THE NEW “SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL”:

Using California’s Local Control Funding Formula to Dismantle the School-to-Prison Pipeline

By

Community Rights Campaign of the Labor/Community Strategy Center & Black Organizing Project

MARCH 2014
About Us

Labor/Community Strategy Center’s Community Rights Campaign

The Strategy Center is a Think Tank/Act Tank for regional, national, and international movement building, founded in 1989 and based in the 10 million-person world city of Los Angeles. Our campaigns, projects, and publications are rooted in working class communities of color, and address the totality of urban life with a particular focus on civil rights, environmental justice, public health, global warming, and the criminal legal system.

Community Rights Campaign is a project of the Labor/Community Strategy Center. What do we want? To build a movement to free the U.S. 2.4 million prisoners and end the criminalization of our communities. These are our sisters and brothers. Of those 2.4 million human beings, almost 1 million are Black and more than 500,000 are Latino. This level of structural racism is a human rights violation. The Community Rights Campaign is organizing in L.A. high schools and among L.A.’s 500,000 low-income bus riders to build campaigns to push back the growing police/prison state and push forward an expanded social welfare state; to push back the police/prisons/punishment approach to organizing society and push forward a resources/reparations/redistribution approach.

“Hey LAUSD, I’m Pre-Med, Pre-Job, Not Pre-Prison!” We are leading a long-term campaign to challenge suppressive, pre-prison conditions in Los Angeles public schools and across the state and nation. We believe it is parents, teachers, and students—not police, tickets, and courts—who will lead the way to transforming our schools.

Black Organizing Project

The Black Organizing Project (BOP) is a black, member-led, community organization working for racial, social, and economic justice through grassroots organizing and community building in the Bay Area. BOP seeks to erode and replace the current system of structural racism in which low-income black people are systematically shut out of the decision-making process and the resources and opportunities needed for community safety, economic sustainability, and well-being. BOP’s Bettering Our School System (BOSS) campaign seeks to eliminate reliance on law enforcement and implement research-based school discipline alternatives to policing within the Oakland Unified School District.
Introduction

Because of Proposition 30 and the resulting Local Control Funding Formula, there is now more focus on educational equity in California schools than perhaps ever before. All across the state, policymakers and communities are having much-needed discussions about how state funding can help to better address the needs of our children and youth. These conversations are covering many of the most significant barriers that students face in obtaining a high-quality education. But there is one topic that continues to be off-limits in many of these discussions, despite being one of the most significant causes of educational injustice and inequality across the state: school policing.

For years, school districts have been expanding their police forces on the hunch that it would improve school safety, and by extension, school performance. However, not only is there no credible evidence to support this approach, there is ample evidence showing that schools with heavy police presence, which are invariably found in low-income communities of color, tend to create hostile and unwelcoming school climates that alienate students and fuel the familiar indicators of school failure: misbehavior, violence, absenteeism, and high dropout/pushout rates. Moreover, and as will be shown below, they have resulted in startlingly high rates of student involvement in the juvenile justice system and an array of irreparable harms for individual students, their families, entire communities, and the state as a whole.

The Community Rights Campaign of the Labor/Community Strategy Center and the Black Organizing Project have years of experience with the destructive impact of school policing on our communities. We have seen firsthand how countless young people – and especially Black, Latino, and other students of color – have been needlessly criminalized, in violation of both international human rights standards and California law.1 We have watched our school budgets be increasingly devoted to law-enforcement-based school security strategies at the expense of vital support and educational services that students need. And while we have made some important progress in our respective communities around limiting police involvement to where it is developmentally and educationally appropriate, we also recognize that California schools will never be equitable so long as some students attend caring, nurturing schools with regular access to guidance counselors, school psychologists, social workers, school nurses, and other support services, while other students attend heavily-policed schools in which they are always just one minor misstep away from being handcuffed, put in the back of a police cruiser, and winding up in juvenile court.

