

June 5, 2020

Red Clay School District
1502 Spruce Avenue
Wilmington, DE 19805

To the Red Clay School District Board Members and
Superintendent Green:



Delaware

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Kathryn Jakabcin
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We can all agree that a safe school produces an environment conducive for learning. A common misconception is that the presence of police officers and armed security guards help to make this possible. Research indicates that having school-based police contributes to making students feel less safe and negatively impacts student achievement.

The recent deaths of George Floyd and Breona Taylor illustrate that law enforcement officers may exercise unlawful use of force, creating a significant safety risk for youth at schools. In particular, students with disabilities and Black and Brown students are most likely to experience use of force at schools.¹ These students would be far better served by the school district divesting from law enforcement officers and investing in counselors and professionals who can better respond to their needs.

¹ Merkwae, Amanda. "Schooling the Police: Race, Disability, and the Conduct of School Resource Officers," *Michigan Journal of Race and Law*; Volume 21, 2015. Available at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1053&context=mjrl>

² "Cop No Counselors – How the lack of Mental Health Staff is Harming Students." Available at: https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/030419-acluschooldisciplinereport.pdf

Lapan, R., Whitcomb, S., & Aleman, N. (2012). "Connecticut professional school counselors: College and career counseling services and smaller ratios benefit students. *Professional School Counseling*," 16(2), 117-124.
Richard E. Cleveland and Christopher A. Sink. "Student Happiness, School Climate, and School Improvement Plans: Implications for School Counseling Practice. *Professional School Counselling*." (2018) 21:1, 1-10.



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“A 2018 study reviewing the impact of federal grants for school police on 2.5 million students in Texas found a 6 percent increase in middle school discipline rates, a 2.5 percent decrease in high school graduation rates, and a 4 percent decrease in college enrollment rates. Another 2018 study found more police in New York City neighborhoods hurt the test scores of Black male students.”²

The presence of police shifts the focus from learning and supporting students to over-disciplining and criminalizing them. Students are removed from classes, subjected to physical restraint, interrogation, and other risks to their rights to education, due process, and equal treatment. Black and Brown students and students with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by this inequitable treatment.

According to Federal Civil Rights Data Collection, Delaware students attending schools with police were arrested at a rate of 72 arrests per 10,000, eight times the arrest rate for students attending schools without police (9 per 10,000). Delaware School Discipline Improvement Program (SDIP) indicates that Red Clay School District has eight schools required by law to provide specific discipline improvement plans due to disproportionality in out-of-school suspensions.³

Conversely, research has shown that the presence of school-based mental health providers, i.e. school counselors, social workers, psychologists, mediators can result in positive outcomes for students and improve school safety generally. In addition, these schools have seen improved attendance rates, improved academic achievement and career preparation, improved graduation rates, and fewer disciplinary incidents and lower suspension and expulsion rates.⁴

We acknowledge and greatly appreciate Red Clay for working to address systematic inequities in the District by establishing an Equity Office and partnering with the ACLU-DE and other community-based organizations to make significant changes. Removing School Resource Officers and

³ Delaware Department of Education, 2019 Statewide Summary Report, <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/470/SDIP%202019%20Final%20Report%20as%20of%2030%20JAN%202020.pdf>

⁴ Cop No Counselors, pg 6.

Constables is a continuation of this important work of building inclusive school environments that are **not** rooted in fear and bias but instead nurtures and values ALL of our children.

Given the extensive evidence available, we urge the Red Clay School District Board to redirect current SRO and constable funding and make available additional resources by investing in school-based health resources and other proven restorative practices that will make our schools safer and more inclusive.

Respectfully submitted,



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