

NYC PUBLIC SCHOOL DISCIPLINE CODE THE GOOD, BAD, & UNKNOWN

What is the current discipline code?

On September 7, 2017, Chancellor Carmen Fariña of the New York City Department of Education (DOE) sent families a letter to introduce the updated *Citywide Behavioral Expectations to Support Student Learning* (Discipline Code) for students K-12. The letter encouraged families to read a total of 80 pages on disciplinary responses and interventions.

What are the standards of student behavior? What are the consequences? Who decides?

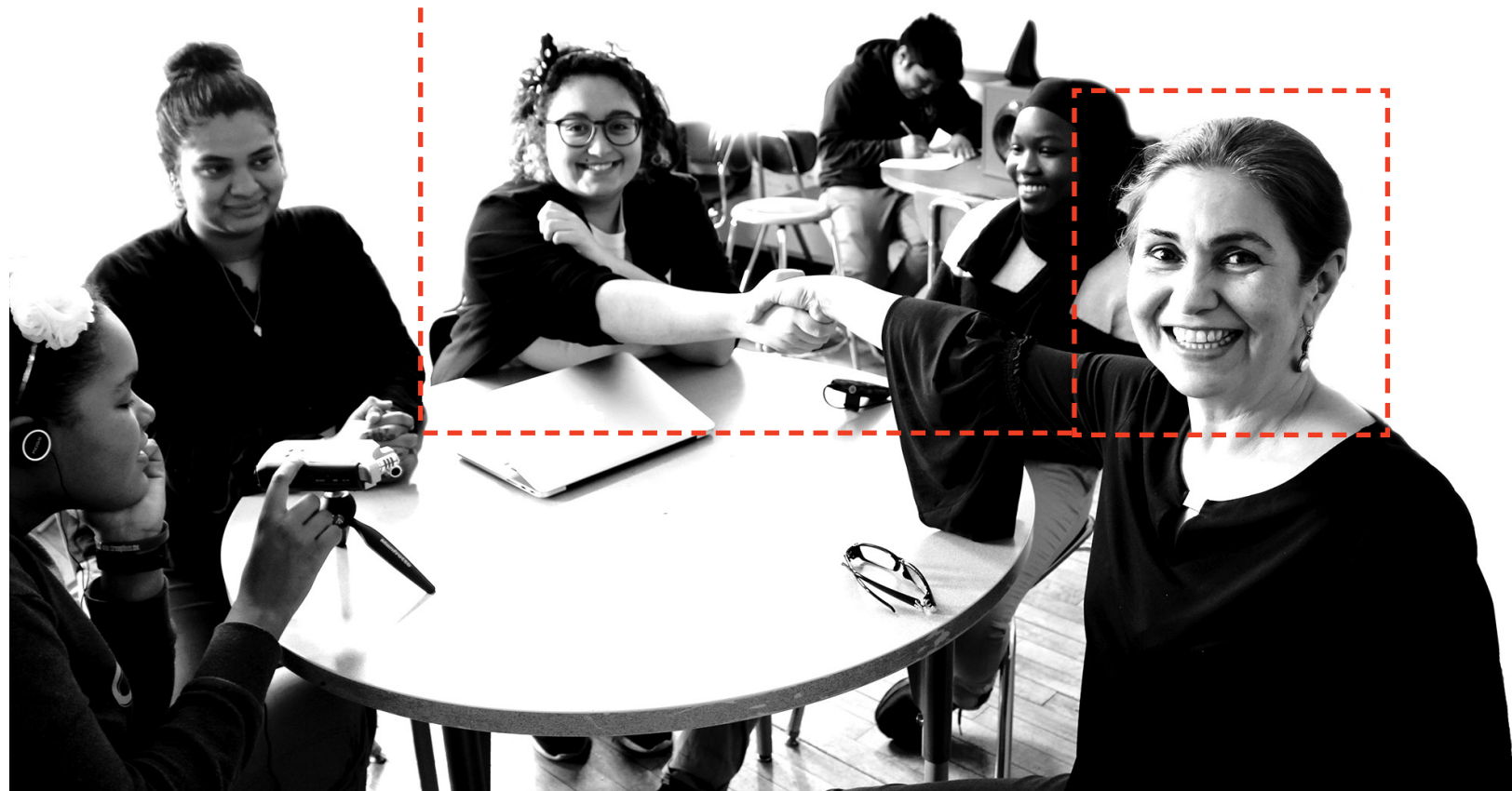
In the spring of 2018, CUP collaborated with Teaching Artist Nupur Mathur and public high school students at Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy (KAPPA) International High School in the Bronx to dig a little deeper into school discipline. To investigate, students got out of the classroom to survey their school community on student rights and responsibilities, and interview key DOE staff on school safety. Students created this newspaper to break down the 80 pages of the Discipline Code and imagine the future for their school.

