



HIGHLIGHTS

From the 2012-13 to 2014-15 school years, the number of students suspended out-of-school decreased by nearly 50%; students suspended in-school decreased by 55%.

From 2012-13 to 2014-15, incidents resulting in an out-of-school suspension have seen a 6% decrease and in-school incidents an 11% decrease.

In 2014-15, students lost close to 12,000 days of class time in out-of-school suspensions.

African American students represent one-third of the Bridgeport Public School District, however, they make up over half of students suspended in-school and out-of-school.

LOST CLASS TIME:

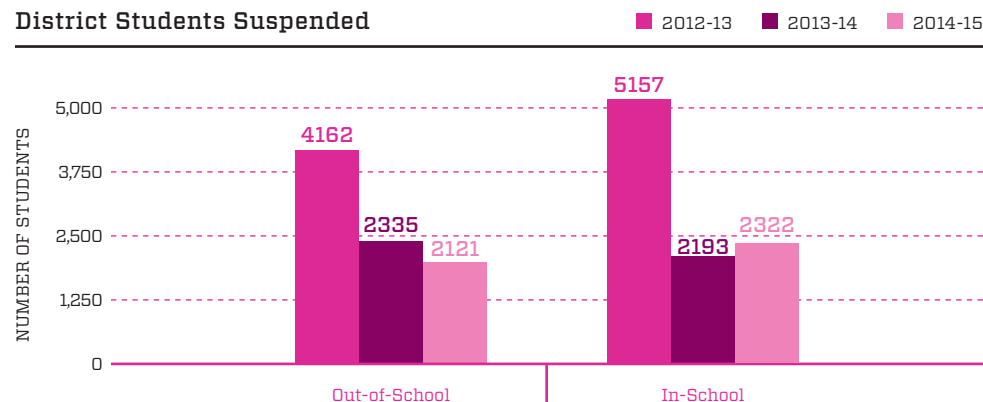
Redefining School Discipline and Improving School Climate in Bridgeport

Suspensions as a punishment for misbehavior means lost class time, missed opportunities, and an underutilization of the educational resources that the school system has to offer. Since 2009, the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition (BCAC) has reported on the state of suspensions in the Bridgeport Public School (BPS) District and what that means for the youth we send on to higher education or into the workforce. Although suspensions in BPS have decreased, the District is redefining approaches to reduce suspensions even further. New strategies such as managing student behavior through social and emotional learning are emerging with the expectation that Bridgeport can continue its declining suspension rates.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS: HAVE WE MADE PROGRESS?

The number of students suspended out-of-school decreased by 49% from 2012-13 to 2014-15. During that same time period, students given in-school suspension dropped by 55%.

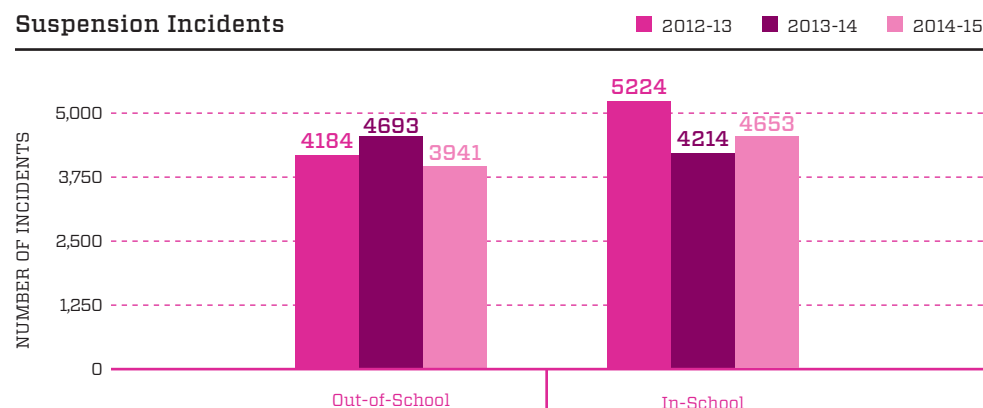
District Students Suspended



Distinct students means the individual students suspended in-school or out-of-school. Students are counted only once regardless of the number of suspensions given.

From 2012-13 to 2014-15, out-of-school suspension incidents for all BPS dropped by 6% and in-school suspensions dropped by 11%.

Suspension Incidents



Incidents means the total number of suspensions given.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION RATES CONTINUE TREND OF DECLINE

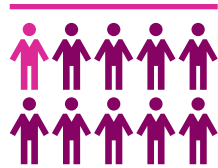
Out-of-school suspension rates for the five schools below have dramatically decreased from 2012-13 to 2014-15. These five Bridgeport Public Schools had at least a 15 percent point decrease in their student suspension rate.

