

SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE



TEACHER DIVERSITY



# Philadelphia State of Education Report

2017-2018

PUBLISHED BY **URBED**



LOCAL CONTROL



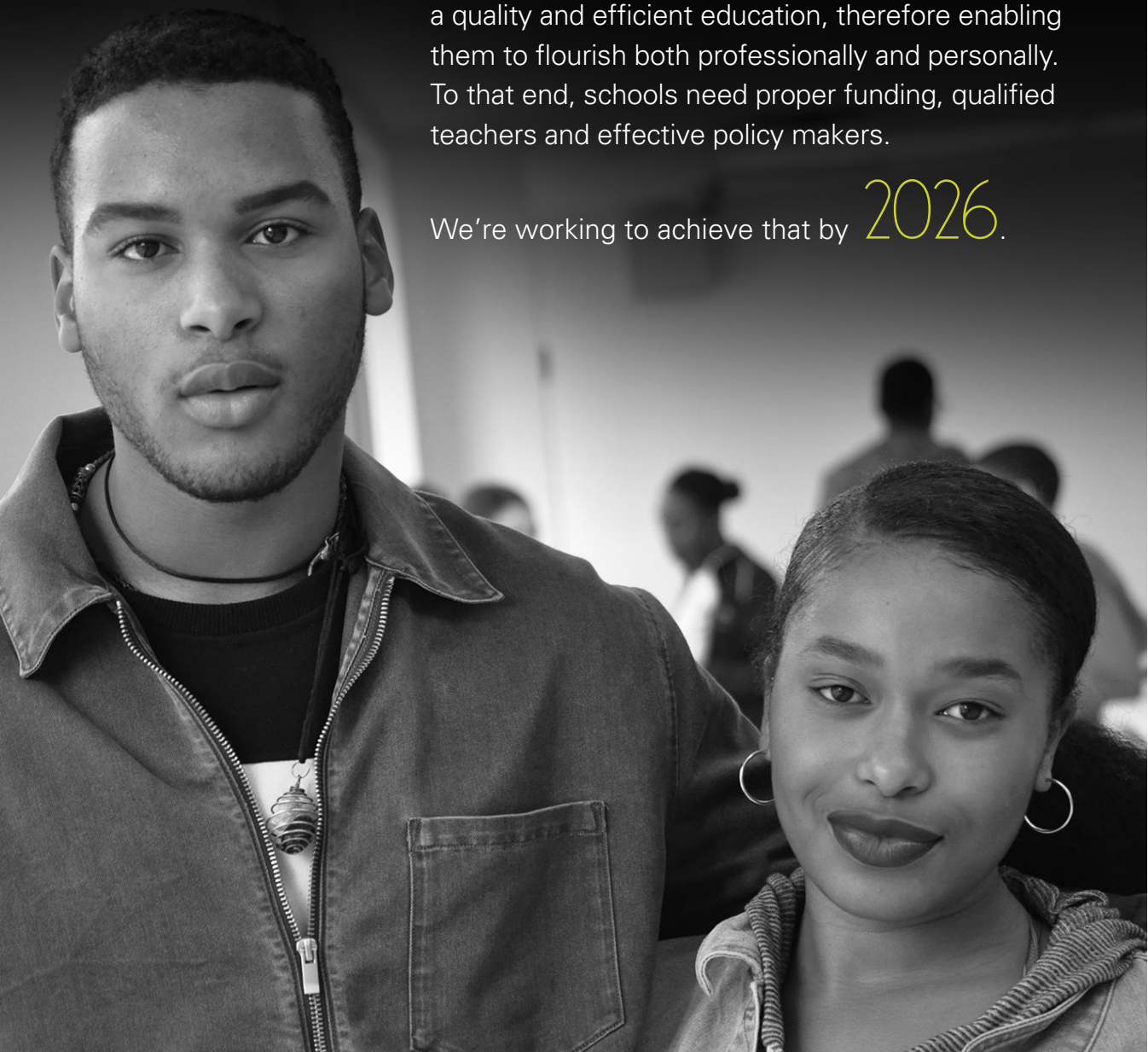
BUILDING CONDITIONS

UrbEd is a student-led, student-run nonprofit organization that advocates for students and families who are deprived of a quality and efficient urban education. We work directly with students, parents, teachers, school staff, policy makers and organizations who are fighting for the same objective.

