

Looking Ahead
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About the Cornell Roosevelt Institute

The Roosevelt Institute at Cornell University is a student-run policy institute that generates, advocates, and lobbies for progressive policy ideas and initiatives in local, university, state, and national government. Members write for our campus policy journals, complete advocacy and education projects in the local community, host research discussions with professors, write policy and political blogs, and organize campus political debates and policy seminars.

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Letter from the Director

Dear Readers,

I am excited to present to you the seventh issue of *Looking Ahead: The Cornell Roosevelt Institute Policy Journal* by the Center for Education Policy and Development. This journal contains the work of six policy analysts; each of whom spent many hours doing in-depth research and careful deliberation to find solutions to the problems plaguing our education system today.

As students at Cornell University, we've experienced firsthand much of the benefits that our education system has to offer. With this, however, we become more aware of the gaping and ever-increasing inequality that still exists. From school vouchers to teacher unions to charter schools, one could spend countless hours debating proposed solutions. We all come from incredibly diverse backgrounds to attend one of the best academic institutions in the world, and with our varying perspectives we are in a unique position to discuss and search for solutions that ensure the greatest possible equality in education.

Each proposal in this journal engages with some of the toughest issues surrounding education reform. Together, they show all that we have the potential to accomplish if we fight hard enough. We're lucky to be where we are today because of education; it's up to us to provide this opportunity to everyone.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Raskin
Economics and Government (A&S '16)
Senior Policy Chairman

Philadelphia's Failing Schools: How Afterschool Programs Can Help

By Elizabeth Clarke, Major: Psychology '17, Email: egc55@cornell.edu

This proposal calls for the School District of Philadelphia to use new tax revenue to implement a district-wide afterschool program that will help reverse the trends of low achievement, high drop-out rates, and rampant juvenile crime in the city.

Background and Context:

Thousands of low-income students in Philadelphia face educational obstacles that negatively impact their intellectual and social development. Nationwide, the disparity in standardized test scores between rich and poor students is estimated to be 40% larger than it was thirty years ago, and socioeconomic status has a significant impact on other educational factors, such as attention skills and antisocial behavior. Furthermore, students in poor inner-city districts, such as Philadelphia, are at high risk for getting involved in juvenile crime. In 2011, severe budget cuts exacerbated these issues; the School District of Philadelphia – which educates 12% of Pennsylvania students – endured over 35% of the state's funding cuts. The district was forced to eliminate thousands of jobs, art programs, and basic supplies. In essence, the budget cuts produced a school system that drastically underserves students who were already at a disadvantage.

In September of this year, the State Senate approved a \$2-per-pack cigarette tax that is expected to bring up to \$80 million annually in local revenue for the district. The funds have an inherent political link to charter schools, as some Republicans only supported the bill because of an amendment that allows new charter schools a second chance at approval after rejection by the District's School Reform Commission. However, many argue that charter schools fail to address the issue of failing district schools and instead consume precious funds in the process.

Policy Idea:

Rather than using cigarette tax funding to open new charter schools, the funding should go towards creating a district-wide afterschool program for middle and high school students. With the goal of improving academic outcomes and the socio-emotional wellbeing of students, the program should offer a well-rounded curriculum that includes group and individual academic work, college admissions counseling, and fun, enriching programs in a safe setting.

Policy Analysis:

Research shows that afterschool programs (ASPs) can have a positive impact on students' test scores, grades, self-esteem, socialization skills, and future drug use. These benefits can be long-term; students aged five through 12 who participated in LA's BEST program – a government-funded, afterschool initiative geared towards low-income children – showed a significant decrease in high-school drop-out rates and juvenile crime tendencies.

Programs that incorporate academic initiatives, skill development, and fun activities are most effective because of their well rounded, engaging approach. Furthermore, it is imperative that ASPs create a supportive environment for students. This can evolve through peer teaching, in which older students aid teachers in instructing younger students. Not only does this foster community integration and leadership development, but research also shows that when students teach others, they develop a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of topics themselves.