Out-of-School Student Suspension Rates in Schools with K-8 Grades

SCHOOLS	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
COLUMBUS	33.2%	17.6%	4.8%
CROSS	77.5%	24.1%	21.3%
DUNBAR	56.8%	31.8%	18.5%
HOOKEE	25.1%	10.4%	9.5%
ROOSEVELT	31.9%	14.7%	15.4%

Did You Know?

IN 2014-15



ONE IN TEN

10.1%

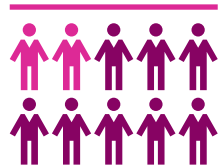
BRIDGEPORT
PUBLIC SCHOOL
STUDENTS WERE
SUSPENDED
OUT-OF-SCHOOL

COMPARED TO



20.5%

TWO IN TEN



IN 2012-13



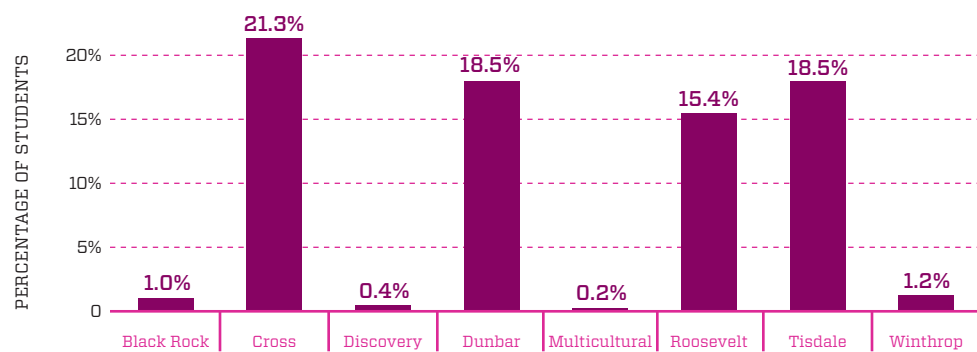
SHARING SUCCESSES: AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TALE

Several schools initiated their own best practice methods for an improved school climate in light of high suspension rates. Columbus Elementary School attributes their reduction in suspensions to the creation of support teams. These teams have been designed to better understand student behavior and meet the needs of Columbus students. They help students identify feelings and build connections through empathy instead of taking misbehavior at face value and responding with punishment. To encourage positive student behavior in and out of class, Jettie S. Tisdale Elementary School implemented a reward-incentive competition where classrooms can receive coins for completing specific tasks in a behaviorally appropriate manner, such as walking to the cafeteria in a straight and well-behaved line. The number of coins won by each classroom are displayed in the hallways so that everyone can see each other's progress and strive to do better. Wilbur Cross Elementary School recognized that when students were given out-of-school suspensions, more often than not students would return to school with additional stresses and appear more troubled than before. Wilbur Cross's response was to increase the level of parent engagement in their school. Wilbur Cross also created 'Regroup / Chill out Chairs' to solve disruptive classroom tendencies instead of administering automatic detentions/suspensions.

HIGH VARIANCES AMONG SCHOOLS

The percentage of students suspended continues to vary widely among BPS. In schools with grades K-8, out-of-school student suspension rates ranged from a low of .2% to a high of 21%.

Highest and Lowest Out-of-School Suspension Rates for Schools with Grades K-8, 2014-15



OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION REDUCTIONS: BRIDGEPORT HIGH SCHOOLS

Out-of-school student suspension rates in the high schools have also decreased from 2012-13 to 2014-15, though not to the same extent as some of the District's elementary schools.

Out-of-School Suspension Rates for High School Students

OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
BASSICK	33.5%	20.6%	23.0%
CENTRAL	39.2%	24.9%	17.2%
HARDING	51.1%	24.3%	26.1%

Fairchild Wheeler Interdistrict Magnet (which includes Aerospace / Hydrospace Engineering and Physical Sciences High School, Information Technology and Software Engineering High School, and Biotechnology Research and Zoological Sciences High School) and Bridgeport Military Academy are not included in this chart because they opened in 2013-14.

