

#AssaultAtSpringValley

An analysis of police violence against Black
and Latine students in public schools

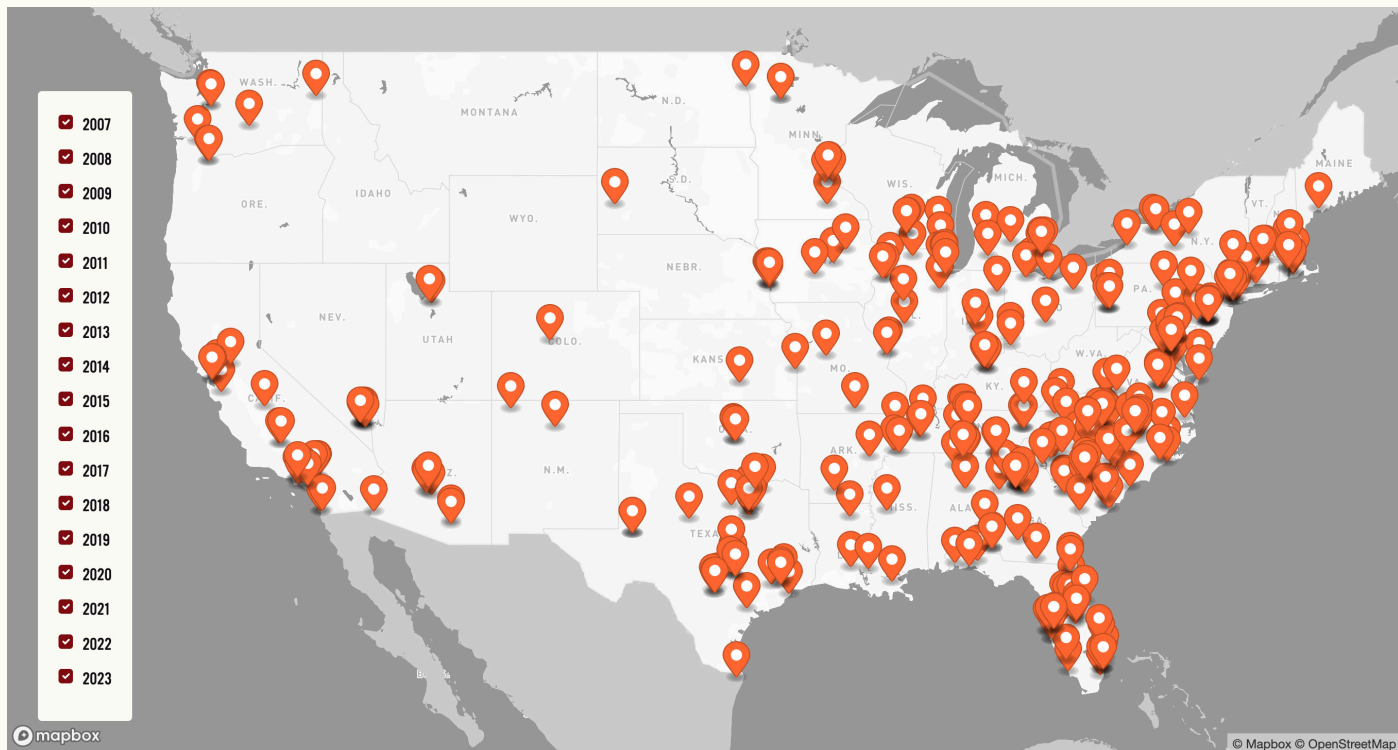
2023 Update



#POLICEFREESCHOOLS

ADVANCEMENT
PROJECT

Alliance for
Educational
Justice



2023 UPDATE ON THE CONTINUED VIOLENCE AGAINST BLACK AND LATINE STUDENTS CAUSED BY SCHOOL POLICING

The first edition of this report was released in December 2022, presenting findings of combined quantitative/qualitative data analysis of 285 incidents of police assaults between the 2011-12 and 2021-22 school years. Analyzing these acts of violence by police officers and school security guards against students (*#AssaultAts*) helps us better understand the extent to which school policing jeopardizes the physical safety and health of Black and Latine students, girls, students with disabilities, and students attending predominately low-income schools.

This edition updates those findings through the 2022-23 school year with analysis of 372 assaults and includes additional data points, such as the geographic region in which assaults occurred and

whether the assault was carried out by a sworn police officer or security guard. This edition also provides analysis specifically for the 2022-23 school year. These updated findings highlight the extent to which policing students places them at risk of both physical assault and sexual violence perpetrated by school police and security guards.

For more information about the National Campaign for Police Free Schools, visit:

POLICEFREESCHOOLS.ORG

For more information about the *#AssaultAt* initiative please visit:

POLICEFREESCHOOLS.ORG/MAP

¹ Nance, J. P. (2015). Students, police, and the school-to-prison pipeline. *Washington University Law Review*, 93, 919.