This policy brief is intended to contribute to the efforts to provide equal educational opportunities for all students and to dismantle the “school-to-prison pipeline.” We know that once in the juvenile or criminal justice system, many of our youth will never get out of it. That is why we must eliminate the policies and practices that push out and criminalize our students, and instead ensure that our schools are providing infrastructures of support to uphold students’ civil, human, and educational rights. It’s time for California to
write a new chapter, and instead of handing over responsibility for student discipline, school safety and school climate to law enforcement, courts, and the criminal system, let’s use the energy of youth, parents, teachers, and administrators to create the schools and communities our people deserve.

Local Control Funding Formula and Over-Policing

Fortunately, California school districts now have a rare opportunity to address their past school-safety missteps, reassess their priorities, and ensure that all schools are well-structured to meet students’ developmental needs. The new Local Control Funding Formula is specifically designed to benefit students from low-income communities, English learners, and foster youth, thus promoting greater equity in California schools. As such, the decisions made about how to allocate these state funds should address the most significant barriers these students face, and over-policing of their schools is undeniably one of them. Additionally, two of the eight “state priority areas” for allocating those funds are “school climate” and “student engagement,” both of which are heavily affected by the presence and role of police in schools.

Under-Education and Over-Incarceration

| Combined Enrollment in California State University System | 436,560 |
| Combined Population within California Prisons and Jails, on Parole, and on Probation | 598,600 |

Thus, within the many districts in which school policing has been a community concern, it should be a key component of the local decision-making process over the next few months. And these communities have a not-to-be-missed opportunity to replace their ineffective school police and security strategies with proven alternatives that promote healthy school climates, improved academic achievement, and greater school safety.

Civil Rights Milestones and the National Sea Change Around School Policing

It is particularly noteworthy that this opportunity presents itself in 2014, the 60th anniversary of Brown vs. Board of Education and the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. As a result of these two landmark advances in the struggle for racial justice and equality, our nation finally distanced itself from “Jim Crow” segregation and dispelled the myth of so-called “separate but equal” facilities. Nevertheless, following these victories, legalized discrimination was soon replaced by other forms of racialized oppression that, while less blatant, have still been devastating in their impact. Policies and practices such as those that lead to over-policing within communities of color and mass incarceration are Jim Crow’s heirs, and the anniversaries we commemorate this year remind us of the need to eradicate these new forms of “separate and unequal” treatment that continue to limit the opportunities within communities of color.

Fortunately, the tide has now turned nationally with regard to school police. Many districts, state policymakers, and even the federal government have now recognized the extensive harm caused by this approach and the need to end the over-policing of schools. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice recently released a comprehensive package of school discipline guidance in which school districts were cautioned against the involvement of police in “routine disciplinary matters,” “inappropriate student referrals to law enforcement,” and the
“negative unintended consequences” of an overly expansive role for school police.\textsuperscript{2}

“A routine school discipline infraction should land a student in a principal’s office – not in a police precinct.”

- Eric Holder, Attorney General of the United States (Jan. 8, 2014)

Summary of National Research

The DOJ/DOE guidance is consistent with the extensive research done nationally on the consequences of school policing, much of which has been discussed in our previous publications, as well as those of several national organizations that have expertise in this area.\textsuperscript{3}

The key findings include the following:

- School police have not been proven effective at improving school safety, and can actually make schools less safe by promoting increased disorder and violence.
- Having police in schools has produced more students being needlessly criminalized and sent into the juvenile justice system, often for routine, low-level offenses. This has been especially true for students of color, as well as students with disabilities, LGBTQ students, and homeless and foster youth.
- In fact, national estimates from the U.S. Department of Civil Rights indicate that Black and Latino students are over 80\% more likely to be arrested in school than their White peers.\textsuperscript{4} And recent research demonstrated that police officers were less likely to see Black youth as being “innocent,” and were more likely to view them as being older, and thus more culpable, than their White peers.\textsuperscript{5}

