

Solutions Not Suspensions

October 2022

The Need

Schools should be places where students are welcomed and supported in their learning and development. But across New York, children as young as pre-kindergarten and even in child care lose out on instruction each year because of suspensions.

The Solution

New York state must end the reliance on suspensions as the default way to discipline students. Instead, children should be held accountable through age appropriate, restorative and trauma-informed interventions that help children learn from mistakes and continue their academic development.

Students who miss 20 days or more in a year are significantly less likely to graduate from high school. In New York, suspensions can last up to 180 days and disproportionately impact students of color.

In 15 school districts in one school year...

15,306

students were suspended at least once



Includes
606 children
in Pre-K to Grade 3

134,712

days of school were lost to suspensions



Black and Hispanic students were up to **5x more likely** to be suspended than white students



Students with disabilities were up to **5x more likely** to be suspended than their peers



Economically disadvantaged students were up to **4.5x more likely** to be suspended than their peers

Source: *The Children's Agenda policy analysis, 2022*

Policy Changes Needed

- 1** Require school codes of conduct to include restorative approaches to discipline and proactively foster a positive school climate
- 2** Limit the use of suspensions in Kindergarten through 3rd grade to only the most serious behaviors
- 3** Shorten the maximum length of suspension from 180 to 20 school days (except when required by federal law)
- 4** Prohibit suspensions for minor infractions such as tardiness, dress code violations, or insubordination
- 5** Require that students who are suspended receive academic instruction and the opportunity to complete assignments, take exams and earn credit
- 6** Require charter schools to follow state education law on student behavior and discipline

Evidence the Policy Works

In 2016, the Rochester City School District adopted a new code of conduct that included restorative practices. Over the next two years school saw...



27% drop in suspensions
3,032 fewer suspensions



28% drop in courses failed by students who were suspended
2,066 fewer courses failed



47% drop in suspensions for "other disruptive incidents" that include non-violent, non-intimidating behaviors like wandering halls, talking back to teachers, fooling around in class, etc.

Source: *Breaking the School to Prison Pipeline*, 2019

Public Support

84%

of Monroe County parents support eliminating suspensions in Pre-Kindergarten through Third Grade (except in extreme situations)

62%

of early childhood educators support eliminating suspensions in Pre-Kindergarten through Third Grade (except in extreme situations)

Source: *The Children's Agenda policy analysis*, 2022