² Livingston, M. D., et al. (2019). A descriptive analysis of school and school shooter characteristics and the severity of school shootings in the United States, 1999–2018. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 64, 797–799.

³ Peterson, J., Densley, J., & Erickson, G. (2021). Presence of armed school officials and fatal and nonfatal gunshot injuries during mass school shootings, United States, 1980–2019. *JAMA Network Open*, 4 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.37394>

⁴ Beger, R.R. (2003). *The worst of both worlds*. *Criminal Justice Review*, 28, 336–340.; Nolan, K. (2011). *Police in the hallways: Discipline in an urban high school*. University of Minnesota Press.

SCHOOL POLICING CONTINUES TO ACTIVELY HARM BLACK AND LATINE STUDENTS WITHOUT MAKING SCHOOLS SAFER

Rather than make schools safer, research demonstrates that school police negatively impact school climate and student safety,¹ do not avert school shootings,² and do not prevent deaths or injuries when there is an active shooter.³ Educational settings that are heavily policed can create adversarial relationships between youth and school officials that alienate students, increase their anxiety, and create a sense of mistrust between peers.⁴

Moreover, the presence of police in schools reinforces the school-to-prison pipeline, increasing student arrests⁵ and exclusionary discipline⁶ while decreasing instructional time⁷, student attendance,⁸ and on-time graduation.⁹

School policing disproportionately drives Black students into the youth and adult punishment systems¹⁰ despite the fact that Black students do not misbehave more than their white peers.¹¹ Accordingly, it is not surprising that Black students are less likely to feel safer with police in their schools and have less positive perceptions of police both within their schools and communities.¹²

School policing also comes with a host of collateral consequences for Black and Latine youth and their families, including lost course credits, the burden of legal costs and court fees, the stress of family separation, and even serious threats to the student's or family's immigration status.¹³

¹ Nance, J. P. (2015). Students, police, and the school-to-prison pipeline. *Washington University Law Review*, 93, 919.

² Livingston, M. D., et al. (2019). A descriptive analysis of school and school shooter characteristics and the severity of school shootings in the United States, 1999–2018. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 64, 797–799.

³ Peterson, J., Densley, J., & Erickson, G. (2021). Presence of armed school officials and fatal and nonfatal gunshot injuries during mass school shootings, United States, 1980–2019. *JAMA Network Open*, 4 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.37394>

⁴ Beger, R.R. (2003). *The worst of both worlds*. Criminal Justice Review, 28, 336–340.; Nolan, K. (2011). *Police in the hallways: Discipline in an urban high school*. University of Minnesota Press.

⁵ Owens, E. G. (2017). Testing the school-to-prison pipeline. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 36(1), 11–37.

⁶ Fisher, B.W., & Hennessy, E.A. (2016). School Resource Officers and exclusionary discipline in U.S. high schools: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Adolescent Research Review*, 1, 217–233; Weisburst, E., (2019) Patrolling public schools: The impact of funding for school police on student discipline and long-term education outcomes. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 38, 338–365.

⁷ Losen D. & Martinez, P. (2020). *Is California Doing Enough to Close the School Discipline Gap?* The Center for Civil Rights Remedies, The Civil Rights Project at UCLA. <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline/is-california-doing-enough-to-close-the-school-discipline-gap>.

⁸ Brady K.P., Balmer S, & Phenix D. (2007). School-police partnership effectiveness in urban schools: An analysis of New York City's Impact Schools Initiative. *Education and Urban Society*, 39,455–478.

⁹ Weisburst, E., (2019).

¹⁰ Homer, E.M., & Fisher, B.W. (2020). Police in schools and student arrest rates across the United States: Examining differences by race, ethnicity, and gender. *Journal of School Violence*, 19, 192–204.

¹¹ Contrary to some popular opinion, research in the area of office referrals, suspension, and expulsion has shown that Black students are not receiving disproportionate school disciplinary consequences due to higher rates of misbehavior. See Skiba, R. (2013). Reaching a critical juncture for our kids: The need to Reassess school-justice practices. *Family Court Review*, 51(3), 380–387.

¹² Nakamoto, J., Cerna, R., & Stern, A. (2019). High school students' perceptions of police vary by student race and ethnicity. WestEd. pp. 4–5. <https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/resource-high-school-students-perceptions-of-police.pdf>

¹³ Burrell, S. & Rourke, S. (eds.) (2011). *Collateral consequences of juvenile delinquency proceedings in California: A handbook for professionals*. Pacific Juvenile Defender Center. <https://njdc.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/PJDC-CA-Collateral-Consequences-Handbook-2011.pdf>

WHAT IS AN #ASSAULTAT?

