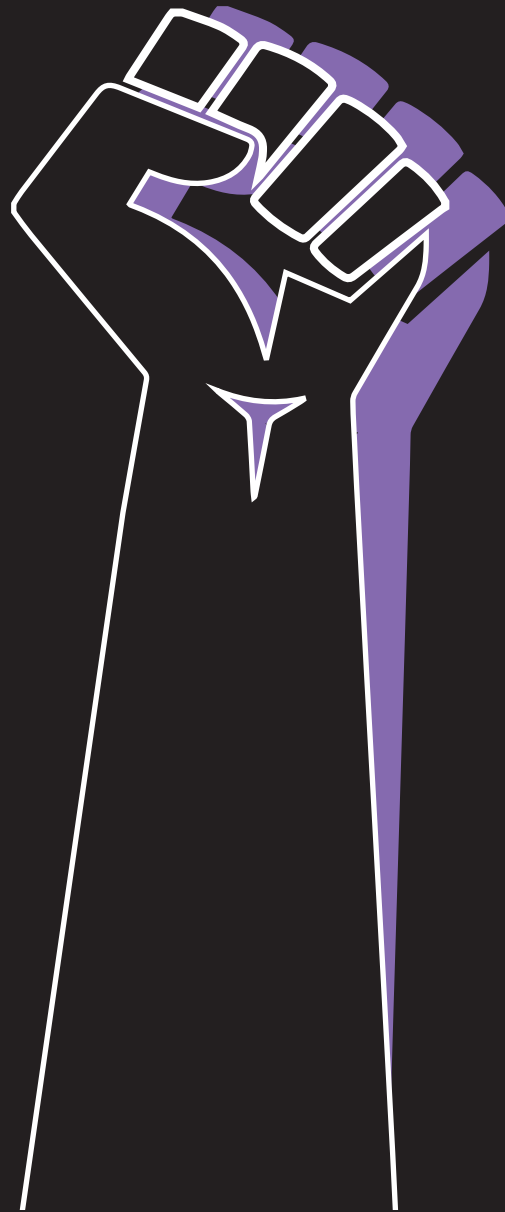


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# THE PEOPLE'S PLAN FOR POLICE FREE-SCHOOLS

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2019



## THE BLACK ORGANIZING PROJECT

# Black Organizing Project, The People's Plan for Police-Free Schools OUSD Implementation Proposal

## TURNING WORDS INTO ACTION: WILL OUSD'S CRISIS OF HUMAN RIGHTS FALL INTO A CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP?

Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) has a long record of disproportionately suspending, expelling, involuntarily transferring and arresting Black students into the criminal justice system. Black Organizing Project (BOP) has been engaged with OUSD leadership over this human rights crisis since we launched our Bettering Our Schools Campaign (BOSS) in response to the murder of Raheim Brown by an Oakland school police officer in 2011.

*OUSD has the information it needs to act. The question is, will they take action?*

Over the past 8 years, BOP has organized students, families and community members to provide OUSD leadership with countless personal testimonies, feedback from community forums, and one-on-one meetings. We have provided abundant data demonstrating the disproportionate harms of the school-to-prison pipeline on students and families of color. We have channeled the groundswell of protests and community outrage at the high profile police murders of Black men from Sacramento to Ferguson to Oakland into demands for dismantling OUSD's school-to-prison pipeline.

In response, we have heard OUSD leaders express support for reform. We have seen them respond to community advocacy by agreeing to implement a complaint policy for families and an MOU with the Oakland Police Department to limit police involvement at school. We have seen them adopt restorative justice and trauma-informed practices as district priorities and designate schools as sanctuaries for immigrant families. In the process, some leaders have even shared with us their own negative personal experiences with law enforcement in our communities.

Despite this, the continued presence of armed police in our schools is a blatant contradiction of everything OUSD claims to stand for. A growing body of research shows that aggressive policing is a threat to physical and mental health, especially for vulnerable communities of color. You cannot have OSPD officers in schools causing trauma and harm for Black and Brown students and also say that you are for restorative justice or trauma-informed practices. You cannot allow 73% of students arrested to be Black (who are 26% of students enrolled) and claim to be for equity and putting students first. The district's commitment to providing "sanctuary" for immigrant students and families rings completely hollow as long as OUSD fails to stop the hemorrhaging of Black students and families from OUSD due to the toxic climate created by policing, criminalization and push out.

