



OCR Racial Equity Toolkit Assessment Worksheet

Title of policy, initiative, program, budget issue: 2025 FEPP Levy Safety Investments

Description: Student Safety investments address root causes through relationship-centered, non-punitive approaches that promote safe school environments, reduce interpersonal conflict, and reconnect justice-involved and disconnected youth to community, school, and career pathways

Department: Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL)

Contact: Rosa Ammon-Ciaglo

Indicate whether the item is:

Policy Initiative Program Budget Issue

Step 1. Set Outcomes.

1a. What does your department define as the most important racially equitable community outcomes related to the issue?

- % of students who feel safe at school
- % of students involved in interpersonal violence/conflict at school
- % of students of color furthest from educational justice that perceive fair application of behavior and safety rules/practices by adults at their school
- % of students who experience exclusionary discipline at school (reduce race-based disproportionality)
- # of schools with instances of gun violence occurring on or around school property

1b. Which racial equity opportunity area(s) will the issue primarily impact

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criminal Justice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Jobs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment | |

1c.

Are there impact on:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contracting Equity | <input type="checkbox"/> Immigrant/Refugee Access to Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce Equity | <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement |

Please describe: N/A

Step 2. Involve Stakeholders & Analyze Data.

2a. Are there impacts on geographic areas? Yes No

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All Seattle Neighborhoods | <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Union | <input type="checkbox"/> East District |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ballard | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Southwest | <input type="checkbox"/> King County (outside Seattle) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> North | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Southeast | <input type="checkbox"/> Outside King County |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Delridge | Please describe: |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Central | <input type="checkbox"/> Greater Duwamish | |

2b. What are the racial demographics of those living in the area or impacted by the issue?

Currently the City of Seattle (DEEL and HSD) invests in student safety-related programs at 23 public schools. The highest concentration of funding is in schools located in Council Districts 2 and 3, areas with relatively high percentages of BIPOC residents compared to other districts. All of the schools supported are in the top 50th percentile among all Seattle Public Schools for the share of the student population who identify as Students of Color Furthest from Educational Justice¹ (SOCFFEJ) and/or English Language Learners. On average the student populations across supported schools are 60% SOCFFEJ.²

Indicators of need related to student safety that shape where DEEL directs its funding include both school and youth assets like school climate and sense of belonging and risk factors such as community-level violence occurring in and around schools. For the small number of schools that experienced instances of gun violence on their school block in SY 2024-25, an average of 78% of the student population are SOCFFEJ.³

An additional population impacted by the issue are youth who are disconnected from school and youth involved in the justice system. In SY 2024-25, an estimated 1,193 9-12th grade SPS students (7.8%) disconnected from school, and an estimated 3,841 youth citywide aged 16-24 were neither in school nor working.⁴ In 2024, 3.4 in 1,000 Seattle youth ages 8-17 were involved in arrests; this number was highest for Black youth, with 15.5 arrests per 1,000.⁵ These rates have been on the rise since 2021, though they have dropped significantly from 2019 levels.

2c. How have you involved community members and stakeholders?

DEEL has conducted 2 Phases of Stakeholder Engagement to inform FEPP Levy design and implementation. DEEL hosted 45 in-person and virtual events in locations throughout Seattle to capture feedback from youth, families, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders. School and student safety was a common theme that surfaced as an area of concern.

¹ Students of Color Furthest from Educational Justice includes students who are of African American, LatinX, Pacific Islander, Native American, or Southeast Asian race or ethnicity.

² "School Needs Assessment"

³ DEEL internal analysis of SPD data.

⁴ DEEL analysis of SPS enrollment data and American Community Survey (ACS); Communities Count, *Youth In School or Working*, retrieved from: <https://www.communitiescount.org/youth-in-school-or-working>

⁵ The Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR), *Law Enforcement Data Analysis (LEDA) Dashboard: Washington State Juveniles (Ages 8 – 17) by City Level Demographics* (WSCCR, 2026), retrieved from: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/wscrr/viz/LEDAToolPackagedWorkingCopy/LEDALandingPage>

DEEL also conducted an Every Child Ready survey that had 213 responses from Seattle residents. Results of the survey included priorities for FEPP Levy student supports.