On October 26, 2015, a 16-year-old Black girl attending Spring Valley High School in Columbia, South Carolina was placed in a headlock, flipped over in her desk, then dragged and thrown across her classroom by a school police officer.¹⁴ While many of her classmates lowered their heads in fear, others recorded the attack on their phones. One of these videos went viral, exposing many to the shocking actions of Deputy Sheriff Ben Fields (referred to by students as “Officer Slam” even before the incident) which would later be known as the *#AssaultAtSpringValley*. The 16-year-old survivor and a Black girl classmate who recorded the incident were arrested, sent to juvenile detention, and charged with “disturbing a school function” - a law that was later ruled to be unconstitutionally vague.¹⁵

The Alliance for Educational Justice (AEJ), a national network of over 30 youth-led and intergenerational grassroots organizations fighting to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline, responded to the *#AssaultAtSpringValley* by collecting data to bring attention to the frequent and widespread abuse endured

by Black and other students of color at the hands of school police and the school policing infrastructure.¹⁶ AEJ member organizations and Advancement Project later formed the National Campaign for Police Free Schools (the Campaign) in 2017. Today, the Campaign includes more than two dozen local youth organizing groups fighting to achieve a liberatory education system.

The Campaign continues to track and chronicle *#AssaultAts*, which are defined as acts of violence (including sexual violence) by police against Black and Latine students, other students of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ students.

The National Campaign for Police Free Schools tracks incidents of police violence against students as reported in the news and on social media and publishes these incidents on the Campaign website:

[POLICEFREESCHOOLS.ORG/MAP](https://policefreeschools.org/map)

RECENT AND NOTABLE #ASSAULTAT EXAMPLES

- **September 2021 | *#AssaultAtAuburn* (Rockford, IL):** An Auburn High School resource officer caused permanent brain damage and a skull fracture by slamming a 4-foot 11-inch, 140-pound Black high school student into the ground. After an administrator attempted to steer the student back to class, the school resource officer aggressively stepped in and slammed the student headfirst. The student was immediately knocked unconscious. Paramedics and the student's grandmother were called to the school. Once at the school, the grandmother was told that the student “slipped and fell” and that it was a small “scuffle.” Video of the incident confirmed that the school and school resource officer misrepresented what happened to the student.¹⁷

¹⁴ Yan, H. (2015). South Carolina school officer fired, but more fallout possible. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2015/10/29/us/south-carolina-school-arrest-videos>

¹⁵ *Carolina Youth Action Project v. Alan Wilson*, No. 21-2166 (4th Cir. 2023).

¹⁶ For the purposes of this analysis, school policing infrastructure includes school resource officers (SROs), police officers on school property and at school-related events, and school security guards.

¹⁷ Savini, D. & Youngerman, M. CBS 2 *Investigators reveal a student was body-slammed by a school resource officer, and family says police, school tried to cover it up*, CBS News Chicago (Oct. 8, 2022), <https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/parris-moore-rockford-student-school-resource-officer-body-slammed/>.

- **September 2022 | #AssaultAtEastRidge** (*East Ridge, TN*): A school resource officer at East Ridge High school grabbed a Black teenager by his dreadlocks and dragged him across the floor after the student refused to play kickball because he was not feeling well. After the student attempted to deescalate the situation by walking away and sitting in the bleachers, the school resource officer grabbed the student by his hair, slammed his face into the bleachers, and pin him down while he says, “I’m not resisting.” When the student left the gym to call his father, the officer pepper sprayed him. Once the student’s father arrived, a different police officer took him to the bathroom to clean his eyes before arresting him for disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, and assault.¹⁸
- **September 2022 | #AssaultAtKIPPNavigateCollegePrep** (*San Jose, CA*): A former KIPP Navigate College Prep school resource officer was arrested for sexually assaulting a young girl. It was discovered that the school resource officer sent multiple inappropriate text messages and sexually assaulted the minor on several occasions. The survivor confirmed the assaults in an interview with the San Jose Police Department.¹⁹
- **April 2023 | #AssaultAtNewBern** (*New Bern, NC*): A former deputy sheriff with the Craven County Sheriff’s Office was arrested for felony sex act with a student and felony indecent liberties with a student for actions committed while he was a school resource at New Bern High School. The mother of the student was very saddened and expressed concerns about how this assault will impact her daughter psychologically for the rest of her life.²⁰

METHODOLOGY

The National Campaign for Police Free Schools partnered with Indiana University PhD Candidate, Britany Beauchesne, to analyze the #AssaultAt database to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the extent and type of and harms caused by school police violence against Black and other students of color.

