



**2021 LEAD in LYFE: Teen Advocacy Program
Focusing on Advocacy and Racial Equity**

**Presentation Compilation of Groups 1-5
Summary Report**

January 3, 2022



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Introduction

L.E.A.D. In LYFE League is a ten-week teen leadership and advocacy program hosted by the Louisiana Center for Health Equity (LCHE) in partnership with the Foundation for Louisiana and the NAACP Louisiana State Conference during the Fall of 2021. The program is geared towards giving teens aged 13 to 18 (See Appendix) from across the state the tools necessary to become advocates in their schools and communities, promote racial justice and racial healing to both prevent and address generational trauma and violence among youth. The goal of the program was to offer teens an outlet to speak about their challenges and experiences and propose solutions to their concerns. The teens were educated on racism, racial equity, racial healing, advocacy skills, conducting research, and formulating proposed policies.

The focus areas that the teens discussed over the course of the program were those that arose from their real-life experiences. Today, many teens experience various injustices in their schools, in their communities, and in society overall. This project chose education and the school environment as the area of interest. L.E.A.D. teens then identified a list of issues, selected the five that are of most concern to them and developed proposals with solutions they view as appropriate and needed. The topics are:

- The Quality Gap of Funding and Education
- Mental Health Awareness in Schools
- Gun Violence on School Campuses
- Students Take Action on Bullying Prevention
- Accusation Without Investigation (Zero Tolerance Policies)

Once the L.E.A.D. teens formulated their proposals and solutions, they assembled with the Louisiana Youth Advisory Council (LYAC), a legislatively authorized group of teens from around the state, to present their proposals for policies. L.E.A.D. and LYAC were charged with the responsibility of offering each other feedback and advice on how to successfully develop solutions, policy recommendations and how to properly present them to policymakers.

During the assembly, L.E.A.D. also presented their proposals to a distinguished panel of policymakers and education leaders which consisted of State Senator Regina Barrow, State Senator Cleo Fields, East Baton Rouge School Board Vice President Dawn Collins, President of Louisiana Association on Educators Dr. Tia Mills, Board Development and Legislative Specialist from the Louisiana School Boards Association Dr. Wendy Baudoin and State Representative Larry Sellers. The panel's responsibility was to offer each group critical feedback on how to improve their proposals to further advocate for their concerns at future opportunities. This document has been prepared at the panel's request for the L.E.A.D. presentations. After hearing each of the presentations Senator Cleo Fields, who chairs the Senate Education Committee, stated his interest in working with his colleagues on policy considerations in response to the teen's concerns. EBR School Board Vice President Dawn Collins made a proposition to invite L.E.A.D. to present their proposals to the East Baton Rouge School Board.

Group One: The Quality Gap of Funding & Education

Members: Joshua White, Mariama Scott, Zachary Simien, Malik Roberson, and Albert Simmons

Group One Summary:

The first issue brought about by the teens was the quality gap of funding and education between traditional public schools and magnet schools. The group believes that funding is the gateway to a high-quality education that should be provided by all schools. The group referenced the Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* that desegregated schools, lawsuits filed by segregated schools of New Jersey, and the loss of economic support and violence experienced due to these efforts of desegregation. The group suggests that these historical events are the impetus for the division of students, schools, and funding.

The educational standard established by the students should be to surround students with more knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes that promote learning. Every student should have a quality education that helps them develop their personal attributes and achieve many different skills. The group found that magnet schools in Baton Rouge are specialized public schools and are managed by the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. These schools were developed to, “promote academic achievement for students with specific educational needs, increase diversity in the district, and offer students a quality education based on their learning styles, skills, and interests”, according to EBR Magnet School Director, Theresa Porter.

The quality gap found by the students is characterized by inadequate funding for traditional public schools. The inadequate funding results in a lack of technological advancements, updated textbooks, limited extracurricular activities, and outdated sports equipment relative to magnet schools which are privy to priority resources, better technology, more programs, and quality teachers. Moreover, this gap can potentially affect the future success of students, particularly those from lower-income and underrepresented neighborhoods, and

their ability to attend college. These issues display a clear distinction between traditional and magnet public schools. The students also shared their personal experiences on how they noticed these disparities firsthand by moving into a different neighborhood and having to switch schools.

The teens believe that there should be more focus on schools in lower-income areas rather than constantly improving schools that already are high-performing schools.

The teens recommended fundraisers, alumni clubs for annual donations, grant writers to apply for government grants for their schools, improved community, and school relations, updated technology for all schools, and more qualified or experienced teachers in traditional public schools. Students also recommend more government sources of funding for public schools to increase their quality of education, pay teachers higher wages, and to improve the school environment across the board.

Group One Slides:

The Quality Gap of Funding & Education

Joshua White, Mariama Scott, Zachary Semien, Malik Roberson and Albert

Introduction and Purpose

- ▶ To help identify and display the quality gap amongst schools in our state.
- ▶ We noticed this gap as we were discussing the differences amongst our schools .
- ▶ We believe that all students should have access to high quality education and we believe it starts with funding.
- ▶ It is our hope that we make you all aware and offer a few recommendations.



“If they are going to be separate then they should be equal” - Mariama S.

