



# POSITION STATEMENT REGARDING RESTRAINT & ISOLATION IN SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## SUMMARY

In September 2021, Seattle Public Schools (SPS) updated [School Board Policy 3246](#) and [Superintendent Procedure 3246SP](#) regarding restraint and isolation in schools. School Board Policy 3246 called for the elimination of isolation as a practice in Seattle Public Schools, an important and forward-thinking move, as banning isolation is not yet required by Washington state law, despite significant efforts to do this (and more) in the last legislative session.<sup>1</sup>

To implement the changes required in both policy and procedure, SPS has taken a number of steps: contracted with Crisis Prevention Institute to provide de-escalation training district-wide over a period of three years, changed reporting requirements, and implemented quarterly-updated “Discipline Dashboards” with public facing data on disciplinary actions (though restraint and isolation incidents are not among the incidents reported). We commend the efforts Seattle Public Schools have made to date in addressing the use of practices that are disproportionately applied to students with disabilities and students of color, and elementary-age students.<sup>2</sup>

Given the recent DOJ Investigation and Settlement Agreement with Spokane Public Schools<sup>3</sup>, we believe it is in Seattle Public Schools’ best interest (not to mention the best interest, safety and mental wellness of our students *and* staff) to ensure that systems are in place and training and technical assistance are provided to support the elimination of these practices to the greatest degree possible. Spokane made great strides in the last few years to reduce restraint and eliminate isolation, yet the DOJ still determined that their use of restraint and isolation practices effectively “discriminated against students on the basis of disability by denying them equal opportunity to participate in or benefit from the District’s education program.” We sincerely hope that, despite its own efforts, Seattle will not be next.

With this in mind, we have drafted the Position Statement below as part of a good faith effort to meaningfully partner with Seattle Public Schools to ensure successful outcomes for our students, staff and families in addressing restraint and isolation in our schools. We would welcome a meeting with the Superintendent to discuss.

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<sup>1</sup> [“Isolation and Restraint of Students is Abuse”](#) (Seattle Times Editorial Board, March 28, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> [Black students are more than twice as likely to be suspended as white students](#), and most incidents of restraint and isolation happen to children in [grades pre-K to 5](#), with [93% of incidents involving students with disabilities](#). Our schools also continue to [segregate children with disabilities at higher rates than most other states](#).

<sup>3</sup> Settlement Agreement between The United States of America and Spokane Public Schools. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1580051/download>

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### **I. “PRESENT LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE”: THE CURRENT STATE OF SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS’ EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE ISOLATION AND REDUCE/ELIMINATE RESTRAINT IN SCHOOLS**

Below is a summary of the main points in the updated [School Board Policy 3246](#) and [Superintendent Procedure 3246SP](#) :

- The use of isolation is prohibited under all circumstances.
- The use of restraint on students is prohibited except in situations when there is an imminent likelihood of serious bodily harm to a person... [and] may be used only as a last resort and only to the extent necessary to prevent or minimize imminent bodily harm to the student or to others.
- The use of restraint or other physical crisis intervention must be immediately discontinued once there is no longer an imminent likelihood of serious bodily harm.
- Under no circumstances will these techniques be used as a form of discipline, punishment, for adult convenience, or as a response to property destruction or a disruption of a student that poses no risk of bodily harm.
- No restraint is permitted that is administered in a way that restricts breathing or speaking, or that is performed against a wall or the floor.
- All staff will be provided with the district’s established policy and procedure regarding the use of restraint and other uses of physical crisis intervention.
- The student’s parent or guardian must be notified when their student has been restrained (verbally within 24 hours; in a written incident report no later than 5 school days following the incident), EVEN if the restraint is part of a mutually-agreed Emergency Response Protocol.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [WAC 392-172A-02105 \(2\)](#): “School districts must follow the documentation and reporting requirements for any use of isolation, restraint, or restraint device consistent with RCW 28A.600.485, regardless of whether the use of isolation, restraint, or restraint device is included in the student’s emergency response protocols.”