2d. What does data and your conversations with stakeholders tell you about existing racial inequities that influence people’s lives and should be taken into consideration?

Data on key student outcomes related to school safety indicate the following trends for students of color:

- **Sense of physical and psychological safety at school:** across the Seattle Public School District, SOCFEJ are less likely to agree that they feel safe and welcome at their school (83% compared to 86% of non-SOCFFEJ students respond positively to this question on the School Climate Survey). In addition, SOCFEJ students feel less positively about their sense of belonging and inclusion at school (Table 1).
- **Student perceptions of fair application of rules/safety practices at school:** Students of color are slightly more likely to feel positively about the application of fair rules and safety practices at their school compared to other groups, though a much lower share of SPS students overall respond positively about this topic compared to other aspects of school climate (Table 1).
- **Exclusionary discipline:** Students of color, particularly Black/African American students, experience exclusionary discipline at higher rates than their peers and are more likely to experience longer periods of exclusion (such as 10 days or more) (Table 2).

Table 1: SPS School Climate Trends on Indicators Related to School Safety

SPS Districtwide	Percent of Students Responding Favorably by Topic/Question			
	I feel safe and welcome at my school	Belonging & Relationships	Inclusionary practices	Positive Behavior & Safety
African American Male Students	83	82	84	76
Non-African American Male Students	85	84	85	75
Students of Color Furthest from Education Justice (SOCFFEJ)	83	82	84	76
Non-SOCFFEJ	86	85	86	74

Source: SPS School Climate Survey SY 2023-24

Table 2: Seattle Public Schools Exclusionary Discipline Trends

Student Group	Discipline Rate	Rate Excluded 1 Day or Less	Rate Excluded 2 To 3 Days	Rate Excluded 4 To 5 Days	Rate Excluded 6 To 10 Days	Rate Excluded 10 Days or More
All Students	2%	28%	40%	14%	12%	7%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	2%	20%	80%	0%	0%	0%
Asian	1%	26%	40%	17%	9%	9%
Black/ African American	6%	21%	41%	16%	15%	8%
Hispanic/ Latino of any race(s)	2%	31%	40%	12%	11%	6%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2%	13%	63%	25%	0%	0%

Two or More Races	2%	30%	34%	14%	13%	10%
White	1%	38%	40%	11%	8%	4%

Source: OSPI, Discipline Report Card SY 2024-25

Stakeholder feedback related to student safety from the Every Child Ready community conversations and survey included the following key themes:

- **Community Violence:** Parents express concern about shootings near schools, particularly in South Seattle
- **Immigration Concerns:** Ensuring students of all immigration statuses feel safe attending school
- **Prevention Over Intervention:** Strong preference for addressing root causes rather than reactive security measures
- **Restorative Practices:** 69% of survey respondents included conflict resolution or restorative practices as a top health and safety support that would improve the K-12 student experience, with higher rates of support for restorative practices among respondents who identified as people of color.
- **Mixed Views on Officers:** Some families support unarmed community safety guards while others report students feel unsafe when seeing police
- **Physical Security:** Youth request basic improvements like locks on doors, and 43% of survey respondents listed physical security or school security as a key priority in health and safety supports.
- **Parent Engagement:** Suggestion for parent co-parenting circles as conflict mitigation strategy

2e. What are the root causes of factors creating these racial inequities?

Physical violence risk and psychological unsafety share overlapping drivers: trauma exposure, community violence, lack of trusted relationships and support systems, and environments where conflict is not prevented early or repaired effectively.⁶

Root causes of physical violence in/around schools

Students experience physical safety threats when violence is normalized, escalates quickly, or is left unaddressed until it becomes crisis-level.

