

North Carolina School Safety Recommendations (4.12.19)

Authored by representatives from the Durham People's Alliance Racial Equity and Education teams, the People's Alliance Latinx Caucus, BYP100, Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People, City of Durham Neighborhood Improvement Services, Southern Coalition for Social Justice's Youth Justice Project, and families in North Carolina public schools.

1. **We ask the Governor to direct his Crime Commission to issue a report or publication on the School-to-Prison Pipeline in NC.**
 - a. Budget items: "School Resource Officers Report" and "School Safety and Mental Health Support Allotment" [7.8(a), 7.8(b), and 7.9(a) from the first edition of Governor's budget]
 - b. Explanation: We would like this as an evidence-based effort, either through the establishment of a Special Committee (like the school shootings committee) or through a research partnership like this. This committee should be representative of and led by the population directly impacted by the school-to-prison pipeline, including mental health providers, families of color, low-income families, and families with students with disabilities.

2. **We ask that the Governor foster accountability in schools through transparent/consistent data collection. Specifically, we ask that the Governor augment his budget item 7.9(a) (annual SRO report request) by adding data collection around SRO interactions with students.**
 - a. Budget: 7.9(a) in first edition of Governor's budget
 - b. Explanation:
 - i. We want consistent metrics with shared language and understanding on what we're measuring. There is vast inconsistency at local levels now, but coming from top down, we'd be measuring the same things and have some consistency across districts on what we're observing. Specifically, we want to measure/document any time a SRO is involved with a student.
 - ii. We should track regularity, such as when, how, and who is involved in referrals. We want to know entire sequence and process and everything that led to that, as well as establish an accountability component.
 - iii. *Accountability:* This can take many forms, but from the Governor's office it might include administration in grants for SROs, what trainings SROs must have, etc.

3. **We ask that the Governor augment the current PowerSchool incident report requirements to address the school to prison pipeline and create more accountability for teachers and administrators. Specifically, we ask that the Governor collect data of who (teachers and administrators) is disciplining students as a new required category when filing the required PowerSchool incident reports.**
 - a. Budget: "Student Data and Information System Enhancements" from Education budget summary; Governor's budget items 7.5(a); 7.13(a); 7.15.
 - b. Explanation:
 - i. We ask that the Governor address the severity of disproportionate discipline that is impacting how safe students feel around their teachers and administrators, the professionals charged with educating them. To address this issue, we suggest tracking the "high-flying" teachers (aka ones who have patterns of making referrals) as much as the high-flying students.
 - ii. The data should be stored on PowerSchool, and needs to include who's sending who, for what reasons, etc.
 - iii. Accountability will be rooted at a local level through Accountability Agreements, but the data should be turned over to state/Governor's office, who can utilize funding allotted through items such as 7.5(a), 7.13(a), and 7.15.

4. **In partnership with the aforementioned PowerSchool requirements, we ask the Governor to support the movement for more accountability for adults in schools with pathways that provide clear, structured solutions for teacher/administrators whose data demonstrates bias and lack of classroom management skills with the overall impact of shifting focus from student (over)accountability to adult (under)accountability.**
 - a. Budget items: "\$5 million: Strengthening the Educator Workforce", "\$5.325 million-Professional Development for Teachers and School Leaders", and "\$500k- North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching."
 - b. Explanation: It is important to examine disproportionate discipline data and shift accountability to those in charge. However, structures must be in place to help teachers exhibiting bias and having classroom control issues-- for example, allocating funding to add support staff for classrooms, or differentiating professional development.

5. **In accordance with Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 (federal law), we ask that the Governor implement a policy, practice or system improvement strategy to reduce racial and ethnic disparities that come from SRO referrals. Specifically, we ask that mandatory racial equity training for SROs be required, that there is explicit language in the MOU regarding the SRO's role, and that the Governor clearly define the duties of law enforcement so that police officers are not involved in student discipline or counseling.**
 - a. Budget items: "\$15 million: Public Safety Improvements Reserve"
 - b. Explanation: The MOU needs to clearly define roles and responsibilities.

6. **We ask that the Governor consider implementing a plan that would gradually decrease the discrepancy between recommended student-to-counselor ratio and our actual ratio over the next 3 years. Specifically, we urge the Governor to enable school districts to meet the recommended student-to-professional ratios for school counselors and social workers, and prioritize funds for these professionals ahead of police and security officers.**
 - a. Budget items:"\$4.7 million- Statewide Regional Support Model" and "\$40 million: School Safety and Youth Mental Health - Student Support Positions".
 - b. Explanation: We appreciate the Governor's 2018-2019 budget recommendation of \$55 million for Youth Mental Health, which includes \$40 million to increase the Certified Instructional Support Personnel allotment, guaranteeing one additional full-time employee (FTE) in each district. However, adding only one FTE per district is inadequate when research shows that the needs are much greater. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends that schools strive to maintain a 250:1 student-to-counselor ratio. As of 2018, North Carolina's ratio was 386:1, according to the Department of Public Instruction. Setting ratios might help prioritize resources.

7. **We ask that the Governor ensure that any funds, including grants, given to school districts for "school safety" have clear guidelines and prioritize the use of programs and professionals that have been shown to improve school climates, reduce racial inequities, and provide identification, prevention, and intervention services, such as social-emotional and mental health classes, creating trauma-informed schools, and increased community-school partnerships. Further, we ask that the Governor advocates against SROs in elementary schools.**
 - a. Budget items: There is not a budget item for this, but rather we ask that an evidence-based lens be used in allocating funds for school safety.
 - b. Explanation: Research and best practices suggest that having SROs in schools can come with unintended, negative consequences, particularly for students of color. Data also demonstrates that investing in reducing racial inequities can address the whole child's needs, leading to a decrease in the achievement gap.