“Principals do not get to decide the rules because we are a big entity. KAPPA is just one school of almost 2,000 public schools in New York City. The DOE comes up with a discipline code, which is like a behavior code. It tells you what the inappropriate behavior is and what are the infractions.”

-Panorea Panagiosoulis, KAPPA principal

“Over the past three years at KAPPA, what I have found to be more difficult is the drama that results from social media comments, because it escalates quickly, and doesn’t involve two individuals. It’s usually a group of people that surround it. What happens in the social media realm is brought into school. And then students are eager to fight. Trying to identify who the victim is and who the offender is can be very complicated.”

The DOE uses progressive discipline, the process of using increasingly severe disciplinary responses when a student fails to change inappropriate behavior. Behaviors and disciplinary responses are grouped into five different levels.



KAPPA students interview Principal Panorea Panagiosoulis.

How are the rules enforced?

“When I was a principal, our only discipline code was no weapons and you can’t fight here. Kids who didn’t want to go to class didn’t have to. My challenge to the teachers was to make what happens in class more interesting than what happens on the street. And we did.”

-Eric Nadelstern, Former Deputy Chancellor and Founding Principal of the International High School at LaGuardia Community College



KAPPA students interviewed Joshua Laub, Jasmine Fernandez, and Kenyatte Reid from the New York City Department of Education on school rules and discipline.



Eric Nadelstern talks to KAPPA students at Columbia University, Teachers College about his experience as a former principal and Deputy Chancellor.

“The Chancellor’s office, the head of the DOE, creates and promotes the discipline code but most of the school principals just ignore it.”

“I was a principal for 11 years and to be honest I didn’t open the discipline guide all that much, if at all. It is just a framework. A reference. A guide for schools that need it.”

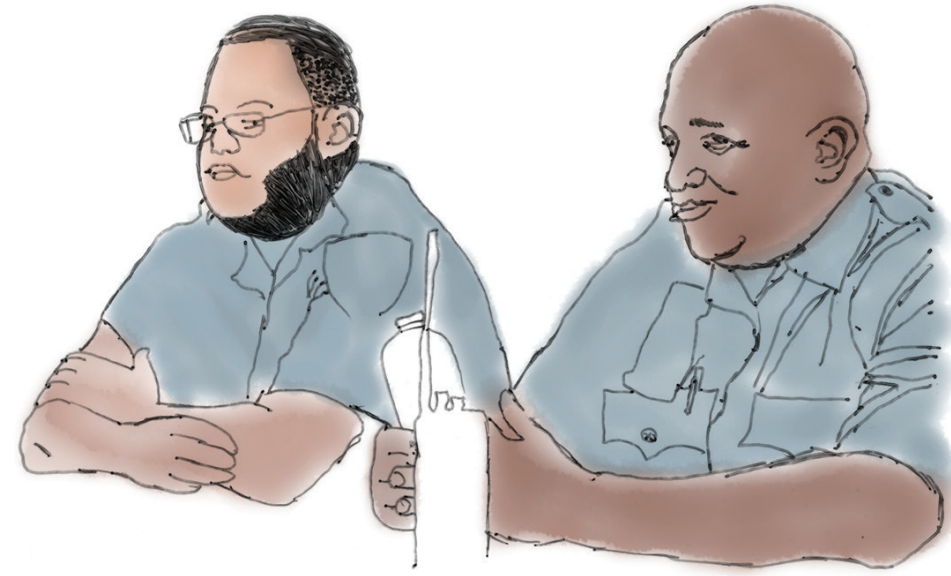
-Anonymous community member, former principal