The School District of Philadelphia should implement an ASP for middle and high-school students that

Key Facts:

- The School District of Philadelphia currently has a 42% proficiency rate in reading and 45% proficiency rate in math.
- Participation in high quality afterschool programs has been linked to 20 percentile gains in test scores and significant improvements in work habits and social behaviors.
- Active participation in afterschool programs has also been linked to reduction in juvenile crime tendencies; each dollar spent on LA's BEST program was estimated to return \$2.50 to society in the form of avoided incarceration costs.

incorporates these findings into a well-rounded afterschool curriculum focused on academics, yet broad in its goals to support and foster individual growth. Though many polices aim to close achievement gaps and promote opportunity, few provide the same holistic impact as a community-based afterschool program.

Next Steps:

In analyzing proposed district revenue over the next few years, the Philadelphia School Reform Commission should allocate a portion of incoming funds for the development and implementation of a district-wide afterschool program. Since immediate revenue is needed to balance the district budget, the upcoming year can be spent developing a curriculum in cooperation with community organizations, educators, and educational psychologists.

Talking Points:

- The School District of Philadelphia faces a severe financial crisis, but a new cigarette tax promises increased revenue in coming years.
- In allocating these new funds, it is imperative that policy-makers choose children's needs over political demands. Such needs include individualized education, life-skill development, fun extracurricular opportunities, and positive socialization.
- A district-wide afterschool program – when implemented with an evidence-based, comprehensive approach – has the capability of satisfying all of these needs and contributing to the long-term, holistic wellbeing of students.

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Educating Employers: Improving the Rights of Migrant Agricultural Workers

By Alexander Seton, Major: Industrial and Labor Relations '16, Email: as2722@cornell.edu

By Gabriella Johnston, Major: Industrial and Labor Relations '16, Email: grj28@cornell.edu

Migrant agricultural workers are particularly vulnerable to violations of their labor rights. Mandatory education programs for employers on their legal responsibilities to employees will partially shift the burden of compliance to employers and significantly improve the rights and working conditions of agricultural laborers in the Ithaca area and nationally.

History:

Migrant agricultural laborers in the United States are a distinct group of workers who suffer egregious violations of their rights and are routinely exploited. These rights are insufficiently protected by national and state legislation that is outdated and heavily biased towards agricultural employers. Additionally, the nature of the agricultural industry itself is inherently unstable due to the weather, seasonal changes, time, and the availability of a sufficient labor force. Unfortunately, this instability is reflected in the poor working conditions experienced by migrant agricultural laborers. These workers often receive low wages, work extremely long hours without any overtime pay, face harsh and sometimes dangerous working conditions, and experience temporary/irregular employment. Above all, many of these workers are unaware of the scope of their rights and when their rights are actually being violated by employers. While the United States Department of Labor requires that employers disclose to workers the terms of their working arrangement for prospective employment (wages, itemized statement of earnings, safety standards, housing (when applicable), worker compensation information etc.), language barriers and unfamiliar work-culture values often lead migrant workers to enter into working arrangements without fully understanding the extent of their implications. When considering the predicament of migrant agricultural workers, the media and legislators focus heavily on the highly publicized workers' rights conflicts in border states such as Texas, New Mexico, and California. However, these workers represent just one group of the millions of migrant and seasonal farmworkers that serve as the backbone for the multi-billion dollar U.S. agricultural industry. In fact, there is a sizeable and largely disregarded migrant agricultural population, consisting of Asian, Caribbean, Hispanic, and African American workers, in Ithaca, New York, a region that relies heavily on the contributions that its agricultural industry makes to its local economy.

Policy Idea:

The most effective way to improve the labor rights and working conditions of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in Ithaca, New York entails the cooperation between university academics (specializing specifically in labor relations and agricultural economics) and local activist groups to educate employers about the responsibilities that they have toward their workers and the repercussions that they could face for neglecting these responsibilities. In other words, our policy proposal focuses on shifting the burden of understanding and complying with federal, state, and local laws regulating agricultural workers from the workers themselves to their employers.

Policy Analysis:

Currently, the trend in the field of labor relations relies heavily on the employee fully comprehending the scope of his/her rights and initiating a grievance process if and when these rights are violated. However, this can be particularly difficult for agricultural workers, the majority of whom are foreign born, due to the language barriers that they often face which precludes them from comprehending the full extent of their rights and how these rights may conflict with conditions of their working arrangements.