Identification and Entry of Cases

A comprehensive search for all news reports on assaults against students by school-based police was conducted by Advancement Project and AEJ staff, identifying all such cases reported in the news media between January 1, 2011 and May, 2023. All assaults included in this analysis

were documented in local and/or national news outlets, including newspapers, broadcast news, and online news sources. The Huffington Post’s 2018 tracker of the use of tasers, pepper spray, and physical abuse by school police against students was used as a reference against which to check the completeness of coverage of our database. Because many assaults by police on students are never reported in the media and there is no agency that systemically tracks such assaults, the data presented here are most likely an underestimate of the total number of police assaults against students in and around K-12 schools.

¹⁸ Dominique L. *Viral video: Affidavit reveals new details in East Ridge student’s arrest by SRO*. ABC News Channel 9 (Sept. 20, 2022), <https://newschannel9.com/news/local/viral-video-shows-east-ridge-students-forceful-arrest-by-hamilton-county-sro-tuesday>

¹⁹ Public Notification of Arrest by the San Jose Police Department (Sept. 28, 2022), <https://www.sjpd.org/Home/Components/News/News/957/262>

²⁰ Rush, D. *Former Craven County deputy/SRO charged with having sex with high school student*. WITN News (April 10, 2023), <https://www.witn.com/2023/04/10/former-craven-county-deputy-sro-charged-with-having-sex-with-high-school-student/>.

²¹ Rebecca Klein, *The Other Side of School Safety: Students are Getting Tasered and Beaten by Police*, Huffington Post (Sep. 8, 2018), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/school-safety-students-police-abuse_n_5b746a4ce4b0df9b093b8d6a?ct=t%28EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_4_6_2018_COPY_01%29 (tracker available at <https://onedrive.live.com/view.aspx?resid=A6E84B607DC2E33110&ithint=file%2cxlsx&authkey=!AK5VvBX5OPFMLs>).

Based on this research, 372 incidents involving an assault on a K-12 student were identified.²² The web-based #AssaultAt map and database contain only assaults against Black and Latine students, LGBTQ+ students, and students with disabilities. To ensure accurate assessments of the distribution of assaults across racial and other population categories, additional collection of incidents sought to identify *all* cases of police assault against students, regardless of race, sexual orientation or gender identity, or disability status.

Coding and Analysis of Cases

Indiana University research staff developed a code-book to catalogue the characteristics of each assault in six areas: a) characteristics of students assaulted; b) trends in police assaults over time; c) location of assault within the school; d) types of assaults committed; e) harms to students; and f) consequences, if any, to the assaulting officer. Once all 372 cases were coded, analyses of the data were conducted using SPSS 29. All analyses in this report are descriptive in nature, providing an initial snapshot of the characteristics of such assaults.

SUMMARY OF **KEY FINDINGS**

TRENDS FROM 2011-2023:

- Over **85% (85.4%)** of victims²³ of police assaults since 2011 have been Black students. Approximately **1/4** of those assaulted by police have been students with disabilities or students with mental health concerns.
- The **3rd** most frequent assault type—in over **13%** of cases—was *sexual assault*. This is an increase from the fourth most frequent assault type in our December 2022 report.
- **60%** percent of school policing assaults on students resulted in serious injury to the student, many involving hospitalization, broken bones, or concussions.
- The most frequent type of assault included **multiple forms of police force** used in the same incident.
- **5** students have been *killed* by school police since 2011.
- Police faced no consequences in **well over 1/2** of the incidents of assault on students.
- Our new geographic analysis shows **58.6%** assaults occurred in Southern states. In contrast, **16.7%** occurred in the Midwest, **12.6%** in Western states, and **12.1%** in Northeastern states.

NOTABLE FINDINGS FROM THE 2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR:

- Of the assaults in which race could be identified, **80%** of victims were Black students, while none were against white students.
- In cases which gender could be identified, **52.6%** of victims were girls during the 2022-23 school year.
- Sexual assault was the **2nd most frequent type of assault (25.5%)** during the 2022-23 school year.
- School resource officers were involved in **49%** of assaults against students, whereas security guards were the perpetrators in **21.6%** of assaults, police at the school were involved in **15.7%**, security officers in **7.8%**, and multiple forms of police in **5.9%**.

²² The web-based #AssaultAt map and database contain only assaults against Black and Latino students, LGBTQ+ students, and students with disabilities. To ensure accurate assessments of the distribution of assaults across racial and other population categories, additional collection of incidents sought to identify *all* cases of police assault against students, regardless of race, sexual orientation or gender identity, or disability status.

²³ The term "victims" is used to describe the full universe of students assaulted by police, as tragically some of the students did not survive their assaults.

²⁴ The geographic analysis is based on the four land regions designated by the U.S. Census Bureau.

WHICH STUDENTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO BE VICTIMS OF SCHOOL POLICE VIOLENCE?