Level	1	2	3	4	5
Behavior	Uncooperative behavior, such as being late for class	Disorderly behavior, such as smoking or using obscene language	Disruptive behavior, such as vandalism or a physical confrontation	Aggressive or harmful behavior, such as cyber-bullying or causing serious physical injury	Seriously dangerous or violent behavior, such as selling drugs or using a weapon
Disciplinary Response	Meetings with the student or parent conferences	Same response as Level 1	Suspension up to 90 days	Suspension up to 135 days	Suspension up to 1 year or expulsion if the student is 17 or older

Who are school safety agents?

School safety agents are sworn police officers, not security guards, who are employed by and report to the New York Police Department (NYPD). They are hired to provide security and ensure the safety of students, faculty, and visitors in NYC public school buildings. They patrol the school, operate scanning equipment, verify identity, challenge unauthorized personnel, and escort visitors.

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In NYC, there are more safety agents per student than other cities have police officers per citizen.



KAPPA safety agents spoke with the students about their role at the school.

There are over 2,000 more school safety agents than school guidance counselors in NYC.

“There are over 5,000 school safety agents in NYC public schools. These numbers would make the NYPD’s School Safety Division the fifth largest police force in the country, larger than the police forces in Washington, D.C., Detroit, Boston, or even Las Vegas. In the morning when I go to school, the first thing I see are the safety agents. And then there are more safety agents at the metal detector. And then there’s more in the hallways and the elevators. It feels like a prison and not a school.”

-Blake Coniglio, KAPPA student

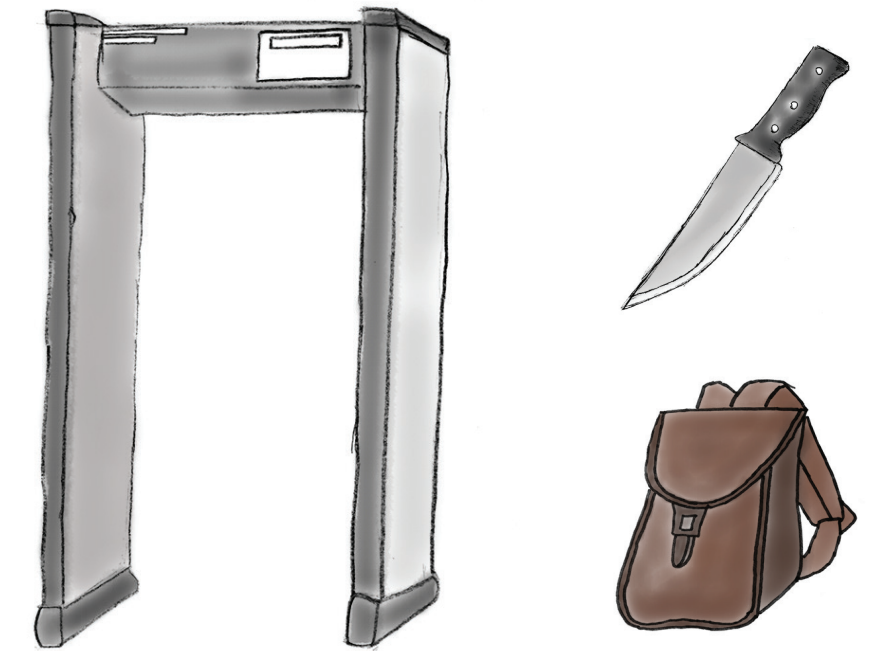


Do metal detectors make our schools safer?

NYC spends, on average, \$3,000 more per student who attend a school that does not have metal detectors. Students in schools with metal detectors receive less funding each school year.

High schools with metal detectors are overcrowded, with 18% more students than classroom seats.

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Over 90,000 students pass through permanent metal detectors every school day in New York City.

