



Ramsey County Attorney's Office

Community Task Force on Safe Schools

Final Report

February 2017

In partnership with



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Letter from the Co-Chairs to the County Attorney

Attorney Choi:

It is with a great sense of hopefulness that we submit the recommendations of the Community Task Force on Safe Schools. We are honored to have been involved in the important conversations that led to these recommendations. And, we are confident that the task force has identified many of the factors that contribute to positive school climate. If implemented with fidelity across the county, we believe these recommendations would ultimately result in greater success for the children and youth of Ramsey County.

As we reflected on the task force deliberations since last summer, we were reminded of an incident involving the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., recounted in the book *Martin Luther King on Leadership*. In September 1962, as King sat on the stage during a Southern Christian Leadership Convention, a white member of the Nazi party jumped up to the podium and punched him several times in the face. As the security guards rushed to help him and pulled away the hate-filled youth, King responded, calmly, that he would not press charges. He said: "The system that we live under creates people such as this youth. I am not interested in pressing charges. I'm interested in changing the kind of system that produces this kind of man."

The recommendations in this report reflect committee members' deep desire to change systems and identify holistic solutions that resist placing blame, or further polarizing our communities based on race, income or zip code. Like Dr. King, most on the committee were disinclined to perpetuate practices that have led to racially disproportionate contact with the juvenile justice system, and contributed to academic and opportunity gaps predictable by race and income. Rather, we believe systemic changes to policies and practices are what will ultimately create safe schools and safer communities in ways that are sustainable over time.

We believe safe and effective learning environments have a positive effect on the lives of students, staff and families. But, as we discovered, many things impact school climate, not all of them within the schools' control. Therefore, our work did not focus solely on recommendations for systems-level change. We recognized, for example, that one of the most important roles parents and caregivers have is to equip their children with effective problem-resolution tools. Some parents are well-positioned to accomplish that; others need support. A lingering question for the task force is how community-based organizations, faith-based institutions and other non-profits can undergird and supplement those parents who want their children to succeed, but are not currently in a place to help them achieve that success.

We also encourage those who may work to implement some of the recommendations in this report to intentionally seek to include student voice. School safety affects students and many of them desperately want to be part of the solution; we need to help find ways to better engage them.

Also, we understand that despite the best efforts of many, there will be a need to further explore the creation of alternative learning opportunities for students who are removed from the regular school setting for failing to comply with the safe goals that we have set. More discussion is needed to ensure that these opportunities are designed to focus on academic supports and interventions rather than on punishment and separation or exclusion for certain groups of students.

In conclusion, the work of this task force has reinforced for us the idea that safe schools cannot occur in isolation. Community members must join with elected officials and school leaders to engage youth before, during and after school as we try to protect and create safe and respectful learning environments across Ramsey County. School leaders must find ways to work with parents and community members to make sure that students know that the adults of this community will set limits; the adults of this community will protect them; and the adults in this community will model the level of respect that we expect to see from students as well.

Respectfully,

Jeremiah E. Ellis
Committee Co-chair

Suzanne P. Kelly
Committee Co-chair

Background, Process and Guiding Principles

Background

In winter of the 2015-16 school year, Ramsey County Attorney John Choi announced that he would convene a task force in response to an increasing number of incidents reaching his office involving student acts of physical aggression against staff in their official capacity. Throughout the 2015-16 school year, the County Attorney and his staff spoke with Superintendents, teachers, school staff, students, parents, and others in the community who care deeply about our schools and are invested in being part of the solution. The narratives and themes that emerged from those conversations included concerns about increased disrespect among adults and youth, significantly disproportionate numbers of African American students reflected in discipline data and the worrisome trajectories for those students.

In June of 2016, the County Attorney convened the *Community Task Force on Safe Schools* to bring together stakeholders with diverse perspectives from across the Ramsey County community to better understand dynamics contributing to incidents of physical aggression in youth and recommend community-based solutions to improve safety in schools for students and staff. A total of 39 task force members were appointed, with most members attending a majority of task force sessions between June 29, 2016, and January 9, 2017. (See Appendix for a list of task force members.)

The County Attorney, in his guidance to the task force, noted that the challenges illustrated by incidents at school are really symptoms of a broader community dynamic that plays out in homes, neighborhoods and schools, and not simply a “school problem” for the schools to solve on their own. Schools are a logical place for conflicts to arise because that is where young people collectively spend the majority of their time with each other and adults. The intent of the task force and the recommendations provided by it is not to micromanage schools and school districts, but to move upstream and support the development of meaningful relationships and collaborative partnerships across Ramsey County to prevent incidents and help keep Ramsey County youth from ending up in the justice system.

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The task force included parents, teachers, school resource officers, youth workers, students and others who bring firsthand knowledge of the struggles youth face and the types of behavior to which adults are challenged to respond. The County Attorney sought to make representation geographically and demographically representative of the community in Ramsey County. In order to ensure the task force functioned as an independent body, not beholden to any one agenda, the County Attorney selected two co-chairs, Jeremiah Ellis and Suzanne Kelly, to help develop and guide the work of the task force and contracted with an independent consultant to facilitate the process. Thanks to the generosity of the Bush Foundation, the County Attorney’s Office was able to hire TeamWorks International Inc., a Minnesota-based consulting group grounded in education and non-profit organizational development and planning, to facilitate the process.

The task force members felt it was important to explicitly state that they contributed their expertise, time and talent to this effort because of their fervent belief in the young people in our community. It was, ultimately, that faith that guided the development of recommendations included in this report and the commitment of many task force members to advocate for implementation of recommendations beyond the conclusion of the

task force's official work. Task force members agreed that the goal is to create safe and supportive schools that embrace and welcome all students and that intentionally serve our most marginalized youth.

The task force engaged in finding solutions to ensure:

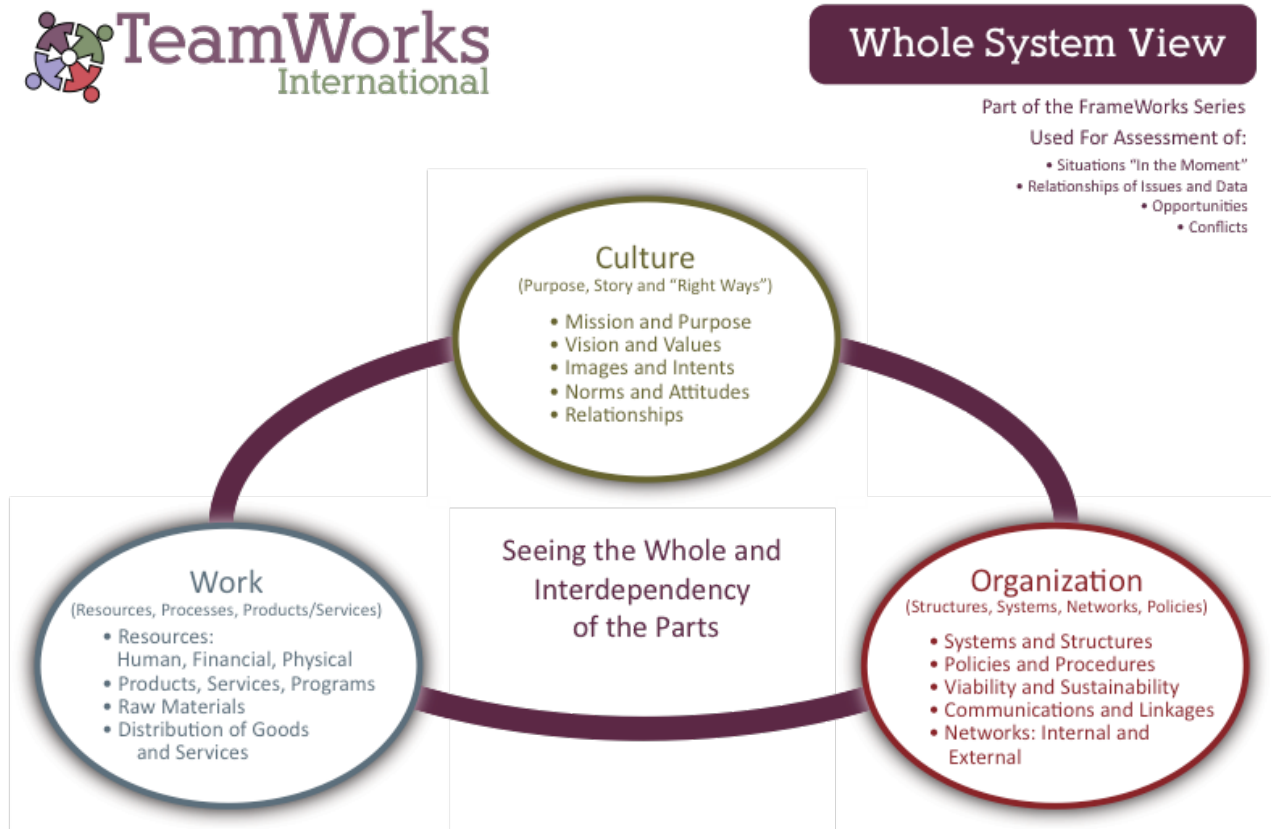
- positive and meaningful adult engagement with youth,
- adults help students learn how to process their emotions and appropriately resolve conflicts, and
- a restorative approach to repairing harm when it occurs.

