

HENRY BUTLER

DEMOCRAT FOR CITY COUNCIL 41ST DISTRICT

BROWNSVILLE ★ OCEAN HILL ★ BEDFORD-STUYVESANT
EAST FLATBUSH ★ CROWN HEIGHTS

LEADERSHIP YOU CAN BELIEVE IN

Stopping the School to
Prison Pipeline in District 41:

Education Proposal By Henry Butler

PAID FOR BY HENRY BUTLER 41ST COUNCIL

STOPPING THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE IN DISTRICT 41:

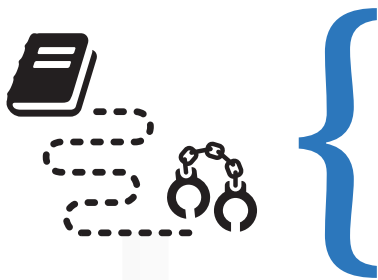
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INTRODUCTION

I am running for City Council in District 41 because I am committed to bettering the lives of all our residents, but I am first and foremost a father, and my sons Kevin and Miles are my ultimate inspiration to create positive change. It goes without saying that the future of our district lies within our children. According to the U.S. Census, over 40,000 residents of District 41 are school children, ages five to nineteen, and right now, their daily experiences are shaping them into the adults that will eventually lead our community.

Regrettably, the experiences many of our kids are having in school are not promising for a bright future. According to a report by the Urban Youth Collaborative and Center for Popular Democracy, every year, New York City's school-to-prison pipeline costs \$746 million. A *City & State* Op-Ed says that, "This figure includes salaries for police in schools, staffing for suspension hearings, incarceration and criminal court expenses, metal detectors, and surveillance cameras – and tens of millions in lost tax revenue from students who drop out of school after being arrested or suspended."¹



**New York City's
school-to-prison pipeline
costs \$746 million**

The school to prison pipeline is real and is harming the potential of our community. In today's world, a high-quality education is the great equalizer, and I truly believe that a high-quality educational experience is one in which our students feel safe and cared for. I have a plan with several steps to address the core issues building up the pipeline in our district. As a member of City Council, I will propose my own legislation and use my influence in several ways to support lowering the size of our classrooms, bringing an end to excessive suspensions and policing, introducing more extracurricular, afterschool and vocational programs and hiring more nurses and social workers in our schools.

¹ <http://cityandstateny.com/articles/opinion/new-york-city-schools-to-prison-pipeline.html>

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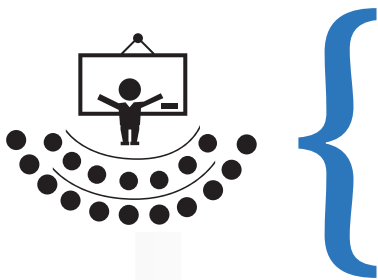
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SMALLER CLASSES, BETTER OUTCOMES

As a parent of school-aged children, I hope that every day my sons are getting the appropriate individual attention from their educators that they need to succeed. Working in groups fosters critical skills in collaboration, but personalized direction is also necessary for academic achievement. In addition, teachers dealing with easily manageable class sizes, are less likely to be disciplinarians toward children who just need extra attention.

According to the NYC Department of Education, the average size for K-8 classrooms in our district is 23.6, and 20.9 students per 9th grade to 12th grade classrooms, both of which are much higher than the citywide average of 14.5.² While the numbers may not sound so staggering, according to the Center for Public Education, smaller classes in the early grades (K-3) can boost student academic achievement and a class size of no more than 18 students per teacher is required to produce the greatest benefits.³ Also, the minority enrollment of our district is 94%, and minority and low-income students show even greater gains when placed in small classes in the primary grades.



18 students per teacher
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academic achievement

² <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/schools/data/classsize/classsize.htm>

³ <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Organizing-a-school/Class-size-and-student-achievement-At-a-glance/Class-size-and-student-achievement-Research-review.html>



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LEARNING SHOULDN'T STOP AFTER THE BELL

Our kids experience within our school walls is incredibly important, but what happens after school lets out is equally as imperative to their success. I propose bringing more afterschool and extracurricular programs to our community, so that learning doesn't stop after bell, and kids have something safe and productive to do after they leave their classrooms. The Promising Afterschool Programs Study observed approximately 3,000 elementary and middle school students, 85 percent of whom were Latino or African-American, from low-income families attending 35 high-quality afterschool programs across the nation. The study determined that those who attended high-quality programs regularly over the course of two years saw gains in their standardized math test scores compared to non-participants. Students regularly participating in the afterschool programs also saw reports of misconduct decrease, and students also shared that they decreased their use of drugs and alcohol.⁴

I also propose adding additional Beacon centers to our district, which currently has one. Beacon youth programs are designed to help participants acquire the skills and attitudes they need to graduate from high school, succeed in their chosen career, and give back to the community. I would work with the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) to open an additional 2 Beacon centers in our district. Each Beacon receives a base grant of \$400,000 annually, as well as an allotment of \$50,000 for space and cleaning costs, however, I would use my influence as a City Councilmember to secure additional funding from local and national foundations.⁵ According to Youth.gov, effective afterschool programs bring a wide range of benefits to youth, families and communities. Afterschool programs can boost academic performance, reduce risky behaviors, promote physical health, and provide a safe, structured environment for the children of working parents.⁶



**Proposing additional
Beacon Centers to help
participants acquire skills
needed to succeed**

⁴ http://childcare.wceruw.org/pdf/pp/study_of_after_school_activities_descriptive_report_year1.pdf

⁵ <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/after-school/beacon-youth-programs.page>

⁶ <http://youth.gov/youth-topics/afterschool-programs/benefits-youth-families-and-communities>



EXPANDING VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

While every child should receive a high-quality education that will prepare them for college, not all of our students subscribe to the four-year college track by choice and are in need of vocational education to get them ready for careers.

