



# ARRESTED FUTURES REVISITED

**SPRINGFIELD:** The Ongoing Impact  
of the School-to-Prison Pipeline



**November 14, 2023**

# Presentation Overview

## Introduction

I. School Discipline

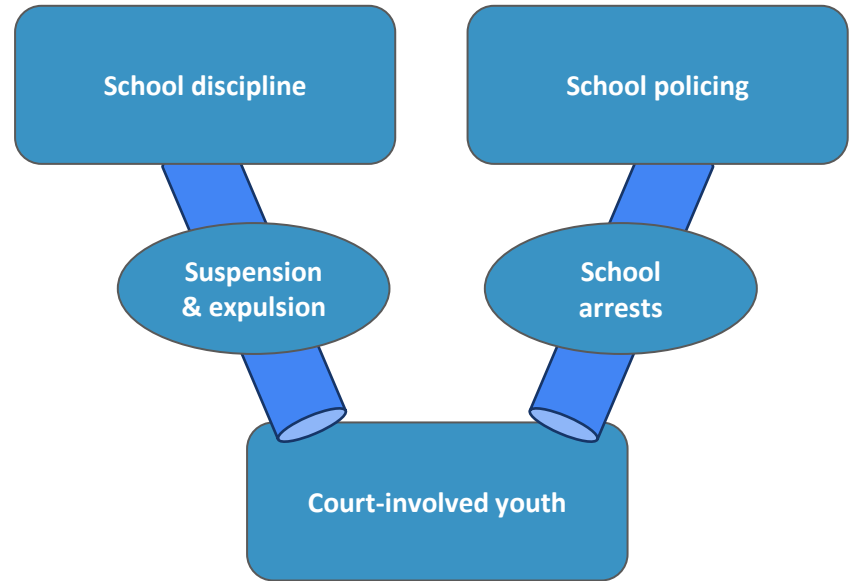
II. School Policing

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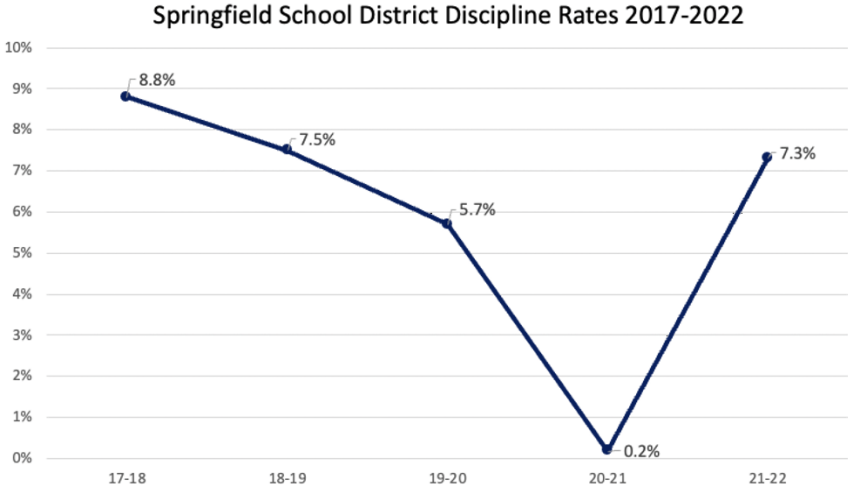
Q&A



# Introduction

2012: Boston, Springfield, and Worcester Public Schools

2023: Springfield Public Schools (SPS)



