

TOOLKIT:

POLICING IN SCHOOLS



NEW YORK CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

OVER 93,000 NEW YORK CITY STUDENTS can't get to class every day without passing through a gauntlet of metal detectors, bag searches, and pat-downs administered by police personnel who are inadequately trained, insufficiently supervised, and often disrespectful. And on any day students at any other junior high or high school might be subjected to mandatory scans and searches from roving metal detectors.

These police-student interactions create flashpoints for confrontations and divert students and teachers from teaching and learning. They make many students feel diminished. And they are incompatible with the positive educational environment that students deserve.

STUDENTS AS SUSPECTS: THE OVER-POLICING OF NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS, a report released by the New York Civil Liberties Union on March 18th, 2007, documents police officers' violations of students' rights and makes recommendations as to how the situation could change for the better.

The right to receive a sound basic education in an environment conducive to learning is a basic civil liberty. The New York Civil Liberties Union is strongly committed to protecting the rights of students, and to working with educators, students, families, community members, and city officials to achieve urgently needed reforms.

TOGETHER, WE CAN GUARANTEE that New York City schools are not hostile environments but supportive places where students can learn, grow, and achieve their full potential.



TAKE ACTION: REPORT MISCONDUCT

FILING A COMPLAINT WITH THE SCHOOL SAFETY DIVISION OF THE NYPD

Currently the only way to file a complaint about the actions of School Safety Division employees of the NYPD, like School Safety Agents, is through the NYPD itself.

The number to call if you want to file a complaint is **718.730.8500**. You should be prepared to tell the recipient of your complaint where and when the incident happened, the School Safety Agent's name, badge number, and description (if possible), and a description of what took place.

Keep in mind: the NYPD School Safety Division's internal complaint procedure is time-consuming and may not yield meaningful results. Many important safeguards common to complaint processes—such as confidentiality, protection from retaliation, and an impartial review—do not appear to be in place. However, in the absence of a more effective oversight body, the NYCLU encourages you to register your complaint with the NYPD to create an historical record of the incident.

FILING A COMPLAINT WITH THE CIVILIAN COMPLAINT REVIEW BOARD (CCRB)

Currently, the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB), which is the independent agency that takes complaints about and investigates misconduct by regular NYPD police officers, claims that it does not have authority to hear complaints against School Safety Agents. However, you can help pressure the City to change the CCRB's charter to specifically provide for oversight of School Safety Agents by letting the CCRB know about your incident with a School Safety Agent. This will create a record of school-based incidents within the CCRB and help to illustrate the scope of problems with the NYPD currently taking place in New York City schools.

There are currently a number of ways to file a complaint with the CCRB:

- Visit the CCRB offices at 40 Rector Street, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10006.
- By phone, dial 311 (outside NYC dial 212.NEW.YORK).
- File a complaint online at www.nyc.gov/html/ccrb/html/complaint.html.
- Write a letter to the CCRB at 40 Rector Street, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10006.

SHARING YOUR STORY WITH THE NEW YORK CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

While the NYCLU does not have the resources to respond to every incident of police misconduct in schools, we still want to hear your stories! As we continue our work on holding the NYPD accountable on the streets and in the schools, we need your help. If you or members of your family are mistreated by a School Safety Agent, contact us:

- By phone, dial 212.607.3300.
- Email us at dmaldonado@nyclu.org.
- File a complaint online at www.nyclu.org/policeinschools.
- To fax us, dial 212.607.3318.
- Or mail us your story at 125 Broad Street, 19th Floor, New York, NY 10004.



GET ACTIVE: ORGANIZE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

ORGANIZE A KNOW-YOUR-RIGHTS TRAINING FOR STUDENTS

The first line of defense for any student who interacts with the police in school is to know the law and know his or her rights.

Just because a student is in school doesn't mean he or she doesn't have rights -- quite the opposite! But in order to be protected by their rights, students must know them and must not be afraid to exercise them.

