

**Connecticut State Board of Education****Hartford**

**TO:** State Board of Education  
**FROM:** Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner of Education  
**DATE:** April 5, 2023  
**SUBJECT:** 2021-22 Report on Student Discipline in Connecticut Public Schools

***Executive Summary***

Please find attached the *2021-22 Report on Student Discipline in Connecticut Public Schools*. This report presents analyses of trends in student disciplinary behaviors in Connecticut public schools. It fulfills the requirements in [Connecticut General Statutes \(C.G.S.\) Section 10-233n](#).

In the 2019-20 school year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person classes were cancelled in mid-March and all districts switched to fully remote instruction for the remainder of the school year. In 2020-21, districts implemented different learning models (i.e., in-person, hybrid, or remote) and those models often changed during the year due to changing local health metrics. Moreover, parents could choose for their child to learn remotely.

In consideration of these untraditional school years, 2019-20 and 2020-21 data have not been included in this report. Trend data includes the 2015-16 to 2018-19 school years and 2021-22. 2021-22 data is compared to 2018-19 data to examine any pre-to post-pandemic changes.

Over the past decade, Connecticut has made major strides in reducing exclusionary discipline.

- From 2018-19 to 2021-22 (pre-to post-pandemic) the total number of in-school suspensions decreased by 20 percent while out-of-school suspensions increased by 5.8 percent.
- While some incident categories showed substantial declines from pre-pandemic 2018-19 (i.e., school policy violations declined 16.4 percent, sexually related behavior declined 18.8 percent, and theft related behaviors declined 15 percent), other categories showed substantial increases (i.e., property damage increased 48.5 percent, and weapons increased by 62.0 percent).
- In 2021-22, over 34,600 students (6.5 percent) or approximately one out of every 15 students statewide, received a suspension or an expulsion. Disparities remain in these suspension rates between Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students and their White counterparts. While one out of 25 White students received at least one suspension, one out of 8 Black/African American students and one out of 12 Hispanic/Latino students experienced the same sanction. In other words, Black/African American students are more than three times as likely and Hispanic/Latino students are more than twice as likely

as their White counterparts to be suspended or expelled. The likelihood of higher suspension for students of color as compared to White students has declined slightly over the years but remains high, especially for Black/African American students.

- The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is grouping districts into four tiers based on suspension/expulsion data in order to provide a system of supports and targeted action planning. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2018-19 district tiers are being used to identify those districts needing support.
- Among young children in Grades PreK-2, the number of suspensions declined by 48 percent from 2018-19 to 2021-22. In 2021-22, fewer than 600 students Grades PK-2 (less than one half of one percent) received at least one suspension. Note that C.G.S. 10-233(f) prohibits the suspension or expulsion of students in Grades Pre-K through two unless the incident was “of a violent or sexual nature that endangers persons.”

The CSDE continues to engage the Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative to advise the CSDE on strategies for transforming school discipline to reduce the overall and disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline and use data to drive the implementation of a statewide, systems approach to address disproportionality in school discipline. This includes developing an infrastructure to support high-quality and effective fidelity of implementation that is data-driven, evidence-based, scalable, and sustainable within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS).

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# 2021-22 Report on Student Discipline in Connecticut Public Schools

April 2023

Connecticut State Department of Education  
450 Columbus Boulevard | Hartford, CT 06103

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## Introduction

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This report presents analyses of trends in student disciplinary behaviors in Connecticut public schools. It fulfills the requirements in [Connecticut General Statutes \(CGS\) Section 10-233n](#). Improving student academic and behavior outcomes requires ensuring that all students have access to the most effective and accurately implemented instructional and behavioral practices and interventions. Schools must create environments where all students feel emotionally and physically safe. Students lose important instructional time when they receive exclusionary discipline. The use of disciplinary sanctions such as in-school and out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, or referrals to law enforcement authorities creates the potential for significant, negative educational and long-term outcomes, and can contribute to what has been termed as the “school to prison pipeline.” Studies suggest a correlation between exclusionary discipline policies and practices and an array of serious educational, economic, and social problems, including school avoidance and diminished educational engagement; decreased academic achievement; increased behavior problems; increased likelihood of dropping out; substance abuse; and involvement with juvenile justice systems<sup>1</sup>.

[C.G.S. Section 10-233a](#) defines removal, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion as follows:

- Removal - an exclusion from a classroom for all or part of a single class period, provided such exclusion shall not extend beyond ninety minutes.
- In-school suspension (ISS) - an exclusion from regular classroom activity for no more than ten consecutive school days, but not exclusion from school.
- Out-of-school suspension (OSS) - an exclusion from school privileges or from transportation services only for no more than ten consecutive school days.
- Expulsion - an exclusion from school privileges for more than ten consecutive school days.

## Data Collection and Reporting

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Local Educational Agencies are required to report to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) all disciplinary incidents that result in any of the following:

- In-School Suspension (ISS)
- Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)
- Bus Suspension
- Expulsion (EXP)

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<sup>1</sup> From “Dear Colleague” Letter: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201401-title-vi.html>

In addition, all ["serious" offenses](#) and all incidents involving alcohol, drugs, or weapons must be reported, regardless of the type of sanction imposed. All bullying incidents must also be reported regardless of sanction. Data collected regarding disciplinary incidents are released publicly on CSDE’s data portal, [EdSight](#). A detailed explanation of the data collection and reporting processes are included in Appendix B. Comprehensive information about the disciplinary offense data collection (also known as the ED166) is available on the documentation page of the [ED166 Help Site](#).

### Special Note about 2019-20 and 2020-21 Data

In the 2019-20 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person classes were cancelled in mid-March and all districts switched to fully remote instruction for the remainder of the school year. In the 2020-21 school year, students attended school in-person to varying degrees; some learned fully/mostly remotely for the entire school year. Therefore, any inferences relative to changes in rates over years are based on 2018-19 data; the 2019-20 and 2020-21 data are presented for informational purposes in Table 1 only to demonstrate the data anomaly during these years. 2021-22 data are compared to 2018-19 data to examine the differences from pre- to post-pandemic; 2019-20 and 2020-21 data have been excluded from all subsequent tables and figures.

## Results

### Sanctions and Incidents

The total number of sanctions is a count of all sanctions (ISS, OSS, and Expulsions) given to all students. It is not a count of students; if one student received more than one sanction, then all sanctions received are included below. Students received more severe sanctions in 2021-22. While ISS was substantially lower than in 2018-19, OSS and EXP increased.