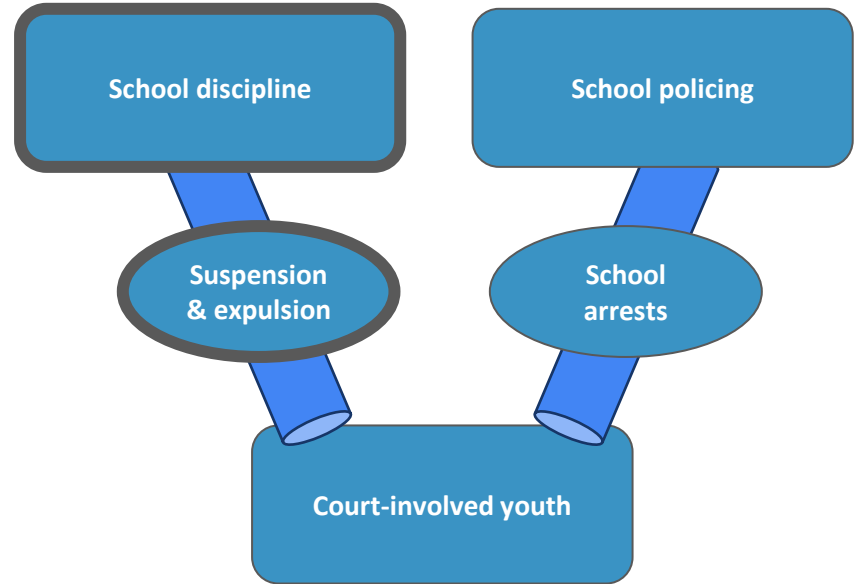
# School-to-Prison Pipeline Context

Legislative changes since 2012:

- Due process protections ensured for discipline (Ch 222, 2012)
- Public district-level school discipline data (Ch 222, 2012)
- SROs no longer mandatory (2020 – Police Reform)
- Greater restorative justice implementation (2022 - Addressing Barriers to Care for Mental Health )

Ultimately, impacting the S2PP depends on policies, practices, and dynamics at the municipal and school levels.

# I. School Discipline



## Finding 1.1: Black students are overrepresented among disciplined SPS student.

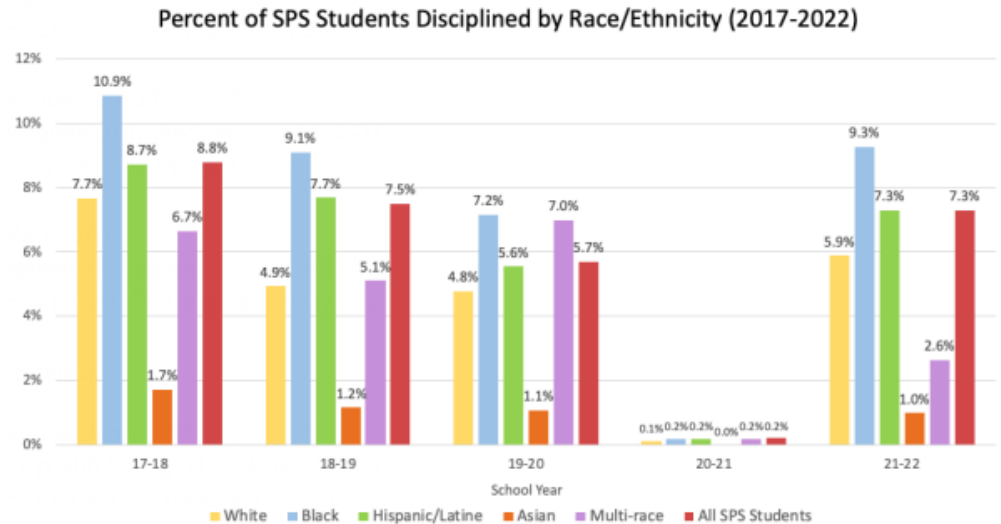
Black students:

- 18-19% of Springfield enrollment
- 19-24% of students disciplined

White Students:

- 9-11% of Springfield enrollment
- 6-10% of students disciplined

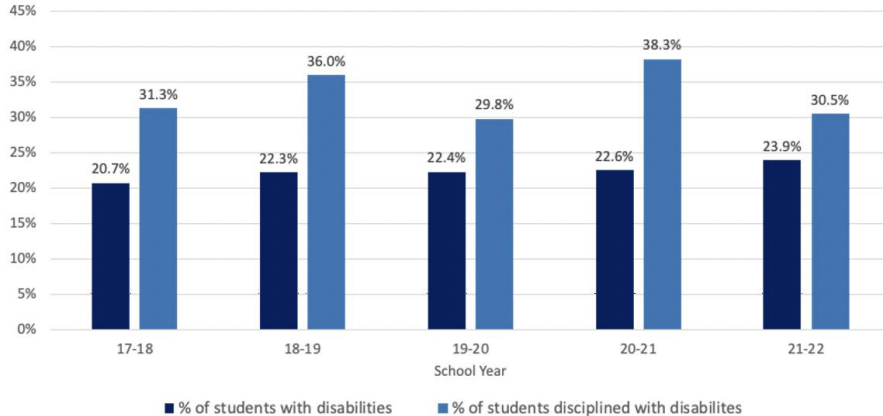
Black students had the highest rate of exclusion of all races in the district.