- Over-policing damages school climate and academic achievement, often creating toxic school environments that inhibit student engagement and the type of high-quality student/staff relationships necessary for effective education.
- The involvement of police in school-based incidents can lead to the escalation of a conflict with significant consequences—handcuffs, use of force, and most seriously, arrest. Students also report widespread use of searches and interrogations, drug-sniffing dogs, pepper spray, police intimidation, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, and excessive force, which can have a lasting psychological impact on youth, many of whom come from neighborhoods with a heightened police presence and already suffer from depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.
- School-based arrests subject students to serious short-term consequences within the juvenile justice system, while also having devastating long-term consequences, such as doubling the odds of school dropout, increasing the likelihood of future incarceration, and creating major obstacles during immigration-related processes and when applying for college, financial aid, the military, and certain jobs.
- In fact, according to a recent study, one in three families of incarcerated youth report that their child’s first contact with the justice system was from a school-based arrest or police referral.\textsuperscript{6}

- School policing is a very expensive policy, both in the short and long terms, while also diverting resources from more effective school safety measures, academic programs, and student support services. Over-policing of schools also weakens overall public safety by damaging community/police relations, reinforcing the school-to-prison pipeline, and diverting resources from serious safety concerns.
Moreover, we have extensive research documenting the many superior alternatives to school policing for creating safe and effective schools, including the use of developmentally appropriate disciplinary methods, investing in student supports and wraparound services, and programs such as restorative justice, Social Emotional Learning, Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and peer mediation. Unfortunately, the budgetary decisions in many California school districts do not currently reflect these more sensible approaches to school safety. The resulting harms to the students in these schools have been significant, and they have been avoidable.

Within the Local Control Funding Formula process, there is a unique opportunity to address these failings, and what may be the single most important social and political challenge of our generation: the systematic under-education and over-criminalization of our young people. We can undo some of the damage caused by the over-expansion of the justice system and its unnecessary encroachment upon the education system. And we can eliminate the “separate and unequal” schools that have been created by the over-policing of our children and youth across the state.

### Under-Education and Over-Incarceration

| Number of CA State Universities Built in Last 30 Years | 4 |
| Number of CA State Prisons Built in Last 30 Years | 23 |

School Police in California

Research from around the state indicates that the police presence within many school districts has become severely bloated. Rather than focusing on protecting students from safety threats that come from outside the school environment – as most people imagine the role of school police – the result in many communities has been the mass criminalization of students within the school environment.

**Over-Policed Districts Across the State**

While there is no data available on the total number of school-based police officers statewide, research from around the state indicates that a number of districts have very large school police forces. For example:

- Los Angeles Unified has its own police department with over 510 officers and staff.\(^7\)
- Oakland Unified has more than 115 law enforcement and security personnel.\(^8\)
- San Diego Unified’s police department has (as of 2011-12) 75 police officers, and is armed with AR-15 assault rifles.\(^9\)
- Santa Ana School Police Department has 66 officers and staff.\(^10\)
- Fontana Unified has 62 officers and staff, including a K9 unit.\(^11\) They are also equipped with high-powered semi-automatic rifles.\(^12\)
- Stockton Unified’s police department has 28 officers and staff.\(^13\)

In some schools, these officers may serve a useful function in protecting students and staff, and in fact some schools have explicit protocols that limit the role of police to actual safety threats (see below). However, in many others, they have taken on an oversized disciplinary role and have needlessly
introduced far too many students into the school-to-prison pipeline. In fact, according to the most recently available data, from 2009-10, well over 30,000 California students were referred to law enforcement in just one school year, and at least 20,000 students were arrested or given a police ticket (given the incomplete data available, the actual numbers may be much higher). Over 90% of the arrested and ticketed students were youth of color.

In just one school year, well over 30,000 California students were referred to law enforcement, and at least 20,000 students were arrested or given a police ticket. Over 90% of the arrested and ticketed students were youth of color.

For example, while it has made progress recently (discussed more below), as recently as 2011-12 Los Angeles Unified had the highest “Student Criminalization Rate” of any large district in the country, with a combined 8,993 arrests and police tickets. As can be seen in the table that follows, as well as the map below, many other districts around the state employ similar practices, criminalizing large numbers of students through school-based arrests and referrals to law enforcement.

