

FROM LOCKERS TO LOCKDOWN!

THE GEORGIA
COALITION
WORKING TO
END THE SCHOOL
TO PRISON
PIPELINE (STPP)

April 2019

The Georgia Project Partners

Year One GCDD NoFA 18ED1
School to Prison Pipeline Grant Report

Project Partners



Gwinnett STOPP

The Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline (Gwinnett STOPP), is a parent-led community-centered advocacy group focused on reversing the School to Prison Pipeline (STPP) trend. The organization was formed in April 2007 by two parent advocates seeking to answer the growing frustration of the number of schools relying on harsh punishment, and law enforcement to address minor school misconduct.

The coalition seeks to build and strengthen relationships within the community in two constructive ways:

- Increase public awareness of the injustice that all children face within the educational system as it relates to the pipeline and the judicial process.
- Promote policy changes through data accountability and fact-based incident reporting which serve to support and strengthen the dismantling of the school to prison pipeline in Gwinnett County.



Interfaith Children's Movement (ICM)

ICM was founded in 2001 in response to the adverse conditions affecting children in our state, including high rates of juvenile justice involvement, educational failure, child poverty and child sex trafficking. ICM advocates on behalf of Georgia's children at the policy and services level by engaging faith communities in calling for justice and servicing the needs of children across Georgia. Our primary methods include:

- Education
- Advocacy
- Mobilization
- Networking
- Information Resourcing

ICM's "Every Child A Learner" (ECAL) campaign embraces the right of every child in Georgia, especially children with developmental disabilities, to receive the highest quality public education because there's no such thing as a child who can't learn.

From Lockers to Lockdown!

THE GEORGIA PARTNERS

PROJECT

This project was approved by the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities on April 1, 2018. The goal of this project is to expand and leverage the existing grassroots, community-based coalition, The Georgia Coalition Working to End the School to Prison Pipeline, to develop and implement a plan to reduce the number of African American males in special education classes who are at risk of being pushed out of school and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems -- a trend known as the "school to prison pipeline" (STPP). This project will use collective impact to train and mobilize grassroots and community stakeholders, including parents, students, faith-based, civic, business, and other community leaders, to become advocates to dismantle the school to prison pipeline through local, state and national action.

Theme

"From Lockers to Lockdown," reflects the students' transition from the learning environment to one of incarceration and other segregated environments. In Georgia's school year 2015-2016, more than 13,300 African American students with disabilities were given out-of-school suspension (OSS); and almost 13,000 were assigned to in-school-suspension (ISS). Although African Americans comprise 37% of the students with disabilities school population, they are disproportionate recipients of OSS, ISS and expulsion:

- Of the total students with disabilities given OSS or expelled totaling 10 days or less, 64% were African American.
- Of the total students with disabilities given OSS or expelled totaling more than 10 days, 75% were African American.
- Of the total students with disabilities given ISS totaling 10 days or less, 52% were African American.
- Of the total students with disabilities given ISS totaling more than 10 days, 60% were African American.



*What was most valuable about this event:
"hearing other community member's concerns
and ideas."*

Project Accomplishments

Identify and contact community partners in the targeted regions of DeKalb County and Gwinnett County.

- ➔ ▪ Created a contact database of more than 200 organizations and individuals
- Communicated with community partners via email, phone and in-person meetings on a periodic basis

Gather and analyze school discipline data for targeted regions on target population, particularly, African American male students with disabilities, from federal, state and locally available data.

- ➔ ▪ Requested and obtained 2016-2017; 2017-2018 school discipline data from the Georgia Department of Education through legislative delegation
- Requested and obtained 2016-2017; 2017-2018 school discipline data from the Georgia Department of Education

Create fact sheets of discipline data for each targeted region and target population based on analysis of federal state and locally available data.

- ➔ ▪ Fact sheets reflecting the application of discipline policies by students by race and disability were produced and distributed at each meeting with the targeted communities

Feedback collected from attendees was instrumental in determining the structure and content of the community engagement sessions—even to the task of identifying the dates for subsequent meetings.

