



National Week of Action Against School Pushout

October 18, 2016

TO: Council Chairman Phil Mendelson
Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie
Councilmember Anita Bonds
Councilmember David Gross
Councilmember Elissa Silverman
Councilmember Robert White Jr.
Councilmember Brianne Nadeau
Councilmember Jack Evans

Councilmember Mary M. Cheh
Councilmember Brandon T. Todd
Councilmember Charles Allen
Councilmember Yvette Alexander
Councilmember LaRuby May
Jennifer Niles, Deputy Mayor for Education
Hanseul Kang, State Superintendent of Education

We, the undersigned, represent parents, students, educators, and community members invested in our city's public education system. We believe restorative justice (RJ), a practice aimed at teaching students the skills to resolve conflicts, repair relationships and build community is creating a positive revolution in education. We want every school in the District to receive the resources necessary to develop and sustain an RJ practice tailored to their unique school's needs.

In 2014, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education produced a report entitled "Reducing Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsions in District of Columbia's Public and Public Charter Schools," highlighting both the harmful effects of exclusionary discipline strategies as well as the troubling facts that in DC, students of color, students with disabilities, and students from low-income households are disciplined at unacceptably higher rates than their peers.¹ We believe RJ is a powerful tool to counteract the negative effects of exclusionary disciplinary policies because we have seen and heard about the positive effect RJ practices are having on school climate; not only in our city, but in school districts across the nation.

A school in Texas reported an **84-percent** drop in out of school suspensions the first year RJ was introduced.² During the 2015-2016 school year, the four District of Columbia Public Schools piloted RJ programs and reported a reduction in their suspensions by an average of **50 percent**.³ In addition to reducing out of school time for students, students at schools implementing restorative practices reported feeling safer in school, enjoying positive relationships with adults in the school building and improved academic performance.⁴ We want all students across the District of Columbia to enjoy the benefits of RJ, including increased graduation rates, increased on-time school attendance and decreased involvement in the juvenile justice system.

We are counting on you to ensure all our local public schools (both DCPS and charter) get the resources they need to support and sustain programs like RJ that provide our students with the skills they need to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

Sincerely,

¹ The Office of the State Superintendent of Education. "Reducing Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsions in District of Columbia Public and Public Charter Schools" (June, 2014), available at, http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/OSSE_REPORT_DISCIPLINARY_G_PAGES.pdf.

² Trevor Froncius et al http://jprc.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/RJ_Literature-Review_20160217.pdf

³ *SchoolTalk, Inc.*, "Restorative Practices in The District of Columbia Schools."

⁴ *Id.*