

BLACKLISTED: 2013-2014

Racial Bias in School Suspensions in Rhode Island
in the 2013-2014 School Year

May 2015



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2013, the ACLU of Rhode Island issued a report documenting eight years of racial disparities in school suspension rates. The report demonstrated that suspensions were overused against all students, but that the burden disproportionately fell on the shoulders of black and Hispanic students, who were suspended at rates substantially higher than their representation in the population. Worse, these disproportionate suspensions, which began as early as elementary school, were often for minor behavioral infractions.

In 2014, the ACLU issued updated data for the 2012-2013 school year indicating that the problem was continuing. With data to support what local activists have been trying for years to change, the ACLU of Rhode Island and other advocates have been actively working to encourage the state government and local education officials to aggressively address the problem of over-suspension and the resulting racial disparities. The time for action has never been stronger, because, unfortunately, the latest data indicates that the problem is not only continuing but, by many metrics, is even worse than it was a decade ago.

As this report documents, during the 2013-2014 school year:

- Hispanic, Black and Native American students were suspended at their highest rates in a decade, while white students have experienced their lowest rate of suspension.
- Non-violent, minor behavioral offenses make up nearly 60% of suspensions for all students. The two vaguely worded offenses of “Disorderly Conduct” and “Insubordination/Disrespect” make up over half (52.5%) of all suspensions – more than all other offenses combined.

- Black *elementary* school students were suspended at a rate nearly three times the rate expected given their representation in the population, while white elementary school students were suspended just half as often as expected.
- Although often overlooked, it is worth highlighting that girls also suffer from this disparate treatment. Data from the past year shows that a *black girl* is almost four times as likely as a white girl to be suspended from school.

A decade's worth of statistics have unequivocally demonstrated that racial disparities in suspension rates are pervasive, and are not resolving on their own. It is our hope that state and local leaders will examine this data – and the growing racial disparities contained within – and come together to take critical steps toward minimizing the use of out-of-school suspensions in favor of a system that keeps students in school, and away from the school-to-prison pipeline.

THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE AND RACE IN AMERICA

Since our first report, “Blacklisted: Racial Bias in School Suspension in Rhode Island,” was released in June 2013, the national conversation around race and the importance of dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline has only gotten louder. In January 2014, the U.S. Department of Education and Department of Justice released new federal guidance¹ recognizing the serious issue of racial disparity in school suspension rates, and offering assistance to schools in administering discipline in a nondiscriminatory way.

States and school districts nationwide have taken serious steps toward reducing school suspension rates, with a number of different tactics. The State of California in 2014 prohibited suspensions for “willful defiance” for students of all grades, and prohibited the use of any suspensions for students in kindergarten through the third grade.² The Maryland Department of Education established new regulations that prioritize a “more rehabilitative philosophy” over suspensions and require documentation and analysis of any suspensions that do take place.³ At the local level, school districts nationwide have begun investigating peer counseling, rehabilitative justice, and a number of alternatives to suspensions.

In August 2014, the shooting of a young black man in Ferguson, Missouri, brought to stark attention what happens when long-simmering issues surrounding race go ignored. An important part of the national conversation that has followed from events in Ferguson has been the school-to-prison pipeline, and how to dismantle it.

It is long known that school suspensions carry a lifetime of consequences, including lower academic achievement – not just for the suspended student, but for other students in their classroom and school – and higher dropout rates. Disturbingly, school suspensions have long been connected to an increased participation in the juvenile justice system and, later, in the adult justice system. Suspensions disproportionately push black and Hispanic students onto a path from which it is difficult to break free. Racial disparities in suspension rates are connected with racial disparities in juvenile justice rates, which link with

disparities in arrest rates, and in the racial makeup of the prison system.⁴ While considerable time and money have been spent trying to address the criminal justice system, less time and effort has been spent on dismantling the suspension culture in our schools, focusing on keeping students in school instead of suspending them for minor offenses.

What follows is an analysis of the racial disparities in school suspension rates for the 2013-2014 school year, the tenth year in our ongoing examination of school suspension rates. For more information about suspensions, check out our original report, “Blacklisted: Racial Bias in School Suspensions in Rhode Island,” available online at www.riaclu.org.

