



Safety & Belonging Work Group

Children & Youth Community Plan
March 2, 2026





Meeting Purpose

- Ground our work in youth voice, data, and research
- Identify opportunities for coordination
- Begin shaping Safety & Belonging strategies for the next CYCP



Agenda

1. Welcome, Overview, & Introductions
2. What Youth Want vs. What Youth Experience
3. How are we doing? What do the data tell us?
4. The Story Behind the Curve: What's Driving Youth Conflict & Violence?
5. What Works: Conditions That Promote Thriving Youth
6. Who are the Partners who have a role to play?
7. Scheduling & Leading Future Meetings
8. Partner Announcements



WELCOME

& Overview



What is the CYCP?

- Citywide plan for children & youth wellbeing
- Built with youth voice + partner collaboration
- Guides funding, programs, and partnerships to eliminate racial and social disparities and advance equity

alexandriava.gov/YouthPlan





How Youth Shaped This Plan

- 1,800+ youth engaged
- Listening sessions across middle & high schools
- Youth analyzed data and proposed solutions





Role of This Work Group



We will:

- Understand the current situation using youth voice, data, and research
- Align existing efforts across partners
- Identify & coordinate realistic Year-1 actions & longer-term strategies
- Draft an action plan that will be included in the CYCP



How Work Groups Make Change

Over the next few months, we will:

- Understand the Situation
 - Look at youth voice, data, and research
- Develop Strategies
 - Start small and learn by doing
 - Align existing programs
 - Identify policy opportunities
- Support Implementation
- Identify resources
- Measure progress
- Share updates with partners



Work Group Arc

Meeting #	Shared Understanding	Map Existing Efforts & Identify Strategy Options	Prioritize & Design Actions	Finalize & Commit
When	March 2	March 25?	April (& May?)	June
Purpose:	Ground ourselves in the problem, root causes, and vision.	Avoid duplication and surface strengths. Look at student recommendations & research packet	Choose 3-5 actions to accomplish in Year 1 of implementation	Prepare the action plan for the CYCP!
Focus/ Questions	- Youth voice - Data trends - Root causes (infographic) - What works (infographic)	- What is already happening? Who is doing what? - Where are gaps? - Which strategies align with root causes? - Which are feasible in Alexandria? - Which need coordination?	- Who does what? - What resources? - How will we measure?	- Confirm partners - Confirm metrics - Identify CYCP language - Plan first pilots
Outcome	Clarity about scope	Landscape map & drafted list of possible actions	Draft action plan	CYCP-ready content



Introductions

Introduce yourself (name & organization) &

One thing that makes a place feel safe & welcoming for youth



Youth Voice





What Youth Want vs. Experience

Youth Want

- Respect from adults
- Safe spaces to connect
- Support for mental health
- Fair responses to conflict

Youth Experience

- Bullying & peer conflict
- Trust gaps with adults
- Social media escalation
- Stress & emotional overload



Student Quotes

Youth Want:

"A lot of community events."

"More coaches and mentors."

"A community where disagreeing is okay with people in real life and on the internet."

"My ideal Alexandria is for bullying to be more of a concern so kids feel safer going to school."

"No crime."

"Safer crosswalks."

"More afterschool clubs so kids can be in a community and have a safe space."

"More safe spaces for queer/trans youth."

Youth Experience:

"Not enough after-school programming."

"Bus schedule leaves no time for after-school activities."

"I'm struggling making new friends."

"Kids can't be themselves without getting judged."

"There are almost no places for kids to hang out with friends."

"Many kids have depression due to not feeling like having a trusted adult."

"Bullying isn't taken seriously."

"People are sexually assaulted in bathrooms and cannot report."

"Security guards fighting with students."

What resonates? What feels new?



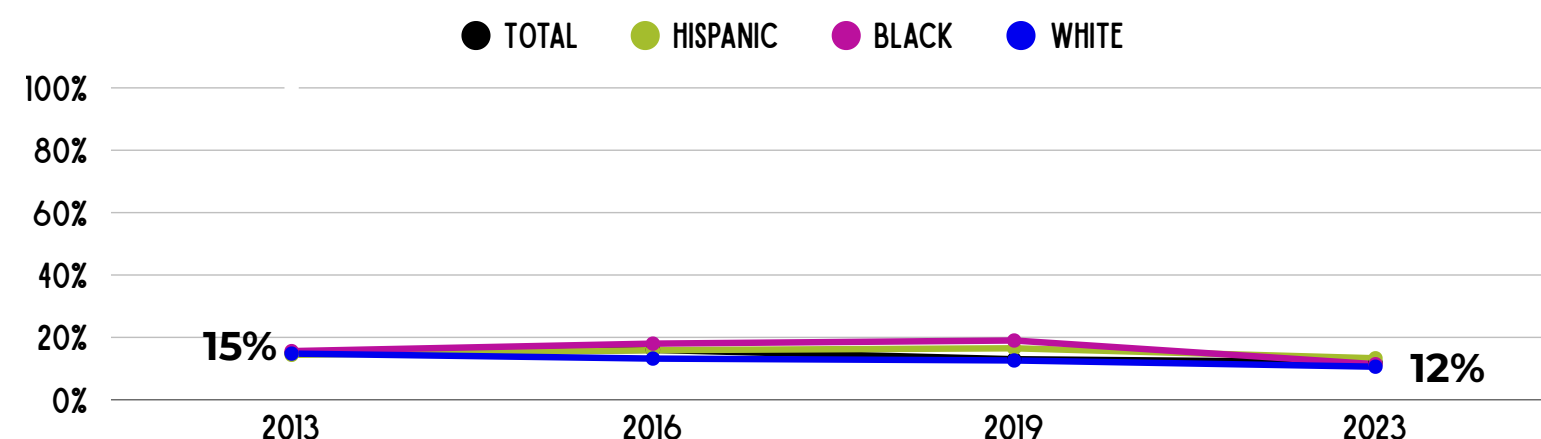
**What the data say about
how we are doing**



