STRENGTHENING SCHOOL SAFETY IN WASHINGTON, DC

Report from the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education and School Safety Enhancement Committee

March 2024

DME ★
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MAYOR FOR EDUCATION

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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DC MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was developed with contributions from the members of the School Safety Enhancement Committee, listed below, along with input from students, school staff, advocates, practitioners, and experts. The Committee was chaired by Deputy Mayor Paul Kihn. A full list of contributors is included in the Appendix.

School Safety Enhancement Committee Members (in alphabetical order):
- Dustin Bellavance, Director, School Safety and Engagement Division, Metropolitan Police Department
- Ricky A. Brown, Jr., Deputy Chief of School Safety and Security, District of Columbia Public Schools
- Dan Davis, Chief Student Advocate, Office of the Student Advocate, State Board of Education
- John Carlos Green, Community Engagement Manager, DC Public Charter School Board
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Executive Summary

The safety and wellness of children remains an urgent priority for Washington, D.C. This report from the School Safety Enhancement Committee ("the Committee") represents an important contribution. The Committee, established by the FY 2024 Budget Support Act of 2023, convened for the first time in November 2023 and worked over four months with staff from the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) to develop this report.

The Committee here presents a set of highly actionable recommendations. These recommendations emerged from deep community and stakeholder engagement, most notably with young people. In addition, the Committee evaluated our existing school-based safety work, conducted data analyses, and explored the relevant local and national research. The Committee endeavored, through all of this, to remain focused on the root causes of school-related violence and thereby to prioritize prevention and mitigation efforts. The Committee's work over the past four months has resulted in this roadmap for safer schools, and therefore safer children and safer staff.

Consistent with prior, similar efforts, the Committee sustained a belief that the safest place for young people is in schools. Focus groups and data analysis supported this belief. However, the Committee also came to understand that the world which today's young people inhabit is rapidly evolving – from the mercurial presence of social media to pandemic-provoked health and mental health needs to changing attitudes towards school attendance. Therefore, the Committee also asserted in several recommendations ways in which the system should adapt to these evolutions.

It also quickly became clear to the Committee that the specific topic of *school* safety is difficult to separate from the larger topic of *community* safety and the broader experience of youth in the District of Columbia. Schools have an important role to play, and they are one piece of a much larger picture. Therefore, while the majority of the recommendations in this report focus on the experience of students within the school building and en route to and from school, several recommendations name work beyond the direct scope of public education.

Given this complexity, and the urgency, the report seeks to identify ideas the District can implement in the short term to improve our system alongside new investments and initiatives that can enhance it over time. The report also includes ideas the Committee thinks are worthy of further consideration but did not have time to fully explore given the project timeline. For each recommendation, the Committee considered the conditions that would be necessary for successful implementation, the population impacted, and proposed next steps.

Specifically, this report presents recommendations within six priority goals, as follows:

- Priority 1: Get more kids safely back into our school buildings
- Priority 2: Strengthen school safety teams
- Priority 3: Keep the small stuff from escalating
- Priority 4: Improve the flow of safety information in and out of schools
- Priority 5: Give schools better safety intervention tools
- Priority 6: Establish a special set of resources for the small number of students who are most at risk, regardless of their school

Priority 1 addresses student safety concerns relating to attendance and the commute to and from school. This includes proposals to ensure greater safety at drop-off and pick up, such as staggered arrivals and dismissals and greater enforcement of illegal activity (e.g., robberies, drug sales) near school grounds. This priority also asserts that students will be safer coming to and from school with facilities' security infrastructure upgrades (e.g., cameras), an expansion of safe passage teams, and dedicated transportation solutions. This priority area also makes recommendations to reduce barriers to attendance, including through more robust case management as part of the referral process.[1]

Priority 2 focuses on the staffing and work of school safety teams, which have different configurations based on school needs, sizes, and models. This includes proposals focused on increasing clarity and transparency around safety team roles while also increasing access to information and best practice operating procedures. Because schools have some difficulty in filling critical safety roles, the Committee also here recommends focusing on safety staff recruitment and retention work. This priority also recommends strengthening the ability of all school safety teams to do their work by providing a one-stop "safety hub" for schools to gain immediate access to supports and information.

Priority 3 focuses on prevention. This includes proposals to limit the use of cell phones and social media in school, build conflict resolution skills among students and staff, and expand in-school and out-of-school opportunities for students who live and attend school in safe passage priority areas. In-school opportunities include greater access to college and career

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[1] Given the Committee's scope, this report does not include recommendations related to traffic safety. However, the Committee recognizes the importance of traffic safety upgrades and personnel in school zones to perceptions and realities around safety and fully supports efforts underway to prioritize and invest in traffic safety improvements near schools (e.g., through DDOT's Safe Routes to School program).

programming; out-of-school opportunities include mentorship, youth development, jobs, sports, and recreation.

Priority 4 focuses on communication between and among schools and public safety personnel and partners. This includes a recommendation to establish clear points of contact and standard operating procedures for personnel providing safe passage and public safety services for schools, and strengthen communication channels among them. The Committee also suggests building a robust alert system accessible by schools, parents, public safety staff, and residents, and improving data sharing to support early warning and intervention, including through a consistent student transfer file.

Priority 5 focuses on providing responsive and supportive tools for schools to use when serious incidents occur. Recommendations here include modifications to the suspension code to allow for appropriate consequences and interventions for the most serious safety infractions, and the expansion of in and out of school therapeutic and highly-supported placements in lieu of traditional suspension.

Priority 6 has a particular focus on identifying students who are at greatest risk of involvement in serious safety incidents and providing tailored services for them. This should include addressing service gaps for teens that can help prevent and address the most serious behavioral health needs such as substance abuse treatment, residential placements, partial hospitalization, and outpatient care.

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As noted throughout the report, these recommendations have a range of costs as well as implementation timelines and considerations. Some come with a significant price tag and many will require significant time to implement. The Committee recognizes the scale and complexity of the recommendations and the context of the District's current constrained financial landscape. Therefore, these recommendations do not represent firm policy positions or changes the District will enact immediately or entirely. Rather, these recommendations from the Committee are intended to serve as a call to some immediate action and present thoughtful ideas for careful consideration around how the District can ensure that all of our schools and students are safe.

Introduction

Background on the School Safety Enhancement Committee

The Fiscal Year (FY) 24 Budget Support Act (BSA) of 2023 established the School Safety Enhancement Committee (the Committee).[2] The Committee was charged with assisting the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) in issuing a report for the Mayor and Council on various aspects of school safety. These aspects included staffing of school safety teams; approaches to improving school safety, such as restorative justice, mediation, and social-emotional learning; methods of violence prevention and intervention; student discipline; engagement with public safety agencies; facilities infrastructure; communication; and reporting. The DME had four months to complete this project – from the start of the fiscal year in October 2023 through February of 2024.

The DME established a 10-member Committee in alignment with the membership requirements included in the BSA. The Committee included (1) Two representatives designated by the DME; (2) A representative designated by the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice; (3) A representative designated by the State Board of Education; (4) A representative designated by the Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools; (5) A representative designated by the Public Charter School Board; (6) A representative designated by the Metropolitan Police Department's School Safety Division; and (7) Three representatives designated by the Chairman of the Council. The full membership list is available in the Acknowledgements section on p. 2.

The Committee met for the first time on November 7, 2023, and convened five times in total. Meetings were livestreamed and open to the public. Information about the meetings is available on the DME website, at https://dme.dc.gov/schoolsafetycmte. At the first meeting, the Committee members reviewed the Committee's charge as well as existing data on youth involvement in violent crime and school safety incidents in DC. Understanding the current conditions of the District, the Committee assessed the presence of key protective factors outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).[3] The Committee established common language to generate comprehensive solutions, focusing on the root cause and keeping in mind the subgroups impacted.

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[2] Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Support Act of 2023, Title IV, Subtitle T.
[3] Protective factors help protect students who may be in at-risk environments against the likelihood of becoming involved in incidents of violence.

At the second and third sessions, the Committee engaged in a series of scenario-based discussions related to common challenges around school and student safety. Scenarios were developed through insights from Committee members as well as student and staff focus groups, alongside discipline and incident data to reflect common occurrences.

Session two focused on prevention efforts and discussed effective actions to stop school-based safety incidents from occurring or escalating, while session three focused on intervention efforts and crisis response. The committee considered school-based and public safety communication as well as staff development and capacity building throughout both scenario-based sessions.

At the fourth session, the DME lifted up emerging insights and themes from the focus groups and interviews conducted by that time. The DME also shared data on staffing configurations at DCPS and charter schools to anchor the Committee in a shared understanding of the current steady state from a personnel standpoint. The Committee discussed questions related to school safety staffing configurations and needs and began to review emerging recommendations. At the final meeting, the Committee reviewed the draft set of recommendations and provided feedback. Together, these recommendations seek to improve the safety of schools and the students and staff within them.

State of School Safety in DC

Youth Involvement in Violent Crime

In terms of the District context, as displayed in Figure 1, violent crime in DC has reached an unfortunate high, with over 5,000 violent crimes[4] reported by MPD in 2023, a 39% increase from 2022.[5] In 2023, 16 young people (< age 18) were shot and killed, and 94 young people were shot and survived.

Figure 1

Youth Gun Victims

Source: Metropolitan Police Department Juvenile Shooting Victim Data
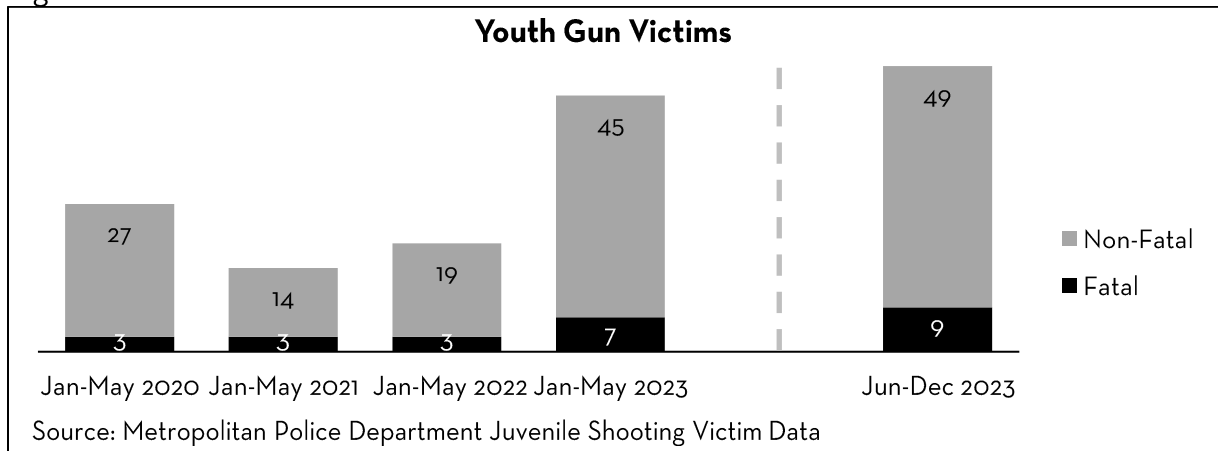
As described in MPD's 2024 Performance Oversight Hearing testimony,[6] youth have been heavily involved in vehicle thefts, carjackings, and robberies. Overall, only 11% of MPD arrests are of juveniles. But in 2023, 32% of vehicle theft arrests, 62% of carjacking arrests, and 73% of robbery arrests were juveniles. In fact, juvenile involvement in robberies has grown significantly in the past few years. In 2019 and 2020, juveniles represented 55% of the robbery arrests, in 2021 it was 58%, in 2022 it was 65%, and in 2023, 73 percent. And more youth are committing serious crimes at a younger age. The number of 12-year-olds arrested increased more than tenfold last year.
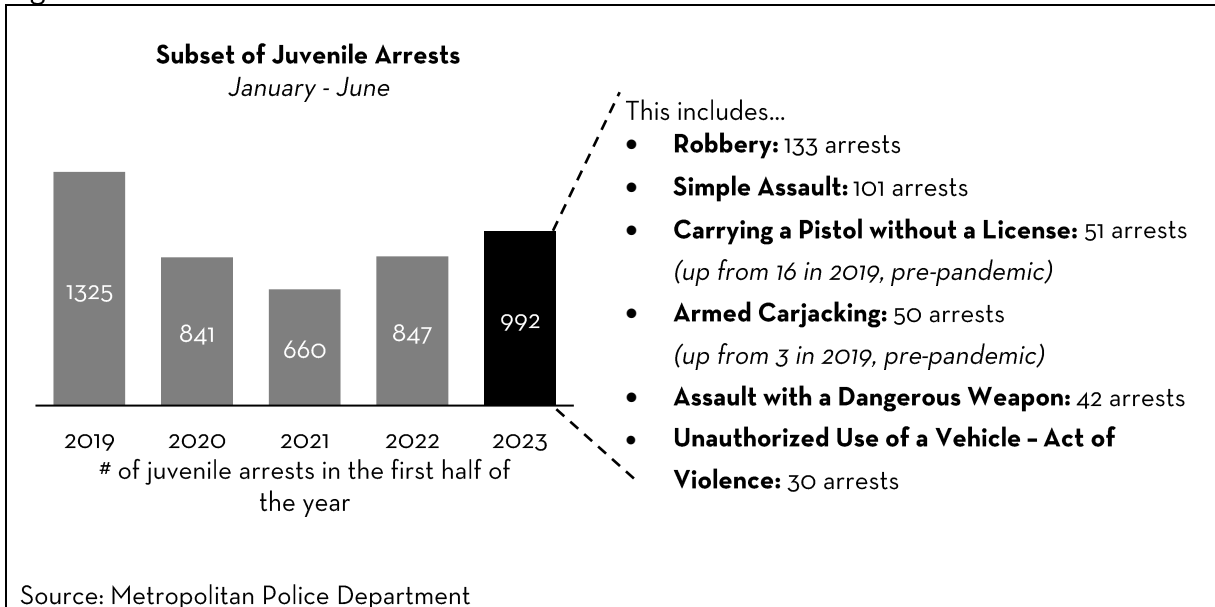
Arrests of youth under the age of 18 are trending up, with gun and car-related arrests exceeding pre-pandemic levels, as illustrated in Figure 2.

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[4] D.C. Official Code § 23-1331 "crime of violence."
[5] Metropolitan Police Department District Crime Data at a Glance
[6] Metropolitan Police Department Fiscal Year 2023 Performance Oversight Hearing Testimony

Figure 2

Subset of Juvenile Arrests
January - June

This includes...

- **Robbery:** 133 arrests
- **Simple Assault:** 101 arrests
- **Carrying a Pistol without a License:** 51 arrests *(up from 16 in 2019, pre-pandemic)*
- **Armed Carjacking:** 50 arrests *(up from 3 in 2019, pre-pandemic)*
- **Assault with a Dangerous Weapon:** 42 arrests
- **Unauthorized Use of a Vehicle – Act of Violence:** 30 arrests

Bar values: 2019: 1325, 2020: 841, 2021: 660, 2022: 847, 2023: 992

# of juvenile arrests in the first half of the year

Source: Metropolitan Police Department

Nationally, violent crime committed by youth (ages 7-17) peaks in the late afternoon, with more than one-third (37%) of all violent crime committed by youth occurring in the 5-hour period between noon and 5 p.m., as illustrated in Figure 3.[7] However, analysis conducted by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) from August 1, 2021 to October 21, 2022 shows a different trend in DC. This analysis encompassed 224 in-school days (49.1%) and 232 out-of-school days (50.9%) with a total of 2,878 offenses resulting in an arrest, 49.8% occurring on in-school days and 50.2% on out-of-school days. Figure 4 shows that offenses peak between 4pm and 6pm (18.9% of all offenses) on in-school days and between 6pm and 8pm (17.1% of all offenses) on out-of-school days. Additionally, Figure 5 shows that youth violent offenses in DC peak around 8pm and 10pm for both in-school and out-of-school days.

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[7] U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Figure 3

Violent Crime Time of Day
(per 1,000) in age group

Under 18 ——— 18 and older

Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Figure 4

DC Offenses by Juveniles
Time of Day

	12am-2am	2am-4am	4am-6am	6am-8am	8am-10am	10am-12pm	12pm-2pm	2pm-4pm	4pm-6pm	6pm-8pm	8pm-10pm	10pm-12am
In-School Day	59	26	16	50	70	106	125	182	271	203	215	111
Non-School Day	122	68	22	39	52	82	116	137	226	247	185	148

In-School Day ■ Non-School Day

Source: The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

Figure 5

DC Violent Offenses by Juveniles
Time of Day

	12am-2am	2am-4am	4am-6am	6am-8am	8am-10am	10am-12pm	12pm-2pm	2pm-4pm	4pm-6pm	6pm-8pm	8pm-10pm	10pm-12am
In-School Day	13	7	9	14	17	33	52	68	61	49	83	35
Non-School Day	34	19	8	7	10	18	32	48	37	65	75	51

