

Mikva Challenge IL



State of Chicago Youth 2021

Mikva Challenge is a non-partisan, not for profit founded on the premise that youth voice and participation matter, and that our civic and political life will be stronger when youth participate and help shape their own destinies.

Mission

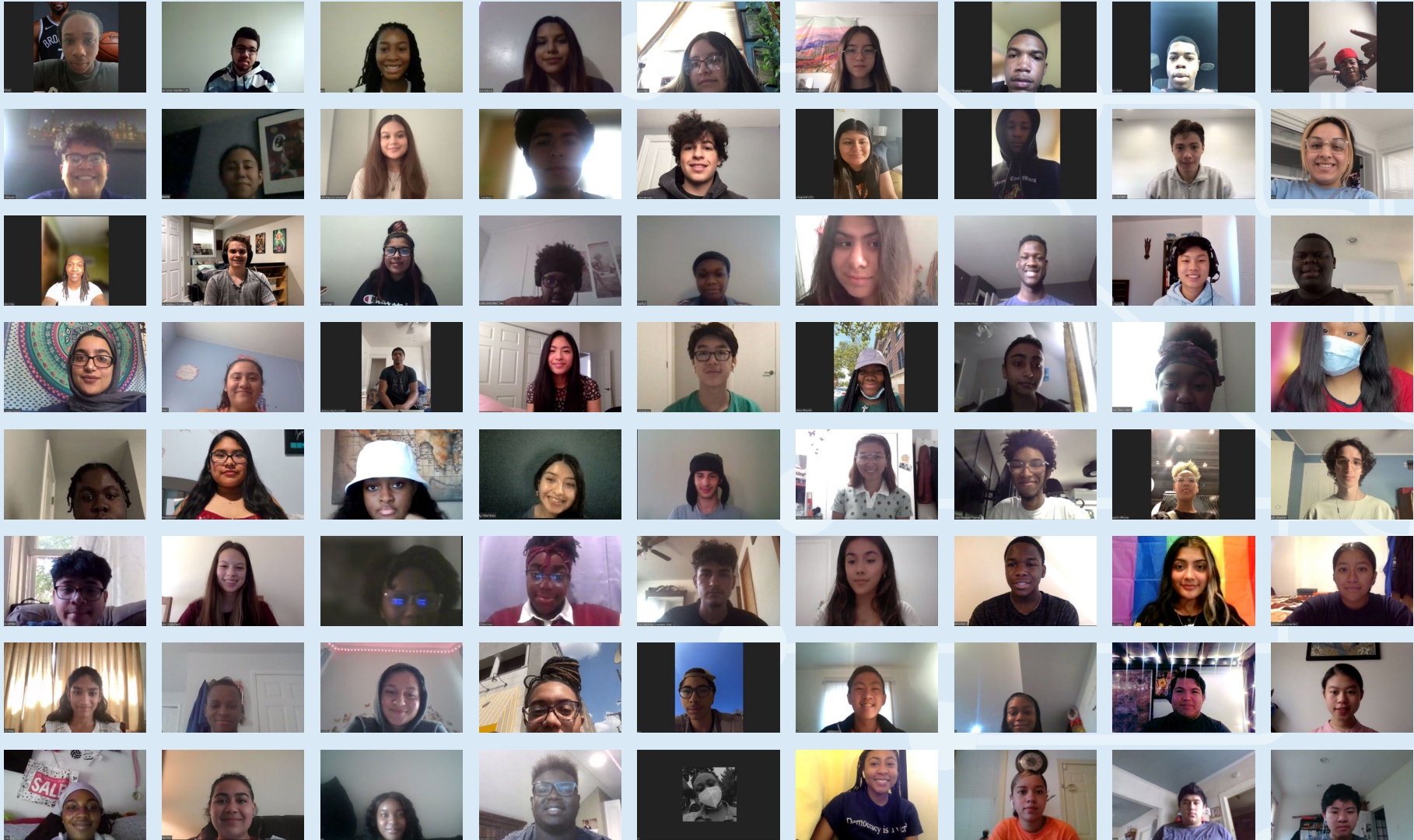
To develop youth to be empowered, informed, and active citizens who will promote a just and equitable society.