Key Facts:

- Agricultural employees are not considered employees under the National Labor Relations Act and are therefore excluded from the protections it provides to workers. Furthermore, they are specifically excluded from the overtime pay provision of the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- While the average number of victims referenced per labor trafficking case was 3.4 victims, cases involving labor trafficking in agriculture referenced an average of 16.9 victims per case.
- 33 victims of labor trafficking in agriculture contacted the national human trafficking hotline directly. Of these 33 victims, 61% indicated that they found the (NHTRC) through the Department of State's "Know Your Rights" pamphlet.

Described as a “successful liberal enclave in a largely conservative region,” Ithaca is an ideal place to implement policy reform for migrant agricultural workers. Agriculture is an integral part of Ithaca’s local economy and culture, creating a \$90 million export industry for the city. The total value of agricultural products is approximately \$4,431,000, and there are approximately 3,412 acres of agricultural lands in the area, along with 40,000 square feet of greenhouses. ii It is also important to note the political affiliation of Ithaca and the various laws passed regarding agriculture. In 1999, Ithaca’s legislature implemented the Agricultural Land Preservation Program and, in 2011, the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. Additionally, Ithaca has its own Agriculture Committee comprised of local farm owners.

Talking Points:

- Migrant workers are easily exploited.
- Federal and state legislation insufficiently protect these workers.
- The current grievance procedure is counterintuitive because it subjects workers to initially accepting violations of their rights and then discourages them from pursuing action against their employers.

Our policy proposal is innovative and realistic because it can be implemented without relying on legislative change which is often exceedingly slow, inefficient, and uncertain.

Next Steps:

Our policy proposal relies heavily on the cooperation among Cornell University, local workers’ rights activist groups, and employers. Cornell, in conjunction with local groups such as the Cornell Farmworkers Initiative, the Cornell Organization for Labor Action (COLA), and the Tompkins’ County Workers’ Center, would conduct workshops for employers, educating them on the importance of the fair treatment of workers, the economics of agriculture, and the legal responsibilities that employers have towards their workers. The partnership between resident labor groups, local universities, and agricultural employers can develop in other regions without the need for state-wide or national legislation. They can simply arise from a grassroots, concerted effort by any local community dedicated to making a positive change for their agricultural workers. Finally, the ultimate goal of our policy proposal is to create a program funded jointly by the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Department of Agriculture (DOA) requiring agricultural employers to take these “courses” in order to receive their registration with the DOL.

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Teacher Tenure Reform: Necessary for Improving National Education

By Abigail Cutler '18, Email: arc234@cornell.edu

The current system of teacher tenure provides educators with the guarantee that they will not be fired from their jobs without just cause, consequently filling school systems with bad teachers. States should restructure tenure by creating a stronger evaluation system, allowing them to fill schools with quality teachers.

History:

Teacher tenure refers to a teacher's contractual right to not lose his or her job without just cause. These laws exist in order to inspire people to become teachers; as the demand for them increases, job security has become a method of meeting it. Tenure also seems reasonable in that no person in any profession should be fired unreasonably. However, the consequences of these laws, created by the state, have led to ineffective, unoriginal, and generally complacent teachers in the world of K-12 education while motivated, creative, and inspired teachers are left without jobs. As a result, the quality of education nationwide is declining and students are losing access to a sufficient education. This is an issue filled with disagreement, and recent lawsuits, such as those in California and New York, suggest that the nation is turning to address the issues associated with tenure. More states need to critically analyze the current system of granting tenure to all teachers early in their careers and without assessment and change them to better meet the needs of the students.

Key Facts:

- It can cost \$200,000 to fire a poor or negligent teacher after paying attorneys for each party.
- Five percent of just-graduating teachers are unemployed, and as tenured individuals take the jobs of other, well-qualified teachers, this number will continue to increase.
- In the current system, teachers with a background in English are teaching science and educators with a background in history are explaining math concepts. They are not needed in their specialized field but can't be fired, so instead they teach a subject they know little about.