OUSD is also contributing to unsustainable and degrading structures of anti-Blackness. By having police in the enclosed public space of school buildings, the district is exposing Black students and students of color to early police contact and higher chances of being criminalized. Oakland schools are socializing Black students to experience police surveillance, containment and suppression as normal. Such a deeply embedded and institutionalized form of preemptive policing has extremely significant consequences. By foreclosing opportunities toward graduation, college and employment for Oakland's Black youth, school policing is fundamentally undermining the economic and public health of the Black community by restricting access and opportunity.

# Black Organizing Project, The People's Plan for Police-Free Schools OUSD Implementation Proposal

Finally, let us remember that police presence in Oakland schools has a racist past that needs to be shed and undone. Historians have documented how, in the 1940s and 1950s, Black students and Black families migrating to Oakland from the South were framed in a racist rhetoric of “black delinquency” and “black dysfunction” which led to school and police collaboration. In the 1960s, policing in school and zero-tolerance policies were at the heart of containment strategies and rhetoric used against the Black Power movement in general and the Black Panther Party in particular. In the 1980s, Oakland was a testing ground for the state’s first attempts by right-wing legal advocates and pro-prison “tough on crime” proponents to impose police in schools through the passage of Proposition 8 “Victims’ Bill of Rights.” For three decades since then, Black Oakland has been under a siege of divestment, dislocation, gentrification and mass incarceration. Policing, punishment and criminalization have invaded every facet of Black life. OUSD is openly participating in continuing this racist legacy.

What follows is a community-driven implementation plan to achieve police-free schools by 2020 by reinvesting the school police budget into supports for the whole child and students with disabilities. We call on OUSD to join a growing list of school districts—from Toronto to Pomona—who are actively implementing solutions like these to achieve authentic student safety. In doing so, OUSD has the opportunity to provide leadership for broader community concerns. In Oakland today, schools are closing and communities are being pitted against each other with declining student enrollment, rivalries between public and charter schools, and social spending austerity. These trends cannot be separated from the continued dislocation and displacement of the Black community in Oakland and in the Bay Area. Destabilized schools foster an increasingly toxic climate—inside and outside the classroom—that pushes Black families out in tandem with increased housing costs and gentrification schemes. Nor can we ignore state and city budgets that continue to sacrifice education and social service programs to ever-growing policing and incarceration budgets. Black Oakland’s human rights crises are all interlinked: housing and gentrification, mass incarceration, and the future of education. We can take a powerful step towards addressing these concerns by ending racialized policing in OUSD.








## *Will OUSD leadership answer the call?*



*Protection From What? Safety For Who? This photo was captured on Wednesday October 23rd, 2019 at a public Oakland Unified School District School Board Meeting.*




# Part 1: Divest from School Policing by Eliminating the Oakland School Police Department by 2020 and Barring any Future Contracts with Law Enforcement

## WHY IS THIS SOLUTION IMPORTANT?

-  In the Bay Area and nationally, the racist institutional history and current realities of policing in communities of color make school police an inherent part of the school-to-prison pipeline for children and youth of color.
-  OUSD data on disproportionate enforcement and school policing impacts show that Oakland's Black youth are currently being harmed by school policing.
-  School policing contradicts OUSD's values of equity, sanctuary and putting students first. It directly undermines OUSD's commitment to restorative justice and trauma-informed practices.
-  Growing national research shows that police presence in schools does not increase school safety. Further, SROs have been shown to increase school reliance on arrests to address discipline, to interfere with education, and to have disproportionate negative impacts on students of color and students with disabilities. Schools with police have been revealed to have higher suspension rates and longer suspension durations.
-  Of 18 school districts in Alameda County, OUSD is the only district to have its own internal police department, costing over \$2.3m annually not including an additional \$4m+ spent on security personnel that contributes to the overall criminalizing and punitive school discipline climate.
-  Reinvesting the \$2.3m+ school police budget into increased supports for the whole child and for students with disabilities will more effectively provide for student safety
-  A growing number of school districts have eliminated, reduced or are considering eliminating or reducing police presence in schools because of equity concerns. These include Coachella Valley, Pomona, Sacramento, and Piedmont in California as well as Toronto, the largest school district in Canada.