## URBED BELIEVES...

students in the urban school system should receive a quality and efficient education, therefore enabling them to flourish both professionally and personally. To that end, schools need proper funding, qualified teachers and effective policy makers.

We're working to achieve that by 2026.



**UrbEd is working in Philadelphia to reform the urban education system in**

## **FOUR KEY AREAS:**



### **School-To-Prison Pipeline**

Dismantle the brutal and disproportionate criminalization of students



### **Teacher Diversity**

Ensure students have educators who look like them



### **Local Control**

Gain democratic local control over Philadelphia schools



### **Building Conditions**

Increase school funding to give students a safe and positive environment

## **STUDENT FEEDBACK**

**UrbEd surveyed** students from 10 different high schools in Philadelphia. We posed a series of questions that helped us glean insights into the thoughts and opinions of those most directly affected by urban education. A sampling of that data is reported herein. Student feedback will inform our goals moving forward. 🎯 Read on to find out how UrbEd is **ON TARGET**.

# School-To-Prison Pipeline



Nationally, Black and Latino students are suspended and expelled at much higher rates than White students<sup>1</sup>. Many scholars contend that zero-tolerance policies disproportionately affect students of color<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, there have been numerous accounts of erroneous suspensions. According to Youth for Change and the Advancement Project (2014), students have reported being suspended for laughing in class, getting out of a chair to sharpen a pencil, or for “popping” gum in class. Out-of-school suspensions are particularly problematic and they are highly associated with later involvement in the juvenile justice system. This is primarily evident in Fabelo’s (2011) study, where he found that a single suspension or expulsion for a minor offense (not including a weapon) almost tripled a student’s likelihood of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system in the following academic year.”

—JUAN BENNETT, M.A.

Professor of Criminal Justice at Temple University

---

<sup>1</sup> Kang Brown et. al. 2013

<sup>2</sup> Skiba, 2001; Advancement Project, 2010

---

2015-2016  
SCHOOL YEAR

**16,401**  
SUSPENSIONS

**5.5%**  
INCREASE FROM  
PREVIOUS YEAR

 OUR FOCUS

UrbEd’s focus on Zero-Tolerance Policies and suspensions stems from the connection they have with student criminalization and incarceration.

## STUDENT FEEDBACK

What do you think about students being suspended?

70%

felt there were **more beneficial alternatives**

20%

felt suspension is acceptable but **other alternatives should be pursued**

10%

felt suspension is **not an issue**

"It's so **useless**. They suspend students at my school all the time for unnecessary stuff when they could have had a detention. Now the student has to deal with that forever being on their transcript and aren't even learning while suspended. Half the time the kid's parents are at work and the kid is roaming the streets just enjoying the day off. They **need to be stopped** or put to use for more serious issues in this world."

"Suspensions hold **no purpose**... besides restricting you of some educational days. ...it's an attempt to help students think about what they've done but other than that, it really holds no purpose."

"Suspension **does not seem effective** for the student seeing that the same student can be suspended more than three times. Schools should come up with other effective methods instead and ditch this method."

"Racial disproportions in suspension are a major reason why suspension shouldn't exist. The action of banning a child from their right to an education is **counterproductive**."



**UrbEd is ON TARGET**  
to advocate for restorative and trauma informed discipline training

# Teacher Diversity

When we increase teacher diversity, all students benefit from the exposure to educators of color. We decrease the negative impact of implicit bias and support the building of authentic relationships that lessen the impact of systemic oppression on kids in urban schools.

