

Keeping Students Safe in Los Angeles

An Analysis of LAUSD School Incident Reports & Funding

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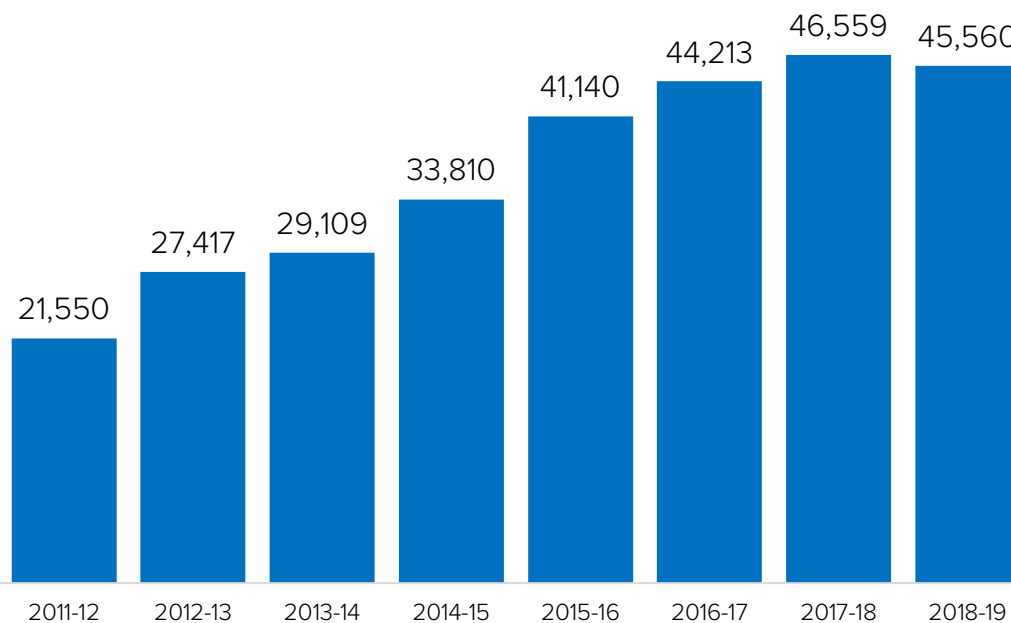
Overview: Los Angeles Unified School District funds the largest independent school police department in the United States⁶. This past school year alone, the district allotted \$70 million to the Los Angeles School Police Department¹. This brief provides an analysis of district wide school incident reports, funding trends for LASPD, and LAUSD students' reported feelings of safety at school. Key findings:

1. School incident reports are on the rise and there is an increasing need for mental health providers.
2. LAUSD student enrollment has decreased, meanwhile funding for LASPD has exponentially increased despite evidence showing that schools are not safer.
3. Black students do not feel safe in school and have negative perceptions of school police.
4. To meet student needs, LAUSD should decrease funds for LASPD and increase funds for school nurses and mental health providers.

Rising school incident reports show an increased need for mental health providers

In 2010, LAUSD developed an electronic tracking system for documenting incidents that affect overall school functioning called the Incident System Tracking Accountability Report or ISTAR⁷. ISTAR documents 56 types of incidents ranging from fighting and harassment to sewage problems and losing keys. Over the past 8 years, incident reports in the district have increased by 111%. Our research team aggregated the different types of incidents into 5 overarching “responder categories” using the incident type definitions provided by LAUSD. The aggregated responder categories encompass the 5 different school departments/personnel that we judged as most equipped to respond to a particular incident. The 5 responder categories are: Police Officers, District Personnel, School Leadership, School Nurse, or School Counselor. Since 2011, School Counseling related incidents have increased by 906%.