Values

- By intentionally reaching out to under-resourced communities and schools, we create opportunities for youth to elevate the issues that are important to them and their community.
- Policymakers make better decisions when youth voice is included in decision-making.
- Community involvement is an essential experience for young people to have a voice in their future.
- By remaining non-partisan, we make space for young people to form their own opinions and choose the candidates and issues they want to support.

Visit us at mikvachallenge.org.

72 Council Members



Mikva Challenge Citywide and Neighborhood Councils

The councils strengthen youth participation in the formation, implementation and evaluation of public policy in city government and in local decision-making in their communities through the creation of issue-based and neighborhood-based youth councils.

Councils serve as a mechanism for a broader base of Chicago youth to have input on key city and community policy and public safety decisions that significantly impact youth.

Participation is open to all Chicago students in **9th-12th grade for Citywide Councils** and students in **7th-9th grade** in the respective neighborhoods for **Neighborhood Councils**.

**Also includes inter-council Chicago Youth Response Team (CYRT).*

Neighborhood Leadership Initiative Action Summer

This year, the Neighborhood Leadership Initiative completed its first ever six-week Action Summer focused on youth-led safety strategies to curb the violence within their communities. Youth across all three of our councils — Gage Park, New City/Back of the Yards, North Lawndale — came together this summer despite an ongoing pandemic and spikes in violence to take action, build community with one another, explore their identities within their communities, and engaged in different strategies for community change. Throughout the summer, youth from NLI's south and west side neighborhood councils unpacked the amplified violence that they saw going on in their communities and developed youth-led safety strategies for navigating within their respective communities. Youth were also equipped with Restorative Justice training and developed their own conflict resolution strategies in order to be able to navigate conflicts that they may experience. Council members then presented to local elected officials and District Coordinating Officers their Collective Vision of Safety and Top 10 Tips for Navigating your Community as anti-violence community resources.

City Wide Action Councils Think Tank Summer

The Citywide Youth Councils engaged in their annual six-week Think Tank summer that focuses on removing barriers to help youth participate in the formation, implementation, and evaluation of public policy in city government. Our youth councils serve as policy experts and advocates, helping the CEO of Chicago Public Schools, the Cook County Board President, City Commissioners, and other city leaders make public policy decisions that significantly impact youth citywide. Youth gather for six weeks with their individual councils to conduct research, interview experts in the field, build community with one another, and build up their advocacy skills throughout the process. Their policy recommendations are then presented to their respective Decision Makers and stakeholders in order to collaboratively include youth voice in future policy decisions.

Citywide Youth Councils

CPS Student Advisory Council (SAC)

Meredith Joncha

Lindblom Math and Science Academy

Cillian Halbleib

The Chicago High School for the Arts

Ta'Jai Johnson

Fenger Academy High School

Destiny Vasquez

George Washington High School

Greatful Nwokocha

Hubbard High School

Ezzard Dennis

Chicago Military High School

Janet Gomez

Benito Juarez Community Academy

Favour Mamudu

Sullivan High School

Omolara Atoyebi

Wendell Phillips Academy

Sofia Fatima

Amundsen High School

Lucero Hernandez

Carver Military Academy

Isabella Kelly

Ogden International High School

Jonah McArthur

Jones College Prep

Justin Meng

Northside College Prep

Layan Nazzari

Taft High School

Aaron Hardman

South Shore International

Yacqueline Chimal

Schurz High School

Tommy Hawkins

Englewood STEM High School

Tajiuna Cooper

Michele Clark High School

Lynn Britton Jr.

Curie High School

Juviel St.Clair Jr.