- ▶ This topic was introduced when the Supreme Court lead Brown v Board of Education that segregated schools.
- ▶ Many schools in the state of New Jersey were segregated and filed a Lawsuit.
- ▶ New Jersey’s district lines reflected the years of segregation.
- ▶ When civil right lawyers tried to enforce the districts to abide by , they loss economic support & experienced violence.
- ▶ “Most children lived in racially segregated communities and the most feasible way to achieve desegregation beyond voluntary transfers was to transport children to schools outside their neighborhoods.”

THIS IS BEGINNING OF DIVIDING STUDENTS, SCHOOLS, AND FUNDING



What is quality of education? (What is the standard)

Learners who are well-nourished and ready to participate and learn. Outcomes surround more knowledge , skills, and attitudes.

Having a quality education helps themselves to develop their personal attributes and many skills to achieve.

This is something that impacts us as whole , not just in school.

Magnet Schools

Magnet schools meets the standards of quality education.

Magnet schools in Baton Rouge are defined as specialized schools that are public without tuition and are managed by the East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS). Theresa Porter, the East Baton Rouge Parish Magnet School Director, clarifies, "Magnet Schools were developed to create exciting learning experiences that promote academic achievement for students with specific educational needs. In addition, the program is a proven model to increase diversity in the district. With over 20 competitive programs, these specialized programs offer students a quality education based on their learning styles, skills, and interests, etc."

The Quality Gap

- ▶ We have noticed that traditional public schools have inadequate funding, or funding seems to be allocated in the wrong place.
- ▶ Many traditional public schools are still operating on old technology (computers, projectors, printers)
- ▶ Many traditional public schools are operating with old textbooks
- ▶ Funding for extracurricular activities at public schools are limited- Although fundraisers are held, many schools generate money for sports but athletes are still using the same gym equipment .
- ▶ But we have noticed that magnet schools are getting priority resources, stripping public schools from quality education.
- ▶ Magnet schools have typically quality teachers and programs

Social Analysis (Who does this affect?)

- Lack of quality educations affects student learning and youth development which can in return affects the successfulness of one's future
- Students who attend public schools are at a disadvantage for college and career opportunities vs those who have more opportunities
- Racial biases in communities
- Youth in lower income neighborhoods
- This issue divides funing

Demographics on magnet schools vs traditional

"Taking advantage of oversubscribed admissions lotteries for magnets and state test scores...able to compare students randomly offered a magnet school seat to those who were not."



Where is the money being placed?

2 Schools in Baton Rouge

Magnet Schools Programs (Grade "A" School")		Traditional Public School Programs (Grade "D" School")
Art	Organizations	Foreign Language
Band	Speech and Debate	Jump Start Pathways (career focused)
Dance	STEM	Music / Art
Music	Visual Arts	Art
Theatre	Bowling	Band
Affinity Associations	Cross-Country	Dance
Athletics	Golf	Music
Business Interest	Gymnastics	Athletics
Clubs	Indoor Track and Field	Clubs
Drama, Theater and Dance	Outdoor Track and Field	STEM
Games and Gaming	Powerlifting	Sports
Honor Society	Soccer	Basketball
National or Statewide	Spirit	Football
Leadership Associations	Swimming	Indoor Track and Field
Peer Tutoring or Mentoring	Tennis	Outdoor Track and Field
Politics and Government	Volleyball	Spirit
School Community	Wrestling	Volleyball

LET'S PAINT A PICTURE

MAGNET STUDENT



- have opportunities to express their talent
- academic achievement levels are higher
- graduate on time with a plan

PUBLIC STUDENT



- not as many clubs to help express talent
- mid learning level , less active in class
- graduate on time but , no plan

Recommendations

School level recommendations:

- Fundraisers could be held for programs
 - GoFund Me & other fundraiser opportunities
- Restore alumni clubs for yearly donations
- Each public school have a grant writer to apply for government grants for their additional programs
- More community organizations-school relationships
- Updated technology for all schools
- Place more qualified and quality teachers in public schools



Recommendations

Policy level recommendations:

- ▶ More government sources of funding should go to public schools to increase their quality instead of splitting funding to put into Magnet Schools.
- ▶ Focus on the quality of few schools therefore we would not have to worry about splitting funding and having school closures



Testimonials



Joseph's Testimony

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gWtcbYJwbZcA7d2d2Tloh5HrRxPZJOv/view>

Conclusion | Q&A



References

<https://www.npr.org/2019/02/26/696794821/why-white-school-districts-have-so-much-more-money>

<https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2017/february/the-troubled-history-of-american-education-after-the-brown-decision/>

<https://education.uconn.edu/2010/06/01/magnet-schools-provide-academic-and-social-benefits-study-reports/#>



Group Two: Mental Health Awareness in Schools

Members: Ambryuna Mayfield, Arianna Pooler, Blessed Roberson, Scedric Jackson, Janessa Laushaw, Dasia Simien, and Kerrow Smith

Group 2: Presentation Summary

The second issue the students discussed was mental health in schools. They found mental health has been a stigma in schools because of how peers, teachers, administrators, and others have little to no information on how to deal with students who tend to struggle in this area. LA R.S. 17:3006 Section A requires all high schools within the state to have a high school counselor; however, Section B states that said counselor is only required to guide “the student's academic and personal goals, planning for college, exploring careers, participation in extracurricular activities, and other skills and interests.” Nevertheless, Sen. Katrina Jackson introduced SB 211, that passed in the 2021 Louisiana Legislative Regular Session, which mandates a required educator in-service regarding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs can manifest themselves through a student’s mental health and through their physical behavior in the classroom. Students who struggle mentally tend to resort to harmful means to cope with their situation. These harmful means can take the form of self-harm, substance abuse, and even suicide. The students found young women are affected at a much higher rate than young men.