How We are Doing (Behavior & Incidents)

Been in a physical fight in past 12 months

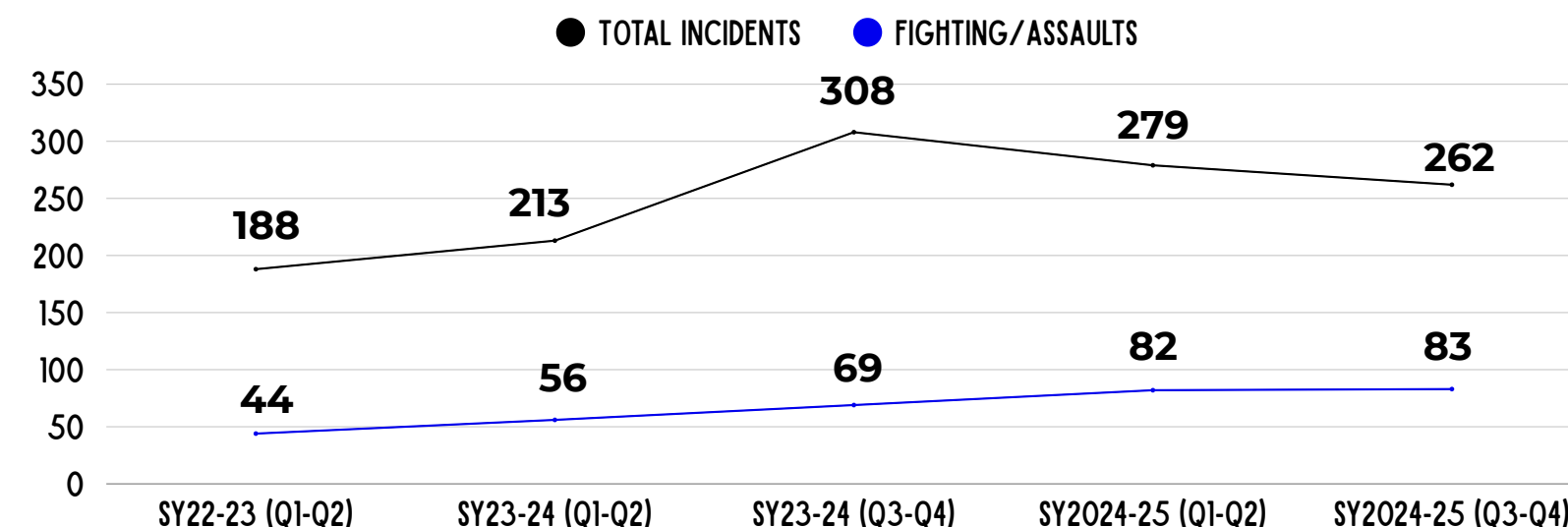
Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 10th & 12th Graders, 2013-2023
of Survey Respondents: 996



- Overall trends improved by 33%
- Fighting rates decreased for all groups from 2019 to 2023.
- Hispanic students report being involved in fights slightly more often (13%) than Black and White students (11%).

Incident Reports by Type (Fighting/Assaults)

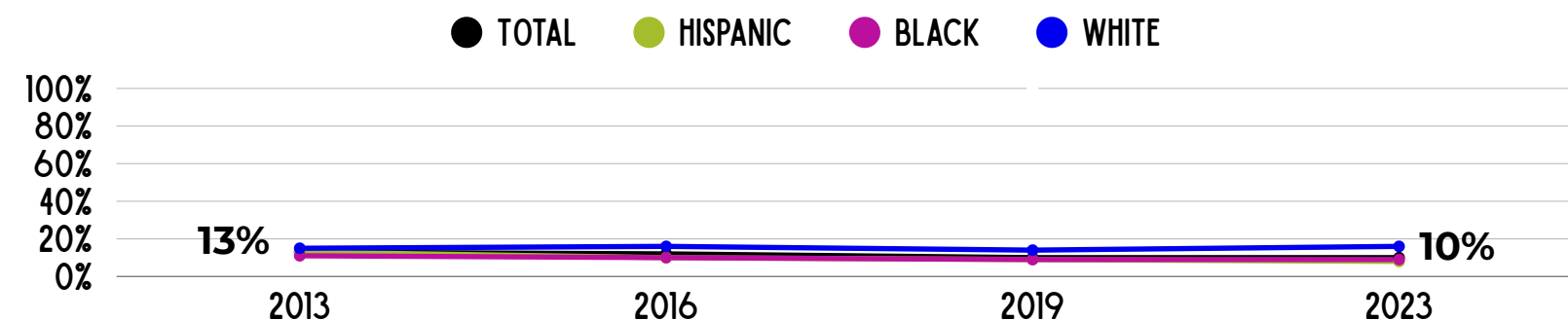
Source: ACPS School Safety Data Reports, 2022-2025



The data show **progress in reducing overall incidents** but a **persistent rise in interpersonal conflict**, highlighting the need for **prevention strategies** that address relationships, stress, and school climate, not only enforcement.