## IMPLEMENTATION NEXT STEPS:

Using best practices for organizational restructuring and change management, OUSD will engage key central departments (especially Legal, Human Resources, Communications, School Networks Supervision Team) to create a detailed plan to eliminate OSPD by the end of 2020. OUSD will consult with BOP and other community stakeholders in developing this plan. This will include a district communication plan for schools, educators, students, families and the broader community; a communication's package for each school; a transition plan for school leaders in buildings affected by the reductions, led by the School Networks Supervision Team; job transition planning and support from Human Resources for reduced staff. If necessary, OUSD will contract for temporary change management services.

-  OUSD will ensure community is at the lead to bring community models and partnerships that could be resources for this change management; leverage community to the table (let us bridge the district to resources).
-  Ensure that the workforce reduction in OSPD is not replaced/substituted through any contract for services from another law enforcement agency.
-  OUSD will work with community stakeholders (BOP, teachers union) to create a plan for reinvesting the \$2.3m+ budget of the OSPD in supports for the whole child and for students with disabilities as outlined below.



## Part 2: Reorganize the Campus Safety and Security Program Under the Department of Equity or Behavioral Health and Restructure the Role of Security Personnel to Become Mentors and Peace/Culture Keepers

### WHY IS THIS SOLUTION IMPORTANT?

- ❏ The Campus Safety and Security Program and its 86 School Security Officers currently report to the OSPD, they are a part of an organizational structure and mission/philosophy that contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline in OUSD.
- ❏ School security personnel should be housed within a department that is aligned with the equity, restorative justice and trauma-informed practices priorities of OUSD.
- ❏ School security personnel have an important role in schools because they are predominantly Black and Brown and have roots in the East Bay; they tend to have relationships with Oakland families and communities of color and have backgrounds working with children and youth of color.
- ❏ School security personnel can be trained/deployed as caring adults to enhance safety on and around the school grounds.

### IMPLEMENTATION NEXT STEPS:




Using best practices for organizational restructuring and change management, OUSD will engage key central departments (especially Legal, Human Resources, Communications, School Networks Supervision Team) to create a detailed plan to move the Campus Safety & Security Program under the Department of Equity or Behavioral Health by the end of 2020. OUSD will consult with BOP and other community stakeholders in developing this plan.

### The reorganization plan will include provisions to:



- ❏ Restructure the role of security personnel to emphasize peace-keeping, culture-keeping and restorative justice (revising the job descriptions).
- ❏ Change the job title of security personnel to reflect new responsibilities (Peacekeeper/School Climate Specialist).
- ❏ Revise hiring procedures to include student, teacher, community and school educator presence on each school's hiring committee to ensure a good fit with each school community.
- ❏ Implement a new training curriculum for peacekeepers/school climate specialists to support their new practices, culturally responsive de-escalation, working with students with disabilities, mental health roles, emphasizing trainings in restorative justice, trauma-informed health first aid, equity and bias mitigation, and Title IX procedures.
- ❏ Increase collaboration between peacekeepers/school climate specialists and special education, behavioral health and mental health staff; Fully integrate peacekeepers/school climate specialists into the Coordination of Services Teams (Student Support Teams).