A study published by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute found that “Students with greater exposure to career and technical education are more likely to graduate from high school, enroll in a two-year college, be employed, and earn higher wages.” It also concluded that career and technical education didn’t preclude or discourage students from continuing their educations after high school.⁷ In fact, trade-centered educational options have been successful in equipping students with the skills they need to go from high school, directly into the workforce.



Students with exposure to career and technical education are likely **to graduate, enroll in college and be gainfully employed**

If elected, I will push to make sure that we offer more vocational opportunities in our schools, so that every child, no matter what their post-graduation ambitions are, can thrive.

⁷<https://edexcellence.net/tags/career-and-technical-education>



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OUR KIDS DESERVE MORE

We should be nurturing our students' minds and bodies, working to lower dropout rates by making sure no student is struggling during the day and has access to nurses and social workers. It is clear that children with unmet health needs are far less likely to have academic success and I will call on the city to expand access to health education and healthcare services in schools.

According to the Children's Defense Fund, Brownsville and Bed-Stuy respectively, almost doubles the city's average for hospitalizations due to asthma in ages 5-14. School-based health services can help mitigate these issues by providing timely care that reduces reliance on emergency rooms and quickly returns a child to the classroom.



School-based health services help mitigate issues by providing **timely care that reduces reliance on emergency rooms**

Almost a quarter of New York City students with a mental health disorder received low grades, mostly Cs, Ds and Fs compared to just 12% of those without a mental health disorder. Meaningful reductions have been seen in depression and anxiety among students in many school-based social-emotional education programs. In addition, schools that provide mental health services have reported better outcomes, such as lower disciplinary referrals and distractive/rebellious behavior, increased classroom attentiveness and peer associations, and an improvement in grades.

Also, our district has the 2nd highest percentage of homeless students in all of Brooklyn and many are suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. We need more social workers in our schools to provide support for our students who are struggling and at risk of acting out or dropping out.

We are currently investing in the school to prison pipeline rather than nurses and social workers. New York employs more than 5,500 New York Police Department school safety division personnel compared to only 2,800 full-time guidance counselors and 1,250 full-time social workers. This must change.



5,500 NYPD school safety personnel vs. 2,800 full-time guidance counselors and 1,250 full-time social workers



ENDING THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF SUSPENSIONS AND POLICING IN SCHOOLS

The high rate of suspensions in our city is out of control, and the demographic makeup of our district puts our kids in particular, at risk for being the victims of unnecessary suspensions, which is a leading contributor to the school to prison pipeline. According to the NYC Department of Education, in 2016, 1,205 individual children in our district were suspended two or more times during the school year. The majority of the suspensions were due to “minor altercations.” According to the New York Civil Liberties Union⁸, “research shows a clear correlation between suspensions and both low achievement and dropping out of school altogether. Such research also demonstrates a link between dropping out of school and incarceration later in life. Specifically, students who have been suspended are three times more likely to drop out by the 10th grade than students who have never been suspended and dropping out in turn triples the likelihood that a person will be incarcerated later in life.” Disturbingly, over 150 of these suspensions in our district were given to children in pre-K or elementary school. It is unacceptable that we are giving such harsh punishments to kids of that age and taking them out of the classroom.



Students who have been suspended are **three times more likely to drop out by the 10th grade**

It is also the case that black and Latino children get suspended at higher rates than white children. Our district is 94% minority enrollment, so nearly every single child in our schools are being affected by the suspension policy.

These facts are startling, and if elected, I will call for an intensive review into our schools’ suspension practices and work with schools to find alternative consequences for minor altercations. In most cases, a suspension is an inappropriate punishment that does not match the cognitive aptitude of the child being disciplined. We should be making our schools a comforting and supportive place to be, not a punitive one. Suspension should be an absolute last resort, because it just perpetuates a cycle of missing precious class time for a punishment that doesn’t match the indiscretion.

While I applaud Mayor Bill de Blasio’s efforts to update school policies by limiting the use of suspensions on young children, there is still more that needs to be done.

⁸ <https://www.nyclu.org/en/publications/impact-school-suspensions-and-demand-passage-student-safety-act>



CONCLUSION



The most important thing we can do for the future of our community, is invest in our children. Our classrooms should be the safest places in the world for our students to be, but unfortunately they are not adequately being taken care of. With the proposals I have laid out, I believe that we can get our schools back on track and back to teaching and cultivating upstanding adults.

Many of my proposals are tied to an increase of funding, which is why I will fight to make sure that our community gets the payout of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit. More than ten years ago, our schools were ordered to receive \$5.5 billion increase in funding, but we have yet to see that payment in full. According to the State Education Department, schools statewide are now owed \$3.6 billion in Foundation Aid under current state law. Finally getting that funding would be my top priority after being elected to office and from there, I can make these plans a reality.



With the proposals I have laid out, I believe that we can get our schools back on track and back to teaching and cultivating upstanding adults.