In-School Day ■ Non-School Day

Source: The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

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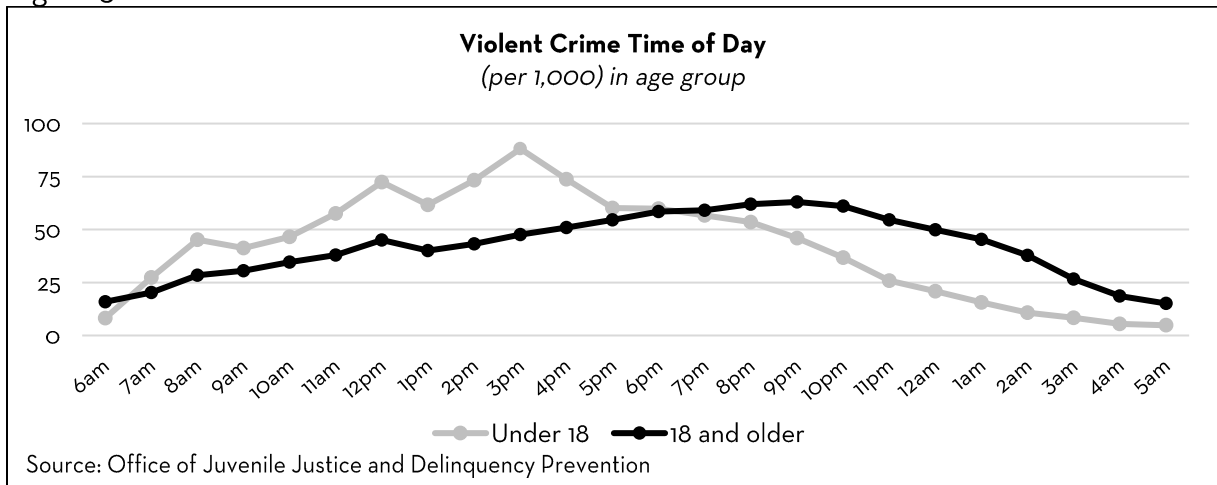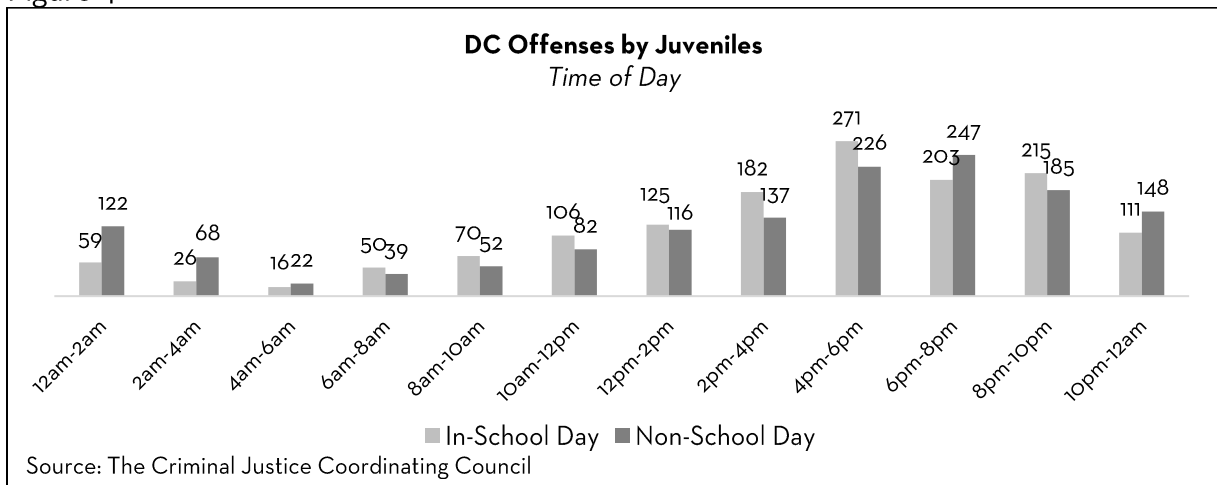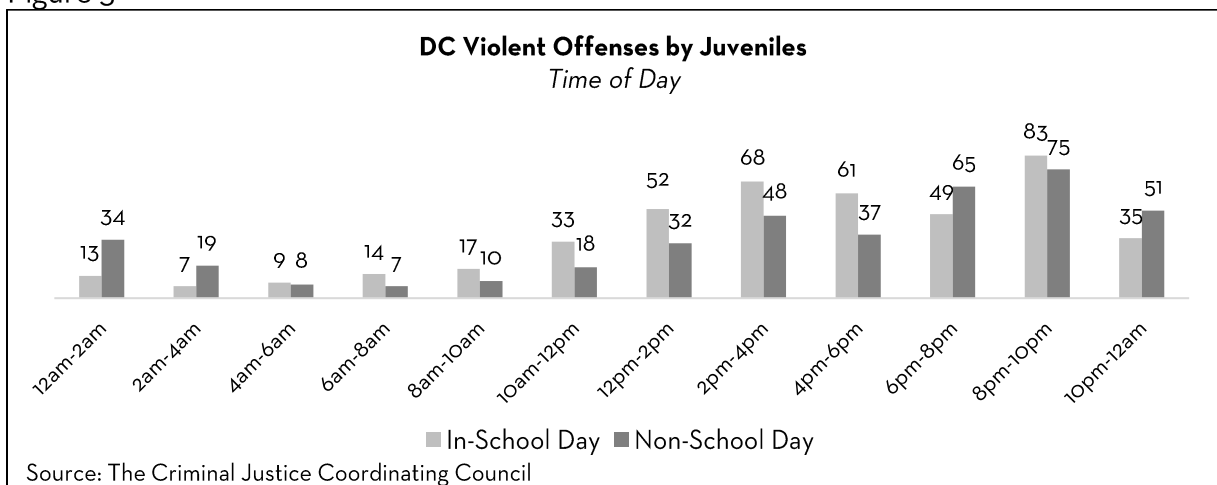## In Neighborhoods

Table 1 shows that, from school year (SY) 2020-2021 to SY 2022-2023, an average of 32% of all DCPS and public charter schools are located in a neighborhood cluster with a "low"[8] violent crime rate, an average of 44% are located in a neighborhood cluster with a "medium"[9] violent crime rate, and an average of 24% are located in a neighborhood cluster with a "high"[10] violent crime rate.
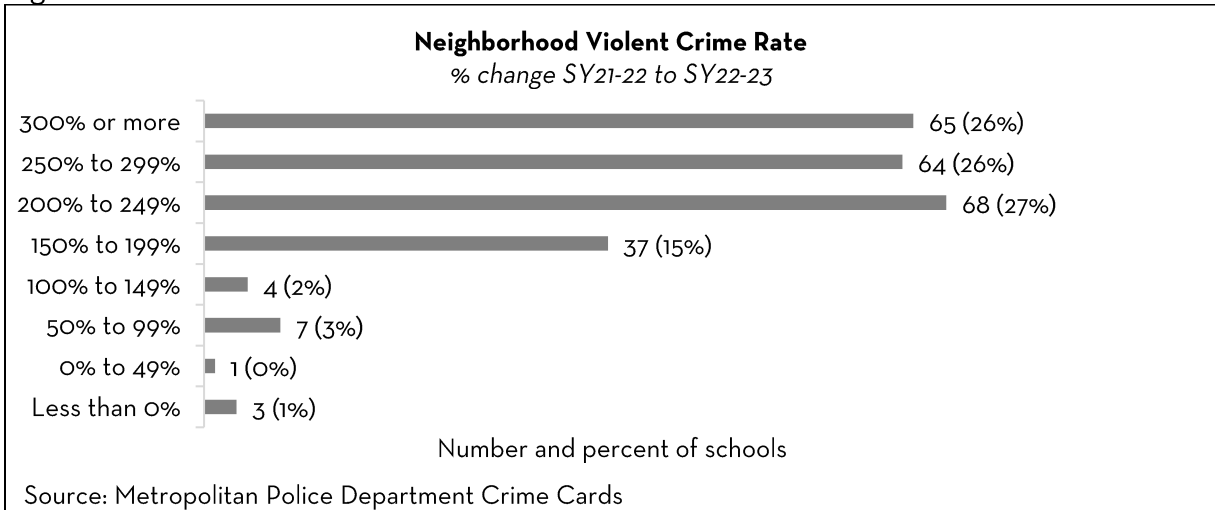
Table 1

Neighborhood Crime Rate & Percent of Schools			
	Low	Medium	High
SY 2020-21	33%	47%	20%
SY 2021-22	32%	41%	27%
SY 2022-23	31%	45%	24%
Source: Metropolitan Police Department Crime Cards			

However, Figure 6 shows that while the percentage of violent crimes in neighborhoods stayed relatively consistent, the actual number of violent crimes increased from SY 2021-22 to SY 2022-23. 94% of schools experienced a 150% or more increase in the number of violent crimes committed in their neighborhood cluster. Furthermore, 26% of schools experienced an increase of 300% or more in the number of violent crimes committed in their neighborhood cluster.

Figure 6

Neighborhood Violent Crime Rate
% change SY21-22 to SY22-23

Category	Value
300% or more	65 (26%)
250% to 299%	64 (26%)
200% to 249%	68 (27%)
150% to 199%	37 (15%)
100% to 149%	4 (2%)
50% to 99%	7 (3%)
0% to 49%	1 (0%)
Less than 0%	3 (1%)

Number and percent of schools

Source: Metropolitan Police Department Crime Cards

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[8] "Low" is a value less than one-third the average of violent incidents.
[9] "Medium" is a value between less than one-third the average and greater than one-third the average of violent incidents.
[10] "High" is a value greater than one-third the average of violent incidents.

In School

As shown in Figure 7, according to the SY 2022-23 disciplinary data, reports of incidents of violence[11] have increased from the previous year by 71%. However, nine schools account for nearly one-third of all reported incidents of violence, with each of those schools having more than 140 reported incidents of violence (

Figure 8). Twenty-six schools had 100 or more reported incidents of violence and account for nearly half of all the reported incidents of violence.
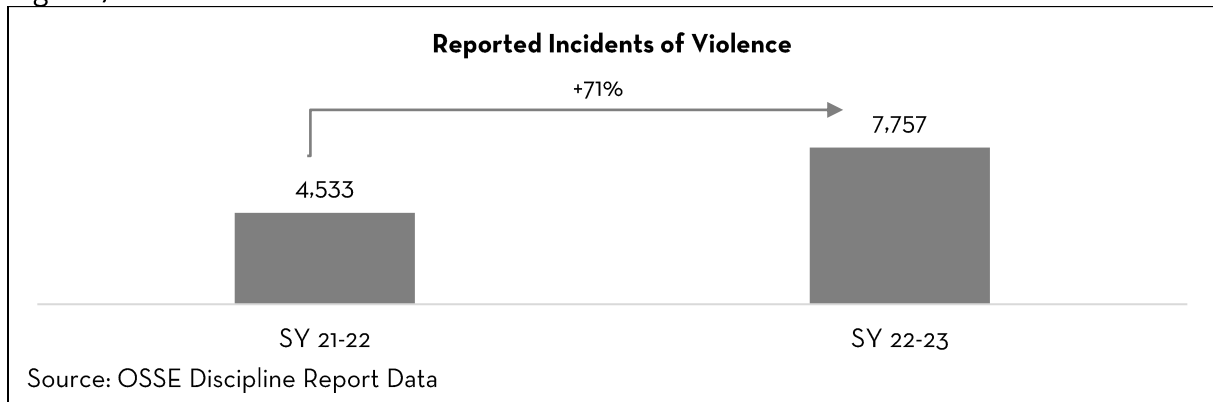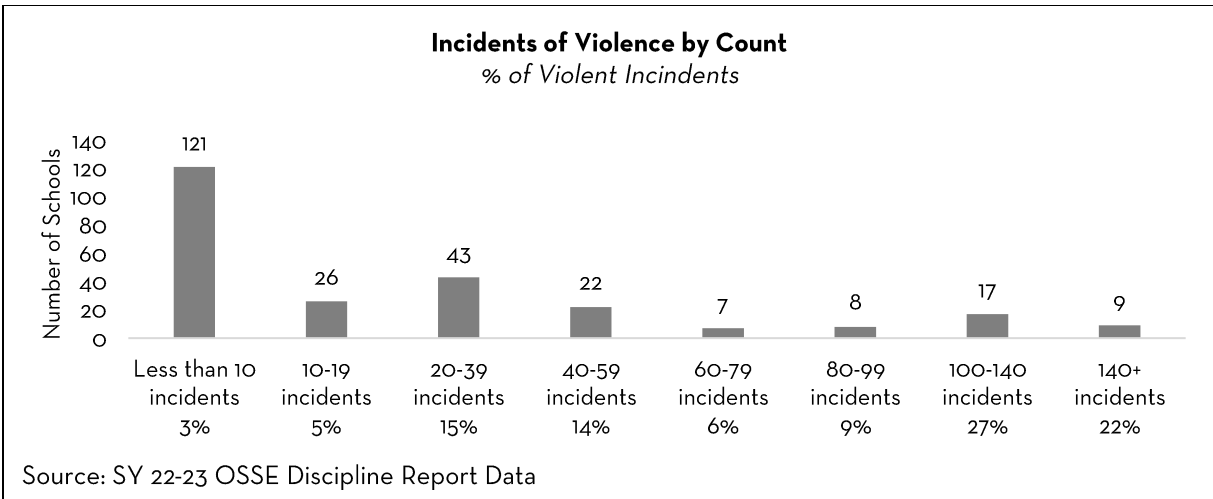
Figure 7

Reported Incidents of Violence

+71%

4,533

7,757

SY 21-22

SY 22-23

Source: OSSE Discipline Report Data

Figure 8

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[11] An incident is counted as an incident of violence when the primary or secondary reason indication for a disciplinary action is listed as one of the following:
(1) rape, attempted rape, and other sexual assault; (2) robbery with and without a weapon; (3) robbery with a firearm or explosive device; (4) physical attack or fight with and without a weapon; (5) physical attack or fight with a firearm or explosive device; (6) threats of physical attack with and without a weapon; (7) threats of physical attack with a firearm or explosive device; (8) possession of a firearm or explosive device; (9) use of a firearm or shooting; or (10) homicide.
Source: 2022 DC School Report Card Discipline Data.

Incidents of Violence by Count
% of Violent Incindents

Source: SY 22-23 OSSE Discipline Report Data

Student Discipline Data

In terms of suspensions, Figure 9 shows an 11% decrease in out-of-school suspensions compared to pre-pandemic levels (SY 18-19). This trend could partially be explained by the implementation of the Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018, which resulted in a limit on schools' use of suspensions, expulsions, and involuntary transfers as disciplinary consequences.[12]

Figure 9

Out-of-School Suspensions

Source: SY 22-23 OSSE Discipline Report Data
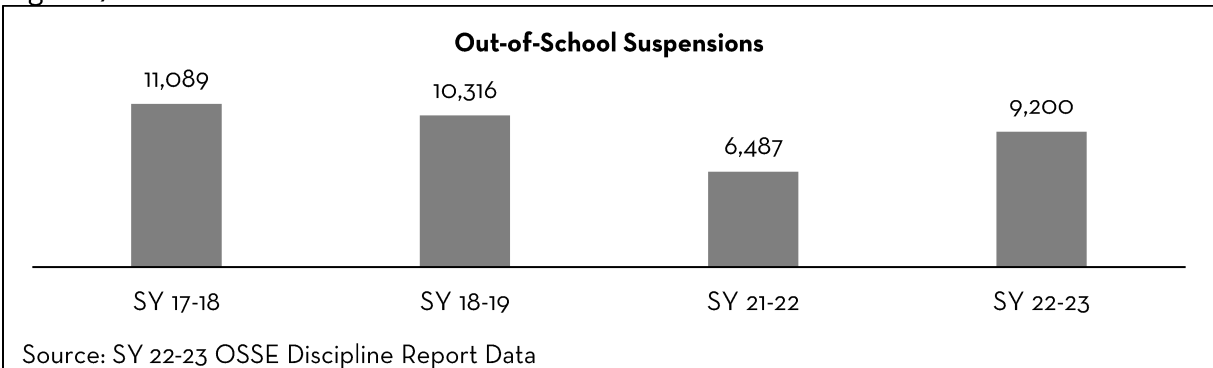
In total, 84 students were expelled in SY 22-23, with fighting and disruptive behavior being the most common reason for suspension and expulsion, followed by weapons. Figure 10 shows that the proportion of students receiving an out-of-school suspension continues to decline.[13]

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[12] This included prohibiting schools from using the above methods of disciplinary consequences for unexcused absences or late arrivals.
[13] OSSE Discipline Report SY2022-23.

Figure 10

Frequency of Discipline Actions, by School Year

School Year	Out-of-School Suspension	In-School Suspension	School-Based Intervention	Expulsion
2018-2019	88%	10%	1%	1%
2021-2022	76%	17%	7%	
2022-2023	70%	17%	12%	1%

■ Out-of-School Suspension ■ In-School Suspension ■ School-Based Intervention ■ Expulsion

Source: SY 22-23 OSSE Discipline Report
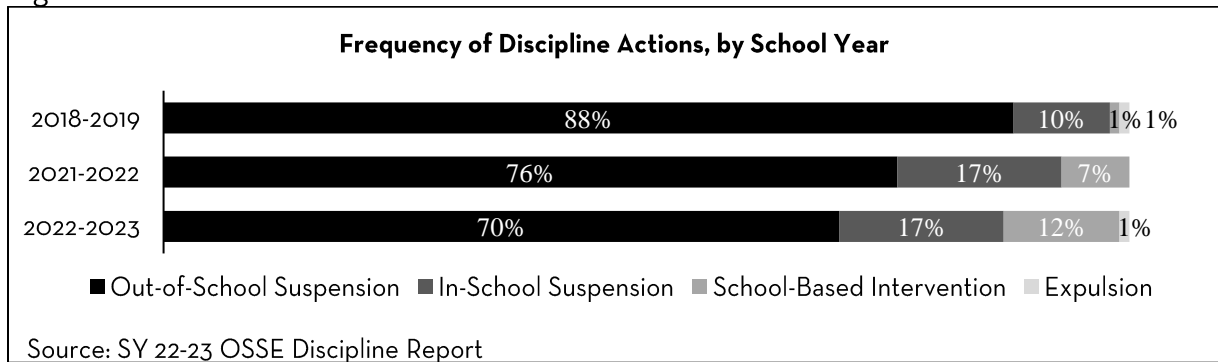
Students' Experiences

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), a health-risk behavior survey distributed every two years to all public middle and high schools in DC and nationally, indicates to what degree safety is a factor in students' decision to attend school, and pinpoints key factors that are driving students' safety concerns.

According to the 2021 YRBS, 16.7% of all middle school students did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school (on at least one day during the 30 days before the survey). This is a 1.7% increase from the previous YRBS survey in 2019. For high school students, 8.4% did not go to school for the same reason, which was a 1% decrease from the 2019 survey.

Notably, Table 2 shows that in just under a decade, membership in gangs and crews has fallen by two-thirds among high school males, from 21.6 % in 2012 to 7.3 % in 2021.[14]

Table 2

YRBS Gang or Crew Trends							
Were a member of a gang or crew (during the prior 12 months)	2012	2015	2017	2019	2021	2019-2021 Trend	Long-Term Trend (2007-2021)
High School	16.5%	17.3%	14.7%	13.4%	6.2%	**Down ↓**	**Down ↓**
Male	21.6%	21.3%	18.6%	16.2%	7.3%	**Down ↓**	**Down ↓**
Female	11.5%	13.3%	10.7%	10.4%	5.1%	**Down ↓**	**Down ↓**
Source: 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey							

According to the 2021 YRBS, middle school students' experience of electronic bullying has increased since 2019, most notably among middle school females, of whom nearly one in four report having been electronically bullied, up from approximately one in six in 2019.[15]

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[14] 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey.
[15] 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

Figure 11 shows an increase in electronic bullying as well as an increase in students reporting having been afraid of being beat up at school. At the same time, Figure 11 also shows a decrease in the percentage of students reporting being bullied or bullying someone on school property as well as a decrease in the percentage of students who have ever been in a physical fight.