-STERLING GRIMES, M.S.ED

Founding Member of Black Male Educators for Social Justice

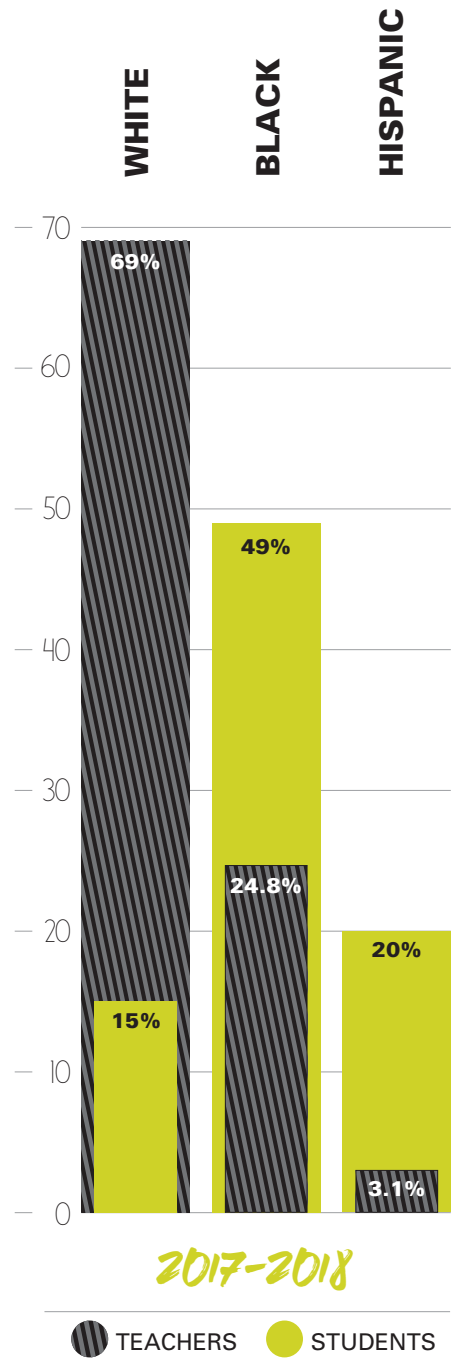
4.5%

OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA ARE **BLACK MEN**



## OUR FOCUS

For this report, UrbEd focused its research efforts on better understanding the impact of Black male educators on student performance. Year-long advocacy however, is dedicated to increasing teacher diversity across the board.



## STUDENT FEEDBACK

Have you  
ever had a  
Black male  
teacher?

**25%**  
RESPONDED  
**NEVER**

**70%** OF STUDENTS  
WHO RESPONDED

**YES** WERE POSITIVELY  
IMPACTED

How has that teacher or  
teachers impacted you?

"He believed in me and  
**gave me the tools** to  
move forward and stay  
positive."

"He was a very straightforward  
guy who **knew what it was**  
**like** to be put down."

"**They make me want**  
**to come to school**  
every day."

"In a positive way. I still can go  
back and talk to him when I need  
advice — **the only one who**  
**believed in me** when nobody  
else did."

"You can always have a  
laugh with them. They're  
**the type that always**  
**want you to pass** no  
matter how much you're  
stuck in the struggle. It  
feels like you can create  
more of a bond with one."



**UrbEd is ON TARGET**  
to encourage diverse students  
to consider the field of education



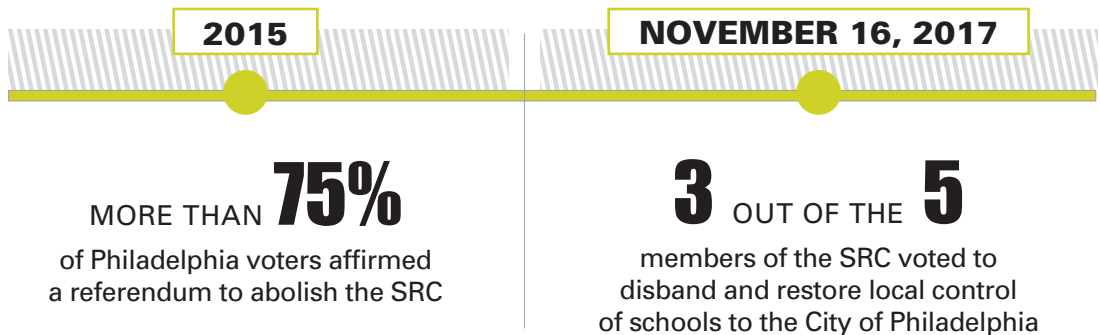
# Local Control



For too long parents, students, educators, and concerned Philadelphians have been left out of the discussion about the future of Philadelphia's public schools and in that time the school system has failed our children. Dissolving the state-run School Reform Commission (SRC) and restoring local control is a critical step towards restoring trust and allowing those of us with a stake in the future of the schools to govern those schools.

-TODD WOLFSON, PH.D.

Co-Founder of Media Mobilizer



SINCE 2016, URBED HAS BEEN AN

**active voice**

ON THE DISBANDMENT OF THE SRC



## STUDENT FEEDBACK

Do you think the School Reform Commission (SRC) negatively affects Philadelphia students?