Bullied on school property in past 12 months by Race/Ethnicity

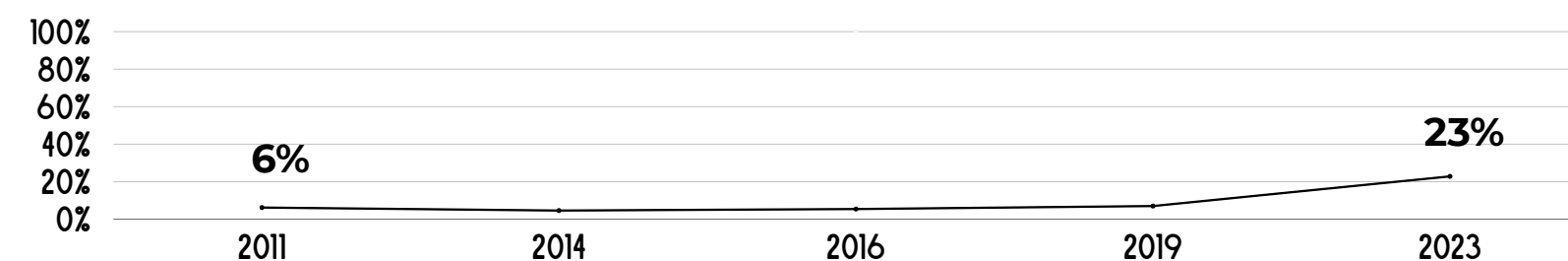
Source: YRBS, Alexandria, 2013-2023



- Overall trends improved by 23%.
- White students consistently report the highest rates.

Didn't attend school due to feeling unsafe at school or on way there in past 30 days

Source: YRBS, 2011-2023



Overall trends increased by 283%

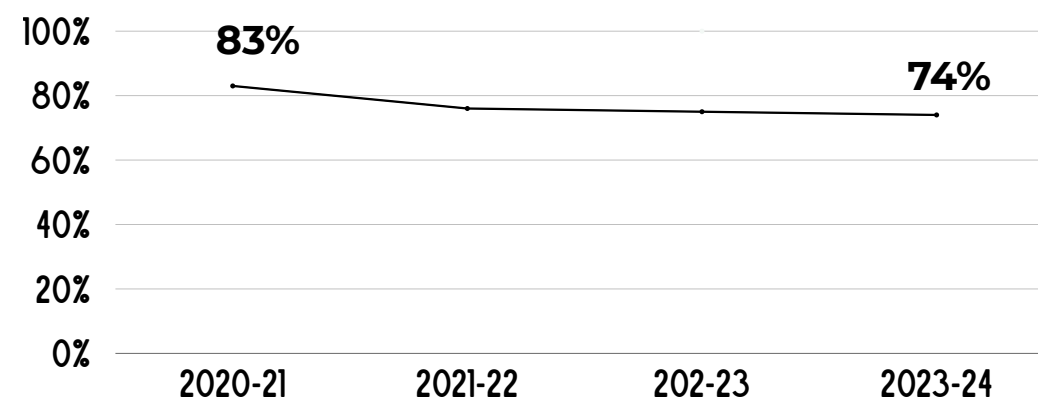


How We are Doing (Belonging & Climate)