ONGOING RACIAL DISPARITY STATEWIDE

Despite an ongoing statewide and nationwide discussion about the harm associated with out-of-school suspensions and the racial disparities that plague them, suspensions continue unabated in Rhode Island. Rhode Island's students lost a combined 30,183 school days to suspensions, often for low-risk behavior that could have been dealt with by other means.

During the 2013-2014 school year, black students comprised 8.13 percent of the Rhode Island student body. Based on these numbers, statistics tells us we should have expected between 7.32 and 8.94 percent of suspensions to involve a black student – a 10% deviation in either direction. Instead, black students comprised 17.70 percent of suspensions. At more than two times what would be expected, this is an almost negligible change from the suspension disparity witnessed in the prior school year – a disparity that had the distinction of being the highest disparity witnessed over nine years of data.

	2013-2014		
	Percent of Student Body	Percent of Suspensions	Ratio of Suspensions to Student Body
White	61.48%	37.30%	0.61
Hispanic	23.41%	37.25%	1.59
Black	8.13%	17.70%	2.18
Asian	3.11%	1.34%	0.43
Native American	0.66%	1.76%	2.67
Multiracial	3.21%	4.61%	1.44

Table 1. Ratio of Race Group Suspension to Student Body Representation, 2013-2014

At the same time, Hispanic students comprised 23.41 percent of the student body. Instead of finding themselves making up the anticipated 21.07 to 25.75 percent of suspended students, Hispanic students made up 37.25 percent; more than one-and-a-half times what is expected. This rate is the highest on record. Meanwhile, white students – 61.48 percent of the student body – comprised just 37.30 percent of suspensions, their lowest suspension rate on record.

In fact, in the three years since the ACLU of Rhode Island began examining racial disparities in school discipline, the disparities have only grown. White and Asian students

last year were suspended at the lowest rates on record, while Hispanic, Black, and Native American students were suspended at their highest rates. Despite the increasing knowledge of the dangers of out-of-school suspensions and more awareness of the resulting racial disparities, Rhode Island’s schools are in fact exacerbating, not lessening, their disparities.

	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
White	0.76	0.76	0.75	0.74	0.73	0.73	0.68	0.67	0.64	0.61
Hispanic	1.50	1.51	1.50	1.55	1.50	1.49	1.55	1.58	1.56	1.59
Black	2.04	2.04	2.01	1.97	2.11	2.04	2.17	2.02	2.19	2.19
Asian	0.71	0.60	0.64	0.59	0.64	0.57	0.44	0.46	0.56	0.43
Native American	2.31	2.12	1.68	1.61	1.89	1.52	1.92	2.11	2.38	2.67
Multiracial	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.58	1.34	1.45	1.44

Table 2. Racial Disparity Ratios, 2004-2005 to 2013-2014

SUBJECTIVE VS. CONCRETE OFFENSES

As these disparities increase, so too does the use of suspensions to penalize those youth who engage in low-risk, non-violent classroom disruptions. These subjective offenses – disorderly conduct, harassment (verbal or physical), insubordination/disrespect, and obscene or abusive language toward a teacher or student – have since the beginning of the ACLU’s research comprised an unacceptable percentage of the reasons for suspensions. Their use has only exploded in the meantime.

In our first report on the subject, we noted that between the 2004-2005 and 2011-2012 school years, subjective offenses made up 41% of suspensions on average. In the 2012-2013 school year, after the General Assembly prohibited suspending students for issues related to truancy, that number skyrocketed to 60.55 percent of suspensions. That number remained relatively unchanged for the 2013-2014 school year. Nearly 60% of suspensions were issued for subjective offenses last year, while 40% were issued for the more serious “concrete” offenses.

