

Dignity in Schools Campaign

# RESOURCES FOR REPAIR AND TRANSFORMATION

March 2022



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Last summer as we prepared for the beginning of this school year, it was clear that the unprecedented trauma<sup>1</sup> and disruptions to social supports<sup>2</sup> that we all have experienced during the pandemic would be brought into the school environment. The only question was whether or not schools would be able to respond with the supports<sup>3</sup> that students and school staff needed. Now we see that in the majority of schools there is not sufficient infrastructure<sup>4</sup> to begin to address the overwhelming need for healing and repair.<sup>5</sup> Worse yet, many schools are taking steps backwards by turning to harsh and exclusionary discipline practices<sup>6</sup> such as suspensions, expulsions and arrests to try to control student behavior.<sup>7</sup> Not only do these practices cause irreparable damage, they don't work.<sup>8</sup> We have decades of research and documented experiences<sup>9</sup> of students and parents that show how these practices enforce the school-to-prison pipeline,<sup>10</sup> and that Black students and other students of color,<sup>11</sup> students with disabilities,<sup>12,13</sup> LGBTQ+ students,<sup>14</sup> and other marginalized students<sup>15</sup> are harmed most.<sup>16</sup>

What we are seeing this year are both new challenges<sup>17,18</sup> and an escalation of long-standing problems,<sup>19,20</sup> but the solutions are the same ones Dignity in Schools Campaign has been calling for since we began. Many teachers are in need of healing and repairing themselves after dealing with all the challenges of the pandemic,<sup>21</sup> and want to be a part of bringing in Restorative Justice<sup>22</sup> and other positive supports to their schools<sup>23</sup>. We know what works and have compiled these resources from our members and allies to support organizers in calling on schools and districts to take steps now to build up their capacity to meet student needs in this critical time.

## Healing and Repair: Restorative and Transformative Justice

It has always been true that student behavior is directly tied to whether their needs are being met, trauma they have experienced, and a range of other factors. We know that so much of what students are struggling with now is due to the stress and trauma of the pandemic, and we cannot accept responses that would send them down a pipeline to prison and/or deny their full potential. With restorative and transformative practices, the whole school community is strengthened and when conflict or other issues arise, students can develop life-long skills to repair relationships and take accountability for their actions. The resources below contain materials that will help schools build community through the practice of restorative or transformative justice.

**DSC - [Restorative and Transformative Justice Toolkit](#)**

**[TransformHarm.org](#)**

**Fix School Discipline Coalition – [Toolkit for Educators](#)**

**Restorative DC – [Resources, Videos, Training Padlets](#)**

**Project Nia - [Building Accountable Communities Toolkit](#)**



# **Invest in an Infrastructure of Caring: Positive School Climate and Discipline**

In order for healing and repair to occur, schools need to both dismantle the criminalizing practices that may be in place, and build up the positive infrastructure of supportive school staff and a healthy school community. That means a full removal of police from schools, ending abusive practices such as seclusion, restraint and corporal punishment. Funds coming from the various COVID relief packages should be used to help build up schools' capacity to support students and their families this school year and beyond.

**DSC - [Key Elements of School Climate and Positive Discipline](#)**

**DSC - [Community Not Cops: Creating Safe, Supportive, Police-free Schools](#)**

**AEJ & Advancement Project - [We Came to Learn: A Call to Action for Police-Free Schools](#)**

**NWLC - ["...and they cared": How to create better, safer learning environments for girls of color and Stop Flushing Money Down the Pipeline: A Call to Divert Federal Money from Cops to Counseling in Schools](#)**

**NAACP LDF - [Reopening and Operating Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)**

**Ed Trust et al - [Equity Lessons Learned from Schools in the Time of COVID-19: Education Resources for State Leaders](#)**

**[Ensuring Federal Stimulus Funds Support Communities, Not Cops](#)**

**CAP - [Returning To School Must Include a Reinvestment in Section 504 Plans](#)**

**MHA - [Addressing The Youth Mental Health Crisis: The Urgent Need For More Education, Services, And Supports](#)**

Government-produced resources:

**[Evidence-Based Interventions: Using American Rescue Plan](#)**

**[Resources to Accelerate Learning" Community of Practice](#)**

**[Department of Education Handbook 2: Roadmap to Reopening Safely and Meeting All Students' Needs](#)**

**[Supporting Child and Student Social, Emotional, Behavioral and Mental Health during COVID-19 Era](#)**

# Whole School Transformation: Students, Parents, Teachers and Communities

Whatever steps schools take this year should be building towards fundamental shifts in the culture and power dynamics. So many things have happened in the last two years that we never would have thought were possible, it shows that real transformation is possible too if youth and parents are able to lead the way. The resources below put forth a vision for whole-school transformation and systemic change that shifts power and addresses the needs of youth, families, school staff, and the larger community.

**DSC - Model Code on Education and Dignity chapters on [Participation](#) and [Monitoring and Accountability](#)**

**CJSF - [Do the Harder Work--Create Cultures of Connectedness in Schools: A Youth & Parent Organizer Response to the Federal Commission on School Safety](#)**

**GGE - [Sustaining Police-free Schools Through Practice: A toolkit for New York City Communities](#)**

**CPD - [Youth Mandate for Education and Liberation](#)**



## ENDNOTES

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