- ➔ ▪ Information regarding this project was provided to elected officials who represent the targeted communities;
- Legislative officials were engaged to assist with data collection;
- Letters of invitation to the community engagement meetings were sent to elected officials; and
- A contact directory of the respective elected officials for the targeted communities was provided to the community engagement participants.

Design, assess and re-design engagement sessions in targeted regions based on feedback from attendees.

- ➔ ▪ Feedback collected from attendees was instrumental in determining the structure and content of the community engagement sessions—even to the task of identifying the dates for subsequent meetings.

Develop survey, agendas, questionnaires and other pertinent documentation for community engagement in targeted regions.

- ➔ • Surveys were developed, distributed, and collected at each community engagement session. Several attendees participated in the video story collection, which took place during engagement sessions.
- All documentation needed to execute a videotaping of participants' stories was developed and provided to participants, as necessary. All forms that required permission or release were collected and filed in a confidential manner by the project partners.

Promote community engagement sessions in targeted regions through standard communications, and other relevant venues and communications outlets.

- ➔ ▪ Community engagement sessions were promoted through the traditional tools of providing flyers at relevant meetings, in-person asks, email and phone calls; through more modern online tools such as Eventbrite, Facebook and Twitter; and communications to various networks through a host of community-based organizations as well as network media through a PSA with Cox Media.

Compile and evaluate data from capacity surveys to determine final target region for implementation of the pilot program.

- ➔ ▪ Project partners compiled and evaluated the data submitted in the capacity surveys and determined that there was a mutual deficit in the capacity of both community cohorts.

Community Events

During Year One, the project partners successfully convened and engaged the targeted communities in several settings: listening sessions, issue training, and engagement sessions. Each event is listed and described below.

How do you think STPP impacts your community?

| | |
|----|---|
| 1. | <i>Young men that are being pushed out of school end up in the legal system.</i> |
| 2. | <i>Unstable families.</i> |
| 3. | <i>There are children who lose hope, and thus, become less productive.</i> |
| 4. | <i>Adversely. Societal bias causes communities to break down.</i> |
| 5. | <i>STPP causes depression and insecurity in my community.</i> |
| 6. | <i>Racially disparate discipline practices allow for segregation in our public schools.</i> |
| 7. | <i>Overly zealous discipline practices lead to less school engagement.</i> |

Community Listening Sessions

On July 25, 2018 and July 26, 2018, grantees convened introductory meetings in DeKalb and Gwinnett Counties respectively. The goals for the meetings were to introduce the project to key community members, faith communities and organizations; gain the community’s perspective on education; and identify others who should be involved. Attendees included parents, retired educators, clergy, attorneys, and community advocates.

We began each session with an overview of the project then provided attendees a data review for their county. While many understood the concept of School to Prison Pipeline, seeing the data was quite impactful. Attendees were then asked to discuss and respond to questions designed to stimulate conversation while eliciting issues that impact education in their communities. The issues noted by the attendees were used in planning for the engagement sessions.

The listening sessions were enthusiastically received by the targeted communities. Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO) volunteered to provide training on special education to expand the community’s knowledge.

Another notable outcome from the introductory meetings was attendees wanted to be involved in the planning process for the larger community meetings. The planning committees also assisted in further identification of decision makers and influencers for the targeted regions.

Social Role Valorization Training

A training conducted by the Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO) on social role valorization was successfully held. It supplied participants a foundational understanding of students who are served under special education. The training was designed to provide more clarity on the issue of the intersection of special education and the school to prison pipeline. Several new people attended this event which included parents, current and retired educators, attorneys, community advocates.

The discussion exposed the need for a deeper level of understanding of our own biases and how those biases inhibit more effective collaborative partnerships between school and community. The training helped to identify the roles of decision makers and influencers who should be included in this work.

Community Engagement Sessions

October and November 2018 Sessions



Community engagement sessions were conducted on October 27, 2018, at Gwinnett Technical School campus and at Antioch A.M.E. Church, Stone Mountain, GA on November 10, 2018. Both sessions were attended by parents, community activists, ministers, educators and public policy advocates, who were key in informing the project partners about the target communities and their awareness level of the intersection of the school to prison pipeline and Black male students with disabilities.

