

ENDING THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

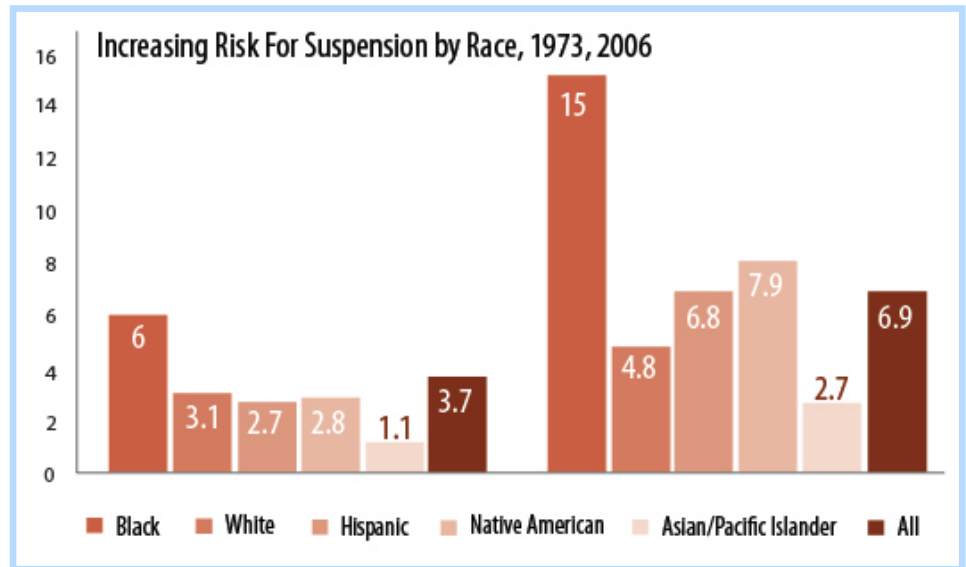
It's time to end ineffective – and often discriminatory – discipline policies and ensure children stay in the classroom to college and career pipeline.



It's a simple fact that schools must be safe environments for teachers to teach and children to learn. But harsh discipline policies that are pushing out students for minor infractions defy common sense.

When children aren't in school, they are missing out on educational opportunities, creating a cycle of misbehavior and lost opportunity – and statistics show they are more likely to drop out or get into serious trouble with the law. (www.dignityinschools.org/category/tags/fact-sheet)

Across the country, the combination of overly harsh school policies and an increased role of law enforcement in schools has created a “schoolhouse-to-jailhouse track,” in which punitive measures such as suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests are increasingly used to deal with student misbehavior, and huge numbers of youth are pushed out of school and into prisons and jails. (www.advancementproject.org/our-work/schoolhouse-to-jailhouse)



Source: The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)

To protect each child's civil right to a high-quality public school education, we must hold our school leaders accountable for enacting discipline policies that treat students equitably and give teachers and school administrators the tools and the training they need to keep our children in the school buildings where they can continue to excel academically and thrive socially and civically.

In New York City alone, students spent more than 16 million hours serving suspensions between 1999 and 2008, according to the report, “Education Interrupted: The Growing Use of Suspensions in New York City's Public Schools,” (www.nyclu.org/publications/report-education-interrupted-growing-use-of-suspensions-new-york-city%E2%80%99s-public-schools-) published earlier this year.

What's the problem with **PUSHOUT?**

Students suspended, expelled or arrested in school are more likely to drop out or graduate late.

Students at schools that use suspensions less perform better on academic tests and have better opinions of their principals.^{1,2,4}

A student with three or more suspensions by his sophomore year is five times more likely to drop out than other students.¹

Suspended students miss class time and are more likely to do poorly in school.

Students who have been suspended score an average of five grade levels behind in reading skills after two years.⁵

1 high school graduate prisoner, 8 non-graduate prisoners

Young people who do not finish high school are more than eight times more likely to go to prison than students who graduate.³

More than 1 million students who start high school this year won't finish, according to the Dignity in Schools Campaign. When schools rely too heavily on suspensions and expulsions, they push students out onto the streets and often into legal trouble.

