

SAFE SPACE?

How does police presence impact schools?



NO VIOLENCE



Policing in schools is one of the fastest growing areas of law enforcement in the U.S.

What makes a school safe?

How does police presence impact school safety?

How can students affect safety in their schools?

In the fall of 2019, CUP collaborated with Teaching Artist Ro Garrido and the International Community High School's (ICHS) 11th grade students to explore school safety. To investigate, students got out of the classroom to speak with their peers and community members about what makes them feel safe.

The group teamed up with Designer Marcela Szwarc and created this booklet to teach others what they learned and encourage students to get involved in school safety decisions.



What does school safety mean to you?

TRUST

“Safety in schools or in any type of community is really about trust. It’s about trust and about knowing the people that are around you and knowing that they have your best interest in their heart.”

–Johanna Miller, Director of the Education Policy Center, New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU)



COMMUNITY

“Community makes a safe school. When people feel that they belong, they feel safe. When there’s space for young people to have ownership over what’s happening, it makes it feel safe.”

–Amelia Frank, Director of Youth Development, Community Connections for Youth (CCFY)

FREEDOM

“Safety is having a space where you’re able to feel free, and you’re able to feel yourself and express yourself the way you want to.”

–Leelee Romero-Smith, Mentor and PAR Lead Researcher, CCFY



Students created pillows to express what they need to feel safe in school.

EMPATHY

“Sometimes when you understand what a person’s been through or what they’re going through, you may think differently about them. Empathy [supports] safety.” –Khalid McKenzie, SBCC Coordinator and Intervention Specialist, CCFY

There are many ways to create safe learning environments. However, for the past 20 years, New York City has equated safe schools with police presence.

Policing in NYC schools

In 1998, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) agreed to sign over all safety responsibilities to the New York City Police Department (NYPD). Since then, school police officers have been involved in handling student misbehavior—even when students have not broken the law.

How many police are in NYC schools?

“There are more than 5,000 police in NYC schools. There are more cops in NYC schools than there are in the cities of Washington, D.C. or Las Vegas.”
–Johanna Miller

How much does all this cost?

“New York City spends a lot of money on police in schools—over \$221 million dollars [annually].”
–Johanna Miller

Why are there more police in some schools than others?

“Every time there’s a fight in a school, or a suspension, or something gets stolen, it gets logged in a database. The [DOE] decides based on how many incidents that school reports, what type of policing they’re going to get. When schools use alternatives to suspension [and] use more restorative practices to resolve conflicts within the school, [those instances] get logged very differently.”
–Amelia Frank

Do metal detectors keep us safe?

Every day, over 100,000 NYC students pass through metal detectors operated by police officers.

“Metal detectors [in NYC schools] only uncover about 1/3 of all ‘dangerous instruments’...2/3 are uncovered because a young person and an adult have a trusted relationship and the young person tells the adult.”
–Johanna Miller

“I think metal detectors provide a false sense of security. Yes, it may look like things are safe because I have to walk through a metal detector and everyone else has to walk through one, too. But, if there are people inside that want to hurt me, they’re going to hurt me.”
–Amelia Frank



A Recent History of Police in NYC Schools

As narrated by Johanna Miller

Before 1998

“Schools hired their own security guards and they worked in the school. A lot of the school safety officers we have now are from that old system.”

“Stop-and-frisk was just starting. [The NYPD] was doing a lot of really aggressive policing in communities of color. NYC Mayor Rudy Giuliani said, ‘We need to do exactly that in the schools.’ But people were upset and said, ‘We don’t want police in schools.’”



2008

“[The NYC government] put a freeze on hiring guidance counselors... But they never put a freeze on the school safety budget and it continued to grow, even when they had no money for anything else. They kept hiring cops.”

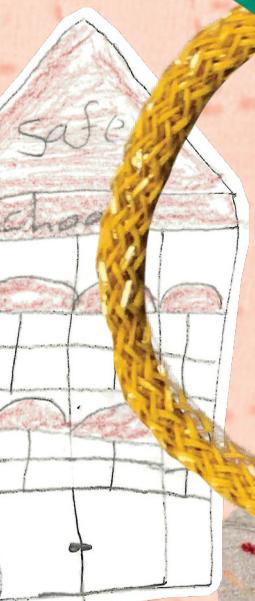


2001

“Mayor Bloomberg came into office in 2001 [and] immediately doubled and then tripled the size of the force... They went from 1,800 police to 2,500 police. Now we have 5,200 police in schools.”

1998

“Giuliani did this very weird thing where he lied about how dangerous schools were. He hid the data...and he said, ‘Schools are the most dangerous they’ve ever been. We need police in schools.’... When the data came out, [the reality was that] the schools actually had their safest year before police entered schools.”



2019

“That freeze on guidance counselors was just lifted... That’s why we have 5,200 police officers and we only have about 2,500 guidance counselors, and about 1,800 social workers.”



How does police presence impact schools?

“The time of year that has the least amount of kids getting arrested is summer time. Why is that? Because they’re not at school... This highlights that a school-to-prison pipeline exists.” –Amelia Frank

The **school-to-prison pipeline** is the idea that actions like breaking minor rules, which should be handled by the school, instead leads students into the criminal justice system. Zero-tolerance disciplinary policies and police presence in schools make this more common, especially for Black and Latinx students.