Data collection and analysis continue to demonstrate that police violence is much more likely to impact Black and Latine students, especially girls. Prior research has demonstrated that Black students are arrested at higher rates when police are present in schools.²⁵ Outcomes are even worse for Black girls in schools: research

has shown that Black girls are four times more likely than their white peers to be arrested, three times more likely to be referred to police, and two times more likely to be physically restrained.²⁶ This research builds on those findings by ascertaining that racial disparities in school discipline extend to acts of police violence against students.

FINDINGS:

THE STUDENT VICTIMS OF POLICE ASSAULTS ARE OVERWHELMINGLY BLACK. SCHOOL POLICING ASSAULTS ALMOST NEVER TARGET WHITE STUDENTS.

- **Racial Category:** In cases where race was identified, **85.4%** of the assaults were directed against Black students and **11%** against Latine students. Only **3.8%** of all reported assaults were against white students.
- **Gender:** Boys were victims of **60.2%** of assaults, while girls were the victims in **39.8%** of school policing assaults.
- **Intersection of Race and Gender:** In cases where both race and gender were identified, Black boys represented **over 1/2 (55.8%)** of all assaults, while Black girls represented **nearly 1/3 (29.5%)** of all police assaults.
- **Age:** The vast majority of students assaulted were between 13 and 17 years of age (**53.8%**). There were **10** instances of police violence in which the victim was between 4 and 8 years old.
- **Disability Status:** Approximately **1/4** of police assaults were on students with disabilities or students with reported mental health concerns. Specifically, **12.1%** of police assaults involved students with disabilities, while students with mental health concerns were identified in **12.4%** of cases.
- **2022-23 School Year Findings:**
 - *In cases where race was identified, no assaults were directed toward White students. **80%** were directed toward Black students, **6.7%** against Latine students, and **13.3%** against American Indian/AK Native students.*
 - *When the gender of the victim was identified, girls were the majority (**52.6%**) of school policing assaults during this school year.*

²⁵ Homer, E.M., & Fisher, B.W. (2020). Police in schools and student arrest rates across the United States: Examining differences by race, ethnicity, and gender. *Journal of School Violence*, 19, 192–204.

²⁶ U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2018). *2015-2016 Civil Rights Data Collection, School Climate & Safety*. Washington, DC.

HAVE POLICE ASSAULTS ON STUDENTS INCREASED OVER TIME?

Many state and local policy makers continue to call for increased school policing despite the absence of evidence that policing schools improves safety or prevents school shootings and despite mounting evidence of the harms created by placing police in schools, especially for students of color.²⁷ Three notable incidents resulting in increased calls for school policing followed the Sandy Hook Elementary School

shooting in 2012, the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting of 2018, and the Robb Elementary School shooting in Uvalde in May, 2022. Such reflexive and ill-considered reactions have led to expanded funding for school police and even requirements for police in schools, increasing both the number of police in schools and the incidents of police violence against students.

FINDINGS:

THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF POLICE ASSAULTS IN A SCHOOL YEAR HAS INCREASED OVER TIME.

- **2011 to 2014:** On average, **13** assaults per year.
- **2014-2015:** **27** assaults that school year.
- **2015-2020:** An average of **38** police assaults on students per year, representing **one** school police assault on a student every week.²⁸
- **2021-2022:** An average of **53** assaults that school year (**1.47** per week).
- **2022-2023:** An average of **51** assaults that school year (**1.42** per week).

WHERE DO POLICE ASSAULTS AGAINST STUDENTS USUALLY OCCUR?

School policing is an extension of the same harmful policies and practices that created the racially disparate status quo. They echo other racist initiatives – Jim Crow, the War on Drugs, and broken windows policing – that have saturated low-income Black and Latine communities with police, increasing rates of criminalization and incarceration.²⁹

The data from this study reflect a similar dynamic, demonstrating that schools with higher populations of Black and Latine students and low-income youth experience more state-sanctioned violence. Moreover, the data highlight regional disparities, potentially demonstrating the impact of increased funding and statewide requirements for school police in southern states like Texas and Florida.

²⁷ The presence of school resource officers has led to more students being involved in the criminal legal system for minor violations of school behavioral codes. See e.g., Nance, J. (2015). Additionally, the presence of school police leads to greater use of exclusionary discipline for Black and Latine students when compared to their White peers. Crosse, S., Gottfredson, D. C., Bauer, E. L., Tang, Z., Harmon, M. A., Hagen, C. A., & Greene, A. D. (2021). Are effects of school resource officers moderated by student race and ethnicity? *Crime & Delinquency*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/001128721999346>