“There are all sorts of ways to get around scanning. There are better ways of doing that. In the end, what we’re after is to get students to internalize self-control and discipline around learning and around conducting their lives. Not setting up all these external contraptions so that they don’t have to develop the self-control.”

-Eric Nadelstern



“When I first came into this school 11 years ago, I hated metal detectors. I thought the scanning was the worst way to begin the morning. I thought it dehumanized our students. I thought it was almost like this prison mentality. However, I have also seen the illicit materials that students have brought in. I do believe metal detectors are a deterrent to possible violent issues that might arise otherwise. Knives have been confiscated. We’ve had makeshift weapons confiscated at scanning. Before, a couple years ago, kids would bring in a water bottle and put alcohol in it. Vodka. Kids were getting sick. I now believe that because of the current reality it’s better that we are a scanning school.”

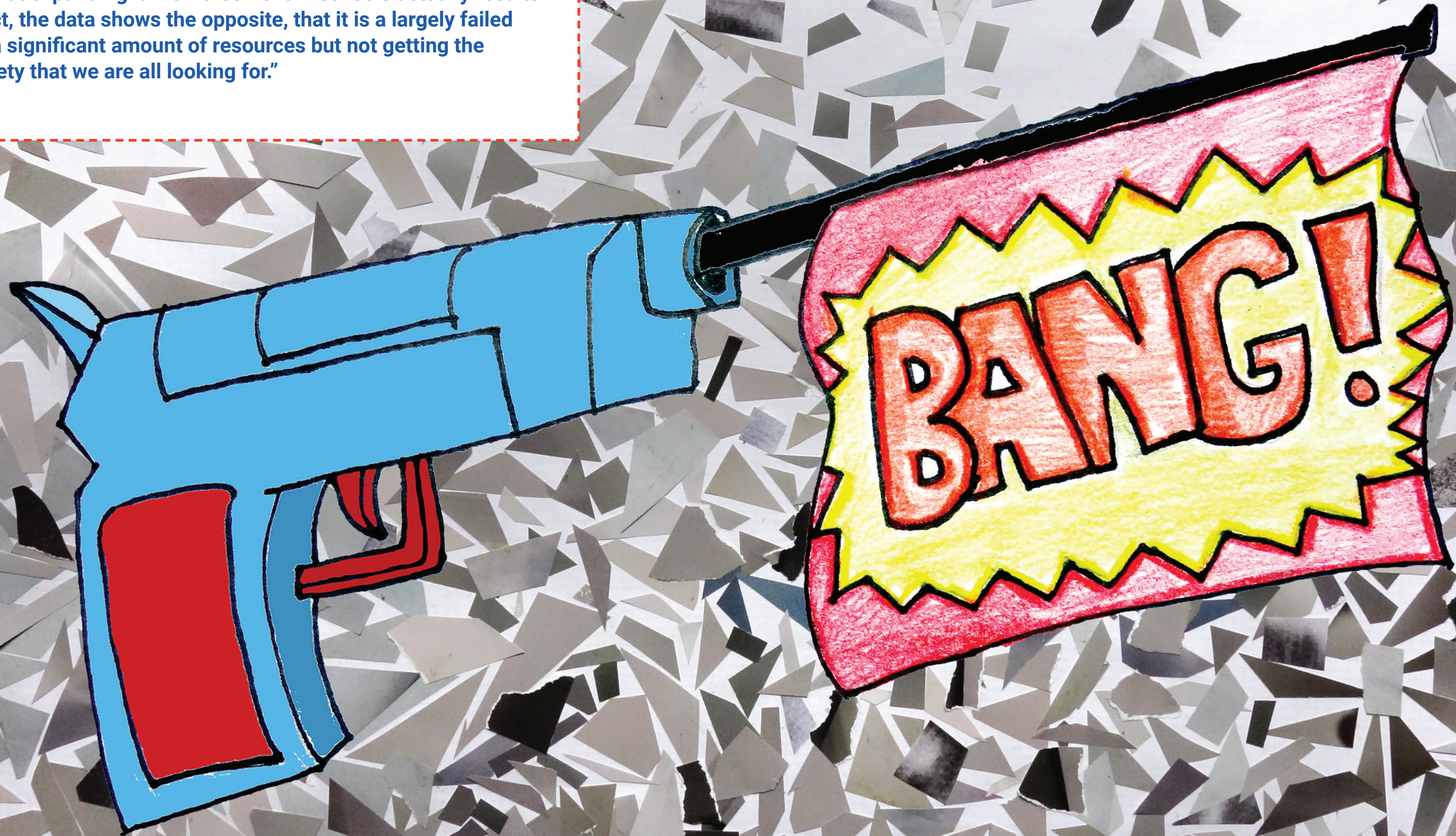
-Panorea Panagiosoulis



