

The Civil Rights Project



Proyecto Derechos Civiles

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Millions of Children Find the Schoolhouse Door Locked

*UCLA Center for Civil Rights Remedies Finds Shocking Suspension Rates
in thousands of districts across the nation.*

(Los Angeles, CA) Today, the Center for Civil Rights Remedies at the Civil Rights Project/*Proyecto Derechos Civiles* issued “**Opportunities Suspended: The Disparate Impact of Disciplinary Exclusion From School,**” a nationwide report based on an analysis of Federal government suspension-related data from the 2009-10 school year for grades K-12. This first-ever breakdown of nearly 7,000 districts found that 17% of African American students nationwide received an out-of-school suspension compared to about 5% of White students. The comparable rate for Latinos was 7%. The data analyzed covered about 85% of the nation’s public school students. The suspension rates were equally striking for students with disabilities and revealed that an estimated 13% of all students with disabilities were suspended nationally, approximately twice the rate of their non-disabled peers.

The real disturbing story, however, is at the district level. This review covers school districts across the country, from every state, and it found that in nearly 200 districts, 20% or more of the total enrolled students in K-12 were suspended out of school at least once. The numbers are more shocking when broken down by race and disability. For all students with disabilities, regardless of race, over 400 districts suspended 25% or more of these students. Black students with disabilities were most at risk for out-of-school suspension with an alarming 25% *national average for all districts in the sample.*

The report breaks down suspension rates by state and race, and provides links to in-depth profiles of the suspension rates *for every district in the sample.* The alarmingly high suspension figures highlighted in the report are in stark contrast to the thousands of other districts in the report that suspended 3% or less of each subgroup.

“The frequent use of out-of-school suspension results in increased dropout rates and heightened risk of youth winding up in the juvenile justice system,” stated the study’s lead

author Daniel J. Losen. “We know that schools can support teachers and improve learning environments for children without forcing so many students to lose valuable days of instruction. The data also show that numerous school districts are not suspending large numbers of children from any racial group. In contrast, the incredibly high numbers of students barred from school, often for the most minor infractions, defies common sense and reveals patterns of school exclusion along the lines of race and disability status that must be rejected by all members of the public school community.”

The report also reviews the research on alternatives to out-of-school suspension and discusses numerous ways to respond to misbehavior that would keep children both safe and in school.

Gary Orfield, co-director of the Civil Rights Project, continued, “This important study confirms an unfortunate reality – minority students face the brunt of school-based discipline. This has to end, and the report provides thoughtful guidance to help us reach that goal.”

The report makes several recommendations to correct this disturbing trend. These recommendations are directed to:

- **Parents:** Bring large racial, gender, and disability disparities to the attention of local and state school boards;
- **Federal and state governments:** Provide greater support for research on evidence-based and promising interventions that will reduce the use of suspensions and other harsh disciplinary measures;
- **Educators:** Use disaggregated discipline data to guide and evaluate reform efforts; and
- **Media:** Question the justification and research basis behind discipline policies that keep large numbers of children out of school.

To view a copy of “Opportunities Suspended: The Disparate Impact of Disciplinary Exclusion From School,” by Daniel Losen and Jon Gillespie, please visit

<https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/federal-reports/upcoming-ccrr-research>

About the Civil Rights Project at UCLA

Founded in 1996 by former Harvard professors Gary Orfield and Christopher Edley Jr., the Civil Rights Project/*Proyecto Derechos Civiles* is now co-directed by Orfield and Patricia Gándara, professors at UCLA. Its mission is to create a new generation of research in social science and law on the critical issues of civil rights and equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups in the United States. It has commissioned more than 400 studies, published 13 books and issued numerous reports from authors at universities and research centers across the country. This research, conducted by the CRP’s Center for Civil Rights Remedies, was made possible with the support of Atlantic Philanthropies. The Center is dedicated to improving educational opportunities and outcomes for children from subgroups who have been discriminated against historically due to their race/ethnicity, and who are frequently subjected to

exclusionary practices such as disciplinary removal, over-representation in special education, and reduced access to a college-bound curriculum.

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