In some cases, California school districts have arrested and referred their students to law enforcement at startling rates. For example, in San Jacinto Unified and Middletown Unified, there was one referral to law enforcement for every nine students in the district. In Hanford Joint Union High SD, there was one for every seven students. And in Campbell Union High SD, there was one referral to law enforcement for every three students in the district.

In contrast, there are schools, and districts, all over the state that continue to resolve the full array of school disciplinary issues without criminalizing their students. Thus, this set of policies must be a key focal point for any education policymaker concerned with creating equal opportunities to learn for California’s students.

### School-Based Arrests of Students in California School Districts

**Source:** 2009-10 U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School District</th>
<th>Student Population</th>
<th># of School-Based Arrests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stockton City Unified SD</td>
<td>38,360</td>
<td>760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego Unified SD</td>
<td>136,050</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura Unified SD</td>
<td>17,820</td>
<td>705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fontana Unified SD</td>
<td>42,805</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaheim Union High SD</td>
<td>32,925</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hacienda La Puente Unified SD</td>
<td>21,340</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temecula Valley Unified SD</td>
<td>30,395</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan Hill Unified SD</td>
<td>9,005</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield-Suisun Unified SD</td>
<td>21,455</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atascadero Unified SD</td>
<td>4,870</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In just one school year, well over 30,000 California students were referred to law enforcement, and at least 20,000 students were arrested or given a police ticket. Over 90% of the arrested and ticketed students were youth of color.

For example, while it has made progress recently (discussed more below), as recently as 2011-12 Los Angeles Unified had the highest “Student Criminalization Rate” of any large district in the country, with a combined 8,993 arrests and police tickets. As can be seen in the table that follows, as well as the map below, many other districts around the state employ similar practices, criminalizing large numbers of students through school-based arrests and referrals to law enforcement.

In some cases, California school districts have arrested and referred their students to law enforcement at startling rates. For example, in San Jacinto Unified and Middletown Unified, there was one referral to law enforcement for every nine students in the district. In Hanford Joint Union High SD, there was one for every seven students. And in Campbell Union High SD, there was one referral to law enforcement for every three students in the district.

In contrast, there are schools, and districts, all over the state that continue to resolve the full array of school disciplinary issues without criminalizing their students. Thus, this set of policies must be a key focal point for any education policymaker concerned with creating equal opportunities to learn for California’s students.
Referrals to Law Enforcement
Northern and Central California
Source: 2009-10 U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection

Referrals to Law Enforcement
Southern California
Source: 2009-10 U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection
Student Policing vs. Student Support
OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PSYCHOLOGISTS

COUNSELORS

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SECURITY
Student Policing Over Student Support

When California voters were asked whether hiring a school counselor or a police officer would be more effective at preventing violence, they overwhelmingly chose counselors, 67% to 26%. Most school administrators have similar views, with 68% of them listing the addition of counselors and support staff as the highest priority for addressing disciplinary issues. Nevertheless, within many districts, the excessive reliance on law enforcement has created school staffs that are severely out of balance, with expanding school police and security forces and shrinking numbers of supportive school personnel that are equipped to assist students with their developmental needs, such as guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, and nurses. For example:

- Oakland Unified has only 11 counselors, four psychologists, and zero social workers to go along with its 115 law enforcement and security staff members.
- Compared to its 62 police officers and security personnel, Fontana Unified has zero counselors and social workers, 29 psychologists, and 12 nurses.
- While Santa Ana Unified has 66 police personnel, it has only 58 counselors, 48 psychologists, 20 nurses, and nine social workers.

This reflects a broader statewide pattern in which California schools have severely under-funded school support staff. For example, statewide in 2012-13, there were 808 students for every counselor, 1,332 students for every school psychologist, 2,723 students for every school nurse, and 14,315 students for every school social worker. This continues an embarrassing trend in which California was last among all 50 states in providing counselors to students, and 45th in providing student support personnel, in 2010-11. Given the variety of academic, psychological, behavioral, emotional, and physical challenges that our students face on a daily basis, this level of staff support is grossly insufficient.