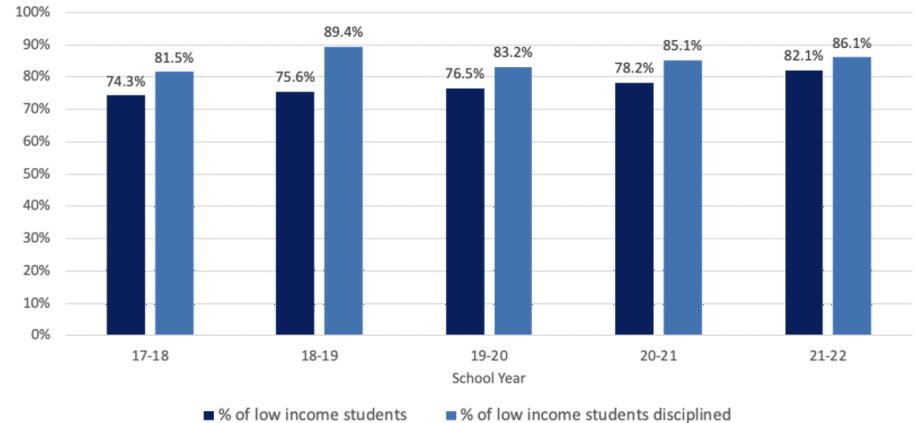
**Finding 1.2: Students with disabilities and students considered low income continue to be overrepresented among disciplined SPS students.**

Students w/ disabilities: 31% of disciplined students in SY21-22, 24% of enrollment  
Low-income students: 74% in SY17-18, 82% in SY21-22

**% of SPS Student Body v. % of Disciplined Students  
Students with Disabilities**



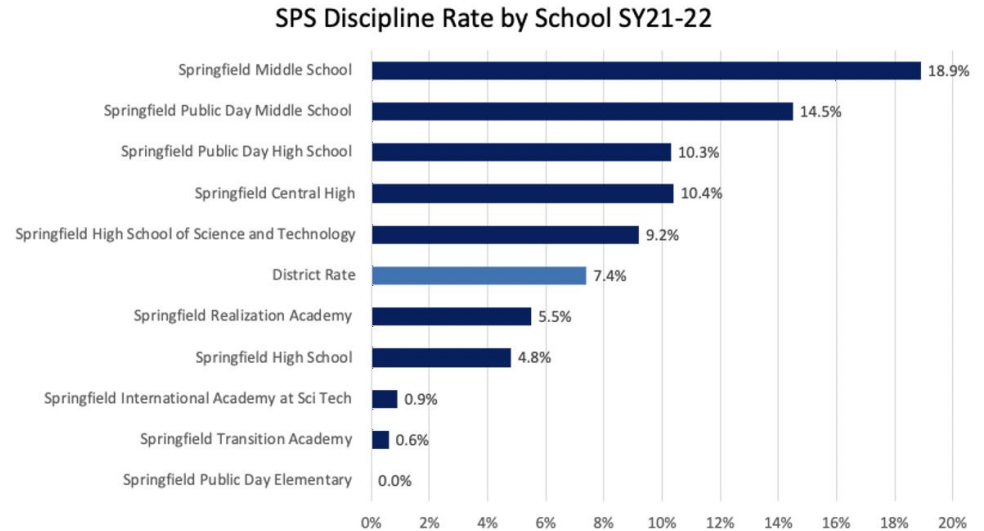
**% of SPS Student Body v. % of Disciplined Students  
Low Income Students**



## Finding 1.3: Schools with the highest disciplinary rates in SY21-22

### Highest Disciplinary Rates:

- Springfield Middle School and Springfield Public Day Middle School
  - Alternative schools in the same building
- Springfield Public Day High School
- Springfield Central High