It should be noted that, while several students were part of the early task force work, a majority of sessions were attended by adults who regularly interact with youth. Students were also strongly represented in a July 25, 2016 task force input session and in conversations leading up to the task force formation. Task force members continually reiterated throughout the process the need to include student voice in any follow-up work related to the release of these recommendations.

Task force members shared diverse perspectives, called out system barriers, highlighted examples of hope, and openly discussed their concerns about the growing fatigue among youth advocates and communities of color to the ongoing call for solutions to combat the persistent achievement and discipline gaps, with few results. A grave concern of the members was the perceived lack of accountability on the part of system leaders (elected and appointed) to invest in and follow through on meaningful change, including the difficult task of addressing systemic racism and of the role of race and culture in interactions with youth across multiple systems (such as schools, justice and local government social support programs.) Members also highlighted the need for *partnership with* and investment from parents/guardians, business, community and faith-based organizations in addressing these persistent challenges.

Process

In all, the task force met 10 times between June 29, 2016, and January 9, 2017. The early stages of the process included grounding task force members in a shared understanding and context for the challenges regarding student and staff safety and behavior, as well as the systems youth encounter frequently when discipline is applied, such as police and the judicial system. The task force members requested and reviewed data, sought and included community input at a July 25, 2016 input session, and conducted an Environmental Scan.



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The Environmental Scan is a process that brings about a common understanding of the current reality of the systems connected to supporting safe schools, student behavior and how adults respond to student behavior. The Scan is an effective way to assess the influences upon these systems. In order to support a well-rounded discussion of multiple aspects, the Whole System View FrameWork was used. (Results of the Environmental Scan and a summary of data insights are included in the Appendix.)

To better understand and synthesize countywide data, the County Attorney's Office received support from the Saint Paul Foundation to secure the expertise of an experienced data analyst, familiar with school-based data, to help the group analyze and interpret data that included:

- 2013 and 2016 Minnesota Student Survey Results for students in Ramsey County school districts
- Ramsey County student suspension data
- Police and Sheriff's Office data related to youth

The task force then began outlining potential recommendation focus areas and ideas. The co-chairs created the following Guiding Principles for the task force as they developed and refined their recommendations through the fall of 2016.

Task Force Guiding Principles

Recommendations/solutions should:

- seek first to meet the needs of students/children
- address racial and cultural disparities, inequities and awareness
- emphasize policy-level changes over procedure/program changes
- highlight the role of community-based solutions

While task force members applied these principles as part of their solution development, they also urge leaders to use them as they consider and, hopefully, implement these recommendations. Addressing racial and cultural disparities through thoughtful and intentional planning, investment, time and patience is critically important to the task force.

Recommendations

While a number of ideas and solutions could be applied to address youth safety in schools and in the broader Ramsey County community, the task force identified five key recommendation areas to address across the following groups:

- Schools/School Districts
- Justice System (Police, Prosecutors, Courts, Corrections/Probation, Placement Facilities)
- Community Services and Supports (Parent/Guardians, Community Members, Local Government, Nonprofits, Faith and Business)

Task force members observed that Ramsey county school districts struggle with the disproportionate suspension, expulsion and justice system involvement of youth of color and youth with disabilities. The formal and informal practices and policies related to school discipline and justice system involvement has been dubbed “the school to prison pipeline,” which has shaped guiding principles and strategies to interrupt this trajectory. These disparities most severely impact youth of color, specifically African American youth. Disparities and gaps exist within and across all the systems that are supposed to support and serve youth. Task force members agreed that, in order to truly address safety of children and adults in schools and in the community, we collectively need to better understand and address the factors creating the situations where students reportedly “act out,” including:

- The inability of adults to relate to and understand the experiences of students and families with a different racial and cultural background than their own.
- Parents and caregivers who are committed to their children’s success, yet need more support and skills about child development and de-escalation and conflict resolution techniques to help their children effectively learn how to manage their emotions.
- Acknowledging and embracing community and faith-based leaders as an integral part of family systems.
- The increasing need for youth mental health services for children in the absence of a mental health system to support children.

Within each of the five recommendation categories are specific examples that are offered as both standalone suggestions and part of a comprehensive approach – aligned across multiple systems that serve the same young people – to address youth and adult safety and success. The task force recommendations include some innovative new ideas and approaches and some that have been suggested previously but have either not yet been implemented, or have not been implemented broadly and deeply enough within and across organizations serving our youth.

Task force members frequently discussed the need for investment, time, development and patience. A critical step across all five areas is developing cross-cultural and racial awareness and engagement in employees and volunteers. As task force members shared on a number of occasions, organizations that begin to address issues of race and culture must stay on course and cannot simply stop the process because the discussion makes some adults uncomfortable. Anticipate and address the discomfort, and continue to work through it in order to broaden mutual understanding and implement solutions.

A critical step across all five recommendation areas is developing cross-cultural and racial awareness and engagement in employees and volunteers.

In order to deepen this work, Task Force members suggested continuing efforts through a subcommittee designed to propose specific strategies for students involved in school

discipline and the justice system. As noted previously, these are students who are disproportionately African American youth. One of the first efforts of the subcommittee would be to generate a proposal for interagency collaboration — through the creation of a joint policy statement, a Memorandum of Understanding, or an interagency agreement — in support of positive outcomes for children.

The five recommendation areas are:

- A. Build Healthy Relationships With Youth
- B. Enhance Proactive, Positive Approaches to Prevent and Respond to Conflict and Challenging Behavior
- C. Share and Improve Data Within and Across Systems
- D. Increase Parent/Guardian Support, Education and Relationships
- E. Improve Training, Hiring, Development and Learning of Adults Working and Living with Youth

A. Build Healthy Relationships With Youth

Identified Challenge:

While conflict commonly exists between younger and older generations, there appears to be a growing divide among generations in Minnesota and Ramsey County that is exacerbated by race, cultural and experiential differences. While the oldest members of our Ramsey County communities tend to be white, the youngest members are increasingly diverse. (See the Minnesota State Demographic Center for data on Age, Race and Ethnicity: <http://mn.gov/admin/demography/data-by-topic/age-race-ethnicity/>) As our county population ages, the community will require greater dependency on the youngest, most diverse members of our communities. Meanwhile, we must teach, learn and encourage proactive, positive ways to help children and adults develop meaningful relationships and manage their emotions and interactions.

Proposed Solutions:

The task force contends that building healthy relationships with and among adults and youth will greatly prevent and reduce negative interactions and incidents between young people and adults, whether the adults are teachers or other educators, police officers, parents or community members. ***To that end, the task force suggests three key solutions:***

- 1. Create and implement a comprehensive, countywide toolkit that helps people across sectors and generations build relationships with young people, especially those who have experienced childhood trauma or show oppositional behavior, through tangible steps and activities;***
- 2. Create time and space for teachers, other educators, students, and SROs to build relationships and rapport; and,***
- 3. Increase the use of skilled youth workers in middle and high schools and in the community during the times when and in places where youth tend to have higher numbers of police interactions. The task force suggests that these strategies include an expansion of programs like the Community Ambassadors Initiative (<http://www.halliegbrown.org/site/index.php/center-services/community-ambassadors>) countywide to provide youth workers more broadly to proactively engage with youth and connect them to resources, job opportunities, and assist in managing their responses. Youth workers are often able to draw upon shared life experiences and connect with some of the most disenfranchised youth. Based on its data review, the task force suggests making it a priority to add youth workers to Roseville and Maplewood malls from 3pm-9pm, the times a majority of youth are getting into trouble, according to police data.***

Task force members expressed a moral imperative in addressing issues of youth behavior for the sake of youth and community success, particularly in schools. There is an opportunity for members of the Ramsey County community without school-aged children to see the need for removing barriers to youth success and, hopefully, building bridges among the generations.

The task force members, on more than one occasion, also discussed the role of School Resource Officers (SROs) and suggested a re-examination of the how SROs are currently being used in schools and districts. Many task force members argued that if the intent is for SROs to truly build positive relationships with youth and be part of the school team, then treat them as such and dedicate resources, professional development, and time accordingly. Task force members noted that in some districts, one SRO serves multiple schools, which hampers the ability of the SRO to develop proactive relationships with students and school staff.

Innovative Strategies:

- Create and implement a comprehensive, countywide toolkit that helps people across sectors and generations build relationships with young people, especially those who have experienced childhood trauma or show oppositional behavior***
- Expand youth workers countywide to proactively engage with youth***

The task force recommends that schools and districts that partner with law enforcement and use SROs should work to promote positive school climate by increasing opportunities for positive interactions and supports, focus on safety and prevention, and reduce the negative impacts of criminalization that have disproportionately impacted students of color and students with disabilities. According to the Guiding Principles from the U.S. Department of Education and U.S Department of Justice, three elements of an effective partnership between schools and law enforcement include:

- 1) Ongoing and rigorous training for SROs, including cross-training with school staff, on issues like de-escalation, trauma-informed response, bias-free policing, adolescent and child development, and more;
- 2) Clarified roles and expectations, outlined in collaborative agreements, that exclude officers from participating in issues of routine discipline and focus their response to instances that pose serious threats to school safety, and limit the use of citations and arrests only as a last resort; and,
- 3) Are monitored and evaluated through ongoing data collection and assessment.