Lincoln Park High School

Micah Kohng

Whitney M. Young Magnet High School

Teen Health Council (THC)

Sebastian Alvarado

George Washington High School

Trinity Colón

George Washington High School

Freddie Foster

Simeon Career Academy High School

Stephanie Granobles

Whitney M. Young High School

ANiaya Hall

Walter H. Dyett High School for the Arts

Emanuel Hernandez

Whitney M. Young High School

Teniola Idriss

Stephen Tyng Mather High School

Luis Jimbo

Noble Street College Prep

Zara Khan

Whitney M. Young High School

Ely Martinez

Victoria Soto Acero High School

Maximilian Matthes

Albert G. Lane Technical High School

Gremarianne Mosquera

Northside College Prep

Neveah Murff

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Acero High School

Madeline Oktem

Lakeview High School

Olivia Sepich

St. Ignatius College Preparatory

Myesha Skipper

George School of Newtown, PA

Kazi Stanton-Thomas

Latin School of Chicago

Yotzin Tzintzun

Benito Juarez Community Academy

Leyoni Williamson

William J. Bogan Computer Technical High School

Juvenile Justice Council (JJC)

Ahmad Herron

Brooks College Prep

Analise Juju Duarte

Ogden High School

Christopher Carter

Morgan Park High School

Christyana Arrington

UIC

Cristina Solano

Kelly High School

Daniela Perez

Back of the Yards College Prep

Fatima Mendoza

Hancock High School

Ja'Shawn Rozman

Simeon High School

Jalen Hunt

North Lawndale College Prep

Janiya Lanier

Westinghouse High School

Jesus Bakr

Mendota

Josue Rodriguez

North Grand High School

Layla Rodriguez

Lake View High School

Leo Smolensky

Lake View High School

Leonardo Jimenez

De La Salle Institute

Melony Esquivel

Lindblom High School

Micah Johnson

YCCS - Innovations

Octavio Montesdeoca

UIC

Samantha Parra

Roosevelt High School

Shaniya Williams

North-Grand High School

Xavieon Anderson

Morton West High School

Youth Safety Advisory Council (YSAC)