The students also discussed Mental Health Month. Mental Health Month occurs in May and aims to raise awareness surrounding mental health issues. Mental health became recognized as important in 1908 when professionals sought to offer treatments for issues seen as being caused by mental health. Clifford Beers founded Mental Hygiene in 1909 with the aim to maintain mental health through proactive behavior and treatment. More recently, mental health has changed over the last 20 years as awareness of mental health disorders increased. In early December 2021, US Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued an advisory regarding the mental health crisis in youth. This follows the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) which declared a

national emergency on the same issue in October 2021. Dr. Murthy and the AAP note that rates of mental illness increased over the past decade before the pandemic, but the pandemic has exacerbated such increases. Before the pandemic, it was estimated that 1 in 5 children suffered from a mental health disorder ranging from depression to anxiety disorders to bipolar disorders. Dr. Murthy notes that the individuals most at risk of a mental health disorder are those already likely to be marginalized because of their sexual orientation or their racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic status. Dr. Murthy hopes to change the public's perception on mental health. In doing so, he hopes to empower individuals regarding their health while also ensuring everyone has access to quality mental health care, but systemic factors that limit access to health care must be addressed.

The group proposed solutions that include: the implementation of mental health educators, data collection for school improvement planning, implementing a health/safety coordinator, having health counselors within schools, and professional training regarding mental health response and suicide prevention. They also came up with a program called "Mentorship" which provides a safe space for students by providing them with basic school necessities and access to therapy by a mental health professional. Also contained in "Mentorship" is a connection project that seeks to build bonds between students to assure them that someone cares. They proposed a 5-million-dollar budget to provide these resources to all public schools in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. The program may be able to work with something smaller if need be.

The students shared their personal battles with mental health and how their school failed them. One student discussed her own experience with a suicidal attempt while another student

expressed concern as she witnessed a friend struggle with mental health issues and the school's lack of response. The students hope to increase mental health awareness in schools and the resources they need to ensure a healthy environment for every student.

Group 2 Slides

Mental Health Awareness in Schools

Ambryuna, Janessa, Arianna, Blessed, Scedric, Dasia, Kerrow



Introduction and Purpose

Mental Health has been a stigma in schools because of how student's peers, teachers, administrators, and others have little to no information on how to deal with students who are struggling. Students resort to harmful means in order to cope with their situation (self-harm, substance abuse, suicide, etc) and it's not okay for children to harm themselves when they have no one to depend on.

Our purpose is to educate our school systems on mental health so that they might save a child's life, and provide teens with support systems. The stigma that mental health has in schools needs to be addressed and educated on so that schools may implement these lessons..



History

Mental Health Month

- ❑ Mental health month is in May, it's a month where you raise awareness for children, families, and communities.
- ❑ Mental Health was established in 1949 to increase the importance of mental health and wellness.
- ❑ Mental Health became important in 1908, professionals saw it was important to improve mental health by treatments.
- ❑ Clifford Beers founded Mental Hygiene in 1909 (The practice of trying to maintain mental health through proactive behavior and treatment.)
- ❑ Mental Health has changed over the last 20 years when people was becoming more aware what is important of mental health disorders.
- ❑ Approximately 20%-30% teens and children who is diagnosed with mental disorders.
- ❑ Ages 12-18 who suffers from mental illness such as depression, anxiety disorders, and bipolar disorders.



Social Analysis

The main people who struggle with mental health in high schools are teen females.



Who / What Could Help:

- Mental Health Educators
- School data collected used for school improvement planning
- The presence of a health/safety coordinator
- The presence of a health council and state-provided health educator
- Providing professional development in mental health and suicide prevention



Resolution and Recommendations

For a healthy educational environment, It's recommended to include ways to improve and build the students that are going through mental health difficulties. Many schools don't consider the negative possibilities that mental health concerns cause for teens and it's time to make a change and Improve the system!!

We came up with a program which is what we call **MENTORSHIP**.

Benefits:

- Making sure students feel safe
- Free uniforms, lunches, meals for families who financially struggle
- Allowing professionals who has a degree in therapy or teaching to construct and improve those who need reinsuring
- Build up a bond, a connection to project that we care



Budget

To initiate our Mentorship program our budget is going to be \$5million.