TOTAL NUMBER OF INCIDENTS REPORTED IN ISTAR EACH SCHOOL YEAR BETWEEN 2011-2019



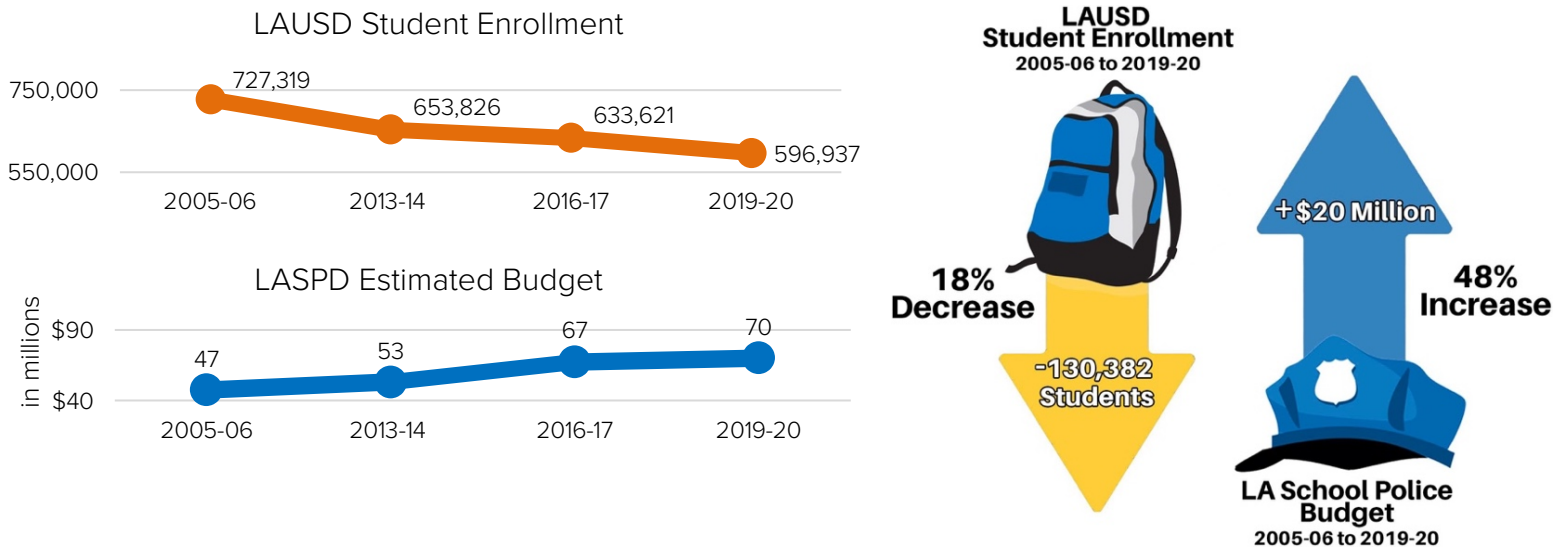
111%
INCREASE
BETWEEN
2011-2019

TOTAL NUMBER OF REPORTED INCIDENTS BY AGGREGATED RESPONDER CATEGORIES A COMPARISON OF THE 2011-2012 AND 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEARS

Responder Category	# of Incidents in 2011-2012 SY	# of Incidents in 2018-2019 SY	PERCENT INCREASE
Police	3,648	6,405	76%
Counseling	1,143	11,493	906%
School Nurse	6,246	10,236	64%
District	2,452	4,107	67%
School Leadership	8,061	13,319	65%