The task force discussed that what is often perceived as “acting out” is a common response to bullying, which must also be addressed, preferably as part of a comprehensive approach to youth behavior. Task force members emphasized that all children need to feel safe, whether in school, in the community, or while spending time with other children. Data show that bullying can lead to perpetration, incarceration, suicide, and violence. And studies show that people who are bullied are more likely to bully others, perpetuating the cycle of threatening, intimidating, violent behavior that is also correlated with involvement with the criminal justice system.

While anti-bullying campaigns are important to raise awareness around the issue of bullying, campaigns alone are not enough. The expectations set in schools and organizations serving youth, and how they are reinforced, are crucial. When high standards are in place for all children and staff, and the culture reinforces those standards and holds everyone mutually accountable, bullying is diminished. Implementing an approach such as *Restorative Practices* may also help to reduce and prevent bullying behaviors. (See Recommendation B below for more details.)

The task force also suggested the following steps to address bullying:

- Define bullying clearly and outline the differences between racism and bullying, including power and authority differences. (See the Minnesota Department of Education’s Tech Resource Center on Bullying.)
- Implement high quality, research-based bullying prevention plans that reflect effective practices.
 - Specifically, anti-bullying programs such those offered by PACER that include developmentally appropriate Social Emotional Learning help students learn what bullying is and what they can do if they see it. Students must learn to distinguish the difference between conflict and bullying and how to respond to both. Consider the "Communities that Care" model. (See www.communitiesthatcare.net.)
 - Be sure school plans include preventing and reducing bullying on buses.
- Call out religious bullying and allow students to educate each other on religious traditions and culture.
 - Explore statutes, rules and policies to allow more partnership with religious organizations.
 - Allow faith leaders to advocate/support youth in schools and the justice system as a support network.
- Address the mental health needs of children - Create a mental health system that includes a race/equity lens so as not to pathologize children of color.

For Law Enforcement/Judicial Agencies:

- Create dialogues between youth and police officers with outside facilitators. Create more intentional positive interactions between police and older youth, such as through programs like the Police Athletic League (PAL).
- Create more opportunities for SROs to engage with students in positive interactions, such as being present in school buildings outside of crisis situations (as noted above.)
- Create clear descriptions of the role of SROs in buildings through memoranda of understanding with school districts, emphasizing the role in protecting school safety, and avoiding the use of arrests, citations and force.

For School Districts and Schools:

- Review hiring practices and demonstrate intentionality about recruiting and retaining educators that reflect the student population.
- Regarding racial equity accountability, plan, commit, invest, take time and patience to implement fully and then evaluate. Reduce short-term, quick-fix approaches.
- Conduct a Ramsey County kick-off during opening week of each school year. Involve schools, parents, and youth to celebrate the unity around the launch of a shared vision for building healthy relationships with youth across the county.
- Create time and space for teachers, students and SROs to build relationships and rapport.
- Create rituals and routines in the first six weeks of each school year to develop relationships among students and staff.
- Create and follow a checklist on building relationships (student voice, student choice) as part of the countywide toolkit to build healthy relationships with youth.
- Consider using the YPQA tool (Youth Program Quality Assessment) to measure youth programs and experiences and identify professional development needs.
- Ask kids about the programming they want in their learning – think outside the box. Incorporate youth voice in appropriate ways at each school level. Build youth voice into the culture of schools.
- Create opportunities for parents to partner and be a part of the school day.
- Incorporate or create lesson plans on how to build a healthy relationship.
- Include and invite community members of color to come in to the schools to speak with students about positive attitudes and life stories.

For Community Agencies:

- Community-based agencies should seek to increase partnerships with schools and provide services through schools, such as school-based mental health services, mentoring programs, employment partnerships for students. Consider Wilder Foundation's Kofi Services as an example.
- Increase community support for young women to address trafficking, violence, and homelessness.

For Faith-based Organizations, Community Organizations and Community Members:

- Review hiring practices and demonstrate intentionality about recruiting and retaining employees that reflect the population.
- Hire more people of color and promote equal hiring practices.
- Regarding racial equity accountability, plan, commit, invest, take time and patience to implement fully and then evaluate. Reduce short-term, quick-fix approaches.
- Implement *Restorative Practices* within organizations to increase the consistency of adult response across our community.

- Faith-based organizations should be viewed as assets and partners, rather than excluded. For some communities, their faith/church is an integral part of their cultural identity and could be leveraged more proactively with youth and family relationships, and help by providing:
 - Volunteers to come into schools to tutor, mentor and build relationships with students;
 - Funds to schools for programming and resources for students (supplies, care packages);
 - Transportation for truant students;
 - Character-building opportunities for students and trust-building opportunities for schools and families.
- Universities and colleges can become more involved in schools (invite students and schools to take tours). Have college staff, faculty and students read to/mentor students.

For Businesses and Business Leaders:

- Review hiring practices and demonstrate intentionality about recruiting and retaining employees that reflect the population.
- Regarding racial equity accountability, plan, commit, invest, take time and patience to implement fully and then evaluate. Reduce short-term, quick-fix approaches.
- Provide opportunities for students by partnering with schools (as some local companies already do) to provide:
 - Youth job opportunities
 - Leadership support and development
 - Volunteers
 - Partnership with community organizations that serve youth at risk
 - Grants/scholarships for students
- Support parents by:
 - Providing time for (encouraging) parents/employees to attend school meetings
 - Offering sick time
 - Being supportive of families with students who have challenges
- Working with community organizations to offer alternatives to calling the police when incidents with youth occur.
 - Offer a more positive approach to addressing challenges with youth, such as through the *Restorative Practices* model. If such a model is adopted by schools, police and courts in Ramsey County, educate businesses and encourage participation in this approach among businesses (such as a civil citation vs. incarceration for theft at local malls.)
- Support fair lending and housing practices and fair wages.
- Consider having a portion of local business development funds go to support projects that develop healthy relationships with youth. For example, can the city or county have a business tax dedicated to education or students to bridge the gap?
- Hire more people of color and promote equal hiring practices.

For Parents and Guardians:

- Establish a positive relationship with someone at the school - this may be a teacher, social worker, principal, counselor or advisor.
- Take advantage of opportunities offered by your child's school or school district to support you as a parent, such as parent education programs and support services for your child.
- Educate yourself about discipline practices at your child's school so you can advocate for proactive and culturally responsive approaches and reinforce those approaches at home.

B. Enhance Proactive, Positive Approaches to Prevent and Respond to Conflict and Challenging Behavior

Identified Challenge:

Task force members identified early on the impact of childhood trauma and mental health challenges on increasing numbers of youth and frequently discussed how trauma and chronic stress impairs brain and emotional development, as well as how student reactions to situations may therefore stem from an inability to process their emotions and/or a lack of self-regulation, coping and conflict-resolution skills.

Task force members noted that traditional methods of school discipline and judicial process appear to be failing youth and the adults who work with them rather than helping youth make better decisions, or understand how their actions may negatively affect them, their peers and families, and the adults who are trying to assist them. Data requested and reviewed by task force members showed that the students most frequently disciplined and adjudicated, disproportionately, are students of color, particularly African American students. Traditional approaches pull students out of the learning environment and exacerbate challenges to their academic success. They also fail to acknowledge how students' experiences, race and culture have shaped (positively and negatively) students' coping and conflict resolution mechanisms.

Proposed Solution:

Develop and adopt proactive, cross-system and comprehensive approaches to teach youth self-regulation and conflict resolution skills, including how to effectively react when they are triggered to prevent oppositional or defiant behaviors. Task force members frequently noted that promoting social emotional learning and trauma-informed practices is critical to understanding and responding to student conflict. These practices must be applied through a cultural lens.

As noted in a September 2016 White House brief on trauma-informed school discipline, barriers to education, such as the "unhealed trauma of abuse, neglect, family dysfunction, homelessness, experiences as immigrants, or the absence of a loved one due to incarceration, or death, contribute to classroom struggles but often go unnoticed... Each fall, some children return to school suffering the effects of toxic stress from events such as neighborhood violence, hunger or severe weather." If these issues are not understood and addressed, toxic stress affects students' ability to concentrate, as well as their short-term and long-term health.

One example of trauma-informed practices adopted by some Minnesota school districts is Teacher-Child Interaction Training (TCIT: <http://www.tcit.org>) for teachers, support staff and mental health providers working with elementary aged students (general education and special education.) TCIT has adapted Parent-Child Interaction Therapy for the classroom and focuses on building positive teacher-child interactions and relationships and is grounded in techniques to address disruptive and attention-seeking behaviors.

Innovative Strategies:

- *Adopt comprehensive, cross-system, trauma-informed approaches to teach youth self-regulation and conflict resolution skills, including how to effectively react when they are "triggered" to prevent oppositional or defiant behaviors.*
- *Apply the Restorative Practices approach for discipline prevention and response.*

The Restorative Practices approach adopted in some communities, school districts and schools is also strongly recommended for consideration as a cross-system, long-term solution for discipline prevention and response. As described by the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP: <http://www.iirp.edu>), Restorative Practices is an emerging social science that integrates practices from a variety of disciplines and fields, including education, psychology, social work, criminology, sociology, organizational development and leadership.