Ali Ngabo

Sullivan High School

Aysia James

Westinghouse High School

Baraa Mohammad

Roosevelt High School

Chance Stegall

Kenwood High School

Cristian Moreno

Chicago Academy High School

Daniel Zhang

Whitney Young High School

Destiny Phillips

Holy Trinity High School

Eric Garcia

Lane Tech High School

Erica Yang

Kelly High School

Jaida Morris

Kenwood High School

Jalen Grimes

Jones College Prep

Jayla Knighten

Westinghouse College Prep

Joshua Larrieux

Urban Prep - Bronzeville

LaNya Rivers

Gage Park High School

Morgan New

Chicago High School for the Arts

Nina Pacheco

North-Grand High School

Rhomello Wellington

Noble - DRW

Ricardo Ramos

World Language High School

Shantell Knighten

Simeon Career Academy

Shelia Murphy

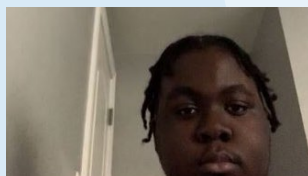
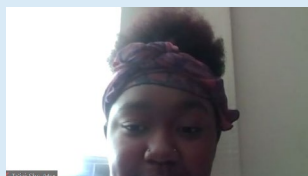
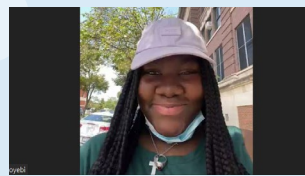
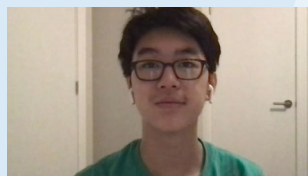
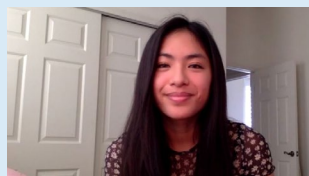
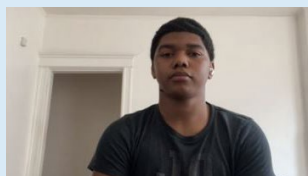
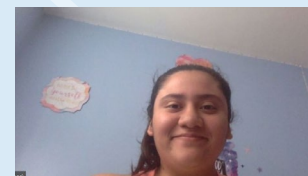
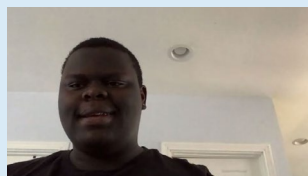
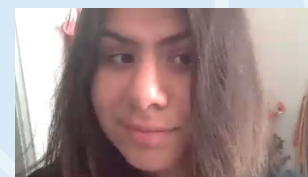
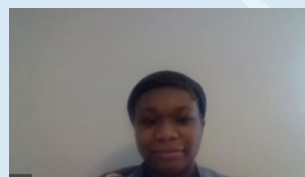
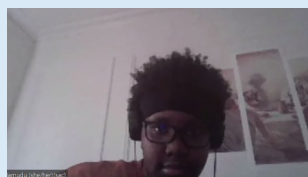
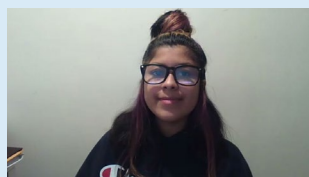
Holy Trinity High School

Vinh Huynh

Intrinsic High School

CPS Student Advisory Council

The CPS Student Advisory Council (SAC) is composed of Chicago Public School students representing 22 different schools from across the city who are passionate about education and are committed to improving CPS schools. Students focus on district policy and on areas selected in partnership with the CEO and other district leadership, meeting regularly to inform and develop solutions and policy recommendations. They conduct research and analysis throughout the year, and advocate for policy solutions that will equitably impact students district-wide and further create a transparent CPS through inclusive partnerships.




Summer Snapshot

This summer, SAC continued previous work that focuses on cultivating an equity lens to advise on the district's policies and initiatives. In meetings with the district leaders, such as the CPS Office of Equity, the Department of Curriculum Instruction and Digital Learning (CIDL), the Office of Social Emotional Learning (OSEL), and the Director of School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP) students unpacked CPS' core values and goals and explored the crucial role that equity plays in creating pathways for student input in decision-making. Working closely with district leaders, students explored how to build on the work around student voice and equity by focusing on their 3 key issue areas:

- **Curriculum Equity Initiative (CEI)** to ensure that students across the district equitably receive quality instruction and have space to provide feedback on curriculum.
- **Student Code of Conduct (SCC)** to provide insight to how the policy and implementation of the SCC can empower students and prevent the reinforcement of disproportionate treatment based on race, learning differences, etc.
- **School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP)** to advise on the policy changes that strive towards a more holistic approach to rating school quality.

Framing Question

How might youth perspective inform and improve CPS District policy, priorities, and decisions in order to achieve the district vision goals?



“I’m so grateful for the time and commitment these young people have made to our district and our city. Their questions, reflections, and feedback are critical to our work, and we are certainly stronger because of their leadership.”

—Heather Van Benthuyzen, Executive Director, Department of Social Science and Civic Engagement, Chicago Public Schools

