The **Justice CORPS** is an initiative to address a continuing legacy of child abuse and institutional concealment of abuse at our private, college-preparatory schools.

As responsible citizens, we recognize the need for improved safety measures to ensure the well-being of young people is protected as they pursue college and professional careers. We also recognize a timely opportunity now, to significantly change the course of business-as-usual, for the long-term health of students, families and schools.

We understand this systemic overhaul is necessary, to address both child abuse and the concealment of its occurrence on campus. Our ultimate goal is a dramatic reduction in the incidence of any abuse on high school campuses. This proposal draws on the expertise and Recommendations of the Independent School Task Force of 2017, (NAIS & TABS) and places decision-making power back in the hands of students and families.

**SUMMARY**

A diverse group of strictly non-affiliated adults, and up to two college interns, act as a volunteer oversight body to receive and report on abuse incidents. The school year begins with a mandatory assembly, where all students learn their rights, expectations for behavior and what happens when a report of abuse is made. Existing child safety organizations may be brought in for support and delivery of this information. The student body is introduced to each member of the Justice CORPS at this first assembly, and a second time during a follow-up assembly following holiday break in January. Schools commit to a three year run of the program. Those that are able to reduce incidents of abuse by 50% or more, from the first year to the third, are eligible to earn the Seal of Excellence in Child Safety.
Key Features

1. diverse, volunteer committee of adults, strictly non-affiliated to designated school
2. two all-school assemblies to introduce Justice CORPS members and deliver training to students, faculty and staff on: expectations for behavior, how to report abuse, and what happens following reports of abuse
3. confidential communication system, directing sensitive information outside school boundaries to Justice CORPS members for record
4. monthly recording of incident reports received, incidents verified, and quantitative score of response enacted by school officials
5. annual report - available for public review - of anonymous incidents to begin comparative analysis: tracking for a minimum 50% decrease in abuse incidents between the first and third years of participation

GOALS OF THE JUSTICE CORPS

1. To tally a true and unbiased record of child abuse (whether student-to-student or faculty/administrator/staff-to-student) on high school campuses;
2. To end the practice of cover-ups by creating a transparency and oversight system;
3. To hold school officials to a higher standard in quality of response;
4. To further the practice of Restorative Justice in schools, as a model that increases positive outcomes through honesty, accountability and repair;
5. To ultimately decrease the incidence of child abuse on high school campuses by 50% or more, in three year cycles, until there is none;
6. To continually expand the network of participating schools to include more and more private, independent high schools, middle schools and elementary schools;
7. To give private and independent schools the opportunity to earn a *Seal of Excellence in Child Safety*, celebrating the efforts of schools that embrace trustworthiness through honesty, courage, transparency and true growth.

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Structure

A volunteer committee 4-6 of adults from within a roughly 50 mile radius of the school, which meets four (4) times/year and exists for the sole purpose of receiving, advising on and recording reports of human rights violations. Meetings will be held in August to review and complete training; September to attend schools and participate in all-school assembly; January as a mid-year review and second school visit; and June, to compile reports and record numbers.

Four to Six members including the possibility of a volunteer law enforcement professional and a volunteer legal professional. Must contain a minimum 50% female members, with one member of a minority ethnic group and one member of minority sexual orientation. Preference will be given to applicants with professional experience in education and/or child health and safety.

One to two interns from area colleges may be selected to assist in operations, for credit at the graduate or post-graduate level. A younger presence will likely decrease intimidation in high school students, and make the Justice CORPS more accessible. CORPS members will visit their assigned school at the beginning of each year and participate in a school-wide workshop on “Your Rights & Reporting Protocols”. This serves to familiarize high school students with the CORPS members, while teaching awareness & setting expectations. Outside agencies, with existing curriculum and expertise in the field, will be brought in to assist with this presentation as needed.

Justice CORPS members then return mid-year in January to re-familiarize students with the service, and to answer any new questions that may have arisen in the first few months of academic life.
The incentive to maintain positive relationships between college-preparatory high schools and the colleges & universities where students hope to attend, may serve as its own positive corrective measure.

Non-Affiliation

Because one stated goal is clear, transparent oversight, we attend to any potential conflict of interest by carefully screening for non-affiliation with the particular school to which the corresponding Justice CORPS is assigned.

Applicants will be screened to exclude any alumni, family of alumni, current or former trustees, donors, family of faculty/staff or family of trustees or regents. Preference will be given to individuals with a direct personal or professional association with, or current academic focus, regarding the wellbeing of children as a whole.

Members are asked to commit to three (3) years of service, to see the abuse reduction rate to completion of cycle. Each will sign a strict non-affiliation agreement, mandated reporter status, and a personal commitment to honor the rights of students above all
else. CORPS members may serve on more than one committee, where schools’ geographic boundaries overlap.