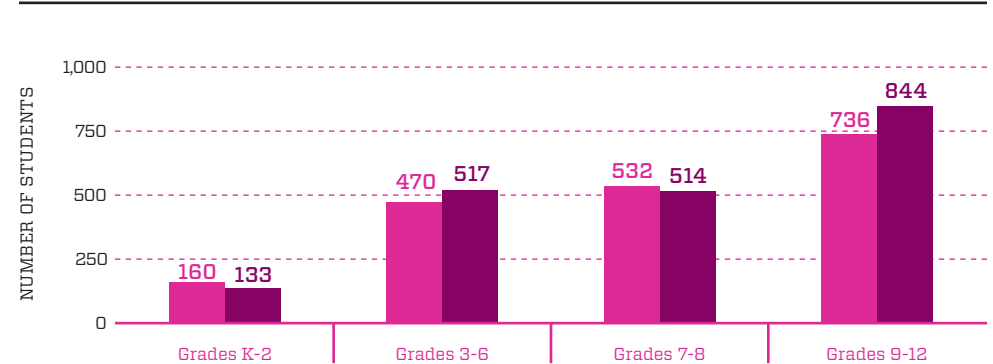
SHARING SUCCESSES: TALES FROM HIGH SCHOOLS

Instead of automatically administering suspensions for unsatisfactory behavior, Central High School employs a combination of strategies to keep students engaged in school. They have found success in part by reinforcing behavioral expectations on an on-going basis and have shifted to an 'our' school mentality to instill pride in students. 'Feedback Fridays' were developed to create a safe space for students and teachers to engage in positive and constructive criticism, lending itself to improved school transparency. Parent engagement at Central has been an important factor in further decreasing suspension rates. Central has actively reached out to parents to garner stronger relationships and foster a more robust system of community support around each student. Best practices like proactive versus reactive interventions play a key role in constructive teacher-to-student communication, and can de-escalate a situation before it turns into a suspension. Harding High School uses this tactic and similar evidence-based practices, such as reinforcing the importance of parent engagement, to lower their suspension rates.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS BY GRADE: WHO IS SUSPENDED MOST OFTEN?

Children in grades K-2 were more likely to be suspended out-of-school in 2014-15 than in-school. Those in grades 7-8 received more out-of-school suspensions as well, by 18 students. Most policy violations in grades 3-6 and 9-12 resulted in in-school suspension rather than out-of-school discipline.

Students Suspended by Grade, 2014-15



NEW LEGISLATION IN 2015: AN ACT CONCERNING OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS FOR PRE-K THROUGH GRADE 2

Data increasingly shows that suspending students does not rehabilitate, but instead can exacerbate behavioral problems, diminish academic achievement, and hasten school dropout.¹ Suspensions also disproportionately affect children of color. A study by the Council of State Governments Justice Center and Public Policy Research Institute examined data on nearly one million public school students and found that even one disciplinary exclusion resulted in a student being twice as likely to repeat a grade and three times as likely to enter the juvenile justice system.²

In July 2015, legislation passed through the Connecticut General Assembly prohibiting expulsions and out-of-school suspensions for students in Pre-K through grade 2. The BPS District is planning on responding with increased developmentally appropriate protocols in place of the former out-of-school suspension and expulsion policies. Initiatives with a social, emotional, and behavioral focus will be put into practice as long-term sustainable solutions.



IN 2012-13

2,906
STUDENTS

WERE GIVEN EITHER AN IN-SCHOOL OR OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION COMPARED TO

2,000
STUDENTS

IN 2014-15

DECREASE OF
31.2%

Did You Know?

SUSPENSION INCIDENTS WERE MOST LIKELY TO OCCUR IN

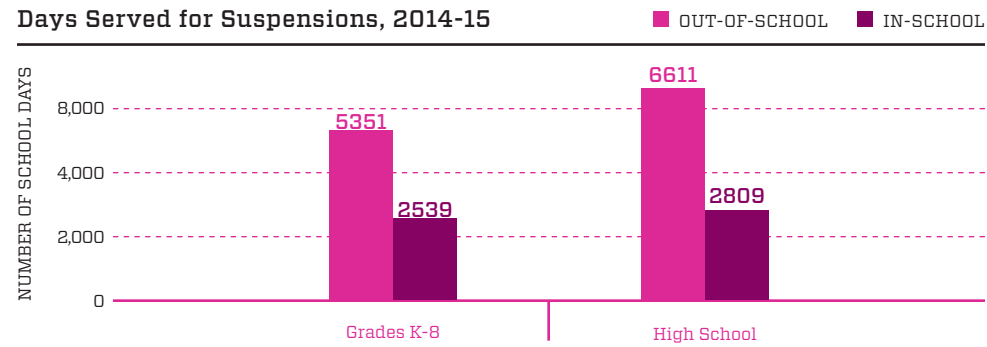
GRADES 7-8 & HIGH SCHOOL

THAN ANY OTHER GRADE



OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION: LOST SCHOOL DAYS

In 2014-15, elementary students across all BPS lost a combined 5,351 days of school time due to out-of-school suspensions, an average of 4.6 days per student. High school students on average lost 6.9 days to out-of-school suspensions in 2014-15, a total of 6,611 days.