“I actually got arrested on school grounds for a fight. That’s what led me into the juvenile justice system. However, I was able to get support and joined an alternative-to-incarceration program that was designed to help young people from reentering the criminal justice system.” –Leelee Romero-Smith

Recent studies estimate the true cost of the school-to-prison pipeline in New York to be over **\$746 million** each year.

“We want to keep young people out of the criminal justice system. We want to take all that money that goes into incarcerating youth, and bring it to the community to support that young person, their family, their school, and the community.” –Amelia Frank

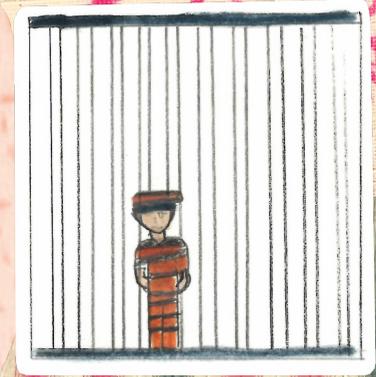
Who’s targeted?

Students of Color

In the 2017-2018 school year, Black and Latinx students made up 67% of the student body, but 88% of arrests and 92% of summonses in school. Students of color are also more likely than white students to be handcuffed for school misbehavior, even when there is no criminal activity.

“What we have learned by looking at what’s happening in schools, particularly with the NYPD, is that white kids will get a second chance, but students of color don’t always get a second chance... We can see [this trend] when we look at the data for the entire city. It is the same for every school in New York City. It is also the same everywhere across the country.”

–Johanna Miler



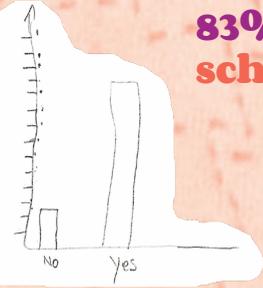


What does the community say?

In the fall of 2019, ICBS students surveyed their peers and community members about school safety.

83% of respondents believed schools need police officers.

62% of respondents believe police officers should be able to arrest students.



WHAT DO YOU THINK?



Are things changing?

In June 2019, the DOE signed a new agreement with the NYPD to limit police involvement in school discipline.

The agreement lists several low-level offenses when police should use “diversionary responses,” such as issuing warning cards, rather than arresting students. These offenses include:

- Low level marijuana possession
- Disorderly conduct
- Consumption of alcohol
- Trespassing
- Graffiti

“One of the biggest categories for arrest of young people in school is having marijuana... Outside of schools marijuana is decriminalized... Certainly, there’s no room for drugs in school. But inside school it’s still treated as a criminal offence.” –Johanna Miller

The new agreement does not decrease the number of police in schools, and school police officers can still decide whether or not to arrest students.



How could things be different?

Make Community Members First Responders

“A lot of the arrests that happen during the day come from schools. What does it look like to have people from the community to be the first responders, to be mediators? What does it look like to hold space by asking, ‘How are you feeling? Do you need a moment to talk?’” –LeeLee Romero-Smith

Increase Community Representation in Schools

“Representation matters. The school teachers and counselors and the principals and the adults in the building should reflect and represent the communities of the young people and families that are coming into the building.” –Amelia Frank



Remove Police From Schools

“I’ve met some great school safety officers...that have been in schools for many years. They know all the kids and they have great relationships. I don’t think it’s just about not having people [in schools]. I think it’s about not having an institution of policing.” –Amelia Frank

Invest in Schools & Students

In 2017, NYC spent over \$357 million on police in schools. In 2020, this number could be as high as \$431 million! That’s almost \$234,000 per school. How would you spend this money at your school?



What do students say?

“A school is a place where students go to learn and feel like they are in their second home. Students expect to see teachers, not armed guards in the school’s hallways.”

–Mahmoud Zaghoul, ICHS Student



“Those students who feel apart or abused are the first ones to try to feel better by killing their bully or someone else. Armed guards can reduce or even prevent that from happening because they will have an eye on the students.”

–Jean Toribio, ICHS Student



“In this country people of color are stereotyped by police officers and it brings disaster to our schools. For this reason schools should not have armed guards.”

–Maria Vargas, ICHS Student



“When will we be able to listen to students and not politicians? As soon as we listen to students we can figure out the effective solution.”

–Thierno Diallo, ICHS Student

“Armed guards are more beneficial for schools than we think. We can’t forget that behind the uniform there’s a human being just like me and you.”

–Jean Santana, ICHS Student



Get involved!

