

Strong relationships make students, teachers feel safer in schools

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A new report from the Consortium on Chicago School Research finds that building high-quality relationships can make students and teachers feel safer in their schools, including disadvantaged schools. Credit: CCSR

Students and teachers feel much safer in some Chicago Public Schools than others, and the best predictor of whether students and teachers feel safe is the quality of relationships inside the school building, according to a new report from the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute.

The report, “Student and Teacher Safety in Chicago Public Schools,” found that schools serving [students](#) from high-crime, high-poverty areas tended to feel less safe; however, demographics were not deterministic of safety. In fact, disadvantaged schools with high-quality relationships

actually felt safer than advantaged schools with low-quality relationships. This evidence provides initial support for the approach of programs such as Culture of Calm, a multi-million-dollar CPS initiative focused on reducing violence by fostering positive relationships among students and adults.

“The promise of these findings is that they provide concrete guidance on where educators struggling with crime and disorder should focus attention and resources,” said Matthew Steinberg, the lead author of the report. “There are so many factors schools can’t control—neighborhood crime, violence in students’ homes—so it is exciting to pinpoint an area that schools really can influence.”

Other key findings from the report include:

- Schools with high suspension rates are less safe than schools with lower suspension rates, even when they serve similar students from similar types of neighborhoods.
- Across CPS, the vast majority of students feel safe in their classrooms, but less safe in areas that lack adult supervision. Only about half of students feel safe in the area right outside their [school](#).
- More than half of CPS high school [teachers](#) report problems associated with robbery or theft in the school, and more than 60 percent report problems with gang activity and physical conflicts among students.
- Schools that enroll the most students who have struggled academically in the past are the most likely to have problems with safety and order.

Findings from the report come from CCSR student and teacher surveys, CPS administrative files and U.S. Census information.

Provided by University of Chicago

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