

A Report Researched and Compiled by the

# High HOPES Campaign

From Policy  
To Standard Practice

## Restorative Justice in Chicago Public Schools Spring 2012

With the support of Member Organizations:



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## **The High HOPES Campaign**

The High HOPES (Healing Over the Punishment of Expulsions and Suspensions) Campaign is calling on Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to reduce suspensions and expulsions by 40% through the implementation of restorative justice practices, which are recognized and embraced in CPS' own Student Code of Conduct. A reduction of at least 40% would mean that thousands of students would be disciplined more effectively and a true culture shift would begin to take place throughout the city's schools. To do this, we call on CPS to work with youth, parent, and community organizations to implement restorative justice strategies, as well as develop and provide accurate and timely performance measures to track the effectiveness of reaching our goals.

The High HOPES Campaign was formed in the fall of 2010 and consists of seven community-based organizations that share concerns about harsh discipline and violence in CPS. Over the past year, this Campaign has held dozens of local actions and meetings, a community summit on using restorative justice in the school environment, numerous meetings with CPS officials and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of CPS, and a public session with the Chicago Board of Education, which was attended by over 500 community residents and leaders. To date, these actions have resulted in the endorsement of the Campaign by numerous Chicago City Council members and two mayoral candidates, and the inclusion of the Campaign as a part of the New Chicago 2011 Coalition's platform.

The High HOPES Campaign continues to grow and expand its work with students, parents, educators, and faith and community members, as it moves forward to create a safer, more effective, and more restorative Chicago Public School system.

### **Methods: How this report was created**

The High HOPES Campaign underwent a thorough, yearlong process of collecting information from restorative justice experts, practitioners, educators, youth, parents, and community members. During this yearlong process, Campaign members interviewed different stakeholders; reviewed studies, reports, and other documentation; and even held an all-day summit attended by close to 100 people. This High HOPES Summit, held in August 2011, focused on gathering information from different stakeholders on various issues, such as how restorative justice is being implemented in CPS and what are best practices and barriers to implementation. During this process, the Campaign created an implementation committee composed of key coalition members. This committee prepared a draft of this report, which was distributed to youth, educators, parents, community residents, and restorative justice practitioners. Next, the feedback from these key sources was gathered and incorporated into a final draft, which was subject to additional review. In March 2012, the coalition approved the final draft of this document.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2006, the Board of Chicago Public Schools officially stripped the language of “zero-tolerance” from the CPS Student Code of Conduct and declared that it “recognizes and embraces the philosophy of restorative justice.” The dramatic change in official discipline policy was noted in the press and celebrated by the students, parents, and advocates who had been calling for an end to the punitive practices and policies that push children out of school.

The 2006 declaration, however, has yet to change the culture of “zero-tolerance” in our schools. Indeed, most CPS schools still treat suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests as a matter of routine, while restorative justice methods remain underutilized. The High HOPES Coalition, made up of students, parents, educators, and community members, believes that it is time for true change.

We spent a year researching, with the input of many stakeholders, to create this report, which shines a light on the ongoing crisis of suspensions, expulsions and school-based arrests and proposes a course for the full implementation of restorative justice in CPS.

Specifically, our report finds that:

- » Suspensions and expulsions do not make schools safer but instead negatively affect the school environment; have long-damaging effects on student behavior, learning and academic achievement; and contribute to higher dropout rates and violence.
- » Restorative justice has been shown to make schools safer and help to lower suspension and expulsion rates.
- » Integrating restorative justice practices is a critical way to improve the culture and climate of a school by supporting the social and emotional development of students and strengthening partnerships among all stakeholders.

We therefore recommend that CPS take the following concrete steps:

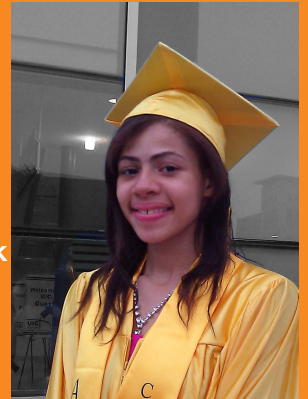
- » Commit to and proactively pursue a district-wide reduction in suspensions and expulsions by 40% in the coming school year.
- » Overcome current barriers to the implementation of restorative justice by developing a sustainable, district-wide plan for rolling out these practices in schools.
- » Fully fund and support implementation by creating full-time restorative justice coordinator positions in each school, and offering ongoing training and technical assistance. Reprioritize its spending on school safety by diverting costly investments in policing and zero-tolerance strategies to the implementation of restorative justice. We estimate that such a full-scale investment in restorative justice would cost around \$44 million, much less than the \$67 million budget of the CPS Office of School Safety and Security.
- » Create monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the reduction in punitive discipline methods and the success of restorative justice implementation, and make that information available in an ongoing, public manner.