Source: Dignity in Schools Campaign

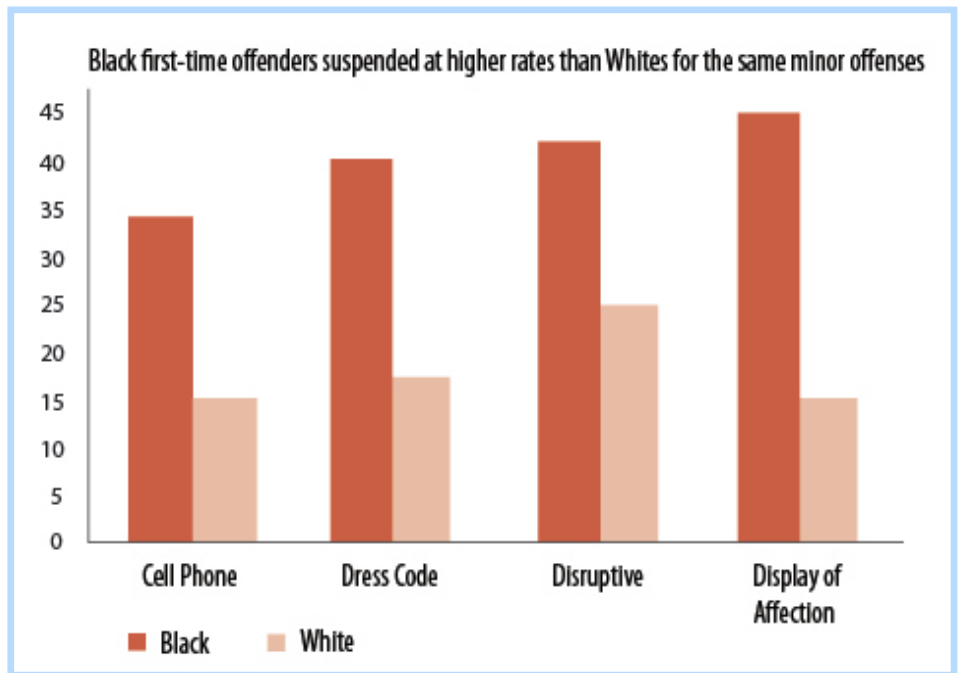
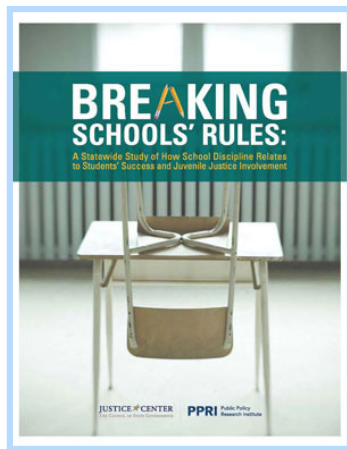
In many communities, this transforms schools from places of learning to dangerous gateways into juvenile court. This is more than an education crisis; it is a racial justice crisis, because the students pushed out through harsh discipline are disproportionately students of color.

In a study released in October 2011, Daniel Losen, a senior education law and policy associate at UCLA's Civil Rights Project, traces the educational consequences of harsh disciplinary measures that are doled out unevenly to students of color. Losen's findings demonstrate that students of color are given harsher punishments than their White peers. Moreover, the types of behavior for which they're being punished more often require a judgment call by teachers and administrators, suggesting that Black students are more frequently called out for misbehavior than their White classmates.

Breaking Schools' Rules, a recent multi-year school discipline study (<http://justicecenter.csg.org/resources/juveniles>) in Texas

from the Council of State Governments provides evidence that suspensions and expulsions are linked to lower graduation rates, higher rates of later criminal activity and that children of color are more likely than their White peers to face the most severe punishments.

Its most shocking finding is that nearly 60 percent of the students in the study were suspended at least once (this includes in-school suspension) and an alarming 31 percent were suspended at least four times. African American students were over-represented among those who had been suspended and subjected to the harshest forms of discipline, including



Source: Civil Rights Project, UCLA

placement in alternative classrooms. A shocking 83 percent of African American males and 74 percent of Latino males in the study were suspended at least once, and one in seven students in the study was suspended at least 11 times.

Relying on harsh discipline policies robs teachers, administrators and parents of the chance to help children learn from their

mistakes and keep them engaged in the classroom, instead of idling at home or in the streets.