“Some of the best changes that we’ve made in the schools and a lot of the laws that we’ve managed to pass have happened because young people said, ‘Could we do this a different way?’” –Johanna Miller

For ideas on ways to take action, visit:

- nyclu.org/en/how-do-i-get-involved-tap
- cc-fy.org/projects/
- urbanyouthcollaborative.org
- dignityinschools.org/take-action/counselors-not-cops/



ICHS Students

Class J

Leticia Acosta Ramos, Laminou Adoi, Kate Aguilar, Victor Aguilar, Elias Al-Masajedi, Nayely Arroyo Garcia, Mamadou Barry, Guillelly Candelario Rodriguez, Elda Chatvarria, Lucilo Checo, Ribaldy De La Rosa Matias, Cheikh Diaw, Ashley Espailat, Brailyn Espinal, Armi Espino, Keyla Garcia, Erimendi Antonio Inoa, Yari Mer Martinez Alvarez, Waldyn Payamps, Genesis Polanco Espinal, Lauren Polanco-Payero, Abranny Polonio, Ashly Quezada, Zariah Rivera, Smarlin Rinaldo Mendez, Chelsie Salvatierra, Santiago Sanchez, Mamadou Sow, Jan Tavaréz, Nicole Vargas Alcantara, Yelissa Vasquez, Mahmoud Zaghoul

Class K

Huda Alhanshali, Abdullah Alnaham, Mutahar Assakaf, Darwins Augustin, Rosibel Caba Rodriguez, Olvin Chavez, Saikat Chowdhury, Isatou Diallo, Nelson Escalante Maldonado, Sindy Garcia, Rudelfi Dario Inoa Garcia, Eimy Lora, Carla Martinez, Teddy Martinez, Elischa Milandou, Angel Molina Veras, Crissith Nova Pena, Benjamin Novas, Nallely Paz, Carlos Jose Rodriguez, Jean Rosado Toribio, Andrea Ruiz Vasquez, Abdou Ouadoud Sanga, Jean Santana, Moustapha Sene, Shima Sheikh, Yerli Suriel, Bousseye Sysavane, Chozin Thet, Gabriela Turbi, Elianet Vallejo, Maria Vargas Alcantara

Class L

Erika Adames, Jose Aguilar, Syed Tareq Ahmed, Araujo, Almunther Assakaf, Fatimata Barry, Maimouna Barry, Marina Corporan, Yoanny De La Cruz, Thierno Diallo, Cheikh Diop, Edward Estevez, Mario Garcia, Anadely Hernandez, Erileidy Inoa, Cristian Jimenez Escobar, Pollob Kapali, Elba Lainez, Harony Nunez Martinez, Chantal Ortega, Edward Pena, Yadiel Pena Marte, Joan Perez, Lisi Perez, Ambar Ramirez Deleon, Hendryk Roche, Lisanyi Rodriguez, Sharif Salami, Abdou Ouahid Sanga, Gustavo Pantoja, Israel Velasquez, Estarlin Zapata Hernandez

The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, particularly among historically underrepresented communities.

The International Community High School (ICHS) is a progressive public school for English Language learners in the South Bronx. To learn more, visit ichs.weebly.com.

ICHS Classroom Teacher: Nick Deming

City Studies are CUP's project-based, in-class and afterschool programs that use design and art as tools to research the city. To learn more, visit welcometoCUP.org.

CUP

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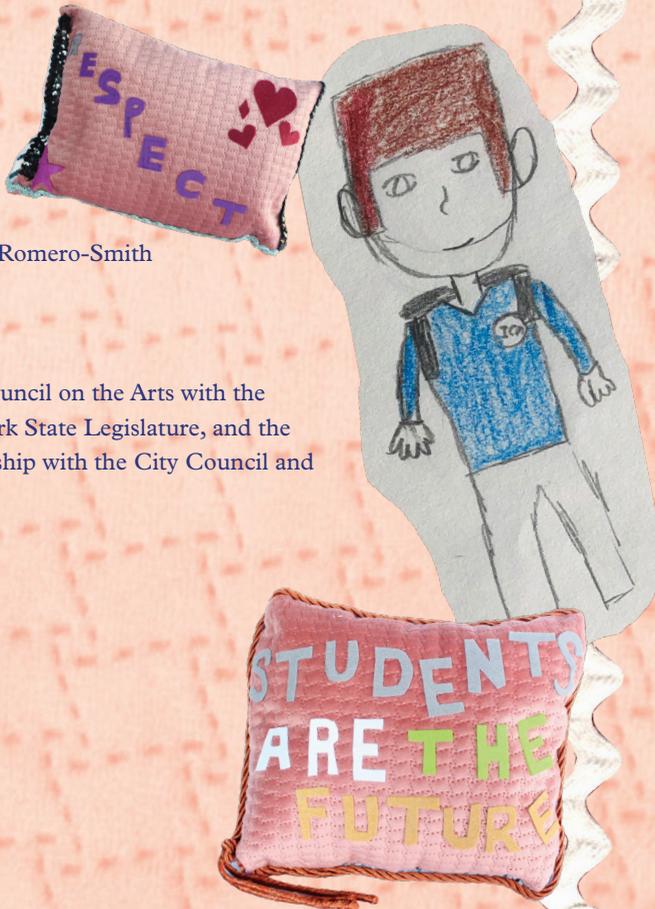
Thanks to our interviewees:

Amelia Frank, Khalid McKenzie, Johanna Miller, Leelee Romero-Smith

Special thanks to: Gileen Navarro, June Song

This project was made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and Council Member Diana Ayala.

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