In light of these realities and recommendations, the High HOPES Coalition calls on CPS to reduce suspensions and expulsions by 40% through the implementation of restorative justice practices, as called for in the CPS Student Code of Conduct. This reduction and reprioritization would mean that hundreds of thousands of students would be disciplined more effectively, and a true cultural shift would begin to take place through the city’s schools. It is time for the written policy to become the standard practice in Chicago Public Schools.

# From Policy to Standard Practice: Restorative Justice in Chicago Public Schools

## Brittany's Story

Brittany was a sophomore in a CPS high school on Chicago's west side when she received an out-of-school suspension for being out of uniform. She was an average student, involved in several after school programs and student council. "When I got suspended, I met people that were out on the street, not in school. They were drug dealers, so my mother didn't want me hanging out with them. But, they didn't judge me for getting suspended, like she did. They became my friends and I had fun with them. It made me not want to come back to school, when my suspension was up." When Brittany did come back to school, she struggled to catch up academically. Shortly after her suspension, she learned about restorative justice methods as an alternative discipline vehicle. She joined Peer Jury, a restorative justice program set up by Blocks Together members at her school. But, Brittany became frustrated that, despite outward support of restorative justice, school administrators were not giving them Peer Jury cases to decide. In one year, Brittany's Peer Jury heard only six cases.



As a member of the Blocks Together Youth Council, Brittany organized her peers to push for the principal to fully support the restorative justice programs that teachers and students had worked so hard to establish in the school. However, constant administrative turnover meant that the group had to keep starting over with the process of getting administrators to buy-in.

The Blocks Together Youth Council is just one of the many groups working from the grassroots level to make sure that restorative justice gets implemented in their schools. The members of the High HOPES coalition came together to make sure that CPS is also doing its part to take restorative justice beyond good policy on paper and toward standard practice for every school.

"...minority students across America face much harsher discipline than non-minorities – even within the same school...some of the worst discrepancies are in my home town of Chicago."  
US Education Secretary Arne Duncan<sup>1</sup>

## **The Problem: Suspensions, Expulsions, and Arrests in Chicago Public Schools**

In the 2008 to 2009 school year, 43,972 students were suspended from CPS<sup>2</sup>, and, in 2010, there were 5,574 juvenile school-based arrests at CPS locations.<sup>3</sup>

CPS has been suspending and expelling students at a higher rate than other big-city districts.<sup>4</sup> Many of these suspensions have been for low-level, minor behavior.<sup>5</sup>

African-American male students, who represented only 23% of CPS students from 2008 to 2009, represented over 48% of suspensions and 57% of expulsions.<sup>6</sup> New data released by the U.S. Department of Education shows that, from 2009 to 2010, "CPS's African American students were five times as likely to be suspended as their white peers."<sup>7</sup> On a national level, studies have also indicated that Latino, LGBTQ, special education, and other minority students are suspended and/or expelled at higher rates, and may thus be at a higher risk in Chicago, as well.<sup>8</sup>

High levels of suspensions and expulsions are highly correlated to high levels of dropouts.<sup>9</sup> In 2010, only 55.8% of CPS students earned their diploma within five years.<sup>10</sup> CPS is referred to as an epicenter of the dropout crisis.<sup>11</sup> As long as CPS continues to rely on suspensions, expulsions, and arrests, the more accurate way to describe CPS is as an epicenter of the pushout crisis. This pushout crisis feeds into the violence problem devastating Chicago as unaddressed conflicts in school spill over into the streets and as pushed out students turn to the street economy when educational doors close.



According to CPS CEO Brizard, “400-plus kids were killed in this city over the past few years, and I’ll be the first to tell you, I think there is a direct correlation between kids dropping out or being pushed out of school, and crime in the city.”<sup>12</sup>

Suspensions and expulsions are ineffective at addressing behavioral, achievement, and school safety issues.<sup>13</sup> Independent research by education and psychology professionals has proven that:

Suspensions and expulsions do not make schools safer and do not improve students’ behavior.

- » Suspensions and expulsions do not make schools safer and do not improve students’ behavior.<sup>14</sup>
- » Suspensions and expulsions have long-damaging effects on student behavior and learning.<sup>15</sup>
- » The higher a school’s rate of suspension and expulsion, the lower the academic achievement of its students - even when taking socio-economic status out of the equation.<sup>16</sup>
- » High levels of suspension do not make students and teachers feel safer, and, instead, can negatively affect the school environment by creating distrust.<sup>17</sup>
- » School districts which have focused on decreasing suspensions have seen an increase in graduation rates. For example, Baltimore City Public Schools lowered suspensions from 26,000 to 10,000 and experienced an increase in their graduation rate of 20%.<sup>18</sup>

### “Shaun’s” Suspension Story

One day after school in grammar school my sister was fighting this girl. All of a sudden, the girl pulled out mace and started to spray it at her. I walked up through the crowd and got maced too. The next day, we came up to school. Our Assistant Principal called us to the office. She got to telling us all about how we were on camera and that I jumped in. I told her how I just walked up and got maced off contact. My eye was red as we spoke. She talked to us and told us how we were wrong. She sat there and handed us our suspension papers. We both got four days. I felt unheard and ignored like the lady didn’t even listen to what I was saying. She just suspended us to get it over with! I felt real horrible thinking no adult trusts any youth. Also, this did not solve the problem between that girl and my sis. No justice at all.