- Processing the event with student(s), family, and staff who were involved in the incident is required. This includes determining whether proper procedures were followed and what training or support is needed to avoid similar staff responses to student behavior in the future. Also required: reviewing or creating a Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP) or, when patterns of similar challenging behavior are identified, conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and developing and implementing a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). The building administrator or designee will “[c]onsider whether any follow up is appropriate for the student or any student who witnessed the incident.”
- “The Superintendent will report annually to the Board on the uses of restraint, including disaggregated data by race, disability category, and school. The report will also include the types and frequency of technical assistance and supports provided to schools to change practices to reduce the use of restraint in buildings.”
- There is a process to report suspected inappropriate (or unreported) uses of restraint (isolation is not mentioned) for parents or guardians of students eligible for special education services (via the complaint process outlined in Superintendent Procedure 2162SP—for “victims of discrimination on the basis of disability”). For all other students, complaints are handled by the Building Administrator or, where appropriate, the Director of Schools.
- There is also a process for staff to report “inappropriate uses of restraints, or abuses of a student” (but with no explicit reference to isolation, requiring us to surmise that this practice falls under “abuse”).

**Trauma-Informed De-Escalation Training:** Seattle Public Schools began the process of training all staff (over the course of three years) in de-escalation trainings from the [Crisis Prevention Institute](#) (CPI)<sup>5</sup>, and in addition, identifying “four to five staff members” in each building to be trained on “positive support of student behavior, cultural responsiveness, effective communication for defusing and de-escalating situations, and safe and appropriate use of restraints and other physical crisis interventions.” These trainings seem intended to meet the Superintendent’s procedural requirement that “[a]ll staff will be trained in trauma informed de-escalation strategies.”

## II. “AREAS OF CONCERN”: OUR POSITION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the position of the Seattle Special Education PTSA that the areas of concern about the District’s policy and its implementation outlined below should be addressed by the School Board and the Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools, according to the recommendations that follow.

### A) DEFINITIONS

We, like the 2022 [OSPI Crisis Response Workgroup](#)<sup>6</sup>, find the “term ‘likelihood of serious harm’ not a significant enough threshold for the implementation of restraint practices. The workgroup recommends using the term “*imminent danger of serious physical injury* that clarifies that restraint should only be used as a last resort to maintain safety in emergency situations when there is substantial risk of imminent danger of serious physical injury to the student and/or others.” This terminology is consistent with that of the Keeping All Students Safe Act (KASSA)<sup>7</sup>, and SSEPTSA recommends Seattle Public Schools lead by example and adopt this terminology.

### B) REPORTING

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<sup>5</sup> We have been told that SPS’s plan is to reach every school over a period of three years, beginning with schools who have demonstrated the highest instances of restraint; 2022-23 school year is year two of this plan. We have asked for, but not yet received, written documentation outlining this training plan.

<sup>6</sup> This group was tasked in 2022 with developing a legislative report on topics related to student isolation and restraint. Kristi De Vadder, an SSEPTSA member, was a member of the workgroup.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/1858/text?r=2&s=2>

There has been inadequate and inconsistent reporting on restraint and isolation at multiple levels:

- From the Superintendent. It took the Superintendent more than two years to provide an annual report to the School Board on Restraint & Isolation. The last published report was in February 2021.<sup>8</sup> Sometime in 2023, SPS posted a Coordinated School Health Update (not dated) on Restraint & Isolation Incidents for the 2021-22 School Year.<sup>9</sup> The report was nearly identical in content to the report issued two years prior, and data provided was only disaggregated by disability (Students with IEPs), but not by race or school building, as required in [Superintendent Procedure 3246SP](#). Incomplete reporting makes it impossible for the School Board to determine whether the implementation is successful.
- From individual school buildings and classrooms, because educators and administrators are either a) not aware of the policies and procedures they need to follow, or b) they don't recognize what they are doing as constituting restraint, as defined in Superintendent Procedure 3246SP, or c) because they are disincentivized from reporting due to fear of legal action or other retribution. Families are routinely excluded from notification, likely for the same reasons. *We are aware of multiple instances of restraint and of isolation that have gone unreported, with reports we've received from families (with incident reports) compared against our public records requests for the period between September 2021-March 2023. We suspect significant underreporting of restraint and isolation is occurring due to these factors.*
- Aside from Public Records Requests, there is no public-facing data reporting on restraint and isolation in Seattle Public Schools.
- The frequency of reporting to the School Board (annually) is insufficient to ensure the kind of progress monitoring that can result in meaningful improvements.
- There is no mention of tracking and reporting on the practice of isolation in Superintendent Procedure 3246SP. Merely banning the practice does not ensure its elimination.

