



SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

Over the last several decades, the number of police officers on K–12 school campuses has increased.¹ In many school districts, the presence of police on campus has led to more citations and arrests among students of color, especially for behaviors that used to be addressed in school without police.² For community organizers and advocates, these arrests and citations show that schools rely too much on police to handle school discipline matters. Having contact with the police increases the likelihood that a student will have to repeat a grade, or will end up in the juvenile or criminal justice system.³ Arrests also harm young people. One arrest doubles a student’s chance of dropping out of school, even if they don’t end up being convicted of a crime.⁴ In California, ninety percent of Black men without high school diplomas are in jail or prison by age 35.⁵ This system, where children are funneled out of school and into juvenile and criminal justice systems is called the School to Prison Pipeline. In addition to these other harmful effects, relying on school police to handle school discipline can actually promote disorder and distrust in schools instead of increasing order and safety.⁶

Public Counsel is a member of the Dignity in Schools Campaign (DSC), a national coalition of parents, youth, organizers, and educators who want to dismantle the school to prison pipeline by challenging the ways students get pushed out of school and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. In Fall 2016, DSC issued a statement to promote solutions and alternatives to having police in schools, such as moving funding away from school police and shifting it towards more counselors, peace builders and positive discipline.⁷ The DSC statement also called for an end to stationed armed officers on school campuses. Some school communities are working toward reforms through strategic partnerships. These partnerships have come about through community organizing efforts that lift up the power of young people and their parents’ stories of fighting for change at their schools.⁸