Gwinnett Community Engagement Session

A successful community engagement session was convened on October 27, 2018, at the Busbee Center at Gwinnett Technical College. We received more than 50 registrations. Parents, students, community activists, and educators attended the day-long session and engaged in active participation.

The session opened with an implicit bias exercise facilitated by a cultural proficiency consultant. We, then, moved into a panel consisting of Black male high school students who were achieving academically, involved in various extracurricular activities, and in Advanced Placement and dual enrollment classes, but who had been suspended at least once. The panel was moderated by a recent high school graduate, who had not been suspended, but is passionate about the impact of the school to prison pipeline (STPP) on her peers.

Our closing exercise focused on possible next steps to impact the intersection of Black boys with the STPP. The Gwinnett County engagement session was supported by Dignity in Schools Campaign as an official partner activity of the 2018 Dignity in Schools Campaign Week of Action.

DeKalb Community Engagement Session

The DeKalb County community engagement session was another successful accomplishment. It was convened on November 10, 2018, at the Antioch AME Church in Stone Mountain, GA. We received 25 registrations, which provided us with a diverse pool of parents, students, community activists, and educators at the day-long session.

The session opened with “What’s Your Pipeline,” an ice breaker quiz that tested attendees’ awareness of the school to prison pipeline issue, then moved into a review of discipline and achievement data in regards to the Black male SWD population within the DeKalb County public school system. The agenda also included a cultural proficiency workshop that focused on identifying biases that create pre-judgments about varying groups of persons, including various racial groups. The attendees also participated in an interactive exercise on creating positive school and community climates for the target population and to help attendees understand alternatives to punitive-only responses, such as PBIS and restorative practices.

Community Engagement Sessions

February 2019 Sessions



Two successful community engagement sessions were convened in February. The sessions were attended by parents, students, community activists, educators and legal professionals, who were critical to the project partners' understanding of the participants' readiness level to lead their communities in addressing the intersection of the school to prison pipeline and Black male students with disabilities.

Gwinnett Community Engagement Session

The Gwinnett County session was convened on February 9, 2019, at the Busbee Center at Gwinnett Technical College. We had 33 registrations, which included first-time registrants, as well as attendees from the project partners' prior 2018 listening and engagement sessions. The session opened with an overview of the project's purpose, recap of the goals, and a visioning for going forward with the work of the project. The opening section, called "From Here to There," also included a participatory discussion of the lyrics, "I Wish," by Stevie Wonder, as a comparison of current societal norms to the societal norms of the mid-20th century.

Participants were engaged in an interactive advocacy exercise, entitled, "Here and Now," for the purpose of guiding the participants through community-building activities and an advocacy exercise that culminated in participants identifying and committing to an advocacy platform. The platform consisted of a list of educational resources that participants in the July 2018 listening sessions had determined were needed in their community in order to create better outcomes for their students and for ending the school to prison pipeline.

Through a consensus-building exercise, Gwinnett participants identified as their top priorities advocacy goals that would promote students' success, rather than their failure by addressing issues such as the relevancy of the curricula to the student population served and implementing clearly defined restorative discipline programs that keep students in school.

Yuki Reese, APEX program manager, represented community partner ViewPoint Health and presented at the Gwinnett County session. Ms. Reese provided information on their work within the Gwinnett County Schools System through the Georgia APEX program, which is designed to promote partnerships between community mental health providers and the public school system; and provide school-based mental health services, including direct student services, professional development for school staff, and opportunities for mental health promotion and awareness.

Community Engagement Sessions

February 2019 Sessions



DeKalb Community Engagement Session

The DeKalb County session was convened on February 16, 2019, at Greater Smith Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church. We had 44 registrations, which included first-time registrants, as well as attendees from the project partners' prior 2018 listening and engagement sessions. The session opened with an overview of the project's purpose, recap of the goals, and a visioning for going forward with the work of the project. The opening section, called "From Here to There," also included a participatory discussion of the lyrics, "I Wish," by Stevie Wonder, as a comparison of current societal norms to the societal norms of the mid-20th century.