“Major crimes, arrests, and use of restraints are at an all time high in NYC public schools. Research shows that the use of school safety agents brings unintended consequences for students, such as a higher rate of suspensions, expulsions, and arrests that funnel kids into the criminal justice system, especially for schools attended predominantly by students of color.

There is no evidence that expanding law enforcement in schools actually results in safer schools. In fact, the data shows the opposite, that it is a largely failed approach in devoting a significant amount of resources but not getting the outcome in school safety that we are all looking for.”

—www.justicepolicy.org



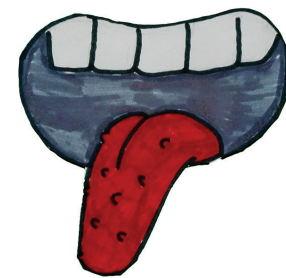
What's the deal with suspensions?

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A student can get suspended for up to 135 school days. There are a total of 180 school days per year, leaving only 45 days to learn a full year's worth of information.

"There's a correlation between kids whose lives are surrounded by toxic violence, families without a livable wage, and lack of housing and kids who act up or don't behave as well in school. We blame those kids for not doing well in school rather than blaming their situations. We suspend or expel them rather than giving them the resources they need to succeed. That doesn't feel right."

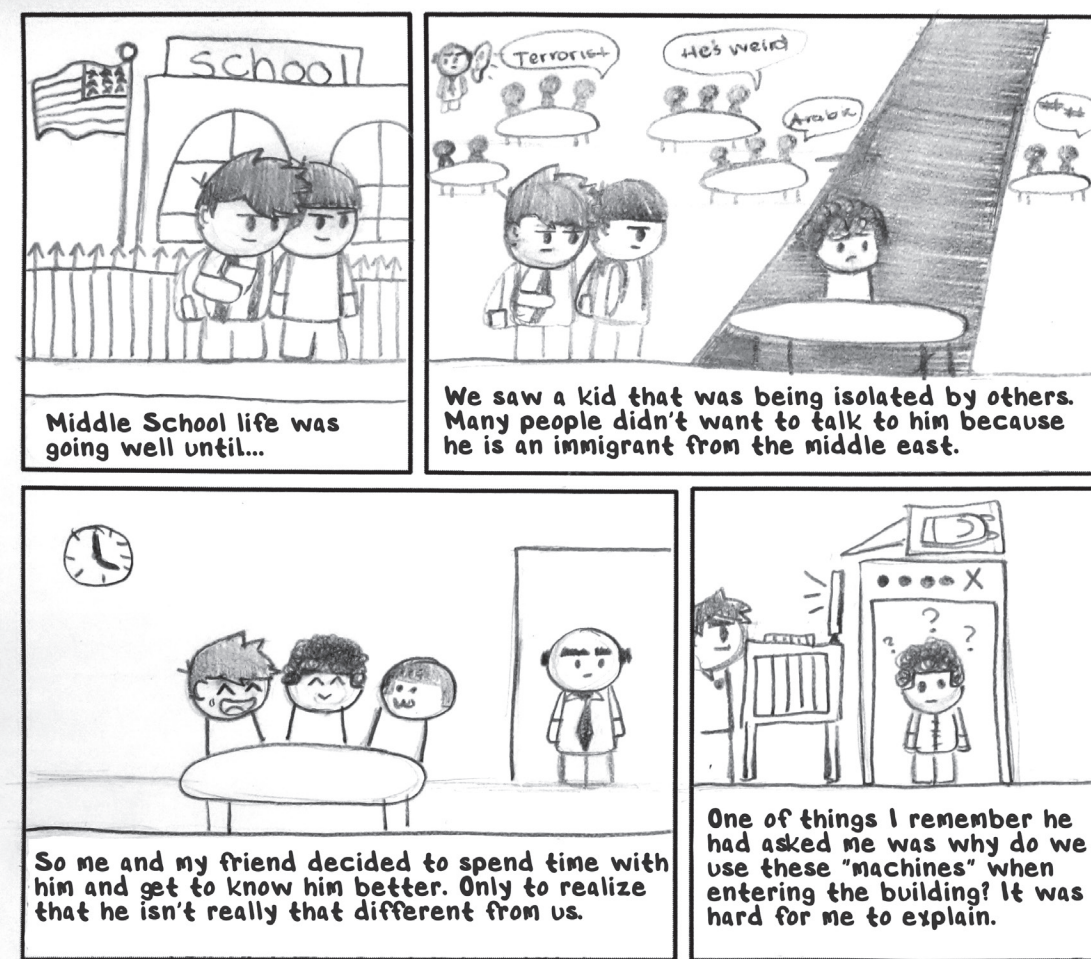
-Anonymous community member, former principal