That’s why I joined C2 [Center of Change] because we do campaigns to actually change the way adults treat us. High HOPES is about real justice in schools.



## Using Restorative Justice in Schools

Research has proven that stronger relationships between students, staff, and parents make a school safer, even if a school is at a disadvantage in other ways,<sup>19</sup> and efforts focused on developing trust and respect among all in the school community are more likely to succeed.<sup>20</sup> Restorative justice is designed to repair and strengthen relationships, so it should be used as a tool for creating school safety.

Within the discipline context, restorative justice philosophy and practices bring the student who misbehaved with those people who were affected in order to hold the student accountable, repair the harm that was caused, and prevent similar actions in the future by addressing needs.

"In his writing portfolio, I found a letter from my son saying he was being bullied by a boy in his class. I am trying to teach him not to deal with his problems by fighting but he was telling me he was going to go psycho on the boy if he didn't stop. I advocated for the teacher to do a circle with the boys to talk it out and it really worked! My son came back really satisfied with it because the boy explained why he was behaving that way and they worked out an agreement. They are friends now."

Lisa Andino, Member of the West Humboldt Park Parent Network

Restorative justice philosophy and practices based upon it are also much more than an alternative way to respond to disciplinary infractions. Integrating restorative justice practices into the every day school life is a critical way of improving the culture and climate of a school in order to support the social and emotional learning and the academic performance of all students and strengthen partnerships among all stakeholders.

Using restorative justice makes schools safer, improves relationships between staff, students, parents, and the community, helps to lower suspension, expulsion, and arrest rates, and provides social-emotional support, so that all can be successful.

For example:

**Cole Middle School** in West Oakland, California implemented restorative justice into its daily activities in 2005 "to correct behavior that had traditionally led to suspensions or expulsions, including fighting."<sup>21</sup> At Cole, from 2005 to 2009, suspensions declined by 87%,<sup>22</sup> expulsions went down to 0,<sup>23</sup> standardized test scores went up by 74 points,<sup>24</sup> and the school retained all of its teachers even though before it had suffered from a high teacher turnover ratio.<sup>25</sup>



**Denver Public Schools** also implemented a successful restorative justice project in 2005 to reduce suspensions and expulsions, in which each of the schools was assigned a full-time restorative justice coordinator who worked closely with the administration.<sup>26</sup> School absences went down by 50% and tardies by 60%, nearly half of students significantly reduced office referrals, 30% of students had less out of school suspensions, and student social skills improved.<sup>27</sup>

**National Comparisons:** Six schools that were evaluated across the country witnessed significant drops in suspensions, expulsions, disruptive behavior, reoffending, violence and discipline referrals generally, after implementing restorative justice.<sup>28</sup> For example, West Philadelphia High School was

one of Pennsylvania's "Persistently Dangerous Schools" for six years.<sup>29</sup> One year after implementing restorative practices, suspensions decreased by 50% from 2007 to 2008<sup>30</sup> and violent and serious occurrences decreased 52% in the 2007 to 2008 school year, while they dropped another 40% by December 2008.<sup>31</sup>

These examples from across the nation, along with the examples of successful implementation of restorative justice practices in CPS that follow, show that the district-wide implementation of restorative justice practices in CPS is essential to increase school safety and student achievement.

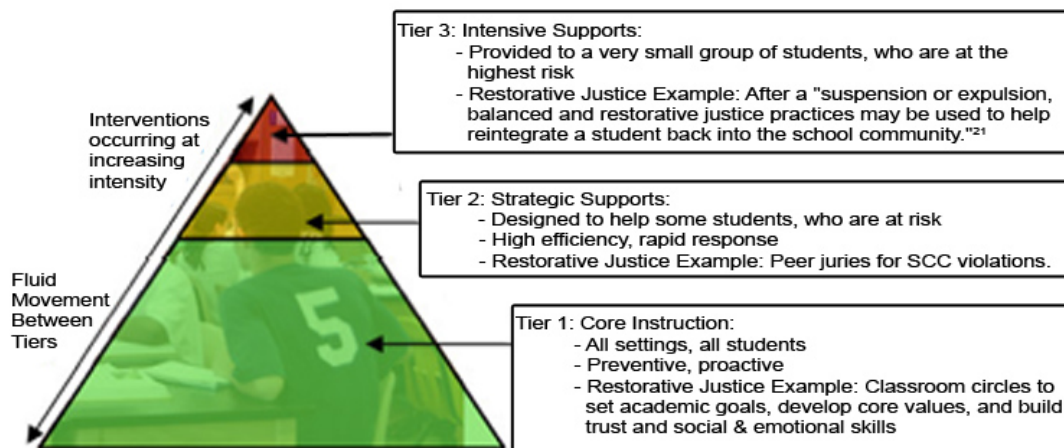
## Restorative Justice as a Response to Intervention Tool