Compelling data and powerful organizing are underscoring the need for systemic changes in school discipline policies that wrongly favor punishments such as suspensions and expulsions instead of constructive approaches for managing behavior and encouraging learning.

And yet, after years of high-profile examples of zero-tolerance

policies gone awry, many school systems continue to enforce such counterproductive measures in vain attempts to show the world they are doing something – even if it's often the wrong thing – to deal with discipline on school grounds.

In a recent news article, The Baltimore Sun reported about two situations involving students who were suspended after mistakenly – by all accounts, not maliciously – possessing items that school officials considered to be weapons.

“Schools that rely on security guards and metal detectors to create safety may end up creating an environment that is so repressive that it is no longer conducive to learning.”

Pedro Noguera, Executive Director Metropolitan Center for Urban Education

In one case, two high school lacrosse players were suspended for several days because they were carrying a pen knife and lighter, which they said they used to fix their lacrosse sticks. In another recent case, a 16-year-old girl who was suspended is being referred to juvenile authorities and could be charged with possession of a weapon

on school property after a former friend told school officials that the girl was carrying pepper spray – which her mother had given her to protect herself while walking to school in the dark morning hours after the teen had been threatened. In the pepper spray case, the girl was told by school officials not to contact her teachers and wasn't able to keep up with classwork.

Often referred to as zero tolerance, these policies leave no room for school administrators and teachers to use their own common sense to handle such situations, and take a toll on already beleaguered judicial systems.

The U.S. Department of Education maintains that nationally more than 3 million students each year are suspended and nearly 100,000 more are expelled, from kindergarten through 12th grade, according to an article that Steven C. Teske – a juvenile court judge in Georgia who is using research data to try to change the way school systems handle discipline issues – recently wrote for the Atlantic Philanthropies website. Thousands are arrested and referred to juvenile court for disciplinary problems that were previously handled in school. Most are boys. Most are African-Americans.

As Teske, who was quoted in the Baltimore Sun's article, said, zero tolerance "goes against the objective of schools, and that is to graduate students."

Ending the school-to-prison pipeline

Across the country, more educators, parents, students and community leaders are gaining momentum in challenging the overreliance on zero-tolerance and other policies and practices that put one-size-fits all solutions in front of common sense and the well-being of our young people.

The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice's "Redirecting the School to Prison Pipeline" project also tackles this issue, saying "the School to Prison pipeline is derailing individual lives, devastating families and communities, and threatening our nation's economic future. Yet,

preliminary research indicates that jail is not the inevitable destiny for children trapped within this pipeline.

"Rather, their journey through the pipeline is accelerated by the convergence of ill-conceived policies and practices permeating both educational and juvenile justice systems, and by the failure of these two systems to work together to improve the life chances of at-risk youths. Fortunately, these ineffective and costly policies can be dismantled and replaced with interventions and programs aimed, first, at keeping more at-risk youths in school through, at a minimum, completion of high school, and, second, at helping those who have dropped out or been sent to juvenile halls to successfully re-enter communities and schools."



Source: Steve Liss, Richard Ross | *No Place for Kids*

NO PLACE FOR KIDS: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration

Annie E. Casey Foundation, October 2011

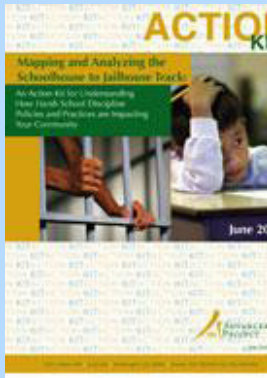
Putting young people in jail – particularly for nonviolent offenses – is a failed strategy, according to a recent report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation that relied on decades of research and data. The report's most scathing findings include that youth incarceration does not reduce future offending; provides no overall benefit to public safety; wastes taxpayer dollars; and exposes youth to high levels of violence and abuse.

States spend an annual average of \$88,000 per youth to lock up juvenile offenders in correctional facilities but are not yielding any benefits from a public safety, rehabilitation or cost perspective, according to the report – which documents four decades of scandals and lawsuits over abusive conditions in juvenile institutions and reinforces the growing consensus among experts that the current incarceration model provides little public safety benefit.

Roughly 60,500 U.S. youth – disproportionately young people of color – are confined in juvenile correctional facilities or other residential programs on any given night, according to an official national count of youth in correctional custody conducted in 2007.