ACHS Students Feel Welcome at School

Source: ACPS Climate Survey Dashboard, 2025

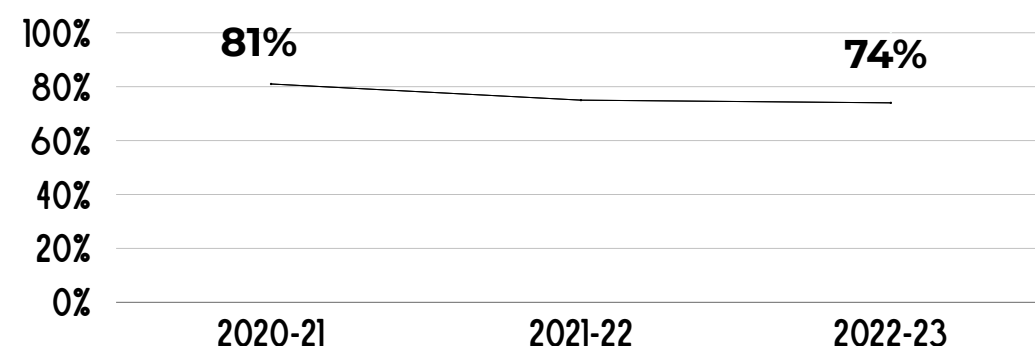
Overall trends declined by 11%



Adults at ACPS Care About All Students

Source: ACPS Climate Survey Dashboard, 2024

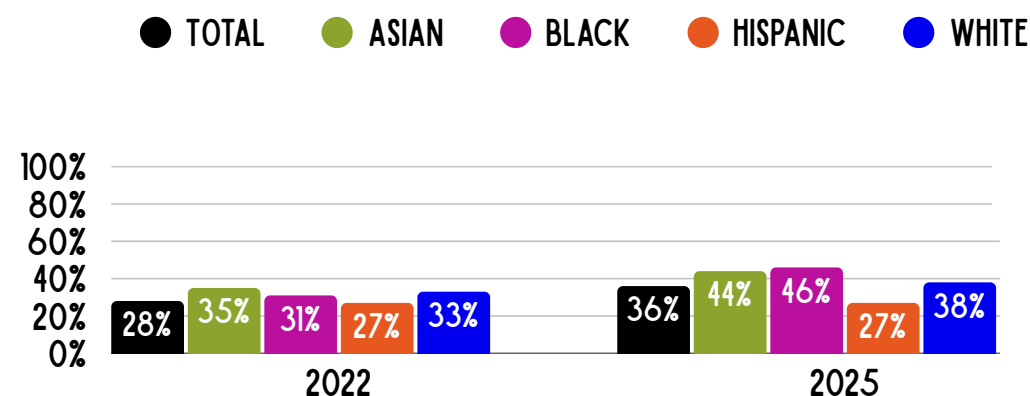
Overall trends declined by 10%



Caring School Climate By Race/Ethnicity

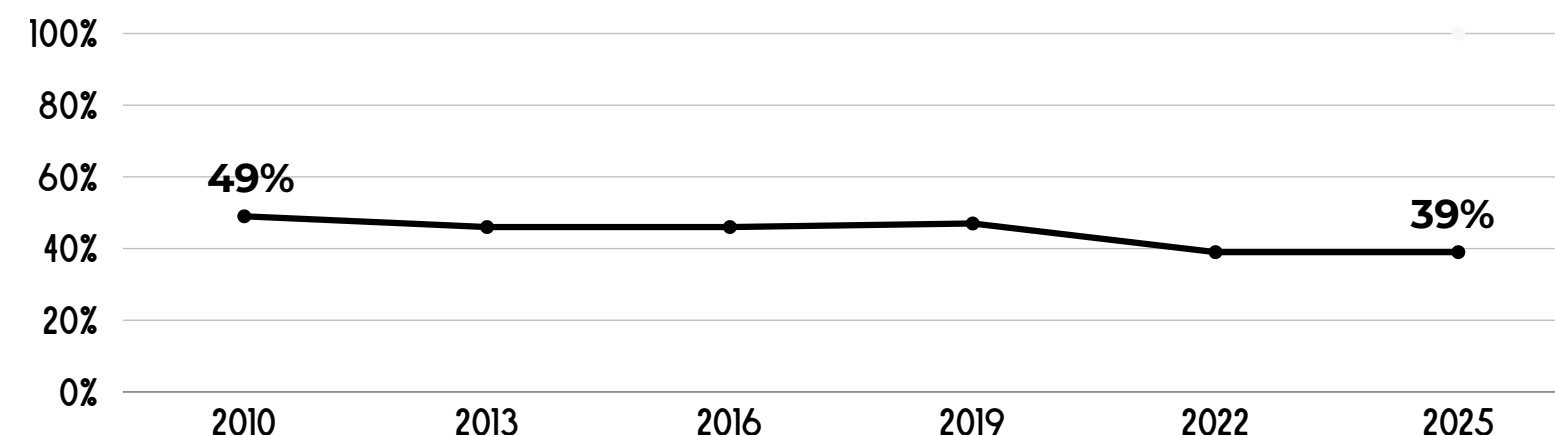
Source: Developmental Assets Survey, 2025

Overall trends improved by 29%
Hispanic students consistently report the lowest levels.



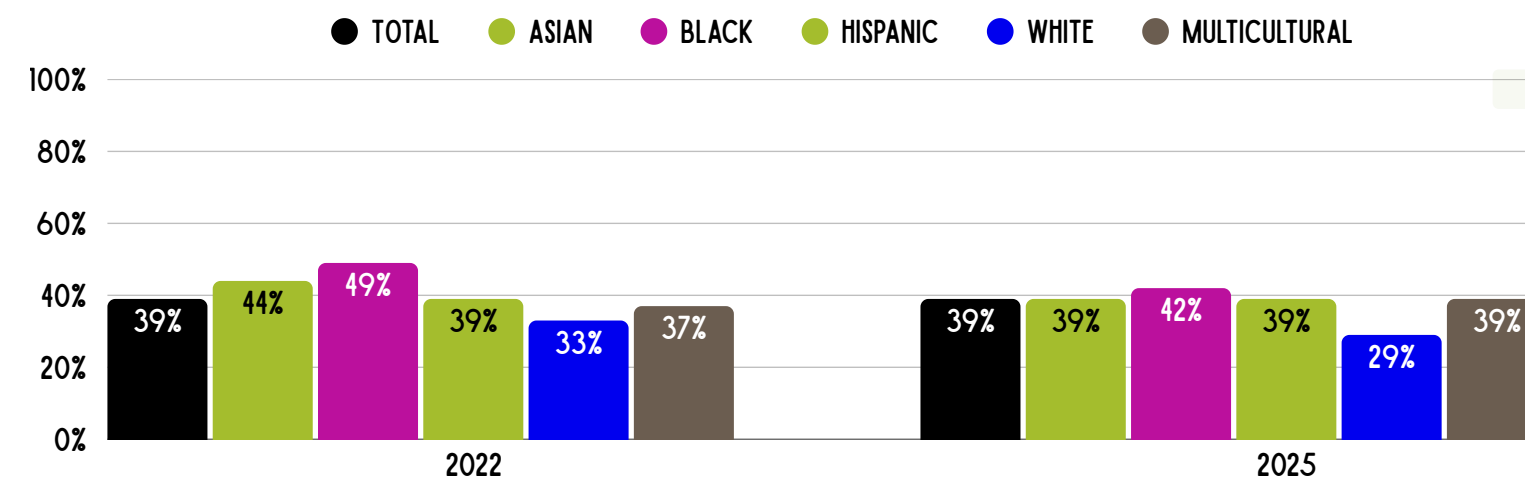
Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood

Source: Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth for ACPS© 2013-2025 by Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN.

