



NAACP, Duluth Branch
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For Immediate Release

Duluth Branch NAACP Demands Alternatives to School Resource Officers in ISD 709

Over the past decade, the Duluth Branch NAACP has been closely involved with conversations and initiatives surrounding the use of School Resource Officers (SROs) in the Duluth Public Schools, ISD 709. Throughout this time, the Branch has maintained its position that SROs have a disproportionately negative impact on BIPOC students. The Branch has proposed and promoted a number of alternative strategies for social and behavioral interventions in the schools, yet SROs continue to remain as a central piece of the district's approach to managing behaviors and disciplinary actions. The following document summarizes data indicating the negative impacts of SROs on BIPOC students. Subsequently, the document reiterates alternative intervention strategies that the Branch would like to see implemented in place of SROs.

ISD 709 disciplinary data (Source: [Propublica](#), based on [US Department of ED CDRC surveys](#)):

- The current system of discipline disproportionately impacts students of color, working class students, and students with disabilities and/or special education.
 - For ISD 709, Black students are 7.2 times more likely to be suspended than white students
 - Hispanic are 4.5 times more likely to be suspended than white students
 - Native Americans are 4.6 times more likely to be suspended than white students
 - Students of two or more races 4.9 times more likely to be suspended
- There are significant disparities of race and discipline between Western and Eastern Duluth schools
 - **At Denfeld (west):** the racial demographics of the school were 9% Black, 72% white, 3% Hispanic, 6% two or more races, 6% Native American. Black students are 5.4x, two or more races are 5.4, and Native American students are 3.1x more likely to be disciplined.
 - **At East (east):** the racial demographics of the school were 3% Black, 88% white, 2% Hispanic, 3% two or more races, 2% Asian or Pacific Islander, 2% Native

American. Black students are 8.3x, two or more races are 8.3x, Hispanic students are 12.3, and Native American students are 12.3x more likely to be disciplined.

- **At Lincoln Park (west):** the racial demographics of the school were 10% Black, 69% white, 4.8% Hispanic, 10% two or more races, 4.2% Native American. Black students are 5.5x, two or more races are 4x, Hispanic students are 4.8, and Native American students are 4.2x more likely to be suspended.
 - **At Ordean (east):** the racial demographics of the school were 4% Black, 86% white, 2% Hispanic, 4% two or more races, 2% Asian or Pacific Islander, 2% Native American. Black students are 17.4x, two or more races are 8.5x, Hispanic students are 7.2, and Native American students are 7.2x more likely to be suspended.
 - **At Congdon (east):** the racial demographics of the school were 5% Black, 80% white, 2% Hispanic, 6% two or more races, 4% Asian or Pacific Islander, 3% Native American. Black students are 20x and Hispanic students are 20x more likely to be suspended.
 - **At Laura McArthur (west):** the racial demographics of the school were 7% Black, 69% white, 4% Hispanic, 14% two or more races, 2% Asian or Pacific Islander, 6% Native American. Black students are 8.3x, two or more races are 8.3x, Hispanic students are 12.3, and Native American students are 6x more likely to be suspended.
 - **At Piedmont (west):** the racial demographics of the school were 7% Black, 67% white, 2% Hispanic, 17% two or more races, 2% Asian or Pacific Islander, 6% Native American. Black students are 4.2x, two or more races are 4.9x, Hispanic students are 8.4, and Native American students are 12.3x more likely to be disciplined.
 - **Yellow** is high school data, **green** is middle school data, and **blue** is elementary school data.
- In 2017-18, of the 78 incidents where the responding officer was an SRO in the middle and high schools (45 of those students were Black or Native American); in 2018-19, SROs responded to 88 incidents (43 of those students were Black and Native American)
 - This makes sense because according to the job description of the Duluth SROs - they are sworn police officers first, but have no requirements for training in education or child development.

Impacts of having SROs within the district:

- These disparities in suspension and discipline → materially limits opportunities of our students and may result in:
 - Lower test scores and lower graduation rates (57.45 for Black students and 52.18% for Native American students district wide in 2017-18)
 - Fewer going to college
 - Less attendance
 - Disproportionate discipline makes it:
 - Harder for students of color to participate in advanced placement classes
 - At Denfeld, white students are 4.4x more likely to enroll in AP, while they are 5.9x more likely than Native American students

- Such comparisons are not available for East (numbers may be too small to report and maintain student privacy)
 - Harder to participate in extra-curricular, including sports and music
 - Sports and music are high-impact practices that encourage engagement - we should be increasing access, not decreasing it
- SROs command considerable resources. The new contract for SROs in ISD709 is \$277,096 for four officers. On the other hand, the median salary for a school counselor is \$56,310 (less in Minnesota, according to BLS). More counselors would provide more student-centered options. They are not resources for the students.
- Schools should utilize a student-focused model, When students have the resources they need, they thrive. Resources should be directed to students, instead of police officers.

Alternative strategies to eliminate and replace SROs within the district:

- Current and former students from East and Denfeld organized with NAACP to address these disparities (before COVID)
 - They asked for:
 - Expand restorative justice principles the schools
 - Employ restorative justice circles
 - Implement addiction help programs as an alternative to punishment
 - Increase the number of mental health professionals within ISD 709
 - Provide a survivor advocate
 - Train all staff in racial, disability, queer and working class justice
- We recognize that student behavior may require intervention, and request some specific restorative practices that tend to the emotional needs that may contribute to behavior, including:
 - [Meditation or yoga](#)
 - As regular practice (helps center students, build coping skills)
 - Intervention
 - [Saturday \(or after school time\) School](#) (school provides transportation or bus passes)
 - [Specific engagement with disaffected communities](#)
 - [Exercises to develop empathy in teachers](#)
 - Employing restorative justice circles and crisis intervention resources
 - Community collaborative, network of advocates to support students and families
 - Engage in other high-engagement activities, including volunteering
 - Link to existing programs and partners, where appropriate
- In addition, to facilitate implementation, the district should develop a school-based and district wide community of practice, so educators implementing training can learn from each other to increase the amount of implementation

Thank you for taking the time to review this document. We look forward to the opportunity to discuss and implement alternative strategies to the use of SROs in Duluth Public Schools. Please feel free to reach out to branch@duluthhaacp.org with any questions regarding this document.

Sincerely,
Duluth Branch NAACP