"I'm more aware of kids that are isolated and are not taking part in school activities. If I see, or it comes to my attention, that kids are being picked on or they don't feel safe I request a meeting with the other kids and we try to do restorative circles. We try to talk about it first. And if that doesn't work then we call the parents. If it has been a terrible act, like there has been a fight, then I will suspend. But suspension is not effective. It's not a learning tool."

-Panorea Panagiosoulis

During the 2017-2018 school year, there was an average of one guidance counselor or social worker per 167 students.



(Not So) Fun Facts

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In NYC public schools, 43% of male students are people of color...



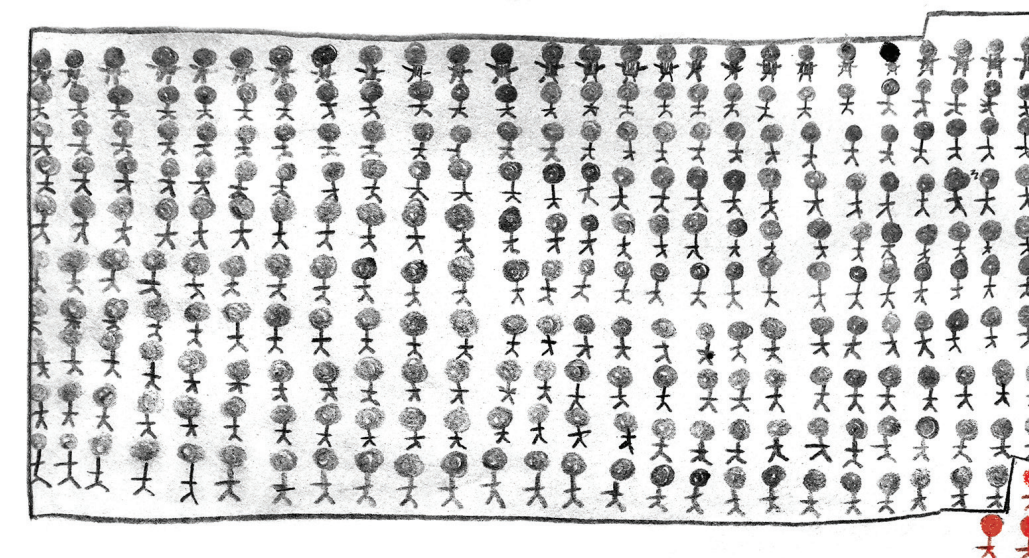
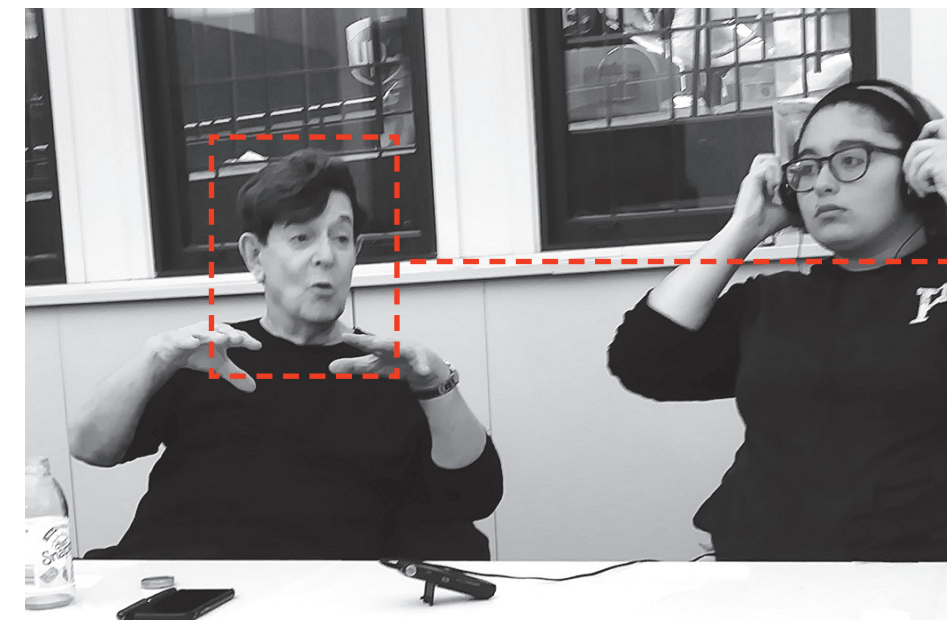
...yet only 8% of male teachers are people of color.