Participants were engaged in an interactive advocacy exercise, entitled, "Here and Now" for the purpose of guiding the participants through community-building activities and an advocacy exercise that culminated in participants identifying and committing to an advocacy platform. The platform consisted of a list of educational resources that participants in the July 2018 listening sessions had determined were needed in their community in order to create better outcomes for their students and for ending the school to prison pipeline.

Through a consensus-building exercise, teams of DeKalb participants (grouped by 25 and under; and over 25) identified the following advocacy goals as their top priorities:

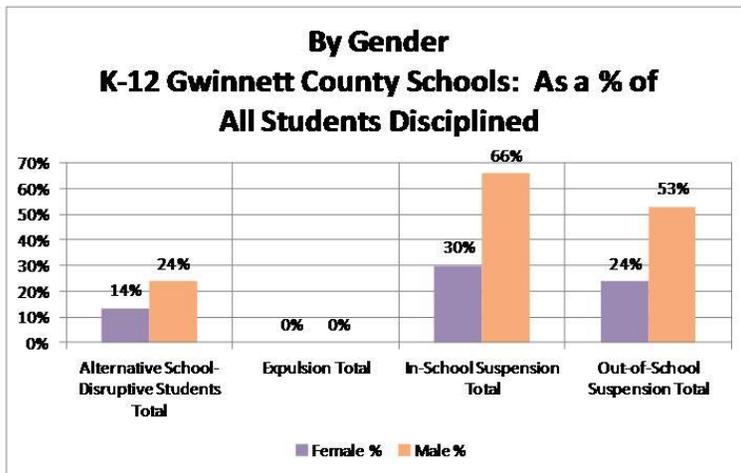
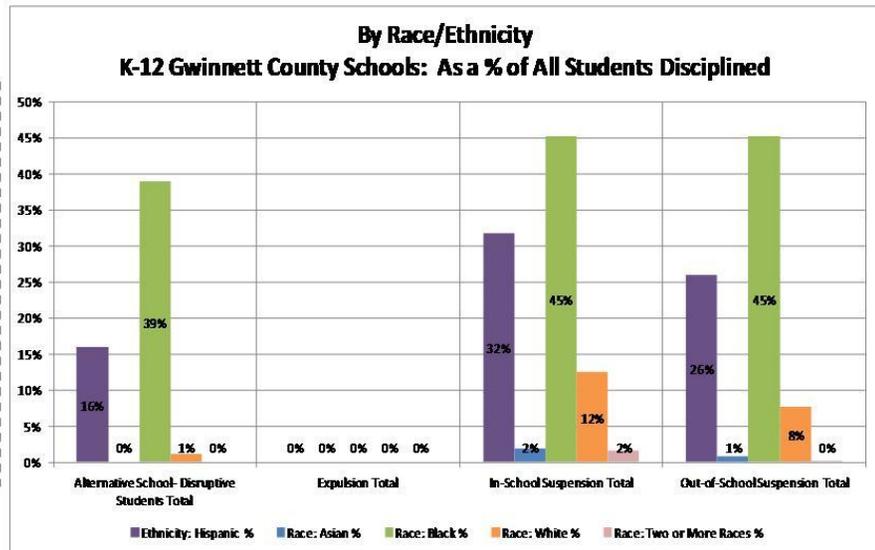
- 25 and under: Integration of socially and culturally relevant content, experiences, etc., as part of the remedial study design; and self-actualization programs that help students build skills, serve, do what builds a sense of self;
- Over 25: More restorative justice; implicit bias training for teachers; and intentional parent involvement.

Rev. Dr. Lamar Hardwick, pastor of Tri-Cities Church and faith community partner, presented at the DeKalb County session. Dr. Hardwick was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder at the age of 36 and has dedicated his adult life and ministry to helping faith communities to become more welcoming to children and adults with special needs. His presentation featured an exposition on the "Six Barriers to Inclusion: Stigma, Anxiety, Executive Functioning, Sensory Processing, Social Communication, and Social Isolation."