Misplaced Priorities

These types of misguided policy decisions have skewed school budgets across the state, putting excessive emphasis on school policing and giving far too little weight to building a more supportive school environment for students. For example,
in Los Angeles Unified, the 2013-14 combined budget for school police and security personnel was $91.3 million, which was more than what the district budgeted for afterschool programs, 73% more than it budgeted for counselors, and far more than double what it budgeted for health services and teacher assistants. In fact, the police/security budget was substantially more than the combined budgets for the arts program, psychologists, the Office of Civil Rights (charged with supporting the instruction of under-served students), instructional aides, psychiatric social workers, parent involvement, and career technical education.

Many other districts have made similarly questionable budgetary choices:

- Oakland Unified spent over $6.5 million on its school police department in 2012-13, but less than $1 million for school counselors.

- Stockton Unified has budgeted $3.6 million for its school police force in 2013-14 but only $2 million on counseling services, $1.2 million on “child welfare and attendance,” and $0.5 million on its parent resource center.

Indeed, in 2011-12 there were at least 18 other districts across the state that spent more on school security than they did on counselors, psychologists, and social workers. Among them were Inglewood Unified (which spent more on security than the other three categories combined), Twin Rivers Unified, Fontana Unified, Compton Unified, West Contra Costa Unified, Antioch Unified, Lynwood Unified, and Victor Valley Unified.

On top of these decisions are the overall budget cuts in districts across the state that resulted in there being 27,000 fewer teachers statewide in
2012-13, compared to five years earlier, despite there being over 48,000 more students. The increased student-teacher ratio has only made it harder to meet student needs, behavioral and otherwise.

One particularly damaging effect of these misplaced priorities is that they have deepened the longstanding resource inequities faced by communities of color. Resources that could have gone towards support staff, afterschool programs, and more effective disciplinary alternatives (and did in other districts) instead went towards school police, security guards, and surveillance cameras in these school districts, which serve mostly Black and Latino youth. In other words, an increasing percentage of the funds allocated to California’s low-income youth of color have been used in ways that have actively harmed them.

Conclusion and Recommendations

All across California, and across the country, school districts are providing safe environments without putting their students at risk of criminalization and undermining school performance. Even those districts that have relied heavily on police in recent years are recognizing past missteps and putting greater restrictions on police involvement in schools. For example:

▶ Los Angeles Unified has substantially reduced its use of police tickets and arrests, nearly ceased the criminalization of truancy offenses, instituted a policy to prevent the frequent use ticketing for students ages 12 and under, and passed a School Climate Bill of Rights that commits to defining and limiting the role of school police on campus.

▶ San Francisco Unified strengthened its longstanding agreement to limit police involvement to situations in which: (a) student safety is threatened; (b) the law requires an officer to be involved; or (c) there is criminal activity by non-students on or near school grounds. Even if an officer intervenes in an incident involving students, they are expected to avoid making an arrest and instead to employ graduated responses, including the use of restorative practices.

▶ Pasadena Unified revised its agreement with the Pasadena Police Department in 2013 to specify that police are to focus on legitimate safety threats and not school disciplinary matters.

▶ Oakland Unified has enhanced the transparency and public accountability of its police practices by implementing a process for filing complaints regarding the conduct of school police and issuing a semi-annual public report summarizing the complaints filed.
Many other school districts around the country have taken similar steps, including such large districts as Denver Public Schools, Clayton County (GA) Public Schools, and Broward County (FL) Schools. Additionally, the Texas legislature recently passed a law that prevents students from being ticketed for Class C misdemeanor offenses.

What these jurisdictions have all recognized is that creating safe schools requires less police involvement, not more. They have faced up to the reality that the over-reliance on school-based law enforcement is ineffective, harmful, and costly. Indeed, when our current practices have resulted in putting one in three Black boys, and one in six Latino boys, on the path to prison, the imperative for every youth-serving institution to revisit their contributions to these dynamics should be clear.