The NYCLU is available to lead Know-Your-Rights trainings for students. These trainings will cover questions that include:

- Can the police search my bag in school?
- What are my rights when passing through metal detectors?
- Do I have to answer questions from police in school?
- Can the police arrest me in school?
- How do I file a complaint against abusive police behavior in my school?

You don't need to be a formal group or organization to host a Know-Your-Rights training. Here are some ideas for groups that can host Know Your Rights trainings:

- Government or social studies classes
- Sports teams
- Religious groups
- After-school clubs
- Summer camps
- Youth groups
- Friends
- Any other group of young people

To find out more about student Know-Your-Rights trainings or to schedule a training, contact the NYCLU at 212.607.3300 and ask for Chloe.

ORGANIZE A MEETING WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

One of the best ways to get people to take action on this issue is to organize a get-together at your home or a neighborhood spot where you and your friends and neighbors can gather to discuss the problem and take action together.

Working to end overpolicing in school can be a good time. Plan for your meeting by having food and drinks or ask everyone coming to bring something to share. Then present the background on the issue, how it affects you and your community, and the steps that your group can take to make change. Hand out "Know Your Rights" cards on students' rights in school, which the NYCLU can provide to you for no charge.

After you discuss the problem together, take action! Get everybody to write letters to the Chancellor using the model letter enclosed here, or make phone calls to City Council Members using the model script also included in this packet.

Before people leave, be sure to plan "next steps" so that the action doesn't end in just one night. Plan for the next move—whether it's more writing, a street action, or a lobby visit to a policymaker.

Gatherings like this help spread awareness about the problem -- and if the information is coming from a friend or neighbor, people will be much more likely to take it seriously.

After the meeting, assess what went right and what went wrong so that each time your work gets better.

ORGANIZE A COMMUNITY FORUM IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Think big! Organize a community forum in your neighborhood. A community forum ...

- informs a large group of people about an issue.
- is a great way to get many people to take action on an issue.
- can draw policymakers or local officials who are responsible for the problem or are in a position of power to fix the problem.
- can draw media attention.

To host a Community Forum you need a space large enough to hold a large group of people. This could be a church, community center, school classroom or auditorium, union or veterans hall, or any place at all.

With a group of friends or neighbors, choose a date. Invite interested parties to speak at your forum – from School Safety Division officials to City Council Members to representatives from the Mayor’s office or the Department of Education to NYCLU representatives to affected students. Once you have a date and some speakers, publicize your event! Hit the streets with flyers. Make phone calls and send emails. Make announcements at public forums and PTA meetings. Do whatever you can to bring together as many concerned community members as possible.

At the meeting, present the problem of overpolicing in New York City schools to the audience. Then ask your panelists to respond. If you have politicians in attendance, make sure they stay on point. Ask them specifically what they are going to do about the problem of policing in schools, and don’t let them avoid giving concrete answers. Allow community members to ask questions, share stories, and express their feelings about policing in schools.

Before everybody leaves, make sure you provide ample opportunities for people to take action by providing model letters and phone call scripts. Provide talking points and Know Your Rights cards. Also, have people sign up on a list to stay involved so that when a course of action becomes available, you can let them know.

Also, if you’re planning a Community Forum on this issue, be sure to let the NYCLU know! We want to help you make these events as successful as possible.

STAY INVOLVED WITH THE NYCLU

The New York Civil Liberties Union is committed to working hard to bring an end to the overpolicing of New York City’s schools and to holding School Safety Agents and the NYPD accountable for their actions. If you’d like to get involved in our fight, join the NYCLU’s E-Activist Network at <http://ga1.org/nyclu/join.html>.

The NYCLU also has a group of committed volunteers that is focused on police accountability issues. We need your help and your input. Join the NYCLU’s Field Department Volunteer Team by contacting our office. We hold meetings every two weeks and would love for you to get involved. Whether you have years of organizing experience or this is your first time, we want your input in organizing lobby visits, protests, forums, or other events. To find out about volunteer opportunities, contact Field Organizer Darinka Maldonado at dmaldonado@nyclu.org or call 212.607.3300.