The Advancement Project's Action kit: Ending the schoolhouse-to-jailhouse pipeline



The Advancement Project's Toolkit helps you collect and analyze data about school discipline policies and practices.

What is Zero Tolerance? (*from the action kit*)

"Zero tolerance" is a law enforcement term taken from the "War on Drugs" that began to make its way into school policy in the late 1980s. Since that time, school districts around the country have taken the Zero Tolerance principle, initially intended for weapon and drug offenses, and expanded it so that harsh disciplinary practices such as suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement are increasingly common for minor misconduct, such as acting up in class, name-calling, and fighting. These policies and practices are often rigid and unthinking (e.g., ten-day suspensions for a fight regardless of circumstances), and reflect a "get touch" approach to discipline in which the punishment rarely fits the misconduct (e.g., five-day suspensions for "disrespect to authority" or "disobedience"). They are also unforgiving leaving students without any "lessons learned" and a discipline record that follows them from grade to grade.



Source: Steve Liss, Richard Ross | *No Place for Kids*

Washington Post article (www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/more-schools-are-rethinking-zero-tolerance/2011/05/26/AGSIKmGH_story.html) for highlights of action in other states:

"This rethinking has come in North Carolina and Denver, in Baltimore and

Voices of Youth in Chicago Education (www.voyceproject.org), an organizing collaborative for education justice led by students of color from seven communities throughout the city of Chicago, recently conducted a cost-analysis that found that not only are these policies ineffective, they are costly. Their research shows that in 2011 Chicago Public Schools spent \$51.4 million on security guards but only \$3.5 million on college coaches. And even while they are claiming to have a \$600 million budget shortfall, CPS is also considering signing a \$100 million, three-year contract to place police in the schools.

Los Angeles — part of a phenomenon driven by high suspension rates, community pressure, legal action and research findings. In the Washington region, Fairfax County is considering policy changes after a wave of community concern; school leaders in the District and Prince George's, Arlington and Montgomery counties have pursued new ideas, too," the article states. "Now, 'it's become evident that simply suspending students and putting them on the street comes back and bites you,' said Bob Wise, a former governor of West Virginia and president of the Alliance for Excellent Education."

Meanwhile, Colorado students, parents, community members and organizational allies have made a significant stride in the effort to end the school-to-prison pipeline with the passage of legislation that calls on leaders to formulate alternatives to zero tolerance policies. See this

For more information about the school-to-prison pipeline and to see other toolkits, visit the OTL Campaign website: www.otlcampaign.org

Resources

Dignity in Schools Campaign

www.dignityinschools.org/content/dignity-schools-campaign-fact-sheets

DSC provides fact sheets on pushout at the national and state level as well as current federal legislation to combat school pushout.

Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race & Justice

www.charleshamiltonhouston.org/Projects/Project.aspx?id=100005

CHHIRJ produces action kits, manuals, and other tools useful to advocates and conducts trainings for juvenile judges, defense attorneys, school officials, and others.

League of Education Voters: School 2 Prisons Podcast series

www.educationvoters.org/tag/schools-2-prisons

LEV works to create an educational system in which every student has an equal and adequate opportunity to succeed in college, work, and in life. LEV released a podcast series addressing the school to prison pipeline.

TALKING POINTS

When students are not in school, they miss out on educational opportunities.

- Suspensions and expulsions are linked to lower graduation rates. (<http://justicecenter.csg.org/resources/juveniles>)
- A student with three or more suspensions by his or her sophomore year is five times more likely to drop out than other students. (<http://www.dignityinschools.org/pushout-factors>)
- Over the course of a lifetime and in terms of missed opportunities, poorer life outcomes, and increased chances of future incarceration, incarcerating a single student could cost as much as \$1.7 million. (http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/educationunderarrest_executivesummary.pdf)

Harsh school policies create a school-to-prison pipeline

- Students who do not finish high school are more than eight times more likely to go to prison than students who graduate. (<http://www.dignityinschools.org/pushout-factors>)
- Research shows that suspensions and expulsions are linked to higher rates of later criminal activity. (<http://justicecenter.csg.org/resources/juveniles>)
- High school students who come in contact with the courts are more likely to drop out. Two-thirds to three-fourths of youth who were confined in a juvenile justice facility withdrew or dropped out within a year of re-enrolling; after four years, less than 15 percent of these youth had completed their secondary education. (<http://www.justicepolicy.org/research/3177>)

This is more than an educational crisis. This is a racial crisis.

