On July 21, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the launch of the Supportive School Discipline Initiative, a collaborative project to encourage effective disciplinary practices that help make classrooms safer and more conducive to learning. It will also promote evidence-based practices that reduce the likelihood that students disciplined at school will have subsequent contact with the juvenile justice system. The initiative was announced at the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, whose membership includes representatives from 12 federal agencies.

Attorney General Holder underscored the need to build consensus across disciplines. “By bringing together government, law enforcement, academic, and community leaders, I’m confident that we can make certain that school discipline policies are enforced fairly and do not become obstacles to future growth, progress, and achievement,” he stated.

“Any comprehensive effort to improve outcomes for students who are misbehaving in school is going to require the engagement of leaders in the education and juvenile justice systems. The announcement of this joint initiative by the Secretary of Education and U.S. Attorney General models the kind of leadership we need in local and state governments on this issue,” said CSG Justice Center Chair and New York State Assemblyman Jeffrion Aubry (D-35th District). “We look forward to working with the Departments of Justice and Education, as well as other agencies and individuals concerned with improving outcomes for all our school children.”

In announcing the initiative, Attorney General Holder referred to the release of the “landmark” report that the CSG Justice Center released two days earlier and to the briefings the Coordinating Council had received on the report. Attorney General Holder and Secretary Duncan cited various statistics from Breaking Schools' Rules: A Statewide Study on How School Discipline Relates to Students’ Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement, which tracked nearly 1 million public middle and high school students in Texas.

“The Texas study revealed that the majority of students studied had at least one suspension or expulsion in their middle school or high school years and those disciplined had a greater likelihood of repeating a grade, dropping out, or coming into contact with the juvenile justice system,” aid Texas State Representative and Justice Center board member Jerry Madden (R-67th District). “This collaborative initiative cannot come at a better time as states like mine work diligently to address school discipline issues.”

The Department of Justice press release can be found at http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2011/July/11-ag-951.html and information about the CSG Justice Center study, done in partnership with the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University with the support of the Atlantic Philanthropies and Open Society Foundations, can be found at http://justicecenter.csg.org/resources/juveniles.

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