

Racial Justice for All Children Task Force: Issue Proposal

Restorative Justice and School Wellness

THE ISSUE

- ❖ MOSES affirms restorative justice and other wellness enhancing practices to create an inclusive culture and climate that increases well-being for all students and reduces behaviors that currently lead to exclusionary practices such as suspensions, expulsions, and police calls.
- ❖ MOSES opposes exclusionary discipline in Madison's schools. We seek new ways to respond rather than persisting in exclusionary discipline practices that frequently are preliminaries to criminalization.
- ❖ MOSES advocates prioritization of and progress in the following areas of the MMSD's Superintendent's Wellness Advisory (SWA) work plan:
 - Community engagement, mental health staffing and practices, restorative justice staffing and practices, transparent communications regarding disciplinary practices and outcomes, recruitment and retention of staff of color, staff training in research-based approaches to reduce exclusionary discipline and to enhance student well-being.
 - Specific ties from these categories to the SWA work plan are detailed in this link to [MOSES advocacy topics for SWA](#).

ALIGNMENT WITH MISSION

- ❖ MOSES's mission is to build collective power to dismantle the systems of mass incarceration and mass supervision and to eradicate the racial disparities in our community that contribute to them. RJAC's mission – to eradicate the childhood to school to prison pipeline – was designed to move MOSES upstream to include a focus on prevention in its effort to dismantle the systems of mass incarceration. The following are directly within RJAC's purview:
 - The school to prison pipeline is fed by the exclusionary discipline and criminalization of youth in our schools. There is [extensive research data](#) that shows that youth, especially youth of color, are more likely to be criminalized when School Resources Officers (SROs) are in the school and there is little evidence that SROs increase safety. MMSD removed SROs in 2020 but that is not sufficient to achieve our mission.
 - We need to create a culture and climate in our schools that reduces the likelihood of behaviors that have traditionally led to exclusionary discipline and criminalization. There is [promising research](#) that restorative practices and a focus on social-emotional concerns can better address student needs and reduce out-of-school suspensions, which have not been found to reduce future misbehavior but which negatively impact academic performance.

BACKGROUND

- ❖ In January 2024 RJAC held a listening session to hear what MOSES members felt was important to achieve school safety. We organized all the responses into [five categories](#). We took these back to RJAC for consideration and found that the task force was unable to prioritize among these.
- ❖ In the 2023-24 school year one of RJAC's members was invited to serve in an ongoing capacity on the newly-formed [MMSD Superintendent's Wellness Advisory](#) (SWA). The SWA is a standing committee charged with overseeing the implementation of recommendations that had been developed through three separate ad hoc committees dating back to 2018. In 2021 MOSES [endorsed the full set of the second committee's recommendations](#). The SWA has representation from teachers, staff, students, parents, community members, and community organizations like MOSES.
- ❖ The Wellness Advisory is built on the national Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model that integrates education and health sectors to improve student and staff well-being. This model focuses on aligning the goals of education and health sectors to improve a child's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. It includes 10 domains that promote student and staff well-being. The [MMSD Wellness Policy](#) stems from this foundation and provides guidance for all MMSD staff to integrate wellness into all that they do with specific measurable goals and outcomes that can be monitored.
- ❖ A new working group within RJAC - the "Restorative Justice (RJ) and School Wellness Group" - compared the items identified in our January meeting with those on the [Superintendent's Wellness Advisory Grid](#) (or work plan). The Restorative Justice (RJ) and School Wellness Group then prioritized these based on its understanding of the concerns that emerged in the January meeting and alignment with our mission. This led to the list of topic areas identified in this proposed issue.
- ❖ All of these topics have been well developed by MMSD and there is evidence to support the effectiveness of the various interventions proposed. The District is committed to them. In this issue proposal we are reducing the list to those items that we care about most, that relate to our mission, and that we believe would be expedited by MOSES advocacy. This list and resulting issue proposal will allow us to most effectively advocate for the items we care about.

ACTIONS

- ❖ Attend SWA meetings to monitor progress, or lack thereof, on the items we care about.
- ❖ Report back to RJAC on items that might benefit from advocacy actions.
- ❖ Determine desired actions and how to engage MOSES and others. Possible examples include:
 - Push MMSD to meet the Board of Education's recommendation to have 2 restorative justice coaches in each of the high schools. Currently they have only one in each of the four comprehensive high schools.
 - Push MMSD to report on data (without releasing identifying information) about post-incident law enforcement interactions with students and provide longitudinal analysis of progress to reduce the frequency and impact of these interactions over time.

TARGETS

- ❖ MMSD administrators involved in these areas including: the directors for Restorative Justice, the Office of School Safety, the Superintendent, and the Board of Education.

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- ❖ Is it tangible: Yes. Items in the work plan are specific and actionable.
- ❖ We care about it: Yes. As noted, MOSES has already taken positions in support of some of the items on the work plan and a RJAC's Restorative Justice (RJ) and School Wellness Group has been actively engaged with MMSD on these concerns. There are other groups in the community, with whom we have and will continue to collaborate, who have also been advocating around many of these issues, including Freedom, Inc. and Families for Justice.
- ❖ It has a target: Yes. The MMSD administrative staff who support the work of the SWA; and the school board, as needed, for possible policy decisions and budgetary actions.
- ❖ It is winnable: Yes. The items in the work plan reflect things we care about. The Superintendent shares these goals. MOSES can provide additional support to MMSD in furthering these objectives and push MMSD to move forward more quickly. We can also serve to raise awareness in the community about what needs to be done.
- ❖ It has a timeline: Yes. While there are no specific times for completion of items on the SWA work plan, the Superintendent's Designee and Staff for the SWA consult with the SWA to prioritize plan components annually. They routinely track and report progress to the SWA. MOSES can influence the prioritization of work plan components as identified in this issue proposal and make sure the things we care about are moving along at an acceptable rate. Additionally, RJAC will identify a specific timeline for taking action to engage administrators around the key areas we prioritize.
- ❖ It advances our values and narrative: Yes. Increasing staff trainings, RJ positions, mental health support, and data on incidents will improve safety and decrease extreme

punishments (suspensions, expulsions, etc.). Our advocacy will help raise awareness of these issues.