

June 2019

We, the undersigned coalition of education and social justice advocates and organizers, call for a 20% increase in the budget for critically-needed school support staff by 2020. We also call for an immediate freeze on the hiring of additional school police and encourage you to redirect those funds to the hiring of school support staff, such as counselors, therapists, social workers, career and college counselors, and Title IX coordinators.

With 1.1 million students in NYC, it's long past time that we give our students more support staff to actually meet the varied and dynamic needs of our students if we are to truly prepare them to successfully navigate today's world.

Right now, that support system is virtually nonexistent, especially for young New Yorkers of color. According to a NYC Department of Education report, in 2018, there were 2,880 guidance counselors and 1,293 social workers serving the 1.1 million students in NYC's public schools. That is roughly 382 students per guidance counselor and 851 students per social worker -- far too many for any one staff member to support effectively or to even know a student by their name.

The Center for Popular Democracy reports that in 2016, there were 5,511 NYPD personnel in NYC public schools, a staggering 190 of who were armed. These statistics aren't just unacceptable and frightening, they're indicative of a growing inability to support the full needs of our youth — especially the marginalized. In NYC, 114,659 youth — that's 1 out of every 10 students — are homeless and 74% of public school youth are economically disadvantaged. Moreover, 96% of teens surveyed by Pew Research Center indicated that anxiety and depression are of the top problems they and their peers face. Given these realities, having more NYPD staff than student support staff is a terrible injustice.

Every young person deserves safe, high-quality, holistic, and transformative educational experiences. If we believe in equity and want to create the future all New Yorkers deserve, we must build within our schools systems of accountability, restorative justice, and behavioral management. We must use the millions of dollars currently directed to the NYPD to occupy our schools to instead invest in our students, their successes, and their academic futures.

If we are to truly create the schools we want for our youth and they want for themselves, we have to increase the budget and hire thousands of student support staff across NYC public schools while putting a stay on hiring more school police.

Signed,

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