## Part 3: Reinvest \$2.3m+ OSPD Budget into Hiring Additional School Mental & Behavioral Health and Special Education Staff

### WHY IS THIS SOLUTION IMPORTANT?

-  Many students who are currently being criminalized at school have mental health needs, behavioral health needs or disabilities. Policing and criminalization disproportionately impacts them and often causes deeper harm or trauma. These students and their schools need stronger support.
-  Growing national research shows that negative encounters with law enforcement lead to adverse mental health outcomes, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder. Among youths, exposure to violence from school-based law enforcement officers has been linked to “denial of educational and social growth”—both key determinants of health—and ethnographic research indicates that current policing practices alter key developmental processes among Black male adolescents. In summary, aggressive policing is “a threat to physical and mental health,” especially for vulnerable communities. (See Appendix below).
-  Currently OUSD staffing levels for school-based mental-health fall far short of national recommendations for student to staff ratios. In SY18-19, the ratio of students per school psychologist was 965:1, for school social workers the ratio was 1619:1 and for counselors it was 984:1. In contrast, the National Association of School Psychologists recommends ratios of 500-700:1 for psychologists, 400:1 for social workers, and 250:1 for counselors. We recognize that the district’s agreement with the Oakland Education Association requires a 500-550:1 ratio for counselors in secondary grades (6-12) and that the district is currently meeting that expectation with a ratio of 499:1. But the district must achieve adequate staffing levels across all grades for counselors and must dramatically increase staffing levels for the critical roles played by school psychologists and social workers. When schools lack adequate staff in these roles to support students’ social and emotional needs as well as the needs of students with disabilities, educators become more frequently overwhelmed and resort to calling police in distress.

### IMPLEMENTATION NEXT STEPS:

-  OUSD will develop a proposal for re-allocating to schools over \$2.3m OSPD budget for hiring additional school-based counseling/mental/behavioral health staff, special education staff and/or restorative justice staff. Staffing decisions would rest with each school and could include aides, paraprofessionals, coordinators, and teachers in these areas. OUSD will develop this plan in consultation with relevant OUSD central office units (especially the School Networks Supervision Team, Special Education Department, Student Services Department, Behavioral Health Department, Counseling Department), the Oakland Education Association, BOP, and other community stakeholders.
-  Expand culturally rooted, healing-centered “rites of passage” programs to all high school and middle schools. Scale a range of culturally-rooted healing practices and trauma informed approaches across all schools in the district. Initiate a mapping of community partners to collaborate with in these areas.

## Part 4: Establish a Community Oversight Committee to Review and Redress all Student and Family Complaints Regarding Interactions with Law Enforcement or School Security Personnel

### WHY IS THIS SOLUTION IMPORTANT?

- Given the impacts, complexity and difficult history behind disinvesting from school policing, OUSD needs an accountability partner in the community to ensure the successful implementation of this plan.
- District accountability regarding student and family complaints regarding school police and school discipline is off track. In response to community demand, OUSD created a complaint policy. To date, the resolution rate for complaints is unacceptably low. Complaints have not been adequately investigated and addressed.
- Many calls to police from schools are for behavior or school discipline-related issues which should not require any law enforcement involvement [OUSD's \$6.5m Problem] (according to the discipline matrix in OUSD policy).
- As we look forward to an OUSD without school police, it is imperative that a Community Oversight Committee be in place to monitor OPD activity in schools (since it will be OPD who will respond to emergencies in lieu of OSPD).

### IMPLEMENTATION NEXT STEPS:

**In consultation with BOP and other community stakeholders, OUSD will establish the Community Policing and Security Oversight Committee as a permanent body which will:**

- Have a voting membership of which the majority represents the community rather than the district or schools; includes members representing students and families impacted by disproportionalities, educators, community special education advocates, community mental health advocates; and does not include members representing law enforcement.
- Monitor data regarding school and educator referrals to law enforcement.
- Have a protocol for receiving and documenting student or family complaints regarding interactions with law enforcement or school security.
- Have a protocol for overseeing investigations of student or family complaints (conducted by district staff).
- Have a protocol for directing redress of harms, including options for requiring the provision of mental health or academic services or any additional supports to repair harm done to a student or family.
- On a semi-monthly basis provide publicly available reports to the OUSD Board.