Recommendation #1: Student Feedback in CPS Curriculum

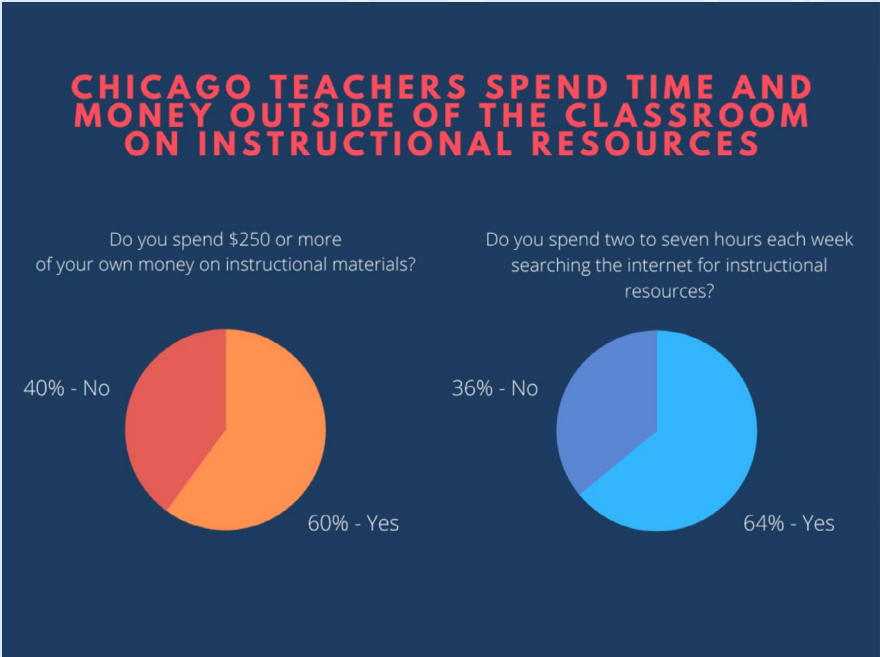
In order for students to have a level of agency over their education, students will work with the Curriculum, Instruction, Digital Learning (CIDL) Department to develop an infrastructure for student input on the lessons in the CPS's new Skyline curriculum. Student feedback on curriculum should be solicited and considered to empower students and enable their active participation in their own education. Student input and feedback on Skyline lessons should directly inform improvements and the quality of the curriculum and its implementation districtwide in SY22.

Why it's Important

As the new curriculum “was launched to ensure every student in every school has access to a high-quality curriculum that engages their interests and celebrates their diversity,” students should be a key stakeholder in evaluating its effectiveness, as they are the ones receiving the instruction. With student feedback, teachers will be able to identify whether the curriculum is working for each student. Consistent and authentic student input will strengthen the effectiveness and impact of the curriculum overall and allow for a more democratic experience in the classroom that promotes diversity and inclusion.

Notable Research

- “About 64 percent of Chicago teachers surveyed said they spend between two and seven hours each week searching the internet for instructional resources, and nearly 60 percent say they spend \$250 or more of their own money on instructional materials.”
- “Evaluation teams comprised of teachers, content experts and district staff, made recommendations about the vendors, according to the district.” As the largest CPS stakeholder, students should be able to weigh in on how the curriculum gets rolled out.



Action Steps

Action Step 1: Create visibility for students to know where the curriculum is being implemented and identify schools/teachers who opt-in and implement Skyline

Action Step 2: Mock Skyline for SAC to test the student rubric

- Use the rubric that last year's SAC created to provide feedback, and then refine or make any edits to the rubric. Improve the process in which students receive the rubric for efficiently providing feedback to teachers on their curriculum.

Action Step 3: Disseminate student rubric and feedback form

- Improve the process in which students receive the rubric for efficiently providing feedback to teachers on their curriculum. There should be a monthly incentive for students to submit feedback and should be continuously used to modify the curriculum. A designated person will need to be appointed to work in partnership with students to create a feedback review process.