Communication Systems

While anonymous communication systems are beginning to see use within private schools, we insist that a new system be utilized. The distinction will be that the destination of the information is outside the school itself. Anonymity may be useful in encouraging young people to come forward. Yet, for true oversight and to ensure justice is achieved, this information must be directed toward adults outside the school system, who are free from coercion, social pressure or conflict of interest.

Therefore, the Initiative includes creation of a confidential communication system where students may contact the Justice CORPS without impediment by any school leader, faculty or staff. The flow of communication will follow a strict protocol:

1. student and/or parent to the Justice CORPS members
2. CORPS members to the parent/s of student
3. Once signed consent is given by student, and parents where appropriate;
4. from CORPS to school

The members will respond to reports by informing students and families of their rights in writing by mail and email, and offering information on options to proceed. A police report will not be immediately required, though all members are naturally mandated reporters. The filing of charges against individuals remains the choice of the student who brings the issue, with consultation of their family and the CORPS.

Students and families may request an in-person meeting to receive the report, where appropriate. All efforts will be made to arrange for this support within 30 days of request.

All Justice CORPS members will be sworn to confidentiality outside of meetings and are also prohibited from sharing details with their corresponding school until written consent has been granted by both student and parent/s or caregiver/s.

Contact information for the Justice CORPS will be printed inside the Student Handbook, on the school’s social media platforms, and available on the school’s website online.

Freedom from Consequence

Students will be protected indefinitely for utilizing the Justice CORPS service, including freedom from any form of punishment, restriction or threat to enrollment status, financial aid, sports team membership and participation or scholarship funding for doing so.

Measures will be put into place to guard against any efforts to curtail use by students (see Ranking System, below).
Reporting & Communication with Schools

The Justice CORPS will provide a written, comprehensive report to school leaders, at the conclusion of the school year, of all consented documented incidents received. Students and families must consent to inclusion of their situation in the report, and may elect to allow recording of details while remaining anonymous.

Throughout the school year, reporting by the Justice CORPS to their assigned school will be done by the first of each month, as needed. The report will be a simple record of: 1) number of incidents received, 2) any required, legal actions to be made by school leaders, 3) requests for supporting documentation, as needed by students and/or their families, to support their efforts at seeking justice.

Once officials received the monthly report, they then have the opportunity to meet and/or exceed the guidelines laid out by the Independent Schools Task Force of 2018. Please see Resources for more information.

Ongoing and Annual Reports will be kept on file and reviewed annually by the Executive Committee. An electronic, unaltered copy of these reports will be made available to all past, current and prospective families at any time.

Ranking System, Available for Public Review

A key factor of the success of the Justice CORPS initiative will be the creation of a ranking system in which human rights violations and response by school officials is made available as public information.

To start, any instance of pressure by school officials, faculty, staff, trustees, Board members or other affiliates on students to remain quiet about incidents will yield an immediate $25,000 fine, to be withdrawn from endowments.

These funds will be allocated for the long-term operation of the Justice CORPS; where excess exists, these will reside in a fund for future restitutions to students. These financial parameters will be outlined in detail by June 2019.

Numerics:

- All schools begin each year with a high score of 10
- Any instance of hazing, assault, including sexual assault and harassment, threats to one’s safety and/or hate speech between students yield a deduction of 1 point
- Any instance of hazing, assault, including sexual assault and harassment, threats to one’s safety and/or hate speech between students - when there is at least a two year grade level separation (such as a senior to a sophomore or a junior to a freshman) yields a deduction of 2 points
• Any instance of physical, emotional or sexual abuse by a staff, faculty or school official, including trustees, Board members or regents, on a student of any age or minor on school campus yields a deduction of 5 points
• Awareness of, and failure to act on, instances of physical, emotion or sexual abuse by a staff, faculty or school official, including trustees, Board members or regents by another adult in above positions will also yield a deduction of 5 points
• In addition to fines, schools where any instance of pressure into silence from officials to students following any human rights violation yields a deduction of 7 points
• Negative scores will be tallied where necessary

Recovery Points

Because response is so crucial in preserving the integrity on an institution, the Justice CORPS initiative includes a measure for recovering lost ranking points by full compliance with recommendations laid out in "PREVENTION AND RESPONSE: Recommendations for Addressing Educator Sexual Misconduct in Independent Schools: by the Independent School Task Force, 2018.

Where schools are able to show thorough, verifiable documentation of compliance with these guidelines; and include a copy of written communications by the school to students and their families about incidents, a 1-3 point score may be factored in to rankings. A score of 1 is minimal compliance/response, 2 is adequate and thorough.

A Recovery Point Score of 3 is earned where Restorative Justice is made available to all involved parties, and conducted on the timeline that supports the child who has suffered abuse. To confirm this highest score, a student would simply verify in writing that a Restorative Justice Circle has occurred to his/her/their satisfaction. The narrative in written in the words of the student seeking repair, and not edited by other parties. See Stories That Heal and Transform, below.