*RECOMMENDATION: CONSISTENT, FREQUENT (QUARTERLY) REPORTING FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT*

Reporting requirements outlined in Board Policy 3246 state: "Superintendent will report annually to the Board on the uses of restraint, including disaggregated data by race, disability category, and school. The report will also include the types and frequency of technical assistance and supports provided to schools to change practices to reduce the use of restraint in buildings." The Superintendent failed to provide a report to the School Board for over two years, in violation with the policy.

In addition, restraint and isolation numbers can be used to address overuse of these practices and target reduction efforts, and this can be reported on regularly (at the very least quarterly) to the School Board to ensure adequate progress is being made.

*RECOMMENDATION: EXPANDED REPORTING FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT*

The reporting requirements as described in School Board Policy 3246 are insufficiently clear and do not capture enough information for the Board to make any meaningful determination of the success or limitations of the policy/procedure. We therefore recommend the following:

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<sup>8</sup> Friday Memo to the Board: Schools & Continuous Improvement Essential Information for the week of February 11-14.

<https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/3246-Annual-Report-Data-of-Incidences-Involving-Restraint-or-Isolation.pdf>

<sup>9</sup>Coordinated School Health Update (undated):

<https://seattleschools.sharepoint.com/sites/SPSBoardOffice-O365/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FSPSBoardOffice%2DO365%2FShared%20Documents%2FSchool%20Board%2FAnnual%20Reports%2F2022%2D23%2F3246%20Annual%20Report%20%2D%20Restraint%20or>

1. Include a reporting requirement to **report isolation incidents** in the Superintendent Procedure, and ensure that forms used to report isolation make clear that the practice is banned, so as not to imply that the practice is allowed just because it can be reported. Isolation can and should be tracked and reported, even though it is prohibited, until it is gone, because it will take time to eliminate the practice.
2. Include staff reports and family complaints (504 Grievance, HIB, or emailed complaints to Building Supervisor, Director of Schools, etc.) on inappropriate (or unreported) use of restraint and/or isolation in the Superintendent's Report to the School Board. These reports and complaints are illustrative of the limits of the policy/procedure and may be used to inform future policy revisions or procedural changes, as well as targeted interventions in schools.
3. Include restraint and isolation data reporting on the Discipline Dashboard for every school.
4. The Superintendent's report should be sent to known organizations or individuals who have a vested interest in this work or request it in advance (or after publication) to ensure there are opportunities for outside monitoring and community input. Individuals or organizations with a vested interest in this work should not have to keep a vigilant watch on School Board agendas to have access to this information.<sup>10</sup>

**C) POLICY AND PROCEDURE OMISSION: NON-PUBLIC AGENCIES AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DISTRICTS CONTRACTED WITH SPS**

There is no mention of Non-Public Agencies or Educational Service Districts being subject to the same prohibitions, restrictions, and reporting requirements outlined in School Board Policy 3246 or Superintendent Procedure 3246SP. If isolation is prohibited and restraint is limited in SPS, then SPS should not be sending students to educational programs whose use of these methods is not in alignment with District policy and procedure, and data from these institutions should be included in the Superintendent's report.

*RECOMMENDATION: HOLD NON-PUBLIC AGENCIES AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DISTRICTS CONTRACTED BY SPS TO THE SAME REQUIREMENTS*

Amend the School Board Policy and Superintendent Procedure to correct this omission. This applies to all sections: family notification, staff training, reporting, processing of the incidents, etc., and should be reflected in all contracts with these institutions.

**D) FAMILY EDUCATION AND NOTIFICATION ON THE DEFINITIONS, USE, LIMITS OR PROHIBITION OF RESTRAINT AND ISOLATION**

Families are mostly unaware of the district's prohibition of isolation and limits on the use of restraint in our schools.

1. There is no mention of the definitions, use, limits or prohibition of restraint or isolation in the Student Rights and Responsibilities Pamphlet<sup>11</sup> (Restraint, Isolation, and Other Physical Uses of Crisis Intervention

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<sup>10</sup> [Restraint and Seclusion: Resource Document. U.S. Department of Education](#). May 2012, p.23. "States, districts, and schools should consider making these data public, ensuring that personally identifiable information is protected."