WRITE LETTERS TO THE MAYOR, THE CHANCELLOR, AND YOUR COUNCIL MEMBER

If we want them to enact laws and rules to protect students' rights, Mayor Bloomberg, the DOE Chancellor and the City Council must hear from all of us loudly, clearly, and frequently that the overpolicing of New York schools must stop.

This section contains two letters: one for Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein and one for your City Council representative.

You may want to change the letter to include personal stories about yourself or your children and their encounters with police in their schools. A personal story is always more effective than a form letter.¹

Feel free to detach each letter and make lots of copies for your friends, neighbors, and relatives to send as well. If you'd like to copy and paste the text of this letter into a new document and edit it on a computer, you can obtain an electronic version online at www.nyclu.org/policinginschools.

The more letters that reach the Mayor, the Chancellor, and the City Council, the quicker we'll be able to make change.

You can send your letters to the Mayor, the Chancellor, or the City Council at the addresses below:

Office of Mayor Michael Bloomberg

City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Office of Chancellor Joel Klein

52 Chambers Street, Room 320B4
New York, NY 10007

City Council Members

The address for each NY City Councilmember is different.
To find out who your city council member is, visit
http://www.nycouncil.info/constituent/member_list.cfm.

¹ If there are pending criminal charges against a student, or if a student is awaiting a suspension hearing, you should include few details about the incidents that led to those charges or suspension until those issues have been resolved. Consult an attorney or advocate.

Date: _____

Dear Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein:

I write to ask you to put an end to the overpolicing of New York City schools. While I understand the importance of ensuring a safe learning environment for children, it is just as essential that schools treat all students with dignity and respect. I am worried that too many students are treated like potential criminals from the moment they walk through the schoolhouse door.

Every day, students across the city face overaggressive police tactics in their schools, with severe consequences for their rights. Through the use of metal detectors, bag searches, and heavy-handed enforcement of minor school infractions, the NYPD has transformed many of our schools from educational institutions into police zones. These activities deny students necessary classroom time, and too often result in wrongful arrests or suspensions of New York City students.

Surprisingly, there are few regulations governing police activities in our schools, and even fewer mechanisms to hold police personnel accountable for their actions. I believe that there is a way to end the overpolicing of our schools, and I ask that you enact these four reforms to achieve that end:

- **Restore school safety responsibility to educators, not police officers.** Our schools must be run by education professionals, and not by law enforcement. I ask that you set clear guidelines establishing school principals as the primary authority responsible for safety in New York City schools.
- **Invest additional resources into alternatives to policing and rely less on metal detectors.** The law enforcement culture of many New York City schools is damaging to the education environment and to students' social development. I ask that you examine and implement alternatives to traditional policing methods that are more in line with an education setting.
- **Require that school safety officials are better trained to work with youth and in collaboration with school communities.** Traditional law enforcement training is inappropriate and insufficient for schools. I ask that you ensure that School Safety Agents are taught how to effectively interact with students, including students with special needs. School safety officials should be part of the fabric of the school community, and not disinterested outsiders.
- **Work with the City Council to amend the City Charter to expand the jurisdiction of the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) to include complaints against employees of the School Safety Division of the NYPD.** Just like other NYPD divisions, the School Safety Division must have independent civilian oversight. Students, parents, and teachers must have meaningful redress if they are mistreated by a School Safety Agent and the CCRB should be authorized to assess such claims.

As a parent committed to making our schools the safest they can be and to providing our children with the best education possible, I urge you to support these crucial reforms. Changing the way police interact with our children in schools will go a long way towards enhancing students' education and improving police-community relations as a whole.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this matter and to learning about your response to this important issue.