## Part 4: Myths and Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: Aren't we legally required to have police in schools? OUSD decided in 2001 to eliminate OSPD but a lawsuit reversed the decision.**

**A:** No school district is legally required to station police in schools. OUSD is the only district in Alameda County that has its own police force. Workforce reductions are a normal component of school district management and there are legal and illegal ways of conducting them. OUSD's legal mistake in 2001 was not the decision to eliminate the OSPD positions; school districts eliminate positions all the time. Their mistake was the combination of reducing those positions but then turning right around and "replacing" them by contracting with the Oakland Police Department for policing services. You cannot legally terminate an employee on the basis of eliminating their position and then hire someone else to provide those same services. This is one reason why future OUSD contracts with any law enforcement agency must be barred. It's also important to remember that Oakland historically never had police in schools and never asked for police to be put in schools. This was put upon us and this is not the first time we have tried to remove police from schools.

**Q: What happens if a real emergency happens in a school and there is no OSPD officer there—who will respond?**

**A:** OUSD is within the jurisdiction of the Oakland Police Department and OPD has the legal responsibility to provide emergency response, just as it currently provides every day to the 48 charter schools in OUSD that do not currently have any OSPD officers stationed at them. OUSD is actually the exception among Alameda County school districts as being the only district wasting \$2.3m+ of its budget annually to fund a separate internal police department, while also spending millions on security personnel, in spite of being located within a city that provides policing services (already resourced at about half of the City of Oakland's budget).




**Q: I agree we should remove police from our schools, but if we do it right away, won't it cause chaos?**

**A:** School districts regularly reorganize services to continuously improve. Whether the change goes smoothly or causes chaos is a function of how well the district manages the change. As with any other reduction or reorganization, it is essential that the district work carefully with its Legal, Human Resources, Communications and School Networks Supervision Teams to create a plan for the transition that incorporates change management best practices and that includes appropriate resources to manage the change effectively. It is also critical that the \$2.3m+ budget of the OSPD be strategically reinvested in supports for the whole child and students with disabilities with an eye to supporting authentic student safety.







# Science for Police-Free Schools

## PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS OF POLICING

-  No reduction in school crime. A review of 40 years of evaluations of school policing showed no positive impact on school crime or delinquency. Stern and Petrosino, What Do We Know About the Effects of School Based Law Enforcement on School Safety, West Ed Justice and Prevention Research Center, April 2019.
-  No increase in student safety. The amount of student victimization is the same regardless of the level of school security. Students' perceptions of safety are significantly lower in schools with more security. Females, African-American, Latino and Low SES students feel significantly less safe in schools with higher levels of security. Presence of school police associated with higher rates of suspension overall and with greater racial disparity in suspension rates. Finn, J.D. & Servoss, T.J. (2014). Misbehavior, suspensions, and security measures in high school: Racial/ethnic and gender differences. *Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children at Risk*, 5 (2), Article 11.
-  Presence of school police triples the odds of the school having a high number of arrests and widens the racial disparity in arrest. Servoss, T.J. & Finn, J.D. (2016, April). Racial/ethnic disparities in school exclusions: The role of school security. Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association.

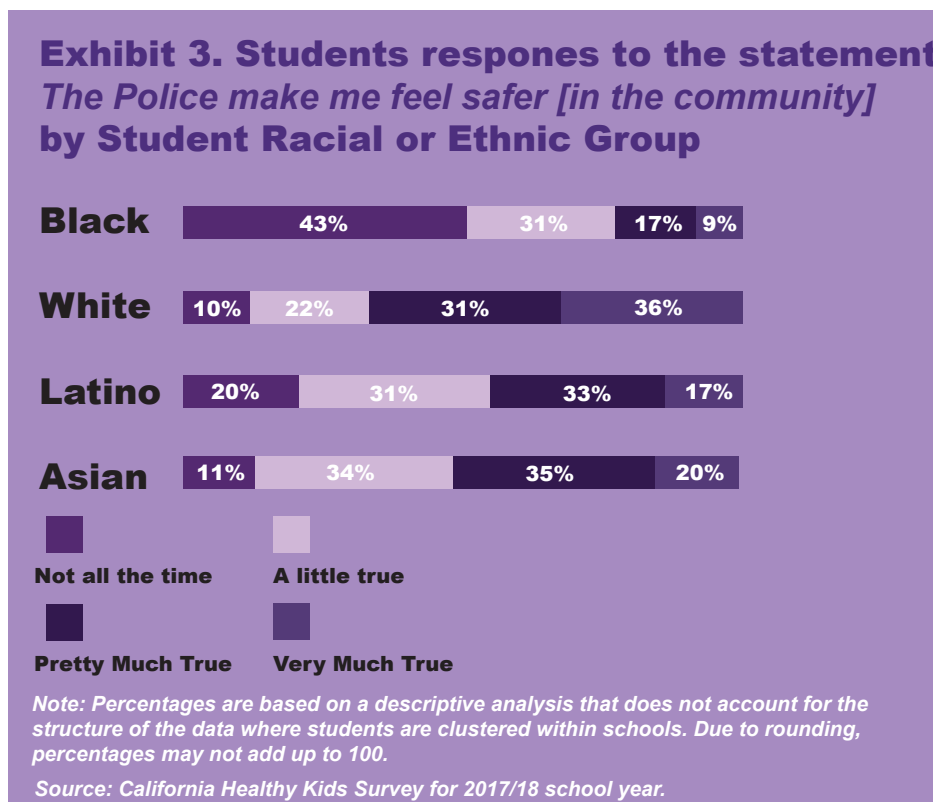
## PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS OF POLICING