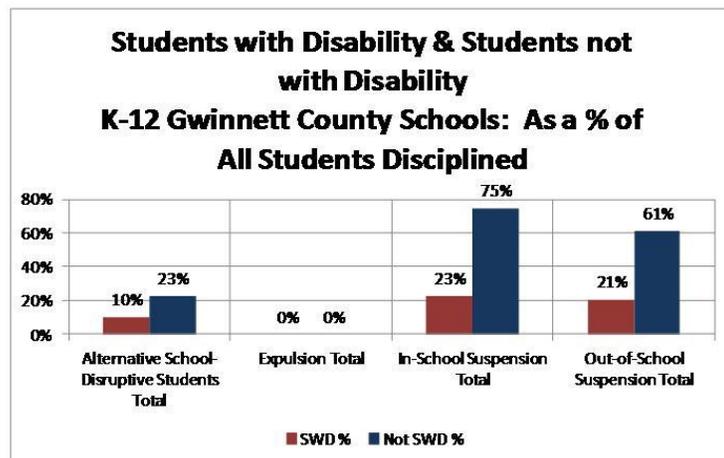
Gwinnett County School Discipline Data 2017-2018

The 2017-2018 school year, Black and Hispanic students overwhelmingly comprised the majority of students removed from the learning environment. Black students made up 45% of the OSS and ISS totals and 39% of the Alternative School placements.



Males exceed females in removals from the learning environment. Based on the race/ethnicity totals, it can be surmised that Black males receive the majority of "disciplinary" measures.

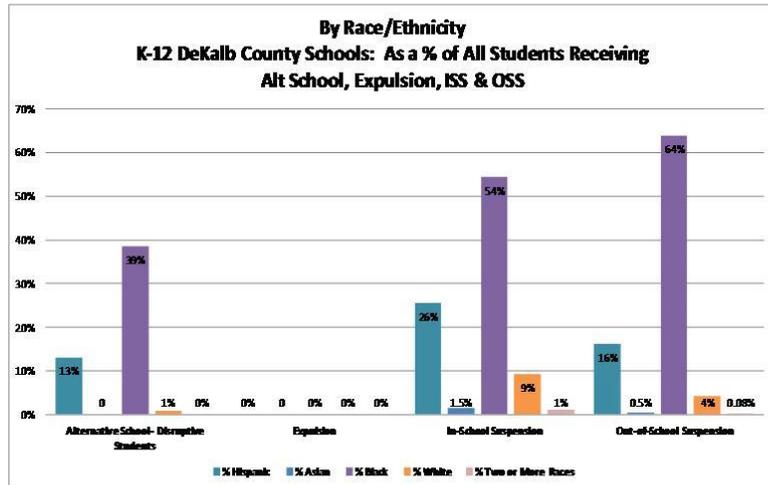
Students identified as SWD are disproportionately represented in removals from the learning environment. While comprising 13% of the total school population, they comprise 23% of ISS and 21% of OSS totals.



DeKalb County School Discipline Data 2017-2018

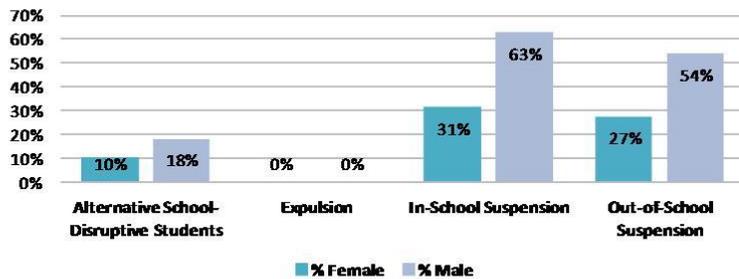
The 2017-2018 school year, Black and Hispanic students overwhelmingly comprised the majority of students removed from the learning environment.

Black students made up 54% & 64% of the ISS and OSS totals, respectively, and 39% of the Alternative School



By Gender

K-12 DeKalb County Schools: As a % of All Students Receiving Alt School, Expulsion, ISS & OSS

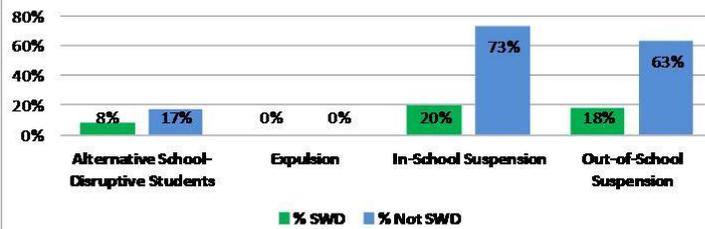


Males exceeded females in removals from the learning environment. Based on the race/ethnicity totals, it can be surmised that Black males received the majority of "disciplinary" measures.