	2013-2014		
	Percent of Student Body	Percent of Subjective Suspensions	Ratio of Subjective Suspensions to Student Body
White	61.48%	36.00%	0.59
Hispanic	23.41%	38.10%	1.63
Black	8.13%	18.04%	2.22
Asian	3.11%	1.37%	0.44
Native American	0.66%	1.87%	2.83
Multiracial	3.21%	4.61%	1.44

Table 3. Ratio of Subjective Suspensions to Race Group

In our 2012-2013 update, we noted that thousands more suspensions occurred that year for “Disorderly Conduct” and “Insubordination/Disrespect” than for assault, bomb threats, breaking and entering, possession or use of controlled substances, fire regulations violations, fighting, gang activity, harassment, hate crimes, hazing, larceny, threats, trespassing, vandalism, or weapons possession combined. In fact, those two vague offenses alone comprised one-third of all suspensions; alarming at the time, that number now seems quaintly conservative. In the 2013-2014 school year, *more than half* of all suspensions (52.46%) were for “Disorderly Conduct” and “Insubordination/Disrespect.”

Those suspensions came with even larger racial disparities than for suspensions overall, with black students comprising 2.27 times the number of expected suspensions for these two offenses.

	2013-2014		
	Percent of Student Body	Percent of Subjective Suspensions	Ratio of Subjective Suspensions to Student Body
White	61.48%	33.58%	0.55
Hispanic	23.41%	39.97%	1.71
Black	8.13%	18.42%	2.27
Asian	3.11%	1.34%	0.43
Native American	0.66%	1.98%	3.00
Multiracial	3.21%	4.68%	1.46

Table 4. Ratio of "Disorderly Conduct" and "Insubordination/Disrespect" Suspensions to Race Group

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL VS. HIGH SCHOOL

During the 2013-2014 school year, 1,371 elementary school students were suspended from school; 145 of these students were in the first grade alone. This disturbing number is made even bleaker when one examines the racial breakdown of the suspensions.

Similar to figures from the previous year, nearly a quarter of suspended elementary school students were black. They get suspended nearly three times what is expected given their representation in the population.

	2013-2014		
	Percent of K-5 Student Body	Percent of K-5 Suspensions	Ratio of Suspensions to Student Body
White	59.17%	29.69%	0.50
Hispanic	25.06%	36.54%	1.46
Black	8.04%	23.32%	2.90
Asian	3.19%	0.78%	0.24
Native American	0.63%	1.60%	2.54
Multiracial	3.92%	8.06%	2.06

Table 5. Ratio of Race Group Suspensions to Student Body Population, Grades K-5

White students comprised nearly a third of elementary school suspensions during the 2013-2014 school year, an increase over what was experienced the school year before but still just half the expected number of suspensions. Meanwhile, Hispanic students experienced both a mild drop in their suspension rate and increase in their population rate that left them suspended 1.46 times as often as expected.

Elementary school students are not immune from the subjective offense disparity. In 2013-2014, more than a third of the suspensions (843 out of 2,307 total suspensions) were for the subjective offenses of “Disorderly Conduct” or “Insubordination/Disrespect.”