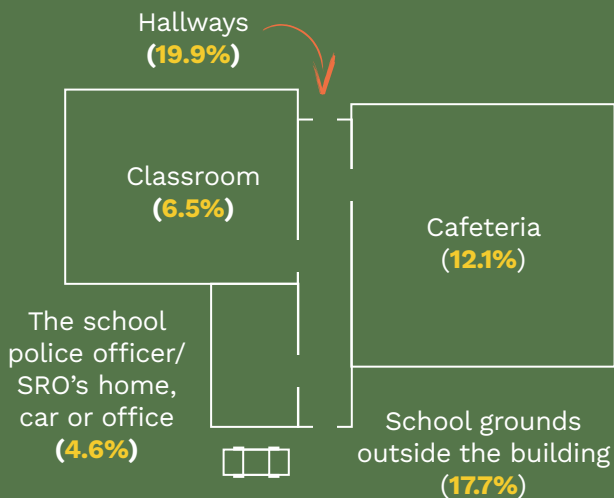
²⁸ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent school closures, police assaults on students dropped substantially, to 12 cases in the 2020-21 school year.

²⁹ Alexander, M. (2012). *The New Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of color-blindness*. New York: The New Press.

FINDINGS:

SCHOOLS WITH HIGHER POPULATIONS OF BLACK AND LATINE STUDENTS AND LOW-INCOME YOUTH EXPERIENCE MORE POLICE ASSAULTS. ADDITIONALLY, SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTHERN REGION OF THE UNITED STATES ACCOUNTED FOR THE MAJORITY OF ASSAULTS.

- **School Racial Composition:** Police assaults on students occurred in schools with a higher percentage of Black and Latine students (**58.4%**) and a lower percentage of white students (**32.7%**).
- **School Socioeconomics:** Police assaults are more likely in schools with a higher percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch (**61.2%**).
- **School Level:** The vast majority of assaults on students (**72.3%**) occurred at the high school level, while **14.0%** of cases occurred in middle schools, and 19 cases (**5.1%**) at the elementary level.
- **Location in School:** The largest proportion (**19.9%**) of assaults took place in school hallways.
- **Geography:** The majority (**58.6%**) of assaults occurred in Southern states (**218** of **372** assaults), while **16.7%** occurred in Midwestern states, **12.6%** in Western states, and **12.1%** in Northeastern states.
- **Locale:** The largest proportions of police assaults were in city (**37.6%**) or suburban (**37.1%**) schools.
- **2022-23 School Year Findings:**
 - Assaults on students occurred in schools with a higher percentage of Black and Latine students (**57%**).
 - **63.8%** of assaults took place at schools with higher percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch.
 - **82.4%** of assaults took place at high schools.



WHAT TYPES OF ASSAULTS DO SCHOOL POLICE COMMIT?

Viral videos like the #AssaultAtSpringValley depict adults inflicting violent harm on children and youth at all school levels. Middle schoolers are tased, elementary school students as young as 5 are placed in handcuffs, children are sexually

assaulted,³⁰ and youth are shot dead – all by police officers whose self-proclaimed purpose is to protect and serve.³¹ Our analysis provides a clear picture of the types of harms inflicted upon students by policing schools.

FINDINGS:

BY FAR THE MOST FREQUENT TYPE OF ASSAULT (35.2%) INCLUDED MULTIPLE FORMS OF POLICE FORCE IN A SINGLE INCIDENT.

FOR EXAMPLE, IN A SINGLE INCIDENT, A SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER THREW ITEMS AT THE STUDENT, PUSHED THE STUDENT AGAINST WHITEBOARD, SLAMMED THE STUDENT ON DESKS, THREW THE STUDENT TO THE GROUND, AND SHOVED HIS KNEE INTO THE STUDENT'S NECK. ADDITIONALLY, THE NUMBER OF SEXUAL ASSAULTS INCREASED DURING THE 2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR.

- Of the **372** cases, **5** students died, **3** of those killed by gunshot.
 - Sexual assault was the **3rd** most frequent type of assault by school police on students —occurring in **49** or **13.2%** of cases. This is an increase from almost **10%** of cases in our 2022 report.
 - The other most frequent types of assault included:
 - Tasing: **21.5%**
 - Pepper spray: **10.5%**
 - Student Slammed against the Floor or Wall: **4.3%**
 - Choked, or Knee on Neck: **1.9%**
 - Student punched, beaten, or physically assaulted: **5.7%**.
 - While all forms of school police are part of the school policing infrastructure — from school resource officers to security guards — our analysis shows that **54%** of assaults were perpetrated by school resource officers.
- Police at the school were involved in **22%** of assaults, while multiple forms of police were involved in **16.1%** of assaults.
 - **2022-23 School Year Findings:**
 - School resource officers were involved in **49%** of assault cases, security guards in **21.6%**, police officers at the school in **15.7%**, security officers in **7.8%**, and multiple forms of police in one assault in **5.9%**.
 - Assaults with multiple types of force were the most frequent (**27.5%**).
 - Sexual assault was the second most frequent type of assault during the 2022-23 school year, occurring in a quarter of all assaults (**25.5%**).
 - Of the **17** sexual assault or sexual misconduct cases that took place during this school year, SROs were involved in **8** (**47.1%**), security guards in **7** (**41.2%**), and security officers in **2** (**11.8%**).