Trained by practitioners from the Yukon Territory, Minnesota Restorative Practices Practitioners began implementing Restorative Justice Practices within the criminal Justice System. The practitioners partnered with communities, schools and the criminal justice system to build strong and healthy relationships between youth and adults, thus interrupting the pipeline to prison and building stronger communities. Much of the success experienced by implementing restorative practices can be attributed to its fundamental premise as stated by IIRP, “The fundamental premise of Restorative Practices is that human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive change in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them.” While the Restorative Practices movement is new to some, its practices are adopted from indigenous communities, including those from the Yukon Territory.

Restorative Practices provides systems of accountability to address negative behavior and to repair harm. Cheryl Graves from the Community Justice for Youth Institute in Chicago outlined the Traditional Approach to schooling vs. the Restorative Approach to schooling (see the table below.) This paradigm shift provides adults with a strength-based approach to addressing negative behaviors and supports youth in developing empathy and accountability for negative behaviors.

Traditional Approach	Restorative Approach
School and rules violated	People and relationships violated
Justice focuses on establishing guilt	Justice identifies needs and obligations
Accountability = punishment	Accountability = understanding impact, repairing harm
Justice directed at offender, victim ignored	Offender, victim and school all have direct roles in justice process
Rules and intent outweigh whether outcome is positive/negative	Offender is responsible for harmful behavior, repairing harm and working toward positive outcomes
No opportunity for remorse or amends	Opportunity given for amends and expression of remorse

While Restorative Practices is a paradigm shift, it provides strategies for adults and youth to close the historical relationship gap for students of color within schools, communities, justice systems and social services, by developing empathy, a strong consideration of human relationship, accountability and an opportunity to repair harm.

A number of task force members are familiar with Restorative Practices and two task force members are involved with the SPPS Restorative Practices Pilot. They have witnessed increased student and parent engagement, healthier adult-youth relationships, increased classroom time and a variety of options to promote positive school climate.

When implemented with fidelity, Restorative Practices addresses many of the needs that the task force requests:

- A shift in adult mindset in interacting with students and families
- Builds healthier and more positive adult-youth relationships
- Addresses race equity practices for disciplined youth
- Provides opportunity for student, parent and community voice and engagement
- Increased school attendance/classroom time
- Decrease of pipeline to prison
- Decrease in bullying
- More positive school climate

- Provides structure for personal accountability in repairing harm
- Provides opportunity for shared leadership
- Provides a positive and engaging approach to mental health services
- Provides a positive and engaging approach for reentering a community after harm has occurred

Task force members view this as an opportunity for the justice system to follow through with this evidence-based approach and help Minnesota catch up with other states and leaders that are successfully implementing Restorative Practices across systems.

The subset of recommendations within this area includes:

- Integrate *Restorative Practices* into discipline prevention and response. Help youth learn from mistakes, make amends and participate in healing. Ensure that the systems supporting youth (schools, school districts, police, and courts) are engaging in the same language, training and application to create alignment and consistency for youth, families and staff working within and across these systems.
 - Request that school district leaders countywide (superintendents and boards of education) commit (through resolution or policy) to this or a similar model and develop teachers and staff to apply it.
 - Create experts within county and city systems (courts, corrections, prosecutors, police, parks, libraries and other places serving youth).
- Educate community leaders (Parks and Recreation, Out-of-School time providers, Faith, EDL, Discovery Club, Suburban Ramsey Family Collaborative) and parents/caregivers about trauma-informed practices and Restorative Practices to align adults' response to youth behavior across our community.
- Encourage business to embrace alternative approaches to criminal processes for youth for preliminary, minor offenses.
- Explore the use of mediation rooms as a safe space for youth having difficulty self-regulating, to help them center themselves and return to class.

C. Share and Improve Data Within and Across Systems

Identified Challenge:

Through a review of data regarding youth and discipline (from suspensions to results of the Minnesota Student Survey to police data to County Attorney's Office data), it became clear to the task force that not only are data collection and categorization practices inconsistent, data both within and across systems serving youth in Ramsey County is misaligned and disconnected, creating complex layers of reporting that complicates and confuses data analysis and data sharing about youth behavior, discipline and support for the young people (and their families) who encounter school, police, court and social support systems. The task force also expressed the need to develop a system to collect data about how students perceive their relationships with educators.

Proposed Solution:

The task force strongly recommends aligning data systems countywide for cross-sharing information about youth being served by multiple entities in real-time. Specifically, task force members recommend two big ideas:

- **Create a universal countywide reporting system to increase the consistency and ability to compare data across schools, the county, and cities; and**
- **Create a shared data platform**, similar to Hennepin County's "Data Backpack," that enables data sharing between the city, county and school districts that includes public health, after school programs, and parks and recreation.

Prior to this data alignment, map out youth-serving agencies, supports and programs to identify where they intersect and where gaps exist across the organizations and their services.

Police and sheriff's departments within the county, for example, compile and report their data differently and use different data systems. Schools and districts, while using the same statewide system for reporting suspensions and expulsions to the Department of Education, appear to describe student discipline "offenses" differently from each other in their student handbooks, as well as apply different consequences for the same type of offenses depending on the approach and practices of the school district. Even schools within a given district apply consequences differently based on the philosophy of the school or its leadership.

Innovative Strategies:

- *Align data systems for cross sharing information about youth being served by multiple entities in real-time*
- *Create a shared data platform among the city, county and school districts*

Some school districts offer alternative-to-suspension programs in order to keep students in educational programming when they might otherwise be suspended in another district. And once students are expelled from one local school district within the county, they must be educated and therefore usually end up – at least temporarily – in another nearby school district. (Expulsions may last up to one calendar year and no more, according to state law.) The data regarding the students (from academic to discipline data) should follow students accordingly, yet school districts also use different data systems for their own planning and reporting purposes.

The sharing of data across different systems becomes more complicated and complex, not only due to the use of different data systems, but also due to privacy laws intended to protect individuals. Yet these same laws designed to protect students and youth also can create a barrier for the multi-jurisdictional teams that support the same young people across multiple organizations, from schools to the justice system to social services agencies.

Some task force members expressed concerns that staff and/or school leaders have an inherent disincentive to increase the consistency and accuracy of their data because it may reflect poorly on their personal job performance, on the Minnesota Department of Education's assessment of their District's performance, and/or create a negative perception of the school in parents and the broader community.

Task force members suggest that leaders develop a countywide data reporting system through which all entities are requested to collect specific data in a consistent format with clear definitions to increase consistency of data for comparative analysis and collaboration. The data should, ideally, be publicly accessible and meaningful in the community. (Consider the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative stakeholder model.)

The subset of recommendations within this area includes:

- All agencies serving discipline- and justice-involved youth should coordinate services and supports through a process outlined in a joint policy statement, memorandum of understanding, or interagency collaborative agreement.
- Improve educational services in alternative and justice facilities settings through increased coordination with schools, especially for students with special needs. Improved juvenile justice education has been shown to reduce juvenile recidivism.
- Streamline school data across schools and districts within Ramsey County.
- Provide opportunities for students to evaluate their experience with teachers (similar to the way college students evaluate instructors for college courses.)
- Survey youth, families and caregivers, specifically about their experience with the Juvenile Justice System, such as a post-service evaluations or interviews to assess the experience in terms of support.

D. Increase Parent/Guardian Support, Education and Relationships

Identified Challenge:

The impact of childhood trauma and mental health challenges on youth affect not only schools, but families, parents and caregivers as well. Like all adults, some parents would benefit from child and adolescent development education, and some need more support to help their children work through difficult transitions and challenging behavior at school, in the community and at home.

Proposed Solution:

The task force suggests **better engaging** and **providing support to parents at the earliest stages of youth behavior challenges, as well as at key transitional points for youth (such as between elementary and middle school and middle school and high school.) Consider the creation of an Adolescent Childhood Family Education (ACFE) program to educate families through the secondary school experience.**

Across all jurisdictions (education, justice, local), the task force recommends the following:

- Support asset-based, positive youth development models so adults are not only seeing and identifying deficits, but are also identifying and encouraging positive development and behavior. (The *Restorative Practices* model referenced earlier would be consistent with such an approach.)
- Engage skilled community intermediaries or peer parents to help support families/parents *as behavior and discipline issues arise*. They must be skilled at working with both children and adults. (Such as NAMI, MACHMA, PACER, ARC, Ramsey County Mental Health Collaborative, MOFAS) These “navigators” could serve as a bridge to the services that support the family as a whole and may be perceived by families to be more tuned in to their families’ needs.
- Provide after-care transition for youth after incarceration with inter-agency collaboration and families involved in planning for school and community re-entry. (Consider the Pennsylvania model Models for Change: www.modelsforchange.net)
- Provide Virtual Family Support, similar to the Adoption Support Network (www.nacac.org)
- When working with students and their families, it is necessary to work with students within the context of who they are, their family systems/values, community, and spiritual practices. A model of care that addresses both the individual child’s emotional needs as well as the social environment in which s/he lives should be considered when working with families i.e. Trauma Systems Treatment Model (involves a shift in an organization’s decision to view and serve more than the individual client – systems and environment change must be a part of treatment/service).