"Response to Intervention (RtI) is a framework that is based on the principle that all students can learn; it is student-focused, data-driven and based on educational practices that are proven to be effective. It is designed around a multi-tiered system of prevention and interventions that uses all educational resources in a unified approach to address student needs proactively. The CPS RtI Framework is designed to support the performance of all Chicago Public School (CPS) students. Federal legislation authorizes and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) requires all school districts to demonstrate evidence of an RtI framework in the 2010-11 school year. The CPS Board of Education passed a RtI resolution in 2010."

*Chicago Public Schools, Office of Teaching + Learning<sup>32</sup>*

Restorative justice is a way to meet the federal, state, and local requirements for RtI and is well suited to provide even the first tier of support for all students, not just for those struggling behaviorally. Restorative justice practices should be integrated proactively as a way to prevent harm and strengthen relationships, not just as a way to address harm and solve problems after the fact. Restorative justice measures at all 3 tiers of intervention create a safe space for students, school members, and community members to dialogue about issues that affect them and create opportunities to resolve matters that are going on in the school. In fact, using a restorative justice measure in tier 1 could prevent tier 2 and 3 interventions. "Where used for preventive purposes, restorative justice was shown to result in student improvement in the areas of adaptability and ability to cope with stress."<sup>33</sup>

The restorative justice philosophy gives schools the flexibility to take into account their own circumstances instead of imposing a rigid structure that might be hard to adjust to particular schools, because a variety of different processes come out of this philosophy. There should be a unifying, district-wide structure, but the school community should have the opportunity to create programs that can vary.



*RtI diagram and information within diagram come from Chicago Public Schools, Office of Teaching + Learning<sup>34</sup> and the Illinois State Board of Education<sup>35</sup>. The High Hopes Campaign has added the Restorative Justice Examples.*

## Successful Implementation of Restorative Justice in CPS

In the CPS Student Code of Conduct, the Chicago Board of Education “embraces the philosophy of restorative justice”<sup>36</sup> and “encourages principals and administrators to adopt and implement restorative justice philosophies and practices.”<sup>37</sup> In addition, the Student Code of Conduct “is intended to be **instructional and corrective**, not punitive.”<sup>38</sup> Chicago public schools that have holistically and consistently implemented restorative justice programs have seen benefits in school culture and performance paired with a decrease in violence and disciplinary issues. Restorative justice programs in CPS include circles, peer juries, and victim offender conferencing.<sup>39</sup>

According to CPS: “preliminary data show a one-third decline in high school suspensions [for schools emphasizing restorative justice versus suspensions] when comparing year-over-year data from the first semester of the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years.”<sup>40</sup>

### DYETT HIGH SCHOOL: THE MODEL OF WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH

At Dyett High School, implementing a series of restorative practices, including peace circles and peer juries, led to a drop from 819 misconduct reports in 2006 - 2007 to 306 in 2007 - 2008, a decrease of 63%.<sup>41</sup> Arrests also fell from 35 to 6, a decrease of 83% in just one year.<sup>42</sup>

### FENGER HIGH SCHOOL: CULTURE OF CALM

In response to violence at Fenger High School, a school-wide restorative justice plan was developed, which now includes peace circles, a peer jury, victim offender mediation, and family group conferencing.<sup>43</sup> Fenger has a Culture and Climate Coordinator (CCC) for these restorative justice programs, and the programs strive to involve and connect all members of the school community, including students, security guards, and administrators.<sup>44</sup> Anyone in the school community can refer a case to the CCC.<sup>45</sup>

During the 2010 to 2011 school year, 306 Fenger students received restorative justice services, and 1,103 suspension days were prevented.<sup>46</sup> Cases of misconduct dropped by 59% during this same school year, while arrests declined by 69%.<sup>47</sup>

**PEER JURIES THROUGHOUT CPS:** According to the program manager in charge of the system-wide Peer Jury program at the time, peer juries avoided over 2,000 suspension days for the 2008-2009 school year alone through restorative agreements.<sup>48</sup> DePaul and Northwestern researchers documented that an average of 847 peer jury cases were heard annually throughout the 28 CPS high schools that had peer juries, for the three-year period from 2004-05 through 2006-07.<sup>49</sup>



“In order for a Culture and Climate Coordinator to be successful in any school they need support from the principal, the school team, community organizations like CJYI [Community Justice for Youth Institute], and the wider Restorative Justice community. I would not be successful in implementing the Restorative Justice practice without their support.”