Students identified as SWD comprise 8% of Alternative School removals, 20% of ISS and 18% of OSS totals.

Students with Disability & Students not with Disability

K-12 DeKalb County Schools: As a % of All Students Receiving Alt School, Expulsion, ISS & OSS



Gwinnett County February 2019 - Session Survey Results:

Of the total respondents to this section of the session evaluation, the following represents their perspective of the usability of the information presented at this session:

| Session Topic | From Here to There | Advocacy Here and Now | Advocacy Now | View Point Health |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 4 – Agree that I will be able to use what I learned | 60% | 80% | 60% | 60% |
| 5 - Strongly agree that I will be able to use what I learned | 85.71% | 85.71% | 71.43% | 71.43% |

**There was only one other respondent who marked “Neither agree nor disagree” across the session topics.*

Of the total respondents to this section of the session evaluation, the following represents their perspective on the style and format of the session for learning purposes:

| Session Topic | From Here to There | Advocacy Here and Now | Advocacy Now | View Point Health |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 4 – Agree that this is a good way for me to learn | 83.33% | 66.67% | 66.67% | 50% |
| 5 - Strongly agree that this is a good way for me to learn | 50% | 70% | 50% | 60% |

DeKalb County February 2019 - Session Survey Results

Of the total respondents to this section of the session evaluation, the following represents their perspective of the usability of the information presented at this session:

| Session Topic | Remembering | Advocacy Here and Now | Living the Life |
|---|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 4 – Agree that I will be able to use what I learned | 80.00% | 60.00% | 40.00% |
| 5 - Strongly agree that I will be able to use what I learned | 80.00% | 86.67% | 93.33% |

**There was a total of three respondents for the other levels of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree/Nor Disagree.*

Of the total respondents to this section of the session evaluation, the following represents their perspective on the style and format of the session for learning purposes:

| Session Topic | Remembering | Advocacy Here and Now | Living the Life |
|---|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 4 – Agree that I will be able to use what I learned | 40.00% | 60.00% | 60.00% |
| 5 - Strongly agree that I will be able to use what I learned | 75.00% | 81.25% | 93.75% |

**There was a total of three respondents for the other levels of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree/Nor Disagree.*

Gwinnett County October 2018 - Session Survey Results:

Of the total respondents to this section of the session evaluation, the following represents their perspective of the usability of the information presented at this session:

| Session Topic | Counselors Not Cops | Do You See Me? | Real School vs. Old School | Rebuilding from the Inside Out |
|---|---------------------|----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| *5 - Strongly agree that I will be able to use what I learned | 66.67% | 100% | 88.89% | 44.44% |

**Only Level 5 is represented in this section. There were only two respondents at another level (which was neither agree/nor disagree).*

Of the total respondents to this section of the session evaluation, the following represents their perspective on the style and format of the session for learning purposes:

| Session Topic | Counselors Not Cops | Do You See Me? | Real School vs. Old School | Rebuilding from the Inside Out |
|---|---------------------|----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| *5 - Strongly agree that this is a good way for me to learn | 77.78% | 88.89% | 66.67% | 44.44% |

**Only Level 5 is represented in this section. There were only two respondents at another level (one at "Neither agree/nor disagree" and one at "Agree").*

DeKalb County November 2018 - Session Survey Results:

Of the total respondents to this section of the session evaluation, the following represents their perspective of the usability of the information presented at this session:

| Session Topic | Counselors Not Cops | Do You See Me? | Rebuilding from the Inside Out |
|--|---------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| *5 - Strongly agree that I will be able to use what I learned | 100% | 100% | 33.33% |