Table 1: Total Number of Sanctions

Sanction Type	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	% Change	
					2021-22	from 2018-19
In-School Suspension	56,866	53,057	49,667	48,431	38,739	-20.0
Out-of-School Suspension	34,415	32,982	31,834	32,681	34,580	5.8
Expulsion	848	750	797	745	858	15.2

The behaviors associated with the sanctions received by students are grouped into 10 categories (Table 2). In 2018-19, school policy violations accounted for approximately 46 percent of all incidents, down from 56 percent in 2015-16 and down from 48 percent in 2017-18. This trend has continued post-pandemic with school policy violations accounting for 41 percent of reportable incidents.

While some incident categories showed substantial declines from pre-pandemic 2018-19 (i.e., school policy violations declined 16.4 percent, sexually related behavior declined 18.8 percent, and theft related behaviors declined 15 percent), other categories showed substantial increases (i.e., property damage increased 48.5 percent, and weapons increased by 62.0 percent). In 2018-19, Vandalism accounted for 84 percent (N=1,216 incidents) of all incidents in the Property Damage category. In 2021-22, Vandalism accounted for 82 percent of all incidents in the Property Damage category, but the number of reported vandalism incidents increased to 1,780. Vandalism is defined as the willful destruction or defacement of school property (destroying school computers, carving a desk, spray painting walls, damaging vehicles, etc.).

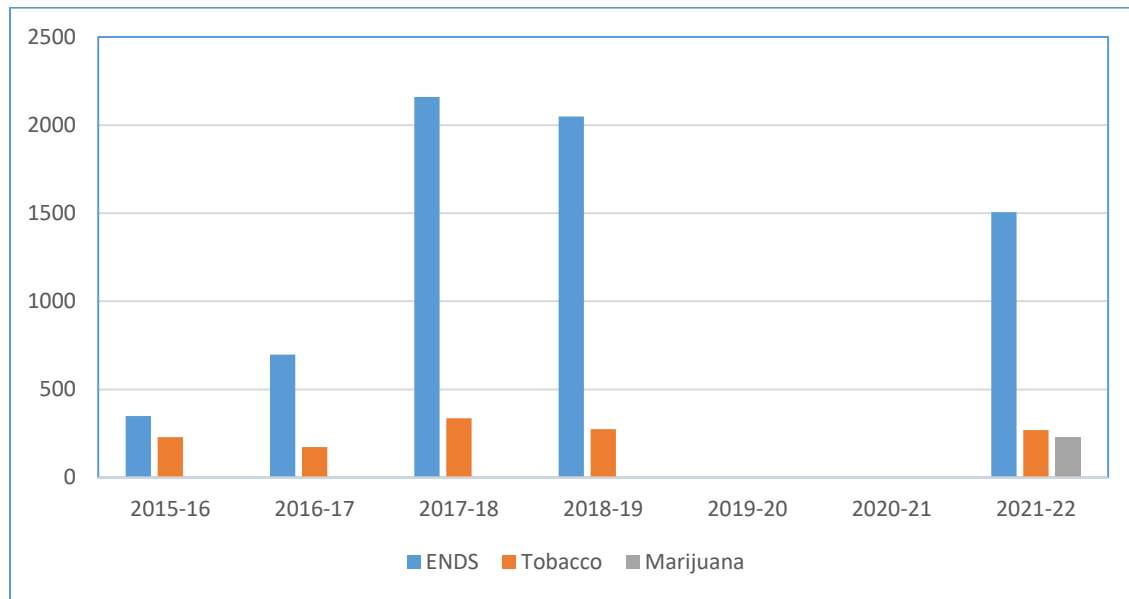
*Table 2: Incidents by Category*

Incident Type	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2021-22	% Change from 2018-19
Violent Crimes Against Persons	440	392	483	398	427	7.3%
Sexually Related Behavior	1,134	1,286	1,329	1,254	1,018	-18.8%
Personally Threatening Behavior	6,622	6,870	7,208	6,787	7,559	11.4%
Theft Related Behaviors	1,669	1,686	1,312	1,217	1,058	-13.1%
Physical and Verbal Confrontation	13,862	14,985	14,811	14,976	15,764	5.3%
Fighting and Battery	15,744	16,744	16,952	18,036	17,165	-4.8%
Property Damage	1,234	1,529	1,431	1,455	2,161	48.5%
Weapons	920	936	917	801	1,298	62.0%
Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco	2,551	3,098	4,964	5,933	6,449	8.7%
School Policy Violations	56,281	51,879	45,769	43,869	36,687	-16.4%

The Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco category continues to see an increase in incidents. The use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) – otherwise known as E-Cigarettes, “pens,” or “vapes” – was first reported in the 2015-16 school year. From 2015-16 to 2016-17 the use of ENDS doubled, while tobacco use decreased. In 2017-18, the use of ENDS more than tripled from 2016-17. Tobacco use also

increased. While tobacco use dipped slightly when ENDS were beginning to increase in popularity, tobacco increased in 2017-18. Tobacco use has remained stable, while ENDS incidents decreased. As of July 1, 2021, Public Act 21-1 legalized possession of up to 1.5 oz of marijuana, and allowed use in specified locations, for those over 21. As with tobacco-based products, marijuana is not legal on school grounds regardless of age. To accompany this change in legislation, marijuana-based codes were introduced in the 2021-22 discipline collection to detach it from the illegal drug category.

Figure 1: ENDS, Tobacco, and Marijuana Use



For consistency, both “possession” and “use” codes have been included in this report for each substance. While ENDS use was lower than 2018-19, possession has more than doubled. Tobacco possession and use continue to decline. In 2021-22 marijuana violations included 35 incidents of possession and 226 of use.

Table 3: ENDS, Tobacco and Marijuana Possession and Use

Incident Type	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2021-22
ENDS Possession	N/A	N/A	N/A	675	1,323
ENDS Use	349	697	2,160	2,048	1,506
Tobacco Possession	116	116	172	201	160
Tobacco Use	229	172	335	274	268
Marijuana Possession	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	35
Marijuana Use	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	226