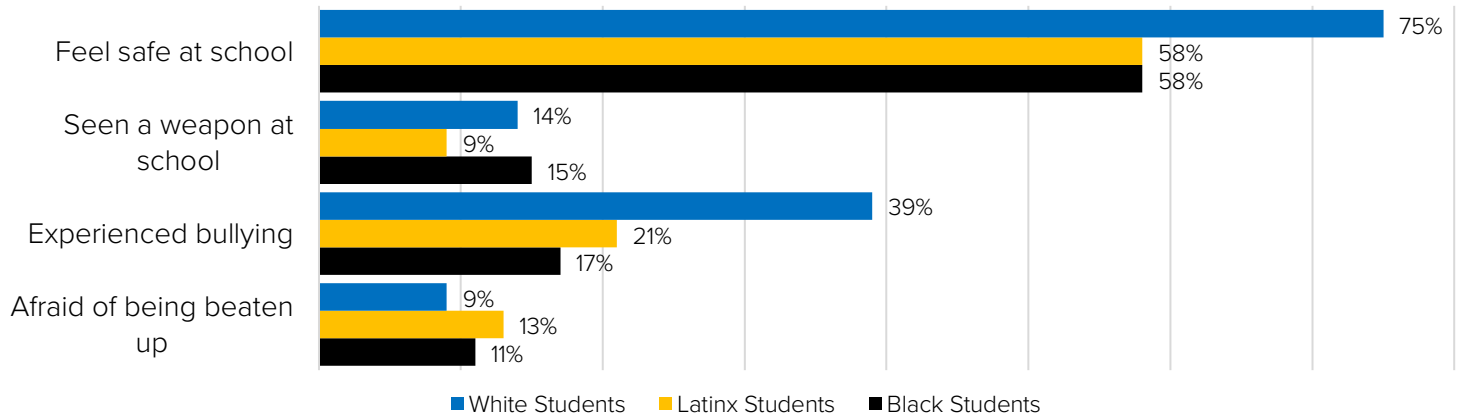
While LAUSD student enrollment decreases, funding for LASPD increases—yet, students still don't feel safe

Student enrollment is a critical factor upon which funding decisions and district wide school budgets are based. Since the 2005-2006 school year, LAUSD has experienced an 18% decrease in student enrollment⁴, meanwhile the LASPD budget has increased by 48%.¹ Despite a \$20 million increase in LASPD funds, many students still feel unsafe. Results from the 2018-2019 California School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey⁵ show that Black and Latinx students in LAUSD do not feel safe in school. Similarly, increased police funding has done little to curb the rise of incidents of suicidal behavior. According to ISTAR, for the past two years suicidal behavior has been the top reported incident across the district.



CALIFORNIA SCHOOL CLIMATE, HEALTH, AND LEARNING SURVEY

2018-2019 RESULTS FOR LAUSD 9TH GRADE STUDENTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY



SUICIDAL BEHAVIORS IS THE TOP REPORTED INCIDENT ON ISTAR

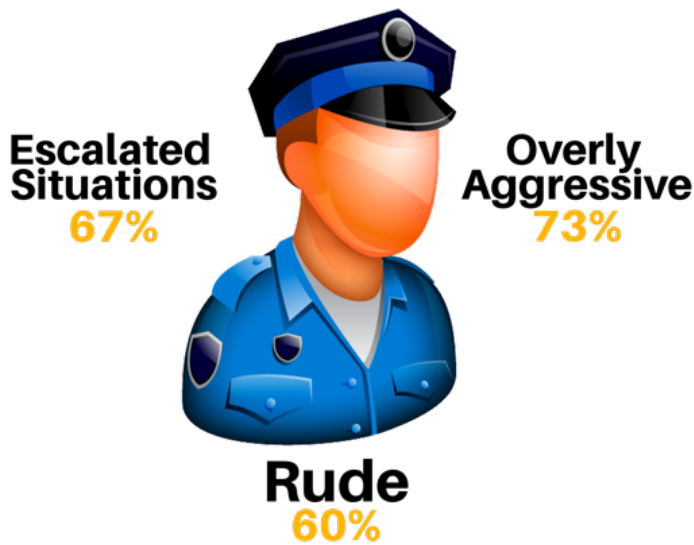
IN 2017-2018 AND 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEARS

Total number of reported incidents of suicidal behavior in 2017-18	Total number of reported incidents of suicidal behavior in 2018-19
10,648	10,840