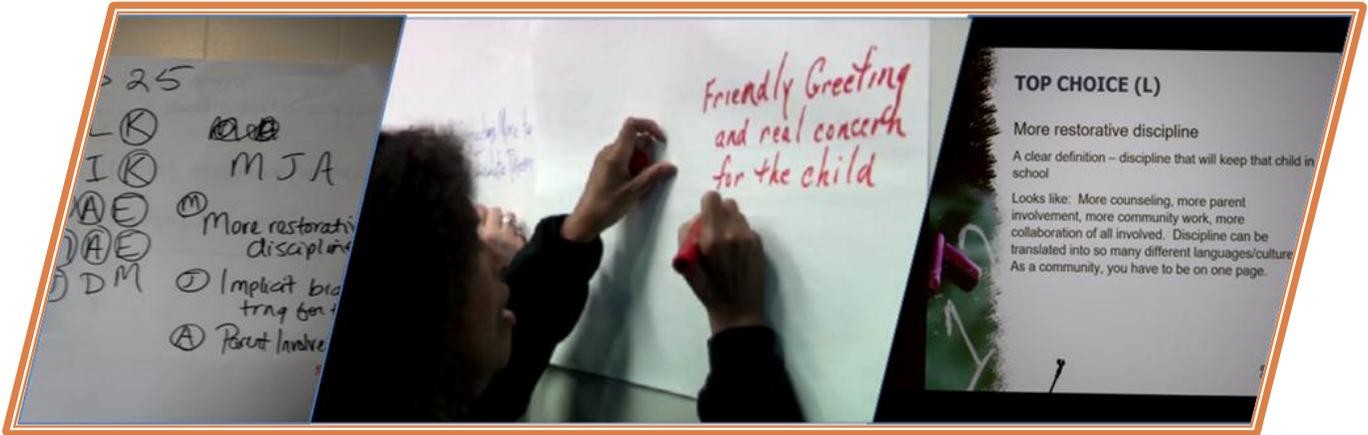
**Only Level 5 is represented in this section. There was only one respondent at another level (which was "Neither agree/nor disagree").*

Of the total respondents to this section of the session evaluation, the following represents their perspective on the style and format of the session for learning purposes:

| Session Topic | Counselors Not Cops | Do You See Me? | Rebuilding from the Inside Out |
|--|---------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| *5 - Strongly agree that this is a good way for me to learn | 100% | 100% | 33.33% |

**Only Level 5 is represented in this section. There was only one respondent at another level (which was "Neither agree/nor disagree").*

Recommendations



Year One of the project successfully increased awareness of the education, disability and social justice issues within the targeted regions to better inform advocacy and potential policy work. Parents who attended the sessions stated they are now better informed about education issues. Others expressed feeling more empowered and vindicated for pushing back on their children's school(s) regarding special education identification and support.

One of the biggest challenges we encountered during the project was access to quality fully disaggregated data. Education systems do not make data readily accessible, and it becomes even more difficult to access reliable data that are disaggregated by all subgroups, particularly those targeted in the project. Oftentimes, information is dated when a source for disaggregated data by subgroups and education program is identified. This is an ongoing challenge that the partners have raised at various education accountability levels for several years. While the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that data be accessible and fully disaggregated, states are slow to comply. Another challenge was the drop-off ratio for registrations versus attendance. We generated substantial public interest, but many registrants' priorities changed by the dates of the events.

We also learned during Year One that there exists a mutual deficit in the capacity of both of the targeted communities and the need to continue the work with both. Each community has specific needs and unique operational norms. Therefore, it is the conclusion of the project team that to select one community over the other would inhibit the progress that was made during Year One. Our recommendation for Year Two includes building the capacity of both communities. We were encouraged that we received 30 commitment statements of support and interest in further engagement in this effort – that's 29% of the total participant population.

As initially proposed, the project activities to be performed during Year Two and subsequent years of the implementation phase are training and technical assistance. The training and technical assistance will be designed to increase the capacity of community members to become effective advocates for students and families within the public school system, whether meeting with administrators or giving testimony at school board meetings. In order to build sustainable community-based education advocacy, we will recruit a select number of previous engagement session attendees to train as advocacy cohort teams. The training will require a commitment from the cohort members to attend all training sessions and participate in advocacy efforts in their respective communities.