³⁰ A 2014 national study found that SROs are significantly more likely than other police officers to be arrested for sex-related crimes. Most arrests of SROs are for sex-related crimes in which the SRO targeted a victim enrolled at the school where they were employed. Stinson Sr, P. M., & Watkins, A. M. (2014). The nature of crime by school resource officers: Implications for SRO programs. *Sage Open*, 4(1), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2158244014521821>

³¹ Advancement Project/Alliance for Educational Justice. (2021). #AssaultAt Map. <https://policefreeschools.org/map/>

WHAT HARMS ARE DONE TO STUDENTS BY POLICE ASSAULTS?

School policing, and the associated assaults on children, can cause physical, emotional, and psychological harm that is potentially irreparable. Even students who are not arrested or assaulted are harmed by the stress and trauma created by attending schools where they observe assaults and misconduct and therefore may fear for their safety.

One study found that youth who were stopped by police officers demonstrated psychological distress and subsequent school disengagement.³² Similarly, a separate study found that being stopped by a police officer at school was a strong predictor of adverse emotional and mental health responses like posttraumatic stress and emotional distress.³³

FINDINGS:

SCHOOL POLICE ASSAULTS RESULTED IN STUDENT INJURY OR DEATH IN NEARLY TWO THIRDS (73.7%) OF THESE 372 INCIDENTS. AMONG THE HARMS TO STUDENTS OCCURRING AS A RESULT OF POLICE ASSAULT:

- **Serious Injury:** **42.2%** of the victims were reported to suffer serious injury (includes broken bones, hospitalization, concussion, taser prongs left in their body, long term effects, or urination/defecation as a result of tasing): **157** assaults.
- **Death:** **5** students.
- **Reported Side-effects of Sexual Assault or from Officer Sexual Misconduct:** **50** cases (**13.4%**).
- **2.4%** of the hospitalizations as a result of police assaults involved removing prongs left in the students' skin after being tasered.
- **2022-23 School Year Findings:**
 - Over a quarter (**25.5%**) of assaults were sexual assault during the 2022-23 school year.
 - Injuries were reported in **76.5%** of assaults.

³² Del Toro, J., Jackson, D. B., & Wang, M.-T. (2022). The policing paradox: Police stops predict youth's school disengagement via elevated psychological distress. *Developmental Psychology*, 58(7), pp. 1402–1412. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0001361>

³³ Jackson, D. B., Fahmy, C., Vaughn, M. G., & Testa, A. (2019). Police Stops Among At-Risk Youth: Repercussions for Mental Health. *The Journal of Adolescent Health: Official Publication of the Society for Adolescent Medicine*, 65(5), pp. 627–632. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.05.027>

WHAT CONSEQUENCES, IF ANY, DO OFFICERS FACE FOR ASSAULTING STUDENTS?

Another similarity between policing in communities of color and school policing is the widespread lack of accountability following acts of violence against Black, Latine and LGBTQIA+ people.³⁴ School police officers are often only accountable to the head of the police department or sheriff's office that employs them, not the democratically elected school board or

the parents who send their children to school to learn. Students and parents often do not know whether a complaint against a school police officer should be filed with the principal, school district, or police department – or even whether such a formal complaint system exists. This lack of accountability is also reflected in our analysis of the #AssaultAt data.

FINDINGS:

IN APPROXIMATELY 60% OF THE POLICE ASSAULTS, THERE WERE *NO REPORTED CONSEQUENCES* TO THE OFFICER (ALTHOUGH 2 SUCH CASES RESULTED IN A CIVIL LAWSUIT).

For example, in Rolesville, North Carolina in March, 2017, school resource officer Ruben De Los Santos was merely placed on paid administrative leave after video footage showed him body slamming a 15-year-old Black girl and then dragging her limp body out of the camera view.³⁵ Wake County declined to press charges

against De Los Santos and he quickly gained new employment at the Wake County Sheriff's Office.³⁶ When he resigned, the local police department celebrated him as a former "Officer of the Year."³⁷ This type of treatment and lack of accountability is by no means uncommon in cases of police assault.