Policy Idea:

Teachers should undergo more rigorous evaluation before receiving tenure and should be reevaluated on a regular basis in order to ensure that they are still meeting designated standards. School systems should evaluate teachers based on student performance, administrator evaluations, and parent or student feedback; in order for students to access the best education possible, officials should base their educator analysis primarily on student success. School systems should allocate resources to training teachers who have already met the standards for tenure in order to ensure consistently high quality teaching.

Analysis:

Some states have begun to change policy to address the issues associated with tenure, implementing systems based on probation periods and evaluation of overall effectiveness. In New York, the state legislature is beginning to take steps towards achieving a better system of awarding tenure; teachers are forced to undergo a 3-year probation period before being assessed and potentially recommended for tenure. In 2010, Colorado took steps towards implementing a performance-based analysis; the state legislature reformed the tenure system, creating a system in which educators are evaluated annually, in part based on student progress. Additionally, in Colorado, teachers are forced to demonstrate student progress for 3 straight years before they can receive tenure, rather than just simply being required to work for those years.

Next Steps:

Legislators need to take advantage of the states that have already started reforming by researching the impacts of these reforms in order to strengthen future cases. They should continue pursuing lawsuits state by state until national reform is a reality. By using them to prove that tenure laws are unconstitutional, lawsuits can be the primary tool for changing the current tenure system.

On a small-scale level, promoters of reform can work to form focus groups with parents in order to draw attention to this issue of tenure. If parents can be educated regarding the biggest issues within the education system,

they can work to from a stronger movement.

From there, professionally trained advocates and lobbyists need to push for change from the bottom up. County government by county government and then to the state legislature, these issues need to be brought to the attention of each Board of Education with pressure great enough to justify reforming the system.

Legislators should follow the examples set in California and New York. Lawsuits against the state can highlight the unconstitutionality of tenure and can create the policy that finally revolutionizes the currently useless system. By disallowing students a quality education because their teachers can't be fired, the nation is creating an incapable generation, and that will hurt more than just current students.

Talking Points:

- The current tenure system violates students' right to a sufficient education because teachers are not able to provide it. Reforming tenure could be a huge step in remedying the current crisis in American education. Tenure should only be awarded to teachers after they have worked for a set amount of time and have met set performance standards.

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Filling the Education Gap in the Juvenile Justice System

By Toni-Anne Richards, Major: American Studies '18, Email: tr284@cornell.edu

An inadequate education system in state juvenile justice facilities leads not only to a higher rate of recidivism, but also to a greater high school dropout rate. State governments should reorganize the justice system to behave more like an educational institution to reconnect students once they return to school.

History:

The juvenile system and their education programs are managed by different departments and agencies in almost every state. According to a report by the Southern Education Foundation in 2014, the systemic problems in how education is administered at schools in the juvenile justice system have caused nearly two-thirds of those released from the juvenile justice system to drop out of school and roughly 20-80 percent of individuals released from juvenile justice facilities to return to jail after two or three years. Some of the main problems include a lack of accurate student assessments, inconsistent curricula and, perhaps most importantly, little to no support for the transition back to local schools. Much is being done on a local level to provide alternatives to juvenile detention, like community-based programs that allow students to be closely supervised while remaining home. But such alternatives are offered only to those who have committed status offenses or less physically dangerous crimes.

Key Facts:

- Only 15 percent of all students in juvenile-justice facilities, and 26 percent of longer-term students (those incarcerated for 60 days or more), improved in reading during their custody.
- Per pupil expenditure by the state government for a Georgia juvenile school was \$11,136, compared to the \$5,352 spent per pupil in a regular public school.
- The annual cost of residential placement in a Georgian juvenile justice system was between \$89-91,000.

Policy Idea:

State juvenile justice systems should be reorganized so that continuing the students' education is the main priority. This restructuring would involve applying the same public school educational standards to incarcerated students, implementing a data system accessible to local schools and juvenile justice agencies and increasing communication between schools and agencies in dealing with the eventual transition back to school.