Robert Spicer, Culture and Climate Coordinator of Fenger High School.

## Best Practices

When the restorative justice philosophy is implemented effectively in CPS, it can be a powerful tool for avoiding suspensions, improving student achievement, and creating a safer and more peaceful school environment. According to independent research (such as that presented in the previous sections of this report), interviews conducted with restorative justice practitioners and other stakeholders, and the information gathered at the High Hopes Summit from different stakeholders, the most effective models of implementation have included:

- » Commitment and buy-in from the entire school leadership team;
- » A full-time position within the school, either a school employee or a community partner, to coordinate restorative justice programs, as well as the shift of school culture toward restorative principles;
- » Collaboration between school leadership (including local school council members, principals, and other administrators), students, parents, and community members and partners in creating and planning for restorative justice;
- » Ongoing hands-on training and technical assistance for a critical number of students, parents, community members, and school staff (including substitute teachers) in restorative justice practices;
- » Space and time within the school dedicated to restorative justice practices;
- » On-going and transparent monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment with the participation of all stakeholders, such as principals, students, parents, community members, and local school council members, and making sure there is local oversight; and
- » Clear and sustained funding, support, and accountability.

### Setting Up Successful Restorative Justice Coordinators and Trainers<sup>50</sup>

Restorative justice coordinators and trainers would need the following:

- » Must be part of the senior leadership team (SLT) at that school and work directly with the principal.
- » To work across the school community (security officers, deans, other administrators, counselors, coaches, parents) on peace building ideas.
- » A budget to fund the restorative justice project throughout the school community to which they have direct access and spending autonomy (approx. \$10,000 per school year).
- » A stand-alone room in the school for restorative justice practices. The activities that could take place in this room would include victim offender mediation, family group conferencing, peace circles, and peer juries. Where possible, the coordinator would work closely with the Culture of Calm Coordinators on programs that would be a benefit to the school community.

## Current Barriers to Implementation District-wide

Unfortunately, through our yearlong review process, we have found that CPS' official adoption of the philosophy of restorative justice in 2006 has not translated into a sustained, system-wide effort to actually put the philosophy into practice. A number of individual schools have implemented restorative justice of their own initiative or in partnership with community-based partners with outside funding sources, but the best practices listed above are missing in CPS as a whole. Even where they do exist, restorative justice programs are sometimes marginalized, so that the whole school does not see the positive effect.

According to the teachers, students, parents, community members, and professional restorative justice practitioners who came together at the High Hopes Summit or in subsequent meetings, current barriers to full implementation district-wide include:

- » Lack of exposure and training on the philosophy and strategies of restorative justice among all school stakeholders, especially administrators;
- » Confusion as to who to contact within CPS to learn more about restorative justice and how to implement it;
- » Diversion of resources and staff time toward zero tolerance strategies, such as school security cameras;
- » Lack of consistent district-level supports and funding streams;
- » Lack of process to collaboratively engage students, parents, community members and partners in developing restorative justice implementation plans; and
- » Lack of transparency in monitoring, evaluating, and reporting data related to suspensions and expulsions and all programs related to safety, security, or restorative justice.

In the midst of the transition to a new CPS administration, the lack of coherent infrastructure has become even more apparent. Some schools that want to implement restorative justice are not getting a clear response on what to do nor the resources with which to do it. Specialists who previously worked in the Office of Special Education and Supports and supported intervention strategies, such as restorative justice, were let go in the fall of 2011 and it remains unclear to what extent support for restorative justice practices will be integrated into new departments.

The 38 high schools that are participating in the Culture of Calm program, initiated under former CEO Ron Huberman, still theoretically have access to restorative justice supports. Yet, while the new administration of CEO Jean-Claude Brizard pledged to continue this initiative, the central district staff supporting it was reduced and approval of school-level Culture of Calm budgets was significantly delayed this school year.

These barriers indicate that even schools with a strong interest in restorative justice cannot appeal to CPS for effective support, while other schools can continue and are even encouraged to implement CPS-sanctioned and financed zero tolerance strategies. Therefore, all schools can continue to suspend and expel students at high rates (even if they do not want to do so). Independent research and practice (such as that presented in this report) has shown that zero tolerance strategies not only fail to make schools safer, but also bring down academic achievement and have long-damaging effects on student behavior, learning, and the school environment.

## Cost and Commitment of Implementing Restorative Justice System-Wide in CPS

Through the Culture of Calm Initiative, outside organizations have been brought in on a part-time basis to support restorative justice implementation in some schools. However, it has been difficult to provide adequate support to the students involved, follow up on cases, work through logistics, and build school-wide buy-in for the program within a part-time position. This is why a full-time position is needed. In addition, teacher advisors need to be compensated for time they spend outside the school day preparing for and supporting these efforts. In recent years, 1-2 teachers at each school participating in the peer jury program have been able to bill 2-4 hours weekly towards this work. Other models have employed stipends for parent peace circle keepers.



