

# School Success, Safety, Youth Development



In the past two legislative sessions, WA has passed several bills in the realm of school success, safety, and youth development. Some prominent successes include SB 5237, the Fair Start for Kids Act, which expands accessible, affordable child care and early childhood development programs, and HB 1208, which improves the Learning Assistance Program funding stream. Several bills focused on racial equity in schools were also signed into law last session, including SB 5044, which incorporates equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism curriculum into cultural competency training for school staff, and HB 1214, which acknowledges the disproportionate impact of school policing on Black students and improves training for school security staff. However, despite this progress, there is still almost no gender-responsive legislation in WA that centers on the development and success for girls\* in school.

The need for gender-responsive and racially-equitable policies is urgent, as COVID has only exacerbated existing disparities along the lines of both race and gender. Once the pandemic forced youth development and education to shift online, girls reported a lack of access to academic support for different learning styles and digital divides that hampered access to services, resources and education (i). Gendered and racial biases remain prevalent in schools across the country, contributing to a school-to-prison pipeline that disproportionately funnels Black girls into incarceration (ii). This pattern is evident in Washington state, which criminalizes misbehavior in school and allows school districts to use school police officers for discipline, despite evidence that they may make schools even less safe (iii). These disciplinary practices alienate students, and disproportionately harm Black girls, who experience adultification bias (iv), high levels of suspension, and heightened forms of punishment for subjective offenses such as dress code and insubordination (v).

As schools begin to reopen and federal COVID relief funding reaches states, it is imperative that programs and policies address the overlapping impacts of the pandemic on BIPOC\*\* girls, the institutional racism prevalent in the public school system, and the continual over policing and criminalization of Black girls in schools. Advocates and policymakers must implement girl-centered, racially equitable, and community driven solutions that shift educational systems away from punishment and towards a holistic approach that supports girls' social and emotional wellbeing and safety.

---

\*Throughout this document, "girls" refers to gender expansive youth (cis girls, trans girls, non-binary youth, gender non-conforming youth, gender queer youth and any girl-identified youth).

\*\*BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. We use BIPOC to center the unique experiences of Black and Indigenous communities and to avoid generalizing all people of color. For more information please visit this page: [YWCA: Why We Use BIPOC](#).

#### Sources:

- i. Justice for Girls. *Washington State Girls\* Fact Sheet on Violence, Mental Health and Well-being*. (2020)
- ii. Chakara, Mackenzie. "From Preschool to Prison: The Criminalization of Black Girls." *Center for American Progress*. (2017)
- iii. ACLU WA. *Students Not Suspects: The Need to Reform School Policing in Washington State*. (2017)
- iv. Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality. *Adultification Bias*. (2017).
- v. Green, Erica, et al. "A Battle for the Souls of Black Girls." *The New York Times*. (2020).

# Washington Bills Signed into Law in Recent Years\*

School Equity	Discipline & Safety	Youth Dev.	Student Success
<p><b>SB 5044:</b> Adds equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism to existing cultural competency training for school and district staff. Requires districts to use one professional learning day for DEI training. <i>*LEV priority</i></p> <p><b>SB 6066:</b> Requires that OSPI make ethnic studies resources available for K-12. Establishes ethnic studies advisory committee.</p>	<p><b>HB 1214:</b> Providing K-12 public school safety and security training &amp; services by classified staff or contractors <i>*LEV priority</i></p> <p><b>HB 1113:</b> Mandates a process to assess causes and develop solutions for student absenteeism <i>*WACHYA priority, LEV priority</i></p>	<p><b>HB 1208:</b> Making improvements to the Learning assistance Program (LAP) funding stream <i>*YDST priority, LEV priority</i></p> <p><b>SB 5151:</b> Codifies outdoor child care and expands to school-age child care <i>*WACHYA priority, LEV priority</i></p> <p><b>SB 5237:</b> Fair Start for Kids Act: expanding accessible, affordable child care and early childhood development programs <i>*WSCADV priority, YDEKC priority, LEV priority</i></p>	<p><b>SB 5128:</b> Allows for school transportation funding to be funded and flexible during a national emergency. <i>*LEV priority</i></p> <p><b>HB 1297:</b> Working Families Tax Credit: provides direct cash assistance to families in need <i>*WSCADV priority</i></p> <p><b>HB 1166:</b> Expanding access to the homeless and foster care college students pilot program <i>*WACHYA priority, LEV priority</i></p>

## King County Initiative: Restorative Community Pathways

**Lead: Creative Justice, Collective Justice, Choose 180, Community Passageways**

Redirects \$12.59 million in the biennium budget from the King County Sheriff's Office to a program which provides youth accused of a first-time, non-violent felony offense with alternatives to court contact. Instead of being prosecuted, youth are paired with community-based organizations that facilitate a restorative accountability process.

\*Special thanks to WA Coalition for Homeless Youth Advocacy (WACHYA), Youth Development Strategy Table (YDST), Youth Development Executives of King County (YDEKC), Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV), League of Education Voters (LEV) and all other advocates and allies who championed legislation in these policy areas.

# Emerging Ideas: Federal Level

## Ending PUSHOUT Act of 2019

- Provides grants to eliminate exclusionary and discriminatory discipline practices which target girls of color and to replace with trauma-informed and restorative practices
- Strengthens data collection on exclusionary discipline practices
- Creates a joint task force to prevent pushout of Black and brown girls from schools

## Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools Act

- Diverts federal funding away from police in schools, towards evidence-based services that address needs of marginalized students and that are racially and gender responsive and trauma-informed
- Provides grants to school districts ending contracts with law enforcement and hiring mental and behavioral health personnel

# Emerging Ideas: State Level

## Discipline

Recommendations\*: Create a robust continuum of alternatives to suspension and expulsion, eliminate suspension and expulsion for pre-K through grade 2

### Model Policies

CA SB 419: Prevents schools from suspending students' in grades K-8 for willful defiance, prohibits expulsion of grades 9-12 for willful defiance

## School Resource Officers

Recommendations: Remove all police from schools, Redirect funding to counselors and social workers, Prohibit police involvement in student discipline, Amend WA 'Disturbing Schools' Statute

### Model Policies

MD HB 496: Reassigns \$10 million from the Safe Schools Fund into counseling services  
OR SB 238: Prohibiting contracting with law enforcement to place police in schools

## Dress Codes

Recommendations: Review and develop dress codes with articulation of gender and sex equity and responses to sexual harassment and assault, mandate schools include students in development of codes of conduct and policies

### Model Policies

Toronto District School Board: Established fair and equitable standards and practices for student dress in all schools

## Ethnic Studies

Recommendations: Implement comprehensive ethnic studies curriculum, Improve the pipeline for BIPOC teachers, Require ethnic studies courses for high school graduation

### Model Policies

CA AB 331: Requiring ethnic studies in high school graduation requirements

\*The recommendations on this page were informed by the recommendations and policy platforms of the National Black Women's Justice Institute, Girls @ the Margin National Alliance, The Mockingbird Society, League of Education Voters (LEV), American Civil Liberties Union Washington (ACLU WA), and Dignity in Schools. They were also informed by conversations with JFG allies, staff and youth in WA.