For Law Enforcement/Judicial Agencies:

- Encourage law enforcement agencies within the county to hire family support staff who culturally reflect the majority of youth who are funneled through the system and best reflect the communities being served.
- In addition to hiring culturally-reflective and responsive staff, provide outside, third-party liaisons to help families navigate the system on behalf of their children. (As noted above.)
- Expand the use of youth workers countywide to help engage youth and families.

For School Districts and Schools:

- Better engage all parents/guardians, especially those whose children exhibit oppositional behavior.
- More intentionally support and educate parents about child development. Provide a model like ECFE for middle and high school parents (Adolescent Child and Family Education) so families have support during youth transitional stages and are better educated about youth development.

- Build better connections between schools and families, i.e. Parent Home Visit Project, Academic Teacher Teams, Marnita’s Table model of intentional social interaction.
- Offer effective and positive parent engagement strategies already used in some schools/school districts may include:
 - Provide a parent liaison in every school (include a parent library, coordinate volunteers, and hold “coffee hours” in schools to bring in parents.)
 - Offer parents seminars in schools.
 - Provide Virtual Family Support – similar to the Adoption Support Network
 - Hire greeters and friendly clerks
 - Bring in families with fun nights and “team” meetings

E. Improve Training, Hiring, Development and Learning of Adults Working and Living with Youth

Identified Challenge:

The independent adoption of techniques, philosophies and approaches by schools, school districts, and county and city agencies has created a confusing and competing youth development, support and response system within the county. Children and families who move between school districts encounter different discipline expectations and responses. Police and SRO philosophies and encounters vary by jurisdiction. And resources and training to support youth, employees working with youth, and families become diluted as they are spread wide and thin across districts and different agencies.

Proposed Solutions:

Create a coordinated approach to educating, hiring, providing tools to, and supporting adults in Ramsey County who regularly interact with youth. Coordinate development of employees, parents, and youth toward the same purpose. For example, in schools where School Resource Officers (SROs) are represented, consider the SROs as a part of the school team and include them in school-based training where appropriate to their role in the school.

On a broader scale, leverage the assets and trust of faith-based, community and business organizations to reinforce the concepts, philosophy and training that is provided. This will require sharing information more intentionally across jurisdictions and partnering organizations.

The task force also encourages a countywide campaign to create understanding across generations within our communities with a focus on learning about and building positive relationships with the youngest members of our communities. For example, encourage the entire county to read and discuss a focused book list, including the book *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*. Create study circles and develop partnerships with libraries, book stores, Minnesota Public Radio and active book clubs within the county.

Across all jurisdictions (education, justice, local), the task force recommends the following for school staff, community corrections, Probation Officers, School Resource Officers, and adults working with youth in after-school programs.

- Every child who is referred for discipline within the school or justice system should be screened with the ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) indicators to help identify negative and traumatic experiences, needs and potential supports for those children so they can be connected to effective interventions to prevent negative life outcomes.
- Commit to diversifying staff to better reflect the student population.
- Hire employees, such as youth workers, whose competencies include working effectively, respectfully and professionally with people across race, class, and culture and train for the technical skills required to do the job.
- Provide employee training in culturally sensitive techniques and the following:
 - De-escalation with youth
 - Non-violent communication
 - Non-violent crisis intervention
 - Impact of trauma and toxic stress
 - Social Emotional Learning
 - Mindfulness
 - Restorative Practices
 - Special Education (such as through PACER Center and about IEPs)
 - Book discussions – school to prison pipeline, *The New Jim Crow*, etc.

For Law Enforcement/Judicial Agencies:

- Require SROs to participate in school-based Restorative Practices and trauma-informed training with school teams.
- Create a countywide School Resource Officer (SRO) network for support, learning and sharing of best practices.
- Ensure that all staff, including probation officers, police, corrections staff, and court staff prioritize positive relationships with youth based on a commitment to developing positive outcomes.

For Community Agencies:

- Agencies train children, school staff, and parents about drugs/alcohol and make chemical assessments (Rule 25) more available to children.
- Parks and Recreation and “Out of school time providers” actively engage youth in public problem solving in the community to increase community engagement and empathy.
- Provide cultural competency development
 - Non-punitive
 - Non-remedial
 - Countywide model
 - Essential before beginning the process of Restorative Practices
- Provide education to staff and youth about federal, state and local laws and policies related to youth as a way to help young people understand potential consequences.

For School Districts and Schools:

- Train and engage school leadership to develop transition plans and support during involvement with juvenile justice.
- Provide differentiated training, more support and coaching, for educators who struggle most frequently with highly oppositional children. It was noted that about 20% of staff refer 80% of students for behavior issues and those staff need more development to better learn how to engage those children. Just as a minority of students tend to account for the majority of discipline incidents, so do a minority of staff account for a majority of student referrals for discipline.
- Provide education to staff and youth about federal, state and local laws and policies related to youth as a way to help young people understand potential consequences.
- Add more licensed support staff in schools, such as psychologists and counselors, but also non-licensed youth workers to help in classrooms and halls during passing time.
- Provide credit for dual-license teachers in schools.

Additional Thoughts

Task force members entered this process understanding that no quick-fix solutions would be able to correct decades of institutional barriers and competing beliefs, experiences and approaches. The frustration among task force members of daily seeing the challenges of youth, families and employees was palpable. Yet the task force members shared an insistence that it is possible to address these challenges through concentrated effort, clear policies, courageous leadership, and shared practices and approaches.

Not to be lost in the need to address what's happening with *school-aged youth*, was a strong desire to highlight preventative policies, practices and actions. While not in the purview of the task force, task force members strongly emphasized the need for continued and even expanded early childhood education and family programming and support. Establishing foundational learning for children and their parents for social emotional development stands the best chance for long-term prevention of the kinds of physical aggression and conflicts that have escalated in recent years.

Finally, while the official role of the task force has ended, the desire for task force members to stay involved has not. Concluding discussions by the task force emphasized the need for additional coordination, collaboration across agencies, and shared accountability for action. Many task force members stand ready to assist and champion the next steps.

Appendix

Task Force Members

Name	Role
Diedra Carlson	SPPS - Teacher at JJ Hill Elementary School, St. Paul Federation of Teachers
Kathy Lombardi	SPPS - Department of School Climate & Support, Mental Health Coordinator
Todd Goggeleye	SPPS - Principal of American Indian Magnet
Dr. Jenny Loeck	ISD 623 - Principal of Roseville High School
Joan Duncanson	SPPS – Special Education Teacher & Parent
Jen Lodin	Irondale High School Associate Principal - ISD 621
Tony Denny	Capitol View Center ALC - ISD 916
Dave Wilmes	Retired, Saint Paul Youth Services ACE program, specialist on youth in trauma, poverty
Bao Moua	Wilder Foundation Clinical Supervisor
Jeremiah Ellis	Generation Next Director of Community Partnerships, *co-chair
Avis Fink	Lead Social Worker - ISD 624
Laura Jones	Parent, Restorative Justice, Juvenile Justice Reform
Kimii Porter	Parent & Probation Officer, Leads Repurpose group for African American men
Jill Curran	Parent of charter school middle school student & SPPS high school student
Connie Hayes	Superintendent, Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District
Minor Student	12th grade Highland Park high school student
Minor Student	9th grade Saint Paul charter student
Anthony Brown	Saint Paul Police Officer
Joel Franklin	NAACP Vice President
Tricia Hughes	Maplewood-NSP-Oakdale, Director of Student Services - ISD 622
Steve Randall	Saint Paul Parks & Recreation, Youth in Transition, Community Ambassador
Suzanne Kelly	MN Philanthropy Partners Special Assistant to the President, *co-chair
Gail Chang Bohr	Retired – Former Judge, Children's Law Center Executive Director
Larry Lucio	Former High School Principal, specialized in working with adjudicated youth
Erik Skold	Sprockets Out-of-School Time Network Director
Tynielle Ziegler	American Indian Family Center staff
Daud Mohamed	Ka Joog Associate Director
Martha Johnson	Foster and special education parent, retired SPPS teacher, school climate consultant
James Walker	Dayton's Bluff Elementary/Achievement Plus
Samakab Hussein	Parent of Mounds View Elementary Student
Jerome Graham	Former MAP Project coordinator/Mentorship for adjudicated kids with IEPs
Myra Smiley	East Side resident, District Council member, grandparent
Lonn Bakke	Maplewood Police - School Resource Officer
Keith Allen	Ramsey County Manager's Office
Runney Patterson, Sr.	Ministerial Alliance, New Hope Baptist Church Pastor
Dr. Talaya Tolefree	Parent & ACE program staff at 180 Degrees
Kaying Thao	Parent of Roseville MS/HS students, former Roseville School Board member
Darius Husain	Face to Face Academy Charter School Executive Director
Sasha Cotton	African American Leadership Council Chair of Education/Youth Leadership Committee