MAJOR TYPES OF VIOLATIONS FOR IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

Elementary and high school students receive in-school and out-of-school suspensions for a wide array of violations.

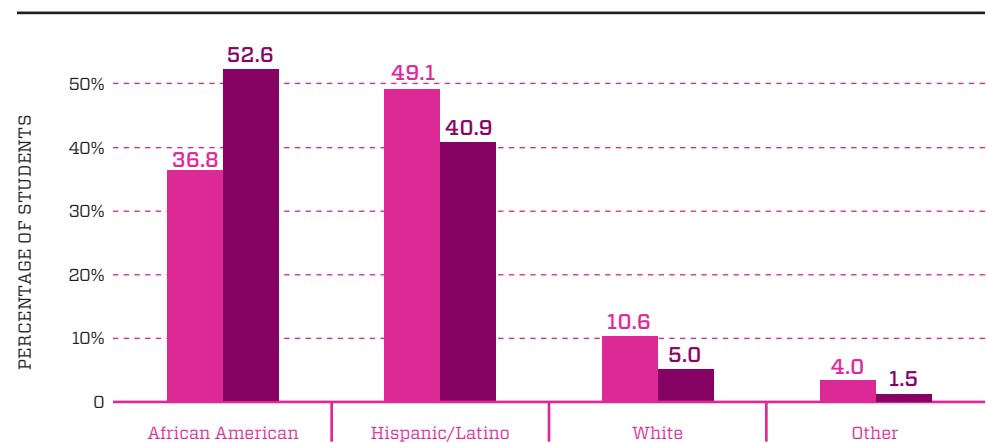
Major Reasons for School Suspensions

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL
- DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR	- DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR
- FIGHTING/ALTERCATION/PHYSICAL AGGRESSION	- DRESS CODE VIOLATION
- INSUBORDINATION/DISRESPECT	- FIGHTING/ALTERCATION/PHYSICAL AGGRESSION
- OBSCENE LANGUAGE/PROFANITY	- INSUBORDINATION/DISRESPECT
	- LEAVING SCHOOL GROUNDS
	- SKIPPING CLASS

DOES RACE PLAY A ROLE?

African American students are disproportionately suspended. Although African American students represent only 36.8% of the BPS District, they make up 52.6% of students suspended out-of-school and 51.9% of all students suspended in-school.

Student Race and Ethnicity Enrollment Compared to Students Suspended Out-of-School, 2014-15



BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND BEST PRACTICES

Childhood trauma generated by poverty, homelessness, challenging social relationships, or physical stressors like substandard housing and poor air quality are some of the leading public health problems in the United States today.³ Unmet social, emotional, and physical needs impact children's concentration and behavior in the classroom. The result contributes to a negative school climate and high rates of suspensions and expulsions.⁴ Evidence-based practice models using social-behavioral strategies are proven to drive down high rates of suspension, expulsion, class disruptions, and increase school safety. These measures create a more progressive school climate overall and improve student's leadership skills, social competency, motivation, study skills, and decrease anxiety and depression.⁵

When student's emotional needs are recognized and handled effectively, they are better able to learn, get the most out of their education experiences, and focus on doing their best in school. Helping students better identify and manage feelings of anger, disappointment, or shame can lead to better outcomes in the classroom.⁶

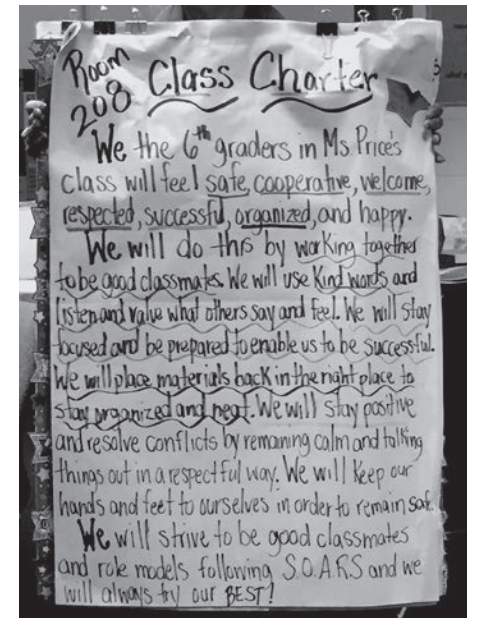
In the last several years, the BPS District has implemented national best practices on improving school climate, including Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). This is a program for preventing and responding to discipline problems that uses a comprehensive approach to set and enforce clear behavioral classroom expectations. PBIS has been proven to increase school safety and decrease behavioral difficulties in students.