Figure 11

YRBS Middle School Reponses

Source: 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey
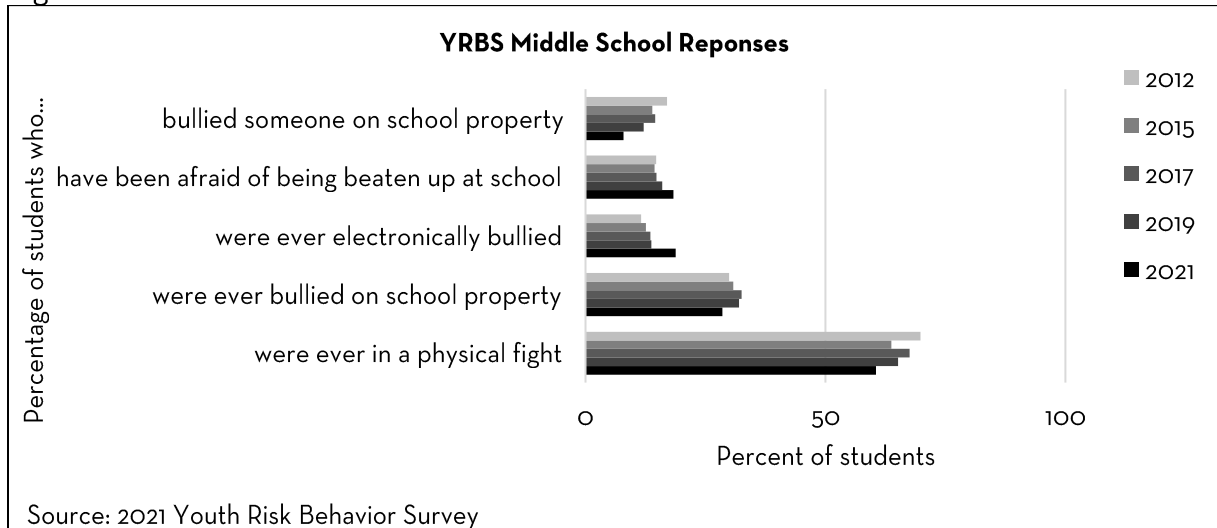
School Staffing

In addition to incident and perception data, the Committee wanted to better understand how schools are staffed from a safety standpoint. To that end, DME staff conducted analysis based on a review of staffing at all DCPS schools in SY 23-24 and incorporated data from charter schools through a survey facilitated by the DC Charter Alliance.[16] From this data, it is clear that schools have a variety of staffing structures when it comes to individuals that contribute substantially to the safety of a school (these roles can go beyond traditional security and discipline positions). Above and beyond the dedicated security staff, assigned to every DCPS school, all DCPS middle and high schools budgeted for a Social Worker and Psychologist. Outside of those roles, 86% of DCPS middle schools budgeted for an In-School Suspension Coordinator and 79% budgeted for a School Counselor. 87% of DCPS high schools budgeted for an Attendance Counselor and 67% budgeted for a Behavior Technician and In-School Suspension Coordinator. For charter schools, 69% of responding LEAs included a Dean of Students (or related role) in their

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[16] In November and December 2023, the DC Charter School Alliance, in partnership with The DC Public Charter School Board, collected data from charter school leaders through a 10-question survey on the roles engaged in school safety and the effectiveness of various school safety tools and strategies.

safety management structure along with 53% including a Behavior Technician, 42% including a Social Worker, and 31% including a Psychologist. The most commonly reported safety management role in charter schools is a Chief Operating Officer or Operations Leader, with 86% of responding LEAs including this role.

DCPS

Using DCPS's fiscal year (FY) 2024 amended budget spreadsheet,[17] DME staff identified positions schools prioritize for promoting safety and divided these positions into two categories: 1) full-time safety positions where the primary function of the role is safety, and 2) supporting school safety positions where the primary function of the role may not be safety, but where the role focuses on student well-being and school climate and therefore has a safety impact. Full-time safety positions include Behavior Technicians, In-School Suspension Coordinators, Deans of Students, and Restorative Justice Coordinators. Supporting school safety positions include Attendance Counselors, Psychologists, Social Workers, School Counselors, and Guidance Counselors.

At the same time, many adults in schools play functional roles different from their titles. At one DCPS school, for example, there are six individuals that the school considers "behavior deans," but who have various official titles such as strategy and logistics roles, parent coordinators, and restorative justice coordinators. These individuals have similar actual job responsibilities, supporting safety and positive behavior in the school, but are funded through different positions within the budget.

Every DCPS school has budgeted for at least one part-time Social Worker. 95% of elementary schools have funding for a Psychologist, and all middle and high schools have funding for one. The most common school safety team for DCPS is composed of a Behavior Technician, Psychologist, and Social Worker, with 70 out of 116 schools budgeting for these positions. Attendance Counselor and School Counselor were frequently budgeted positions, with 32 schools including both types of roles on their safety teams. Figure 12 shows the number of full-time and supporting roles across DCPS schools.

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[17] FY24 Initial, Submitted, & Amended Budget Spreadsheet.

Figure 12

DCPS School Safety Roles

Source: DCPS FY24 Amended Budget Spreasheet
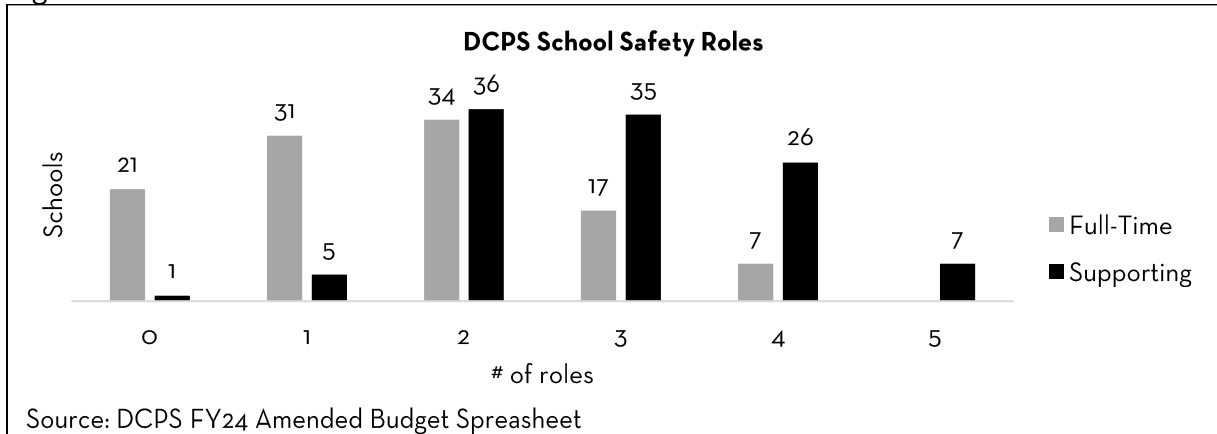
Within DCPS middle schools, the most common school safety staff team, excluding Psychologists and Social Workers, is composed of a Behavior Technician, In-School-Suspension Coordinator, Restorative Justice Coordinator, and School Counselor. 6 out of 14 middle schools budgeted for these roles. Every DCPS middle school budgeted for at least one full-time safety and at least one supporting school safety staff role. Figure 13 shows the number of full-time and supporting roles at DCPS middle schools.

Figure 13

DCPS Middle School Safety Roles

Source: DCPS FY24 Amended Budget Spreasheet
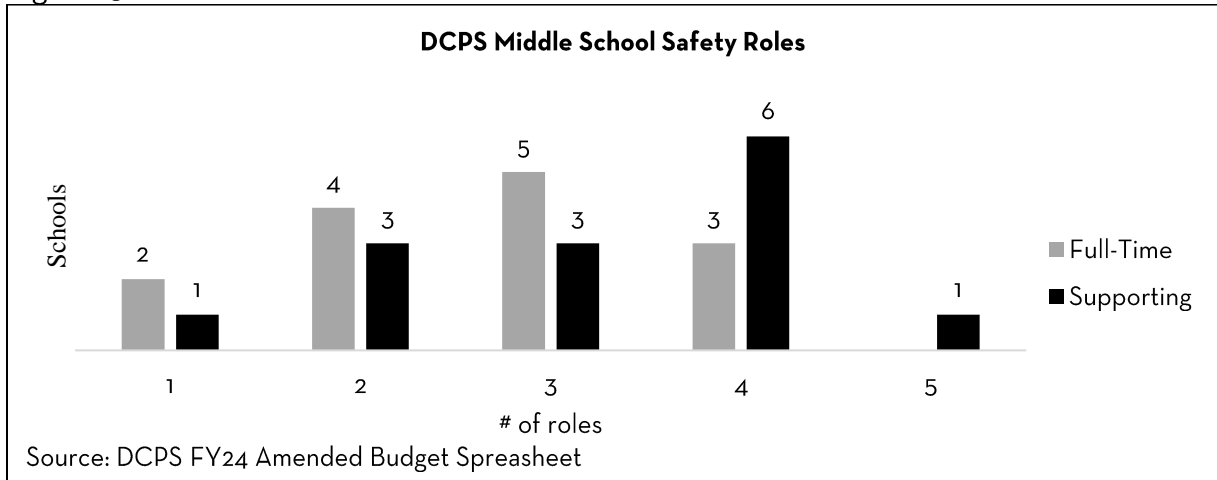
Within DCPS high schools, there is an emphasis on supporting school safety roles, with every high school budgeting for at least three of these roles. However, there are three high schools that have no budgeted full-time school safety staff. Figure 14 shows the number of full-time and supporting safety roles at DCPS high schools.
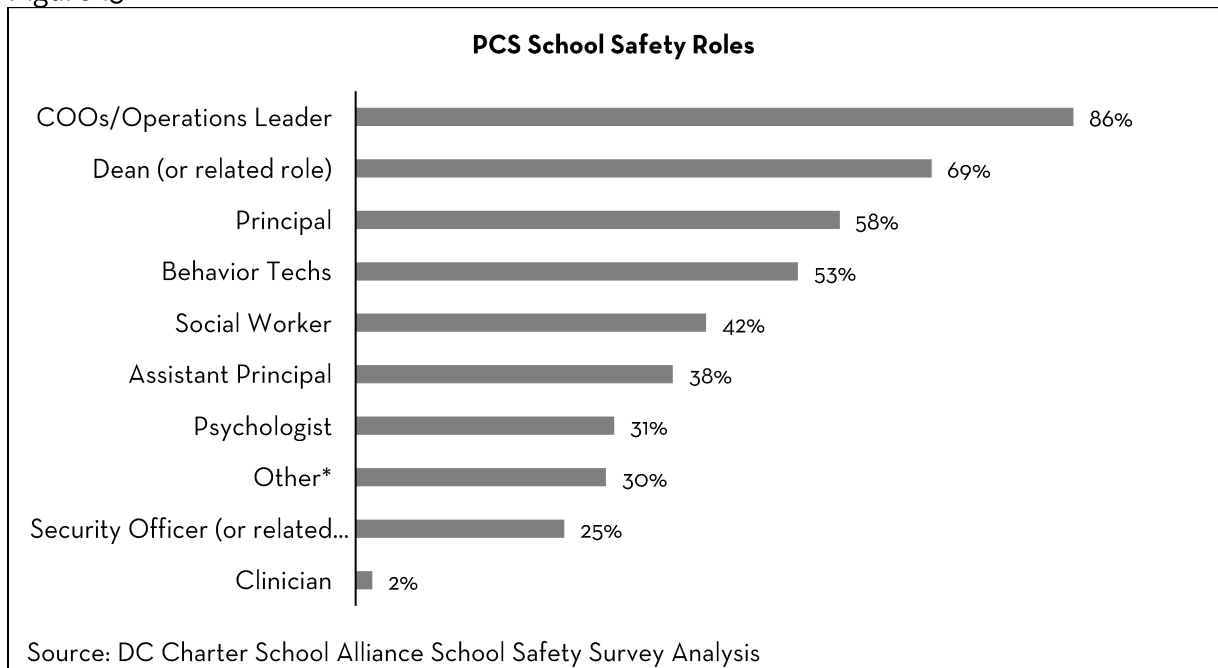
Figure 14

DCPS High School Safety Roles

Source: DCPS FY24 Amended Budget Spreasheet
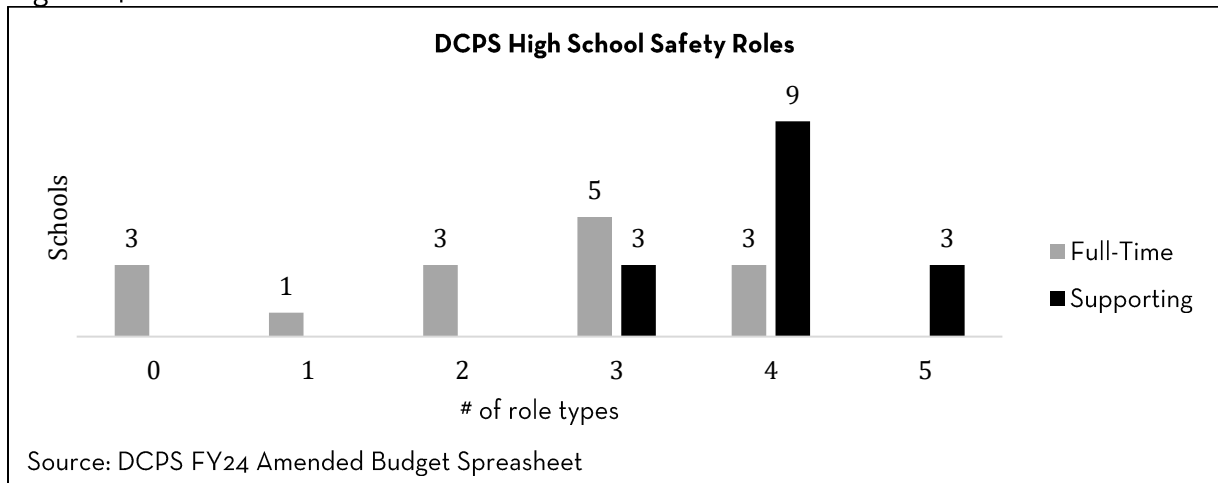
DC Public Charter Schools (PCS)

In November and December 2023, the DC Charter School Alliance, in partnership with The DC Public Charter School Board (PCSB), collected data from charter school leaders through a 10-question survey on the roles engaged in school safety and the effectiveness of various school safety tools and strategies. 100% of grade levels are represented in the survey from a variety of different size LEAs.[18]

Figure 15

PCS School Safety Roles

Source: DC Charter School Alliance School Safety Survey Analysis

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[18] Participation consisted of 22 Early Childhood, 25 Elementary, 16 Middle, 14 High, and 3 Adult Charter LEAs.

Figure 15 shows the key safety team roles and the percent of responding LEAs that included roles in their safety management structure. 42% of responding LEAs have 1-2 of the roles, 44% have 3-4 of the roles, and 14% have 5 or more roles.

There is even more diversity in roles when comparing multi-site to single-site charter LEAs. Table 3 shows an example comparison between two schools, with the multi-site charter LEA being able to contract full-time security on campus as well as having a role for a regional safety director who covers traffic safety work.

Table 3

Multi-site Charter LEA	Single-site Charter HS
Staffing • Full Time contract school security on campus • Hired off duty MPD • Campus Safety Managers per campus • Regional safety director role (Operational Managers) – covering traffic safety work, coordinating with DDOT • Dean of Student at HS, one per grade level • Restorative Practice Teachers and intervention coordinators at MS sites • In school violence interruption services at the high school • School-based community engagement team to support families	*Staffing* • Campus Directors/Assistant Directors, monitoring operations and staff • At least one, school-wide, Dean of Students • Student support coordinators respond directly to incidents • Social worker supports highest need students • Part-time contract security, monitoring students and staff at a single-entry point to the building

Strategies the District Has Pursued to Date

The DME's approach to youth safety has always considered how the District supports students across geographic locations as they navigate the world – in school, in transit, and in community. And the DME has always recognized the importance of a differentiated approach based on need. In this body of work, the Committee focused on solutions that are rooted in best-practice research and data, come from school community feedback, and prioritize students with the greatest needs and risk factors. The recommendations seek to ensure a baseline level of school safety for all students in the District; focus efforts on students living and attending school in safe passage priority areas; and prioritize resources on students at greatest risk of being involved in serious safety incidents.

In School

Attendance Interventions

The safest place for students to be during the day is in school. To address the concerning rise in chronic absenteeism and truancy following the pandemic, the District has focused first and foremost on the school-level ground game so that students feel a sense of belonging and connection to their schools, and also on system-level supports and interventions to address attendance barriers families and students face. To support school attendance District-wide, the District has invested in evidence-based "nudge" technology to support school attendance directly. The DME has partnered with EveryDay Labs (EDL) to offer every public school serving K-12 students access to an intervention that has proven to be effective at reducing chronic absenteeism in other localities. In SY 22-23, 177 schools across both DCPS and charter LEAs opted in to implement the EDL intervention, which uses attendance data to target text message and mail communication to families of students who are either chronically absent or at risk of becoming chronically absent. By the end of the school year, 48% percent of the over 50,000 students who received the intervention improved their in-seat attendance rate, including 11% of students who were chronically absent at the start of the intervention and not chronically absent by the end of the school year. Elementary school student experienced greater attendance outcomes, with 56% of students improving.

Positive Climates and Cultures
Evidence has shown that positive school climates encourage attendance and foster safe schools. To support positive climates and cultures within schools, the District has invested in student mental health and well-being and the integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) inside and outside of the classroom through school-based mental health clinicians, restorative justice technical assistance, and soon to be finalized SEL standards and a District-wide school climate survey. The DME has worked closely with the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) to support every school in having a clinician, and this year, DBH is launching three pilots that provide schools with direct funds to hire providers, enable telehealth services, and leverage behavioral health technicians. Additionally, OSSE, in partnership with DBH, DCPS and PCSB, received a $9.7M federal grant to support recruitment and retention efforts for school-based mental health staff. While there is more work to do, the District has seen progress: as of the publication of this report, 68% of schools have a full-time clinician, up from 61% in SY 22-23.

Through the Restorative Justice Technical Assistance Grant, OSSE makes restorative justice training available to LEAs through technical assistance from SchoolTalk's RestorativeDC. In SY 23-24, 38 schools are being supported through this grant, and all LEAs and schools are provided biweekly training opportunities. OSSE also expanded its discipline data collection to include restorative justice as a discipline action for the first time this past school year, and restorative justice actions constituted 40 percent of all reported discipline actions. Additionally, 117 of 240 schools report on My School DC the use of "Restorative Justice." Restorative Justice practices range from one-on-one

restorative conversations, peer or trained facilitator-led circles, facilitator-led restorative justice conferencing, to restorative mediations, all designed to repair and renew relationships between every individual involved in the act of harm in lieu of exclusionary and punitive actions.[19]

A critical part of school staff responding to safety concerns effectively and efficiently is ensuring they are trained appropriately. The DME, in collaboration with DCPS and agency partners, hosted the Districtwide Campus Safety Summit in July 2022 to bring together school leaders from DCPS, public charter, and private and parochial schools to provide emergency management and critical incident training.

In Transit

Recognizing the safety needs of youth during school commute times, the District has invested in several initiatives to improve youth safety en route to and from school. During the pandemic, the DME launched the Safe Passage, Safe Blocks program, an $8.5M annual investment that places trained adults hired through partnering community-based organizations in eight safe passage priority areas. The program serves 48 schools through partnerships with four nonprofit providers employing 190 safe passage staff[20] and is overseen by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice (DMPSJ). The District also launched the $8M DC SchoolConnect program, which provides shuttle service for select schools in safe passage priority areas and is run by the Department of For Hire Vehicles (DFHV). DC SchoolConnect has approximately 750 registered students and 300 active riders, with a wait list of over 200.

In Community

To promote positive youth development and safety, the District has expanded the number of safe, engaging activities after school hours. The Office of Out of School Time Grants and Youth Outcomes (OST Office) has expanded its investments in after school to reach over 16,000 students each year and has launched My Afterschool DC, a unifying system for families to access OST programming offered across agencies. The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has expanded recreation activities, especially in areas with limited activities, through Recreation for All, which includes expanded recreation center hours, programming driven by youth requests, such as Late Night Hypes, and grants to community-based organizations. The District has also expanded seats in school year and summer internships through DOES and OSSE, reaching over 1,300 during the school year and over 12,000 youth over the summer in FY23.

