

**NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL-JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP TASK FORCE:
KEEPING KIDS IN SCHOOL AND OUT OF COURT**

WORK GROUP DESCRIPTIONS

Engagement Work Group: Identifying promising and emerging strategies to keep kids in school and out of the justice system.

Recent research indicates that school engagement is a strong predictor of a student’s life outcomes, including whether that student is likely to become involved in the justice system. School engagement, in turn, is linked to school climate – the environmental factors that help keep students and teachers safe, connected and supported. Potential questions to be answered:

- What can the research on school engagement tell us about what works to keep students engaged in school and out of the justice system?
- What can research and experts (local and national) tell us about inter-agency strategies to improve school engagement as it relates to keeping kids out of the justice system?
- What are the “bright spots” in NYC schools – schools that have improved student engagement and safety and how have they done it?
- What are the “bright spots” nationally – and what can we learn from those that we might be able to apply here?
- What can research and experts (local and national) tell us about disproportionate impacts with regard to students with special needs or students of color and what are the promising and emerging culturally competent strategies to improve school engagement for these students?
- In a time of resource challenges, what can research and experts tell us about the most effective and efficient approaches to keeping kids in school and out of the justice system?

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Working to improve the lives and life chances of children involved with New York courts

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Re-Engagement Work Group: Identifying promising and emerging strategies to re-engage kids in school who are disengaged and at risk of involvement or involved in the justice system.

Research and common sense recognize that disengagement from school is a strong risk factor for students to become or to continue to be involved in the justice system. Students who are disengaged from their local schools – for example, chronic truancy, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, placement in a suspension school, or placement in a juvenile or adult facility – need focused interventions to re-engage them in school in order to reverse that course and keep those youth out of or returning to the justice system. Potential questions to be answered:

- What can we learn about kids who enter the justice system in NYC as a result of a school-related issue?
- How can we strengthen transition programs to help keep students in school or re-engaged in school?
- What can research and experts (local and national) tell us about what role truancy, discipline and the lack of school engagement play in predicting a student's involvement in the justice system? What can we learn about impact on students with special needs and students of color?
- What are the bright spots locally and nationally which have succeeded in averting deeper involvement of kids in the justice system in favor of heightened engagement in the education system?
- In an era of resource constraints, what can the research and experts (local and national) tell us about promising and emerging initiatives to realign resources from expensive deep-end strategies to efficient and effective prevention and intervention strategies?
- What opportunities are there for inter-agency partnerships to re-engage disengaged students?

Data Work Group: A critical component of the fact-finding process will be grounding our understanding of school engagement and re-engagement in data. The data workgroup will focus on gathering and analyzing existing data, working with potential data sources to identify and analyze other promising sources of information, and engaging in very targeted data collection, as necessary. The data group will also help assess the quality of the data currently available to identify challenges and potential solutions. Finally, this work group will be informed by and supportive of the other two work groups, looking, for example, at the research on promising practices to guide its data collection and analysis. Potential questions include:

- What data is currently available or might be made available to help understand how to keep kids in school and out of the justice system?
- What are the trends with regard to the school-justice connection for students in recent years?
- What can the data tell us about potential bright spots and challenges?
- Can the data be disaggregated by critical elements such as race/ethnicity, geography, special needs, etc.?
- What are the challenges with respect to data collection and data quality?
- What data is available about the overlap between school-related incidents and the justice system? What are the challenges?
- What data can be collected and/or analyzed to build on the court survey data and follow the path of youth who enter the justice system as the result of a school related incident?
- What can the research and experts (local and national) tell us about what data is most relevant to analyzing the school-justice connection?