

SUSPENSIONS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEFINITION: The total number and rate of suspensions (both in-school and out-of-school) of public school students, disaggregated by race. Note that the number of suspensions per 1,000 students enrolled is not synonymous with the number of suspended students per 1,000 students enrolled. A student may experience multiple suspensions during a single school year.

SIGNIFICANCE

Children and teachers alike have the right to learn and teach in a safe environment that is conducive to learning. Suspensions can have negative long-term educational and personal consequences for students. Suspensions have been associated with a higher risk of dropping out, becoming a crime victim, and delinquent behavior.¹

Because disciplinary policies and practices vary from district to district, differences in suspension rates among parishes should not be interpreted as reflecting differences in student behavior. Instead, suspension data reflects how often this particular form of discipline was used by school administrators.

Data collected by the Office of Civil Rights shows that Louisiana suspends a larger percentage of its public school students than almost any other state.³ In the 2006 school year, 12.1% of Louisiana public school students received an in-school suspension and 11.8% experienced an out-of-school suspension. Suspensions are most common in middle schools, where almost one out of every four students (24%) received at least one in-school suspension and 19% received at least one out-of-school suspension in SY 2006. Seventeen percent (17%) of high school students experienced at least one in-school suspension and 16% received an out-of-school suspension.⁴

Many schools and school districts in Louisiana are implementing a program called Positive Behavior Support (PBS), an evidence-based program designed to improve student behavior and reduce the number of students who are removed from the classroom. PBS utilizes three tiers of increasing intervention to promote positive conduct. Universal interventions apply to all students, and typically include school-wide education about rules and social skills training. Secondary interventions target students who have displayed challenging behaviors, and may include behavior contracts, daily check-ins with a staff member, and conflict resolution training. Tertiary interventions, which apply to students with the most challenging academic and behavior problems, may include a special behavioral assessment, counseling and an individualized behavior support plan.⁵

DISPROPORTIONALITY

The rate at which black students are suspended is

higher than the corresponding rate for white students in every single parish in Louisiana. During the 2006-2007 school year, there were 729 suspensions of black students for every 1,000 black students enrolled in Louisiana's public schools. This rate was 2.6 times as large as the rate for white students, which amounted to 285 suspensions per 1,000 students enrolled.

Racial disparities in suspension rates varied widely across parishes. In East Carroll Parish, the rate at which black students were suspended was 1.3 times as large as the rate for white students. By contrast, the suspension rate for black students was more than four times as large as the rate for white students in six parishes—De Soto, La Salle, Lafourche, Grant, St. James and Vermilion.

DATA SOURCE

Analysis of information provided by Department of Education, Division of Planning, Analysis, and Information Resources, by special request

RATE CALCULATION

$1,000 * (\text{number of suspensions} \div \text{number of public school students})$

$1,000 * (\text{number of suspensions of black students} \div \text{number of black public school students})$

$1,000 * (\text{number of suspensions of white students} \div \text{number of white public school students})$

DATA NOTE

Data for City of Baker and City of Zachary school districts are reflected in East Baton Rouge data. Data for the City of Monroe are reflected in data for Ouachita Parish. Data for City of Bogalusa are reflected in data for Washington Parish. Data for Lab schools and all other charters are not included in the parish-level data, but are included in the statewide data. Note that enrollment data used to calculate rates reflects October 2006 enrollment counts, except for the parishes of Ascension, Jackson, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, and St. Tammany, for which February 2007 enrollment data was used because enrollment in February was higher than in October.

¹ Jane Sundius and Molly Farenth, "Putting Kids Out of School: What's Causing High Suspension Rates and Why They Are Detrimental to Students, Schools, and Communities," Open Society Institute—Baltimore, 2009, retrieved from www.soros.org/initiatives/baltimore/ on 6/1/2009.

² La. Rev. Stat. Ann. 17:416 (2008)

³ U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, "Civil Rights Data Collection: 2006," U.S. Department of Education, retrieved from <http://ocrdata.ed.gov/> on 6/1/2009.

⁴ Louisiana Department of Education, *2006-2007 Louisiana State Education Progress Report*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana Department of Education, 2008), 22-23, retrieved from www.doe.state.la.us/ on 6/1/2009.

⁵ Louisiana School-to-Prison Pipeline Reform Coalition, "Reducing Student and Teacher Dropout Rates in Louisiana," Southern Poverty Law Center School-to-Prison Reform Project, 2009.