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[19]Learn more about the common types of Restorative Justice Practices used across LEAs in the District here.
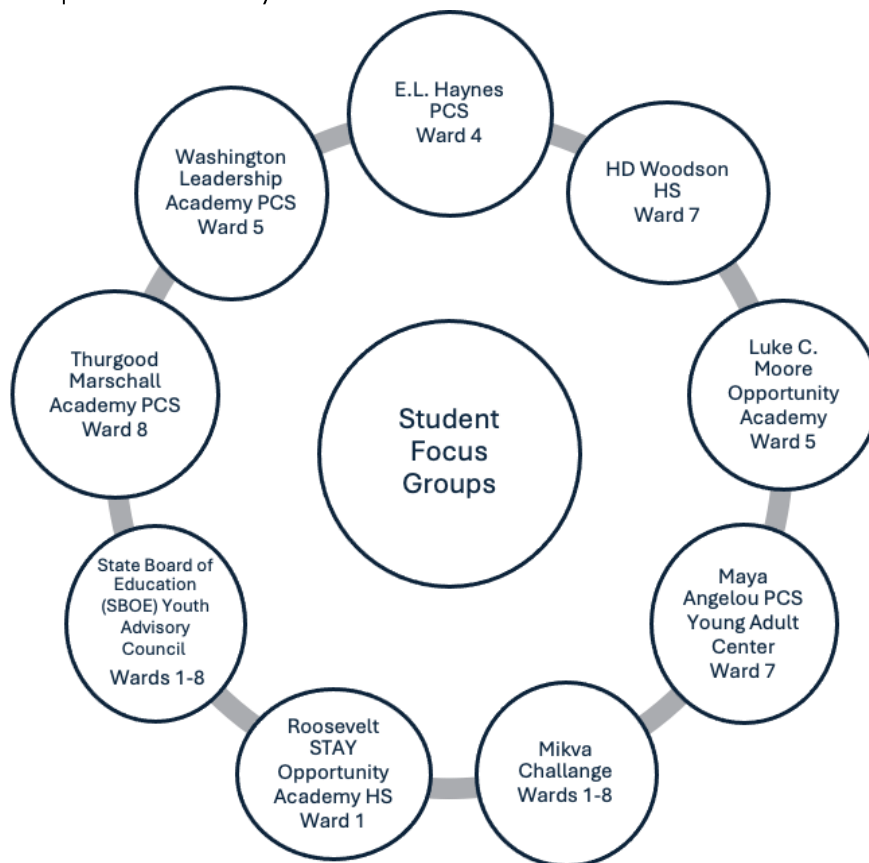[20] Safe Passage, Safe Blocks staff are employees of community-based organizations and not government employees.

The Committee's Approach

In our work, the Committee wanted first and foremost to center the voices of students and school staff as well as parents, all of whom are deeply impacted by school safety. The Committee also wanted to bring in the expertise of academics, advocates, and practitioners in the field, in DC and nationally. DME staff brought insights from all of these groups to the Committee meetings and used them to craft the recommendations in this report.

Focus Group Composition

Student Focus Groups

The DME conducted focus groups with students attending school across the District. This effort strategically sought to gather voices of single-site and multi-site charter school students, DCPS neighborhood and citywide high school students, and DCPS and charter alternative school students. We wanted to include a representative sample and therefore identified schools that had low, medium, and high levels of safety incidents, based on OSSE's Discipline Report. In several cases, students were able to speak about their experience in multiple schools they attended in the District.

E.L. Haynes PCS Ward 4

Washington Leadership Academy PCS Ward 5

HD Woodson HS Ward 7

Thurgood Marschall Academy PCS Ward 8

Luke C. Moore Opportunity Academy Ward 5

Student Focus Groups

State Board of Education (SBOE) Youth Advisory Council Wards 1-8

Maya Angelou PCS Young Adult Center Ward 7

Roosevelt STAY Opportunity Academy HS Ward 1

Mikva Challange Wards 1-8

Staff Focus Groups

At the staff level, the DME similarly sought perspectives from a range of school types and focused primarily on members of school safety teams. The DME also talked to representatives of the Washington Teachers' Union and heard from teachers through various engagements, including through the Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals, and Educators (S.H.A.P.P.E.).
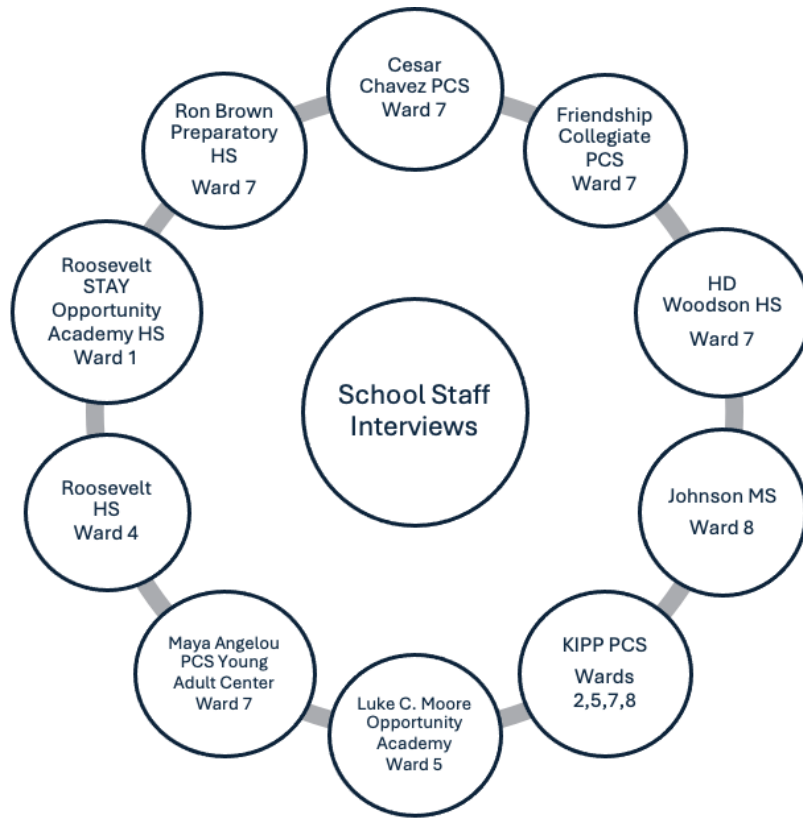
Parents, Advocates, Practitioners, and Experts

To ensure the Committee's recommendations were reflective of research and evidence-based practices as well as the knowledge of experts and practitioners in the field, DME staff scheduled over 20 conversations with experts, practitioners, and advocates to share our analysis and findings and solicit their input on the recommendations. Staff also incorporated the voices of family members and guardians through conversations with Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE) and the LSAT Collective. A full list of organizations and individuals consulted for this report is available in the Appendix.

Learnings from stakeholders

Key Themes

Several recurring themes were elevated throughout the Committee's engagement sessions. The following are common themes expressed by participants in the focus groups and conversations.

Perceptions of Safety

- Many stakeholders, including students, staff, and parents, believe violence in DC is a real and urgent problem, with many believing it has reached a crisis point.
- Students mostly feel safe in school, especially when they have relationships with trusted adults.
- Having a caring adult in school, who understand and listens to them, significantly impacts students' feelings of safety and belonging.
- Many students feel unsafe in the commute to and from school and are eager for safe passage and transit solutions.
- Social media is a major driver of conflict and can create peer pressure and escalate even seemingly minor situations. Social media is generally perceived to be out of the control of school staff.
- DCPS schools in particular expressed needs and concerns around the prioritization of safety infrastructure upgrades in and around school facilities.

Current Interventions, Programs, and Staffing

- Students generally (although not all) appreciate effective security guards and weapons abatement - students cited police, security guards, and metal detectors as top things that make them feel protected.
- Safe passage workers are not intended to directly intervene in conflicts; consequently, some stakeholders, especially students, do not perceive Safe Passage, Safe Blocks to be an effective conflict prevention and de-escalation strategy, although schools (within and outside of safe passage priority areas) are eager for more support with safe passage.
- Some stakeholders would like the Safe Passage, Safe Blocks program to be more closely connected to schools and active for longer periods of time during the day. Others suggested more connection between Safe Passage and violence interrupter programs.
- Schools try to implement conflict resolution and restorative justice practices but often lack the techniques and the art – students from all buildings could articulate their schools' processes for addressing conflict, but suggested the number of

teachers and staff that "actually get it" is too low (2-3 per building). More can be done to build consistent capacity across schools, staff, and teachers.

- Recruiting and keeping talent in safety team roles really matters. Pay for certain safety team roles (e.g., behavioral technicians) can be a challenge in recruitment and retention at DCPS. Stakeholders recommended greater recruitment from the community and from individuals with relevant experience.
- Teachers would benefit from high-quality, ongoing restorative justice and conflict resolution training but feel training fatigue.

Communication and Coordination

- Schools and family members want real-time, accurate information about safety incidents in and around schools.
- Many charter schools feel that information is not shared consistently across sectors, and that they can be left out of critical communications.
- Many stakeholders believe the District needs better coordination in general and with schools specifically when it comes to safety interventions and programs and supporting students at risk of becoming involved in serious safety incidents.
- Schools have limited information about the students in their building and the services they are receiving, and there is limited communication between schools and service providers, hindering prevention and intervention efforts.

Safety Response

- Many stakeholders believe that more targeted supports, interventions, and consequences are needed to address the most serious youth safety challenges.
- School communities want more consistent support and guidance after serious safety incidents occur.
- DCPS schools want more clarity and stronger processes in cases where students are transferred or requesting transfers because of safety issues (e.g., expulsion from another school, involuntary transfers, safety transfers).
- School communities want a more robust crisis response protocol that includes culturally competent supports for teachers, staff, and students. Schools requested increased utilization of and connection with DBH workers in particular.

Defining a Safe School

Each stakeholder engagement started with the question "What defines a safe school?" to set a baseline for how District residents, parents, school leaders and students define safety. We heard some variations, but mostly respondents described safety as a feeling, evoking confidence in their emotional and physical safety.

"A safe school allows students to learn, and can provide them with proper things they might need, whether [they are] low-income, they need food, or are a kid that needs a better education."
—Ward 5 high school student

"It's the staff that makes me feel safe. Being able to communicate with someone I can talk to if I have an issue or problem, it will calm me down."
—Ward 1 alternative school student

"School is safe…Deans make it to where we're all a family in the school. There's also a mentor program …If I get triggered or stressed out, I've got other mentors or the wellness suite. I've had a therapist. [These are] programs where they won't judge me, and they can help me."
—Ward 8 high school student

"[Safe schools mean] functional HVAC systems, clean water, doors that lock if they need to lock, ADA compliant, children who feel loved, heard, engaged, and valued."
—Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE) parent

Intervention and Prevention

Schools have the capacity to successfully prevent conflict and intervene when incidents happen, when they have the right supports and resources available. DME staff asked students and staff to provide insights on areas of prevention and intervention that worked well, as well as those that needed improvements.

"Schools are a microcosm of the District – diversity, funding. Here [at this school] I'm not boxed into providing services to students who have an IEP or 504. I am able to develop emotional regulation, men's groups. A lot of students and teachers are trauma heavy, so we have to look at the way we put mental health clinicians in our schools and how service delivery is offered. If a student has an issue, there are maybe five places we can call, and maybe I can get them in January."
—School clinician

"I grew up in the generation that had Officer Friendly – that helped mold my perception of police. Social media is changing the narrative of the police. It's a touchy subject. There has to be some form of police engagement."
—Community resident

"Address the barrier with CFSA to provide supports to parents that are in need of supervision or supports with out-of-control youth. The current system will charge a parent with neglect if they seek help or put the youth in care. Create a channel that identifies students in need of care before they come involved with the justice system."
—Ward 7 leadership

Safety Staff Recruitment and Retention

Schools need the right people in their buildings, who are well trained to manage student mental and behavioral health needs and support a warm, welcoming school environment. Stakeholders in all groups underscored the need for experienced, culturally competent staff that have the skills and training to build authentic relationships with students.

"Having bi-lingual and culturally competent security guards is important so students can feel confident to make reports of brewing conflicts without a language barrier. Also, having bilingual guards to be able to interpret hand signs and gang signs so they can anticipate conflicts before they happen."
—Ward 2 student

"We spend a lot of time vetting and interviewing candidates for our behavior team [behavior techs] and when we finally find a quality one, they often turn down the position because the pay is extremely low, or they do not stay long."
—Ward 7 school leadership

"Teacher hiring should include a restorative justice performance assessment during the interview process [so that] schools can determine if teachers and staff have the right mindset and skills to implement a positive school climate and culture."
—Ward 7 school leadership

Recommendations

The recommendations from the School Safety Enhancement Committee seek to increase the safety of students in school and en route to and from school. These recommendations support safety for all students and have a particular focus on students who live and/or attend school in safe passage priority areas and those who face the greatest risk of being involved with serious safety incidents.

These recommendations do not represent policy positions or changes that DME will enact upon publishing this report. Rather, this report serves to highlight the state of school safety in DC, lift up voices of students and school community stakeholders, elevate recommendations from the School Safety Enhancement Committee, and provide a roadmap to further work to increase the safety of DC schools and our students.

The Committee's recommendations are grouped into the following six priority goals:
- Priority 1: Get more kids safely back into our school buildings
- Priority 2: Strengthen school safety teams
- Priority 3: Keep the small stuff from escalating
- Priority 4: Improve the flow of safety information in and out of schools
- Priority 5: Give schools better safety intervention tools
- Priority 6: Establish a special set of resources for the small number of students who are most at risk, regardless of their school

Within these categories, the recommendations are grouped into solutions that can be accomplished now and solutions that should be considered with additional resources. Each recommendation includes a rationale, the intended population the recommendation will impact, the conditions necessary for success, and the next steps. A chart in the appendix weighs the recommendations against key criteria, including the ease of implementation, impact, and cost.

Priority 1: Get more kids safely back into our school buildings.

Students need to be in school. Period. On any given day last school year, 13% of public school students were not in school. The District collectively must do better, and can do better. Much of this work lives in schools as they work to create meaningful, warm, engaging learning environments. Some of this work lives in transit, as students travel to and from school. Families also have a role to play, as the District collectively works to rebuild and remind families of the absolute importance of attendance. The recommendations within this goal support consistent school attendance, including by reducing safety challenges in the commute to and from school.

1a. Implement a pilot for **staggered arrival and dismissal times** in safe passage priority areas with multiple schools.

Conflicts can arise during school commute times between students from different schools. Public safety agencies and students shared that having fewer students on the streets at any given time can reduce the chance of safety incidents, especially in safe passage priority areas with concentrations of schools and near Metro stops that are identified as safety hot spots by the Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD). Some DCPS and charter schools in neighborhood clusters (e.g., NoMa-Gallaudet) already stagger arrivals and dismissals. Some coordinate these staggered times with WMATA (e.g., Johnson and Turner). To minimize opportunities for safety incidents, the Committee recommends that DCPS and charter schools in safe passage priority areas within close proximity stagger arrival and dismissals. Later high school start times and flexible, non-traditional schedules for high school students (e.g., half days for seniors to pursue work-based learning or college courses) could support this recommendation. *This recommendation would impact all students in participating schools in safe passage priority areas.*

Conditions for success: This recommendation would benefit from strong communication between DCPS and charter schools and buy-in around the pilot, as well as flexibility in school staffing, coordinated around transit, for both sectors. Start and end times would also need to be far enough apart to have an impact.

Next steps: DME (and its cluster agencies, including PCBS), and DMPSJ should identify school clusters in safe passage priority areas that do not currently have staggered arrivals and dismissals and work with MPD and MTPD to identify good candidates for the pilot, including through identification of schools near Metro hot spots. DME and DMPSJ should connect with WMATA to align service times to facilitate timely departures for school communities.

1b. Enforce penalties for **illegal activities near schools**, including enforcement of drug free and gun free zones, and increase awareness of penalties.

Illegal and dangerous activity that takes place around school buildings (e.g., open air drug markets, armed robberies) can create unsafe conditions for students and as they travel to and from school. Multiple school leaders and staff shared this concern. The Committee recommends that the District more rigorously enforce penalties for illicit activities within

school zones[21], in keeping with the existing law around drug free zones and gun free zones,[22] and pair this enforcement with increased public awareness of the penalties (e.g., through signage and public service announcements). More security cameras (see recommendation 1d) could also support the effort to reduce illegal activity such as robberies and drug sales near schools. Initiatives to get parents and other community members in the neighborhoods during school transportation times (e.g., as civilian safe passage/"safety ambassadors") and could also support this work. *This recommendation would impact all students.*

Conditions for success: This recommendation would require sufficient staffing allocation of MPD to conduct patrols, as MPD currently has to focus on where crime is happening across the District, and action from the US Attorney (and OAG as applicable) in papering cases.

Next steps: MPD should increase patrols and enforcement of drug free zones near schools (staffing permitting); the US Attorney (as OAG as applicable) should more consistently and aggressively prosecute cases involving criminal activity in school zones.

1c. Revise the criteria for **designating safe passage priority areas** to ensure clarity and consistency. Establish new criteria for high risk areas to receive "surge support" outside of designated safe passage priority areas. (See the related recommendation to expand the Safe Passage, Safe Blocks program under 1g below.)

Many stakeholders expressed their desire for greater clarity and understanding around the designation of safe passage priority areas ("priority areas"). For example, several stakeholders asked why Tenleytown is considered a priority area. At the same time, there are schools within safe passage priority areas that do not have Safe Passage, Safe Blocks coverage, like Jefferson Middle School, Washington Global, and DC International. Moreover, several stakeholders asked for a way to add coverage in areas that are not classified as priority areas but have experienced violent incidents and need more support (e.g., near the Potomac Avenue Metro stop). Clearer, publicized criteria for how priority areas are determined along with a baseline of services as well as criteria for adding surge support (e.g., a Safe Passage roving team) would help address these questions and concerns. The criteria should specify the data sets to be considered to determine neighborhood-based needs and school-based needs. *This recommendation would impact students in safe passage priority areas and areas designated for surge support.*

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[21] Per DC Code, "school zone" includes any street, block, or intersection within 350 feet of a given school's building or school grounds and includes crossing points closest to that boundary; however, areas within school zones that are unused for crossings, such as along a highway without marked crossing points, may be excluded from the school zone. https://code.dccouncil.gov/us/dc/council/laws/24-285.
[22] DC Official Code § 48–904.07a. Drug free zones and DC Official Code § 22-4502.01. Gun free zones; enhanced penalty.

Conditions for success: This recommendation would require a comprehensive data review and consensus around eligibility criteria for safe passage priority areas and surge support.

Next steps: DMPSJ and DME (and its cluster agencies, including PCBS), should convene to identify criteria and standards.

<u>*Consider doing with additional resources:*</u>

1d. Establish a baseline of **school safety infrastructure** and provide funding and oversight to ensure compliance across all schools.
- Implement program with OVSJG to provide schools and child development facilities with **external cameras**.

Some schools do not have effective security infrastructure in and around their buildings necessary to prevent and respond to safety incidents. Some schools reported that their equipment (e.g., PA systems) and door locks do not work consistently, others requested outdoor cameras, perimeter fencing and gates, bulletproof windows, and visitor access management systems, and one school said the weapons abatement system they wanted to purchase was far too expensive. Many DCPS schools raised concerns about work order completion and prioritization. Analysis from the Master Facilities Plan (MFP) has shown that safety infrastructure, such as door lock and hardware issues, is one of the most prevalent work order problem types.