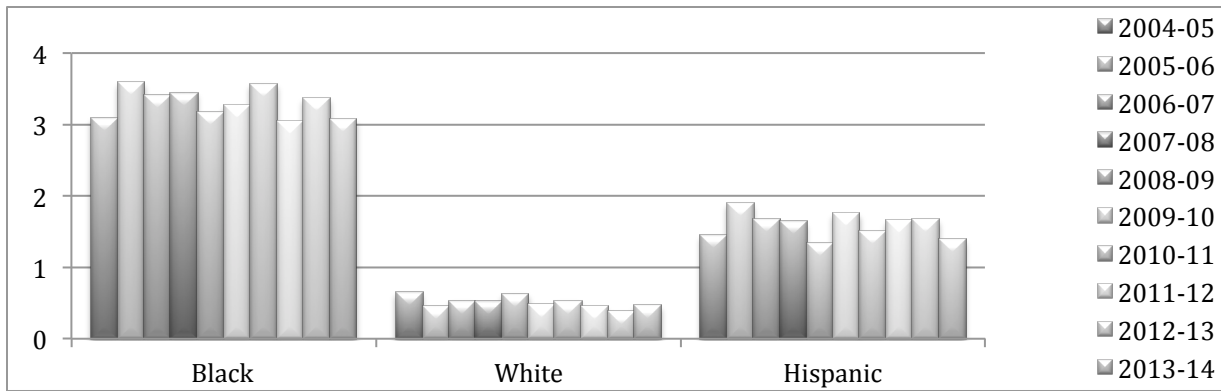


Figure 1. Suspension Disparity in Subjective Offenses, Grades K-5

Despite making up just one-third of the elementary school student body population, black and Hispanic students together comprised nearly 60 percent of elementary school suspensions for “Disorderly Conduct” and “Insubordination/Disrespect.” Black students alone made up 25.03 percent of the suspensions for these offenses, 3.11 times what is expected given their representation in the elementary school population. Hispanic students comprised 34.64 percent of these suspensions, 1.38 times their expected rate. At 27.88 percent of suspensions, white elementary school students were suspended for “Disorderly Conduct” or “Insubordination/Disrespect” less than half as often as expected.

	Number of Suspensions							Ratio of Suspensions to Population Rate					
	White	Hispanic	Black	Asian	Native American	Multiracial	Total	White	Hispanic	Black	Asian	Native American	Multiracial
2004-2005	295	176	187	8	11	--	677	0.63	1.44	3.26	0.37	2.58	--
2005-2006	230	243	223	3	12	--	711	0.47	2.06	3.65	0.13	0.29	--
2006-2007	203	203	194	8	4	--	612	0.49	1.73	3.60	0.42	0.88	--
2007-2008	243	215	197	9	10	--	674	0.54	1.63	3.32	0.39	1.88	--
2008-2009	292	188	197	7	8	--	692	0.63	1.16	3.17	0.30	1.50	--
2009-2010	226	267	199	20	18	--	730	0.46	1.90	3.03	0.77	2.50	--
2010-2011	252	276	186	6	10	43	773	0.52	1.59	3.09	0.25	2.29	1.93
2011-2012	248	267	218	7	10	46	796	0.51	1.44	3.43	0.28	2.17	1.76
2012-2103	206	336	238	8	16	57	861	0.39	1.63	3.43	0.29	2.91	1.91
2013-2014	235	292	211	3	19	83	843	0.47	1.38	3.11	0.11	3.57	2.51

Table 6. Suspensions for "Disorderly Conduct" and "Insubordination/Disrespect" by Race, Grades K-5

By high school, the racial disparities in suspension rates lessened somewhat, but the picture is mixed. The number of high school suspensions declined by more than six hundred between the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school year, dropping from 7,897 suspensions to 7,209. At the same time, suspensions for “Insubordination/Disrespect” and “Disorderly Conduct” still make up nearly 60 percent of the suspensions given to high school students – 4,168 suspensions were issued for these two offenses alone.

Although the racial disparities experienced by suspended high school students are less severe than those for elementary school students, it is still a cause for great concern. Black high school students made up 15.48 percent of suspensions during the 2013-2014 school year, 1.83 times what is expected given their representation in the high school student population. White students, on the other hand, made up fewer than half of the high school suspensions despite constituting nearly two-thirds of the high school student population.

	2013-2014		
	Percent of 9-12 Student Body	Percent of 9-12 Suspensions	Ratio of Suspensions to Student Body
White	63.80%	48.38%	0.76
Hispanic	21.59%	29.80%	1.38
Black	8.46%	15.48%	1.83
Asian	3.10%	1.66%	0.54
Native American	0.69%	1.25%	1.81
Multiracial	2.36%	3.43%	1.45

Table 7. Race Disparity in High School Suspensions, 2013-2014

The disparity increases when examining the suspensions of high school students only for “Disorderly Conduct” and “Insubordination/Disrespect.” Black students remain suspended for these two offenses more than twice as often as expected, while white students are suspended just 0.68 times what is expected given their representation in the population.