**80%**  
RESPONDED  
**YES**



### OUR FOCUS

This past November, the SRC was successfully abolished through the work of UrbEd and other organizations. We felt it was important to include the voices of students that fueled the fight for local control. We will continue to advocate for the governing system that works best for students and schools.

### What do you think about the SRC?

"I think that the SRC is **very insensitive** to the School District of Philadelphia. I also think that it isn't fair that **they aren't elected**. Random people should not be appointed to make decisions that affect many young students' futures."

"The SRC is **inappropriately placed** with the Philadelphia School District because the people appointed have no stake in the educational system."

"It is **not an effective system**. Voting is something that could help make the process and decision more fair for the people being affected by it."

"The State taking charge of Philadelphia will diminish the needs for our schools because **the State is unaware of Philly's needs** compared to the rest of our rural state."



**UrbEd is ON TARGET**  
to restoring local control to the students and families of Philadelphia

# Building Conditions



Due to poor building conditions, teachers have seen a decrease in their work performance and teacher effectiveness (Schneider, 2003). If our performance as teachers is already lacking due to these conditions, it directly impacts student performance in the classroom. Some schools in Philadelphia that date back as early as the 1800s and 1900s may still have facilities that are outdated. This can impact teacher performance, therefore impacting our students on a daily basis.

-ALEXIS RYLANDER

Teacher at Boys' Latin of Philadelphia

FISCAL YEAR 2016-2022

The School District of Philadelphia estimates spending:

**\$250,431,884**

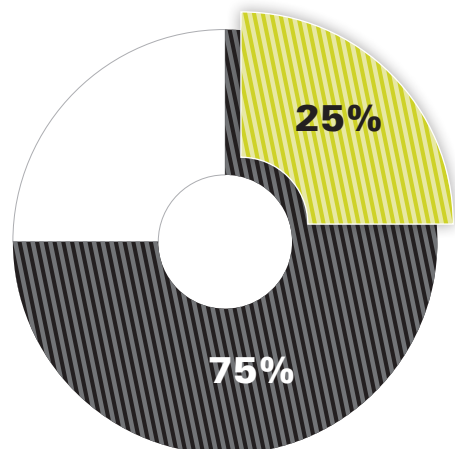
ON BUILDING RENOVATION/  
CONSTRUCTION



**12,000**

OUTSTANDING REPAIRS  
HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED

2017  
CONDITIONS OF  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



POOR

POOR AND BEYOND  
FEASIBLE REPAIR

## STUDENT FEEDBACK

How do you feel about your school's building condition?

50%  
RESPONDED  
OKAY

10%  
RESPONDED  
BAD

How have the building conditions affected your learning?

"There have been days where we have had to get out early because of the **heat**."

"The building is very old and there is **no air** which harms learning."

### OUR FOCUS

UrbEd's focus on building conditions stems from the negative effect we believe it has on student learning. A majority of Philadelphia school buildings are in poor condition which impacts the delivery of quality education.

"It has made me **unmotivated** to come to school."

"Our rooms are really cold and the **lack of warmth** may disturb one's learning. Same goes towards **air conditioning**. We don't have much and obviously, it would affect one's learning as well."

"Problems range anywhere from mismatched **broken lockers** to **roach and mice infestations**."



**UrbEd is ON TARGET**  
to assess and advocate for greatly improved building conditions

**UrbEd encourages involvement to  
reform the urban education system in**

## **FOUR KEY AREAS:**



### **Policy Engagement**

**HELP** determine what urban education looks like in the future.



### **School Donations**

**ADD** resources and bring excitement to students attending urban schools.



### **UE Ambassadors**

**JOIN** a group of student reformers that are reclaiming their education.



### **Advocacy Trainings**

**COME** learn ways to advocate and reclaim what you believe in.

## CONTACT US

Info@UrbEdAdvocates.org or (267) 277-7065

1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320 // Philadelphia, PA 19107

**urbedadvocates.org**

FOLLOW US:    @URBEDADVOCATES

#### **UrbEd Inc.**

Tamir D. Harper, Co-Founder & Executive Director  
Juwan Z. Bennett, Board Chairman

#### **Project Direction**

Luke Risher, Co-Founder & Programs Director  
Zoey Tweh, Advocacy & Policy Director  
M. Samuel Dennis, Finance Director

**Inside front cover photo:** Philadelphia public school  
students Na'eem Goins and Arielle Moore

#### **Publication Sponsors**



Masters Group Design  
mgdphilly.com