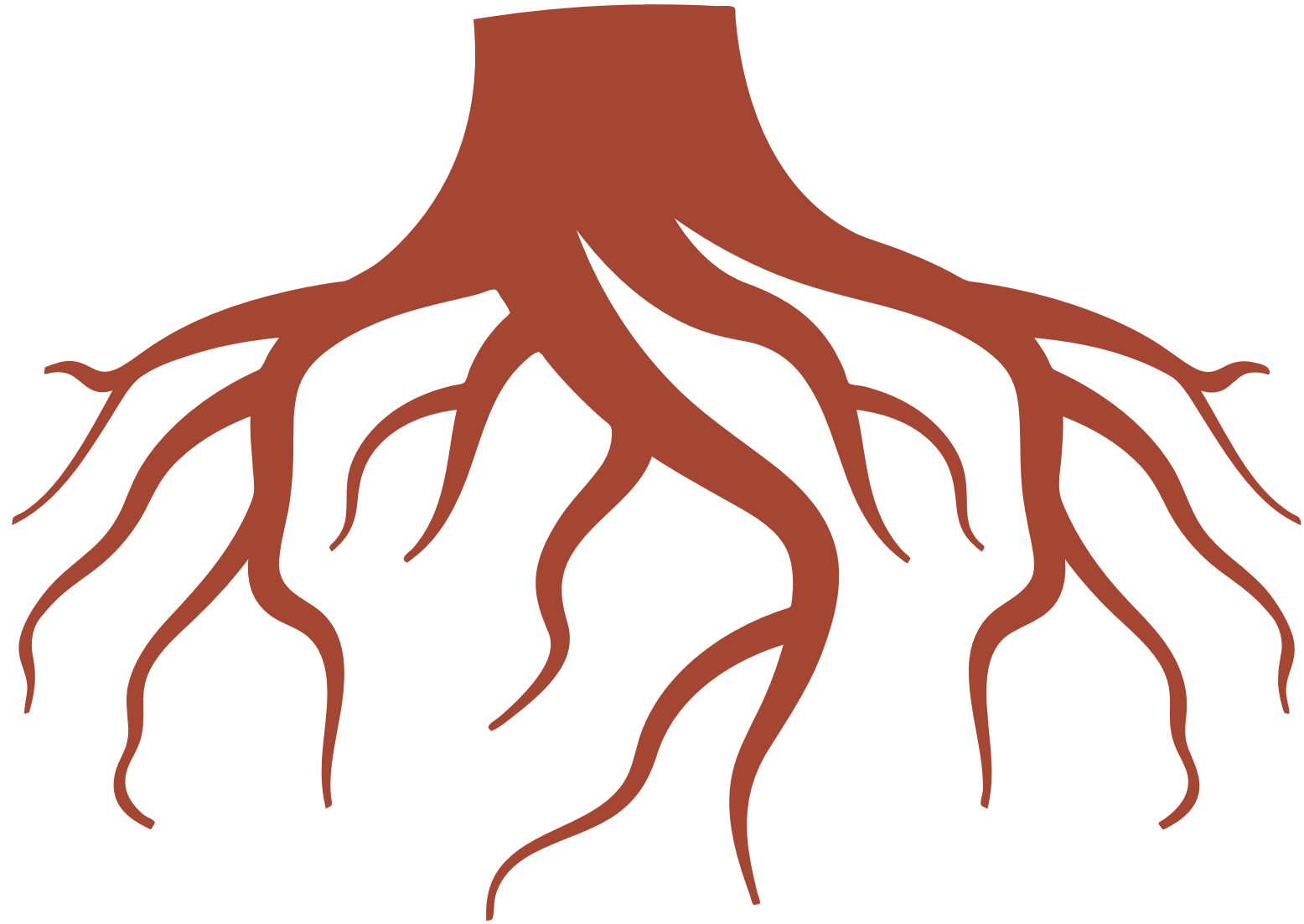


Overall trends declined by 20%

Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood By Race/Ethnicity, 2022 & 2025



White students consistently report the lowest feelings of safety.



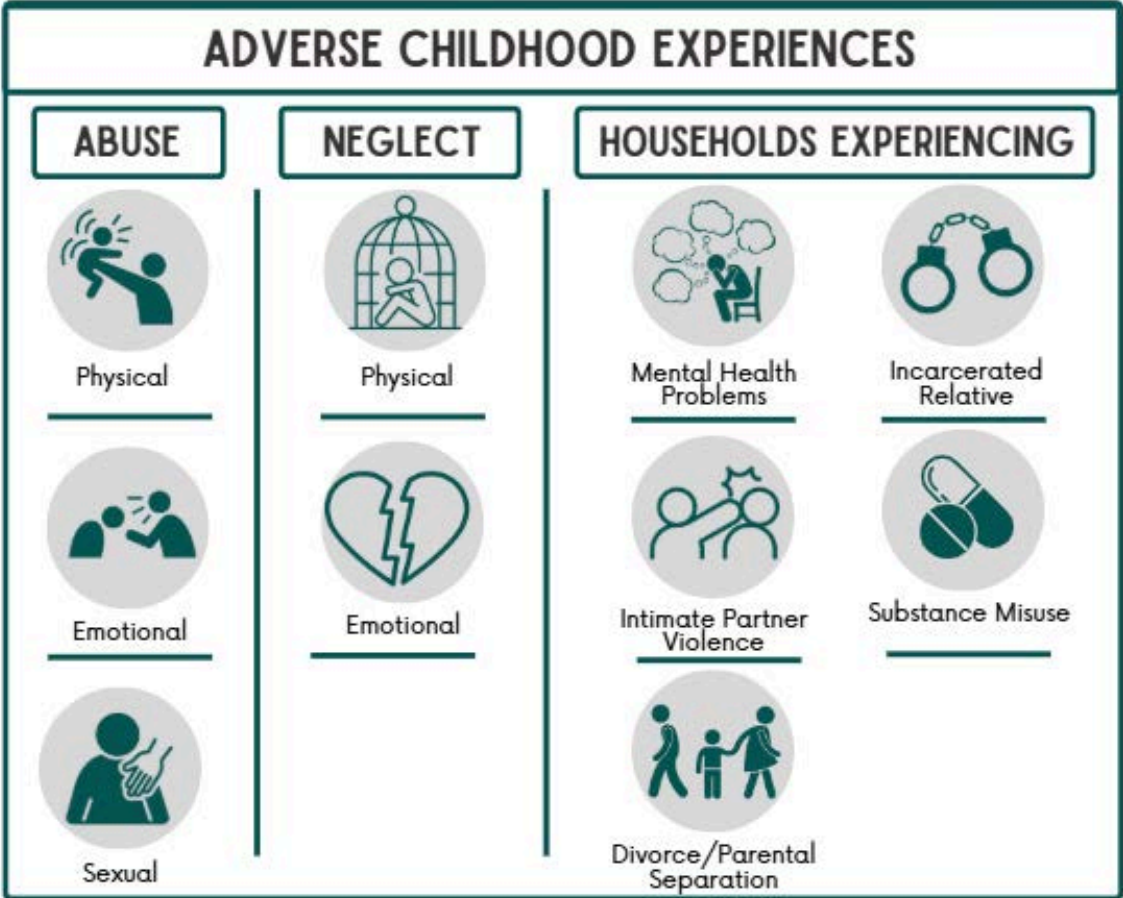
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The Story Behind the Curve