This will provide to all schools in East Baton Rouge Parish:

- Pay for mental health workers in school
- Food
- Supplies (Games, resources, food, incentives, and more)

This is necessary to gain the best experience for our students/ teens to not only gain knowledge but have fun while doing it. Fundraising, Grants, Donations are recommended as well to reach our goal of raising money for the program



Testimonials

Janessa

- ▶ My suicide attempts
- ▶ How my school dealt with it
- ▶ How could have they done it better

Ambryuna

- ▶ A Friend spoke on how she felt discriminate against because she is in a wheelchair. We went on a field trip school and they asked us to write on paper how we felt about the field trip. That trip made it hard for her to get around and she decided that she didn't want to go anywhere else until she gets the ability to walk. Lets let that sink in.

My school failed my friend. She was hopeless and felt unheard. We had the opportunity to write those papers to be heard and she was still neglected and made feel like an outcast for something she could not control.



Conclusion/ Q&A

The purpose of our message was to educate and share our experiences on how the stigma in schools are harmful to students. We should not be afraid to be judged or ridiculed when we ask for help.

A student should be able to rely on their teachers and administrators with their vulnerability, but instead the adults have no idea how to handle us when we are at our lowest.

We present our presentation and ask for funding of our program Mentorship, so that we can be able to uplift the people who can't speak. We want schools to do better on how they treat and handle their student's safety.

Any Questions?



Group Three: Gun Violence on School Campuses

**Members: Moriah Jackson, Ivory Brown, Derianah Williams, Micha
McLemore, and Ladevion Hill**

Group 3: Presentation Summary

Gun violence in schools has always been a huge problem in America, especially in the last ten years. Recently there have been even more occasions where students have brought guns to school. The students found that gun violence in schools is mainly due to bullying. Many students are bullied and feel they have no other way to protect themselves resulting in them bringing a firearm to school. One issue that the teens identified is that guns are easily accessible to minors all over the country and there is no definite way to make sure someone is qualified to get a firearm resulting from various legal loopholes. The students further found that mental health contributes to gun violence everywhere but more so in schools. Due to the recent gun violence in schools, many students feel unsafe in the school environment and can create a distraction or even a mental strain for them. There aren't many gun laws in place due to the gun-rights activist groups in America.

The group recommends metal detectors for the safety of the students, a campus interactive organization for students who are victims of bullying, and a virtual option for students who deal with social anxiety. They also recommend more psychological counselors in schools. There is not a clear budget, but they would like to see at least four psychological counselors on each campus, excluding academic counselors.

The students also recounted their own experiences with guns on school campuses. One student shared her experience of being at school when a fellow classmate was caught with a gun. She described a very frightening experience that made her question her safety every time she went back to school. Although no one was physically injured, she could only imagine the toll it

may have taken on other students. Their main goal is to bring an end to the possibility of guns being brought on school campuses to protect the students' physical and mental well-being.

Group Three Slides

Gun Violence on School Campuses

Moriah Jackson
Ivory Brown
Derianah Williams
Micah McLemore
LaDevion Hill



Introduction and Purpose

- ❑ Gun Violence- violence committed with the use of a firearm.
- ❑ A national public health epidemic that exacts a substantial toll on the U.S. society
- ❑ Gun violence is big issue in schools because of bullying kids feel as if it is their last resort to fixing the problem



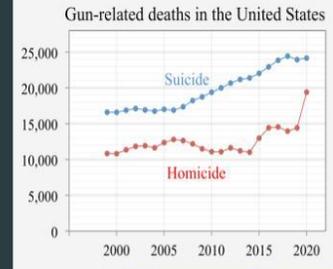
History

WHY IS GUN VIOLENCE A PROBLEM:

- ❑ Guns are easily accessible to minors
- ❑ There is no definite way to make sure someone is qualified for a firearm

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- ❑ 1,013 Gun deaths in Louisiana around 2019
 - ❑ 107 were children and teens
 - ❑ 54% were homicides
 - ❑ 44% were suicides
 - ❑ 85% of the victims were males
- ❑ Had the 6th highest gun death rate in the country



Social Analysis

-mental health ---> contributes to gun violence
Gun violence in schools has kids walking around scared and fearing for their lives
This is not good because now instead of kids walking around thinking about school work, their thinking about where's the next shooting going to happen causing the academic performance to drop
Let us not forget that this is an ongoing problem in schools as we speak



Resolution and Recommendations

- ❑ There aren't many gun laws in place due to the gun rights activist groups.
- ❑ Recommendations
 - ❑ Metal detectors in schools
 - ❑ Having a group or organization placed in schools to help distract/ activities
 - ❑ A virtual version of the group/organization for children with social anxiety



Budget

SOLUTIONS

- ❑ **Implement more psychologist counselors**
 - ❑ School psychologist----> \$35.96/hour (4)
- ❑ **Metal Detectors**
 - ❑ \$30/piece (4)
- ❑ **School Organization/Club + Website**
 - ❑ \$300---->trips, food, essentials
- **Total**
 - ◆ \$1,571 per school
- Implement within schools that don't have these options yet.



Testimonials

There was an incident where a student bought a gun to my school. When I heard about this I was shocked. I started to think about what could've happened if the gun was used. Someone's life could have been ended far too early if the gun was shot. The fact that it was so easily bought into the school is concerning. The child shouldn't have so easily got their hands on a gun. This is a problem that I feel needs to be addressed fast!