Thank you,

Date: _____

Dear Council Member _____,

As your constituent, I ask that you work with the rest of the City Council to rein in the overpolicing of New York City schools. While I understand the importance of ensuring a safe learning environment for our children, I believe that it is just as essential that schools treat all of our students with dignity and respect. I am worried that too many students are treated like potential criminals from the moment they walk through the schoolhouse door.

Every day, students across the city face overaggressive police behavior in their schools, with severe consequences for their rights. Through the use of metal detectors, bag searches, and heavy-handed enforcement of minor school infractions, the NYPD has transformed many of our schools from educational institutions into police zones. These activities deny students necessary classroom time and too often result in wrongful arrests or suspensions of students. The heavy law enforcement presence in many New York City schools is damaging the education environment and students' social development

Surprisingly, there are few regulations governing police activities in our schools, and even fewer mechanisms to hold police personnel accountable for their actions. It is now time for the City Council to evaluate the effectiveness of the City's increasing use of the police in our schools, and to oversee the activities of the NYPD in this crucial arena. The police must be held accountable wherever they conduct law enforcement activities—whether in the streets or in the schools.

In this light, I call on the City Council to:

- **Conduct oversight hearings on NYPD policing of New York City schools.** The City Council must perform its oversight function and demand meaningful answers from NYPD and Department of Education officials on the role and activities of School Safety Agents in our schools. There are too many unanswered questions about how our schools are policed and the public deserves to know more about this important issue.
- **Amend the City Charter to expand the jurisdiction of the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) to include complaints against employees of the School Safety Division of the NYPD.** With over 4,600 NYPD employees in New York City schools interacting with students on a daily basis, there is no reason why these agents should not be held accountable by the CCRB as other NYPD officers are. Implementing a meaningful SSA misconduct complaint procedure for students, families, and school employees would go a long way towards creating a safe and fair learning environment for school communities.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this matter and to learning about your response to this important issue.

Thank you,



CALL THE PEOPLE WHO CAN CHANGE THE SYSTEM

Another way of reaching the Mayor, the DOE Chancellor, and your City Council Member is to make phone calls to their respective offices. Policymakers have confirmed that hearing from their constituents on a particular issue can change the way they decide to vote or approach an issue; it can also help them choose their priority issues before those issues become the subjects of proposed legislation. With frequent and steady phone calls, we can make the issue of ending the overpolicing of our schools a high priority for policymakers.

In this section you will find model phone scripts for calling the Mayor's office, the DOE Chancellor's office and your Council Member's office. Feel free to detach each script and make copies so that your friends, neighbors and relatives can make calls as well.

Remember: the script is just a starting point. You may want to add your own personal thoughts and stories in order to make the call more effective. Giving policymakers specific information about how this issue affects you or your family will be more effective than reading the script alone.

You can call the Mayor's Office, the Chancellor's Office, and your Council Member's office at the numbers below:

Office of Mayor Michael Bloomberg

311 or 212.639.9675

Office of Chancellor Joel Klein

212.374.5141

City Council Members

The phone number for each NY City Councilmember is different.

To find out who your city council member is, visit

http://www.nycouncil.info/constituent/member_list.cfm.

PHONE CALL SCRIPT TO CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

Hi, my name is _____ and I'm a constituent of Council Member _____'s.

I'm calling today to ask that Council Member _____ work with the rest of the City Council to rein in the overpolicing of New York City schools, and protect the rights of students against police misconduct in our schools. While I understand the importance of ensuring a safe learning environment for our children, it is just as essential that schools treat all of our students with dignity and respect. As a parent, I am worried that too many of our students are treated like potential criminals from the moment they walk through the doors of their schools.