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

	EDGE	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	EBBING
	<i>These are crazy, cutting edge ideas and propositions that are:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> being considered, but not yet tested in the field an influence on the field 	<i>These are the things and influences that are being addressed, tested, or piloted - they are new and not fully adopted into the standard way of doing things</i>	<i>These are the set, standard ways of doing things or a steady influence</i>	<i>These are the things and influences that used to be standard, but are now disappearing</i>
<p>WORK Resources (financial, human, operational), Programming, Job Roles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early childhood interventions to support self-regulation Greet every student who enters the building by a social support staff 100 graduation rate with high standards (example of Urban Prep Academy) Campus Clinic (doctors, dentists, mental health, psychiatry) Experiential Learning (wilderness/outdoor, service learning), especially in urban settings Diversifying staff to work with parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Criminal element” – criminalizing students Peer review and mentoring for teachers, especially regarding race and equity Public engagement in schools is very complex and varying skill levels for school leaders to lead it ESSA Trauma-informed care Teaching self-regulation versus behavior management School climate improvement teams Courageous racial equity conversations training Parent Teacher Home Visits Project Academic Parent Teacher Teams – alternate conferences Wrap-around case management Teacher training regarding behavior and de-escalation Alternatives to suspension Teacher child interaction training Technology Restorative practices Continuing parent education (especially for parents raising adolescents) Social emotional training for staff/adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labeling of disability/diagnosis in order to get services SROs Funding cuts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electives Willingness of police officers to be SROs Resources Equitable vs. equal resource distribution

	EDGE	EMERGING	ESTABLISHED	EBBING
ORGANIZATION Communications, Procedures, Networks, Systems, Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing of data across agencies and multiple systems Year-round calendar with frequent breaks Decentralized schools (site based) HS Redesign – tech/design class, combined with public problem solving, few traditional classes, focus on youth voice Non-traditional conflict resolution and management (gang activity, student/student, and student/staff) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dual licensing SPED and ED Community Schools Public Montessori Schools Year-round school calendars “Criminal element” – criminalizing students Peer review and mentoring for teachers, especially regarding race and equity Restorative practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zero tolerance as a best practice (this was noted as between Established and Ebbing) System that does not support diverse learning The traditional school day schedule Disproportional access to Children’s Mental Health Services. Each school/district as autonomous (behavior expectations, SROs, roles.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NCLB Isolated decision-making by teachers on discipline Behavior rooms K-12 movement/exercise (recess/play)
CULTURE Mission, Purpose, Attitudes, Beliefs, Relationships, Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandated and applied teacher equity/race PD Policing efforts to improve the view or relationship with African American men and boys Serve all kids based on their needs and not on a label Unconditional education (nobody is excluded) Addressing compassion fatigue/staff self-care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Criminal element” – criminalizing students Growing # of parents who need support Communitywide indifference to problems in schools (such as support for funding) Teachers are afraid and unsupported More sever passing of public judgment about problems in schools SRO conversations Student voice Parent support Non-violent crisis intervention Teacher support Restorative practices Ideas about how the greater community be part of the solution Preparing to create healing environments Awareness in some communities of disproportionately identifying students for Special Education. Definition of “community” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents want/value education and the best education for their children Funding cuts Distrust Racial profiling Disproportionally identifying students for Special Education services. Perception of inequitable schools and accompanying resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership – trust and relationships with Parks and Rec/outside groups Demographics - where the dominant culture of students is white Content over relationships

Environmental Scan - Trends and Influences

The underlying trends and influences are critical to understanding internal and external forces that shape our environment and the work ahead.

Trends and Influences	
Edge and Emerging	Established and Ebbing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Holistic approach• Restorative practices (relationships) – not yet comprehensive or implemented fully• Push FOR institutionalized racism as some systems try to eliminate it• Unresolved conflicts with students in different parts of the community (outside of the schools) that are not communicated across systems• Feeling of trust with people/adults in the system• Research, evidence-based practices – but can't use one method for all• Brain development research about children/young people• Culturally relevant practices and curriculum• Need for diversity of staff• TIME – for parents to support their children• Limited tools for parents to support their children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Federal rules and regulations regarding Special Education• Limited/declining resources for Siro• Shift in inpatient care from residential care to community-based care• Negative perception of SROs in the media• Focus on content over relationships due to limited resources• Focus on testing/NCLB• Difficulty of shifting resources and belief systems to create equitable opportunities• State and federal funding – Title I• School board and Superintendent Budgeting• “Criminalizing” behaviors/zero tolerance• Lack of trust in decision-making at the local levels• Mental providers – lack of diversity and difficulty accessing• Institutional racism• Impact of SROs through lens of equity

Summary of Insights from Task Force Data Review

Small Group Processing of Data Reviewed			
Data Insights	Implications	Questions for Clarification	Additional Information Requested
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma/substance abuse can “cause” behaviors • There are gaps in what students understand about differences and similarities (Islamophobia is a real problem.) • Some data is altered • There are system issues – racism • Continue to blame the victim • From online survey: there appears to be no connections/communication between parents and schools • Possible inconsistencies in the data • In 8th and 9th grade the #s seem to go up • Data is more student focused, doesn’t include adult information, data on teachers • Race plays a big role • Geographic location is telling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for common descriptions (behaviors) across the county • We need teachers who reflect the kids they teach • Need for trauma-informed classrooms • Relationship-based learning • Empathy – SEL, mindfulness, movement • Ethnic students – tap community experts • Need alternatives to traditional discipline practices • Need to help students understand the difference between bullying (power differential) and conflict • Look at risk factors and protective factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can we learn from success at charter schools? • How do we assess school success (not just based on external behaviors? Some kids are quiet and not learning. • How do engage the whole community to achieve the goals, i.e. healthy students? • Can we get data on teacher/student conflict? • What restorative practices have taken place? • Can we get data on teacher/staff referrals of students for suspension? (Find out who is sending the kids for discipline?) • Why is there a mismatch of teacher/student ratio? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions asked in the MN student survey • Deeper research about mental health and substance abuse/trends, such as prescription medication • What are effective bully-prevention programs? • Truancy/attendance data – TIP? • Restorative practices using community resources • Data on highly mobile students and homelessness • Data on sexual activity and assault

Summary of Community Input (July 25, 2016)

Overview

On July 25, 2016, the Community Task Force on Safe Schools hosted a public input session at the Martin Luther King Center in St. Paul to gather input on four questions. Nearly 115 people of diverse ages, races and experiences (including teenagers) attended the session and participated in one of five small group conversations. The information received informed the work of the task force as it developed recommendations for Ramsey County Attorney John Choi. Input was gathered in small groups with task force members as facilitators. Notes, as reported below, were taken via flip chart sheets as the participants provided their responses to four questions asked of each small group:

As it relates to creating safe and caring environments for children and adults...

- 1. What are the biggest challenges that you think the task force can and should explore in its recommendations?**
- 2. What's working here, or elsewhere, that the task force should consider among its recommendations?**
- 3. What are YOUR ideas for COMMUNITY-BASED solutions to support safe schools?**
- 4. Finally, what are our greatest community strengths or assets that you think should be part of the solution?**

Expectations of Participants

Facilitators outlined expectations for participation in the session. The expectations are similar to the guidelines for the task force members. They were:

- Participants will nurture a safe and listening environment that respectfully allows dissenting views without judgment.
- Individuals will seek to describe their experience and thoughts in a coherent and timely way.
- Participants and facilitators will refrain from identifying individual employees and students when outlining complaints due to privacy restrictions.
- Participants will avoid sidebar conversations during the meetings; our goal is respecting the whole group.
- One person speaks at a time.
- Self monitor so that no one person is speaking at the expense of others in the group.
- Encourage those who have not yet spoken to share their thoughts.
- Conversations are about ideas and experiences, not personalities.
- Participants who disrespect their fellow participants will be reminded of the ground rules, and if not abiding, the participant may be asked by a facilitator to excuse themselves from the group.
- Participation is your agreement to abide by these expectations. Participants who do not agree to these expectations may leave now before we begin our discussion.

Q1 Responses: What are the biggest challenges that you think the task force can and should explore in its recommendations?

- Special Education support/more support, case-by-case with individuals
- Raise expectations for "ALL" students
- Performance of ALL students in ELL (who is getting sent to or served by ELL)
- Appropriate training - Special Ed
- Lack of positive communication/all staff, school community
- Act by organizations (for districts, community members)
- Act at District level
- Accountability trainings for systems
- Community violence (brought into buildings, example gun violence)
- Surveys on school safety
- Meaningful relationships
- Cell phone use in the classroom
- IPAD – IT support
- Working with families/engagement

- Leadership and staff reflect the student population
- Lack mental issues/support services
- Trust (need to build and monitor) – discrimination – parents need accountability
- Racism – need to deal with “isms”, meaningful relationship, individual bias
- What is consistent about behavior/relationships
- What are the rules?
- Students who are disrespectful
- Develop district leadership
- Parent/student orientation consistency
- Teachers not knowing how to handle their students
- Establishing boundaries (student: student; student: staff)
- Teachers from the community who know their students and parents
- Misunderstanding teachers/disengaged teachers
- Teachers with bad hygiene
- Students being treated with respect/feeling respected
- Stable classroom environments
- Teachers who love their students
- Teacher continuity
- Relationships
- Racial equity
- Economic disparity
- Microaggression
- Larger/growing achievement gap
- Student buy-in/be part of the community
- Policy makers don’t know what the true hindrances are
- Clarify role of SRO
- \$ and other resources to ensure school safety
- More accessible mental health resources – students and families
- More accessible student support services
- Survey of community based organizations and how they are helping kids who need help the most
- Understanding the full diversity of students’ needs and then assigning resources appropriately
- Knowing how school is dealing with issues that arise with the kids and have appropriate staff to determine those needs
- Understanding outside stressors that impact children (trauma, homelessness, drugs, etc.)
- Wide and diverse parent engagement
- No standard of reporting what is happening in community (equitable data)
- How to help people whose self worth is low
- Poverty, lack of jobs, homelessness
- Educate employees
- How to address communitywide challenges outside of schools
- Fabric of community isn’t as strong as it was
- Challenges around Special Ed and ELL
- Reputation – St. Paul, Special Ed, - public generally
- Teachers not equipped to handle disruption
- Need better support for parents with infants
- Better training – cultural – from those affected – TRAUMA
- Whiteness in all aspects of institution, and naming what we want
- Data – from schools to arrests to prosecutions – what do the numbers say?
- Expectations of schools – if we expect that much, need to match with supports
- Value – on the ground work, cultural specialists, teams
- Working in silos rather than partnership