<sup>11</sup> [Seattle Public Schools Student Rights and Responsibilities Brochure](#). 2022-2023.

are mentioned briefly in the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook<sup>12</sup>, an online document that families are unlikely to see).

2. Even families of students who receive special education services are unaware of the definitions, use, limits or prohibition of restraint or isolation. While the statement “The district has a policy for notifying parents regarding the use of restraint or isolation. A copy of this policy is attached to this IEP” is included on every IEP, yet this policy is frequently not included.
3. Often, the notification parents or guardians receive after a restraint has been used is the *first time they hear of the practice in schools*. And, as noted above, *underreporting* (and, therefore *under notification*) on the use of restraints and isolation in our schools continues to be a problem.
4. Families who lack internet access, time to sift through information online, or whose first language is not English are particularly impacted by the ways this information is (or isn’t) communicated.
5. **All SPS families deserve to be informed of the District’s policy and procedure on these practices to the greatest extent possible, with definitions, restrictions, prohibitions, and *examples of each outlined in plain language, and in families’ home language.***
6. Families can and should play a vital role in ensuring that procedures are followed, and they can only do this when they know their rights.<sup>13</sup>

*RECOMMENDATION: IMPROVE PARENT/GUARDIAN NOTIFICATION OF DISTRICT’S RESTRAINT & ISOLATION POLICY*  
SPS must send a written notice explaining the definitions around restraint and isolation, and the policies and procedures regarding use, limits or prohibition—with *definitions and examples written in plain language and the family’s home language*—home to the family of every SPS student.<sup>14</sup> This notice must be sent in the student’s home

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<sup>12</sup>[Seattle Public Schools Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook](#), 2022-2023, p. 43 “**Restraint, Isolation and Other Uses of Physical Crisis Intervention:** Students shall remain free from unnecessary or unreasonable restraint, restraint devices, isolation and other uses of physical intervention. The use of restraints on students is prohibited except in situations when there is an imminent likelihood of serious bodily harm to a person. In such situations, restraint may be used only as a last resort and only to the extent necessary to prevent or minimize imminent bodily harm to the student or others. The use of isolation is prohibited under all circumstances. (See, Board Policy No. 3246 and Superintendent Procedure No. 3246SP)”

<sup>13</sup> [WAC 392-400-110 \(3\)](#): “A school district must make discipline policies and procedures available to families and the community. The school district must annually provide the district's discipline policies and procedures to all district personnel, students, and parents, which may require language assistance for students and parents with limited-English proficiency under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

<sup>14</sup> [Restraint and Seclusion: Resource Document. U.S. Department of Education](#), May 2012, p.20. “All parents should receive, at least annually, **written information about the policies and procedures for restraint and seclusion** issued by the State, district, or school. This information should be included, for example, in the district’s or school’s handbook of policies and procedures or other appropriate and widely distributed school publications. Schools, districts, and States are encouraged to **involve parents when developing policies and procedures** on restraint and seclusion.

These written descriptions should include the following: (1) **a statement that mechanical restraint should not be used**, that schools should never use a drug or medication to control behavior or restrict freedom of movement (except as authorized by a licensed physician or other qualified health professional), and physical restraint and seclusion should not be used except in situations where the child’s behavior poses an imminent danger of serious physical harm to self or others and should be discontinued as soon as the imminent danger of serious physical harm to self or others has dissipated; (2) **definitions of restraint and seclusion**; (3) information on the **procedures for determining when restraint or seclusion can and cannot be properly** used in school settings; (4) information

language, and it must make clear that reporting is required even when performed in accordance with a mutually-agreed Emergency Response Protocol.