- **Community violence exposure + gun violence risk**, which can spill into school settings and elevate fear, conflict, and retaliation cycles
- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma exposure**, which can increase hypervigilance, impulsivity, conflict responses, and risk behaviors
- **Engagement in risky behaviors (drug/alcohol use)**, increasing likelihood of conflict and unsafe situations
- **Economic insecurity and instability**, increasing stress, unmet needs, and youth vulnerability to harm and risky environments
- **Interpersonal conflict and lack of conflict mediation/de-escalation capacity**, where conflict escalates rather than being resolved early

Root causes of psychological unsafety (fear, mistrust, belonging gaps)

Even when violence is not occurring in the moment, students may feel unsafe due to school climate and social conditions.

- **Lack of belonging and peer connection** (students don't feel socially safe, respected, or supported)

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Risk Factors for Youth Violence*, retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/youth-violence/risk-factors/index.html>

- **Lack of trusted adults and support pathways**, limiting help-seeking and early intervention
- **Unaddressed anxiety/depression and chronic stress**, which can worsen students' sense of threat and disengagement
- **Disproportionate or punitive discipline climates** that increase mistrust, especially for students most impacted by harm and system involvement
- **Bullying, harassment, sexual violence, and relationship harm**, which often drive psychological unsafety even when not always reported as “violence”

Root causes of racial inequities in school safety include the following:

- **Racial disproportionalities in punitive discipline** patterns observed in Seattle mirror national trends, which research indicates stems from implicit racial bias in how adults in a school setting respond to student behaviors.⁷ This bias has a particularly large impact on Black students and leads to long-term repercussions from reduced school attendance and engagement to increased likelihood of criminal justice system involvement. Research has also shown that a heightened punitive climate in a school setting often leads to lower psychological safety and increased mistrust of school, especially among students of color.⁸
- **Systemic racial inequities in socioeconomic conditions** lead to higher likelihood of risk factors associated with school safety being concentrated in communities of color and affecting students of color.

Step 3. Determine Benefit and/or Burden.

Given what you have learned from data and from stakeholder involvement...

3. How will the policy, initiative, program, or budget issue increase or decrease racial equity?

What are potential unintended consequences? What benefits may result? Are the impacts aligned with your department's community outcomes that were defined in Step 1.

Benefits: Safety investments are designed to increase racial equity in safety outcomes in two ways:

- Prioritizing strategies like restorative practices, culturally responsive youth violence prevention programs, and mentorship that are specifically designed to address root causes of interpersonal violence and exclusionary discipline, advance racially equitable practices among teachers, and strengthen safety protective factors such as social-emotional skills, strong peer relationships, and access to trusted adults.
- Prioritizing schools or communities for investment that have higher instances of safety concerns, which baseline data show tend to be concentrated in schools with high proportions of SOCFEJ. The index of safety need or risk used by DEEL⁹ includes the following indicators: student exposure to bullying at school, students' perceived sense of safety at school and traveling to school, rates of violent crime in school neighborhood, rates of students experiencing exclusionary discipline, and students' perceptions of existing discipline and safety practices at school.

Evidence behind the strategies that will be the focus of safety investments demonstrates a direct connection to priority racial equity outcomes.

⁷ Sevon, M.A., *Schooling While Black: Analyzing the Racial School Discipline Crisis for Behavior Analyst* (Behavior Analysis in Practice, 2022) retrieved from <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9744995/>

⁸ Nance, J.P., *Students, Security, and Race* (Emory Law Journal, 2013), retrieved from [https://scholarlycommons.law.emory.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1221&context=elj](https://scholarlycommons.law.emory.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1221&context=elj;);

⁹ “School Needs Assessment”

Evaluation research on the effects of restorative practices in schools demonstrates significant reductions in exclusionary discipline rates and student arrests, reduced racial disproportionality in exclusionary discipline, and improved school climate (a protective factor linked to improved psychological safety and reduced interpersonal violence in school settings).¹⁰

Among secondary (middle and high) schools currently receiving funding for restorative practices from DEEL, outcomes in student perceptions of school climate and safety practices are improving more rapidly than at their counterparts not receiving restorative practices support (Table 3), supporting the findings in literature about these strategies.