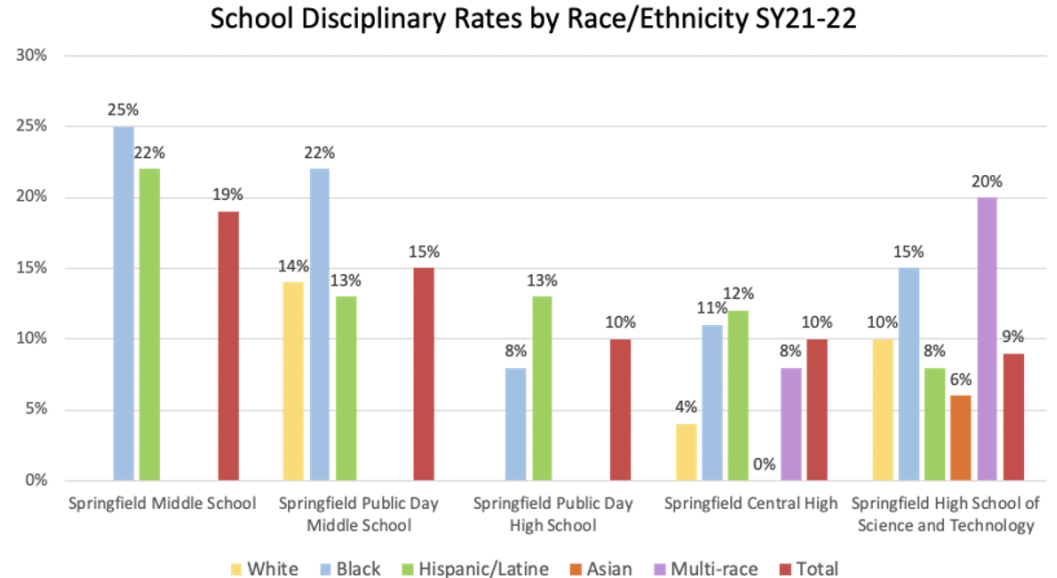




## Finding 1.3 (cont'd): Schools with the highest disciplinary rates in SY21-22

In schools with above-average disciplinary rates, students of color were overdisciplined.

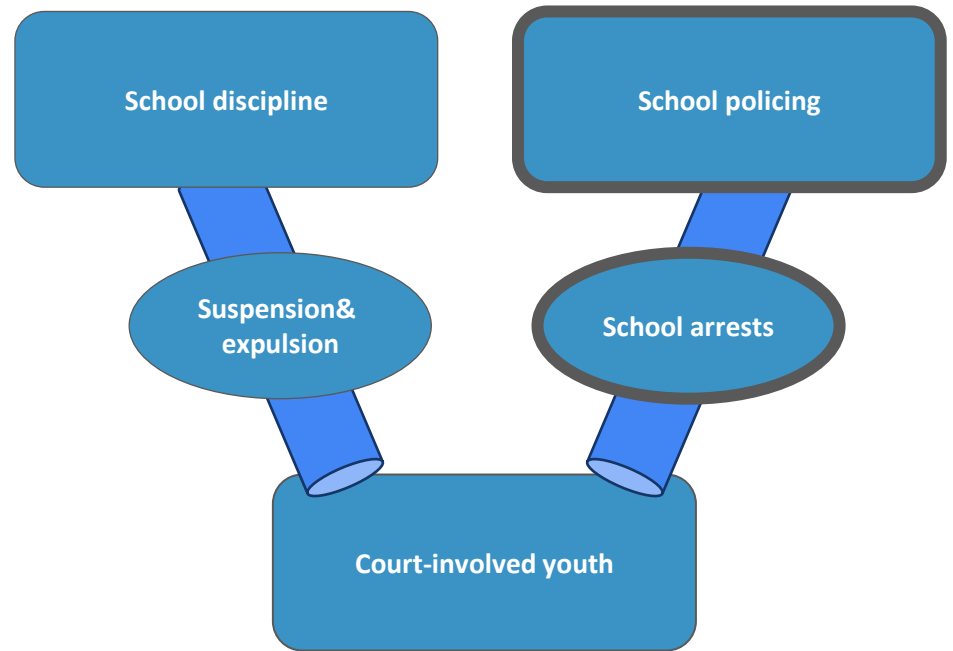
In SY21-22, no White students were disciplined in the Public Day High School or the Public Day Elementary School.



