

# Repaving the Road to Graduation: Improving Education Outcomes for All Students

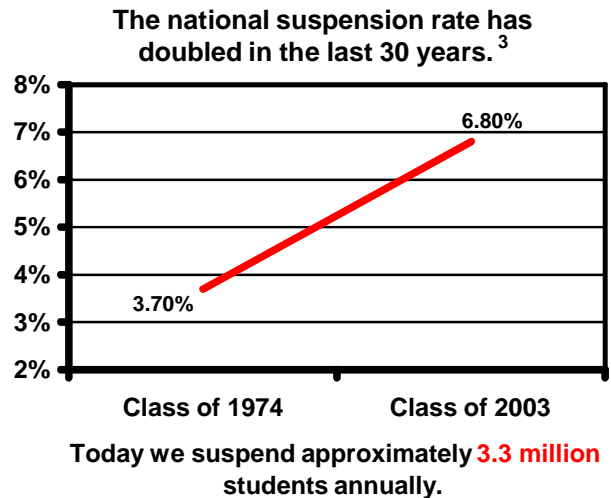
Students in the U.S. public education system are struggling against a tide of harsh zero and low tolerance punishment policies. Many are falling behind or being pushed off the path to graduation and landing in the streets or in the juvenile justice and adult criminal justice systems.

## The National Picture

### BEING SUSPENDED FROM SCHOOL IS A BETTER PREDICTOR OF HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT THAN<sup>1</sup>:

- Low socio-economic status
- Not living with both biological parents
- High number of school changes
- Low percentage of peers planning to go to college

### YOUTH WHO DROPOUT OF HIGH SCHOOL ARE 3.5 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE ARRESTED THAN GRADUATES<sup>2</sup>



## Why Should The School Board Care?

- Because the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) reported that “suspension and expulsion as punishment . . . literally push out some students who are overtly discharged and more subtly discourage others from continuing in school.”<sup>4</sup>
- Because data from the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) established that a majority of even low risk juvenile offenders in Washington State have been previously suspended or expelled.<sup>5</sup>
- Because even though **Seattle School District** has successfully reduced its suspension rate, the district’s Standard Discipline Guidelines have been severely affected by the culture of zero and low tolerance:

In 1996, there were only 15 offenses which could lead to suspension on the first violation.<sup>6</sup>

There are now 32 offenses for which the standard punishment is suspension, and an additional 19 offenses that lead to suspension after one warning.<sup>7</sup>

In 2006-2007, there were approximately **twice** as many White middle schools students as African Americans.<sup>8</sup> However, 28% (606) of the African American middle school students were short-term suspended, as compared to only 7% (262) of their White peers.<sup>9</sup>

**Is Every Student Receiving a Quality Education In A Safe School?  
Please Reconsider Whether the Current Discipline Policy Furthers that Objective.**

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## Do Zero Tolerance Policies Improve the Learning Environment?

**RESEARCH HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT ZERO TOLERANCE POLICIES ARE NOT EFFECTIVE:**

“Higher rates of school suspension are associated with lower state wide testing scores even after controlling for poverty rate, school size, school type, school locale, and percentage of African American students”<sup>10</sup>

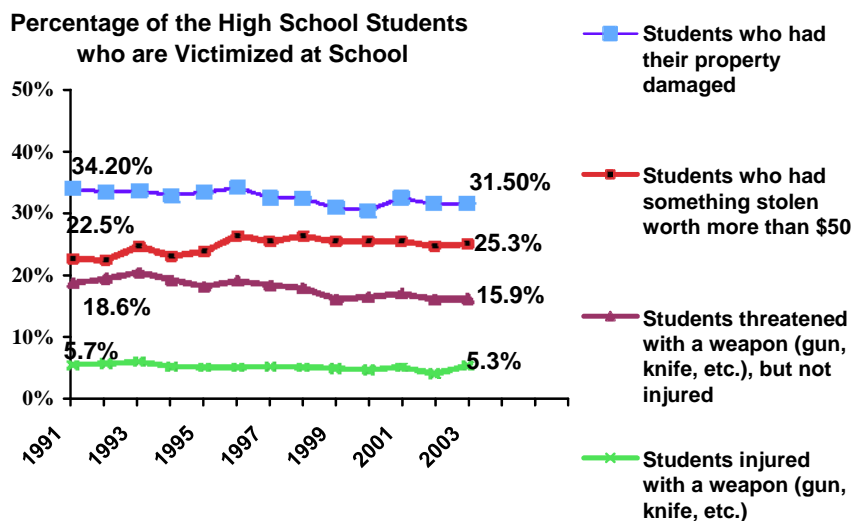
“There appears to be little evidence, supporting the effectiveness of suspension or expulsion at improving student behavior or contributing to over all school safety.”<sup>11</sup>