Table 3: School Climate Favorable Responses, SPS Secondary Schools (Middle and High)

School Climate Survey Indicators Related to School Safety	Schools Receiving RP Funding		Schools without RP Funding	
	Spring 2022	Spring 2025	Spring 2022	Spring 2025
Belonging & Relationships	81%	86%	81%	83%
Inclusionary Practices	82%	90%	82%	85%
Positive Behavior and Safety	73%	81%	68%	73%

Long-term 1-1 mentoring programs, which establish a meaningful relationship with a trusted adult, have been shown in research to improve emotional well-being, reduce behavior issues (“delinquent behavior”), and increase engagement in school and work.¹¹ These are important protective factors for improving interpersonal relationships between students in a school setting, addressing root causes of interpersonal violence, and in some cases restoration and reintegration (such as re-establishing school attendance) for youth who have been involved in interpersonal conflict or the criminal justice system.

Mentoring also advances racial equity by directly addressing the systemic and environmental conditions that disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, and other students of color. Many high-risk youth experience overlapping challenges such as chronic absenteeism, academic failure, unstable housing, exposure to violence, and limited access to mental health supports. These risks rarely occur in isolation but rather accumulate and interact, creating compounded barriers to safety, stability, and school engagement. Students of color are more likely to encounter these intersecting stressors due to structural inequities, making the stabilizing presence of a consistent, caring adult especially impactful.¹²

A long-term mentor relationship helps rebuild trust in adults and institutions, trust that is often affected by experiences of trauma, discrimination, or inconsistent support. Mentoring strengthens coping skills, emotional regulation, and problem-solving, which are essential for reducing conflict and improving school climate¹³. For students of color who have disproportionately experienced exclusionary discipline

¹⁰ Adukia, A. et al, *From Retributive to Restorative: An Alternative Approach to Justice in Schools* (Institute of Labor Economics, 2025), retrieved from: <https://educationlab.uchicago.edu/resources/from-retributive-to-restorative-an-alternative-approach-to-justice-in-schools/>; Katic, B. et al, *A Systemic Evaluation of Restorative Justice Practices: School Violence Prevention and Response* (Journal of School Violence, 2020), retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15388220.2020.1783670>

¹¹ Brookes, J. et al, *A Rapid Review of Wellbeing, Offending, and Successful Matching in mentoring for “at risk” young people* (Children and Youth Services Review, 2025), retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0190740925000155?via%3Dihub>

¹² Brookes, J. et al, *A Rapid Review of Wellbeing, Offending, and Successful Matching in mentoring for “at risk” young people*

¹³ The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Spotlight on Youth Mentoring* (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2024), retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/blog/spotlight-on-youth-mentoring>

or strained relationships with school systems, this relational buffering and advocacy can interrupt cycles of disengagement and conflict.

Potential Burdens/Unintended Consequences: Some interventions designed for school safety are considered punitive and may not be eligible for FEPP funding, such as school-based police officers (School Resource Officers/School Engagement Officers), and metal detectors. These strategies have been linked in research evidence to adverse outcomes for students of color or shown to reduce overall student perceived safety at school. For example, in peer cities that have utilized School Resource Officers outcomes include increases in weapon identification, exclusionary discipline, and student arrests, with either null or negative impacts on overall student feeling of safety.¹⁴ Outcomes with equity implications include increased exclusionary discipline among Black students and students with disabilities, and lower perceived safety among BIPOC students.¹⁵ Metal detectors have been shown in some studies to reduce the likelihood of carrying weapons to school, but they are also linked to negative outcomes such as reduced students' perceived safety at school, reduced belonging and school connectedness, and increased student anxiety and stress.¹⁶

It is also possible that more focus on racial equity in safety could inadvertently lead to targeting students of color for violence prevention and intervention in a manner that is discriminatory rather than focused on addressing broad root causes in an equitable and culturally responsive manner.

Step 4. Advance Opportunity or Minimize Harm.

4. How will you address the impacts (Including unintended consequences) on racial equity? What strategies address immediate impacts? What strategies address root causes of inequity listed in Q. 6? How will you partner with stakeholders for long-term positive change? If impacts are not aligned with desired community outcomes, how will you re-align your work?

