 3

Yes  No

If "Yes", what happened?

8. Who should be checking in on your child regularly while they're at school?

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classmates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidance Counselor/Social Worker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School support staff (including coaches, school aides, paraprofessionals, maintenance staff, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School administration (Principal, Assistant Principal, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Safety Agents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Do you think school is a supportive and caring place for your child?

Yes  No

10. Which of the following activities exist at your child's school?

- Sports
- Dance
- Art
- Other: (please fill in): \_\_\_\_\_

11. In this survey, we're trying to find out what helps students to stay in school, and why some students are not in school. We want to know your opinion on this. Write a few sentences on the following:

I think students cut class because...

12. If your child or family is in crisis (loss of housing, an arrest, or death, etc.), what kinds of actions would you expect your child's school to take?

- Do nothing
- Set up a meeting between your child and the school counselor
- Don't know
- Schedule a home visit
- Report your family to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS)
- Provide a referral to a community organization for support services

B.R.A.T Parent Survey | 4

13. Do schools help parents support their kids during testing? If "yes" How?

Yes  No

### About Me:

- The name of my child's school is \_\_\_\_\_
- I have a child with a condition that would be considered a disability (like a mobility disability, blindness, deafness, ADHD, and/or a learning disability)
  - Yes  No
- My child's age is \_\_\_\_\_
- I have more than one child in a Bronx public school  Yes  No
- They are currently in grade: \_\_\_\_\_

### In the last four years:

- Circle the number of times your child has been **Suspended** 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+
- Circle the number of times your child has been **Expelled** 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+
- Circle the number of times your child has been **Given a summons/ticket** 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+
- Circle the number of times your child has been **Arrested** 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11+

- I identify as:  Male  Female  Trans (gender/sexual)
- My race and/or ethnicity is: (Check all that apply)
  - Black or African American  Afro Caribbean  Asian, South Asian or Pacific Islander
  - White  Middle Eastern  Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - Latino/Latina or Hispanic  Native American or American Indian
- English is my first language:  Yes  No
- I am employed:  Yes  No

If "Yes" answer Question 10a.

10a.  Full time (20+ hours)  Part-Time (20 or less Hours)  I have more than one jobs

Finally...if you could ask Mayor de Blasio to make one change to New York City schools that would make them more supportive places for students, what would you ask him to do?

## Appendix 2: Demographics of Survey Respondents

In total, Bronx Research Action Team (BRAT) members surveyed 274 students and 94 parents. All students and parents are either currently enrolled or have a child enrolled in a Bronx middle or high School. BRAT team members included demographic questions at the end of each survey. Here is what we learned:

- 74.8% of students are enrolled in high school. Just 16% of students are currently middle school students. The average age of the children of parents surveyed is 14.38 years.
- Out of student respondents, 42.8% identify as male, 56.4% as female, and 0.2% as transgender. Twenty-one percent of parent respondents identify as male, and 79% as female.
- Thirty six percent of student respondents identify as Black or African American, 62% as Latino/Latina or Hispanic, 2% as Afro-Caribbean, 0.8% as Middle Easter, 3.7% as Asian, South-Asian, or Pacific Islander, and 4.9% as other.
- Twenty-three percent of parents identify as Black or African-American, 70.4% as Latino/Latina or Hispanic, 1.2% as Asian, South-Asian, or Pacific Islander, and 4.9% as other.
- 61.2% of students and 52.4% of parents reported that English is their first language. 36.2% of students and 47.6% of parents reported that English is not their first language.
- 31.8% of students reported that they had been suspended at least once.
- 4.1% of students reported that they had been expelled.
- 13% said they had received a summons.
- 11% reported that they had been arrested.
- 41% of students attend school on an Impact Campus. NYPD has identified these schools as having high levels of incidents, targeting their school policing efforts at these campuses.
- 12.1% of students reported that they have a disability. A slightly higher number of parents-19.5%-responded that their students have a disability.

Overall, we recognize that fewer men, middle school students, and students with disabilities completed our survey. Because we focused on students and families who are currently enrolled in Bronx schools, our survey data does not reflect the perspective of students who have left school.

Another limitation of our survey is the small number of educator surveys we collected. Despite extensive online outreach, only 33 educators completed the survey. As a result, we grounded our findings in the responses of young people and their parents, and largely make use of educator surveys as a point of comparison with this data. Here's what we know about the educators:

- Thirty-five percent of educator respondents identify as male, and 58.8% identify as female.
- Fifty-three percent of educator respondents identify as white, 11.8% identify as Black or African-American, 17.6% as Latino/Latina or Hispanic, 5.9% as Asian or Pacific Islander, and 11.8% as other.
- The experience of educators varies widely, ranging from 2 to 26 years in the classroom. The median number is 4 years of experience.
- 76.5% of educators do NOT work with students with disabilities, while 23.5% do.

We believe deeply that multi-stakeholder participation is essential to meaningful debate around fundamental policy questions affecting our public schools. The lack of educator participation in our survey reflects how challenging it is to bring educators and community members together for these critical conversations. While we conducted extensive street outreach to students and parents to collect surveys, we found that the only effective strategy to connect with educators was online, limiting our outreach. There should be more public forums for educators and community members to engage directly in critical conversations about education policy. Creating space for all stakeholders to find common ground, explore each other's perspectives and craft solutions is of urgent importance as we confront the disparities in our public school system.

## Acknowledgments

We are deeply grateful to the 400 Bronx students, parents and educators who shared their experiences with us through surveys and focus groups. We hope this report is worthy of your trust and courage.

This report would not have been possible without the dedication and determination of Bronx Research Action Team members and participants. Thank you to the young people, parents, community members and educators who have participated in BRAT since February 2015. BRAT members crafted our research questions, designed and collected surveys, analyzed data and developed recommendations. They are: Victor Almanzar, Jeffrey Dantzer, Anjed Eloved, Antelma Espejel, Gideon Frankel, Joseph Ferdinand, Ana Maria Garcia, Domingo Gomez, Maribel Guillet, Lydia Hampton, Zehra Imam, Michelet Issa, James James, Yolanda Jennings, Karen Jimenez, DeJohn Jones, Bonnie Massey, Janet C. Mays, Leticia Martinez, Mwaniki Mwangi, Shakala Maxwell, Sandra Mitchell, Josephine Ofili, Rosemary Ofili, Christiana Ofili-Nwankwo, Irma Ortiz, Raquel Nuñez, Jimmy Rivera, Robin Majette, Laura Rodriguez, Pablo Tiburcio, Silvia Tiburcio, Rodemy Tolentino, Olive Trought, and Frank Williams.

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## Endnotes

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