- In **45** cases (**12.1%**), the assaulting officer received only minor consequences (e.g., internal review, docked vacation days, docked pay, removed or reassigned, placed on leave, suspension).
- The assaulting officer was arrested or charged in approximately one fifth of the cases (**21.5%**).
- The officer was suspended or fired in less than **10%** of cases.
- Consequences were much more likely and severe in the case of sexual assault: There were no significant penalties in only six of the documented cases of sexual assault.
- Outside of sexual assault and sexual misconduct, severe consequences are rare: Only **4%** of assaulting officers were suspended or fired, and only **8.1%** were arrested or charged.
- **2022-23 School Year Findings:**
 - Officers received no consequences in **45%** of assaults.
 - Officers were arrested or charged in **37.3%** of assaults. Most of these were in sexual assault cases.
 - Outside of sexual assault and sexual misconduct, officers were suspended or fired in **7.8%** of assaults and arrested or charged in **7.8%**.

³⁴ Advancement Project. (2022). #HowCopsGetOff Narrative Animated Series. <https://secure.everyaction.com/9Nt-KXgp5UW4SRIFHyesOg2>

³⁵ Derek Hawkins, *Video Shows N.C. Police Officer Slamming Student to Floor*, The Washington Post (Jan. 4, 2017), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2017/01/04/video-shows-n-c-police-officer-slamming-student-to-ground/>.

³⁶ *Wake County Grand Jury Declines to Charge Officer Seen Slamming Student to Ground*, ABC 11 (Mar. 7, 2017), <https://abc11.com/rolesville-high-student-body-slammed-by-officer/1789045/>; Ruben De Los Santos, LinkedIn, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ruben-de-los-santos-9341b91a6>.

³⁷ Jeff Reeves, *Rolesville High SRO Resigns After Video Shows Him Slamming Student*, CBS17 (Mar. 3, 2017), <https://www.cbs17.com/news/rolesville-high-sro-resigns-after-video-shows-him-slamming-student/1016919833/>.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms the experiences of Black and other students of color who have been harmed by school police and security guards and understand that policing schools actively jeopardizes their physical and emotional safety. School policing taints learning environments with the same punitive practices and discriminatory outcomes that plague America's youth and adult legal systems.

Every stage of the youth punishment system (e.g., school exclusion, arrest, secure detention, probation) is counter-productive to healthy adolescent development. Youth development is harmed, not promoted as: (1) officers use intimidation and physical force to arrest or physically restrain students against their will; (2) students are removed from a familiar educational environment and isolated from their support systems while detained; and (3) youth are stigmatized and alienated from their peer groups upon returning to school.

To create equitable and nurturing school environments, education policies and resource allocation must be focused on practices that promote care and compassion, not coercion and control.

School policing siphons funding from resources and practices (e.g., mental health services and transformative and restorative justice models) that can proactively prevent conflict and teach positive social and coping skills without the threat of physical harm or criminalization. If we continue to place police in schools, we are ensuring that every week, somewhere in our nation, more students, especially Black students, will suffer the physical scars and emotional trauma associated with police brutality while attending school.

IT IS TIME TO LISTEN TO YOUNG PEOPLE WHO KNOW WHAT THEY NEED TO FEEL SAFE AND SUPPORTED IN SCHOOLS.

For more information about the National Campaign for Police Free Schools and the #AssaultAt initiative please visit the website and #AssaultAt map at

POLICEFREESCHOOLS.ORG/MAP

³⁸ Southern Coalition for Social Justice. (2022) *Invest in Our Children, Invest in Our Youth: Ending Youth Criminalization in North Carolina*. <https://southerncoalition.org/justice-system-reform/youth-justice-and-safe-schools/investinouryouth/>

SUGGESTED CITATION

Whittenberg, T. and Beauchesne, B. (2023). #AssaultAtSpringValley: An analysis of police violence against Black and Latine students in public schools. Advancement Project & Alliance for Educational Justice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was a collaborative effort between Advancement Project, Alliance for Educational Justice, and Indiana University PhD Candidate Britany Beauchesne. This updated report is authored by Tyler Whittenberg and Britany Beauchesne. The 2022 release of this report was authored by Tyler Whittenberg, Russell Skiba, and Britany Beauchesne, and may be found here <https://policefreeschools.org/resources/assaultat-spring-valley-an-analysis-of-police-violence/>.

We thank the organizations that make up the National Campaign for Police Free Schools and all of the young people and community members fighting for a liberatory education. Special thanks are also extended to: Jonathan Stith, founding member and Senior Advisor of the Alliance for Educational Justice; Maria Fernandez, Managing Director of Campaign Strategy at Advancement

Project; Katherine Dunn, Program Director of Opportunity to Learn Program at Advancement Project; Angela Groves, Staff Attorney at Advancement Project; Dijon Stokes, Program Associate at Advancement Project; and all others who contributed to the organizing that made this report possible.

The #AssaultAt concept and database was created by the Alliance for Educational Justice, a national network of over 30 youth-led and intergenerational grassroots organizations fighting to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. The Alliance for Educational Justice and Advancement Project continue to collect this data and support the National Campaign for Police Free Schools, which includes more than two dozen local intergenerational organizing groups fighting to achieve a liberatory education system.