When developing and implementing school-based safety investments in the FEPP levy, DEEL will pursue partnership, policy, and program strategies to avoid and/or mitigate any unintended consequences for racial equity.

Program Strategies: If funding safety interventions such as physical security measures (metal detectors, school engagement officers, etc.) require evidence-based practices to mitigate potential inequities resulting from these practices. These include cross-institutional MOUs/policies for role clarity in responding to disciplinary incidents and pairing physical security strategies with school-wide restorative practices.¹⁷

¹⁴ Javdani, S., *Policing Education: An Empirical Review of the Challenges and Impact of the Work of School Police Officers* (American Journal of Community Psychology, 2019), retrieved from:

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6597313/>

¹⁵ Sorensen, L. et al, *Navigating the tradeoffs of police in schools* (The Brookings Institution, 2023), retrieved from:

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/navigating-the-tradeoffs-of-police-in-schools/>

¹⁶ Gastic, B., *Metal Detectors and Feeling Safe at School* (Education and Urban Society, 2010, Sage Journals), retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0013124510380717>; Mowen, T.J., et al, *Is More Necessarily Better? School Security and Perceptions of Safety among Students and Parents in the United State* (American Journal of Criminal Justice, 2018), retrieved from: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7205221/>; Nance, J.P., *Students, Security, and Race*

¹⁷ Javdani, S., *Policing Education: An Empirical Review of the Challenges and Impact of the Work of School Police Officers*; San Diego Unified School District, *Restorative Discipline Policy: Building restorative school communities rooted in equity, belonging, and thriving for ALL students* (San Diego Unified School District, 2025), retrieved from: <https://sandiegounified.diligent.community/document/00fc3896-39ef-4150-a331-33b08e644a0c/>

Policy Strategies: Require schools to engage with their communities, especially families/students of color, to inform development of safety strategies

Partnership Strategies: Prioritize culturally responsive programs and organizations to receive youth violence prevention funding and provide restorative practices trainings to ensure that racial equity is centered in implementation of evidence-based safety strategies

Step 5. Evaluate. Raise Racial Awareness. Be Accountability.

5a. How will you evaluate and be accountable? How will you evaluate, and report impacts on racial equity over time? What is your goal and timeline for eliminating racial inequity? How will you retain stakeholder participation and ensure internal and public accountability? How will you raise awareness about racial inequity related to this issue?

DEEL will use the following methods to evaluate and report on racially equitable safety outcomes:

Annual monitoring and reporting: key racial equity outcomes such as school climate, student perceptions of school safety, exposure to violence (such as bullying), and exclusionary discipline rates will be tracked on an annual basis and disaggregated by race/ethnicity.

Evaluation: DEEL will conduct a formal evaluation of FEPP-funded safety strategies before the end of the 6-year implementation period that will include consideration of racial equity impacts.

Eliminating racial inequities in safety entirely rely on systemic conditions and risk factors (such as community safety, adverse childhood experiences, etc.) that are outside the scope of educational investments. However, DEEL safety strategies will aim to significantly move the needle on racial equity in safety across key outcomes by the end of the six-year levy period, following the high-level trajectory below:

- Implementation years 1-3:
 - Make progress on key protective factors supporting school safety (increasing overall results and ensuring reduction or closure of race-based gaps)
 - School climate indicators (listed in sections above)
- By implementation years 5-6:
 - Reduction in race-based disproportionality in exclusionary discipline at schools receiving restorative justice funds
 - Improvement in student perceived safety at schools receiving safety investments

5b. What is unresolved? What resources/partnerships do you still need to make change?

Engaging with SPS district to determine integration of DEEL safety investments with SPS strategies, including Central Office Restorative Practices, with focus on racial equity goals and/or implications

- Establishing partnerships with organizations with expertise in the justice system, particularly those supporting youth

Attachments

1. Restoration and Re-entry: Literature Review on Mentorship for High-Risk Youth

Restoration and Re-entry: Literature Review on Mentorship for High-Risk Youth

Seattle Department of Education & Early Learning, April 2026

Introduction

A growing number of youth are navigating circumstances that place them in heightened risk of school disengagement, dropout, and long-term disconnection to education. Often referred to as high-risk youth, this group includes adolescents and young adults ages 13–24 who face overlapping challenges such as chronic absenteeism, academic failure, unstable housing, exposure to violence, mental health concerns, involvement with the juvenile justice system, or caregiving and financial responsibilities that pull them away from school. These risks rarely occur in isolation. Instead, they accumulate and interact, creating conditions that make it difficult for young people to remain engaged in school or envision a viable path toward adulthood.

