

February 22, 2024

RESOLUTION TO CREATE A COMPREHENSIVE WHOLE SCHOOL SAFETY POLICY IN CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WHEREAS, the Board strives to create a positive culture and climate at all of our schools, grounded in our vision that all students deserve to learn in environments that provide physical, emotional, and relational safety; and

WHEREAS, research consistently demonstrates that safe and supportive school environments are important aspects of improving student learning and well-being. This includes high levels of trust between adults and students, and that students feel safe both in and around school buildings, and while they travel to and from home; and

WHEREAS, since 2012, CPS has significantly reformed the District's approach to school safety, transitioning from a zero-tolerance, enforcement-only approach focused on physical safety, to an approach that also prioritizes emotional safety and relational trust, with a more restorative approach to discipline. This shift has resulted in significant progress over the last decade in reducing overall out-of-school suspensions, in-school suspensions, police notifications, and expulsions, as well as a reduction of incidents as students travel to and from school; and

WHEREAS, while progress has been made, recent data show disparities in certain student groups. For example, the rates for out-of-school and in-school suspension continue to be disproportionately higher for students with disabilities, as well as African American male and female students when compared to their Latinx and White counterparts; calls made to police also continue to disproportionately involve students with disabilities, as well as African American male and female students when compared to their Latinx and White counterparts; and expulsions in district managed schools are disproportionately African American and Latino males; and

WHEREAS, at its August 26, 2020 Board Meeting, the Board adopted a resolution (20-0826-RS10) directing the District to "provide to the Board a comprehensive plan for schools currently using SROs (School Resource Officers) to phase out their use" and that such plan include, but not be limited to, "an inclusive, thoughtful, and expeditious process to develop and implement alternative systems of safety for CPS students in every school that prioritizes their physical and social-emotional well-being, learning, and transformation;" and

WHEREAS, in the three (3) school years since the adoption of the above-referenced resolution and as a result of a new engagement process, now called "Whole School Safety Plan" process, fourteen (14) schools have voted to completely remove a total of twenty-eight (28) SROs and instead received \$3.9 million in total funds to be invested in staff- and program-related alternative safety interventions, such as climate and culture, restorative justice, and social service coordinators. However, the District still has thirty-nine (39) schools with one (1) or two (2) SROs, for a total of fifty-seven (57) full-time SROs, with only one (1) school voting to remove both SROs in the most recent vote; and

WHEREAS, the vast majority of schools, 595 of 634 schools, across all of our neighborhoods have implemented safety plans without utilizing SROs. These schools without SROs instead employ a wide variety of tools to ensure students' physical safety, including Crossing Guards, Safe Passage workers, security officers, and security cameras to ensure students can travel safely to and from school. Furthermore, the Board is continuing its investments in schools' ability to support students' relational and emotional safety. For example, staff are trained in de-escalation strategies to ensure the physical safety of students and fellow staff, and schools that removed SROs were given funding for alternative safety plans, which they used for positions (e.g., Restorative Justice Coordinators, Youth Interventionist Specialists) and programming (e.g. Mentoring Programs, Safe Passage Programs, Staff Professional Development).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED THAT THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO directs the CEO to take the following actions:

1. Evaluate current policies, practices, and resource needs to assess the root causes and contributing factors of the disproportionalities for different student groups.
2. Develop a new districtwide policy that codifies best practices for a holistic approach to school safety at every District school and that addresses root causes and contributing factors referenced in (1) above, such as approaches to wrap-around supports, restorative justice, healing-centered practices, re-engagement strategies, facility needs, etc. The policy must further meet the following requirements:
 - a. In alignment with the above-referenced resolution approved by the Board on August 26, 2020, the policy must make explicit that the use of SROs within District schools will end by the start of the 2024-2025 school year, understanding that the District will continue its strong partnership with the Mayor's Office and the Chicago Police Department, which have always, and will continue to, provide critical support for all of our schools.
 - b. The policy must build upon the existing foundation of community engagement already built into the Whole School Safety Planning process in order ensure a holistic approach and ownership of school safety.
 - c. The policy must be presented to the Board for final approval by the June 27, 2024 Regular Board Meeting and be in accordance with the processes and procedures pursuant to Board Rule 2-6.
3. In conjunction with the policy proposal in (2) above, share with the Board an implementation plan for the policy in partnership with the Mayor's Office, the Chicago Police Department, and other necessary entities that support physical and emotional safety, and relational trust, for our students, staff, and school communities.