Policy Analysis:

In 2013, Georgia shifted its juvenile justice policy to focus on community-based alternatives as opposed to sending less problematic delinquents to juvenile facilities. By asking every school with a campus police officer to make space for a probation officer, this allowed the two to exchange notes on the students and broaden the options for discipline, thus preventing students from losing valuable time in school for relatively minor infractions. A 2012 Georgia state report noted that the cost of juvenile facilities per bed was \$91,126 per year. Compared to the community based approaches mentioned earlier, that's a difference of at least \$88,000 per year. These methods ensure that taxpayers' money is spent on individuals who show signs of progress. The education system in Georgia also shared its database of student records to the Department of Juvenile Justice, which makes the educational transition for juveniles who are placed in long-term facilities much easier by eliminating the delay of receiving important paper work about test scores and special educational needs. The more readily available this information is to educators in the juvenile facilities, the more easily they can address the student's academic needs. In 2010, statistics showed that students at the Maya Angelou Academy, a charter-like school for incarcerated youths in D.C., achieved the equivalent of 1.4 years in reading and 1.3 years in math per year on standardized due to a curriculum closely modeled after the D.C. school system's and individualized teaching.

Next Steps:

Students in the juvenile justice system are receiving a substandard education at a time when they need a quality education the most. To promote and implement these changes, school officials and probation officers must work together to decide reasonable punishments for juvenile offenders that will not be detrimental to their

education over time. For long-term residents, legislation should be passed that makes it mandatory for juvenile justice school curricula to follow the public school system curricula. The creation of these lesson plans should be overseen by the juvenile system educators. The implementation of a database that shares information between a state's department of education and the juvenile system would be overseen by school officials and educators on both sides. By shifting the focus of state juvenile justice systems from punishment to rehabilitation, states can not only save money by using less expensive alternatives for less egregious offenders, but also ensure that juveniles already in the system do not end up in the same situation two years later.

Talking Points:

- Rehabilitation through education needs to be made the main priority of the juvenile justice system.
- Subpar education in the system will only contribute to the growing recidivism problem.
- Communication between the juvenile justice system and local schools is key to ease transitions for the students.

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Improving Graduation Rates in Rochester City Schools

By Emily Slifkin, Major: Development Sociology '18, Email: ems386@cornell.edu

Rochester has the lowest high school graduation rate of all the major city school districts in New York State. To combat this, the city should implement middle-school level programs designed to fight early disengagement.

History:

In June 2014, the New York State Education Department released a report focused on the performance of a cohort of students who had entered high school in 2009. In the report, the Department found that only 43 percent of all Rochester students from the group had graduated high school¹, a number half a percent lower than that for the previous group of students who were tracked. According to the District Superintendent, Bolgen Vargas, three issues have largely contributed to the problem of low graduation rates: the difficulty of tracking the movement of students in the school district, low school attendance rates, and the need for improvement of students' reading abilities at a younger age.

Several cities have recently implemented innovative approaches to increase graduation rates. A local movement in New York City, for example, sought to create smaller schools, and a movement in the District of Columbia called for the provision of school vouchers to low-income families. However, both of these ideas can be costly and difficult to replicate. A more promising plan to prevent student disengagement at the middle-school level through effective intervention methods has shown strong results in increasing graduation rates³; the program's interventions seek to not only provide students with more resources so that they do not fail classes and become discouraged, but also to work on behavioral issues during the years when kids are most impressionable.

Key Facts:

- 34 high schools in the Rochester metropolitan area have graduation rates of 90% or more, while the city itself has a graduation rate of 43%.
- Graduation rates can increase by 50% by implementing a Truancy Intervention Program.
- 60% of the students who will not graduate high school can be identified during the middle-grades.

Policy Idea:

The City of Rochester can increase high school graduation rates by preventing student disengagement in the middle grades; the latter can be achieved through a multi-pronged intervention program that provides more interesting programming, gives extra help to struggling students, and increases administrative efforts in reducing truancy issues in impressionable students.