## Incidents by Grade

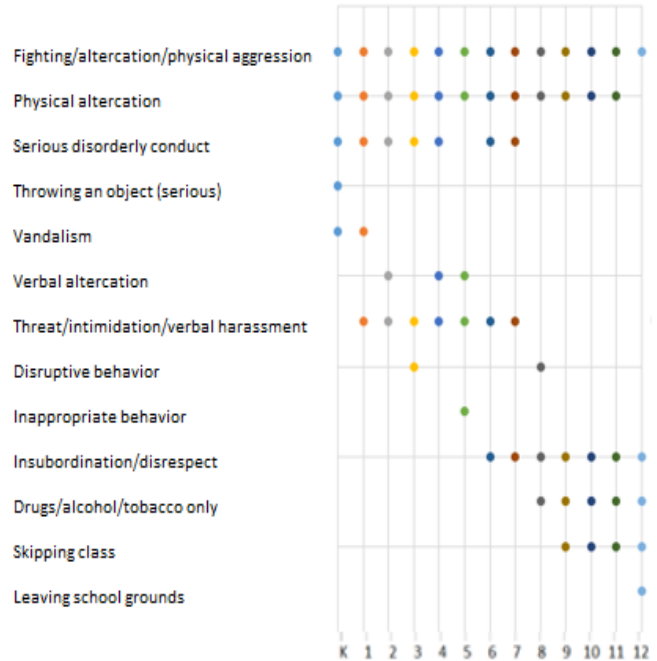
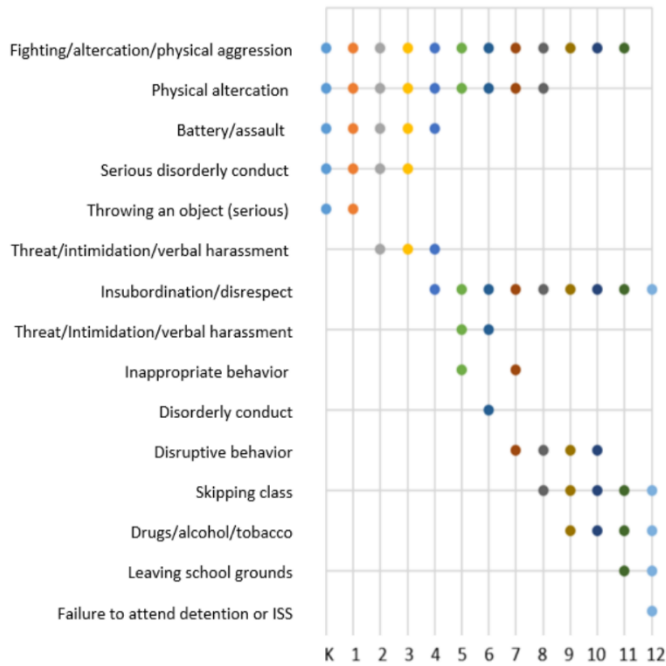
What are the most common behaviors/incidents that manifest themselves in a particular grade? How do they change across the grades? For this analysis, the CSDE identified the most frequent incidents for each grade and then organized them by grade (see Figure 2). A brief definition for each incident type in Figure 2 is provided below.

- **Fighting/altercation/physical aggression** – Participation in an incident that involved a physical confrontation in which one or more participants received a minor physical injury. A minor injury is one that does not require professional medical attention, such as a scrape on the body, knee, or elbow; and/or minor bruising.
- **Physical altercation** – Participation in a confrontation, or some type of physical aggression that does not result in any injury.
- **Serious disorderly conduct** – Security/police were called, an injury may have occurred, and/or there was a major disruption to the educational process.
- **Throwing an object (serious)** – Use this category if there is a victim with any level of injury.
- **Vandalism** - Willful destruction or defacement of school property (destroying school computers, carving a desk, spray painting walls, damaging vehicles, etc.).
- **Verbal altercation** - Participation in an incident involving a verbal confrontation (shouting match, yelling, etc.).
- **Threat/intimidation/verbal harassment** – Physical, verbal, written, or electronic communication (without displaying a weapon and without a physical attack) which results in fear of harm.
- **Disruptive behavior** – Disruption of class; in the hallway, cafeteria, or any other area of the school.
- **Inappropriate behavior** – Horseplay, play fighting, playing cards.
- **Insubordination/disrespect** – Unwillingness to submit to authority, refusal to respond to a reasonable request, or other situation in which a student is disobedient.
- **Drugs/alcohol/tobacco** – A substance-related offense.
- **Skipping class** – As defined by LEA policy.
- **Leaving school grounds** – As defined by LEA policy.
- **Battery/assault** – Striking another person with the intent of causing serious bodily harm to the individual. A physical attack on an individual resulting in an injury requiring any type of medical attention.
- **Disorderly conduct** – Any behavior that seriously disrupts the orderly conduct of a school function or which substantially disrupts the orderly learning environment.
- **Failure to attend detention or ISS**

Figure 2: Top Five Incidents by Grade, a Two-Year Comparison

2018-19

2021-22



Pre-and post-pandemic trends are similar. These data reveal that while some incidents like *fighting/altercation/physical aggression* appear in the most frequent incidents in almost every grade, other incidents are more prevalent in certain grade ranges. For example, *throwing an object* occurs primarily in Grades K and 1. As it happened prior to the pandemic, *insubordination/disrespect* appears as a primary reason in the late elementary years and remains prominent in every subsequent grade. *Skipping class* remains in all high school grades. Post-pandemic, *vandalism* and *verbal altercation* appeared in the elementary grades, while *threat/intimidation/verbal harassment* expanded to appear in both the elementary and middle grades.

## Suspension Rates

The suspension rate equals the number of students reported with at least one suspension (in-school or out-of-school) or expulsion divided by the unduplicated student enrollment count for the school or district for the given school year. Prior to the pandemic, 6.7 percent of all students received at least one suspension or expulsion during the 2018-19 school year; in 2021-22, the rate declined slightly to 6.5 percent. This continues the pre-pandemic downward trend and is observed in most student race/ethnicity groups (Table 4).

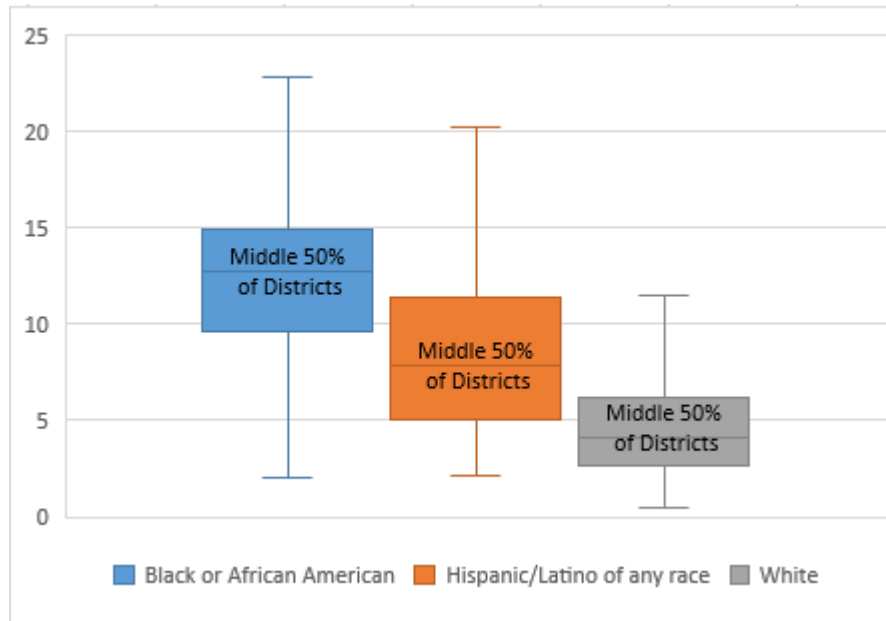
Both pre-and post-pandemic, the suspension rate of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students is significantly greater than that of White students. Black/African American students are more than three times as likely as their White student peers and Hispanic/Latino students are more than twice as likely as their White student peers to receive a suspension/expulsion. Pre-pandemic one out of 24 White students received at least one suspension/expulsion, while one out of seven Black/African American students and one out of 11 Hispanic/Latino students received the same sanction. Numbers improved slightly post-pandemic, wherein one out of 25 White students, one out of 8 Black/African American students, and one out of 12 Hispanic/Latino students received at least one suspension/expulsion. Though the suspension rates are higher for students of color, those rates are declining.