To address these concerns, the Committee recommends identifying a baseline of safety infrastructure (e.g., entryway access, hardware, cameras, lighting) and establishing a fund for schools that have not met the baseline. Its recommended that a fund for charter schools be established to address these safety infrastructure concerns, similar to DCPS' capital investments budget. Upgrading the security of access points is especially important for schools that are not in traditional school facilities or are in older facilities. At the same time, the Committee recommends implementing a camera rebate program with OVSJG to provide charter schools and child development facilities with external cameras to support camera upgrades made as part of DCPS' capital projects. HSEMA could work with the Department of General Services (DGS), public charter schools, and child development facilities to ensure appropriate levels of access. This could support recommendation 1b above (regarding criminal activity around schools).

Finally, the Committee supports implementing the recommendations in the Master Facilities Plan around DGS' work order processing and small capital requests to strengthen processes. Specifically, based on the facility assessments, the MFP recommends that small capital projects be prioritized to improve safety and security design. The plan also

recommends creating a new funding category with a dedicated funding source to address educational adequacy shortcomings. This proactive approach aims to create a secure and conducive learning environment while addressing broader facility-related challenges. *This recommendation would impact all students.*

Conditions for success: Strong processes for identifying, prioritizing, and implementing upgrades and sufficient funding would be critical to the success of this recommendation.

Next steps: OSSE and HSEMA, with support from DME and DMPSJ, should work with LEAs and schools to identify a baseline of safety infrastructure and a process for evaluating schools; DGS should consider how to strengthen its work order processes per the recommendations in the MFP; OVSJG should explore establishing a camera rebate program with schools; DME and DMPSJ should identify resources for priority infrastructure upgrades.

As discussed in the introduction, while the Committee did not focus on traffic safety, we are supportive of efforts to expedite the approval process for schools seeking improvements to traffic safety infrastructure (e.g., speedbumps, crosswalks, crossing guards) and to strengthen consistency in cross guard coverage and training.

1e. Reform the **truancy referral process** to provide more support to students and families to attend school.
- Revise requirements for **School Support Team meetings** to allow schools to prioritize support for the most at-risk students.
- Introduce **new case management support** for students and families in advance of CFSA and Court referrals.
- **Expand the PASS program** for students ages 10-17.

At present, student support teams (SSTs) are required to meet with families of students when a student reaches five unexcused absences. At schools with high absenteeism, this threshold can be burdensome and does not allow for the flexibility schools need to prioritize support for the most at-risk students.

Moreover, when the needs of students and families go beyond what can be addressed by school-level interventions, additional resources are necessary to support them prior to the involvement of the child welfare or legal systems. At present, schools are required to refer students ages 5-13 to the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) when the student reaches 10 unexcused absences, and students ages 14-17 to Court Social Services when the student reaches 15 unexcused absences. For younger students, CFSA's current focus and intention is to investigate for educational neglect and not remediate barriers to school

attendance. For older students, Court Social Services evaluates the referral and makes a recommendation to OAG about whether to petition the case, but OAG still makes a determination independent of the recommendation by Court Social Services.

In SY 22-23, over 1,000 students were referred to Court Social Services. By December 2023, fewer than 300 of those referrals had been processed, and Court Social Services recommended that OAG petition less than 10% of those cases. Ultimately, OAG, did not petition any cases, but referred about 60 students to the Alternatives to Court Experience program.

In short, as a result of current processes and resources, additional supportive services outside of the school are not made available to either group of students through the referral process. Additional case management support after referrals are made by schools would help to connect students and their families with the resources they need to remediate barriers to school attendance.

One program shown to have some success in changing outcomes for students ages 10-17 is the Parent and Adolescent Support Services (PASS) program,[23] managed by the Department of Human Services (DHS). PASS provides early intervention services to the youth and families it serves with the ultimate goal of keeping youth out of the juvenile justice and/or child welfare systems. At present, the program is staffed to support fewer than 300 students per year, and demand for the program is much higher than that. Expanding the capacity of the PASS program would ensure that more students receive this intervention, which has been demonstrated to change both behaviors and school attendance outcomes. *This recommendation would impact all students experiencing absenteeism.*

Conditions for success: For this recommendation to be successful, attendance points of contact at each school would need to be informed of changes to rules and additional District resources available to help their students and families remediate barriers to school attendance. In addition, the appropriate District agency and/or community-based organizations would need to strengthen their case management capacity. Referral processes and forms would need to be updated.

Next steps: DME should continue engagement with school officials to assess the impact that any proposed changes would have on the number of students requiring Student Support Team (SST) meetings. For expanded case management, DME should explore options to build capacity within agencies and community-based organizations. For the

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[23] In FY 23, 98% of students who completed PASS program avoided legal involvement. In addition, 78% improved overall functioning according to the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale.

expansion of PASS, DME should work with the DHS to understand what resources would be required to expand the reach of the PASS program.

1f. Provide **transportation** for high-risk students in safety "hot spot" areas.
- Work with WMATA to increase **bus service frequency** and explore dedicated student buses.
- Provide **shuttle service** between schools and Metro.
- In select cases, consider providing **door-to-door** transportation.

Safety incidents involving students can occur in transit to and from school, including while students are waiting at bus stops or walking to the Metro. This is a particular issue in areas with higher levels of crime. Student, staff, and parents shared in focus groups that crime in transit to and from school is the biggest source of fear when it comes to safety. "Getting to and from home is a life-or-death situation," explained a 9th grade student. Providing transportation services is one way to alleviate safe passage concerns. Many stakeholders asked for dedicated WMATA bus routes to specific schools based on safety needs, in keeping with what is offered for certain schools (e.g., Shepherd Park to Jackson-Reed High School).

The transportation issue could be addressed in a few ways, including increased and dedicated bus service on specific routes to school, shuttle transportation between specific schools and Metro stations, and door to door transportation for students with the greatest safety risks. We recommend collaborating with WMATA to increase the frequency of buses and establish more dedicated school routes in safety "hot spot" zones. For shuttle transportation, the District could expand or adjust DC SchoolConnect and/or DC NeighborhoodConnect. Another option would be to consider piloting door-to-door service for select students through grants for low-cost transportation options or ride share services. Some schools and nonprofits (e.g., Digital Pioneers Academy, the T.R.I.G.G.E.R. project) provide this option for students. For all of these transportation options, after school programming times should also be factored in, along with considerations for students with disabilities. *This recommendation would impact students in safety hot spot zones.*

Conditions for success: For this recommendation to be successful, the District would need clear criteria for identifying routes, schools, and students eligible for transportation services. The District would also need to ensure that any dedicated transportation was appropriately staffed and had safety precautions in place. Lessons can be learned from existing District transportation services, including through DFHV and OSSE.

Next steps: DME and DMPSJ should work together to identify criteria, routes, and schools eligible for dedicated bus service and work with WMATA to determine what is possible. DME and DMOI should explore if there are available transportation resources to repurpose towards shuttles or door-to-door transit for high-priority schools and students.

1g. Expand **Safe Passage, Safe Blocks teams** to cover all schools and non-school priority locations (e.g., Metro stations) within safe passage priority areas, and to include any need for "surge" capacity in other places.

As described in 1c, schools in safe passage priority areas without Safe Passage, Safe Blocks coverage have asked for support, as have schools outside of priority areas experiencing violence. Schools have also asked for support with more hours, to cover times when after school and sports programming let out. Schools and public safety staff have also expressed interest in greater collaboration and coordination between Safe Passage, Safe Blocks teams and other violence prevention programs such as violence interrupters, which are often managed by the same community-based organizations, to increase coverage and effectiveness. KIPP DC is an example of a charter school that hires violence interrupters from the same organization that provides safe passage support to supplement services. The Committee recommends that DMPSJ explore additional resources and ways to expand the continuum of safe passage services under its purview, including Safe Passage, Safe Blocks staff and violence interrupters, to cover all schools within safe passage priority areas. Some schools and advocates have also asked for more communication and coordination between safe passage workers and schools. One way to address this could be to make safe passage employees full time and allow for school safety team staff to serve in these roles, which could help address concerns raised about consistency in staffing and training. *This recommendation would impact students in safe passage priority areas.*

Conditions for success: Successful implementation of this recommendation would require resources, staffing, and coordination among safe passage and violence prevention programs and schools. Programs should be regularly evaluated to understand their impact and invest accordingly.

Next steps: DMPSJ should identify opportunities to expand service coverage within and beyond safe passage priority areas, leveraging the suite of program options, and regularly evaluate programs.

Priority 2: Strengthen school safety teams.

The scope of school safety work has expanded alongside the number of incidents schools find themselves managing in a post-pandemic world. Some schools report being overwhelmed with higher student mental and behavioral health and safety needs and have limited human resources to help manage this new workload. Other schools have the teams, but need school-wide training that improves cultural competence and transforms mindsets. While school safety team configurations vary based on schools' needs, sizes, and approaches, well-trained, effective teams, with appropriate and clearly defined roles, are key to ensuring schools can manage and respond to safety needs within their buildings.

Consider doing now:

2a. Require all schools to **establish School Safety Teams** composed of at least the following core functions:
- School **safety leader** to convene team and monitor work (incident commander).
- School **discipline lead** to support with student behavior management.
- School **social-emotional learning lead** (e.g., social worker).
- School **facility lead** to support building security and monitor access.
- Safety **point of contact** for external agencies, organizations, and community stakeholders.

Schools have different approaches to safety and different configurations for their safety teams, in alignment with their needs, sizes, and educational models and philosophies. The most common DCPS high school safety team configuration includes an attendance counselor, behavior technician, and school counselor, with 60% of DCPS high schools budgeting for these roles. DCPS middle schools more often include in-school suspension and restorative justice coordinators in their budgets. Additional variations exist across schools, LEAs, and sectors. Safety teams often encompass staff focused on students' health and wellbeing (e.g., health suite staff, social workers, psychologists). The gaps are less about positions but rather role clarity and functions.

We recommend that every school identify the members of the safety team and who is responsible for core functions, including the lead point of contact for safety-related matters (the incident commander), the lead for discipline, the lead for social-emotional learning, the lead for facility safety (e.g., secure access points), and the lead for communication to external agencies, organizations, and school community stakeholders. The positions, functions, and configuration of a school's safety team should align with school's needs and be responsive to the needs presented by the school community. *This recommendation would impact all students.*

Conditions for Success: Successful implementation of this recommendation would require clearly articulated expectations and communications to schools. Schools should leverage and build on – and not duplicate – existing structures that are working (e.g., behavioral management committees at DCPS).

Next Steps: DME and DMPSJ should support LEAs in identifying school sites in need of school safety team development and support. DME should pair schools in need of development in this area with schools successfully managing school safety team operations to build school-to-school mentorship and communities of practice.

2b. Create and share **best practice protocols** for school safety teams, including regular meeting cadence and content and standard operating procedures for safety-related scenarios.
- Convey to schools best practices in **engaging MPD and public safety partners**.

School safety teams are positioned to be effective in preventing the escalation of incidents if their routine practices support early identification of emerging conflicts. School safety teams should convene regularly, align on processes and protocols for managing safety incidents, debrief the events of the day, and take necessary precautionary actions to prevent escalation or reoccurrence for safety-related scenarios (e.g., fights, information about community-based violence). In order for school safety teams to optimize their impact, all school teams should receive consistent training (e.g., on prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery) and have open lines of communication with supporting agencies and service providers so that updates and flags are shared early and often. Safey teams should also receive clear guidance on best practices and protocols for engaging with MPD and public safety partners (e.g., violence interrupters).

Conditions for Success: Successful implementation of this recommendation would require strong communication, shared protocols, training, and clear points of contact at each District agency for schools. A common system for recording and tracking incidents that need to be shared with public safety agencies and programs, available to schools, would support this recommendation.

Next Steps: DME and DMPSJ should identify and establish the necessary communication channels between school leaders, MPD, and violence prevention and intervention services. DME, DMPSJ, DCPS, PCSB, and OSSE should work to develop a model incident form and determine how to effectively track and record incident data for charter LEAs. DME and

DMPSJ should determine the necessary steps to produce the guidebook and schedule training.

Consider doing with additional resources:

2c. Establish career pathways for the hardest-to-fill safety roles to strengthen recruitment and retention.
- Identify role progression opportunities along **predictable pathways**.
- Increase **compensation**.
- Evaluate where to allow experience to count in lieu of education **requirements for hiring**.
- Establish **apprenticeships** for behavioral and student support staff positions.

As noted earlier in Goal 2, schools have different approaches to safety and different configurations for their safety teams, in alignment with their needs, sizes, and educational models and philosophies. The gaps schools experience on safety teams are less about position types but rather staff recruitment, development, and retention. Many DCPS school teams shared how the low pay for safety team roles like behavior technicians (currently around $34,000) impedes talent development and retention. School leaders and staff also expressed the need for more talent pipelines for safety team roles.

To promote recruitment and retention, the Committee recommends creating career pathways for safety team roles in DCPS and charter schools as well as for positions supporting safety around schools. Specifically, the Committee recommends increasing the pay for behavior technician roles in DCPS and creating pathways for staff in those roles to move into higher-paid positions such as Restorative Justice Coordinators, including by allowing experience and performance to count in lieu of the education requirement. In this example, Restorative Justice Coordinators require a bachelor's degree, while behavior techs require only a high school diploma. Using experience and performance to qualify for promotion would allow for career development. Although there was less feedback from charter stakeholders on this topic, given more flexibility in hiring and positions, the Committee encourages charter schools to consider similar recommendations as applicable.

Apprenticeships across DCPS and the charter sector would help build a talent pool and should include cost-free pathways to degrees and credentials. Grow Your Own models could start as early as high school with training and internships. To encourage shared understanding and experiences, recruitment for safety team roles should focus on community members, former students, parents, safe passage staff, and paraprofessionals working in schools. We also recommend exploring opportunities for school safety team

roles to serve safe passage functions and vice versa, through rethinking of full-time positions. *This recommendation would impact all students.*

Conditions for success: Resources to increase pay and intentional recruitment and development of apprenticeship models would be important to the recommendation's success.

Next steps: DCPS and charter schools should review safety team roles to see which could benefit from higher starting pay as well as opportunities for experience and performance to count in lieu of education, and should review recruitment channels. DCPS and charter schools should explore establishing grow your own and apprenticeship programs for safety team roles.

2d. Establish a **school safety "hub" for public charter schools** to mirror DCPS' central safety team.

Currently, when a serious safety incident occurs, many charter schools do not have clear, consistent, protocols and ongoing crisis response support from government agencies to support with de-escalating a situation or to help the community heal and prevent follow up incidents. Often, single-site charter LEAs reach out to other leaders to understand protocols and appropriate contacts, and do not have a central government point of contact to share incidents that have occurred or flag possible incidents that are escalating, the way DCPS schools do with the central School Security team. A dedicated response team, consisting of representatives across the DME, DMPSJ, and DMHHS clusters, would serve as one central entity, with a District-wide lens, that triages information from school leaders, helps school leaders determine appropriate next steps, and liaises with District agencies to ensure appropriate supports for schools. In practice, this would function as a 311 for schools on safety matters – a centralized place schools can call for non-emergency (911) safety incidents and have a system for triage and follow up. Representatives from the participating organizations should meet regularly (e.g., weekly) to review critical incidents that occurred in schools the previous week and assign agencies and organizations to work with the youth and families involved and report back on progress.

Conditions for success: This would require ongoing dedicated resources across agencies (e.g., MPD, DBH, ONSE, OVSJG), trusting relationships, and access to agency executives to ensure rapid deployment as appropriate.

Next steps: DME, DMPSJ, and DMHHS should identify the availability of existing resources for quick deployment; DME, DMPSJ, and DMHHS should update the resource guide shared with school leaders to include the latest points of contact and available supports.

Priority 3: Keep the small stuff from escalating.

Strong prevention efforts are key to safe schools. Engaging, safe, productive activities for students, trusted relationships with adults, and appropriate interventions at the school and community level can reduce the likelihood of conflict starting or escalating and can help prevent retaliation. Staff members benefit from training to safely and effectively manage school safety and build positive relationships with students. Students benefit from engaging, safe activities during and after school. Schools benefit from a set of tools and resources to meet students' needs and effectively prevent and respond to school safety challenges.

Consider doing now:

3a. Help schools limit **cell phone and social media** use.

Social media plays a pivotal role in driving and escalating conflicts in and around schools. Some schools (e.g., Banneker, Ingenuity Prep, MacArthur, Friendship Collegiate, Ron Brown) have found success in restricting cell phone use in the building. Some jurisdictions (e.g., Richmond, Va., Orange County, Fla., Flint, Mich.) have implemented a ban on cell phones in schools and others are considering it.[24] The Committee recommends that the District provide support and incentives for schools to limit or restrict cell phone use in school buildings, for example through phone pouches or lockers. The Committee also recommends that the District carefully consider the benefits and tradeoffs of a full ban on cell phones in school.

There was consensus that the District should do more to increase awareness among students and parents about the potential dangers of social media use, including around

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[24] Several states, including California, Florida, and Tennessee, have passed laws that empower LEAs to restrict cell phone use during the school day. (See Lauraine Langreo, "Should More Schools Ban Cellphones? It's a Question U.S. Lawmakers Want Answered," *Education Week,* November 20, 2023). In Florida, the ban applies to instructional time, while Orange County Public Schools has added an additional restriction that students cannot use their phones during lunch or other non-instructional time periods (see Leslie Postal, "School cellphone ban in Orange brings 'remarkable change,' educators say. Students miss them at lunch," *Orlando Sentinel,* December 8, 2023). On the international stage, UNESCO recently released a report recommending cell phone bans in the classroom due to linkages between cell phone use and student performance. Cell phones are already banned in France and Italy, and while countries like Finland and the Netherlands plan to follow suit in 2024 (see Giulia Carbonaro "UNESCO calls for schools around the world to ban smartphones in the classroom," *EuroNews, July 26, 2023.*)

mental health as well as violence. The Committee recommends embedding social media awareness training, including on cyber-bullying, starting as early as elementary school, potentially through the health curriculum, and providing training to parents and guardians.[25] Peer to peer education could be a powerful tool. Several organizations as well as DC Health's HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD & TD Administration currently operate successful peer educator programs to share information about sexual health, providing a model. Training could be accompanied by a public service campaign around the risks of social media use, similar to campaigns around the dangers of drug use. *This recommendation would impact all students.*

Conditions for success: Collecting cell phones requires staff time and buy-in to be successful. Social media awareness training is only as effective as the curriculum and implementation.

Next steps: OSSE should convene a community of practice for schools interested in restricting cell phone use and teaching about the impacts of social media, ideally with student input; DME and DMPSJ should explore a cell phone ban.

3b. Increase **monitoring of youth engagement on social media** coupled with increased communication with school safety points of contact to prevent in-school and out-of-school conflict escalation.