#### **E) REPORTING ON THE INAPPROPRIATE (OR UNREPORTED) USE OF RESTRAINT AND/OR ISOLATION**

1. Superintendent Procedure 3246SP provides a detailed process, complete with timelines, for reporting and investigating staff reports on the inappropriate use of restraint, but *fails to include isolation as a practice to be tracked (so it can be eliminated)*.
2. The Complaint Process outlined for parents or guardians directs those with students who receive special education services to file a complaint of discrimination on the basis of disability with the ADA/Section 504 Grievance Coordinator, a potentially lengthy process, though one that does have established timelines for investigation (that are much longer than those required for staff reports) and protections against retaliation (through filing a separate grievance).
3. Parents or guardians of all other students are directed to make complaints to their Building Supervisor or, if the Building Supervisor is involved in the complaint, their Director of Schools.
4. There are no timelines for investigating parent or guardian reports of restraint (or isolation, as it's not included in the procedure) in the Complaint Process (for students with or without special education services) outlined in SP3246, *yet there is a clear timeline established for investigating staff reports*.
5. There is no mention of protection of students or families against retaliation for reporting, as is referenced under the staff reporting section.<sup>15</sup>

#### **RECOMMENDATION: ESTABLISH CLEAR TIMELINES AND PROTECTIONS FOR INVESTIGATING PARENT OR GUARDIAN REPORTS OF INAPPROPRIATE USE OF RESTRAINT OR ISOLATION**

School Board Policy 3246 and Superintendent Procedure 3246SP exist to prevent physical and emotional harm to students, families and staff due to the potentially traumatic (not to mention abusive) nature of these practices. It's important that reports made by families of students who they believe to have been inappropriately subjected to these practices are taken seriously, that investigations are conducted with expediency, and that protections are in place to prevent retaliation toward the student or the family for reporting. Reports should not be limited to reports of restraints, as the practice of isolation will need to continue to be tracked to ensure its elimination.

1. Establish clear timelines for investigating parent or guardian complaints, for both students who receive special education services (a complaint of discrimination on the basis of disability is not the same as a complaint reporting restraint or isolation, and may take too long to ensure the safety of the child—a HIB complaint may be more appropriate and expedient) and those who do not receive special education services. Given the nature of the complaint (a safety issue, and potential abuse allegation), it is in the best interest of the child to make this process **as expedient as possible**, regardless of whether they are eligible for special education services.

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on the **procedural safeguards** that are in place to protect the rights of children and their parents; (5) a description of the **alignment of a district's and school's policies and procedures with applicable State or local laws or regulations**; (6) **procedures for notifying parents when restraint or seclusion has been used with their child**; and (7) **procedures for notifying parents about any changes to policies and procedures on restraint or seclusion**. If policy or **procedural changes** are made during the school year staff and family members should be notified immediately."

<sup>15</sup> [School Board Policy 5245, Anti-Retaliation](#)

2. Include the ability to report suspected **isolation** in the complaint.
3. Draft a School Board Policy providing protections to students, families who report incidents of restraint or isolation or, if an existing policy already provides these protections, cite that policy in the procedure.
4. Establish a process for individuals who are not a student's parent or guardian OR an employee of the District to report suspected inappropriate uses of restraint or isolation.

#### **F) ACCURATE INCIDENT REPORTING AND FAMILY NOTIFICATION**

No training is provided to staff on policy and procedural changes. The requirement as written in the procedure is simply to provide all staff "with the district's established policy and procedure regarding the use of restraint and other uses of physical crisis intervention." Providing written documentation of the policy and procedure does very little to prevent or limit these practices.

#### *RECOMMENDATION: DISTRICT-WIDE TRAINING ON ACCURATE REPORTING AND FAMILY NOTIFICATION*

1. SPS must provide district-wide training to, and consistent monitoring of, all staff to ensure that they follow the requirements to: a) notify parents/guardians of incidents of restraint, and b) accurately report incidents within the timeframes required in Superintendent Procedure 3246SP.
2. Ensure that all staff are knowledgeable about what does and does not constitute an incident of restraint or an incident of isolation, using clear examples in plain language.<sup>16</sup>
3. Ensure that staff understand that the purpose of reporting is not punitive but is for District staff to identify staff and school buildings that would benefit from technical assistance.
4. This does not have to be a standalone training, as it could be incorporated into an existing mandatory training on student safety.