- Safety looks different for different communities
- Community has resources – partnership
- Transitions biggest challenges
- Make concrete action plans with funding and training and accountability
- Align expectations and interests of stakeholders
- Suspension Alternatives (noted by more than one person)
- Students engaged
- Staffing in the classroom (especially Special Education classrooms) appropriate to policies
- Replicate successful SRO practices
- Cultural diversity as pertains to safety
- Power dynamics – adults/students
- Authentic partnership/collaboration with organizations that reflect multiple perspectives and messaging
- Stereotypes of students with special needs
- Better understanding of disabilities, especially nonverbal
- Rethink policies that don't meet individual needs (mainstream)
- Create culture of safety that prevents violence
- Use discipline to solve problems using student perspectives
- Lack of respect (student/teacher/school, etc)
- Support and training for teachers
- Incorporate student voices
- How to manage communications/spread positive news
- Think outside the box, explore differences (book vs. street culture)
- Diversify teachers and staff
- Make #1 priority, community partners, members citywide
- Every race and culture to have a voice
- Institutional racism, recognize stats, African American/Asian data disaggregated
- Absence of fathers/mentors (incarcerated)
- Tracking with fidelity/analysis (robust reporting)
- Teacher bias, access
- Labels/mindsets of white teachers judging black children
- Addressing behavior/alternatives to suspension
- Understanding needs/culturally specific/modifications
- Equity for ALL students (noted by more than one person)
- Staff development that is teaching specific, monitor student concerns
- Defining violence and safe schools
- Bullying concerns and other related (procedures clear, resolutions, communication)
- Find a way to hold on to the neediest kids while keeping the school safe for everyone
- Evaluate the role of SROs
- Early intervention – communicate more on staff level of ways to help those troubled students)
- Need more time with students (needy) – humane vs. frazzled
- Many teachers are not trained how to use students as resources
- Separate out from schools and agencies
- Secondary levels are too large to manage
- Need space availability to build relationships with students
- Student view: need more time to do work
- How to be inclusive with students (safety for whom), kids with kids (bullying)
- Sexual harassment (is violent)
- Mentality shift from punishment to learning how to work through difficult situations
- Student: need more breaks throughout the class times
- Historical trauma

Q2 Responses: What's working here, or elsewhere, that the task force should consider among its recommendations?

- Helping students learn from within their own cultural context
- Adaptable teachers
- Friendships
- Teachers who keep an orderly classroom
- Respectful environments
- More youth – youth leadership
- Youth language
- Feeling heard
- Community volunteers
- Teachers from the community
- Sense of community (Como Park)
 - Engaged principal builds relationships
 - For communities of color as well as whites
 - Example in Maryland not necessarily in MN
 - Example in past SPPS (1990s), not necessarily today
 - Example in Johnson HS today
- Community-based organizations in partnership with schools that are culturally relevant
- Teachers of color, especially who share experiences with students
- SPPS under Silva:
 - Administrators of color
 - Parent advisory councils (culturally specific)
 - Mainstreaming of Special Education
 - Racial equity policy
 - After-school programs and sports
 - Johnson HS late start and Go-to passes
 - Multiple perspectives in curriculum
- Student assistance team and Bridge View and SCIT at Murray
- Restorative justice
- Re-entry meeting with suspended students and families
- School-based, school-designed solutions (not district initiatives)
- Site-based model of decision making
- Engaging diverse stakeholders (race, age, religion, etc)
- Home visits/parent teacher teams (SPFT)
- Office of Black Male Achievement
- Small group/contained classes for K-6 EBD (1980s-1990s)
- Youth empowerment (DC and New Orleans)
- Strong student/staff relationships (Capitol View)
- Racial equity
- Student advisory at board level
 - Student engagement/voice
 - Understand youth perspective
- Communication between student support (social workers, etc), teachers, justice system, etc – facilitated by liaison (Harambee)
- BLM and police joint activities
- Counselors help build community/respect (Como Park)
- 12th grade recognition program (SPPS)
- Training on Parent Portal
- PreK (All Day K)
- Parent engagement
- Strength-based relationships - Time/Work

- All students having science
- Diversity training (cultural)
- Teachers that reflect the student body
- Having phones taken away
- Restorative practice
- Great teachers
- AVID/Foundations
- New teacher training class management
- Parent liaison/parent-teacher connection
- Student mentor K-12
- Full service community schools
- Restorative justice/practices
- Clear behavior expectations and enforcement of the expectations (with appropriate cultural lenses)
- Addressing issues in a way that people can best relate to
- Co-creating expectations within a community (classroom, etc.)
- Manageable class size so teachers can build community more effectively
- Support staff to meet needs of “high flyers”
- Social and emotional learning (SEL)
- Active community engagement and community relationships
- Site-based management
- Graduation mentors and coaches – MPS Public Schools
- Career Day – MPS Public Schools
- MPS Public Schools – list practices for student engagement
- Kent Circle Training Institute
 - training from the communities they serve
 - Culturally specific training, teams, etc.
- Culturally relevant curriculum increases engagement, reduces “othering,” reduces reacting, tensions
- Social emotional curriculum early on, but also SEL learning for adolescents (6-12) – be careful to ask what culture in social emotional teaching
- Partnering with communities
- Community Full-Service Schools – Missouri, etc., and not Achievement Plus
- Positive youth development – not deficit based
- Restorative Justice Practices
 - Help kids stay in school when used as response to incidents
 - More important to build community, address conflict as it arises, trust all voices
 - Open World Learning – Crew
 - Farnsworth
- Educators
 - Caring about kids
 - Having counselors, Paras, someone who cares – Project Kofi
 - Asian students – invisible, go all day without adults talking to them
- Alternatives to suspension, community engagement, rationale behind concerns (noted by more than one participant)
- Restorative Justice Programs (noted by more than one participant)
- De-escalation techniques, equity PD
- SPPD Community involvement
- Trauma-informed environment, effects of trauma, non-punitive
- Promise Neighborhood (bottom-up process)
- Reduce policed presence, increase support services
- Full-service, wrap-around schools (community services, parental engagement, grants through MDE)
- Brooklyn Center Schools Model (MH support at schools)
- Peer-to-peer mentoring
- Equitable resources

- Family involvement outreach/home visits
- Restorative justice (only in 4 schools so far)
- History Project
- Gordon Parks (HS for Recording Arts) – young people viewed as resources, engaged
- 4-Step Process effective program in problem solving
- ISS – teachers in special room, know what is being taught in classes (ISS) and help students stay current in class, also helps students work through issue that caused suspension/social justice
- SROs – building relationships with students
- MN Humanity Center – narratives, voices –
 - Suggested book: “How to talk so your kid will listen. How to listen so your kids will talk.”
- Student: Kids should have more activities in school/classes
- Job readiness for students
- More student voices at all levels – classroom, schools, districts
- Youth Prize – encourages children to be leaders
- More local support for students

Q3 Responses: What are YOUR ideas for COMMUNITY-BASED solutions to support safe schools?