Schools recognize social media's impact on peer relationships and conflict. Some school communities report predatory social media accounts whose purpose is to publicize sensitive student information and circulate problematic content. School leaders have worked to identify these "fight pages" and "troll accounts" to mitigate their effect but believe their efforts are often too late. Teachers and staff also routinely monitor Instagram and other platforms for student conflicts. We recommend that MPD increase targeted monitoring of public posts by students that could lead to violence and that the District work with social media platforms to remove videos depicting or instigating quickly. Teachers, staff, and families should receive training on how to monitor, flag, and report public and private social media posts to which they have access that could lead to violence or harm. Finally, public safety and justice agencies working with youth, such as DYRS, Court Social Services, and OAG, should explore sharing and monitoring of social media accounts as a condition of program participation or release, as applicable. *This recommendation would impact all students.*

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[25] This curriculum could be part of a larger bullying awareness and prevention training.

Conditions for success: This recommendation would require targeted monitoring and clear protocols so that students' free speech rights are not violated.

Next steps: DMPSJ should explore ways to expand targeted monitoring of students' social media posts to prevent violence and training for school staff and guardians.

<u>Consider doing with additional resources:</u>

3c. Elevate and approve the **conflict resolution state standards** that OSSE is completing as part of its comprehensive social-emotional learning standards.

DME's Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Landscape Scan revealed that all schools, to varying degrees, teach conflict resolution skills, largely though RJ/PBIS or through a discrete curriculum like Second Step. However, feedback from focus groups indicates that varied or low-quality implementation of these techniques leave students feeling that they do not have the adequate skills to reach a restorative and just resolution to conflict.

To ensure high-quality conflict resolution skill development that is embedded within the school climate and culture as both a preventative and responsive measure, OSSE's SEL Standards should be approved and adopted District-wide. The standards create indicators that assist schools with the implementation of SEL practices and skill building within core instruction and school climate through developmentally appropriate goals and guidance for students to work towards. The standards focus on conflict resolution through the "Relationship Skills" competency, with strategies that include:
- Building and maintaining positive, respectful, and healthy relationships across different environments by listening
- Communicating
- Using perspective-taking skills
- Resolving conflict
- Collaborating
- Seeking help when needed

Extensive research conducted by CASEL, the leading national expert in SEL, which provided the framework for OSSE's SEL Standards, found that in states that adopted SEL Standards, students saw an improvement in academic performance by 11 percentile points, a decrease in emotional distress with more positive attitudes about self and others, and a decline in conduct issues.[26] *This recommendation would impact all students.*

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[26] The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. Child Development, 82, 405-432.

Conditions for Success: For this to be successful, OSSE would need to build school and staff capacity to integrate SEL into core instruction and provide professional development and/or technical assistance on the required skills, materials, and systems for implementation.

Next Steps: As DME continues to work with OSSE on the rollout of the SEL Standards, DME should share training providers, resources, and best practice examples in DC that address challenges to implementation.

3d. Strengthen capacity of school staff to **implement conflict resolution**; have OSSE establish a set of recommended training providers for conflict resolution; offer training to safety team members, teachers, and leaders, and provide stipends for participation; open training to staff providing safety support outside of schools; and establish a Community of Practice for participants.

Teacher preparation and training are critical for high-quality conflict resolution implementation. To ensure teachers and leaders have the skills, mindsets, and capacity necessary to integrate restorative practice and conflict resolution skills within a school's climate and culture, OSSE should establish a set of recommended training providers for conflict resolution, with an emphasis on community-based providers. Community-based providers can increase the connection between school and community, ensuring learning is shared beyond school walls. Relatedly, community providers understand the student population and can help provide the culturally responsive nuance educators need to teach students the skills to prevent and respond to conflict. This collaboration can establish a strong foundation for a community of practice to share resources, findings, and evidence-backed tools and strategies for participants to leverage. DC benefits from a network of expert partner organizations that work with schools to integrate SEL and conflict resolution training, some of which are featured in DME's SEL Provider Guide.[27]

Conflict resolution training should be ongoing for instructional and non-instructional staff, especially safety team members, with tiered support based on staff roles. As an incentive, participants could be eligible for a stipend to combat the training fatigue expressed in staff feedback. Contract security, SROs, safe passage workers, and MTPD as applicable should have access to the high-quality training, supporting alignment and consistency. *This recommendation would impact all students.*

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[27] The SEL Provider Guide is available at https://view.officeapps.live.com/

Conditions for Success: This recommendation would require effective community-based training providers, a funding source to provide training, training stipends, and capacity at OSSE to process stipends, and capacity at OSSE to develop and maintain the vendor repository and criteria for partnership. Ideally trainings could be facilitated or co-facilitated by people who work in DC schools as well as external experts.

Next Steps: OSSE should finalize Districtwide SEL standards for implementation in the 2024-25 school year; DME and OSSE should identify strong providers that focus on conflict resolution as a starting point to build out a provider repository.

3e. Provide schools with the highest rates of out-of-school suspension and incidents of in-school violence a **temporary Restorative Justice Coach as a pilot through OSSE** to strengthen the capacity of the school to implement restorative justice**.**

While many schools indicate they use Restorative Justice – 117 out of 240 schools indicate so on MySchool DC – implementation and impact vary across schools. Across our focus groups and expert interviews, participants raised the theme of inconsistent training and implementation around restorative justice and conflict resolution.

To deepen the implementation of proactive restorative justice practices within District schools most in need, the Committee recommends expanding OSSE's Restorative Justice (RJ)[28] Technical Assistance Grant on a pilot basis to provide schools with the greatest safety needs (e.g., highest rates of suspension, highest incidents of violence) with a dedicated Restorative Justice Coach through an OSSE-approved technical assistance provider. The RJ Coach would work closely (2-3 visits per week) with the school's climate team and relevant member of the LEA to:
- Provide the administration and School Safety Team with guidance on a school-wide RJ approach.
- Train administrators and the School Safety Team to model and implement restorative practices.
- Provide ongoing professional development and engagement with members of the school community throughout the school year for continuous improvement.

Ongoing training and support would help the climate team, schools, and families deepen their awareness and implementation quality of Restorative Justice, not just in the event of

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[28] A trauma-informed school wide philosophy and set of practices rooted in community and equity to resolve conflict and repair harm. The current OSSE grant focuses on professional development and planning opportunities to support long-term integration of restorative practices and capacity building for individuals, staff, and the partnering organization through whole school or targeted technical assistance. Learn more about the Restorative Justice Technical Assistant Grant here.

incidents but throughout all interpersonal interactions. The expanded pilot should start with a focus on high schools with high suspension rates and in-school violence.

This approach is modeled on the success Chicago Public Schools has seen with their Restorative Practice coaching model, which led to significant reductions in out-of-school suspension days by 18% (17 days) and a 19% decline in child arrests. High school students also reported an improvement in perceived school climate attributed to perceptions of positive changes in peers' classroom behavior, sense of belonging, and school safety. *This recommendation would impact students in schools with high rates of out of school suspension and safety incidents.*

Conditions for Success: For this to be successful, the right technical assistance providers would need to be identified. OSSE would need capacity to offer these coaching services.

Next steps: OSSE should identify the schools with the highest rates of out of school suspension and safety incidents; OSSE should identify criteria for high-quality providers; DME and OSSE should explore resources for implementation; OSSE should evaluate its current restorative justice programming to inform future work.

3f. Expand **youth employment and career pathway opportunities** in safe passage priority areas.
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) program expansion.
- Expansion of the School Year Internship Program (SYIP) and the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program (MBSYEP).
- Expand job opportunities for teens.

Many students need to earn money in high school and lack clear pathways to family-sustaining careers. This can lead to disengagement with school. Of the ten most commonly held occupations for youth born in DC, only four meet the criteria associated with a "good job."[29] The most commonly held job by far among youth born in DC is a cashier, which has a median annual wage of $31,180, nearly $15,000 below the family-sustaining wage for a single adult living in DC. Moreover, large achievement gaps in postsecondary outcomes persist along economic and racial lines, exacerbating the deep income inequality in DC, which also has the largest Black-White wealth gap in the country. CTE programs are not distributed equally around the District, and signature internship programs like the School Year

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[29] Good Job is a full-time role which 1) is in a high-demand, high-growth sector, 2) provides opportunities for skills advancement and career advancement, and 3) provides a living wage that provides family-sustaining income and benefits (~$46K for one adult in DC). Source: CityWorks DC

Internship Program (SYIP) and Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) are not currently targeted to students based on geography or identified risk factors.

The Committee recommends increasing the number of paid internships for high school students and expanding Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs resulting in credentials and degrees towards careers in high-demand fields. Internships can be expanded through DOES' SYIP and SYEP, for all students, and OSSE's Advanced Internship Program and Career Ready Internship, for CTE students. The Committee recommends that pay be evaluated to make sure students who need to earn money can afford to participate in paid internships during those hours. CTE expansion should focus specifically on schools in safe passage priority areas, with the understanding that once a program is established, it should not be discontinued if the safe passage priority area boundary changes, given the costs of implementation and the need for consistency for students and families. Finally, we recommend working with employers to increase employment opportunities for high school students in safe passage priority areas, especially following internships. These opportunities could be linked to class attendance and other performance metrics. *This recommendation would primarily impact high school students in safe passage priority areas.*

Conditions for success: The District would need sufficient employer partnerships and internship placements and would benefit from dedicated local CTE funding.

Next steps: OSSE should identify schools in safe passage priority areas with no or low CTE access and explore school-based or District-wide CTE and employment programs to serve those schools; DOES should analyze participation in SYIP and SYEP by safe passage priority area to identify targeted recruitment and expansion opportunities; DME should identify potential resources for this recommendation.

3g. Expand **mentorship programs** in safe passage priority areas.

Research shows that strong adult relationships can reduce absenteeism and play a crucial role in preventing school violence. Relationships with trusted adults can provide guidance, help students develop social-emotional skills, and foster a sense of belonging.

The Office of Out of School Time Grants and Youth Outcomes (OST Office) currently has $500,000 allocated in FY24 for a partner to provide mentoring programs for a minimum of 100 youth ages 11-18 who are in grades 6-12. Many other OST programs provide mentorship as part of their programming. DCPS has also invested in programming to support relationships and belonging for students with successful experiences like Empowering Men

of Color (145 students), We the Girls (500+ students), and Becoming a Man (340 students). Expanding mentorship programs in schools in safe passage priority areas and for students at greatest risk of involvement in safety incidents can improve youth development and school safety. The intensity and type of mentoring programs can be adjusted based on the young people's needs and can include academic supports (e.g., high-impact tutoring).

Conditions for success: Nonprofit capacity and robust identification of students who can most benefit would be important for this recommendation, as would the ability of organizations to work with students and families over time.

Next steps: DME and the OST Office should convene mentorship programs to better understand capacity, outcomes and needs and identify schools that can benefit from expanded services.

3h. Dramatically expand **out of school time (OST) programming**, including school-based after-school and neighborhood-based enrichment and recreation, in safe passage priority areas.

More access to productive, engaging activities for youth after school hours has significant development benefits and helps to keep youth safe and out of conflict.[30] These activities can include youth development and leadership programs, arts programs, STEM programs, athletics (including e-sports), and recreation. The Committee recommends the District focus its after school and recreation expansion on students who attend schools or live in safe passage priority areas, including within the DC Housing Authority (DCHA), with a goal of reaching universal access for these populations over time. School-based OST programs can create a version of an extended day model in which the school serves as a safe haven for students. We recommend expansion through existing vehicles, including My Afterschool DC (launched in FY24), a unified platform for out of school time programs and a downpayment on universal after school, and DPR's Rec for All initiative (established in FY23). The District could consider payment for participation for students for whom the lack of earned income may be an access barrier.

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[30] High quality afterschool and out-of-school time programs have the following eight key features, according to the National Research Council: physical and psychological safety, appropriate structure, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong and feel included, positive social norms, support for efficacy and mentoring, opportunities for skill building, and integration of family. [Our Common Wealth: Building a Future for Our Children and Youth The Report of the Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time (November 2007).](#)

To expand recreation and athletics, the Committee recommends implementing recommendations from the DME's *Washington, DC High School Sports Review Study,*[31] with a focus on students who live and attend school in safe passage priority areas. These recommendations include creating more opportunities for **low-cost sports development programs** to feed high school sports through partnerships with DPR; support from professional sports teams to provide funding for coaching and programmatic development; and investment in **new facilities** (e.g., at RFK, the DC Armory, or Kenilworth North) to accommodate expanded athletic programming such as indoor/outdoor track, soccer, and baseball. *This recommendation would impact students in safe passage priority areas.*

Conditions for success: The District would need sufficient funding and provider capacity, and would need a mechanism for prioritizing students in the My Afterschool DC system.

Next steps: DME, through OST and DPR, should identify schools in safe passage priority areas with limited OST and recreation access and expand opportunities to serve those schools through My Afterschool DC.

Priority 4: Improve the flow of safety information in and out of schools.

Appropriate management of emergency incidents requires swift and efficient communication channels between public safety agencies and the individuals and schools requesting support. Communication channels and notifications need to be clear and consistent across schools and sectors. Local education agencies need to know when there has been an incident that may affect their school communities. Schools need channels to share their knowledge with public safety agencies on escalating conflicts. School leaders need to be able to rely on first responders to engage immediately. Parents and community members need to be able to rely on timely information and updates from school communities in case an emergency impacts their children. Currently there are several ways local education agencies and public safety agencies communicate with schools, and there is a District emergency alert system called AlertDC; however, improvements are needed to make these channels effective for all parties. The District also needs clear mechanisms for schools to communicate with one another and with public safety agencies to share pertinent information about conflicts. At the same time, the District needs to equip schools with sufficient information about students in their buildings so they can develop early warning systems and anticipate and address needs before safety incidents arise.

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[31] The Study is available at: https://dme.dc.gov/DCSportsStudy.

4a. Publish **lists** of all school and agency safety points of contact providing safe passage and public safety services, including Safe Passage, Safe Blocks staff, crossing guards, violence interrupters, and SROs.

Parents and public safety agencies in particular have asked for greater clarity around the safety lead (or incident commander) for each school and which staff are leading on various aspects of safety, including socio-emotional learning. To that end, schools should publicize the list of safety team staff (e.g., by posting it to their website) and make sure points of contact are included in relevant agency databases (e.g., Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency's (HSEMA's) alert system) and routinely updated. At the same time, school leaders experiencing safety concerns within their buildings expressed the need for direct access to individuals who can deploy supportive resources or work to triage the schools' needs. Establishing clear points of contact would support school communities in effectively navigating and activating the appropriate resources for violence prevention and intervention. These points of contact should be in direct communication with school safety teams to facilitate information flow. *This recommendation would impact all students.*

Conditions for Success: The location of the list of safety points of contact should be widely shared and easily accessible. Content should be updated regularly. This recommendation would benefit from standardized operation and communication procedures between agencies, service providers, and schools (see recommendation 4b).

Next Steps: DME should determine where school safety team information should be publicized and collected to facilitate better communication, and share clear guidance and requests with schools; DME and DMPSJ should work with agencies and partners to gather points of contact and determine how best to make them available to schools.

4b. Establish **standard operating procedures (SOPs) for safety communications** among schools and public safety service providers and agencies, including Safe Passage, Safe Blocks staff, crossing guards, violence interrupters, SROs, MTPD, OAG, ONSE.

Information flow between and among school-based staff and public safety agencies and partners should be consistent and clear. Agencies and service providers currently have a variety of communication and operating processes. Standardizing operation procedures, especially focused on the relevant and timely flow of information to inform responses to situations such as escalating conflicts and active threats, would support alignment and collaboration and help resolve communication gaps and delays in response to safety

incidents. Schools have also asked for stronger communication systems, with Safe Passage, Safe Blocks programs in particular, so they can better understand and anticipate coverage and direct resources to the highest need areas and situations.

Regular convenings of the in and out of school supports for school safety (e.g., Safe Passage, Safe Blocks staff, violence interrupters, SROs, MTPD, OAG, ONSE, schools) at the District-wide and regional levels would support increased communication and trusted relationships.

Conditions for success: This would require SOPs for all agencies and service providers to be easily accessible, with responsive staff providing consistent messaging and next steps. School teams and public safety personnel would need appropriate training.

Next Steps: DMPSJ and DME should determine participating programs and partners; develop a standardized communication flow; set up regular convenings; and train school-based staff and participating agencies and CBOs.

Consider doing with additional resources:

4c. Create a consistent **student transfer file** developed by OSSE.
- The **file could include** attendance, academic performance, behavioral data, health data, and case management/referral data, consistent with privacy laws.
- Encourage **warm hand off between schools** as they send and receive students.

Schools have limited information on students who transfer to their schools, especially between LEAs. Schools do not receive consistent information about students' academic performance (e.g., math and reading levels, attendance), discipline records (e.g., suspension, expulsion), health information (e.g., immunizations), involvement with government agencies (e.g., CFSA, DBH, DHS, and DYRS) or case management contact information. This limited information makes it difficult for schools to understand students' risk factors, budget and staff appropriately for the upcoming school year, establish and expand early warning systems to capture additional indicators (and associated thresholds) and anticipate and address needs that can result in safety incidents and other challenges. The Committee recommends establishing a consistent transfer file across schools and sectors, developed by OSSE, that includes critical baseline information about students and their needs. Ideally, student needs would be incorporated into placement decisions. The Committee also recommends requiring a meeting between schools as a condition of transfer. A meeting between the receiving school and the transferring student's parents/guardians would also

be beneficial. *This recommendation would impact all students and specifically students who transfer between LEAs and schools.*

Conditions for success: For this recommendation to be successful, the District would need clear protocols and guidance around data sharing to ensure that student data is not misused or shared inappropriately. OSSE would need capacity to build this information into DC's Statewide Longitudinal Educational Data (SLED).

Next steps: OSSE should identify key components of a comprehensive transfer file in partnership with LEAs and schools and develop guidance around student transfer policies.

4d. Establish a **real-time alert system** through HSEMA for schools, safe passage providers, and residents to obtain immediate notifications of safety threats and incidents.
- Consider expanding RAVE or similar application to allow for two-way communication between schools and public safety personnel.
- Include status updates in active crisis situations.

Schools consistently shared that they have insufficient information about safety incidents in their local communities, hindering their ability to respond appropriately to protect their students and staff. Parents also expressed frustration around lack of access to timely and consistent communications about safety incidents impacting schools. Currently, the District has an alert system called AlertDC, but general notifications through AlertDC often come hours after the incident has taken place and after school leaders have to make decisions about operational changes. DCPS has piloted a two-way communication system through the application RAVE, and charter LEAs use a range of channels, including Raptor. The bomb threat in January 2024, quickly assessed by MPD and found to not have corroborating evidence, presented a case study in how information is shared inconsistently across LEAs, with charter LEAs contacting MPD and receiving varying information about responses, resulting in confusion about what actions to take.

The Committee recommends creating a user-friendly, tailored, real-time alert system that is mandatory for schools and publicly funded child development facilities and opt-out for families, as part of school enrollment, to ensure that information is being shared in real time with all key stakeholders. This system should leverage and learn lessons from existing alert systems through HSEMA and the Office of Unified Communications (OUC). Safe Passage, Safe Blocks staff, SROs, crossing guards and others supporting safe passage should be able to access the system. The Committee recommends tiering the system so that school administrators can access data before it is fully validated so they can prepare responses

appropriately. Ideally the system would allow for two-way communication between schools and public safety agencies. *This recommendation would impact all students.*

Conditions for success: The system would have to be user friendly and accessible, and tiered access policies would have to be developed. HSEMA would need sufficient capacity to build and manage the system. Sign up and notification policies and protocols should be clear for schools, organizations, and individuals.