Analysis:

There needs to be a change in the way the Rochester City School District addresses its graduation rate. With the majority of other school districts in the metropolitan area achieving graduation rates of 90% or more¹, this is an issue that needs to be addressed. A previous study on preventing student disengagement in urban middle schools found that 60%³ of the students who will not graduate high school can be identified during the middle-grades by looking at indicators such as poor attendance, misbehavior, and failing a class. By tracking students at the middle-school level who have failed classes or were subject to disciplinary actions for behavioral issues, school administrators can prepare targeted interventions to give these students more help to stay on the path to graduation. This program would require extra help to be added to middle-schools throughout the district. This could be achieved by hiring a few additional assistant teachers and counselors, which would use less funds than resizing high schools or providing school vouchers.

Next Steps:

The City of Rochester should begin an intervention-based program targeted at disengaged students in middle school. This can be done by teacher trainings, perhaps led by teachers from successful schools nearby, which would provide support to create more engaging activities in classrooms. There can be an addition of extra

help labs to make sure students do not fail a class. Small learning communities can help students and teachers learn and care about each other. To combat behavior issues, positive behavior and good attendance should be constantly recognized and promoted. Absences and misbehavior should be responded to in a consistent way. To track absences and properly report and discipline students who miss a lot of school, a program like the Truancy Intervention Program, experimented with in St. Paul, can be put in place⁴. This would mean connecting the city schools to law enforcement in the county or city to create more solid consequences for students who have low attendance rates, however not to the point of juvenile detention.

Talking Points:

- Cursive has been proven to develop motor skills and enhance cognitive development in children.
- Cursive creates opportunities to study history, is faster than printing, decreases attempts of forgery, and is ascetically pleasing.
- Replacing cursive with keyboard typing in curriculums could increase gaps in educational inequality.

Endnotes:

1. Amanda Ciavarri, "Rochester City School District graduation rates drop," WHEC Rochester, <http://www.whec.com/article/stories/s3482973.shtml> (accessed November 30, 2014).
2. RocDocs, "Graduation Rates for Area High Schools," Democrat and Chronicle, <http://rocdocs.democratandchronicle.com/database/graduation-rates-area-high-schools> (accessed November 30, 2014).
3. Robert Balfanz et al., "Preventing Student Disengagement and Keeping Students on the Graduation Path in Urban Middle-Grades Schools: Early Identification and Effective Interventions," *Educational Psychologist* 42, no. 4 (2007): 223-235.
4. Kathryn Santelmann Richtman, "The Truancy Intervention Program of the Ramsey County Attorney's Office: A Collaborative Approach to School Success," *Family Court Review* 45, no. 3 (2007): 421-437.

A Dare to Destroy D.A.R.E.

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D.A.R.E. should be dismantled for a less invasive approach that does not shame all drug users.

History:

Drug Abuse Resistance Education, D.A.R.E. founded in California in 1983 is a publicly financed program that uses policemen to implore 25 million children to reject drugs and gangs as well as to solicit suspicious information. A 1992 Indiana University study concluded that graduates of D.A.R.E. had higher hallucinogenic drug use than those who were not guinea pigs of the program. In 1994, three Research Triangle Institute International scientists utilized eight previous studies in addition to supplementary research to conclude that D.A.R.E. had dubious long-term effects. Moreover, RTI concluded that D.A.R.E.'s overloading of information was detrimental to its cause. Shortly after RTI's findings D.A.R.E. in disgraceful fashion spent \$41,000 to suppress and intimidate the scientists. In 1995, Joel Brown Ph.D. director of the Center for Educational Research and Development and Principle Investigator of the Public Health Institute released a damning report of D.A.R.E.'s performance in California. "More than 40 percent of the students told researchers they were 'not at all' influenced by drug educators or programs. Nearly 70 percent reported neutral to negative feelings about those delivering the antidrug [sic] message. While only 10 percent of elementary students responded to drug education negatively or indifferently, this figure grew to 33 percent of middle school students and topped 90 percent at the high school level." 1998 was a disastrous year for D.A.R.E. as its Federal funding was revoked because of ineffectiveness and faulty research. In a slap to the face, numerous researchers and psychologists including Dr. Dennis Rosenbaum and Dr. William Colson determined that D.A.R.E. graduates had a higher propensity to drink alcohol, smoke tobacco, and use illegal drugs. In 2006, the American Psychological Association backed by the Surgeon General released a 10 year study of D.A.R.E. empirically proving that the program was at best useless and at worst increased drug use. In response to the critics, in 2009, D.A.R.E. introduced the "keepin' it REAL" curriculum which shifts from "a drugs are bad" approach to a more socio-emotional and life skills perspective. This curriculum is a more earnest attempt due to its accommodation to differences in cultures, ethics, conventions, and views. Studies evaluating this new and improved program however, definitively conclude that D.A.R.E. still does not prevent drug use. Teachers and administrators have lost faith in D.A.R.E. as schools and its revenues have fallen every year (According to a 2012 study, about 60% of school districts have eliminated D.A.R.E. since the mid-2000s in the 32 states where data were available. D.A.R.E.'s 2011 annual report showed total revenues around \$3.7 million, down from \$9.7 million in 2000).