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(NUMBER AND RATE PER 1,000 STUDENTS ENROLLED)

SY 2006	TOTAL		BLACK		WHITE		RACIAL DISPARITY RATIO*
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	
LOUISIANA	331,070	486	225,622	729	97,245	285	2.6
Acadia	5,158	539	2,873	1,062	2,261	335	3.2
Allen	1,493	345	677	664	780	247	2.7
Ascension	4,543	246	2,814	502	1,617	136	3.7
Assumption	2,005	467	1,439	788	548	228	3.4
Avoyelles	3,495	550	2,268	781	1,155	348	2.2
Beauregard	4,148	670	1,293	1,283	2,772	556	2.3
Bienville	1,001	420	838	593	161	171	3.5
Bossier	12,192	623	6,514	1,075	5,232	425	2.5
Caddo	31,780	731	26,427	954	5,142	349	2.7
Calcasieu	18,702	570	9,526	825	8,856	432	1.9
Caldwell	462	251	186	557	272	184	3.0
Cameron	225	145	24	490	191	132	3.7
Catahoula	445	248	295	413	148	140	3.0
Claiborne	856	328	748	425	101	122	3.5
Concordia	1,231	304	910	434	315	164	2.7
De Soto	3,676	734	3,045	1,120	597	274	4.1
East Baton Rouge	29,996	541	27,406	640	2,221	214	3.0
East Carroll	527	348	502	356	25	278	1.3
East Feliciana	488	207	414	227	74	138	1.6
Evangeline	2,205	354	1,273	497	914	255	1.9
Franklin	1,689	483	1,326	735	357	215	3.4
Grant	869	243	363	736	496	164	4.5
Iberia	2,679	188	1,988	313	652	90	3.5
Iberville	2,554	594	2,352	729	193	188	3.9
Jackson	971	439	519	652	443	321	2.0
Jefferson	29,720	680	20,999	968	6,148	425	2.3
Jefferson Davis	1,386	238	610	427	747	174	2.4
Lafayette	25,392	833	17,666	1,370	7,263	445	3.1
Lafourche	13,041	879	7,200	2,188	5,283	506	4.3
La Salle	452	166	157	491	276	117	4.2
Lincoln	3,976	593	2,989	874	962	306	2.9
Livingston	5,029	215	678	480	4,286	199	2.4
Madison	1,193	518	1,121	538	66	344	1.6
Morehouse	1,270	252	1,025	316	234	133	2.4
Natchitoches	3,720	530	3,114	776	579	204	3.8
Orleans	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Ouachita	9,600	340	7,085	514	2,461	176	2.9
Plaquemines	1,509	418	591	521	825	379	1.4
Pointe Coupee	2,182	721	1,894	957	287	286	3.3
Rapides	8,770	365	6,457	621	2,196	173	3.6
Red River	1,266	811	1,041	999	221	438	2.3
Richland	1,201	349	982	535	212	135	4.0
Sabine	1,273	302	662	623	362	163	3.8
St. Bernard	1,260	335	359	576	834	289	2.0
St. Charles	5,438	559	3,209	909	2,053	356	2.6
St. Helena	952	725	922	750	30	385	2.0
St. James	3,127	751	2,836	1,012	290	218	4.6
St. John the Baptist	5,938	875	5,286	1,002	567	461	2.2
St. Landry	3,953	254	2,853	322	1,072	164	2.0
St. Martin	4,503	520	3,200	776	1,265	289	2.7
St. Mary	3,506	353	2,378	513	1,037	217	2.4
St. Tammany	10,916	308	4,158	657	6,484	235	2.8
Tangipahoa	15,003	766	10,130	1,122	4,670	464	2.4
Tensas	360	435	351	463	8	LNE	n.a.
Terrebonne	9,798	510	6,025	1,092	3,143	274	4.0
Union	757	244	508	375	244	158	2.4
Vermillion	6,237	684	3,340	1,687	2,780	411	4.1
Vernon	3,522	363	1,373	700	1,980	284	2.5
Washington	1,419	186	870	252	540	131	1.9
Webster	2,479	331	1,563	483	880	213	2.3
West Baton Rouge	1,624	451	1,160	621	445	265	2.3
West Carroll	379	161	182	402	196	106	3.8
West Feliciana	906	367	630	587	273	199	3.0
Winn	844	303	524	544	315	177	3.1

*The racial disparity ratio was calculated by dividing the black rate by the white rate. The resulting ratio shows the degree to which the black rate of suspensions was higher than the white rate. A ratio of one indicates that there was no difference between the white and black rates, while ratios greater than one indicate that the black rate was higher than the white rate. **Note that the "number of suspensions per 1,000 students" should not be confused with "the number of students suspended per 1,000 students" enrolled, which is a fundamentally different measure. Because a single student can experience multiple suspensions during a school year, the "number of suspensions per 1,000 students enrolled" is substantially higher than the "number of students suspended per 1,000 enrolled." LNE [low number of events] is used because the rate or percent may be unreliable. S indicates that data for Orleans Parish was suppressed because of irregularities in the data.