Overview: Los Angeles Unified School District funds the largest independent school police department in the United States. This past school year alone, the district allotted $70 million to the Los Angeles School Police Department. 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 ISTAR. 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**

![Graph showing the increase in reported incidents from 2011-12 to 2018-19.](image)

111% INCREASE BETWEEN 2011-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responder Category</th>
<th># of Incidents in 2011-2012 SY</th>
<th># of Incidents in 2018-2019 SY</th>
<th>PERCENT INCREASE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>3,648</td>
<td>6,405</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counseling</strong></td>
<td>1,143</td>
<td>11,493</td>
<td>906%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Nurse</td>
<td>6,246</td>
<td>10,236</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>2,452</td>
<td>4,107</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Leadership</td>
<td>8,061</td>
<td>13,319</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 enrollment\(^4\), meanwhile the LASPD budget has increased by 48\(^{\%}\). Despite a $20 million increase in LASPD funds, many students still feel unsafe. Results from the 2018-2019 California School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey\(^5\) 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>LAUSD Student Enrollment</th>
<th>LASPD Estimated Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>727,319</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>653,826</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>633,621</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-20</td>
<td>596,937</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CALIFORNIA SCHOOL CLIMATE, HEALTH, AND LEARNING SURVEY
2018-2019 RESULTS FOR LAUSD 9TH GRADE STUDENTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White Students</th>
<th>Latinx Students</th>
<th>Black Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feel safe at school</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seen a weapon at school</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced bullying</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afraid of being beaten up</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SUICIDAL BEHAVIORS IS THE TOP REPORTED INCIDENT ON ISTAR
IN 2017-2018 AND 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEARS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of reported incidents of suicidal behavior in 2017-18</th>
<th>Total number of reported incidents of suicidal behavior in 2018-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10,648</td>
<td>10,840</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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**

- Escalated Situations: 67%
- Overly Aggressive: 73%
- Rude: 60%

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

- 8%
- 25%

**BLACK LAUSD STUDENTS’ PERCEPTION OF POLICE OFFICERS**

I DISAGREE/STRONGLY DISAGREE THAT POLICE OFFICERS ARE:

- Trustworthy: 63%
- Is supportive on my campus: 50%
- Dependable Champions of the Community: 35%
- Caring: 60%
- Adds to my safety on campus: 45%
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.

To meet student needs, LAUSD should decrease funds for LASPD and increase funds for school nurses and mental health providers.
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 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 Index
   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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www.blackmaleinstitute.org

References:
9. More information on the Student Equity Needs Index can be found at https://www.equityallianceforlaskids.org/resources/