~Derianah Williams



Final Remarks

Gun Violence is a big issue in schools today because sometimes it could leave a long lasting traumatizing affect on the kids there, bullying is a number one reason why this continues to happen and it leaves the kids feeling as if they need to protect themselves so this is why we have taken the time to put together a presentation on ways we could prevent this within schools and not leaving those kids to think that gun violence is their last resort.

References

History reference- <https://efsgv.org/state/louisiana>

Gun Violence definition reference- www.amnesty.org



Group Four: Students Take Action on Bullying Prevention

Members: Andrew Jackson III, D'Shyra Hawkins, Jarred Parson, Diana Anderson, Jenessa Stewart, I 'Renee Knighten, Nylah Guidry

Group 4: Presentation Summary

This group wants to take action against bullying in schools. They found that bullying affects mental health, takes away a student's confidence, instills fear in teens, and leads to suicidal thoughts or actions. When bullying is not addressed, it may have devastating outcomes. The group proposes a program for students called "Talk About It" which would enforce bullying prevention in schools where anti-bullying policies are not taken seriously. The program would include going into schools and hosting team building and unifying activities. In addition, the group also advocates for in-person interventionists to help counsel bullying victims.

The students found that about 20% of students aged 12 to 18 have experienced bullying nationwide. These students have reported that the person who bullied them has influenced other students' perception of them through their social influence. In addition, the bully was physically stronger or larger and may have had more money than the victim. Bullying has also been reported to take place in the classroom, the cafeteria, the school courtyard, the internet, the bathroom, and the locker room.

The teens propose "Talk About It" which is an in-person school program that will host unifying activities for youth to realize the similarities that they share with one another. This will prevent bullying by exposing how prevalent the issue is and inspire the students to make a change. The resolution will be a live chat system in which students can vent about their problems from home and in the school environment. The team chose to have the virtual chat option to notify and interact with the hired specialist to help the youth by providing resources and coping skills.

One group member shared her testimony of how she was bullied and the effects it had on her. She explained how her school turned a blind eye to her being bullied which made her feel hopeless, like she had nowhere to go for help. She engaged in self-harm for a time but promised she'd never do it again. She felt the school could have dealt with her situation in a better way. Thankfully, she found the courage to share her story with hopes to bring light to the issue. From sharing her personal experience, this teen and her group members are very passionate about implementing this program into schools across Shreveport, Baton Rouge and possibly statewide.

Group Four Slides

Students Take Action on Bullying Prevention

Andrew Jackson III, D'Shyra Hawkins, Jarred Parson, Diana Anderson, Jenesis Stewart, I'Renee Knighten, Nylah Guidry



Introduction and Purpose

Purpose:

To propose a new program called "Talk About It". This program will enforce hands on school bullying prevention because policies don't get taken seriously. Talk About It will go in schools and host team building and unifying activities. The second portion of the program will also have an in person interventionist to help and counsel those who are bullied.

Why It's Needed:

- Bullying affects mental health
- School bullying takes away the opportunity to have a safe learning environment
- Bullying takes away the confidence to speak up and puts fear in teens
- Bullying leads to suicide
- Bullying is not addressed until something detrimental happens



Impacts of Bullying

Kids who are bullied can experience negative physical, social, emotional, academic, and mental health issues. Kids who are bullied are more likely to experience:

- Depression and anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy. These issues may persist into adulthood.
- Health complaints
- Decreased academic achievement—GPA and standardized test scores—and school participation. They are more likely to miss, skip, or drop out of school.
- A very small number of bullied children might retaliate through extremely violent measures.



History of Bullying:

In 12 of 15 school shooting cases in the 1990s, the shooters had a history of being bullied.

- Two events in 1999 were turning points in the recognition of school bullying as an important societal problem in the United States. First was the shooting at Columbine High School, widely viewed in the press as actions by vengeful victims of bullying. Equally important, but less prominent in the media, was the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education*, which established that schools could be liable for failing to stop student-to-student sexual harassment.

- Yet after more than a decade of judicial and legislative activity since those two landmark events — as well as a massive increase in scientific research — today's laws and policies about bullying are fragmented and inconsistent.



Social Analysis

Who is Affected ?

- About 20% of students ages 12-18 experienced bullying nationwide.
- Students ages 12–18 who reported being bullied said they thought those who bullied them:
 - Had the ability to influence other students' perception of them (56%).
 - Had more social influence (50%).
 - Were physically stronger or larger (40%).
 - Had more money (31%).
- Nationwide, 19% of students in grades 9–12 report being bullied on school property in the 12 months prior to the survey. The following percentages of students ages 12-18 had experienced bullying in various places at school:
 - Hallway or stairwell (43.4%)
 - Classroom (42.1%)
 - Cafeteria (26.8%)
 - Outside on school grounds (21.9%)
 - Online or text (15.3%)
 - Bathroom or locker room (12.1%)
 - Somewhere else in the school building (2.1%)
 - Approximately 46% of students ages 12-18 who were bullied during the school year notified an adult at school about the bullying."



Resolution and Recommendations

More About Lets Talk About It:

“Talk About It” is an in person school program that will host unifying activities in order for youth to realize the similarities that they share between each other. This will prevent bullying by exposing how prevalent the issue is and inspire the students to make a change.