Key Facts:

- In 2006, the American Psychological Association backed by the Surgeon General released a 10 year study of D.A.R.E. empirically proving that the program was at best useless and at worst increased drug use.
- Teachers and administrators have lost faith in D.A.R.E. as schools and its revenues have fallen every year (According to a 2012 study, about 60% of school districts have eliminated D.A.R.E. since the mid-2000s in the 32 states where data were available. D.A.R.E.'s 2011 annual report showed total revenues around \$3.7 million, down from \$9.7 million in 2000).

Policy Idea:

State by state drug awareness programs run by social workers and psychologists who have realistic expectations.

Analysis:

The first obvious problem with the program is that it is conducted by policemen rather than by social workers. This format makes students feel uncomfortable knowing they may accidentally incriminate themselves or their friends. Social workers create a much more welcoming vibe, which allows more honest discourse. In addition, the policemen hired for this job only have a few months of training while social workers are required to have over a year of training. D.A.R.E. continues to this day to have a box in every classroom to urge students to "rec-

ognize, resist, and report” any drug abuse. This has created a toxic environment beyond the classroom let alone an unsafe space as many children have become informants of their parents. After nine-year-old Darrin Davis found speed in his home and reported it to the police his parents lost their jobs, their house was foreclosed, and his father served a three month jail sentence. D.A.R.E. however will never remove policemen from these posts because of its funding from despicable police lobbyists. D.A.R.E.’s zero tolerance policy is troubling considering it views cigarettes, rum, marijuana, and cocaine as equally harmful. There are nuances to every drug and lumping them all together is irresponsible and ineffective. Conflating drug use and drug abuse has similar pitfalls to abstinence-only sex education, which has only led to higher birth rates. The zero tolerance policy that the policemen preach ties directly to today’s school prison pipeline that targets minority youths. The police officers driving confiscated drug cars, doling out freebies like buttons, tee-shirts, sodas, awards, etc. mesmerize youths to a taboo activity. D.A.R.E. continues to expose young susceptible children to drugs in a glamorizing yet demonizing fashion which can foster curiosity known as the forbidden fruit syndrome. The officers tell kids that if they do drugs they will become addicts and be useless to society. This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for some youths who falsely believe that their drug use is the epitome of their character.

Talking Points:

- There are nuances to every drug and lumping them all together is irresponsible and ineffective.
- The police officers driving confiscated drug cars, doling out freebies like buttons, tee-shirts, sodas, awards, etc. mesmerize youths to a taboo activity.

Next Steps:

We need a program that does not use scare tactics to spread either fabricated or exaggerated misinformation about marijuana. The Gateway Theory that marijuana use leads to the use of more harmful drugs should not be taught anymore because it is empirically false. No more should programs tell students to simply abstain from all drug use. Lessons should accommodate for the many students will inevitably experiment with drugs and teach them how to avoid abuse. There must be discussions about reducing risks and insuring safety when taking drugs. No more should moralist propaganda about drugs be indoctrinated in our classrooms. Emphasis should be put on moderation and acceptable doses of alcohol. Safety not abstinence should be the primary concern following the same methods of safe sex education. Students across the country should be taught about the importance of having a designated driver for intoxicated youths.



“The school is the last expenditure upon which America should be willing to economize.”

-Franklin D. Roosevelt