Table 4: Suspension Rates by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2021-22	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
American Indian or Alaska Native	131	7.1	121	8.4	117	8.4	119	8.3	119	8.5
Asian	451	1.7	442	1.6	501	1.8	530	1.9	446	1.6
Black or African American	11,446	16.2	10,745	15.2	9,884	14.3	9,897	14.0	8,518	12.5
Hispanic/Latino of any race	13,156	10.3	12,710	9.7	12,819	9.4	13,214	9.2	13,574	8.6
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	23	4.5	36	6.8	32	5.8	34	5.7	46	8.5
Two or More Races	1,067	7.0	1,080	6.7	1,248	7.0	1,368	7.0	1,636	7.0
White	11,826	3.9	11,448	3.9	12,167	4.2	11,696	4.1	10,310	4.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,100</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>36,582</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>36,768</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>36,858</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>34,649</b>	<b>6.5</b>

The distribution of suspension rates by Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and White students (Figure 3) across districts illustrates the pattern of higher suspension rates for students of color occurs in districts across the state.

Figure 3: Distribution of 2021-22 District-Level Suspension Rates by Race/Ethnicity



Males continue to be suspended at substantially higher rates than females (Table 5). However, suspension rates for males have declined over the past few years while that of females increased slightly post-pandemic in 2021-22.

Table 5: Suspension Rates by Gender

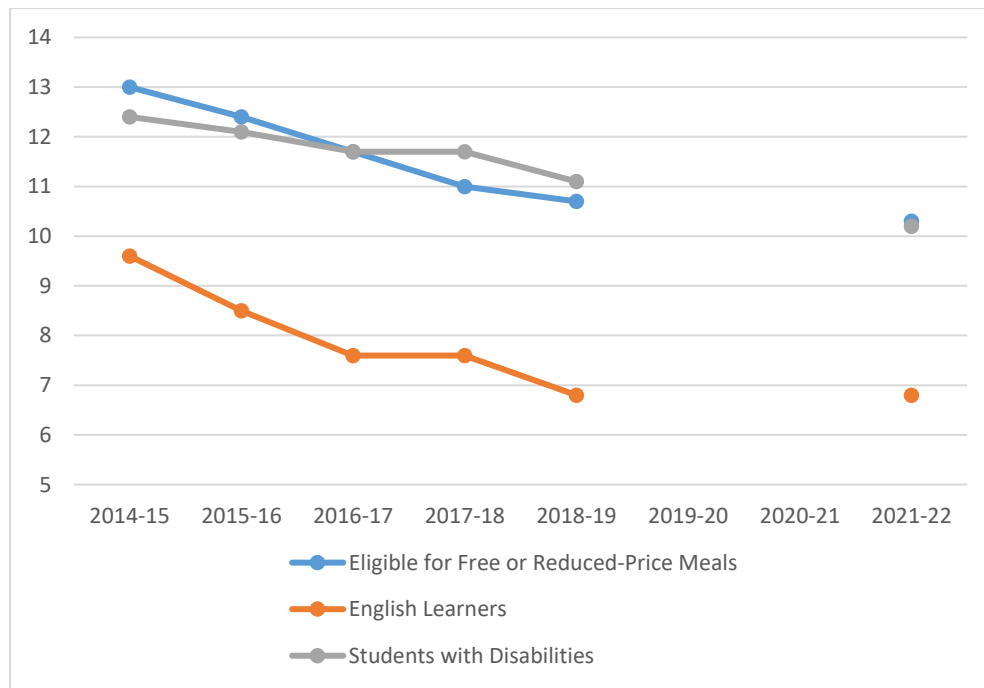
Gender	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2021-22	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Female	11,886	4.5	11,373	4.3	11,356	4.4	11,638	4.4	12,156	4.7
Male	26,214	9.3	25,209	9.0	25,410	9.1	25,215	8.9	22,459	8.2

Suspension rates for students eligible for free- or reduced-price meals, students with disabilities, and English learners are higher than the state average (6.5 percent), however the trend shows their suspension rates are declining for these student groups (Table 6 and Figure 4).

Table 6: Suspension Rate by Program Status

	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2021-22	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
<b>Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Meals</b>	26,735	12.4	25,863	11.7	25,585	11.0	26,223	10.7	24,049	10.3
<b>English Learners</b>	3,148	8.5	2,990	7.6	3,154	7.6	3,070	6.8	3,446	6.8
<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	10,199	12.1	10,127	11.7	10,442	11.7	10,551	11.1	10,145	10.2