## Recommendations concerning school discipline:

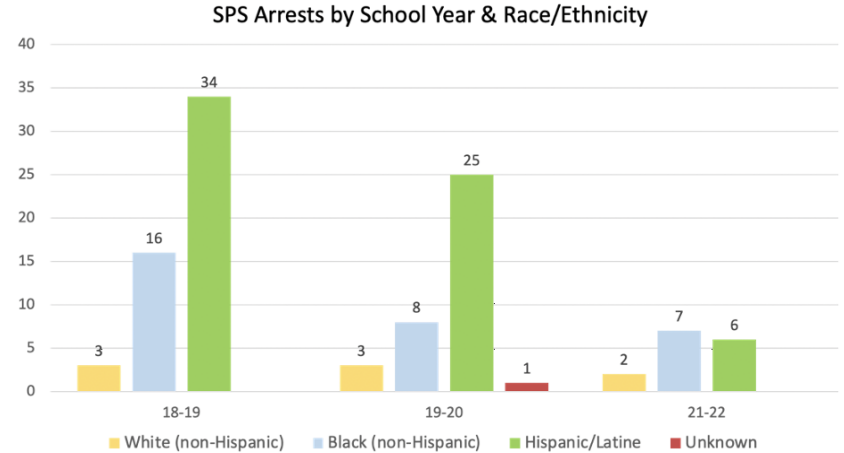
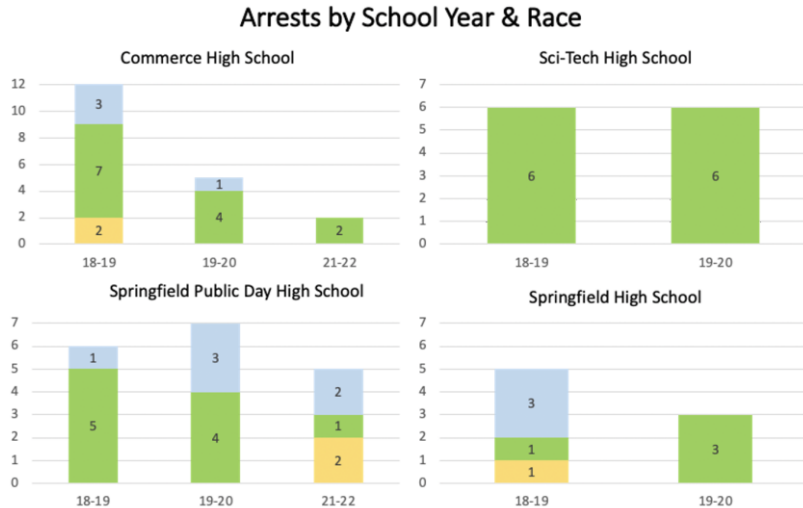
1. SPS must apply a restorative framework into their curriculum and disciplinary system
2. SPS should consider creating an equity and school climate team to address the stark racial disparities in its disciplinary data
3. SPS should ensure that its students receive culturally responsive instruction from educators.
4. The City of Springfield should conduct a full and thorough audit of Springfield Public Schools Special Education department, with a focus on practices at the Public Day Schools.

## II. School Policing



## Finding 2.1. Black students represented 47% of school arrests in SY21-22, despite making up just 19% of the school population

### Most arrests: Commerce High School, Sci-Tech High School, and Springfield Public Day High School

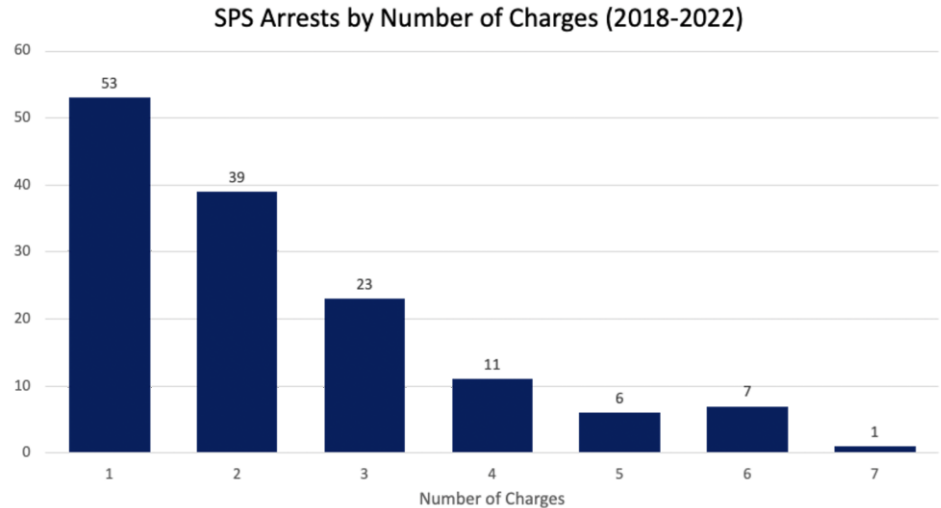


Black and Latine students make up over 85% of student arrests in Springfield

Finding 2.2. Over 60% of students were arrested for multiple charges, with one student arrested on as many as 7 charges.