The estimated costs of fully implementing restorative justice methods in Chicago Public Schools for one year include, but are not limited to:

- » A full-time restorative justice coordinator in each school. If staffed by an outside community partner, this position would cost roughly \$50,000.
- » Compensation for teacher, community, and/or parent advisors implementing restorative justice programming, \$2,000-8,000.
- » Consultants and training services, \$5,000-15,000.

Taken together, these costs total between \$57,000 and \$73,000 per school. Taking \$65,000 as a median value for the system's 675 schools, in order to implement restorative justice on a district-wide level, CPS should spend \$43,875,000 on restorative justice programming. This represents less than 1% of the CPS budget.

## Restorative Justice Saves Money & Makes Schools Safer

We are often told that the financial woes of CPS prevent it from making commitments to new initiatives. But, shifting funds to restorative justice would mean that schools could actually become safer and save on security costs. In the 2010-2011 school year alone, the CPS central office budget gave more than \$67 million to the Office of School Safety and Security to fund "school security," which included security officers, metal detectors, and surveillance cameras.<sup>51</sup> These \$67 million did not "even include school-level spending on security."<sup>52</sup>

In the 2010-2011 budget, CPS designated \$51.4 million to be spent on "school-based security guards (included in the Office of Safety and Security allocation)," and spent approximately \$8 million per year for Chicago Police Department officers in all 96 high schools.<sup>53</sup> In 2011, the Chicago Police Department asserted that the true cost for two police officers at roughly 100 high schools for 8 hours a day was closer to \$25 million per year instead of \$8 million, and the new school administration reviewed the case and agreed to pay that amount and reimburse the police department for previous years.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, during the 2011-2012 school year, CPS will have to pay \$70 million to make up for previous years.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the CPS 2011-2012 budget also includes \$7 million for the installation of state-of-the-art security cameras at 14 schools, a zero tolerance measure. Since restorative justice has been shown to increase school safety, restorative justice programs should be funded instead of these zero tolerance measures.

There are also huge additional costs associated with enforcing zero tolerance policies, which require significant time and resources to process tens of thousands of suspensions, expulsions, arrests, and referrals to alternative schools. Most of the \$1.4 million given in 2010-2011 to the Office of Student Support and Engagement included \$1.1 million to be spent on expulsion hearings, appeals, and officers.<sup>56</sup> In addition, the City of Chicago has “administrative costs associated with questioning, processing, charging and detaining the thousands of youth who are arrested in school every year. Moreover, because these policies contribute to Chicago’s high truancy and dropout rates, they result in a loss of state and federal funding for CPS, which are based on attendance and enrollment numbers. For example, in the 2009-2010 school year, every student who was not enrolled or absent on ‘count day’ cost CPS \$6,119 in lost state revenue. That year, the state counted 349,196 students throughout CPS, when CPS estimated that in fact 409,279 students were enrolled that year. This means that low attendance, caused in part by push-out and harsh discipline, cost the district \$370 million in lost revenue.”<sup>57</sup>

Finally, approximately 45,600 Illinois students who should have graduated in 2010 “dropped out.”<sup>58</sup> If half (22,800) of those students had graduated, they would have possibly contributed the following to the Illinois economy: “\$263 million in increased earnings, \$192 million in increased spending, \$70 million in increased investments, \$717 million in increased home sales, \$26 million in increased auto sales, 2,300 new jobs, \$335 million in economic growth, \$30 million in increased tax revenue, [and] increased human capital.”<sup>59</sup>

## Setting Priorities

Not all schools are similarly situated when it comes to implementing restorative justice practices, so they will need different levels of funding and support from CPS in order to be successful. For resource allocation to be equitable, CPS should use the following criteria for developing funding and resource priorities:

*Type of school:* Regular neighborhood schools should get funding priority over charter, contract, selective enrollment, turnaround, or any other type of school that is not directly managed by CPS. Regular neighborhood schools have the most direct ties to their communities and, therefore, can benefit the most from restorative justice practices. That said, charter, contract, selective enrollment, turnaround, and any other types of schools should still be required to have a restorative justice plan in their new or renewal application going forward.


*Need:* Once a school has met the basic criteria for type of school, CPS should look at how far a school is from implementing restorative justice programs effectively. If all other factors are the same, CPS should spend more resources on schools with higher rates of suspension, expulsion, and other related indicators of need, and spending should eventually go down to the level of other schools as the school becomes more stabilized and peaceful.

If neighborhood schools already have parent, student and community driven plans for a whole-school approach to restorative justice, the school should get special consideration to fulfill their plan as soon as possible. Funds for the staff and program needs of a restorative justice initiative in a school should be specifically earmarked in order to ensure that the programs are correctly implemented and allow for true oversight from CPS leaders in the area and school, the local school council, and the rest of the school community.