Figure 4: Suspension Rate by Program Status



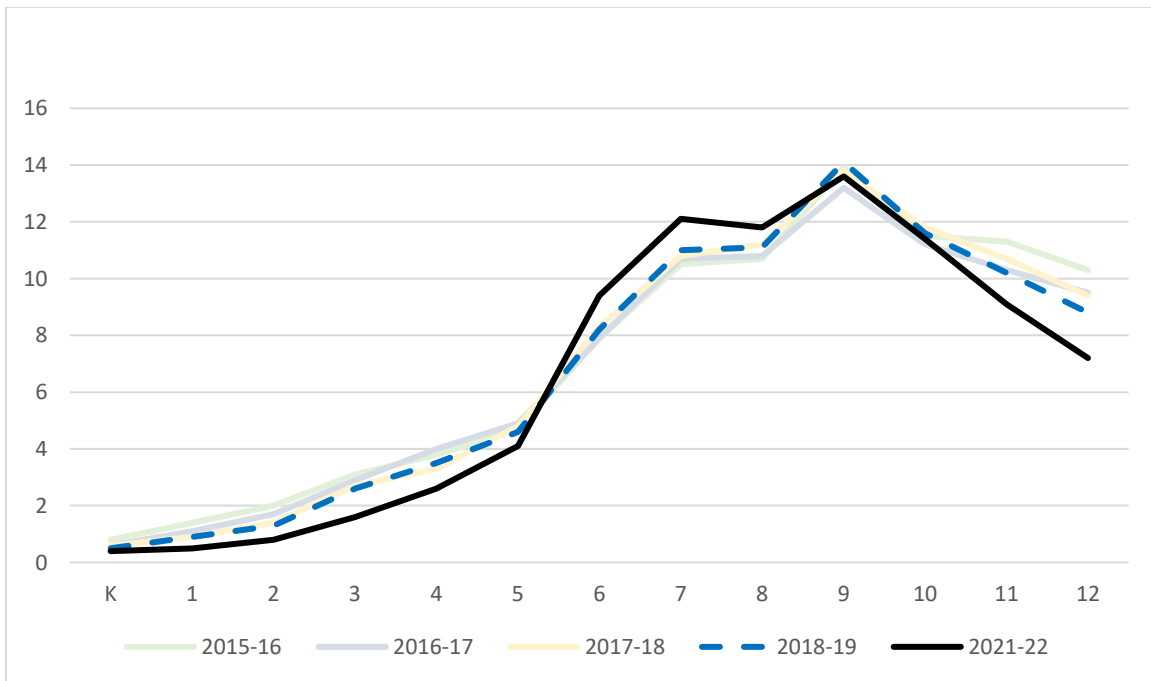
Analyses by grade (Table 7 and Figure 5) reveal that suspension rates increase gradually in the elementary grades and spike in grade 6. The highest suspension rates occur in grade 9. The five-year trend indicates the suspension rate of 12<sup>th</sup> graders is steadily decreasing.

Table 7: Suspension Rates by Grade

Grade	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2021-22	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
K	314	0.8	220	0.6	203	0.6	198	0.5	142	0.4
1	543	1.4	413	1.1	351	0.9	337	0.9	162	0.5
2	789	2	649	1.7	501	1.4	504	1.3	290	0.8
3	1,237	3.1	1,144	2.9	1,022	2.7	986	2.6	603	1.6
4	1,503	3.8	1,593	4	1,305	3.3	1,374	3.5	971	2.6
5	1,874	4.7	1,929	4.9	1,948	4.8	1,861	4.6	1,552	4.1
6	3,187	7.9	3,195	7.9	3,327	8.3	3,387	8.2	3,599	9.4
7	4,341	10.5	4,354	10.7	4,371	10.8	4,494	11	4,815	12.1
8	4,373	10.7	4,484	10.8	4,589	11.2	4,598	11.1	4,824	11.8
9	6,202	13.9	5,735	13.2	6,023	13.8	6,245	14.1	6,226	13.6
10	4,810	11.5	4,679	11.2	4,856	11.8	4,950	11.6	4,772	11.4
11	4,619	11.3	4,195	10.3	4,330	10.7	4,170	10.2	3,608	9.1
12	4,299	10.3	3,987	9.5	3,916	9.4	3,746	8.8	3,065	7.2

Figure 5 is a graphical representation of the table above. Note the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic data are represented in bold for easier identification.

Figure 5: Suspension Rates by Grade



## District Tiers Based on Suspension/Expulsion Data

Effective in the 2020-21 school year, the CSDE grouped districts into four tiers based on racial/disparities in suspension/expulsion data to provide targeted interventions and supports. The primary metric used for placing districts into tiers is the “Suspension/Expulsion Rate.” This is the percentage of students receiving at least one in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion during the school year. Using this metric allows for the broadest inclusion of students who may experience any exclusionary discipline during the school year.

The Suspension/Expulsion rate is reported publicly for all students and student groups on [EdSight](#) and included in the [Profile and Performance Report](#) for every district/school. Districts are placed into tiers according to the following criteria:

- Tier 4 - Consistently High Suspension Rates (may also have high disproportionality): Overall, Black, or Hispanic suspension rate  $\geq 15\%$  in 2 recent years.
- Tier 3 - Consistently High Disproportionality: Not in Tier 4 AND either Black or Hispanic Relative Risk Index (RRI)  $\geq 3$  in 2 recent years.
- Tier 2 - Consistently Medium Disproportionality: Not in Tiers 4 or 3 AND either Black or Hispanic RRI  $\geq 2$  in 2 recent years.
- Tier 1 - Low Suspension Rate/Disproportionality: All other districts

See [Appendix A](#) for a list of districts by tier and an explanation of the RRI. In light of the pandemic, the 2018-19 districts tiers are being used to identify districts needing support. Complete data regarding the tiers is available on [EdSight](#).

## Suspensions of Young Students, Pre-K through Grade 2

The number of out-of-school suspensions for students in Grades Pre-K through two has evidenced a steep decline (Tables 8 and 9), especially with the passage of [Public Act No. 15-96](#), *The limitations surrounding Out-Of-School Suspensions and Expulsions for Students in Preschool and Grades Kindergarten to Two*. This law limited out-of-school suspensions in Grades 3-12 and prohibited the suspension or expulsion of students in Grades PreK-2 unless the incident is of a violent or sexual nature that endangers persons.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> While the general suspensions statute, Section 10-233c of the General Statutes, continues to include preschool in the grade range for which out-of-school suspensions are permissible, this reference was most likely inadvertent in view of the explicit prohibition, in Section 10-233l, of out-of-school suspensions for students in preschool programs operated by boards of education, charter schools or interdistrict magnet schools.

The total number of suspensions and expulsions declined from over 5,000 prior to PA 15-96 to 1,926 pre-pandemic in 2018-19 and 994 post-pandemic (Table 8).

*Table 8: Total Number of Sanctions (PreK-2) – not a student count*

Year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2021-22
ISS	1,911	1,477	1,152	1,032	395
OSS	1,327	983	791	894	599
EXP	* <sup>3</sup>	0	0	0	0

Correspondingly, the total number of students (unduplicated count) in Grades PK-2 who receive at least one suspension or expulsion has also declined significantly from 1,046 in 2018-19 to less than 600 in 2021-22 (Table 9) which is less than one half of one percent of all students in Grades PK-2. The declines over the past several years are attributable largely to the passage of [Public Act No. 15-96](#) which was subsequently codified as C.G.S. 10-233(f).