Multiple systemic and environmental factors contribute to youth becoming high risk. Poverty, community violence, and limited access to mental health supports can undermine a young person’s sense of safety and stability. Experiences of trauma, discrimination, or family instability can erode trust in institutions and adults. Schools themselves, often under-resourced and overburdened, may struggle to provide individualized attention or relational support to students who need it most. As these pressures build, many young people begin to disengage: attendance declines, academic performance drops, and eventually some leave school altogether. Once disconnected, youth face even greater barriers to reentry, including bureaucratic hurdles, stigma, and a lack of supportive relationships to help them navigate the return.

Mentoring has emerged as a promising strategy for supporting high risk youth and reengaging those who have already left school. Unlike short term interventions, mentoring provides consistent, caring relationships that help young people rebuild trust, strengthen coping skills, and reconnect with supportive adults and institutions. Research shows that high quality mentoring can reduce delinquent behavior, improve emotional wellbeing, and increase engagement in school or work, effects that are especially pronounced for youth facing significant adversity (Brooks, 2025). According to a 2023 MENTOR study, 74% of young people reported their mentor as a key contributor to their later success in life (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2024). For young people who have dropped out or are at risk of doing so, mentors can serve as advocates, connectors to resources, and guides through the complex process of returning to school.

Mentorship

Mentorship methodologies for high-risk youth are not rigid silos, they can be combined or used independently depending on the youth’s needs and the program structure. Mentoring methodologies for high-risk youth can be grouped into three primary categories: community-based mentoring, specialized mentoring, and other mentoring models (involving school-connected mentoring).

Although these categories are distinct, they are not mutually exclusive. In practice, they often coexist within the same program. A mentor may build trust through community-based strategies, apply

trauma-informed techniques when needed, and simultaneously support academic re-integration. At the same time, each category can also be used independently, depending on the program’s goals and the youth’s needs. The following will take a closer look into each of these mentoring methodologies.

Community-Based Mentoring

Community-based mentoring (CBM) is defined as a formal, one-to-one relationship between a non-parental adult and a young person, typically lasting around a year and taking place in community settings rather than schools. This mentorship methodology is developmentally oriented, aiming to support socioemotional and academic growth through a mix of relational, recreational, and goal-oriented activities (Goldner and Ben-Eliyahu, 2021). This mentor method is grounded in theories of attachment, social support, and social learning, emphasizing the importance of close, trusting relationship as the mechanism for change. The model is flexible and can serve youth with a range of risk profiles, though research notes that youth with moderate risk may benefit most.

Limitations do exist with community-based mentoring that limits its overall impact. Research shows that CBM produces small average effects across socioemotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes (Raposa et al., 2019). The model also depends on long, stable relationships, yet many matches end early. Relationship quality varies widely, and not all mentors provide the support, sensitivity, and trusty identified as essential for positive outcomes. This mentor method is also resource intensive, costing far more than other mentoring methodologies, making sustainability of program challenging. Evidence suggests that youth with moderate risk may benefit more consistently than those with the most complex needs, indicating community-based mentoring alone may not be sufficient for higher risk populations.

Specialized Mentoring

Specialized mentoring refers to structured, clinically informed models designed for youth experiencing trauma, substance use, violence, or reentry from juvenile justice or residential settings. Unlike community-based mentoring, which emphasizes flexible, relationship-driven support in neighborhood settings, specialized mentoring incorporates targeted interventions grounded in trauma-informed care, cognitive-behavioral strategies, restorative practices, Noand coordinated case management. These programs typically involve mentors with advanced training who work within multidisciplinary teams and follow structured protocols to address safety, emotional regulation, relapse prevention, or reintegration needs. While specialized and community-based mentoring can coexist, and in some cases complement one another, they are not always implemented together. Specialized models require more intensive resources, professional oversight, and clinical alignment than traditional community-based approaches, which can make integration challenging depending on program capacity and youth needs (Tolan, 2013).

