



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

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## Press Release

### For Immediate Release

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## Advocates for Children of New York Supports the City's Adoption and Funding of Recommendations by the Mayor's Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline

**July 21, 2016 (NEW YORK CITY)** — Today, the City announced its intention to implement the recommendation of the Mayoral Leadership Team on School Climate and Discipline to modify the Department of Education's (DOE's) discipline code to end suspensions for students in kindergarten through second grade and increase support for positive behavior interventions in schools. Advocates for Children of New York staunchly supports the elimination of suspensions for these students and the use of a developmentally sound approach to address the behavior of young children instead.

“Suspending a young child from school does nothing to teach social-emotional skills or change the child's behavior when the child returns, and removing children from the classroom causes them to fall behind in key academic skills, such as learning to read. The City should act quickly to implement the changes recommended,” said Kim Sweet, the Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York.

As NYPD data also released today reveals, our schools have become safer: crime is down, fewer students are arrested, and most police encounters with students are for low-level crimes and noncriminal offenses. Despite these improvements, new data reported pursuant to Student Safety Act amendments passed last year illustrates the continued need for the City to embark on a long overdue strategic plan to address significant racial disparities in students arrested, handcuffed, and issued summonses, as well as in students suspended.

The Leadership Team's report contains a number of additional recommendations that should be implemented, including:

- Launching a pilot program providing a comprehensive mental health service continuum in 20 high-needs schools, including using hospital-based clinics and providing whole-school Collaborative Problem Solving training to support these schools, and

- Revising the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and the DOE to decriminalize student misbehavior by clearly delineating the roles of school administrators and the NYPD, specifying minor offenses that will not result in student arrest or receipt of a summons, and creating an arrest diversion program for lower-level crimes.

Says Dawn Yuster, Director of AFC's School Justice Project, "There are a lot of excellent ideas in this report. Now the City needs to make them happen."

### **About Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)**

Since its founding in 1971, Advocates for Children of New York has been protecting the education-related needs of children most at risk of academic failure or school-based discrimination due to such factors as poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, language barriers, immigration status, homelessness, or involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice system. AFC's mission is to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. AFC achieves this through four integrated strategies: free advice and legal representation for families of students; free trainings and workshops for parents, communities, and educators and other professionals, to equip them to advocate on behalf of students; policy advocacy to effect change in the education system and improve education outcomes; and impact litigation to protect the right to quality education and to compel needed education reform.

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