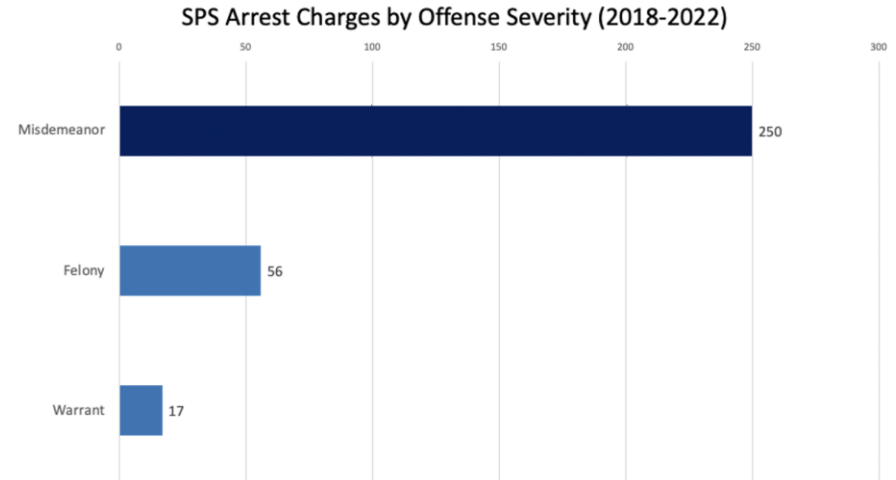
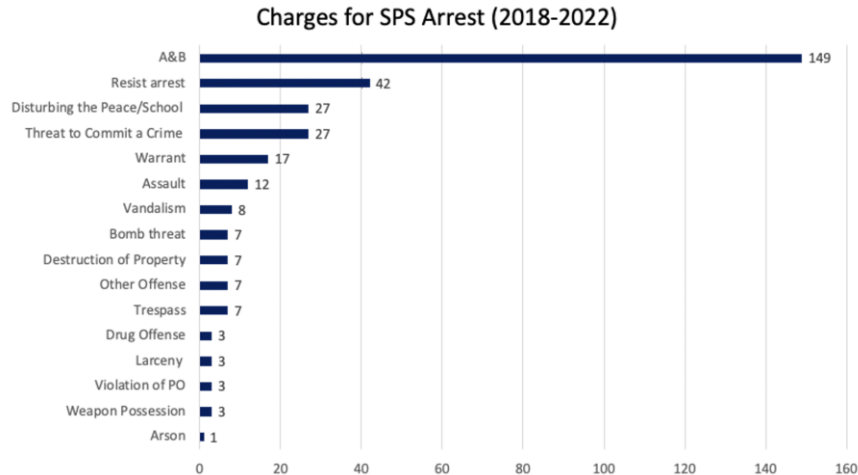
**93% of the resisting arrest charges (39 out of 42) were against Black or Latine youth**

Often used to cover up an officer's excessive use of force and is prevalent among student arrests in Springfield



Finding 2.3. Between 2018-2022, 77% (250 of 323) of SPS arrest charges were for misdemeanor offenses.

## Most common charge: Assault and Battery (46%)



## Recommendations concerning school policing:

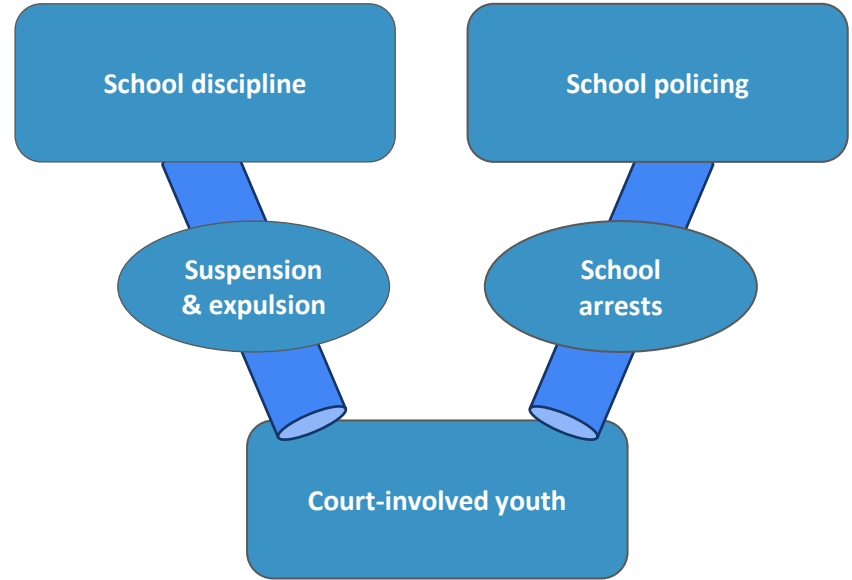
### For the district:

1. Springfield should remove police from school settings.
2. The Springfield school district should implement a restorative justice program in schools.
3. SPS should create a supervisory program for students with disabilities.
4. A full and thorough audit of Springfield Public Schools Special Education department should be conducted.

### For SROs and school staff:

1. All school staff should be trained on the School Resource Officer Memorandum of Understanding.
2. SPS should consider alternative methods for addressing distracting classroom behaviors.
3. Action must be taken to diminish high arrest rates which impact predominately students of colors, students with disabilities, and students with previous court-involvement.
4. SRO training should educate officers on indicators of emotional disability in young students and on resources to help students rather than making an arrest.

### III. 2023 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)





# Memorandum of Understanding

Between Police and School Departments

2022: Model MoU created

- **"the minimum requirement** for schools to formalize and clarify implementation of the partnership between the school and the school resource officer"

**The 2023 SPS MoU does not comply with the model MoU**

## 2023 SPS MoU does not comply with the model MoU

**Finding 3.1:** Lacks the safeguards regulating school arrests provided in the model MoU.

- No language to minimize the amount of time students are unnecessarily removed from classrooms

**Finding 3.2:** Missing key requirements for SRO selection.

- No built-in mechanism for the community to be involved in the selection process.

**Finding 3.3:** Lacks state-required processes for incorporating SROs into school environments and the complaint system required by the state's model MoU.

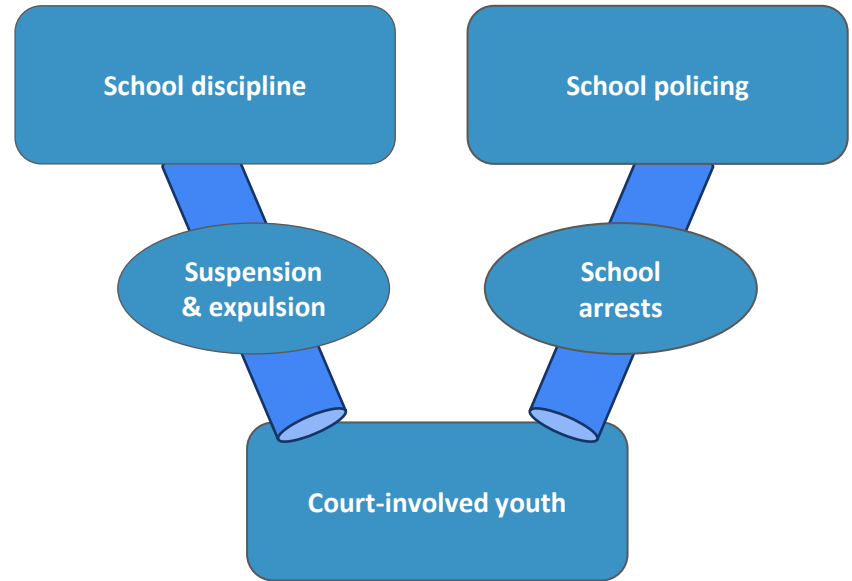
- No language allowing parents and guardians to submit anonymous complaints.

## Recommendations concerning the SPS Memorandum of Understanding:

SPS must update their MoU to comply with the state's model MoU:

- A guiding principle for responding to student behaviors, including the goal to minimize time spent outside of the classroom and to utilize other resources before resorting to the SRO
- Allow community engagement in the SRO selection process
- Ensure disclosure of potential conflicts of interest the SRO may have
- Require SROs to work with the community to develop a system for feedback after selection
- Require an anonymous complaint system that parents and guardians receive notification of at the beginning of every school year

## IV. School Climate



Finding 4.1. Conversations with Springfield students suggest that they cannot identify noticeable benefits, yet they can identify noticeable harms, from SRO presence in their schools.