- Dr. Russell J. Skiba, Director of the Equity Project at the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University

### DOES PERCEPTION MATCH REALITY?

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE REPORTS THAT SCHOOL VIOLENCE IS NOT ON THE RISE.<sup>12</sup>

**Why has there been an explosion in the suspension rate, if rates of student misbehavior have remained constant over the years?**



## What Can The School Board Do?

1. Consider using evidence-based or promising approaches to school discipline such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Restorative Justice, or Peer Mediation.
2. Discover how school board policies impact individual students by regularly inviting students to share their stories and impressions.

<sup>1</sup> Suhyun Suh, Jingyo Suh, & Irene Houston, *Predictors of Categorical At-Risk High School Dropouts*, 85 JOURNAL OF COUNSELING AND DEVELOPMENT 196, 196-203 (2007).

<sup>2</sup> Coalition for Juvenile Justice, *Abandoned in the Back Row: New Lessons in Education and Delinquency Prevention*, 2 (2001), at [http://www.juvjustice.org/media/resources/resource\\_122.pdf](http://www.juvjustice.org/media/resources/resource_122.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Justice Policy Institute, *Schools and Suspensions: Self-Reported Crime and the Growing Use of Suspensions*, 3 (2001), at [http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/01-09\\_REP\\_SchoolsSuspensions\\_JJ.pdf](http://www.justicepolicy.org/images/upload/01-09_REP_SchoolsSuspensions_JJ.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Sue G. Shannon & Pete Bylsma, *Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's Helping Students Finish School: Why Students*

*Dropout and How to Help Them Graduate*, 33 (2003), at [www.k12.wa.us/research/pubdocs/pdf/dropoutreport2003.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/research/pubdocs/pdf/dropoutreport2003.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Robert Barnoski, Power Point Presentation: Suspensions and Expulsions From School and Juvenile Court Involvement (2008) (available from the Washington State Institute for Public Policy).

<sup>6</sup> Seattle Public Schools, *Student Rights and Responsibilities* (1996) (available from Seattle Public Schools)

<sup>7</sup> Seattle Public Schools, *Student Rights and Responsibilities* (2008) (available from Seattle Public Schools)

<sup>8</sup> Seattle Public Schools, *Data Profile District Summary* (December 2007) at [www.seattleschools.org/area/siso/disprof/2007/disprof\\_2007.xml](http://www.seattleschools.org/area/siso/disprof/2007/disprof_2007.xml)

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Russell Skiba & M. Karega Rausch, Indiana Education Policy Center, *The Relationship Between Achievement, Discipline, and Race: An Analysis of Factors Predicting ISTEP Scores*, 3 (2004), at <http://ceep.indiana.edu/ChildrenLeftBehind/pdf/2D.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Russell J. Skiba, Indiana Education Policy Center, *Zero Tolerance, Zero Evidence: An Analysis of School Disciplinary Practice*, 13 (2000) at <http://www.indiana.edu/~safeschl/zte.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Ann L. Pastore & Kathleen Maguire, Eds., University at Albany, School of Criminal Justice, Hindelang Criminal Justice Research Center, *The Criminal Justice Sourcebook* at [www.albany.edu/sourcebook/pdf/t340.pdf](http://www.albany.edu/sourcebook/pdf/t340.pdf)