Conditions That Contribute to Poor Outcomes



Create the conditions for...



which increase the
likelihood for...



Discussion: Where do we see these root causes show up here?

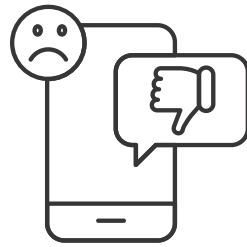


From Students' Perspectives: What's driving violence and conflict



Root Causes Named by Youth

Unaddressed trauma, weak relationships, and limited supports escalate conflict rather than prevent it.



Unmoderated peer conflict & online escalation



"Social media has a big contribution to fights."



Unaddressed stress, trauma, and emotional overload



"May be bringing family violence to school. Doesn't help to punish but to try to understand where violence is coming from."

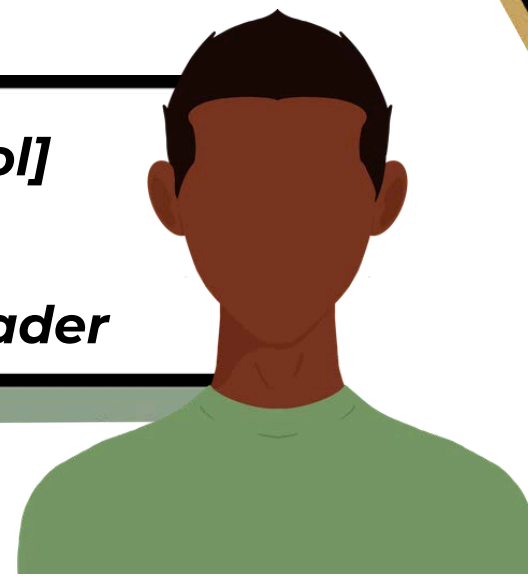
~Alexandria 12th grader



Environments that intensify conflict rather than prevent it

"The halls [at school] feel out of control."

~Alexandria 8th grader

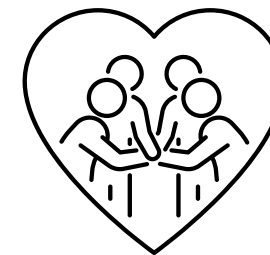


Lack of trust in adults and inconsistent system responses



"Students do not trust adults at school so they do not tell anyone about problems or conflict."

~Alexandria 12th grader



Limited opportunities for belonging, connection, and positive engagement

"Lack of access to support and lack of trust in adults mean that students have less ways to deal with conflict or people to talk to that know how to effectively help someone. Listen empathetically, not escalate it."