- Harsh discipline measures are disproportionately meted out to students of color. (<http://nepc.colorado.edu/files/NEPC-SchoolDiscipline.pdf>)
- More than 28 percent of black male middle school students were suspended in 2006, a rate of nearly three times the 10 percent rate for white males, according to a report by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.
- Nearly 20 percent of black female middle school students were suspended in 2006, more than four times the 4 percent rate for white females, according to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights report.
- Children of color are more likely than their White peers to face the most severe punishments, according to a multiyear discipline study in Texas from the Council of State Governments. (<http://justicecenter.csg.org/resources/juveniles>)

Harsh discipline policies are not cost-effective and don't make schools safer or smarter.

- Schools with higher suspension rates tend to be less safe.
- States spend far more on prisons and incarceration expenses than they do on schools. (<http://www.voyceproject.org/sites/default/files/VOYCE%20report%202011.pdf>)
- Students at schools that mete out fewer suspensions perform better on academic tests. According to the Council of State Governments Justice Center, researchers have identified examples in which schools with similar student bodies that suspended and expelled students at higher rates did no better on key school performance measures than those schools that had fewer suspensions and expulsions. (<http://justicecenter.csg.org/resources/juveniles>)

KEY ORGANIZATIONS

Advancement Project

www.advancementproject.org

Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race & Justice

<http://www.charleshamiltonhouston.org/Home.aspx>

The Children's Defense Fund

<http://www.childrensdefense.org/programs-campaigns/cradle-to-prison-pipeline/>

The Council of State Governments Justice Center

<http://justicecenter.csg.org/>

Dignity in Schools

<http://www.dignityinschools.org/>

The Justice Policy Institute

<http://www.justicepolicy.org/research/3177>

RESOURCES

Alliance for Excellent Education

www.otlcampaign.org/resources/education-and-economy

Advancement Project

Report: *Test, punish and push out: How zero-tolerance and high-stakes testing funnel youth into the school-to-prison pipeline*

www.advancementproject.org/sites/default/files/publications/rev_fin.pdf

Southern Poverty Law Center

Report: *Suspended Education*

www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/downloads/publication/Suspended_Education.pdf

Dignity in Schools Campaign

Fact sheets: www.dignityinschools.org/content/dignity-schools-campaign-fact-sheets

State-specific data: www.dignityinschools.org/category/tags/fact-sheet

Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race & Justice

www.charleshamiltonhouston.org/Projects/Project.aspx?id=100005

The Justice Policy Institute

Report: *Education Under Arrest: The Case Against Police in Schools*

www.justicepolicy.org/research/3177

League of Education Voters

School 2 Prisons Podcast series:

The Opportunity Gap

<http://www.educationvoters.org/2011/07/06/schools-2-prisons-the-opportunity-gap>

The Cost of Inequity

<http://www.educationvoters.org/2011/07/13/schools-2-prisons-the-cost-of-inequity>

From Pupil to Prisoner

<http://www.educationvoters.org/2011/07/20/schools-2-prisons-from-pupil-to-prisoner/>

MEDIA COVERAGE

The New York Times: *School discipline study raises fresh questions*, July 2011

www.nytimes.com/2011/07/19/education/19discipline.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=texas%20discipline&st=cse

The New York Times: *One way to guarantee more trouble*, July 2011

www.nytimes.com/2011/07/31/opinion/sunday/one-way-to-guarantee-more-trouble-for-schools.html

The Huffington Post: *Duncan and Holder announce federal initiative to curb school-to-prison pipeline*, July 2011

www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/21/duncan-and-holder-announcement_906085.html

Corruption Chronicles: *Kill "School-To-Prison Pipeline" By Not Expelling Delinquents*, July 2011

www.judicialwatch.org/blog/2011/jul/kill-school-prison-pipeline-not-expelling-delinquents

ColorLines: *Eric Holder Calls Texas Suspensions of Black Students A 'Wake-up Call,'* July 2011

http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/07/eric_holder_calls_alarming_texas_suspensions_of_black_students_a_wake-up_call.html