

A RETURN TO COMMON SENSE DISCIPLINE

Duval County suspended ten percent of its students at least once during the 2009-2010 school-year, according to data collected by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. During that same school year, Black students in Duval County were three times more likely to be suspended than White students. In 2010-2011, over 450 students from Duval County were referred by the school to the Department of Juvenile Justice. These statistics are a result of policies and practices that over-rely on exclusionary disciplinary measures. The Duval County School District administrators want to do the right thing by students, but the Code of Conduct does not give them meaningful guidance on when exclusion from school is appropriate.

We can make positive changes that provide our students with the education they deserve. Stopping excessive school exclusion is critical for Duval's County's future health and well-being. Instead of relying on failed policies that lead to failing schools, deteriorating communities, and strained budgets, schools should use evidence-based practices that produce dramatic improvements in school climate, student learning, and graduation rates. Some simple policy changes could help ensure that Duval County Public Schools' discipline practices lead to desired outcomes. These changes include:

- 1. Limiting the use of out-of-school suspensions for minor misbehavior, with a clear goal of ending the disproportionate impact on students of color.**
 - a. For each class of offenses, include graduated responses that re-engage students, provide supportive interventions, and hold students accountable.
 - b. Review, revise, and re-align the list of offenses in each class to ensure schools are not over-relying on exclusionary discipline for age-appropriate behaviors.
 - c. Review and revise the list of "Serious Offenses" requiring mandatory referral to the Department of Juvenile Justice so that fewer students are referred from school to law enforcement.
 - d. Remove mandatory suspensions, expulsions, and transfers to alternative schools for most offenses. Grant administrators flexibility to take extenuating circumstances and other factors into account.
 - e. Eliminate exclusionary discipline (in-school and out-of-school suspensions) for all Class 1 offenses.
- 2. Creating clear guidance within the Code of Conduct that imposes low-level interventions and consequences for low-level misbehaviors.**
 - a. Consolidate current language into a concise discipline matrix to make implementation easier for teachers and administrators and to make the Code of Conduct more accessible to parents and students.
 - b. Explicitly define behaviors that can lead to discipline so that students of color are not disproportionately disciplined for overbroad offenses like "insubordination."
- 3. Providing resources and training for evidence-based prevention and supportive intervention.**
- 4. Ensuring students get due process protections *before* being removed from school.**
- 5. Creating mechanisms for community involvement and oversight to monitor the reduction of racial disparities and ensure practices comply with the District's policies.**



Recommendations for Revisions to Duval County School Discipline Policies and Practices

October 4, 2007

1. **Limit the Offenses Resulting in Referral to Law Enforcement**

There is very little guidance in the Student Code of Conduct on when schools should refer matters to law enforcement, and when they should attempt to resolve them within the school environment. We recommend stating explicitly that referral to law enforcement will be limited to only those offenses required by state law.

2. **Limit Out-of-School Suspensions to Serious Misconduct or When Low-Level Misconduct Has Become Habitual**

Even the most minor infractions in the Student Code of Conduct include the possibility of an out-of-school suspension for a second offense. We recommend limiting the use of out-of-school suspension to serious misconduct, and utilizing in-school suspension, detention, or other less severe consequences for low-level misconduct.

3. **Cap Suspension Periods for Low-Level Offenses**

Many relatively low-level offenses in the Student Code of Conduct carry the possibility of long out-of-school suspensions. Such extended absences from school tend to have devastating effects on students' academic performance. We recommend capping the potential suspension periods for low-level misconduct, and using longer suspensions for only the most serious offenses.

4. **Limit Disciplinary Consequences for Conduct Off of School Property**

We recommend limiting the use of disciplinary consequences for conduct that occurs off of school property to only the most serious violations (Class IV, for example) and when the misconduct seriously disrupts the school environment or seriously endangers the safety of other students or school personnel.

5. **Encourage Increased Use of Alternative-to-Suspension Programs, Prevention and Intervention Strategies**

While there is no credible evidence that suspensions and expulsions are effective at changing student behavior, there are a number of available alternatives that have been successful at promoting a productive learning environment, addressing disruptive behavior,

and creating a safe school environment. We recommend devoting more resources to these proven techniques rather than ineffective, punitive strategies.

6. **Train Counselors, Principals, Assistant Principals, and School Resource Officers on the Consequences of an Arrest**

We have learned that most school officials and SROs are unaware of the full ramifications of a juvenile arrest. The Miami-Dade Public Defender's Office has produced a list of these consequences and has conducted a training session on them for all district SROs. We recommend that Duval County do the same.

7. **Train School Resource Officers on Effectively Interacting With Youth and Children with Disabilities**

In our research we learned that most SROs receive little to no training on dealing with young people and, especially, young people with disabilities. It is essential that personnel working in the schools be equipped to understand the unique needs and behaviors of young people within the school environment. We recommend instituting a training curriculum that will better prepare SROs to interact with students.

8. **Clarify Relationship Between School Officials and School Resource Officers**

Our research in Duval County and elsewhere has demonstrated a lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities of SROs. We recommend reviewing the agreements established between Duval County Schools and local law enforcement agencies and more clearly delineating the relationship between the schools and law enforcement.

9. **Create School Discipline Oversight Committees**

We recommend forming school discipline oversight committees at the school and district level, comprised of school officials, parents, students, and interested community members. The responsibilities of the committees would include monitoring school and district performance at promoting a productive school climate and fair discipline practices through the review of school discipline and arrest statistics, and the handling of any complaints about school discipline practices.



Jacksonville, Florida NAACP Ending The School To Prison Pipeline

ARREST BY RACE

SRO School- Based Arrest Totals Three-Year Overview By Race

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total All Races</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Other</u>
2011-2012	325	256	67	2
2012-2013	299	243	54	2
2013-2014	261	214	43	4

ARRESTS BY GENDER

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total All Genders</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Female</u>
2011-2012	325	226	99
2012-2013	299	218	81
2013-2014	261	199	62

OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

<u>Year</u>	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Hisp.</u>	<u>Am.Ind.</u>	<u>Multi.</u>	<u>White</u>
2012	33090	231	24398	1559	28	1126	5748
2013	32883	274	24501	1554	38	1298	5218
2014	28945	258	21507	1399	58	1004	4719

IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

<u>Year</u>	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Asian</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Hisp.</u>	<u>Am.Ind.</u>	<u>Multi.</u>	<u>White</u>
2012	36004	480	22932	2330	30	1047	9185
2013	33518	403	22346	2151	35	1132	7451
2014	25569	242	17181	1621	51	1004	5470

Data received from Duval County Public Schools System - 2014

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