Specifically, I'm asking that Council Member _____ support two important steps to help rein in abusive police practices in the schools. First, I ask that the City Council conduct oversight hearings on the role and activity of School Safety Agents in New York City schools. I hope that the City Council will ask tough questions of the NYPD to make sure that the public knows exactly what is taking place inside our schools with regard to NYPD presence there. Second, I ask that Council Member _____ support legislation to amend the City Charter to expand the jurisdiction of the CCRB to include complaints against employees of the School Safety Division of the NYPD

[Then ask:] Does Councilmember _____ have a position on these issues? [Wait for response. If yes, find out what it is. If no, offer to send more information (direct to www.nyclu.org)].

As a constituent and a student/parent/teacher/community member, the safety and education of children is my top priority. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this matter and to learning about your response to this important issue. Thank you.

PHONE CALL SCRIPT TO CHANCELLOR KLEIN/MAYOR BLOOMBERG

Hi, my name is _____ and I live in _____ [Borough]. I'm calling today to ask that Mayor Bloomberg/Chancellor Klein work to stop the overpolicing of New York City schools and protect the rights of students against police misconduct in our schools. While I understand the importance of ensuring a safe learning environment for our children, it is just as essential that schools treat all of our students with dignity and respect. As a parent, I am worried that too many of our students are treated like potential criminals from the moment they walk through the doors of their schools.

In particular, I am asking that the Mayor/Chancellor take the lead on four important reforms:

- First, I ask that the Mayor/Chancellor support restoring primary authority over school safety to school principals, not the NYPD.
- Second, I'd like for the Mayor/Chancellor to invest more resources into alternatives to policing and rely less on intrusive and harsh methods such as metal detectors and bag searches.
- Third, I ask that the Mayor/Chancellor make sure that School Safety Agents are better trained to work with youth and in collaboration with school communities.
- And finally, I ask that Mayor Bloomberg/Chancellor Klein work with the City Council to amend the City Charter to expand the jurisdiction of the CCRB to include complaints against employees of the School Safety Division of the NYPD.

(Wait for response.) Does the Mayor/Chancellor have a position on these issues? (If the answer is yes, ask what it is. If the answer is no, offer to send more information or direct to www.nyclu.org.)

(End with:) As a student/parent/teacher/community member, the safety and education of children is my top priority I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this matter and to learning about your response to this important issue. Thank you.



CONTACT KEY ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON POLICING ISSUES IN NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS

NEW YORK CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION
125 Broad Street, 19th Floor
New York, New York 10004
212.607.3300
www.nyclu.org/policeinschools

URBAN YOUTH COLLABORATIVE
urbanyouthcollaborative@gmail.com

DESI RISING UP AND MOVING
2-26 Broadway, 4th Floor
Jackson Heights, NY 11372
718.205.3036 (p)
718.205.3037 (f)
www.drumnation.org
info@drumnation.org

MAKE THE ROAD BY WALKING
01 Grove Street
Bushwick, Brooklyn, NY 11237
718.418.7690 (p)
718.418.9635 (f)
www.maketheroad.org
list@maketheroad.org

LEGAL SERVICES FOR NYC
350 Broadway, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10013
212.431.7200 (p)
212.431.7232 (f)
www.lsnny.org

ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN
51 W. 30th Street, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10001
212.947.9779 (p)
212.947.9790 (f)
www.advocatesforchildren.org
info@advocatesforchildren.org

NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of the Chancellor
52 Chambers Street, Room 320B4
New York, NY 10007
212.374.0200 (p)
jklein@schools.nyc.gov

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR OF NYC
Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg
City Hall
New York, NY 10007
www.nyc.gov/mayor

NY CITY COUNCIL
To find contact info for your
Councilmember, visit
www.nyccouncil.info

NY CITY COUNCIL SPEAKER
Christine Quinn
City Hall
New York, NY 10007
212.788.7210 (p)
212.788.7207 (f)
quinn@council.nyc.ny.us

NYC PUBLIC ADVOCATE
Office of Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum
1 Centre Street, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10007
212.669.7250 (p)
212.669.4701 (f)
www.pubadvocate.nyc.gov
ombudsman@pubadvocate.nyc.gov