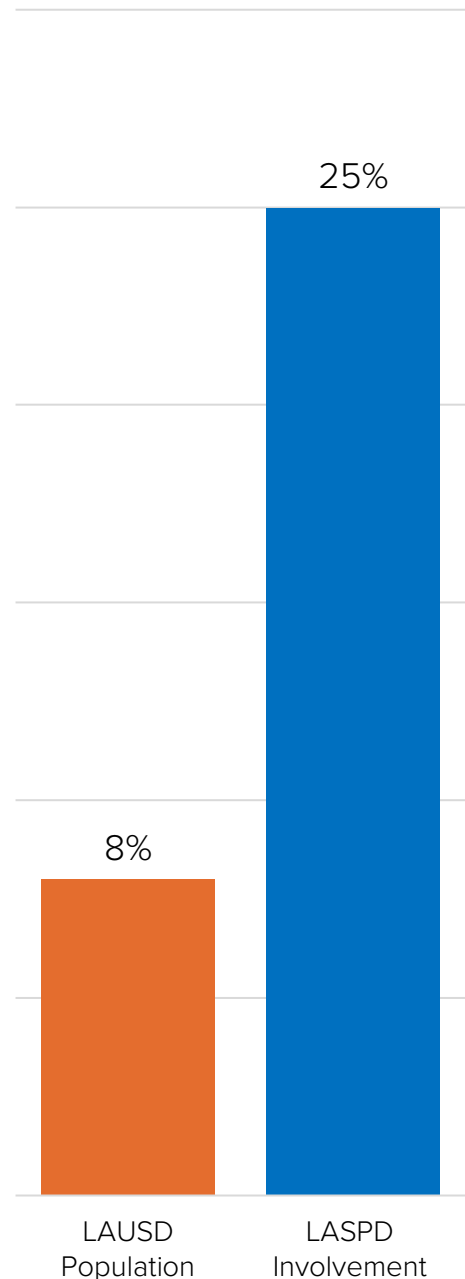
Centering the safety of Black students in LAUSD

According to a 2018 report from the UCLA Million Dollar Hoods Project, Black students comprise 8% of the student body in LAUSD, yet account for 25% of arrests, citations, and diversions². Further, as part of a larger comprehensive study, a local coalition of community-based organizations called Brothers, Sons, Selves (BSS) surveyed 291 Black students in LAUSD about their perceptions of school law enforcement and their personal feelings of safety in school⁸. Students characterized school police officers as rude and overly aggressive and reported feeling that school police officers often escalated situations. Similarly, a majority of students felt that school police officers were untrustworthy and uncaring.

Black LAUSD students perception of school police officers

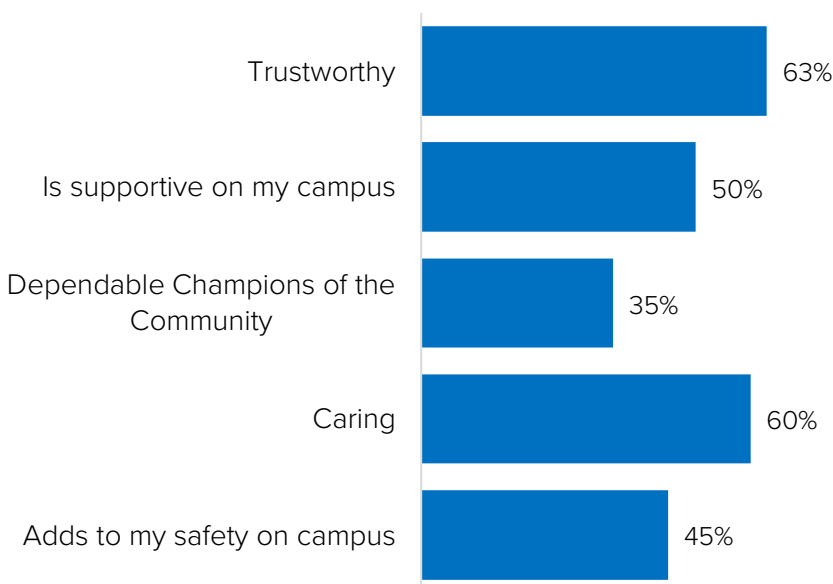


BLACK STUDENT REPRESENTATION VS. POLICE INVOLVEMENT IN LAUSD 2014 - 2017



BLACK LAUSD STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF POLICE OFFICERS