	2013-2014		
	Percent of 9-12 Student Body	Percent of 9-12 Suspensions	Ratio of Suspensions to Student Body
White	63.80%	43.38%	0.68
Hispanic	21.59%	33.01%	1.53
Black	8.46%	17.01%	2.01
Asian	3.10%	1.80%	0.58
Native American	0.69%	1.34%	1.93
Multiracial	2.36%	3.45%	1.46

Table 8. Race Disparity in "Disorderly Conduct" and "Insubordination/Disrespect" Suspensions, High School 2013-2014

THE GENDER IMPACT

The stereotype of a suspended child is often that of a young black boy, and it is true that boys – particularly boys of color – are more likely to be suspended from school. But the impact of suspensions on girls – particularly girls of color – should not be minimized or ignored.

While the overall student body is split relatively evenly between boys and girls, boys make up 71.58 percent of suspensions on average. More than eleven thousand suspensions involved boys in the 2013-2014 school year, compared to 4,417 for girls. Altogether, 7.87 percent of the male student body experienced a suspension, in contrast to just 3.60 percent of the female student body.

	Boys			Girls		
	Percent of Male Student Body	Percent of Suspensions	Ratio of Suspensions to Student Body	Percent of Female Student Body	Percent of Suspensions	Ratio of Suspensions to Student Body
White	61.62%	38.77%	0.63	61.32%	33.64%	0.55
Hispanic	23.46%	36.25%	1.55	23.37%	39.85%	1.71
Black	8.09%	17.64%	2.18	8.17%	17.89%	2.19
Asian	3.03%	1.38%	0.46	3.21%	1.22%	0.38
Native American	0.63%	1.48%	2.35	0.68%	2.47%	3.63
Multiracial	3.17%	4.48%	1.41	3.25%	4.94%	1.52

Table 9. Ratio of Race Group Suspensions to Student Body Population by Gender, All Grades

As has come to be expected when talking about school suspensions, however, black and Hispanic boys *and girls* are more likely than white boys and girls to be suspended from school. As for boys, a staggering 15.97 percent of the black male student body experienced a suspension in 2013-2014, or more than one in six black boys. Among Hispanic boys, 11.98 percent of the population was suspended at least once. Meanwhile, just 5.24 percent of the white male student body was suspended.

For girls, 7.62 percent of black girls were suspended from school at least once – almost as much as the average suspension rate for boys generally. Among Hispanic girls, 5.99 percent were suspended at least once; in contrast, just 2.10 percent of the white female student body was suspended.

Altogether, a black boy is 3.46 times as likely as a white boy to be suspended from school, while a black girl is 3.98 times as likely as a white girl to be suspended from school.

While both boys and girls were suspended for “Disorderly Conduct” or “Insubordination/Disrespect” more than any other offense, among girls those two offenses comprised 55.94 percent of suspensions. These vague and unpredictable offenses therefore have a disproportionately large impact on girls of all races.

	2013-2014		
	Percent of Female Student Body	Percent of Suspensions	Ratio of Suspensions to Student Body
White	61.32%	29.42%	0.48
Hispanic	23.37%	43.55%	1.86
Black	8.17%	18.37%	2.25
Asian	3.21%	1.05%	0.33
Native American	0.68%	2.71%	3.98
Multiracial	3.25%	4.90%	1.51

Table 10. Ratio of Suspensions for "Disorderly Conduct" or "Insubordination/Disrespect" to Race Group Representation

Yet, here again, the racial disparities are immense. A black girl is 4.68 times more like than a white girl to be suspended from school for “Disorderly Conduct” or “Insubordination/Disrespect.” As suspensions for these two offenses have been comprising a larger and larger percentage of all suspensions, we can expect to see this particular impact on black girls to be exacerbated in the years to come, unless state and education leaders intervene.

DISTRICT SPECIFIC DATA

No districts have been immune from the problems of racial disparities in school suspension. Of the 29 school districts and five charter schools for which there was sufficient information in the 2013-2014 school year, 24 school districts and two charter schools disproportionately suspended black students. Twenty-one school districts and one charter school disproportionately over-suspended Hispanic students. Only the Beacon Charter School and Blackstone Academy over-suspended white students.