#### **G) DISTRICT-WIDE MANDATORY STAFF TRAININGS ON PROACTIVE, COLLABORATIVE, STUDENT-CENTERED BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES**

The trauma-informed de-escalation trainings currently being implemented by SPS (via the Crisis Prevention Institute, or CPI) are insufficient to meet the needs of and prevent harm to our most vulnerable kids, our students furthest from educational justice, **as the CPI trainings prioritize crisis intervention, de-escalation, and compliance over PROACTIVE, COLLABORATIVE, STUDENT-CENTERED strategies** designed to understand and prevent behaviors that can lead to restraint. While de-escalation is necessary, it does nothing to solve the problems that are leading to the kinds of behaviors that result in a staff member choosing to restrain or isolate a student. True trauma-informed trainings give staff the tools to meet student academic, behavioral and social-emotional needs, creating durable solutions to address concerning behavior. This work is what Superintendent Jones has referred to as "the front end" work needed to address disproportionality in discipline<sup>17</sup> and what Dr. Ross Greene calls "early" interventions.<sup>18</sup>

- The timeline for implementation of CPI training (all schools over the course of three years) means that some staff may be in a job for up to three years before they even receive training (see footnote 2, above).

<sup>16</sup> [WAC 392-400-110 \(3\)](#) "The school district must ensure district employees and contractors are **knowledgeable** of the discipline policies and procedures."

<sup>17</sup> "This is really about disproportionality in discipline... and we have a Guardrail that says 'the Superintendent will not allow the use of disciplinary actions as a substitute for culturally responsive behavior and social and emotional supports for students with and without disabilities.' What we're talking about is the back-end of what we need to do on the front-end, and the front-end is that real proactive work so that we don't get to this place. We have... African American males are three times... 300 percent more likely to be disciplined than their counterparts. And so, this is work that we need to do on the front end." Superintendent Brent Jones at the [March 2, 2022 School Board Meeting](#), discussing the Disciplinary Appeal Council.

<sup>18</sup> ["Kids Do Well If They Can" Presentation](#) for Seattle and Washington State by Dr. Ross Greene. 11/15/22



- Superintendent Procedure 3246SP does not call for technical assistance to schools with high numbers of restraints to address school culture, staff training and other professional support to reduce the number of restraints in those schools.
- Despite the fact that the majority of students in SPS who are restrained and isolated are students with disabilities,<sup>19</sup> Superintendent Procedure 3246SP does not call for technical assistance from the Special Education Department to address the needs of individual students who are restrained multiple times; those students are communicating via their behavior that something in the educational environment is wrong and needs to be changed for them to be successful.
- Members of the Seattle Special Education PTSA have testified about all of these issues on multiple occasions.<sup>20</sup>

*RECOMMENDATION: DISTRICT-WIDE TRAINING IN COLLABORATIVE, PROACTIVE, STUDENT-CENTERED BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES*

1. Provide district-wide staff training that goes beyond crisis intervention, addresses the role that school culture plays, and equips educators with strategies that are proactive, collaborative and student-centered, such as the [Collaborative & Proactive Solutions \(CPS\)](#) model offered by Dr. Ross Greene and Lives in the Balance. See [this article](#) for an example of a successful implementation of the CPS model that resulted in dramatic reductions of incidents leading to students being restrained and isolated. Lives in the Balance has web-based training available at no cost to Seattle Public Schools, so training can be provided asynchronously.
2. Require this training for Non-Public Agencies and Educational Service Districts that Seattle Public Schools contracts with.
3. The training should be provided on an annual basis (or during onboarding), at a minimum, and include substitute teachers, emergency substitute teachers, and paraprofessionals of all employment classifications.
4. Include targeted coaching in proactive, collaborative and student-centered strategies in schools with high numbers of restraints. Dr. Greene has offered for Lives in the Balance to provide this training in person. Approximate cost would be \$9-\$11K per school.

**H) POSTVENTION PROTOCOL: PROCESSING THE INCIDENT(S)**

- There is insufficient guidance in Superintendent Procedure 3246SP on the timing of providing support to students, families, and staff in processing incidents of restraint and/or isolation, or in verifying that this support has been provided.
- There is currently no requirement that meetings to process these incidents involve a mental health professional or a student-preferred or trusted staff member and/or family advocate.
- There is no clear guidance on procedures to follow to address repeated uses of restraint: on an individual child, within a classroom, or by the same individual. This is left up to the sole discretion of the Building Administrator.