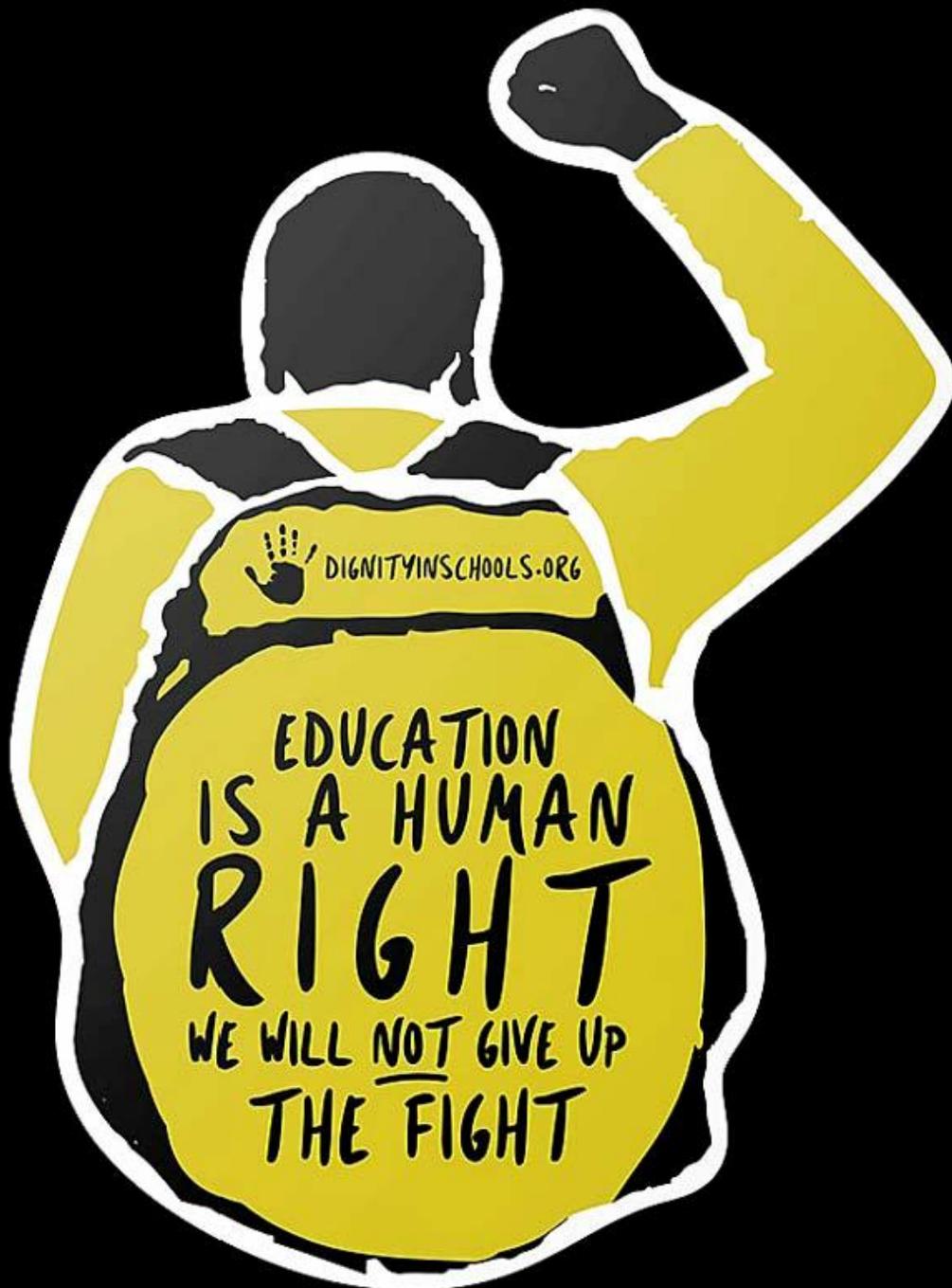
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interfaith
children's
movement

FROM LOCKERS TO LOCKDOWN!

BLACK BOYS, SPECIAL EDUCATION AND THE STPP



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