Next steps: HSEMA should develop a plan for a robust alert system accessible to schools and public safety staff as well as parents and residents, with tiered access and two-way communication capabilities.

4e. Strengthen data-driven interventions by developing a comprehensive **Student Data and Intervention system** to share information across government agencies; use this system to strengthen early warning systems, service coordination, referrals, and incident follow-up by service providers.

As noted in 4c, schools currently have limited data about students in their buildings and the services they may be receiving from government agencies. Schools also do not receive notifications when students in their buildings become connected to government agencies. To address this and support early warning systems and stronger service coordination, we recommend establishing a student data and intervention system that schools and youth-serving government agencies and appropriate public safety partners can access. This system should include up-to-date data on youth in public schools in DC and those connected with DC government agencies (e.g., DBH, CFSA, DHS, DYRS). Ideally, the data system would include contact information for case managers, as applicable. This data system would allow schools to understand what services students are receiving and key aspects of their histories (e.g., adverse child experiences), consistent with confidentiality laws (e.g., medical records and court files would not be shared). Ideally, this system would be connected to OSSE's SLED database and would interact with existing systems such as CRISP. It also should be connected with the DC Criminal Justice Coordinating Council's efforts to assess the data on young adults convicted of shootings and what risk factors they possessed as youth. *This recommendation would impact all students and specifically students with the greatest safety risk factors.*

Conditions for success:[32] For this recommendation to be successful, the system would need to be intentionally piloted and scaled. OSSE would need capacity to build the data system. Stakeholder engagement would be central to the success of this initiative, as the District would need to understand both the technical and adaptive siloes that exist within current systems and what stakeholders need from this system to work across agencies and better support students. The District would also need to socialize this work with stakeholders in a way that centers trust and understanding given the sensitive nature of the data. Finally, the District would need clear protocols around data sharing and governance to ensure that student data is not misused or shared inappropriately.

Next steps: DME, OSSE, and DMHHS should explore where data sharing could be piloted. Because of the long lead time necessary to pilot and scale this kind of data system, there may be shorter-term goals the District can pursue to address the need for improved data sharing, such as developing "archetypes" of students based on their histories of system involvement and identifying what types of services and coordination students who reflect these archetypes typically most benefit from.

Priority 5: Give schools better safety intervention tools.

Schools are often the first to respond and manage incidents at the building level and therefore should have a set of procedures, protocols, and resources they can rely on to respond appropriately to safety incidents. School leaders also need access to appropriate discipline and accountability measures and interventions that support them in ensuring school is a safe place for students and their families.

Consider doing now:

5a. Modify the **suspension code** to allow suspensions for additional serious safety infractions.

A small number of students who commit serious safety infractions are ineligible for suspension under current law. LEA and school leaders from across the District requested

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[32] California's approach to developing their data system took a similar intentional approach to the one recommended here. The legislature authorized the development of the data system in 2019, and included a two-year planning process as part of the design. They also named which stakeholders would be part of the planning committee and required them to deliver a report, hold public meetings, and put forth recommendations that did not have to be unanimous. Although this approach extended the timeline for the system to become operational, it was important to build stakeholder buy-in and ensure the system addressed their diverse needs and interests. More information about California's approach is available here: https://www.wested.org/wested-bulletin/insights-impact/new-statewide-longitudinal-data-system-connects-people-and-information-to-improve-outcomes/

to modify the law in a way that protects the principles of Fair Access while ensuring they are able to protect student safety throughout the building. Based on their input, specifically, the Committee recommends allowing suspensions for serious safety infractions in **middle school.** Currently, the law treats middle school students as elementary school students when it comes to school discipline and only allows suspensions in cases where a student has willfully caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause bodily injury or emotional distress to another person, including behavior that happens off school grounds. This recommendation would narrowly expand the list of suspendable infractions for middle school students to include other serious criminal acts (e.g., drug sales) and bringing a **weapon** (e.g., a knife with a blade longer than 3 inches, brass knuckles, magazine clip) to school. *This recommendation would impact the small number of students who commit very serious safety infractions where these actions are not addressed under current law and their school communities.*

Conditions for success: Following a legislative change, this recommendation would benefit from other resources, such as those identified in recommendation 5c, to provide students who commit these infractions with services and interventions to curtail these behaviors in the future.

Next Steps: The DC Council should amend the Attendance Accountability Act of 2013, effective August 25, 2018 (D.C. Law 22-157; D.C. Official Code § 38-236.01 and § 38-236.04) to slightly modify the section of the code dealing with school discipline.

Consider doing with additional resources:

5b. Expand the therapeutic **in-school suspension** model to support students' social and academic development.

Therapeutic in-school suspension is an approach that is rooted in providing a safe and neutral space for students to reflect on their behavior and craft an action plan to promote better choices in future instances. To do this well, schools should first create a responsive and predictable school-wide behavior system.[33] Restorative in-school suspension models focus on improved self-regulator skills and executive functioning. Recommended program components include standardized schedules, classroom-like set-up, sufficient independent work activities, a limit of no more than four students present at once, and educational staff partnered with behavioral/mental health staff.

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[33] Project MUSE - PBIS in Alternative Education Settings: Positive Support for Youth with High-Risk Behavior (jhu.edu)

H.D. Woodson High School implemented a therapeutic in-school suspension model in SY 23-24, which has had success. This model includes two dedicated staff members (Restorative Practice Coordinators) and a newly established Restorative Center to address adult-student and student-student conflict. We recommend expanding this model in other DCPS schools and exploring supports for pilots in the charter sector.

Conditions for success: This model would require sufficient staffing, training, and resources.

Next steps: DCPS should identify additional schools that could benefit from the therapeutic in-school suspension model; DME should work with PCSB and charter LEAs to identify interest in the charter sector and create opportunities for cross-sector knowledge sharing and program development.

5c. Establish a temporary, highly supportive **placement in an alternative setting** for students involved in the most serious safety incidents and with the greatest behavioral challenges.

When students are involved in the most serious school safety incidents, including bringing a weapon to school or causing significant bodily harm to others, they may be transferred from one school to the next, or they may attend an alternative school or a non-public placement if eligible, but DCPS, the public school system of right, does not expel from the system as a whole. Transfer from charters to DCPS schools or within DCPS in the middle of the academic year can be disruptive for students and school communities and can lead to drop out. Moreover, DCPS does not have an educational environment appropriate for this small number of students to go to receive and connect with appropriate services and interventions. The establishment of a highly supported alternative placement for a small group of students in grades 6-12 with the greatest behavioral needs and most severe safety infractions would help address service gaps and provide appropriate supports to the students until they return to their permanent schools. A temporary alternative setting, which could be located within an alternative school, could also be explored in the charter sector, and a statewide option could also be explored. Behavioral health assessments can help guide placements. *This recommendation would impact a small number of students with the greatest behavioral needs and most serious safety infractions*

Conditions for success: These alternative placements would need sufficient resources to ensure students could access the academic, social-emotional, and behavioral supports needed to succeed. Enabling conditions include but are not limited to: low student-teacher ratios (e.g., under a 1:10 teacher: student ratio), a small school population, experienced staff (including educators, clinicians, and other professionals), flexibility to adapt the learning

program and wraparound supports to students' specific needs, the ability to provide functional behavior assessments, and engagement of adult mentors and families.[34] It would also be important to create clear guidelines and procedures around transfers to and from the receiving school, ensure compliance with special education and other requirements, and provide adequate and stable funding to maintain high-quality programming. These placements would also benefit from partnerships, resources, and services typically offered outside of school; for example, students could more easily access substance abuse treatment and psychiatric care[35] and receive support for follow up on these referrals.[36] To support students' transition back into their home schools, a transition coordinator or similar role can help the student to feel a sense of connection and know that someone is invested in their success.[37] Any laws or regulations required for this recommendation would be subject to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It would be important to understand what percentage of students involved in the most serious safety incidents are receiving special education services in order to inform design, implementation, and staffing.

Next steps: DCPS should develop a programmatic and staffing plan for a highly supported alternative setting; DC Council should amend the code to allow for this option; DME and OSSE should work with charter LEAs to explore options for students in the charter sector.

Priority 6: Establish a special set of resources for the small number of students who are most at risk, regardless of their school.

A small number of youth are responsible for a high number of school safety incidents. Nearly half of all incidents of violence happen at 27 schools in the District. These students have risk factors that can be used to identify them early on and provide supports, using a whole of government approach. While initiatives to identify the most at risk students early on is challenging, as evidenced by efforts both in DC and nationally, the Committee believes that targeted services towards students and their families and addressing service gaps for students in need would go a long way towards supporting the health of the District's young people and the safety of our schools and communities.

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[34] https://dropoutprevention.org/effective-strategies/alternative-schooling/; Alternative education strategies: Reducing violence in school and the community. (apa.org)

[35] https://dropoutprevention.org/effective-strategies/alternative-schooling/; 2022.10.19 SBIRT-SBHC Project White Paper_FINAL.pdf - Google Drive

[36] Addressing Youth Substance Use through School Services and Supports: Lessons from the District of Columbia, Massachusetts, and New Mexico (urban.org), p. 8

[37] Supporting Students in Effective Transitions: What Students Have to Say (ed.gov)

6a. Identify students at greatest risk of involvement in serious safety incidents.

A relatively small number of youth end up involved in serious safety incidents. These students are often transferred from school to school, sometimes late in the academic year, creating educational disruption and challenges for the students and the school communities. Identifying early the students at greatest risk of involvement with serious safety incidents can help direct resources towards prevention and redirection.[38] Education, health, and public safety agencies should work together to identify students with multiple risk factors for justice-involvement[39] as early as Pre-K and identity appropriate services and interventions. Schools have a helpful perspective on which students are at greatest risk based on disciplinary incidents and attendance trends. Teachers and other school staff may have additional insights to share based on their relationships with students and would benefit from clearer protocols on how to connect students in crisis with interventions. This recommendation would be closely related to and facilitated by the student information system proposed in recommendation 4e. Students who have recently been the victims of violence can benefit from hospital-based violence interruption programs to stop the cycle of retaliation.[40]

Conditions for success: These student data are sensitive and should be maintained in keeping with applicable privacy laws and used only for early intervention, not to track or prejudice agencies and services against students. Agency partners would need to have clear data protocols and a shared understanding of how the data would be used. Stronger hospital-school partnerships (within the bounds of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) would support this work.

Next steps: DME, DMHHS, DMPSJ and CJCC should work together to identify a plan for early identification of students at greatest risk of involvement in serious safety incidents. Strong collaboration and coordination with agencies (e.g., DYRS, OAG, CFSA, and Court Social Services) and schools would be important.

6b. Identify a **menu of supportive resources** for students and families at greatest risk of involvement in violence**.**

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[38] [A Study of Factors that Affect the Likelihood of Juvenile Justice System Involvement (dc.gov)](#)
[39] [A Study of Factors that Affect the Likelihood of Juvenile Justice System Involvement (dc.gov)](#)
[40] [Children's National Youth Intervention Program, _Building Connection: How We Help Survivors of Youth Violence_](#)

Related to recommendation 6a, once students are identified as at risk of becoming involved in serious safety incidents, we recommend identifying a menu of supportive services, which could include case management, coaching and mentoring, mental health services and cognitive behavioral therapy, mentorship, training programs for parents, and even direct cash assistance or basic income, to support students and families. This approach could focus on priority access to existing services as well as new services and could include financial incentives for participation. All services should be intentionally tailored to student and family needs and should involve community-based providers whenever possible.

Conditions for success: To be effective, the services offered should be evidence-based and coordinated, and any pilots should be evaluated and adjusted based on data.

Next steps: DME, DMHHS, and DMPSJ should identify the highest-impact menu of services for a potential pilot.

6c. Address **service gaps**:
- Teen-based **cognitive behavioral therapy (expansion)**
- DC-based Psychiatric **Residential Treatment** Facility (PRTF).
- DC-based **substance abuse** treatment services for teens.
- DC-based **outpatient** care for teens.
- DC-based **partial hospitalization** services for teens.

Schools, service providers, and advocates shared specific requests to fill service gaps for teens, including around substance abuse treatment, outpatient services, and partial hospitalization services. Cognitive behavioral therapy was cited as an effective approach and one that should be maintained and expanded. For the most severe cases, some parents and schools have raised the need for a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF), with the understanding that quality programs are difficult to provide and require sufficient funding and staffing. The report *A Path Forward: Transforming the Public Behavioral System for Children, Youth, and their Families in the District of Columbia* named several service gaps for youth that are worth considering.[41] While there are some beds for children at the Psychiatric Institute of Washington (PIW) or Children's National for certain acute care needs, DC does not have a robust continuum of care to address shorter-term and ongoing behavioral health needs. For the most severe cases, in which a PRTF could be appropriate, there are none in DC, and therefore students either do not get placed, face a long waiting list, and/or are placed out of state but face challenges upon re-entry to the community. The District should pursue determining how to optimize Medicaid

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[41] Children's Law Center - *A Path Forward, Transforming the Public Behavioral Health System for Children, Youth, and their Families in the District of Columbia*

reimbursement for as many of these services as possible, based on the latest federal guidance from the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA). While the specific services are outside the scope of the Committee's purview, the service gaps can contribute to safety incidents, in school and in the community, and the Committee therefore recommends that they be seriously considered. *This recommendation would impact students with behavioral health needs that are not currently being met.*

Conditions for success: Sufficient funding, staffing, and partnerships with medical and behavioral health providers, appropriate facilities, as well as lessons learned from other jurisdictions would be critical to the success of this recommendation.

Next steps: DMHHS and DME should identify the priority service gaps to address and explore Medicaid reimbursement and other funding sources.
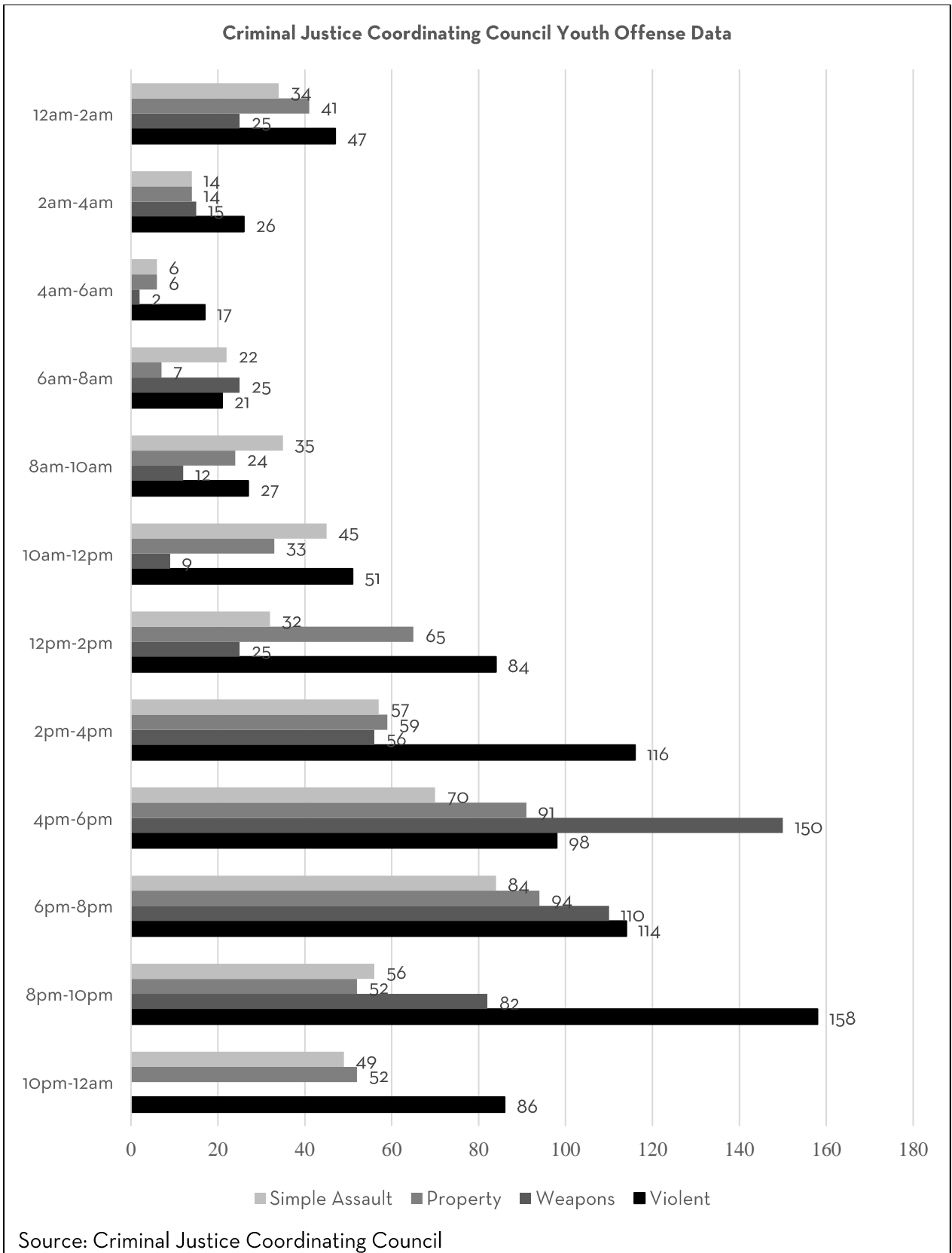
Conclusion

The Committee hopes the data, analysis, and recommendations in this report spur discussion and action in the short and longer-term regarding how the District of Columbia can improve the safety of schools and the students within them. The DME and Committee also thank all of the students, staff, agencies, experts, advocates, practitioners, nonprofit partners, parents, and other residents who have contributed to this report and look forward to future collaboration.