~Alexandria 12th grader

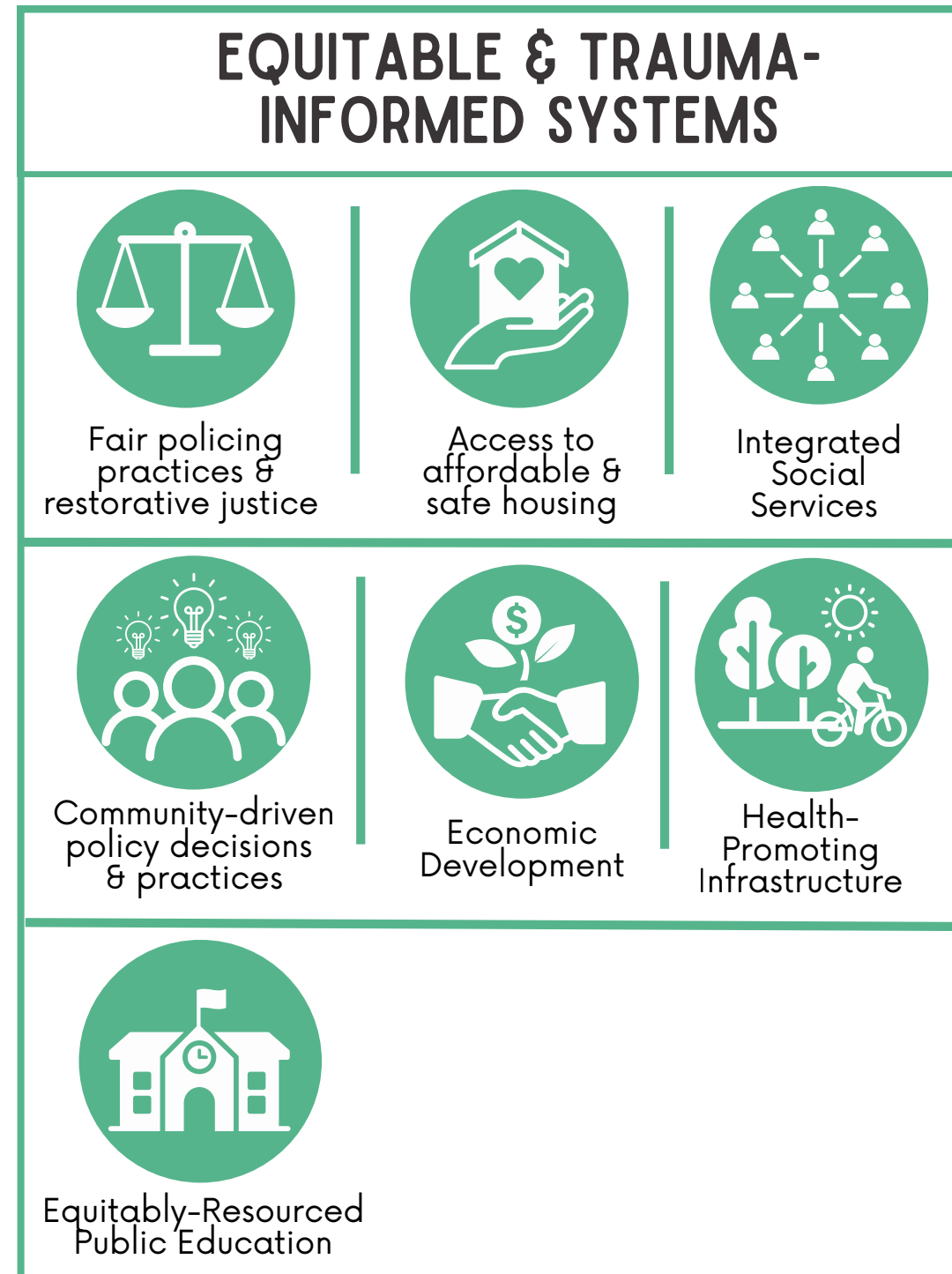




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What Works

Conditions That Promote Thriving Youth



**Discussion: Which protective factors are strongest here?
Which need strengthening?**

Strategies Youth Suggested

for more details, see “Youth Strategy Brief on Safety & Belonging”



Community-Based

- Strengthen adult roles, training & accountability
- Expand access to safe afterschool and enrichment opportunities
- Improve community-level safety conditions
- Expand mental health and therapeutic supports
- Build students' conflict-resolution and coping skills
- Expand youth leadership and peer-led solutions

School-Based (mostly)

- Strengthen reporting systems and follow-through
- Improve transparency and communication across systems
- Refine security and enforcement systems
- Improve security staffing, training, and oversight
- Use surveillance and technology strategically to improve weapons prevention and detection



Partners



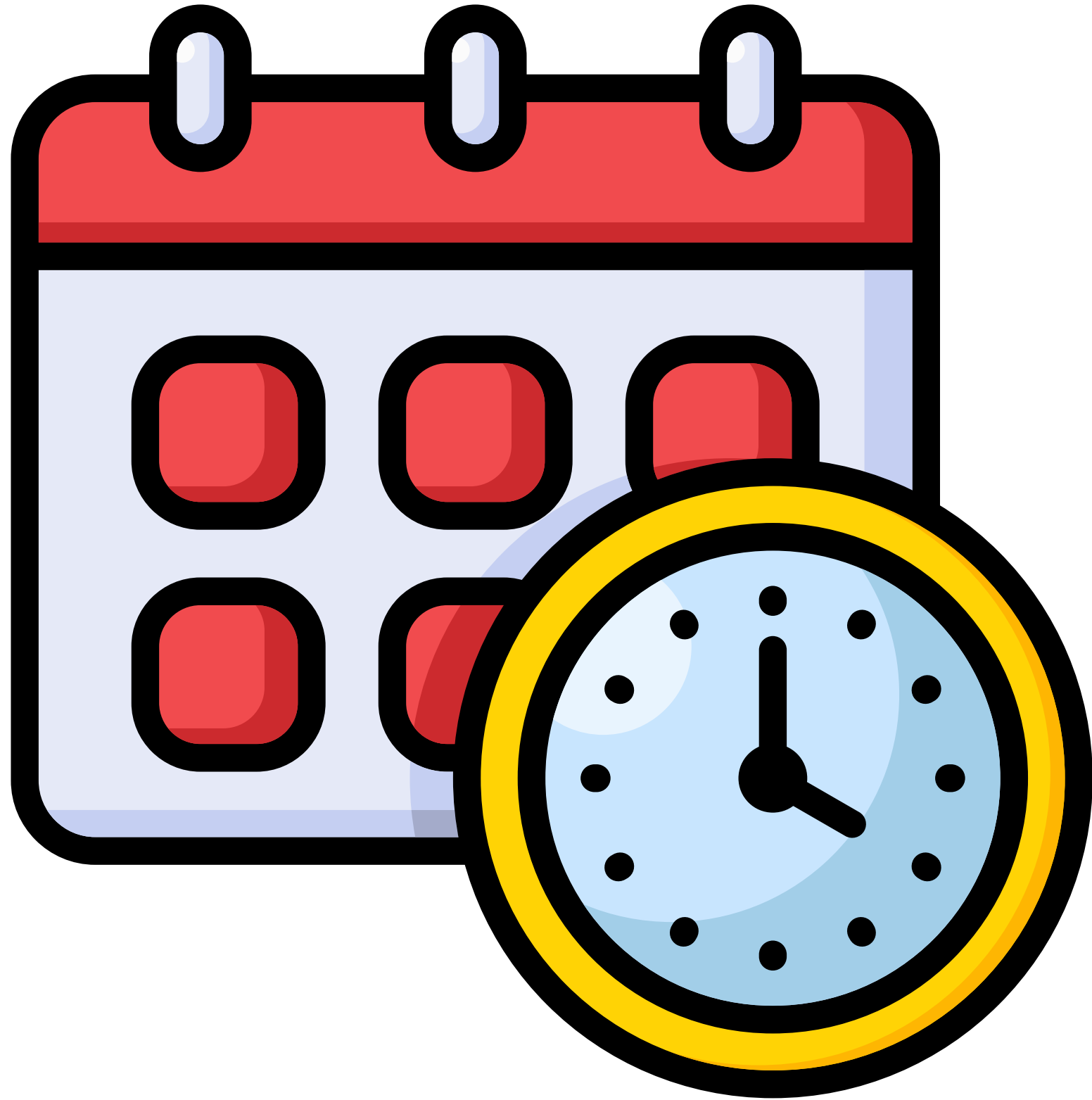
Who Has a Role to Play?