**Harmful practices mentioned:**

- Use of pepper spray without first attempting de-escalation tactics,
- Inappropriate behavior by officers towards female students, and
- Use of discriminatory or targeted searching and policing practices.

*“Currently there’s no balance. We understand the teachers’ and the administrations’ perspective on safety and security, but they don’t understand us.”*

- Student enrolled in Springfield Public Schools

Finding 4.2. Security measures have a disproportionately negative mental health impact on students who have had previous juvenile court involvement and students with disabilities.

**Examples:**

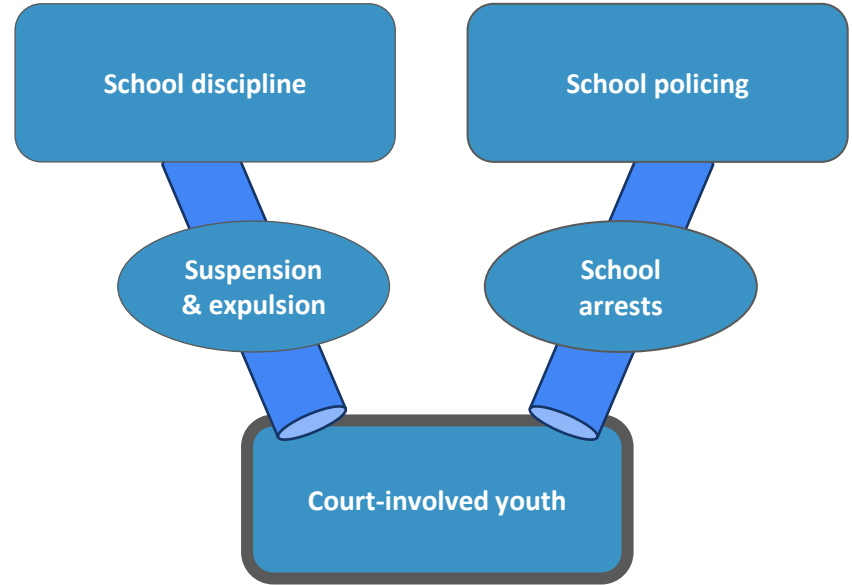
- **SRO presence**
- **Use of metal detectors**
- **Bag searches**

**Springfield students report a general lack of trust of adults in their school community**

## Recommendations concerning school climate:

1. Schools should invest in non-punitive responses to address chronic disciplinary issues such as vaping in school.
2. Schools should implement a method by which students and their families can submit to a regular feedback mechanism regarding school culture and ways to improve it.
3. SPS should end security and surveillance practices that give police unrestricted access to the collected school data.
4. Schools must implement de-escalation strategies by ensuring administrators, counselors, and behavioral therapists are staffed and well-trained to handle situations that could be worsened by punitive responses or police presence.

# V. Treatment of Court-Involved Youth by SPS





**Finding 5.1. SPS creates barriers to enrollment for previously committed students, funneling them into the district's alternative schools.**

SPS inappropriately requires students attempting to enroll (or re-enroll) in school to fill out a “pre-registration” form that includes questions about their juvenile court involvement, including arrests, before enrolling or registering them in a new school.

Children with prior juvenile court involvement are flagged to the ‘Students of Concern Committee’ and presented with contracts that ask them to consent to an evaluation by the Student of Concern Committee.

- Significant delays to re-enrollment

## **Recommendations concerning enrollment of court-involved youth in a new school:**

1. SPS should cease the practice of asking parents to supplement a student's complete school record with other records or information of "any incidents involving suspension, or violation of criminal acts or any incident reports in which [the] student was charged with any suspended act." A student's past juvenile court involvement are confidential records.
2. SPS should not use the same process created for students transferring from a different school district to register students previously committed to DYS, because those students should remain SPS enrolled students even during their time in state custody.



Citizens for Juvenile Justice (CfJJ) is the only independent, non-profit statewide organization working exclusively to reform and reimagine the juvenile justice and other youth serving systems in Massachusetts. Our mission is to advocate statewide systemic reform to achieve equitable youth justice.

Citizens for Juvenile Justice (CfJJ) es la única organización estatal independiente sin fines de lucro que trabaja exclusivamente para reformar y reimaginar la justicia juvenil y otros sistemas de servicios para jóvenes en Massachusetts. Nuestra misión es abogar por una reforma sistémica en todo el estado para lograr una justicia juvenil equitativa.



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