Potential Partnerships

Curriculum, Instruction, and Digital Learning (CIDL) Department of Chicago Public Schools

Recommendation #2: Centering Student Experiences in School Quality Ratings

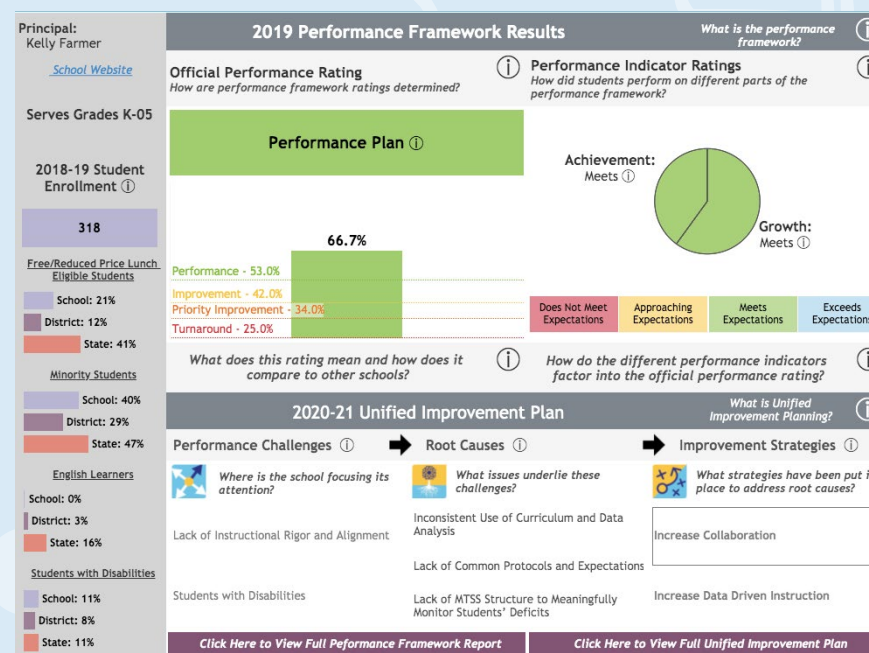
The School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP) plans to have policy changes in April of 2021 and our goal is to ensure that the new SQRP includes student input that can further show qualitative experiences, not just numerical. We plan to participate in Stakeholder Engagement Design Team (SEDТ) meetings and continue providing student representation and participation on the Advisory Group. We want to make sure that school environment, student safety, and student experiences are included in the new SQRP policy changes. SAC will review SQRP proposals before they are presented to the Advisory Group to ensure student input is consistent. We plan to help create accountability for all stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers, school admin, CPS policy makers and community leaders.

Why it's Important

According to data from focus groups conducted by SEDТ, CPS stakeholders expressed that challenges to the current SQRP include feeling punitive for some, and not having an equitable impact on all schools. For example, principals reported that grant makers and partners are unwilling to invest in schools with declining scores or ranked below a 1. This purely quantitative rating policy inhibits a holistic perspective of schools, and can destabilize some schools by penalizing underperforming schools causing them to lose funding. On the contrary, the rating of schools should be a tool that enables more equitable support for the challenges that schools may face.

Notable Research

- According to a case study on Denver Public School (DPS), they have intentionally tracked the progress of students of color, students with disabilities and low income students, to better keep schools accountable for educating all students and closing the color and equity gap. The screenshot below displays an example of a school summary of data that breaks down achievement, growth, performance challenges, root causes, and improvement strategies.



- Arts integration improving schools academics it shows that arts can improve schools rather than just students enjoying school

Table 6
MSA Scores from Bates Middle School and Control School

Grade	Bates					Control School				
	SY 2009		SY 2012		Δ	SY 2009		SY 2012		Δ
	N	P+	N	P+		N	P+	N	P+	
Reading										
6	168	75.0	242	82.7	+7.7	210	77.1	204	75.5	-1.6
7	159	64.8	257	81.4	+16.6	242	76.4	237	72.2	-4.2
8	183	78.1	204	78.9	+0.8	241	77.2	220	73.2	-4.0
Mathematics										
6	167	59.3	243	83.1	+23.8	209	72.2	204	64.2	-8.0
7	159	60.4	258	81.0	+20.6	240	62.5	236	74.2	+11.7
8	184	64.7	204	68.1	+3.4	240	67.9	220	58.2	-9.7
<i>N= number of students taking the test P+ = percentage of students at or above proficient Δ= difference in the percentage of students scoring at or above proficient between 2009 and 2012.</i>										

Reference/link: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1050605>

Based on Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System (MA QRIS) Policy Guide, States with high ratings already grade with other aspects along with a numbers based system and have handbooks we can reference.