Different levels and types of funding and supports should be set aside for schools, depending on where they are in their implementation of restorative justice. For example, the following 3 different stages could be identified and used:

#### Exposure Stage:

- Stakeholders (principals, teachers, staff, parents, community members and students) participate in trainings and events that emphasize the benefits of restorative justice and give them an introduction to the theory and practice and how it affects the whole school.
  - An outside agency or trainer comes to do training with staff and stakeholders that are already involved and will be moving into the more formal planning process.
  - Visit other schools that use restorative justice and host guests.
  - Participate in restorative justice practices to better understand.
  - Weekly meetings with principal and task force to see how they can move forward.
  - Timeline: 1-2 months.
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#### Planning/Training Stage:

- Stakeholders (dean, social worker, district-wide restorative justice coordinator, students, parents, etc.) are involved in a process to plan how they will become a school employing restorative justice methods (for example, organize planning cafés).
  - Submit plan to LSC Chairperson or designee, Management Support Director, Area Instruction Officer, and others.
  - School Restorative Justice Coordinator hired and team of stakeholders assembled.
  - Issues addressed include: scheduling, how to create the best school climate, determining which restorative justice practices to use, setting student selection criteria for programs, deciding which offenses to accept in discipline matters, dedicating at least one room for the practices, agreeing on how team members will communicate, and arranging trainings and professional development.
  - Timeline: 6 months.
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#### Implementation Stage:

- Stakeholders implement their plan.  
For example, trained peer jurors can accept cases, and trained teachers can begin to use restorative communication practices in the classroom.
- At least 8 months to a year of consistent training and technical assistance as new programs are rolled out, followed by continued support and monitoring in the second year of implementation.
- Oversight so that necessary adjustments to the plan can be made along the way.
- Discipline, restorative justice, safety and security and other data and evaluations made public periodically.
- Funding structures and plans should be long term, so that programs can grow and be sustained over time, instead of stalling while waiting to find out whether or not funding will re-occur.
- Timeline: Ongoing.



## Monitoring and Evaluation

School suspensions, expulsions, referrals to restorative justice programs, arrests, and any other data related to safety and security should be tracked and published regularly. The school-by-school blackboard, which is or can be updated daily by principals or assistant principals, can record suspension and expulsion data. Referrals to restorative justice programs and any other data related to safety and security should also be tracked and included in the school blackboard data, to have all data in one report. This and any other related data should be collected citywide, disaggregated by school, race, gender, disability status, and other categories and made public on a regular basis to ensure that the local community can have the data they need to oversee the transformation process. The number of suspensions and expulsions should be a part of evaluating schools and principals, as should the level of student and parent engagement in their school's restorative justice plan. Local School Councils should include and monitor restorative justice plans as part of their School Improvement Plan for Advancing Academic Achievement.

Students need to be a part of evaluating discipline programs. The end of the year school survey already includes some questions about school climate. It should also include specific questions about discipline and restorative justice methods. Also, students who go through restorative justice processes can fill out exit surveys like the ones that Alternatives Inc. has used to evaluate their peer jury program participants.

### Qualities of Restorative Justice Trainers & Practitioners

A restorative justice trainer and/or practitioner, such as a school-based restorative justice coordinator, should have the following qualities:

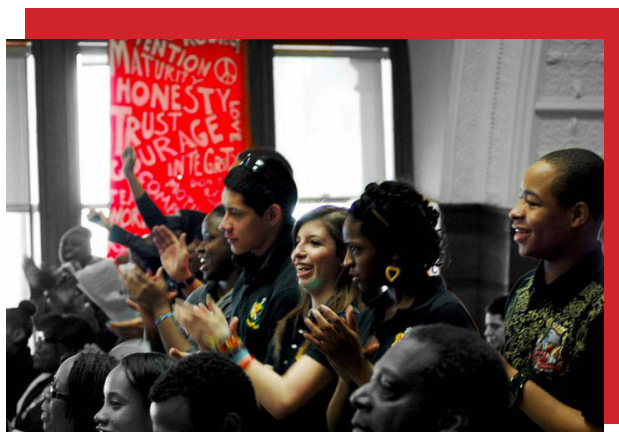
- » A belief in restorative justice philosophy
- » Skills, knowledge, and experience related to all of the following:
  - doing restorative practices with youth, parents and school personnel
  - facilitating groups using interactive methods
  - working with school staff to set up and sustain program structure (navigating the disciplinary structure, troubleshooting problems, etc.)
  - running an effective program within the context of an ever-changing and fast-paced environment
  - developing curriculum, trainings, and youth leaders
  - giving constructive feedback to students and staff in a way that is encouraging yet guides toward best practice
  - working well independently and as part of a team
  - completing paperwork in a timely and accurate manner
  - creatively documenting the success of the program and able to work with youth to articulate those successes to other students, school staff, parents, and administrators
- » Practice an asset-based approach in working with youth and able to form positive relationships with youth
- » Exceptional interpersonal communication and public speaking skills
- » Exceptional time management and organizational skills, good follow through, and the capacity to pay attention to detail
- » Ability to commit to being in the role of advisor/trainer for at least 2 years (to sustain relationships and build momentum within the work)

"If we're going to equip students to handle adulthood, we need to give them chances to remedy their harms, rather kicking them out of school all the time."