- Community conversation in each building/talk with each other
- Create opportunities for students/safe spaces for our children
- Professional (true) facilitator, age appropriate, guide conversations, parent/teacher relationship
- Officers back into schools – community back into building
- Multiple cultural ways – specific healing process
- Non-verbals, i.e. hugs/home life
- Intentionally looking for humanity in others
- Create formal grievance
- Know process and everyone understands
- Infinity Inc. – class for African American students connecting them to black professionals and colleges (ask Rev. Spence)
- Facilitated mentorship for HS students
- Acknowledge that “successful” programs can be exclusionary/not reach all groups (AP, IB, CIS, PSEO)
- University Day School with counselor in classroom (SPPS in 1999 partnership with U of M)
- Teacher training on parent collaboration (mentor family)
- Small group or one-on-one mentorship
- Advances coursework and more access for POC and tools to succeed (CIS, AP, IB, PSEO)
- Right Track (City of St. Paul) and Step Up (Minneapolis)
- STEM after school (especially for POC)
- Athletic programs
- Neighborhood enrichment programs (home ec, shop, etc.)
- Trade union programs
- Training for white students on being allies
- Partnerships with organizations
- Relationships
- Schools going out to the community
- Open Community Forums
- Getting involved in the community, open the door, feel welcomed
- Pay for staff time to support community events
- School safety signs/different languages posted in the community and important places (churches and libraries)
- Acknowledge families and community
- Getting more diverse board members that reflect the districts
- Schools more intentional in getting families involved
- Addressing system racism in academics (GT label)

- Breaking down labels
- Cross-cultural mediators
- Race must take place
- Change policies
- Different parent groups train staff
- Solutions for special needs kids
- Helping students realize their value and uniqueness
- Community based organizations that have the capacity and infrastructure to support our students
- Assessment of who is doing the work in the community – making connections across all – with support to make things work
- All kids know that they are valued
- More security in schools
- Define role of SRO
- Step Up – Achieve MPLS
- Expand awareness of early childhood for ethnically diverse communities
- Career Day in 3rd grade – help young kids envision their future and what it may take to get there
- Broader resource pool (Metro Transit Equity Team, corporate social responsibility groups, Q4, etc.)
- Fearless leaders – dismantle institutional racism and other barriers
- Accountability for all stakeholders
- Set high expectations and high level of emotional support
- Social Studies classes that are inclusive of all cultures, histories/ethnic studies/update curriculum, more relevant to current times
- Children who understand their history of greatness contributes to their sense of pride and belief that they can be great/self confidence
- Communities need clear pathways
- Hiring practices to reflect the community (Who does the hiring? Live in city and love urban community.)
- Make big schools feel smaller (smaller groups, peers move with peers, paras move with kids)
- Outside resources to provide long-term support, PD to schools (such as long-term trauma training for teachers)
- Targeted training to staff who need it the most in a non-shaming way
- Not just training, but supports, “consultations” for teachers
- Externship for teachers in the community/community immersion (funerals, parades, events)
- www.ramseycounty.us/safeschools
 - more than, not just parent teacher
 - home visit program
 - compensate teachers for community immersion
 - flex time
 - expectations – train leaders and principals
- SROs – lots of issues, assess impact and effectiveness, new contract?
- More conversations, especially with ELL and ongoing
- Diversify staff
- Partnerships within organizations (schools, community)
- All adults across all cultures take shared responsibility
- Parent partnerships
- Create opportunities for more connections with families
- Connecting with other programs that work with out of schools programs for youth (Youth Prize)
- Kids to all be on a team – some kids don’t make teams
- Connect the Y and Schools
- Jr. Schools, such as the Art Institute – access to opportunities
- After-school programs
- Address 3-month summer gap – resource for more opportunities
- Study sessions implemented with sports in schools (leaders and athletes)
- Relationships with students – access to resources, activities, invite communication

- MNEEP as a resource – solutions not suspension
- Summit Enrichment Resource Book
- Leverage the community to be service mentors to students
- AMAZE – address bullying in schools
- Space for community and schools to work collaboratively
- Increased communication between systems and research to make it happen
- Survey stakeholders
- ID needs that community orgs can work on
- Building community legacy of social justice on multiple fronts

Q4 Responses: What are our greatest community strengths or assets that you think should be part of the solution?

- Diverse population (race, income) and orgs that represent them
- Business community
- Youth
- Labor orgs and trade unions
- Social Justice Groups (ISAIAH)
- Arts
- Athletics
- Community Boosters
- College communities
- Neighborhoods like Rondo
- Tax \$/referenda
- Public schools
- Philanthropic community
- Rec centers
- Libraries and community centers
- Tech infrastructure
- SPPS iPads and App
- Passion of community members
- Diversity
- Representation of community
- Community-based orgs
- Faith-based orgs
- How we show up every day and transfer positive relationships to all buildings
- Re-Educate – anti-bullying program
- PBIS in all schools with parents taught too
- Being intentional and authentic
- Ensuring that tools like PBIS are being used
- Random acts of kindness
- Learner profile
- Peer-to-peer support at HS
- Affinity group – teachers and students
- Best practice sharing
- Teachers mentoring students
- Weekly progress monitoring by parent for their children, signed contract, covenant for student behavior
- Data for all students
- County's willingness to collaborate
- Assets in our buildings (Hmong, African American, staff of color) to connect with larger community
- School-based field trips

- Places in building to allow students to know each other
- Strong parks and rec
- After-school programs
- Transportation (safe) for activities
- Expanding resources
- Formalizing relationships, stronger coordination, joining resources
- MYA
- NDCAD
- Libraries
- 4H
- ACES
- Investing in funding for retention/recruitment pipeline for teachers
- Mentorship with law enforcement and other agencies
- Courageous Conversations
- Ability to invite community
- Community meetings in the community (honoring community voices)
- Inspirational speakers
- Reach out to own community to be part of the solution
- Access to transportation - more transportation services for after-school programs
- Local band (pay for the kids)
- Build bridge between kids and police
- Colleges and secondary school connections
- Teacher preparedness programs
- More summer education groups
- Positive community centers
- Better curfew system to keep kids off the streets
- Faith-based communities
- Youth development orgs
- Social workers (yet they are not invested in)
- Cross-cultural education and service learning
- Having the safety conversation with students in SPPS to see what solutions they feel are effective (also from students who are considered “violent” what resources could have helped)
- Diversity of St. Paul area and diversity of needs
- Commitment to eradicating systemic racism
- Expanded school/non-profit partnerships
- Diversity
- Multi-cultural workforce
- NAMI, NACMA, etc.
- Parent Academy – expand parent education to more in the community
- School system reach out to community with a plan through community groups for specific role (i.e. Metro Transit equity work
- Early childhood education
- Sprockets
- Internships
- Community Ed
- Rec centers
- Community orgs that support youth (Right Step and Gen Next) – need to build support
- Strong MN identity of volunteerism

Community Task Force on Safe Schools – Community Input Results

Results from online public survey conducted July 25 – August 15, 2016

1. How satisfied are you with the level of safety provided to students and staff in schools within Ramsey County?

Very satisfied	5
Somewhat satisfied	38
Not very satisfied	54
Not at all	14

2. How well would you rate the overall level of community support provided to our schools regarding creating safe and caring environments for students and staff?

Excellent	5
Good	23
Fair	50
Poor	33

3. Our greatest community assets, or strengths, for creating safe and caring environments for children and adults are:

Teachers and school staff	76
Police	28
Faith communities	12
After-school programs	17
Community-based youth programs	25
Mental health support	31
Services in schools such as social workers, English language learner programs and Special Education	40
Other	16

4. Where are the safest places in our community for children and young people to interact with each other:

Schools	58
Religious organizations	50
After-school programs	28
Community-based youth programs	37
Homes	28
Recreation centers	14
Parks/Playgrounds	4
Child care settings	7
Other	5

5. Where are the LEAST safe places in our community for children and young people to interact with each other:

Schools	28
Religious organizations	6
After-school programs	5
Community-based youth programs	5
Homes	39
Recreation centers	29
Parks/Playgrounds	82
Child care settings	6
Other	18

6. Where are the safest places in our community for children and young people to interact with adults:

Schools	78
Religious organizations	50
After-school programs	48
Community-based youth programs	52
Homes	21
Recreation centers	18
Parks/Playgrounds	2
Child care settings	6
Other	3

7. Where are the LEAST safe places in our community for children and young people interact with adults:

Schools	17
Religious organizations	13
After-school programs	8
Community-based youth programs	13
Homes	44
Recreation centers	31
Parks/Playgrounds	77
Child care settings	9
Other	19

8. The task force has identified some of the greatest community challenges for creating safe and caring environments for children and adults. From the list provided below, please identify what you consider to be the two greatest challenges.

Access to medical services	4
Access to mental health services	32
Educational systems/schools	20
Lack of coordination across agencies that serve children	19
Funding/resources	28
Family supports	41
Lack of training for adults working with children	19
Accountability for challenging behavior	52
Racism	20
Other	9

9. Do you believe that one of greatest challenges for creating safe schools is the ability of adults to respond to youth behavior?

Yes	80
No	31

10. From your perspective, what do you think are the greatest challenges for adults to adequately respond to student behavior:

Limited exposure to different communities and cultures	33
Insufficient training to address the needs of children today	37
Fear of young people	17
Lacking confidence or ability to impose consequences	41
Disrespect for young people	13
Disrespect from young people	49
Difficulty communicating with young people	19
Other	24

13. Are you a Ramsey County resident?

Yes	85
No	26

14. If yes, in which city do you reside?

Falcon Heights	1
Little Canada	2
Maplewood	3
Mounds View	1
New Brighton	1
Roseville	3
Saint Paul	67
Shoreview	3
Vadnais Heights	1
White Bear Lake	2

15. Do you work in Ramsey County?

Yes	84
No	21

16. With which of the following do you most identify?

Student (up to and including grade 12)	15
Parent or guardian of school-age child/children	44
Grandparent of school-age child/children	18
Live with school-age children	26
Work with school-age children	66
I rarely interact with children	1

17. Your age?

17 years of age or younger	5
18-24	3
25-34	15
35-44	23
45-54	30
55 and up	35

18. Gender with which you most identify?

Male	32
Female	77

19. Race/Ethnicity

American Indian or Alaskan Native	6
Asian	6
Black or African American	9
East African	2
East Indian	2
Hispanic or Latino	7
Hmong	3
Karen	2
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1
Non-Hispanic or Latino	3
Oromo	2
Somali	2
Southeast Asian	2
White or Caucasian	90