*Table 9: Number of Students Suspended/Expelled (PreK-2) by Grade*

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2021-22
Pre-K	9	*	7	7	*
K	314	220	203	198	142
Grade 1	543	413	351	337	162
Grade 2	789	649	501	504	290

When disaggregated by race/ethnicity, the number of students in Grades PreK-2 receiving at least one suspension or expulsion has declined within all student race/ethnicity groups both pre-and post-pandemic (Table 10).

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<sup>3</sup> The data are suppressed to protect student confidentiality pursuant to the [CSDE's data suppression guidelines](#).



Table 10: Number of Students Suspended/Expelled (PreK-2) by Race/Ethnicity

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2021-22
American Indian or Alaska Native	*	*	*	*	0
Asian	15	10	12	10	*
Black or African American	622	481	354	345	151
Hispanic/Latino of any race	576	446	349	330	235
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	*	*	*	*	*
Two or More Races	73	64	48	57	37
White	373	292	291	302	169

## An In-depth Look at Disparities by Race/Ethnicity

The statewide data clearly illustrate that Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students experience suspensions at substantially greater rates than White students. To explore these racial disparities further, two additional questions were explored:

1. How many students are involved in more than one disciplinary incident during the school year? Are Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students involved in multiple incidents at greater rates than White students?
2. Are different sanctions imposed for similar behavior? Do Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students receive more severe sanctions (e.g., OSS instead of ISS) for the same behavior?

Most of the students who were suspended or expelled (over 20,500 students or 59.1 percent) committed only one incident during the 2021-22 school year; this rate is similar to the pre-pandemic rate of 58.2 percent (Table 11).

Table 11: Percentage of Students with One or More Incidents

	2017-18	2018-19	2021-22
	Percentage of Students	Percentage of Students	Percentage of Students
Only one incident	58.0	58.2	59.1
Two to four incidents	31.8	31.9	31.9
Five to nine incidents	8.0	7.9	7.4
Ten or more incidents	2.1	2.0	1.5

When the data are disaggregated by race (Table 12), it is evident that Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students are reported for more than one disciplinary incident at greater rates than White students. In 2021-22, 45.5 percent of Black/African American and 42.6 percent of Hispanic/Latino students who received a suspension/expulsion were involved in two or more incidents as compared to 34.5 percent of White students. Note that these percentages are the totals of the three columns labeled 2-4, 5-9 and 10+ incidents.

Table 12: Percentage of Students with Multiple Incidents by Race/Ethnicity

	2017-18					2018-19					2021-22				
	Student Count	% with Incident Count				Student Count	% with Incident Count				Student Count	% with Incident Count			
		1	2-4	5-9	10+		1	2-4	5-9	10+		1	2-4	5-9	10+
American Indian or Alaska Native	117	53.8	*	*	*	118	61	30.5	7.6	0.8	119	55.6	35.9	*	*
Asian	501	75.1	21.6	*	*	532	69.9	26.5	2.4	1.1	446	71.9	24.4	*	*
Black or African American	9,884	51.8	35.3	10.1	2.8	9,875	53.8	34.7	9.1	2.4	8,518	54.5	35.3	8.4	1.8
Hispanic/Latino of any race	12,819	54.9	33.3	9.2	2.5	13,217	55	33.9	8.7	2.4	13,574	57.4	32.9	8.0	1.7
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	32	63.2	*	*	0	35	62.9	28.6	8.6	0	46	60.9	28.3	*	*
Two or More Races	1,248	60.8	30.9	6.2	2.1	1396	56.9	31.4	10	1.6	1,636	55.2	34.6	7.9	2.3
White	12,167	65.4	27.9	5.6	1.2	11,685	65.2	27.8	5.8	1.1	10,310	65.5	27.8	5.7	1.0
Total	36,768	58	31.8	8	2.1	36,858	58.2	31.9	7.9	2	34,649	59.1	31.9	7.4	1.5

Are different sanctions imposed for similar behavior? Does the severity of sanction vary based on race/ethnicity?

To answer these questions, an in-depth examination was conducted of four various types of incidents:

1. Fighting/altercation/physical aggression
2. Knife 2½ Inches or Greater
3. Sexual Harassment
4. School Policy Violations

Fighting/altercation/physical aggression was selected because it is the most common incident reported. A knife of 2 ½ inches or greater was analyzed because it is the most common weapon reported. Sexual harassment was selected to represent “serious” incidents. Four types of school policy violations were selected for this analysis to evaluate whether there are any disparities with less severe incidents. The first three incident types are required to be reported to CSDE regardless of sanction, while the fourth type is only reported when the incident results in a suspension or expulsion. In all cases, the analyses were limited to cases where this was the only incident reported for that student. This was done

to eliminate the possibility that the choice of the sanction for a particular behavior was somehow influenced by repeat behavior. Due to small numbers of students across the different race/ethnicity groups, these analyses were limited to the three largest groups of Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and White students. The results from prior years have been included to identify areas where improvements have been made and where disparities may continue to exist.

### CASE #1: Fighting/altercation/physical aggression

This incident type is reported for a student who participated in an incident that involved a physical confrontation in which one or more participants received a minor physical injury. A minor injury is one that does not require professional medical attention, such as a scrape on the body, knee, or elbow; and/or minor bruising. Medical attention from the school nurse qualifies the injury as minor unless further medical attention is required. This incident type can also be used when one person strikes another (causing a minor injury), and the incident is ended prior to the other participant retaliating. Among students who were reported with a single fighting/altercation/physical aggression incident during 2021-22 and where this was their only incident, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students received an OSS or EXP at rates of 71.7 and 68.6 percent respectively, while the rate for White students is significantly lower at 45.2 percent (Table 13).

Table 13: Fighting/altercation/physical aggression Incidents Resulting in OSS/EXP

	2017-2018			2018-2019			2021-2022		
	Total Incidents	Incidents Resulting in OSS/EXP		Total Incidents	Incidents Resulting in OSS/EXP		Total Incidents	Incidents Resulting in OSS/EXP	
		#	%		#	%		#	%
Black/African American	1,215	902	74.2	1,333	708	53.1	492	353	71.7
Hispanic/Latino	1,417	1,061	74.9	1,591	796	50.0	560	384	68.6
White	729	511	70.1	1,022	247	24.1	336	152	45.2
Total	3,361	2,474	73.6	3,946	1,751	44.4	1,388	889	64.0

### CASE #2: Knife 2½ Inches or Greater

In 2017-18 regardless of race/ethnicity, all students statewide who were reported with a single weapons incident where the weapon was a knife that was 2½ inches or greater (e.g., a steak knife, hunting knife), received either an out-of-school suspension or an expulsion. During the 2018-19 school year this was

not the case. Over 91 percent of Black/African American students and nearly 90 percent of Hispanic/Latino students received an OSS, or an EXP, as compared to 76.2 percent of White students who received the same punishment. Post-pandemic the rates rose in each group, 92.5 percent of Black/African American students and 94.8 percent of Hispanic/Latino students received an OSS, or an EXP, as compared to 88.7 percent of White students.