"We need role models in our classrooms that look like the young people if we want people to engage more in school."

-Anonymous community member, former principal

"Some students do whatever you tell them to do and they graduate from high school and they can't get a job. Other students realize that's going to be the case and they find ways to leave before they graduate. And if you can't find honest work, people are going to figure out a way to feed themselves and their families. This is the school to prison pipeline and it discriminates against people of color who have a harder time finding jobs than white kids who graduate."

-Eric Nadelstern



In 2016, 262 disciplinary responses in NYC public schools involved the use of handcuffs. Out of those responses, 259 involved Black and Latino students.

What is the future of school discipline?

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KAPPA student Avree Downing peers into the future of school discipline.

"I'm a firm believer in restorative justice. When a student commits an offense, they are brought before a panel of other students who examine the offense and decide what the penalty is. That's different than someone you've never met, like the Chancellor, already having decided your fate for you. **Restorative justice is all about the students and self-control, not external control.** As long as it's about external control, you're not safe in the real world."

-Eric Nadelstern

"Here's the problem: public education, like most public systems, is set up around the adults in them. Public hospitals are set up around the doctors and nurses, not around the patients. And public schools are set up around the supervisors and teachers, not around the kids. The people who benefit most are the adults. What we should try to do is put students at the top of the equation and all the rest of us work on behalf of kids."

How can you get involved?

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"Some schools have more resources and some schools have better advocates. What we do here, we try to make sure that our kids are armed with that knowledge and the wisdom to advocate for themselves so they can reach those resources. I can't ask for change when the parents are not complaining or the kids are not complaining either, and not demanding excellence. Students need to join student government, get to know the principal, ask questions. Never be afraid to ask questions. If you don't know something then ask because that's our responsibility. We're here to educate you. And if we don't have the answers it's our responsibility to seek those answers. **I like it when kids tell me that things are not working because then I know that they are being observant, and that they want to make a difference.** I also like when they tell me the good, the bad, and the ugly, because we're a community. At the end of the day KAPPA is about the students. And so if students don't get involved we can't continue to grow and make our school better."

-Panorea Panagiosoulis

"I think that the first step in striving for change is to understand anything that was touched upon lightly in a conversation, where we're coming from, and what type of things have affected us and how that differs from everything else. Always take into account what you are going through, what things in your life are being normalized, and why you think things are the way they are. **Ask yourself 'Why do I think this? What around me has allowed me to think this?' Be aware of what makes you you.** What makes your thoughts and ideals what they are today? I feel like we sometimes forget that and we're just ready to throw our opinion out there. You forget to analyze why it is that you have this opinion because sometimes you'll come to realize that an opinion you might have is not even your own opinion. It's something that has just been normalized by everything else."