*RECOMMENDATION: ADDRESSING EMOTIONAL NEEDS POST-RESTRAINT*

Restraints are traumatic for both students and staff. As such, students, their families, and staff must be offered the opportunity to meet with a mental health professional, student-preferred or trusted staff member, or family advocate familiar with language and norms of the family, following any incident of restraint.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/health-safety/school-safety-center/restraint-and-isolation>

<sup>20</sup> <https://seattlespecialeducationptsa.org/news-%26-advocacy/f/school-board-testimony-9921>

SPS must develop specific, *clearly-communicated protocol* that includes:

1. The student(s) involved, and their families;
2. Any and all staff and students involved in or witness to the incident;
3. A qualified mental health professional or student-preferred or trusted staff member and/or family advocate,
4. Desired outcomes (e.g. addressing the events that led up to the restraint, repairing the relationship between teacher, student and peers),
5. Clear timelines for when and how these meetings will be held.

**RECOMMENDATION: ESTABLISH CLEAR GUIDANCE ON ADDRESSING PATTERNED INSTANCES OF RESTRAINT**

Add the following language: “The use of restraint, particularly when there is repeated use for an individual child, multiple uses within the same classroom, or multiple uses by the same individual, should trigger a review [involving the Director of Schools] and, if appropriate, revision of strategies currently in place to address dangerous behavior [(behavior that poses imminent danger of serious physical harm to self or others)].”<sup>21</sup>

### **I) STUDENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

There is currently no mention in School Board Policy 3246 or Superintendent Procedure 3246SP of meaningfully engaging students and families as stakeholders in the process of developing or revising the policy, procedure, or implementation, while these groups are critical to ensuring their successful development and implementation.<sup>22</sup>

The Seattle Special Education PTSA has testified on the barriers to student and family engagement before.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>24,25</sup>Moreover, it is critical to ensure that the intersectionalities of students and families (e.g. of seeking out input from BIPOC, Multilingual, LGBTQ+ and mobile population students and families) should play a significant role in engagement.

**RECOMMENDATION: CONTINUOUS FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AT ALL LEVELS**

The Superintendent Procedure should outline how SPS plans to provide opportunities for meaningful and trauma-informed involvement of families whose students have 1) experienced restraint or isolation and 2) are at risk of being impacted by these practices, as well as the students themselves (should they wish to participate). Those impacted must be involved at all levels of the work to eliminate isolation and reduce/eliminate restraint: from giving input on District-wide policies, practices, and trainings (via the Special Education Taskforce, Professional Development Workgroup, Parent Advisory Council, MTSS Implementation Workgroups, etc.), to building-level discipline decisions (BLT representation and CSIP input), to individual Student Intervention Team and IEP Meetings, etc. (*SEAC as that will be launched this school year*)

Specific engagement plans to include intersectionality of students and families—of students/families with disabilities, BIPOC, low income, LGBTQ+, students experiencing homelessness or in foster care— should also be outlined.

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<sup>21</sup> [Restraint and Seclusion: Resource Document. U.S. Department of Education](#). May 2012, p.12.

<sup>22</sup> [WAC 392-400-110 \(2\)](#): “ Development and review. A school district must develop and periodically review discipline policies and procedures with the participation of school personnel, **students, parents, families, and the community.**”

<sup>23</sup> <https://seattlespecialeducationptsa.org/news-%26-advocacy/f/school-board-testimony-82521>

<sup>24</sup> <https://seattlespecialeducationptsa.org/news-%26-advocacy/f/letter-policy-3246-and-accompanying-procedure>

<sup>25</sup>

<https://seattlespecialeducationptsa.org/news-%26-advocacy/f/letter-proposed-isolation-restraint-policy-and-procedures>

### **III. CONCLUSION**

The Seattle Special Education PTSA urges Seattle Public Schools to act immediately in enacting these changes to Seattle Public Schools' restraint and isolation policy, procedure, and procedural implementation. A bold and progressive new policy and procedure based on the above recommendations will help to rebuild the public trust while affirming the dignity of all SPS students. Our goal should always be to eliminate both the need for and the use of these practices in our schools: in the interest of student and staff safety and mental health, and in the practice of student outcomes focused governance. Taking these steps positions Seattle Public Schools as a leader in the work of enacting procedural and cultural change required to support the needs of **all students**, and in particular students who are most at risk of being harmed: our students who are furthest from educational justice.