Table 14: Knife 2½ Inches or Greater Incidents Resulting in OSS/EXP

	2017-2018			2018-2019			2021-2022		
	Total Incidents	Incidents Resulting in OSS/ EXP		Total Incidents	Incidents Resulting in OSS/ EXP		Total Incidents	Incidents Resulting in OSS/ EXP	
		#	%		#	%		#	%
Black/African American	36	36	100	23	21	91.3	40	37	92.5
Hispanic/Latino	71	71	100	38	34	89.5	97	92	94.8
White	68	68	100	42	32	76.2	62	55	88.7
Total	175	175	100	103	87	84.5	199	184	92.5

### CASE #3: Sexual Harassment

An incident that is reported as sexual harassment involves inappropriate and unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, other physical or verbal conduct, or communication of a sexual nature, including gender-based harassment that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or work environment. Examples include leering, pinching, grabbing, suggestive comments, gestures, or jokes; or pressure to engage in sexual activity.

In 2017-18, there were no significant differences among Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, or White students in the rate at which they received an OSS or EXP. In 2018-19, however, Black/African American students received OSS at a significantly greater rate (57.1 percent) than Hispanic/Latino students (40 percent) and White students (38.8 percent). Post-pandemic, the disparity widened with the rates of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students receiving these sanctions increasing (2.5 and 8.7 percent respectively), and the rate of White students decreasing by 5.5 percent.

Table 15: Sexual Harassment Incidents Resulting in OSS/EXP

	2017-2018			2018-2019			2021-2022		
	Total Incidents	Incidents Resulting in OSS/ EXP		Total Incidents	Incidents Resulting in OSS/ EXP		Total Incidents	Incidents Resulting in OSS/ EXP	
		#	%		#	%		#	%
Black/African American	80	54	67.5	70	40	57.1	57	34	59.6
Hispanic/Latino	106	71	67.0	75	30	40.0	88	43	48.7
White	103	67	65.0	134	52	38.8	105	35	33.3
Total	289	192	66.4	265	111	41.9	250	112	44.8

#### CASE #4: Select School Policy Violations

The following four school policy violations were examined for this analysis:

- Insubordination/Disrespect: Unwillingness to submit to authority, refusal to respond to a reasonable request, or other situation in which a student is disobedient.
- Disorderly conduct: Any behavior that seriously disrupts the orderly conduct of a school function or which substantially disrupts the orderly learning environment.
- Inappropriate behavior: Horseplay, play fighting, playing cards.
- Disruptive behavior: Disruption of class; in the hallway, cafeteria, or any other area of the school.

None of these incidents are classified as “serious,” so their reporting to CSDE is required only if the incident results in a suspension or expulsion. Therefore, this analysis was limited to those incidents that resulted in a suspension/expulsion to determine if students of color received OSS at a greater rate than White students. As with the prior cases, the students selected for this analysis were those who had only one incident type, indicating this is the only issue that took place during the incident. Moreover, this was the only incident for which the student was reported for the school year and the incident was not classified as a bullying incident.

Among students who were reported with a single school policy violation incident during 2018-19 and where this was their only incident, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students received an OSS or EXP at a greater rate (34.3 and 27.7 percent respectively) than White students (19.5 percent). These rates increased in each group post-pandemic, with Black/African American students at 51.6 percent, Hispanic/Latino at 42.9 percent, and White students at 38.1 percent.

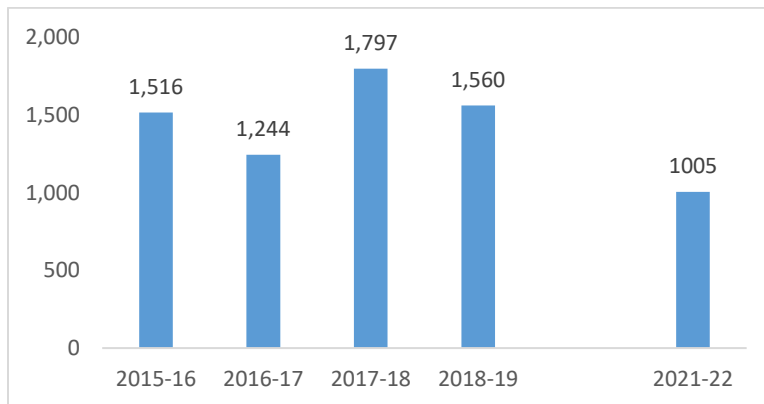
Table 16: School Policy Violation Incidents Resulting in OSS/EXP

	2017-2018			2018-2019			2021-2022		
	Total Incidents	Incidents Resulting in OSS/ EXP		Total Incidents	Incidents Resulting in OSS/ EXP		Total Incidents	Incidents Resulting in OSS/ EXP	
		#	%		#	%		#	%
Black/African American	986	270	27.4	957	328	34.3	190	98	51.6
Hispanic/Latino	1,329	362	27.2	1,240	343	27.7	301	129	42.9
White	1,446	290	20.1	1,349	263	19.5	390	109	27.9
Total	3,761	922	24.5	3,518	931	26.5	881	336	38.1

### School-Based Arrests

Effective July 1, 2015, [Public Act No. 15-168](#), “An Act Concerning Collaboration Between Boards of Education and School Resource Officers and the Collection and Reporting of Data on School-Based Arrests,” redefined a School-Based Arrest as “an arrest of a student for conduct of such student on school property or at a school-sponsored event.” The trend in the total number of school-based arrests reported to the CSDE is presented below (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Total Number of School-Based Arrests



Over the past three years incidents involving Fighting and Battery are the most common reason for a school-based arrest in (Table 17).

Table 17: Incident Categories for School-Based Arrests

Incident Categories for School-Based Arrests	2017-2018 Count	2018-2019 Count	2021-2022 Count
Fighting and Battery	598	515	408
Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco	319	403	88
Physical and Verbal Confrontation	240	215	167
Personally Threatening Behavior	204	134	80
School Policy Violations	151	84	49
Weapons	99	71	135
Violent Crimes Against Persons	65	48	25
Theft Related Behaviors	60	49	19
Property Damage	32	14	26
Sexually Related Behavior	29	27	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,797</b>	<b>1,560</b>	<b>1,005</b>

The majority of students arrested were male. Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students were disproportionately represented among those arrested (Table 18).