Action Steps

Action Step 1: SAC reviews proposals before they're presented to the Advisory Group

- To get a better idea on how our sub-committee can help improve the SQRP.
- Give any helpful feedback from the student perspective.
- Plan time periods for review during the 2021 school year.

Action Step 2: SAC students participate in SEDT meetings and advise on stakeholder engagement work

- To tie our work together with SEDT.
- To push for measures that showcase school environment, student safety, and student experiences in the SQRP.
- To ensure that all student input from schools of all levels 1+ to 3 have input in the process.

Action Step 3: Further Researching Arts Integration

- Look more into how the arts affect students' sense of belonging.
- Research the possibility of including arts integration in the new SQRP system for qualitative data
- Analyze data from SEDT meetings around significance of arts to stakeholders

Potential Partnerships

Jeff Broom, SQRP Advisory Group, Stakeholder Engagement Design Team (SEDT), Office of Equity, CPS Department of Arts

Recommendation #3: Know Your Rights, Adult Accountability, and the Student Code of Conduct

School suspensions have decreased, but Black male students are still suspended more often than their Latino and white peers. In collaboration with the Office of Social Emotional Learning (OSEL), we've been able to revise the Student Code of Conduct (SCC) in order to reduce bias in how policies get carried out. But many students still don't know what the SCC is. With students not knowing about the SCC, they don't know they can refute charges or when their rights are violated. Our goal is to ensure that students are aware of their rights and of the policy changes made to the SCC.

Why it's Important

Inequities in discipline practices put certain students, particularly Black students and students with disabilities, at higher risk for negative life outcomes, including involvement in the criminal justice system. The inequities in disciplinary practices disproportionately affect these students and their education. As the largest CPS stakeholder, students are most affected by the language and in the SCC and by how the SCC gets interpreted and enforced. Being more intentional with how students learn about their rights, coupled with creating more adult accountability, is needed to prevent student rights from being violated, which reinforces a school to prison pipeline.

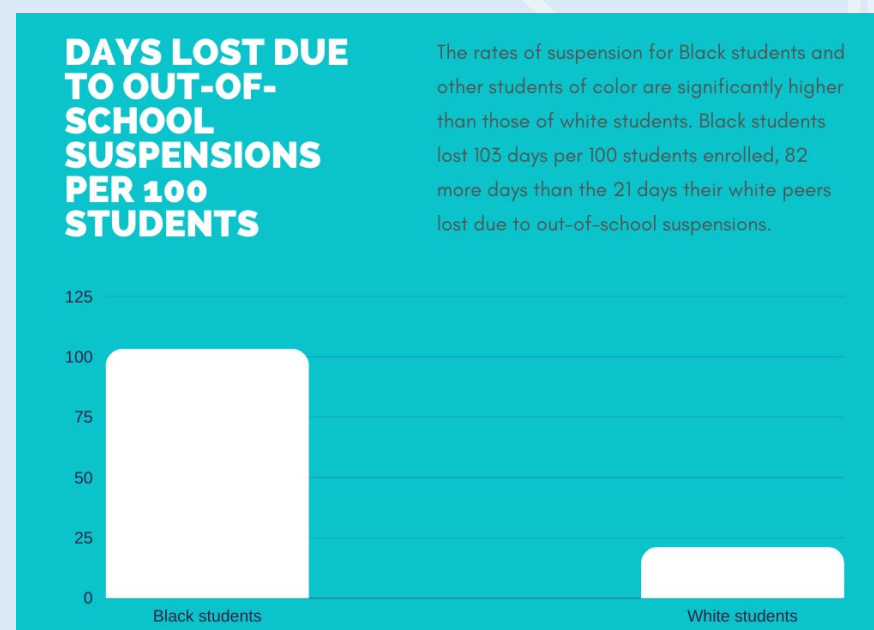
Notable Research

Research that shows how disciplinary measures affect certain groups:

- "Students assigned to a school with a one standard deviation higher suspension rate are 15–20% more likely to be arrested and incarcerated as adults and were also less likely to attend a four-year college."
- "Education professionals should be cautious of relying heavily on exclusionary practices. A strict school climate negatively impacts long-run outcomes — educational attainment, arrests, and incarceration rates — for the overall student body."

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/19/09/school-discipline-linked-later-consequences#:~:tex>

- "The rates for Black students and other students of color are significantly higher than those of white students. Black students lost 103 days per 100 students enrolled, 82 more days than the 21 days their white peers lost due to out-of-school suspensions."



Action Steps

Action Step 1: SAC analyze and understand the updated protocol

- Look for examples of criminalizing language within the text. Gauge how effective the current harassment policies are in 2021 and determine through a student feedback process whether they need to be revised in order to encompass all types of harassment.

Action Step 2: “Know Your Rights” Campaign

- Disseminate information via social media, so students can be informed of the Student Bill of Rights and of the changes made to the SCC

Action Step 3: Ensuring Accountability

- SAC and OSEL can collaborate on creating optional training for school personnel around the Student Code of Conduct. SAC can advise and provide feedback on trainings in the fields of Restorative Anti-bias work in order to encourage school staff to maintain positive relationships with students.

Potential Partnerships

Office of Social Emotional Learning (OSEL), the Juvenile Justice Council (JJC), collaborate with Student Voice Committees and the Student Voice and Activism Fellows (SVAF)

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Thank you!

We are especially grateful to the generous champions and donors of Mikva Challenge. Thanks to the investment of individual donors, foundations, companies, non-profits, government, and other organizations, we are able to uplift the visions, voices and leadership of young people — reaching thousands of youth across Chicago. Our transformational impact is only possible through this support.

Mikva Challenge is grateful to institutions for giving youth a seat at the decision-making table. Our youth have advised various government agencies across Chicago including the Office of the Cook County Board President, Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Police Department's Independent Monitoring Team, the Chicago Department of Public Health, the Chicago Police Department's 9th District Coordinating Officers, 16th Ward Alderman Stephanie Coleman, and 24th Ward Alderman Michael Scott, Jr..

Our programs are also made robust by our relationships with many other leading agencies across Chicago. A special thank you to the Mayor's Office One Summer Chicago (OSC) program and the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) for providing employment and internship opportunities to our youth.

We are grateful to organizations including Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission (IJJC), Firebird Community Arts, Lurie Children's Hospital, the office of Senator Robert Peters, Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) and ICAN! Illinois Contraceptive Access Now, to name a few. Mikva Challenge youth often work closely with these and other organizations to support youth-led projects. These partnerships not only give Mikva Challenge participants access to resources but also access to a network of influential decision-makers throughout the city. Thank you for championing our work while opening many avenues of opportunity for the young people in our programs.

To all of our State of Chicago Youth Town Hall attendees, thank you for partnering with Mikva Challenge to make Chicago one of the nation's preeminent cities to empower, elevate, and strengthen youth voice!

The State of Chicago Youth Town Hall is the sum of collective knowledge, insight and perspectives shared. We would like to express our gratitude to all the people and groups that made this critical work possible, including: Mikva Challenge Staff: Verneé Green, Juleny Santa Cruz, James Fields, Carla Ruvalcaba, Riyan Jones, Larry Dean, Jazmin Ocampo, Crystal Ortiz, Barbara Cruz, Meghan Goldenstein, Mia Salamone, veronica bohanan, Jamie Dillon, Zafiro Aguilar, and all other interns and support staff.