Lucy Funes, KAPPA student

Contact your principal and let them know about the good, bad, and unknown at your school.

Get involved with your fellow NYC students and advocate for change at www.integratenyc.org.

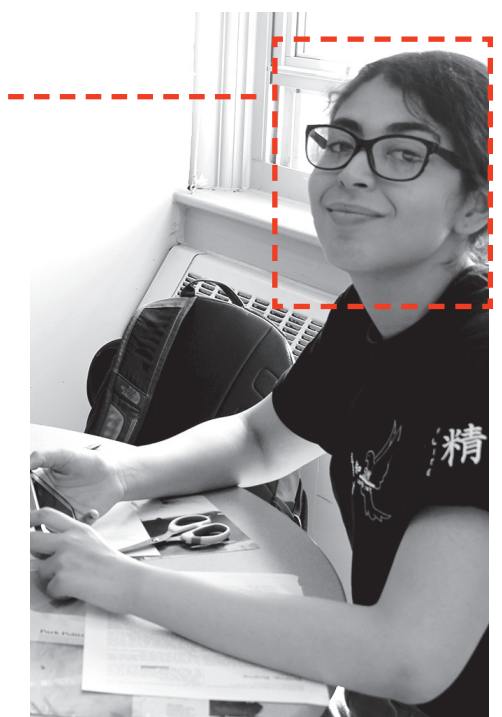
Report harassment, discrimination, and/or bullying behavior to RespectforAll@schools.nyc.gov.

Let the Chancellor know what's on your mind by calling 718-935-2000.



"We need to have our voices heard more in this topic. Adults should not be the only ones talking about and making the discipline codes if it affects the students."

-Pedro Millan, KAPPA student



The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, particularly among historically underrepresented communities.

This project is one of CUP's Urban Investigations – project-based afterschool programs in which high school students explore fundamental questions about how the city works. Students collaborate with CUP and teaching artists to create multimedia teaching tools that reach audiences in the fields of arts and social justice.

To learn more about CUP, visit welcometoCUP.org.

CUP

Teaching Artist: Nupur Mathur
Project Leads: Jenn Anne Williams
Project Support: Clair Beltran

Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy (KAPPA) International High School is a small public high school in the Bronx dedicated to preparing its students for success in college. KAPPA offers the International Baccalaureate Program for all interested and on-track Juniors and Seniors.

To learn more, visit kappainternational.org.

KAPPA

Principal: Panorea Panagiosoulis
Assistant Principal: Casey Smith
Teaching Artist Assistant: Gifty Boanoh
Students: Alejandro Carrillo, Amaya Hunt, Avree Downing, Blake Coniglio, Brianna Douglas, Jaslyn Sarante, Jenebu Jabbi, Lucy Funes, Manuela Castillo, Pedro Millan, Sanjeeda Tanne

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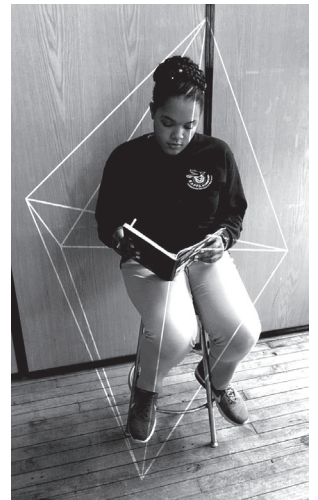
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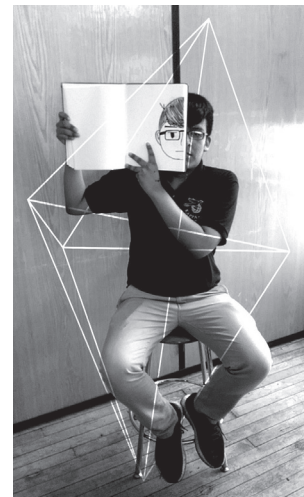
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