School District or Charter School	Black % of Student Body	Black % of Suspended Students	Ratio of Black Suspensions to Population	Hispanic % of Student Body	Hispanic % of Suspended Students	Ratio of Hispanic Suspensions to Population	White % of Student Body	White % of Suspended Students	Ratio of White Suspensions to Population
Barrington	0.75%	0.00%	0.00	1.75%	0.00%	0.00	89.25%	93.33%	1.05
Beacon Charter	5.73%	7.14%	1.25	14.54%	0.00%	0.00	71.37%	92.86%	1.30
Blackstone Academy	18.45%	0.00%	0.00	62.50%	66.67%	1.07	13.69%	33.33%	2.43
Bristol Warren	2.19%	5.51%	2.52	4.58%	6.27%	1.37	87.95%	82.46%	0.94
Burrillville	1.57%	2.21%	1.41	2.72%	5.75%	2.11	93.20%	85.84%	0.92
Central Falls	11.60%	7.00%	0.60	74.22%	81.00%	1.09	8.93%	6.00%	0.67
Chariho	0.83%	1.39%	1.67	2.56%	4.88%	1.91	91.60%	82.58%	0.90
Coventry	1.50%	8.44%	5.63	3.00%	2.60%	0.87	93.62%	88.31%	0.94
Cranston	4.45%	9.84%	2.21	22.71%	39.09%	1.72	61.32%	40.73%	0.66
Cumberland	2.61%	9.35%	3.58	8.87%	13.14%	1.48	83.58%	74.83%	0.89
East Greenwich	0.55%	5.56%	10.11	4.84%	11.11%	2.30	85.99%	75.00%	0.87
East Providence	11.52%	17.24%	1.50	8.95%	9.48%	1.06	72.23%	62.50%	0.87
Exeter-West Greenwich	0.68%	1.57%	2.31	3.73%	7.87%	2.11	94.10%	88.98%	0.95
Johnston	4.16%	3.13%	0.75	13.34%	9.38%	0.70	78.70%	85.94%	1.09
Lincoln	2.54%	9.96%	3.92	5.51%	14.11%	2.56	89.47%	75.52%	0.84
MET Career & Tech	12.53%	0.00%	0.00	44.15%	57.41%	1.30	33.77%	28.57%	0.85
Middletown	5.92%	27.64%	4.67	10.46%	13.01%	1.24	72.50%	44.72%	0.62
Narragansett	1.86%	2.40%	1.29	2.09%	2.40%	1.15	90.09%	88.80%	0.99
Newport	18.10%	37.84%	2.09	21.98%	24.31%	1.11	46.27%	21.80%	0.47
North Kingstown	1.43%	15.79%	11.04	3.20%	11.84%	3.70	90.89%	61.84%	0.68
North Providence	8.38%	11.84%	1.41	17.72%	23.86%	1.35	67.37%	58.54%	0.87
North Smithfield	0.89%	8.70%	9.77	5.98%	15.22%	2.55	89.04%	73.91%	0.83
Paul Cuffee Charter	22.48%	35.00%	1.56	51.37%	55.00%	1.07	9.30%	5.00%	0.54
Pawtucket	25.23%	25.64%	1.02	31.99%	33.67%	1.05	34.04%	29.54%	0.87
Portsmouth	2.33%	10.19%	4.37	3.44%	8.30%	2.41	91.01%	78.70%	0.86
Providence	17.61%	25.77%	1.46	64.80%	60.32%	0.93	8.57%	6.33%	0.74
Smithfield	1.36%	5.15%	3.79	4.16%	9.28%	2.23	82.98%	79.38%	0.96
South Kingstown	2.04%	5.11%	2.50	4.25%	8.03%	2.50	85.57%	65.69%	0.77
Tiverton	1.11%	2.25%	2.03	0.54%	0.56%	1.04	96.26%	88.76%	0.92
Urban Collaborative	18.98%	6.12%	0.32	70.07%	87.76%	1.25	7.30%	4.08%	0.56
Warwick	2.22%	2.75%	1.24	6.44%	9.08%	1.41	85.66%	85.56%	1.00
West Warwick	4.59%	4.39%	0.96	11.60%	14.04%	1.21	79.10%	79.39%	1.00
Westerly	1.33%	11.80%	8.87	6.77%	3.37%	0.50	83.05%	68.54%	0.83
Woonsocket	9.94%	13.39%	1.35	30.10%	35.37%	1.18	48.85%	43.38%	0.89