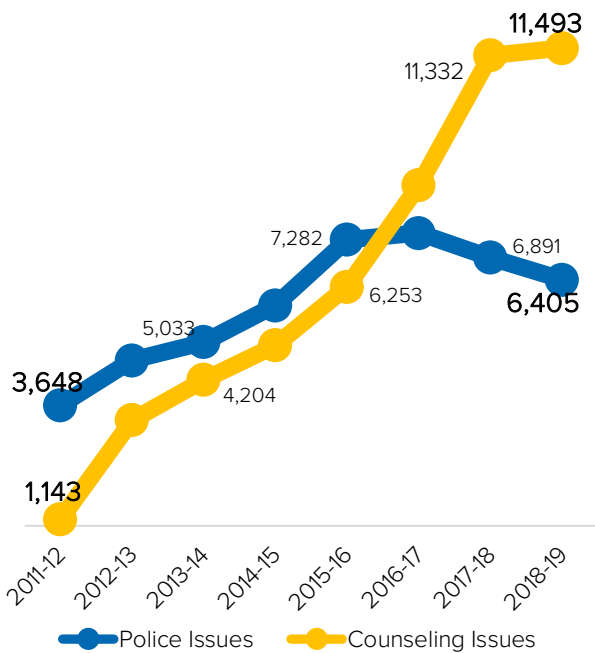
I DISAGREE/STRONGLY DISAGREE THAT POLICE OFFICERS ARE:



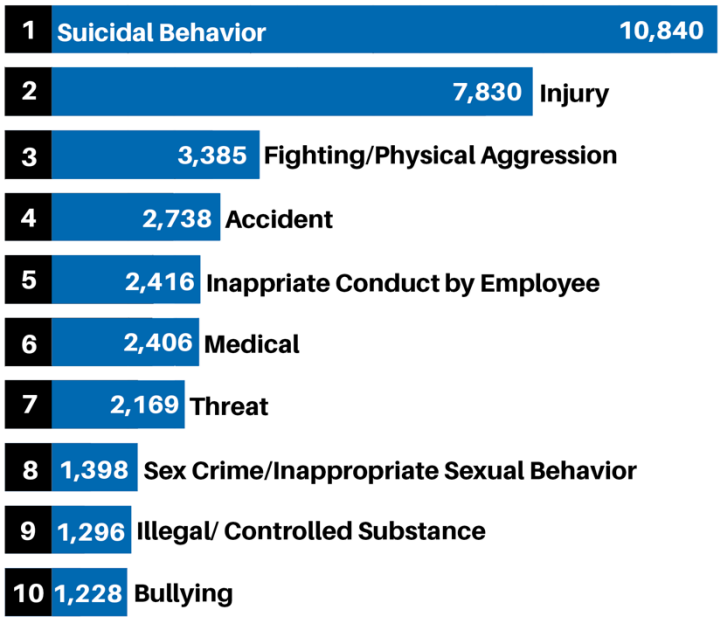
To meet student needs, LAUSD should decrease funds for LASPD and increase funds for school nurses and mental health providers

An analysis of ISTAR data between 2011 and 2019 shows an exponential increase in incidents for whom mental health providers would be the most equipped responders. Last year, 11,493 reported incidents were counseling related issues as compared to 1,143 incidents in 2011. Police related issues, however, have continually decreased since reaching a peak in the 2015-2016 school year with a total of 7,282 reported incidents. Across all school levels suicidal behavior and injuries are among the top three most reported incidents of last year. Suicidal behaviors alone represent 24% of all reported incidents in the 2018-2019 school year.