Principal Ernesto Matias of Wells High School

## Conclusion

In the 2011-2012 Student Code of Conduct, CPS states that "out-of-school suspensions should be used as a last resort, unless necessary due to the severity of a student's misconduct."<sup>60</sup> Moreover, CPS encourages principals and administrators to adopt and implement restorative justice philosophy and practices to address student misconduct. This report has outlined concrete steps that CPS leadership must take in order for restorative justice to become a reality in our schools. With this shift in priorities and investment, we can create the culture shift necessary to transform CPS into a truly restorative system and lower the dangerously high rates of suspensions and expulsions of Chicago students.



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## The Member Organizations of the High HOPES Coalition:



**Blocks Together** is a grassroots intergenerational group in the West Humboldt Park neighborhood organizing around issues of criminalization, privatization and equitable distribution of resources. The Blocks Together Youth Council has pushed back on school push-out and organized for alternatives to punitive discipline in schools since our Graduate Don't Incarcerate Campaign in 2006. BTYC campaigned for and piloted a restorative justice training tailored to school security guards and is working with the BT Parent Network to create a model for community-led whole-school approach to restorative justice at Cameron Elementary school.

## COMMUNITYRENEWALSOCIETY

**Community Renewal Society** is a 130-year-old faith based organization which fights for racial and economic justice in the Chicago metropolitan area. Through its network of more than 70 congregations, Community Renewal Society builds power to create change around issues of injustice. CRS also publishes two award winning investigative journalism magazines, the Chicago Reporter and Catalyst-Chicago, the latter of which has a 20 year history of investigating issues of school reform in Chicago Public Schools. Community Renewal Society has been at the forefront of numerous campaigns for education, housing, and criminal justice reform throughout Chicago and the state of Illinois.



**Enlace Chicago** is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of the residents of the Little Village Community by fostering a physically safe and healthy environment in which to live and by championing opportunities for educational advancement and economic development.



**ONE (Organization of the Northeast)** is a community organization of institutions and people that serves the mixed-income, multi-ethnic, intergenerational Chicago communities of Uptown, Edgewater, East and West Rogers Park, and Ravenswood. Established in 1974, ONE's mission is to build power and develop leadership so that the community can address critical human rights issues that improve our common life. ONE members want a community of opportunities in which income, race, and immigration status are not barriers to inclusion and access. We hold inalienable human rights and dignity that are critical components to create a fair and just society: the right to housing, work, education, and healthcare.



## POWER-PAC, Citywide Action



**POWER PAC, Parents Organized to Win, Educate and Renew - Policy Action Council**, is a city-wide organization of low-income African American and Latino parents. POWER-PAC launched their campaign, Elementary Justice: Redirecting the School to Prison Pipeline, in 2004 to address their concerns about the skyrocketing numbers of suspensions, expulsions and school-based arrests and to seek long-term solutions to this issue. In 2007 POWER-PAC won a major re-write to the CPS Student Code of Conduct to strike “zero-tolerance” and encourage restorative justice approaches. POWER-PAC is staff supported by Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI).



**Center for Change** utilizes youth and adult activism and grassroots organizing to increase the voice and power of those directly affected by oppression and bring them into a movement for racial and economic justice and gender equality. Their central youth organizing group, **Generation Y**, is led by youth of color making change in their everyday lives, forming and leading our community’s movements, while creating a world better for all! Center for Change is the Community Organizing Initiative of the Southwest Youth Collaborative, whose mission is to inspire youth, families, and community members from diverse economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds to become leaders in their communities.

## TRINITY UNITED CHURCH — of — CHRIST

**Trinity United Church of Christ** has been called by God to be a congregation that is not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ and that does not apologize for its African roots! As a congregation of baptized believers, we are called to be agents of liberation not only for the oppressed, but for all of God’s family. As a church family, Trinity acknowledges, that we will, building on this affirmation of “who we are” and “whose we are,” call men, women, boys and girls to the liberating love of Jesus Christ, inviting them to become a part of the church universal, responding to Jesus’ command that we go into all the world and make disciples!



The High HOPES (Healing Over the Punishment of Expulsions and Suspensions) Campaign is calling on Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to reduce suspensions and expulsions by 40% through the implementation of restorative justice practices, which are recognized and embraced in CPS' own Student Code of Conduct.