Other Mentoring Models

School-based mentoring

Unlike community-based mentoring, school-based mentoring occurs within the school environment and is integrated into the daily routines of students who are already attending. Because of this, it can be challenging to implement with high-risk youth who are fully disengaged from school or have already dropped out. However, school-based mentoring is often used as a preventative strategy for students who are beginning to show signs of academic or behavior risk, providing early support before disengagement (Herrera et al., 2007).

In school-based models, teachers or school staff identify students showing academic or social-emotional risk and match them with volunteer mentors who meet with them regularly on campus, often for about an hour a week and is primarily focused on academic support (Portwood and Ayers, 2005). School-based mentoring has expanded rapidly, partly because it is less costly and easier to implement than community-based models (Rhodes, 2002). However, the school calendar limits the duration and intensity of these relationships, often resulting in matches that fall short of the year-long commitment recommended in the mentoring field (Rhodes, 2002). Delays in matching and reliance on college-grad volunteers can further shorten the mentoring period (Karcher, 2008). Evidence suggests that these structural constraints may contribute to school-based programs producing smaller or less sustained effects than community-based mentoring (Dubois, et. Al, 2002).

Check and Connect Mentoring Model

The check & connect model is a school-based mentoring intervention designed to promote student engagement and reduce dropout risk through a combination of systematic monitoring and sustained relationship-building (National Mentoring Resource Center, 2017). In this model, mentors, often referred to as monitors, regularly track indicators such as attendance, academic performance, and behavior (“check”) while also developing supportive, problem-solving relationships with students (“connect”). Although the model is rooted in the school context, it can incorporate community-based elements, including engagement with families and referrals to external support services. However, research highlights notable variability in how the model is implemented across settings. Differences in mentor roles (e.g., school staff versus community-based providers), levels of family involvement, mentor caseloads, and the amount of time spent with students can significantly shape program delivery and outcomes. This flexibility allows adaptation to local contexts but also complicates efforts to determine which components are most essential for effectiveness. As a result, the Check & Connect model is often characterized as a hybrid approach in practice, though its core remains firmly grounded in school-based intervention.

Table 1. The Organizations Using These Mentoring Models

Mentorship Program	Mentoring Model	Year	Students Served	Budget	Outcomes
Check & Connect Plus Truancy Board	Check and Connect (Specialized Mentoring)	2012 (uploaded in 2018)	NA	NA	82% more likely to graduate and 18% less likely to drop out
BBBS Tampa Bay	Community and school-based mentoring	2024	2,549	\$6,056,016	Academic and relational focus. 88% maintained or improved academic performance 85% remained stable or improved with depressive symptoms 77% maintained or improved in parental connectedness
BBBS Kansas City	Community-based mentoring	2023	1,057	\$5,576,000	Relational focus. 91% feel better about themselves

					after spending time with their mentor 97% say having a mentor has had a positive impact in their life
lmentor	School-based mentoring	2024	10,910	NA	Career, education focus. 91% learned about new career pathways and how to work towards career goals.
Grand County School District – Grand Area Mentoring	Specialized mentoring: community and school-based	2025	77	\$215, 351	Re-integration focused. 50% skipped less school. 80% got less in trouble in school. 79% of matches lasted for more than one year.
US Department of Education Student Mentoring Program	School-based Mentoring	Evaluated in 2004	Overall 200 grantees, not clear on total number of students served	\$277,000 per grantee	Long delays in matching. Short match duration. Heavy reliance on young mentors. Activities focused more on social support than academics. No measurable impact on academic, behavioral, and interpersonal outcomes.
OJJDP National Mentoring Programs	National RFP	2023	NA	\$30,000,000(5 awards)	36-month program structure
OJJDP Multistate Mentoring Programs Initiative	National RFP	2023	NA	\$9,000,000 (16 awards)	

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