The resolution will be a live chat system in which students can vent about their problems from home and in the school environment with the schools designated interventionist. Our team chose to have the virtual chat option to notify the hired specialist in order to help the youth by providing resources and coping skills.



Diana's Testimony

During the years of my life I have been through more than a little. Bullying was just one thing I could not shake. My freshman year of high school I was excited to be there but not even the second day there I heard a rumor going on about me. Which I choose not to speak of unless necessary like awareness of bullying. These rumors only got worse from there. I didn't know anyone there so I could not understand who said this and why until one day a few girls up and some stood to the side just looking at me and the girls were picking on me saying things about me and calling me out my name telling me to kill myself. At the time I was not the most confident person nor did I think I was in any way beautiful or pretty or even enough of anything to get through any of school or life. The rumors or bullying didn't stop there. People would turn and laugh at me when they saw me on campus and after a while it was starting to affect me causing me to lose focus in school and have thoughts to come back up that I thought I had gotten rid of. After a while I was sick and tired of it so I tried something I promised myself I would never try again and broke that promise to myself because of what people thought about me. After that attempt I decided I shouldn't care about what people say and I should stop letting people just run me over. So I walked up to my bully and the girls and guys that had started that rumor and I spoke up for myself. I was more confident and the rumor had finally stopped. The girls tried bullying me more but I wouldn't let them have the satisfaction. After that I was more happy and not scared but proud of myself for standing up for myself.

I tell my story so that people can see what could happen or what is part of bullying and how it could start. I wouldn't want any of this happening to anyone else and I'm not the type of person to think that it's ok to do it to anyone else.



Conclusion/ Q&A

Hearing that testimony should help you see why this is so important and necessary. Bullying could have stopped my group member from being here today to tell her story. So again, we ask that you help make Talk About It a real thing so we can save great people like Diana, someone in this room, and beyond, from the dangerous hands of bullying.

Any Questions?



References

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/facts>

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/02/ce-corner>



Group Five: Accusations Without Investigation

Members: Molly Dreznick, Janina Laushaw, Chazmin Slaughter, Paris Bazile, Maya Curley, Alayja Bowie, Jasmin Henderson, Bailey Hemphill, Aariona Smith, and Kolyn Dummons

Group 5: Presentation Summary

The final group's presentation established the issues with zero-tolerance policies in schools. Zero-tolerance policies are school discipline policy that mandate predetermined consequences in response to a certain action regardless of the context or rationale for the behavior. Zero-tolerance policies were first written in school handbooks nationwide in 1993 following decades of "get tough" and "tough on crime" policies at the national level starting with President Nixon. Zero-tolerance policies are derived from the broken window theory which claims that minor infractions can lead criminals to commit other, worse offenses. Zero-tolerance policies were originally used to target gun violence and drug distribution on school property but rapidly grew in scope to include other relatively minor actions. Zero-tolerance policies result in immediate punishment without investigation violating the fundamental rights of American society.

This creates a fundamental problem for students as they can be severely penalized for something such as self-defense. Zero-tolerance policies can affect students' records when preparing for their future. The students found that 50% of suspensions in preschool are Black children despite finding that Black children misbehave no more than other students. Zero-tolerance policies are also closely related to another central problem, over-policing in American schools. Black students represent 31% of school-related arrests and are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled compared to other students. School-related arrests give students a criminal record for actions that take place at school and thus, should be handled within the school. Individuals with a criminal record can be barred from funding and, to an extent, from entering college. HB 688 of the 2017 Regular Legislative Session enacted LA R.S. 17.3152 which

forbids colleges and universities from barring admission to prospective students because of prior convictions. Nevertheless, students of color are more likely to drop out of school and receive fewer educational opportunities. They also linked this to the School to Prison Pipeline, which can result from higher rates of expulsion and disciplinary action.

One student shared her experience of how she may have fallen victim to a zero-tolerance policy without the support of her peers and family members. Her story gives insight into why this is a problem that needs to be solved to protect the future of minority students. The group recommends more counselors and mental health workers in schools, a Peace Circles program which consists of small talk and discussions groups in schools, adding discretion and alternative forms of punishments, inviting more public speakers to schools, Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS), and anti-bias training for students and professionals within the education system. They also feel that physical force should only be used with gun possession on school property and unsolicited substances, such as drugs and alcohol. There should also be more rewards for positive behavior. The goal is to spread awareness of the harmfulness of zero-tolerance policies and create legislation reducing schools' use of zero-tolerance policies.

The problems of a zero-tolerance policy are more structurally rooted and not unique to Louisiana. In recent years, several states have enacted legislation to limit the scope and detrimental effects that stem from such a policy. In 2018, Delaware passed SB 85-SA1 (becoming 14 81:324). This bill requires the annual, disaggregated release of all disciplinary measures taken against students in schools. If a school fails to meet a certain threshold (as determined by per capita suspension rate by year) then a school must submit a plan to the state's Department of Education detailing the changes to the school's disciplinary policy to include a focus on, but not

limited to, restorative practice, trauma-informed care, and implicit bias awareness. Also, in 2018, Indiana passed HB 1421 requiring the state's Department of Education to take inventory of all disciplinary measures used in the state, develop a new model plan for disciplinary measures, and inform local school districts about its implementation. The bill also declares an emergency. While this may have a pure legal reason, the action can also signify to the public the urgency with which action must be taken regarding school discipline. Both the Delaware and Indiana laws can provide the framework with which the Louisiana Legislature can enact meaningful, structural change.