New in 2015, the RULER Approach (Recognizing emotions, Understanding causes and consequences of emotions, Labeling the full range of feelings, Expressing them appropriately, and Regulating emotions to foster healthy relationships) is an evidence-based methodology that helps students recognize and communicate their feelings to teachers, parents, and each other, leading to more open dialogues and strengthened relationships. This program model is not only a district-wide initiative but a community-wide one as well. Including the Bridgeport community and parents in these discussions will help to provide students with the emotional and social supports needed to thrive in school and beyond. Trainings will be made available to the community at large throughout the year.

In addition, the District continues to implement the CAMP program at the Bridgeport Learning Center targeting kindergarten students with serious behavioral problems. Using a team approach, the program includes academics as well as social work and guidance support. The District also worked with school police to create memorandums of understanding, eliminating zero tolerance policies in schools. Data teams have been established to track trends in suspensions across schools by incidents and other factors on an on-going basis.

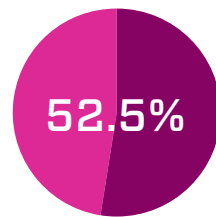
Although suspensions have dramatically decreased and the District continues to form community-based partnerships, BPS students lost close to 12,000 days of class time in out-of-school suspension in 2014-15 alone. In 2013-14, Bridgeport had the second highest rate of suspensions in Connecticut.

The work is not over. It will take the entire community to ensure that these best practices continue working towards reducing in-school and out-of-school suspensions and improving school climate.



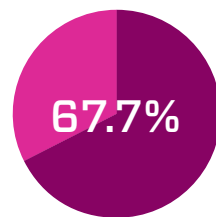
MALE STUDENTS

MAKE UP



OF THE STUDENT POPULATION

BUT



OF THOSE SUSPENDED IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL

¹ Hoffman, C. K., Owen, J., & Wettach, J. (2015). *Instead of Suspension: Alternative Strategies for Effective School Discipline*. Retrieved from: https://law.duke.edu/childlaw/schooldiscipline/downloads/instead_of_suspension.pdf.

² Council of State Governments Justice Center & The Public Policy Research Institute (2011). *Breaking Schools' Rules: A Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement*. Retrieved from: http://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Breaking_Schools_Rules_Report_Final.pdf.

³ Cook, L. (2015). *U.S. Education: Still Separate and Unequal*. Retrieved from: <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/data-mine/2015/01/28/us-education-still-separate-and-unequal>.

⁴ American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008). *Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools? An Evidentiary Review and Recommendations*. Retrieved from: <https://www.apa.org/pubs/info/reports/zero-tolerance.pdf>.

⁵ Brackett, A. M., & Rivers, E. S. (2013). *Transforming Students' Lives with Social and Emotional Learning*. Retrieved from: <http://ei.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Transforming-Students-Lives-with-Social-and-Emotional-Learning.pdf>.

⁶ Brackett, A. M., Hagelskamp C., River E. S., & Salovey P. (2013). *Improving Classroom Quality with The RULER Approach to Social and Emotional Learning: Proximal and Distal Outcome*. Retrieved from: <http://ei.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/How-RULER-Improves-Classroom-Culture.pdf>.



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Research.

Research is the foundation for everything BCAC does. Our reports provide objective data, identify best practices, and suggest practical steps to address the challenges our children face.

Advocate.

Advocacy is at the heart of BCAC's mission. We empower community members by giving them the tools and information to effectively advocate for positive change.

BCAC

Educate.

BCAC educates the community by sharing information, ideas, and resources. By advancing a shared understanding of children's issues, we can move forward as a cohesive community.

Mobilize.

As a coalition of diverse members, BCAC harnesses the power of people to bring about systems change and improve the well-being of children and families.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

**NORMA F. PFRIEM
FOUNDATION**



**BRIDGEPORT
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

The Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition is a coalition of organizations, parents, and other concerned individuals committed to improving the well-being of Bridgeport's children through research, education, advocacy, and mobilization.

BCAC provides the vehicle for the Greater Bridgeport community to take concerted action on issues that affect children's health, education, and safety. Our coalition is grassroots and independent, diverse and motivated. Together, we are advocating for policy and systems change that will clear a path to a better future, particularly for Bridgeport's most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

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