-  Young men of color who reported more police contact also reported higher anxiety scores, controlling for their demographic characteristics and criminal involvement. Furthermore, their anxiety symptoms were significantly related to the number of times they were stopped and to how they perceived the critical encounter was conducted. Greater anxiety was found among respondents reporting more intrusive police stops. Furthermore, intrusive police stops were significant independent predictors of PTSD in young men. *American Journal of Public Health* Geller A, Fagan J, Tyler T, Link BG. Aggressive Policing and the mental health of young urban men. *Am J Public Health*. (2014);104:2321–2327.
-  Neighborhood-level frisks and use of force were linked to elevated levels of psychological distress among men living in these neighborhoods. Sewell AA, Jefferson K, Lee H. Living under surveillance: gender, psychological distress, and stop-question-and-frisk policing in New York City. *Social Science & Medicine*. 2016;159:1–13.
-  Residents of neighborhoods with high rates of law enforcement use of force were at increased risk for diabetes and obesity. Sewell AA. The illness associations of police violence: differential relationships by ethnoracial composition. Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/socf.12361>. Current policing practices alter key developmental processes among Black male adolescents. Jones N. “The regular routine”: proactive policing and adolescent development among young, poor black men. *New Directions for Child Adolescent Development* 2014;143:33–54.
-  In youth, witnessing police violence culminates in symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, depression, poor self-rated health, attentional impairment, poor school performance, and school suspensions and expulsions. Boynton-Jarrett R, Ryan LM, Berkman LF, Wright RJ. Cumulative violence exposure and self-rated health: a longitudinal study of adolescents in the United States. *Pediatrics* 2008;122(5):961–970.

# Science for Police-Free Schools (Cont'd)

## PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS OF POLICING (CONT'D)

- Police treatment functions as a social determinant of health, with unique implications for children. In the journal *Pediatrics*, Boyd states that "Policies that incentivize police contact with civilians for minor infractions or perceived criminality result in neighborhoods where police contact is relatively common or unduly hostile. Among young men who report frequent encounters with police, symptoms of anxiety and trauma are more common. Thus, individuals who are repeatedly, incorrectly deemed suspicious, and subsequently questioned or searched, although not arrested, may harbor stress as a result of those encounters. In youth, the cumulative impact may lead to adverse adult health outcomes." She recommends that pediatricians "partner with school administrators to support student disciplinary policies that minimize punitive contact with police."
- In analysis of student data from the California Healthy Kids Survey, it was found that, compared to their White peers, Asian, Black, and Latino students in California reported feeling less safe with the police in their communities. This trend was particularly pronounced for Black students. The data also suggest that the presence of police in school was less likely to make students of color, particularly Black students, feel safer at school. See Figure below:



Nakamoto, J., Cerna, R., & Stern, A. (2019). High school students' perceptions of police vary by student race and ethnicity: Findings from an analysis of the California Healthy Kids Survey, 2017/18. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

# STAND WITH BOP



*Pictured Above: BOP members convene for an action, October 26th 2019 in Oakland, California.*

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