Group Five Slides



**ZERO
TOLERANCE**

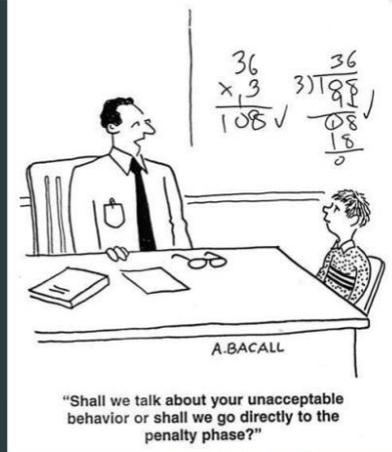
Accusations Without Investigation

Molly Dreznick, Janina Laushaw, Chazmin Slaughter, Paris Bazile, Maya Curley, Alayja Bowie, Jasmin Henderson, Bailey Hemphill, Aariona Smith, Kolyn Dummons



Introduction and Purpose

- ▶ Prevalence
 - ▶ Nationwide
- ▶ Zero Tolerance Policies
 - ▶ “School discipline policies and practices that mandate predetermined consequences, typically severe, punitive and exclusionary (e.g., out of school suspension and expulsion), in response to specific types of student misbehavior—regardless of the context or rationale for the behavior”
- ▶ Purpose
 - ▶ Spread awareness of the harmfulness of zero-tolerance policies
 - ▶ Enforce legislation reducing schools using zero-tolerance policies



History

- ❖ Written in school handbooks nationwide (1993)
- ❖ Derived from the broken window theory- claims that allowing minor infractions causes criminals to be encouraged to commit other (worse) offenses
- ❖ Originally used to stop gun violence and drug distribution on school property, then spread away from original major offenses to minor infractions like fights.
- ❖ No background investigations were being done, and now it completely ignores values and rules.
- ❖ Immediate punishment without investigation



Social Analysis

- People are just being penalized without any thought about it
- This is affecting students records and when a college may look at it, they are not gonna consider your role in the disciplinary action . Only the report of it .
- **“50% of suspensions in preschool are Black children despite a report finding that Black students are misbehaving no more than other students”**
- **“Black students represent 31% of school-related arrests and are 3x more likely to be suspended or expelled compared to their white peers.”**
- P.O.Cs more likely to dropout of school and receive less opportunities for education
School to Prison Pipeline
It can lead to higher rates of expulsion and disciplinary action



Alayja's Testimony

“

My name is Alayja Bowie and I'm from Baton Rouge, Louisiana and I attend Capitol High School. I have straight A's and am on the cheer team. There was a fight that my friend was involved in when three girls tried to attack her once, and when I tried to break it up, I was hit and [for] self defense, I began to fight one of the attackers, and I was recommended for expulsion and couldn't come to school until January, but thanks to God and good references to represent my character, the expulsion was overturned and I was able to participate in my senior night and return to

”

school.



Resolution and Recommendations

- ▶ More counselors and mental health workers in schools
- ▶ Small talk and discussions groups in schools (Peace Circles)
- ▶ Adding discretion and alternative forms of punishments
- ▶ Having more public speakers coming to schools
- ▶ PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support)
- ▶ Anti-bias training for students and professionals within the education system



Conclusion/ Q&A (Team)

- ❖ Physical force should only be used with gun possession on school property and unsolicited substances, such as drugs, and alcohol
- ❖ There should be more rewards for positive behavior, and more mental health workers on school grounds.

Questions?



References

- ▶ History
 - ▶ <https://supportiveschooldiscipline.org/zero-tolerance-policy>
 - ▶ <https://www.lawyers.com/legal-info/research/education-law/whats-a-zero-tolerance-policy.html>
 - ▶ <https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/downloads/6395w9592?locale=es>
- ▶ Social Analysis
 - ▶ https://www.studioatao.org/post/understanding-structural-racism-in-the-u-s-gov-ernment-public-education?gclid=CjwKCAiA1uKMBhAGEjwAxzvX95SOEugcoYlZrz0z2Cv8Oxnac-ww4ltbyDIBXsM7xj5-TVqXFnyBMRoCgAoQAvD_BwE



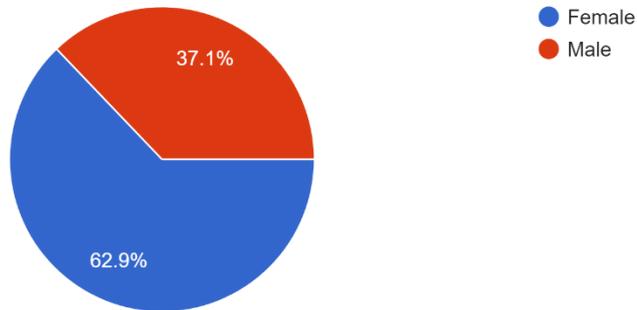
Program Conclusion:

The Louisiana Center for Health Equity (LCHE) is the proud host of L.E.A.D. In LYFE League Teen Leadership and Advocacy Program which provided a proactive youth development opportunity for students aged 13 through 18 across the state. Teens were given the opportunity to express their concerns about education and their school environments as well as to engage as agents of change for racial justice and racial healing. From the quality gap of funding to the issues with the zero-tolerance policies, all of the concerns they presented are linked. The lack of access to mental health services for students contributes to bullying, gun violence, and mental health issues that go unaddressed. The differences in resources between schools affects the opportunities accessible to each student like the zero-tolerance policies. All these issues are linked to the student's access to a quality education, which should be the main priority of the school system. If our state desires the best for the future for our youth and young adults, we must start by allowing them the platform to vocalize their concerns and offer insights with proposed solutions. L.E.A.D. Teens provided fresh perspectives on their needs and that of their schools. Their perspectives and solutions may be the blueprint needed to continue to improve and propel Louisiana's education system forward.

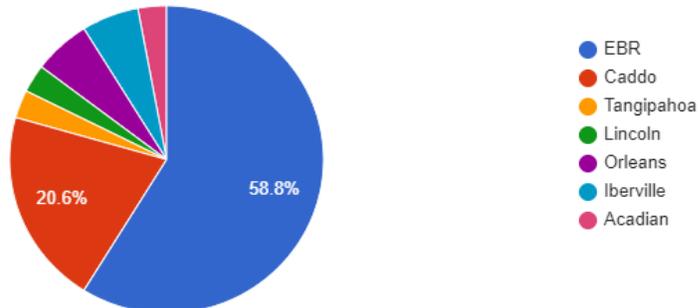
LCHE appreciates and welcomes the future work with Senator Cleo Fields, Senator Regina Barrow, Representative Larry Selders, members of the state legislature, education leaders and Louisiana Youth Advisory Council (LYAC) on a state and local level in developing policies that consider the L.E.A.D. Teens' proposed solutions in addressing their concerns.

Appendix: Participant Demographics

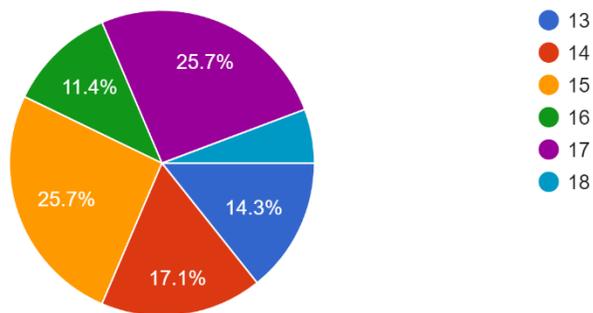
Gender
35 responses



Parish
35 responses

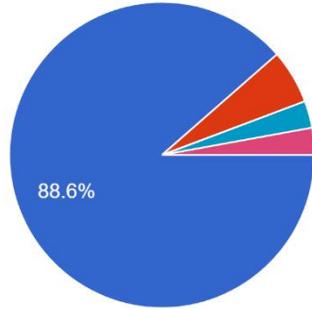


Age?
35 responses



Race?

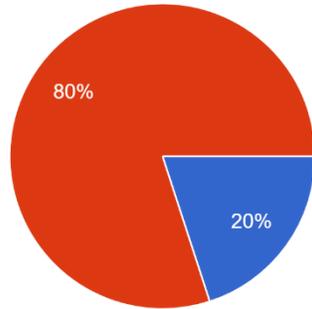
35 responses



- African American
- White
- Latino
- Asian
- Native American/Pacific Islander
- Biracial (Asian and White)
- Mixed with african american & asian

Have you experience disciplinary issues at school

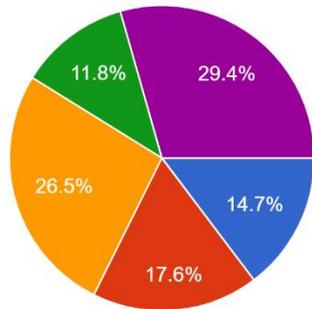
35 responses



- No
- Yes

What grade are you in?

35 responses



- 8th Grade
- 9th Grade
- 10th Grade
- 11th Grade
- 12th Grade

Examples from students:

“I was bullied when I first started to attend SULAB, I didn’t entertain it at first but then it turned into cyber bullying. The person took my silence for weakness and tried to physically harm me and in return I defended myself. It escalated into a physical fight and I along with the other person was suspended.”

“I was dress coded because my shorts were too short, and I felt like that was kind of hypocritical towards me because I’ve seen more white girls wear shorter and revealing clothes, but because I have more “curves” I was the one who got in trouble.”

“I’m currently in a situation where I got suspended because I jumped in a fight that I originally was trying to break up, but the girl hit me, and I started fighting her. So, they gave me 5 days and recommendation of expulsion, but this is my first fight since I’ve been at this school and I made straight A’s, I just don’t think I should have got recommendations of expulsion I’m a great student just was a onetime thing”