Who are we missing? What partners or existing efforts should we connect with?

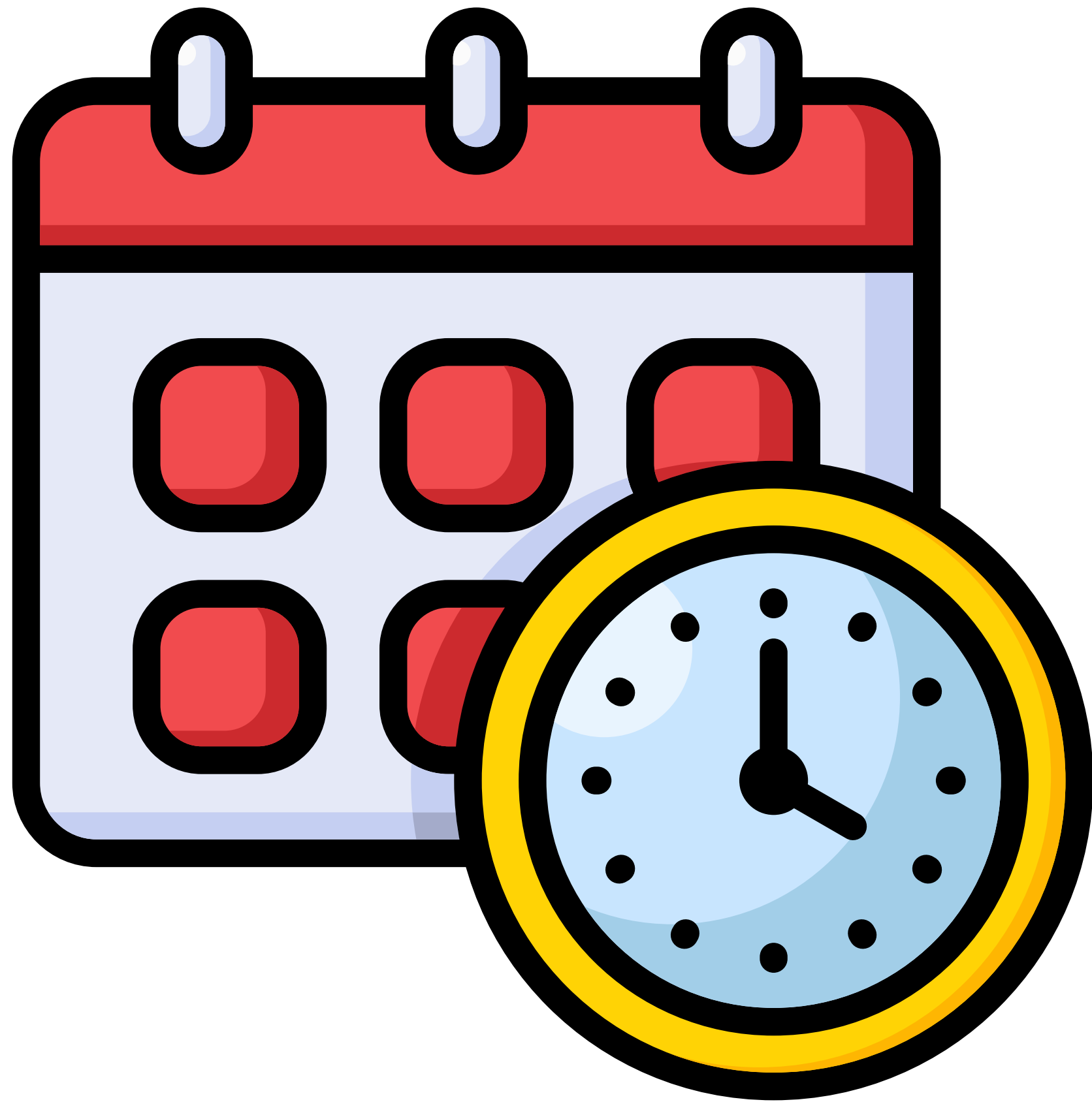


Community-Based Recommendations from youth:

- Train adults
- Expand access to OSTP
- Improve community safety
- Expand mental health supports
- Build conflict-resolution and coping skills
- Expand youth leadership



Scheduling & Leading Future Meetings



Meeting Cadence

When can we meet to...

- Map Existing Efforts & Identify Strategy Options (March 25?)
- Prioritize & Design Actions (April & May?)
- Finalize & Commit (June?)

Who wants to help plan & co-lead a future meeting?