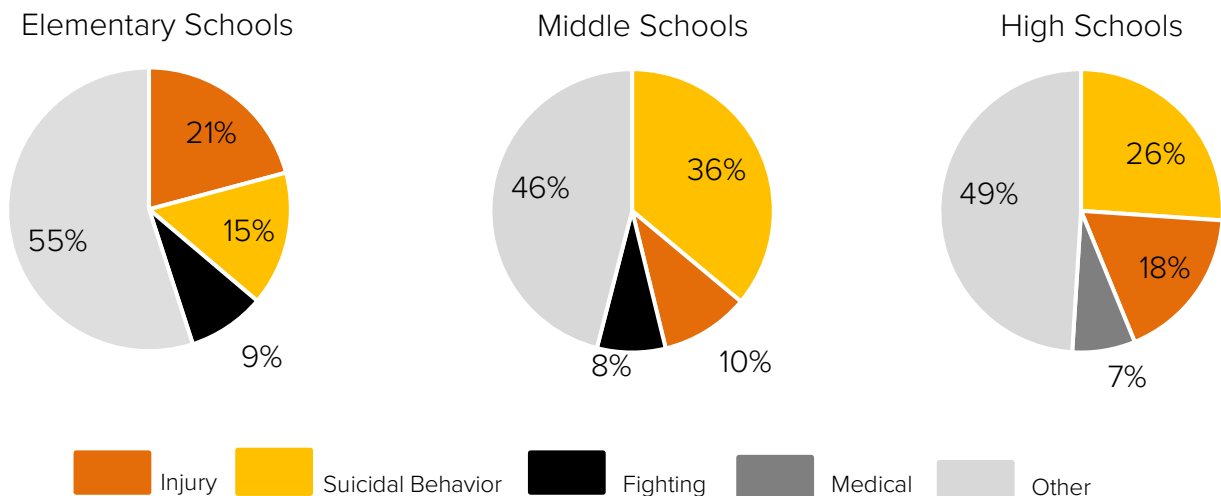
POLICE ISSUES VS. COUNSELING ISSUES LAUSD 2011-2019



TOP TEN REPORTED ISSUES ON ISTAR LAUSD 2018-2019



TOP THREE ISSUES REPORTED ON ISTAR BY SCHOOL LEVEL LAUSD 2018-19



Recommendations for Improving the Safety and Well-Being of Students in LAUSD

1. Hire more mental health providers in LAUSD to maintain a 250 to 1 Counselor to Student Ratio

The American School Counselor Association recommends that schools maintain a counselor to student ratio of 250 to 1; however, LAUSD's ratio is 500 to 1. Mental health issues in LAUSD have skyrocketed by 900% in the past 9 years. It is essential that LAUSD students to have trained professionals to go to if they are exhibiting suicidal behavior or need other types of mental health support—hiring more counselors is simply a must.

2. Reallocate LASPD funding to the Student Equity Needs Index⁸

LASPD has not proven to be effective at solving the safety needs of students in LAUSD. LAUSD should reallocate funding from LASPD to LAUSD Students Equity Needs Index (SENI 2.0). The reallocated funds should provide additional support personnel to attend to the physical and mental health of students in the LAUSD's highest need schools.

3. Listen to Black students and invest in the things that will make them feel safe

The Brothers, Sons, Selves coalition asked Black students in LAUSD to share what they felt should be top funding priorities for the district. They listed:



College and Career Readiness



Mental Health Supports



Recreational Activities



Arts Programs



Hiring More Counselors

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Methodology. ISTAR data from 2011-2019 was retrieved on June 4th, 2020 from the Los Angeles Unified School District Annual ISTAR reports at: <https://achieve.lausd.net/Page/13197>. This study was conducted using only districtwide ISTAR data—no school-level or student-level data was incorporated in the analyses for this study. The 56 types of incidents documented on ISTAR were grouped into 5 responder categories using LAUSD's [ISTAR Issue Type Definitions](#). For more details on the aggregated responder categories [click here](#).

References.

1. Allen, T. (2020). A Web of Punishment. Race, Space, and School Policing in the City of Los Angeles. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of California, Los Angeles. Note: A LASPD budget information from 2010-2020 was requested through LAUSD Office of General Council on June 2nd, 2020; request still pending. 2019-20 budget estimate is based on figure reported in the [LA Times](#).
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8. Ill Turner, D (2019). Brothers Sons Selves Coalition Safety & Youth Justice Survey. Retrieved from: <https://public.tableau.com/profile/david.turner.iii#!/vizhome / BSSDashboardDCTDraft113019/DemographicsDB>
9. More information on the Student Equity Needs Index can be found at <https://www.equityallianceforlaskids.org/resources/>

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