Ratio of < 0.90 = *Undersuspension*
Ratio between .90 and 1.10 = Normal range
Ratio > 1.10 = **Oversuspension**

Table 11. School District and Charter School Suspension Rates, 2013-2014

Black students in North Kingstown were suspended at a rate 11.04 times what is expected based on their population, while white students were suspended just 0.68 times what was expected. As a result, a black student in North Kingstown was 16.24 times more likely than a white student to be suspended. In Newport, where black students make up more than 18 percent of the population, a black student was 4.45 times more likely than a white student to be suspended. Although the school districts we have highlighted have changed over the years, and many have seen fluctuations in the severity of their suspension rates, over-suspension remains a statewide phenomenon, affecting urban and suburban schools alike.

No over-suspension ratio should be viewed as mild or acceptable, particularly as these disparities remain high year in and year out. For the past decade, Rhode Island's school districts have had uniformly high racial disparities in suspension rates.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the ongoing conversation around the deleterious effects of suspensions, Rhode Island's schools continue to exclude children from school on a regular basis, mostly for low-risk behavioral offenses. Students of color are experiencing their highest suspension rates in the last decade, and the youngest of Rhode Island's students are experiencing the strongest effects. Awareness of the problem is not, itself, a solution. It is time for Rhode Island's legislators and education officials to address the suspension problem head-on, before another year's worth of statistics shows a newer, even more grim picture of children funneled out of the classroom and toward the juvenile court system simply because they participated in the frustrating practice of being children.

The ACLU of Rhode Island continues to believe that orderly classrooms are possible without excluding those students in need of particular attention. To address this goal, the ACLU of Rhode Island has a number of recommendations:

- The General Assembly should approve legislation clarifying that suspensions are not to be served outside of school unless the student poses a demonstrable risk of physical injury or serious disruption to students and cannot be controlled by other means.
- School districts should examine their discipline rates annually for any racial or ethnic disparities, consult with educators to develop a plan to reduce these disparities in the future, and share this data and their recommendation with parents and the public.
- School districts should, in collaboration with the school community, investigate alternative evidence-based disciplinary methods, including restorative justice, peer counseling, and positive behavior interventions.

- Schools should examine their policies and procedures regarding discipline to ensure that punishments are clearly and evenly established for various offenses, and that out-of-school suspensions are not presented as a discipline option for those incidents involving minor behavioral misconduct, including attendance issues.
- Students and parents facing suspensions should be informed of their rights to appeal suspensions, and should contact the ACLU if they feel they or their child was unreasonably suspended from school.

The over-reliance by Rhode Island's schools on suspensions has continued for far too long, and impacted far too many students. By limiting the use of suspensions, Rhode Island can keep more of its youth in the classroom, and out of trouble. Today's youth become tomorrow's adults, and minimizing the use of suspensions now ensures that these youth enter adulthood with an education to build upon, not a past to overcome. Action by our legislative and educational leaders now can ensure that no child spends a lifetime paying a hefty price for a few minor incidents of childhood misbehavior.⁵

ENDNOTES

¹ <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201401-title-vi.html>

² Willon, Phil. "Brown signs bill limiting some suspensions, vetoes college repair funds." *The Los Angeles Times*. September 27, 2014. <http://www.latimes.com/local/political/la-me-ln-governor-signs-bill-limiting-suspensions-for-willful-defiance-20140927-story.html>

³ St. George, Donna. "Maryland school board approves new discipline regulations." *The Washington Post*. January 28, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/maryland-approves-new-school-discipline-regulations/2014/01/28/c11ad4de-8385-11e3-bbe5-6a2a3141e3a9_story.html

⁴ For more information on the school-to-prison pipeline, see "The School to Prison Pipeline in Black and White," available at http://riaclu.org/images/uploads/School_to_Prison_Pipeline_in_Black_and_White_2015.pdf.

⁵ This report was prepared by ACLU of Rhode Island policy associate Hillary Davis.



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