Appendix

School Safety Enhancement Committee Members

- Dustin Bellavance, Director, School Safety and Engagement Division, Metropolitan Police Department
- Ricky A. Brown, Jr., Deputy Chief of School Safety and Security, District of Columbia Public Schools
- Dan Davis, Chief Student Advocate, Office of the Student Advocate, State Board of Education
- John Carlos Green, Community Engagement Manager, DC Public Charter School Board
- Simaya Hammon, Student, Banneker High School
- Nicole McDermott, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice
- Tatiana Portillo, Student, Roosevelt STAY
- Dontrell Smith, Parent, District of Columbia Public Schools
- Mische' Walden, School Counselor, Johnson Middle School
- Deitrich E. Williams, Parent, District of Columbia Public Schools

Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Youth Offense Data

Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Youth Offense Data

Time	Simple Assault	Property	Weapons	Violent
12am-2am	34	41	25	47
2am-4am	14	14	15	26
4am-6am	6	6	2	17
6am-8am	22	7	25	21
8am-10am	35	24	12	27
10am-12pm	45	33	9	51
12pm-2pm	32	65	25	84
2pm-4pm	57	59	56	116
4pm-6pm	70	91	150	98
6pm-8pm	84	94	110	114
8pm-10pm	56	52	82	158
10pm-12am	49	52		86

Source: Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

Recommendation Assessment Chart

Recommendation	Ease of Implementation	Impact	Cost
1a. Implement a pilot for **staggered arrival and dismissal times** in safe passage priority areas with multiple schools.	Easy	Medium, targeted	Low
1b. Enforce penalties for **illegal activities near schools**, including enforcement of drug free and gun free zones, and increased awareness of penalties.	Medium	Medium, targeted	Low to medium
1c. Revise the criteria for **designating safe passage priority areas** to ensure clarity and consistency.	Easy	Low to medium	Low
1d. Establish a baseline of **school safety infrastructure** and provide funding and oversight to ensure compliance across all schools. • Implement program with OVSJG to provide schools and child development facilities with **external cameras**.	Medium	Medium to high	Medium
1e. Reform the **truancy referral process** to provide more support to students and families to attend school.	Medium to difficult	High	High
1f. Provide **transportation** for high-risk students in safety "hot spot" areas.	Medium to difficult	High, targeted	High
1g. Expand **Safe Passage, Safe Blocks teams** to cover all schools and non-school priority locations within safe passage priority areas, and to include any need for "surge" capacity in other places.	Medium	Medium	Medium
2a. Require all schools to **establish School Safety Teams** comprised of core functions.	Easy	Low	Low
2b. Create and share **best practice protocols** for school safety teams. • Convey to schools best practices in **engaging MPD and public safety partners**.	Easy	Low to medium	Low

2c. **Establish career pathways** for hardest-to-fill safety roles to strengthen recruitment and retention.	Medium	Medium to high	Medium
2d. Establish a **school safety "hub" for public charter schools** to mirror DCPS' central safety team.	Medium	High	Medium
3a. Help schools limit **cell phone and social media** use.	Medium	High	Low
3b. Increase **monitoring of youth engagement on social media** coupled with increased communication with school safety points of contact to prevent in-school and out-of-school conflict escalation.	Medium	Medium to high	Medium
3c. Elevate and approve the **conflict resolution state standards** that OSSE is completing as part of its comprehensive social-emotional learning standards.	Easy	Medium	Low
3d. Strengthen capacity of school staff to implement conflict resolution.	Medium to difficult	High	Medium to high
3e. Provide schools with the highest rates of out-of-school suspension and incidents of in-school violence a **temporary Restorative Justice Coach as a pilot through OSSE** to strengthen the capacity of the school to implement restorative justice	Medium to difficult	Medium to high	Medium
3f. Expand **youth employment and career pathway opportunities** in safe passage priority areas.	Medium	High, targeted	Medium
3g. Expand **mentorship programs** in safe passage priority areas.	Easy	Medium to high, targeted	Medium
3h. Dramatically expand **out of school time (including recreation) programming** in safe passage priority areas.	Medium	High, targeted	Medium
4a. Publish **lists** of all school and agency safety points of contact.	Easy	Low to medium	Low
4b. Establish **standard operating procedures (SOPs) for safety communications** among schools and	Easy	Low	Low

public safety service providers and agencies.			
4c. Create a consistent **student transfer file** developed by OSSE.	Medium	High	Low to medium
4d. Establish a **real-time alert system** through HSEMA for schools, safe-passage workers and residents to obtain immediate notification of community-based violence.	Easy to medium	High	Medium
4e. Establish a **Student Data and Intervention system** to share information across government agencies.	Difficult	High	Medium
5a. Modify the **suspension code** to allow for suspensions for additional serious infractions	Easy to medium	Medium	Low
5b. Expand the therapeutic **in-school suspension** model to support social and academic development.	Medium	High	Low to medium
5c. Establish a temporary, highly supportive **placement in an alternative setting** for students involved in the most serious safety incidents and with the greatest behavioral challenges.	Difficult	High	High
6a. **Identify students at greatest risk** of involvement in serious safety incidents.	Medium	High	Low
6b. Identify a **menu of supportive resources** for students and families at greatest risk of involvement in violence	Medium	High	High
6c. Address **service gaps**.	Difficult	High	High

Focus Groups and Engagements

School Staff Engagement

School Name	Classification	Ward	# of Interviews
Cesar Chavez PCS	Single Campus Public Charter School	7	2
Friendship Collegiate PCS	Public Charter High School	7	1
HD Woodson HS	DCPS Neighborhood High School	7	2
Johnson MS	DCPS Neighborhood Middle School	8	1
KIPP PCS	Multi-Campus and Largest Public Charter LEA	2, 5,7,8, Online	1
Luke C. Moore Opportunity Academy	DCPS Alternative High School	5	1
Maya Angelou Young Adult Center	Public Charter Alternative High School and GED Program	7	1
Roosevelt HS	DCPS Neighborhood High School and International Academy	4	1
Roosevelt STAY HS Opportunity Academy	DCPS Alternative High School	4	1
Ron Brown HS	DCPS Citywide All Male High School	7	2

Youth Focus Groups

School Name	Classification	Ward	# of Focus Groups
E.L Haynes	Multi Campus Public Charter School	7	2
HD Woodson HS	DCPS Neighborhood High School	7	1
Luke C. Moore Opportunity Academy	DCPS Alternative High School	5	1
Maya Angelou Young Adult Center	Public Charter Alternative High School and GED Program	7	1
MIKVA	Partnering DC High Schools	Various	1
Roosevelt STAY HS Opportunity Academy	DCPS Alternative High School	1	1
State Board of Education (SBOE) Youth Advisory Council	Partnering DC High Schools	Various	1
Thurgood Marshall Academy PCS	Single Campus Public Charter High School	8	1
Washington Leadership Academy PCS	Single Campus Public Charter High School	5	2

Experts Consulted

Name	Expert	# of Interviews
Children's Law Center	Danielle Robinette	1
Center for Child and Human Development Georgetown University	Jennifer L. Woolard, Ph.D. | She/Her/Hers Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs, College of Arts & Sciences Professor of Psychology Adjunct Professor of Law Senior Scholar	1
Data Quality Campaign	Paige Kowalski, Executive Vice President	1
DC Special Education Cooperative	Samantha Walukonis (she/her/hers) Program Quality Specialist	1
John L. Gildner Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents (RICA)	Jada Langston, Principal	1

Juvenile Justice Initiative	Eduardo Ferrer, Policy Director	1
Juvenile Justice Clinic & Initiative Georgetown Law	Kristin Henning, The Blume Professor of Law and Director	1
Maryland Department of Juvenile Services	Vinny Schiraldi, Secretary	1
National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform	David Muhammad, Executive Director Mikaela Rabinowitz, Director of Research and Data	1
OHR Citywide Bullying Prevention Program	Suzanne Greenfield, Former Director	1
Groundswell Network	Gregg Lipman, Founder and CEO	1

Advocates, Practitioners, and Community Based Partners

Name	Point of Contact	# of Interviews
DC Charter Alliance	Rachel Johnston, Nicole Travers, Tameria Lewis, Nicole McCrae, Tomeika Bowden, John Green	5
DC Students Succeeds Coalition	Margie Yeager, Partner, Education Forward DC	1
Education Reform Now	Jessica Giles, Executive Director	1
LEA Leaders	Range of LEAs, including Ingenuity Prep, E. L. Haynes, Thurgood Marshall Academy, KIPP, Friendship, Mundo Verde, Briya, Center City, Two Rivers	2
LSAT Collective	District-wide membership meeting	1
PAVE	PAVE parent leaders and staff	4
S.H.A.P.P.E.	Cathy Reilly, Executive Director; District-wide membership meeting including parents and educators	1
T.R.I.G.G.E.R Project	Tia Bell, Executive Director	1
Washington Teachers' Union	Jacqueline Pogue-Lyons, President	1

District Agencies Consulted

Agency Name
Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC)
DC Department of Health (DC Health)
DC Department of Behavioral Health (DBH)
District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)
Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice (DMPSJ)
Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services (DMHHS)
DC Office of Gun Violence Prevention (OGVP)
Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMA)
Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)
Office of State Superintendent (OSSE)
Public Charter School Board (PCSB)
State Board of Education (SBOE)

School Resource Guide

Resource and Contact Information	Description	Case Examples
ALL SCHOOLS		
911	First call for any safety concerns in which there is a police, fire or medical emergency.	Call 911 if there is a situation that could, or does, pose a danger to life, property, or both; if there is a suspicious activity involving a person(s) or vehicle that appears to have criminal intent. Also, if there is any situation that requires immediate dispatch of an officer, or to report a serious crime, such as robbery, violence, or sexual assault.
1pm Daily Law Enforcement Call Participating Agencies: MPD, WMATA, DCPS, DMPSJ, PCSB, DCPS Special Police Schools should text information for this call to 202-340-7059	Daily 1pm discussion among public safety agencies of recent incidences including bomb threats, large fights etc. for awareness and response coordination. Schools should text information and incidents for inclusion in this coordinating call.	If MPD or DCPS Special Police has responded to a large fight, this call is where they make the situation known to relevant stakeholders and determine next steps. This may mean following up with school leaders or increasing presence around a metro station or neighborhood during dismissal. Additional items like upcoming sports games and school events are shared out so appropriate coverage can be coordinated.
On-Call Watch Commander (School Resource Officer Commander) 202-438-1656	An open hotline primarily utilized for coordinating SRO resources.	You've already called 911 but would like to follow up and connect for an SRO to be deployed to follow up.

Resource and Contact Information	Description	Case Examples
MPD Youth Engagement Branch Captain Paul Hrebenak paul.hrebenak@dc.gov 202-643-8471	Support from law enforcement that specialize in school safety (e.g., supporting with mediation, in-school programming & presentations, outreach, and summer programs)	Several students have had an on-going disagreement, school leaders may reach out to request support with mediation.
District Department of Transportation – Crossing Guards James Strange, Associate Director for Traffic Operations james.strange@dc.gov	Department of Transportation deploys school crossing guards across the city to support student commutes during rush hours. This office also manages Traffic Control Officers who work to support safe and easy commutes alongside school crossing guards. complete the form here; SCG Request Form-.pdf (dc.gov) Read more on what to expect after submission here; School Crossing Guard Request Form (dc.gov)	If traffic and commute conditions during arrival and dismissal near your school building feel unsafe, you can request the Department of Transportation complete a safety assessment to determine the need for a crossing guard, traffic control or other resources for your school community.
Child and Family Services Agency Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Hotline 202-671-7233	CFSA takes reports of child abuse and neglect 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This hotline is the gateway to protection and help for child victims and those at risk up to age 18 in the District of Columbia.	You have reason to suspect a child is being abused or neglected. Review signs of child abuse and neglect to help determine when to call.

| Educational Neglect Triage Unit

Joseph Osiecki
joseph.osiecki@dc.gov	This unit assists schools and families by responding to referrals with the following barriers to attendance (including but not limited to): transportation, housing insecurity, navigating immunization needs, enrollment support, linkage to community resources, and providing education to school personnel and families surrounding attendance reporting.	Student has an increase in unexcused absences due to caregiver's work schedule. Morning transportation to school is not an issue, but afternoon transport is a barrier due to the parent's work schedule. The unit explores transportation recommendations and community-based resources with the family to assist with current barriers to attendance.

Resource and Contact Information	Description	Case Examples
Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) Crisis Response Team

Charter Schools:
Erica Barnes, School Mental Health Branch Chief
erica.barnes@dc.gov
202-295-7037

DCPS Schools:
Nigel Jackson, Director of School Mental Health
Nigel.Jackson3@k12.dc.gov
202-374-8702 | The school has experienced a crisis (death or other traumatic event) and needs increased mental health resources and/or grief counseling. | A student who attends your school, a neighboring school, or lives in community was injured or killed. Students and staff need support in processing the loss. |

| One Common Unity *(Funded by The Office of Gun Violence Prevention)*

Ashlyn Harty
Aharty@onecommonunity.org
(340) 626-9966 | OCU's Peace Together program offers therapeutic support to youth in D.C that have been impacted by Gun Violence. Supports include mental health therapy, or a community-based crisis intervention where their team goes to the community to provide a healing space for youth. The Peace Together program also offers consultations to adults who are working with youth impacted by gun violence, such as teachers, first responders, and parents. | A school community who has lost a student or faculty member to gun violence can reach out to OCU's Peace Together program for support. Peace Together responds within 24 hours of the request and begins planning with the school on ways to support specific individuals or a larger group of youth at the school that have been impacted by the loss. |
| **Parent and Adolescent Support Services (PASS) Intensive Case Management**

dhs.pass@dc.gov
(202) 698-4334 | Intensive early intervention supports for youth exhibiting at-risk behaviors. | There is a student in your school community who is engaging in behaviors such as skipping school (truancy), leaving home without permission, not returning home by curfew, and/or exhibiting extreme disobedience in and/or outside the home. |

Resource and Contact Information	Description	Case Examples
OSSE Restorative Justice Professional Development and Technical Assistance Jessica.Dulay@dc.gov 202-716-6945 SchoolTalk/RestorativeDC rdc@schooltalkdc.org 202-907-6887	OSSE, in partnership with SchoolTalk's RestorativeDC, offers a series of trainings and workshops to introduce and explore key elements of restorative justice in schools. The sessions are highly participatory, allowing school staff to immerse themselves in restorative practices through guided exercises, role	Individuals who are interested in learning more about Restorative Practices and how it can foster positive and more inclusive school climates, are invited to attend any of the city-wide trainings. School teams wanting assistance in what implementation looks like at their school may apply for Technical Assistance in the Spring to prepare and receive

	plays, and other experiential learning opportunities. RestorativeDC also provides targeted technical assistance (TA), which includes school-level customized support to address a specific critical need, identifying root causes of concern and developing a tailored solution. Schools are invited to apply for TA each year in the Spring.	the support the following school year. More advanced schools ready to make a long-term commitment and who have already received TA may then apply to receive Whole School Implementation support, which includes intensive and collaborative technical support and coaching over three to five years.
The Institute for Youth Development Kevin Cataldo Kevin.Cataldo@dc.gov (202) 701-8674	The Institute for Youth Development provides quality training for all adults who work with children and youth in Out of School Time (OST) programs. These adults are also called youth development practitioners. Youth development practitioners deepen their understanding of positive youth development, engage in best practices, and improve services to youth.	Your staff would benefit from professional development workshops on various topics to include the Youth Development Series, Youth Work Methods Series, Social Emotional Youth Methods Series, and more. Workshops are available throughout the year; organizations can request training specifically for their team. Professional Development training is offered both virtually and in-person throughout the District of Columbia.

Resource and Contact Information	Description	Case Examples
SCHOOLS IN SAFE PASSAGE PRIORITY AREAS		
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education School Safety Support Hillary Desir Hillary.desir@dc.gov 202-427-2209	The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education is invested in supporting schools in navigating city resources and connecting to appropriate agency partners. For support with safety	If a particular student or circumstance your school team has been supporting is proving more challenging than you expected you can reach out, share the circumstance and receive support in determine if

	related challenges, contact Hillary Desir.	there are any relevant District resources available.
Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement - Leadership Academy Marvin Gaye marvin.gaye2@dc.gov 202-702-9508	ONSE Leadership Academy Utilizes a positive youth development model to increase resiliency and protective factors for at-risk youth. Including individual goal planning, behavioral guidance, and tailored enrichment activities.	There is a group of students presenting with persistent challenges, you may be interested in reaching out to see if your school can become a participating site.
DC School Connect Sinjoyla Townsend **sinjoyla.townsend@dc.gov** (202) 645-0340	DC SchoolConnect provides micro transportation for select public and public charter schools in Wards 7 and 8 via dedicated buses for students in grades K-12.	School leaders can refer families who would benefit from micro transit based on need; student has been chronically absent; caregivers are concerned about safety during their student commute, a student is threatening or being targeted during their student commute. Contact DC For Hire Vehicles to determine availability.

Resource and Contact Information	Description	Case Examples
Violence Prevention and Intervention Liaison (DMPSJ) Jasmin Benab Jasmin.benb@dc.gov 202-805-4263	The Deputy Mayors Office of Public Safety and Justice manages several credible contact programs. Ms. Benab can provide support activating violence prevention services in neighborhoods where there is conflict involving students.	Students in your school who have known neighborhood/crew affiliations are in conflict with one another. You are unsure of the details but believe things might escalate while students are at school or out in the community.

Safe Passage, Safe Blocks Tiye Kinlow Safepassage@dc.gov 202-227-1850	Safe Passage, Safe Blocks is a violence prevention program positioning trusted adults on the path to and from school to reduce violence incidences.	If your school is in a priority area and is a selected Safe Passage school site and there is student conflict brewing in your building, you should connect with your Safe Passage team to ensure they're ready to prevent and intervene leveraging their rapport with students.

Communications Table

Resource	Purpose	Frequency	Participants
Law Enforcement Call	District agency representatives share about daily incidences that take place at a school, involve a student, or impact a school community.	Daily – 1:00 p.m.	• MPD Rep. • MTPD Rep. • DMPSJ Rep. • DME Rep. • PCSB Rep. • DCPS Rep.
Violent Incident Call	Align and activate city agencies to coordinate response to a violent incident affecting school and local communities.	As needed – 6:00 p.m.	Variable but may include: • DMPSJ Rep. • DME Rep. • Safe Passage Workers (for affected location/school) • Safe Passage Supervisors (for affected location/school) • Law Enforcement Reps. • School Leadership Reps.
School Leader Call	Provide regular updates on school safety resources, programming, and strategy.	Quarterly	• DME Rep. • DMPSJ Rep. • School Leaders
SAFE PASSAGE AREAS/SCHOOLS			

Neighborhood Cluster Group Text Chain	Connect with other neighborhood Principals about student concerns and updates	24/7	• School Administration • MPD School Safety Division • Safe Passage Management
Safe Passage Worker Text Chain	Serves as a communication tool for Safe Passage workers to connect with other public safety personnel.	24/7	• Safe Passage Workers • DMPSJ Rep. • DME Rep.
Supervisory Text Chain	A real time thread of updates, request for support, and technical assistance, usually during commute hours.	24/7	• Safe Passage Management/Staff • MPD • DMPSJ Rep. • DCPS Rep. • DCPS Police • DME Rep. • PCSB Rep.
Safe Passage School Leader Communications	Direct communications between school leaders and Safe Passage partner CBOs – can be calls or texts.	As needed/ requested	• School Administration • Safe Passage Management/Staff • Others as appropriate
Safe Passage Schools Call	Provide school leaders at safe passage selected school sites a chance to check in with DMPSJ, other school leaders and their safe passage service provider. These calls are closed to Safe Passage school sites and by invite-only.	Weekly	• School Administration • Safe Passage CBOs • Management/Staff Government Agencies (on rotating basis), including: DMPSJ, MPD, MTPD, PCSB, DCPS, DME

Glossary of Terms

Safe Passage: Official protection offered to someone in danger or traveling through a dangerous area.

Safe Passage Priority Area: An identified neighborhood area with high levels of crime during the hours in which students travel to and from school, the safety students traveling to and from schools in these neighborhoods may be at greater risk.

Safe Passage, Safe Blocks: a violence prevention program providing at-risk school communities with trusted adults to support the safe travel of students commuting to and from school.

Metro Hot Spot: An identified metro station with high levels of incidents that is highly utilized by student commuters during school commute hours.