To create safe and effective schools, the best strategies have little to nothing to do with police; instead, they involve taking a 360 degree approach to building the strong, supportive, high-functioning environments in which the full array of students’ developmental needs are met. The new Local Control Funding Formula presents California school districts with a golden opportunity to create such environments for the students who need them the most. We can ensure that no California student is treated like a criminal within what should be the sanctuary of school. We can eliminate the hostile and unhealthy environments created by excessive police presence. In short, we can put an end to the “separate and unequal” schools created by excessive reliance on school police, and instead ensure that every child and youth in California is given a full and equal opportunity to obtain the high-quality education that they deserve.

Local Control Funding Formula Recommendations – State

1. State regulatory guidance should require districts to account for the impact of police presence in schools, report data on the use of law enforcement in handling student behaviors, and encourage the use of alternatives to school police.
2. State regulatory guidance should ensure that Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) funds are directed to school sites with the highest rates of criminalization and school pushout.
3. State regulatory guidance should make explicit that LCFF funds are not to be used for school police.

Local Control Funding Formula Recommendations – Local

1. Individual school districts should ensure that their Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) provides for distribution of LCFF funds to schools serving the highest concentrations of low-income students, English learners, and foster youth.
2. School districts should convene public conversations involving students, parents/guardians, and other community members around the impact of school policing, the availability of alternatives, and how that should affect the development of their LCAPs.
3. School districts should not allocate any LCFF funds to school-based police, nor should other funding sources be used to supplant state funds for school police. Instead, LCFF funds should be directed toward the following:
   a. Creating a strong prevention infrastructure by (1) increasing the number of school support staff able to provide prevention and intervention services, such as counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses, and community intervention workers; (2) investing in positive and evidence-based alternatives to school
policing, such as restorative justice, Social Emotional Learning, Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and peer mediation; and (3) ensuring that all such efforts are directed at reducing racial disparities in educational opportunities.

b. Using existing model approaches and recommendations (see above) to develop local protocols for responding to student disciplinary matters without needlessly relying on police and the juvenile court.

c. Assessing how other factors – such as smaller class sizes, more well-rounded and engaging curricula, expansion of ethnic and cultural studies, improved teacher training and support, more afterschool programs, and enhanced student/staff relationship-building – can improve school safety.

4. School districts should specify as core metrics within their LCAPs the use of school-based arrests, tickets, and referrals to law enforcement, and the reduction of racial disparities within the use of those sanctions.

Endnotes

1. See, e.g., Dignity in Schools Campaign, Treaties and Guidelines Addressing Discipline and Pushout, at http://dignityinschools.org/content/treaties-and-guidelines-addressing-discipline-and-dropout; CA Education Code, Sections 200 & 201 (prohibiting the discriminatory creation of a hostile school environment that impedes equal educational opportunities).


7. See Los Angeles School Police Department, at http://www.laspd.com/about.html


disciplinary issues arose. police involvement for whatever did not subject their students to of districts across the state that certainly a very large number arrests and simply failed to report undoubtedly made referrals and arrests. Id. While some – and reported zero school-based to law enforcement, and 375 U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, at http://ocrdata.ed.gov; LAUSD data on file with authors.

15. Id.


17. Because California does not collect data on the issuance of school-based arrests and referrals to law enforcement, the best source of data is the federal Civil Rights Data Collection, the latest available version of which (at the time of printing) is from 2009-10. Supra note 14.

18. Id.

19. Id.

20. Id.

21. For example, of the 502 districts that reported data to the U.S. Department of Education, 241 reported making zero referrals to law enforcement, and 375 reported zero school-based arrests. Id. While some – and perhaps many – of these districts undoubtedly made referrals and arrests and simply failed to report them accurately, there were certainly a very large number of districts across the state that did not subject their students to police involvement for whatever disciplinary issues arose.