For example, if the Justice CORPS receives a report of sexual abuse by an employee against a student; and the school responds according to guidelines within 60 days, recovery points may be considered. In addition, once a school has provided written notification to students and families of the nature of the incident, and an accurate record of corrective actions, points may then equal back to a deduction of zero, plus 1 or plus 2. The goal here is to incentivize the highest possible response by schools. Student to student abuses will follow the same protocol as those laid out by the Task Force. Deductions for silencing efforts are not recoverable. Additional systems will be created to allot points for schools which adopt additional safety measures for students.

The Justice CORPS will compile a minimum two-column report annually of human rights violations and recovery points. This serves as data collection and as public information, available by written request. Both the CORPS and the school will hold identical copies.
Stories That Heal & Transform

Stories can help us learn what is possible and inform our decisions when faced with adversity in the future. In these early stages of development, a first participating school may have the opportunity to highlight a story of Recovery (by excellent response) and Healing, through a short video of a success with the Justice CORPS experience. Of course, this would have to include the full consent and cooperation of all involved.

As an added incentive, a film company is being commissioned to provide the first participating school this chance to share its story in striving to reduce abuse and promote cultures of safety. The first school to sign on will be awarded a professional 3 minute feature documentary. With appropriate support and collaboration, their efforts may become a testimony to the power of moving with transparency, toward true repair.

Please visit: www.theamendsproject.com for updates on awarded funding for this component of the Justice CORPS Initiative.

Seal of Excellence in Child Safety

As of January 2019, a number of child safety organizations are considering serving as host and grantor of the “Seal of Excellence in Child Safety” to participating schools. Again, to earn the Seal, a school must reduce the incidence of child abuse, of all forms, regardless of severity or ranking, by at least 50% in a given three-year cycle through the Justice CORPS Initiative, and in concert with the Task Force Recommendations.
Timeline Proposal

Because the safety of young people must always be an immediate priority, time is naturally of the essence.

Upon receipt of grant funding, this program of three years commitment will begin immediately in the spring of 2019. Screening and confirmation of CORPS members will be completed by June 2019, with training to delivered by remote video conference between June and August of this year.

An Open Call to Schools will be announced via newspaper and social media outlets throughout the country with clearance from the sponsoring child safety organization.

With sufficient funding, the Justice CORPS will run at two schools (ideally in different accrediting bodies) for the school years: 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022.

Implementation

As a new effort in a nation-wide response to a long history of injustices at schools, Vanessa Osage, a former student of Lawrence Academy in Groton, Massachusetts, class of ’96, will oversee implementation.

Facilitator of The Amends Project, Vanessa Osage is a Sexuality Educator, Consultant & Certified Professional Coach, with 10 years experience as Founder/Executive Director of a Nonprofit for positive youth development. www.loveandtruthrising.org

Osage’s legal case began in late 2016, as a proceeding between the Offices of Attorney Mitchell Garabedian and Lawrence Academy of Groton, MA. Acknowledgement of wrong-doing in the school’s response was crucial for Osage in her settlement process, yet unavailable by means of traditional litigation. In 2018, she proposed Restorative Justice, the efforts of which were undermined by the school and remained incomplete.

By choosing to step off the legal path, to mend the loophole that has allowed for cover-ups to occur, she has set a new course for higher outcomes and a more lasting impact.

In May 2018, Vanessa Osage went public with her story and efforts through The Amends Project, to ensure a new quality of response to a pervasive problem for young people and their families. She persists because families continue to reach out to confirm that the cover-up problem continues to this day. The Justice CORPS model is the result of her ongoing research and collaboration with fellow alumni, legal professionals, college professors and child safety advocates from around the country.
Long Term Vision

After an initial run of the program at two simultaneous schools, beginning in 2019-2020, the Seal of Excellence in Child Safety will become a standard which all independent schools strive to claim and achieve. This means a reduction of incidents of child abuse by at least 50% in three year cycles, until there is none.

After the first year of a three-year funding cycle, new systems will be created to fund the ongoing operation of Justice CORPS at increasing numbers of independent schools around the country.

This will become the mark of a school that values child safety in action, beyond just words. The Seal of Excellence will be a reassurance to parents and young people alike, to know that a history of abuse and cover-ups has truly become a thing of the past. This rebalancing of power with appropriate responsibility will contribute to a healthier adult population, one that can create the kind of world we all want to live in.

Resources:

The Amends Project website, www.theamendsproject.com


Brave New Films, Restorative Justice: Why Do We Need It? https://duckduckgo.com/?q=brave+new+films+restorative+justice&t=h&ia=videos&iax=videos&iai=8N3LihLvfa0