Table 18: Student Demographics for School-Based Arrests

Race/Ethnicity	2017-2018 Student Count of School-Based Arrests	2018-2019 Student Count of School-Based Arrests	2021-2022 Student Count of School-Based Arrests
Black or African American	419	390	270
Hispanic/Latino of any race	577	601	421
White	554	468	217
Male	1,133	1,067	649
Female	522	493	313
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,655</b>	<b>1,560</b>	<b>962</b>

Counts of School-Based Arrests by Local Education Agency are available on [EdSight](#).

# A Statewide Systems Approach to Turning the Curve

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## Overview

This section addresses effective approaches to school discipline, including best practices for districts, schools, and other stakeholders to promote a proactive and comprehensive system of support, called multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), to reduce disproportionality in suspensions and expulsions. MTSS is derived from the public health and disease control model and emphasizes prevention for all students with increasing levels of targeted or individualized (intensive) supports. Additionally, MTSS provides a structure for states, districts, and schools to organize initiatives and related resources to maximize effectiveness and meet clearly defined goals. MTSS provides guidance for selecting, integrating, and implementing the best evidence-based behavioral practices for improving social-emotional/behavioral outcomes for all students, particularly marginalized and vulnerable populations. This is why statewide data collection and analysis are critical to this school discipline work.

The role of districts in addressing family and student needs has expanded over the last decade, specifically amidst COVID-19. In addition to ensuring all students meet increasingly rigorous academic standards, schools are asked to reduce school discipline, improve overall social-emotional learning and school climate, and support student and staff mental health needs. Building a coherent system is vital to addressing these areas of concern.

This includes effective strategies to teach and support students and respond to behavioral concerns in a similar manner to academic concerns (i.e., increasing instruction and support when the issues occur). The CSDE also recognizes that exclusionary practices may sometimes be necessary for protecting students against imminent safety risks or when such action is required by state or federal law, such as Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) Sections 10-233c and 233d, these practices should be balanced with the other proportionate consequences that may better serve the social-emotional development of students and result in a positive outcome or resolution.

Researchers agree that when removed from school and left unsupervised, students lose valuable instructional time, resulting in lower academic achievement, grade-level retention, an increased risk of dropping out, and possible involvement with the juvenile justice system. The CSDE has established a methodology for identifying districts with high suspension rates and disproportionality, including analysis of disaggregated discipline data, root cause analysis, school-based diversion models, effective and equitable disciplinary policies, restorative practices, and alternative discipline practices. Below are actions within the CSDE system of supports for districts to further reduce the use of exclusionary discipline and increase the utilization of evidence-based practices and wraparound supports.



## SBE Position Statement on Reducing Disproportionality in Suspensions and Expulsions

With input from the Alternative Schools Committee, Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative, and the Commissioner's Roundtable for Family and Community Engagement in Education, the CSDE developed a position statement that was adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) on February 6, 2019. The [Position Statement on Reducing Disproportionality in Suspensions and Expulsions](#) addresses the components for reducing suspensions and expulsions in Connecticut public schools.

### Focus on Preschool and Kindergarten to Grade Two

The CSDE is developing a Community of Practice with districts to address trends in PreK-2 suspension rates and provide opportunities for improvement and strategies for systemic change. The sessions are designed to help districts with data trends indicating a more than typical use of suspensions for children in grades PreK-2 to change that trajectory. In addition, these sessions will help districts examine data related to suspensions in a manner that assist in formulating useful reflection regarding practices. Topics will include data analysis, Connecticut law, a system of supports, developmental-prosocial approaches, and strategic planning. The three-part session will start in late April 2023.

Additionally, the CSDE, in partnership with the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), developed resources for educators and families for early elementary grades. When a child engages in challenging behaviors, early childhood providers/teachers face decisions about how to respond. Because these situations are emotionally charged, it is helpful to understand the cycle of behavior and have strategies that can de-escalate the situation. When considering de-escalation strategies, it is beneficial to think about the entire cycle of behavior. Strategies can be used at any point during this cycle to help prevent further escalation and support the child to calm down. The resources below have been disseminated to districts. Additionally, the CSDE has added new professional learning opportunities on the impact of childhood trauma and executive functioning skills.

- [Decision Guide for Behavioral Supports Preschool To Grade 2](#)
- [Tip Sheet: Seek To Understand a Child's Behavior](#)
- [Tip Sheet: De-escalation Strategies](#)
- Videos (YouTube)
  - [Mobile Crisis Intervention/211 for children experiencing a behavioral or mental health crisis](#)
  - [The Early Childhood Consultation Partnership \(ECCP\)](#)
  - [The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children](#)
  - [Understanding Challenging Behavior in Young Children](#)

A review of the data in 2017 revealed that suspension and expulsion of students in preschool and Kindergarten to Grade Two occurred in violation of the Connecticut General Statutes. Consequently, the CSDE issued a Commissioner’s memorandum to superintendents of schools that clarified state statutes on suspension and expulsion of students in Preschool and Kindergarten to Grade Two. In addition, the memorandum provided resources that required the 15 districts with high numbers of suspensions and expulsions to participate in a mandatory webinar titled: *Ensuring Equity and Excellence: Positive and Effective School Discipline for Preschool and Kindergarten to Grade Two*. The primary goals were to allow for an interactive discussion with other districts and answer essential questions about the use of disciplinary sanctions. The webinar reviewed early brain development, relevant laws, policy development, information on compliance reporting and coding, and the importance of developing a comprehensive systems approach to address exclusionary discipline for this population. Finally, to generate consistency, the CSDE collaborated with the OEC to provide two follow-up sessions with districts and community providers regarding the alignment of practices.

The OEC piloted a new policy to address exclusionary practices for young children in state-funded early childhood programs. In partnership with the OEC, we provided a statewide workshop called *Enhancing Equity in School Discipline: Practical Strategies and Tools*, presented by Dr. Kent McIntosh, professor, and expert in positive behavior support and equity in school discipline, University of Oregon. The workshop provided evidence-based approaches to address racial and ethnic disproportionality in school discipline.

Additionally, the CSDE continues to work collaboratively with the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight (JJPOC) sub-committee on school discipline. The committee members agree that excluding students from school, especially students in grade two and below, is contrary to supporting students’ social, emotional, and academic development. However, there are times when students exhibit challenging behavior and need to be removed from the classroom for their own safety and the safety of the school community. Therefore, below are the recommendations as part of the CSDE implementation plan for Pre-K through Grade Two.

#### Completed and Ongoing Actions:

- Policy Guidance and Professional Learning.
- Assisting districts with evaluating the effectiveness of school discipline policies and practices.
- Continue to design, execute, and assess multiple professional learning and technical assistance opportunities based on need, demographics, capacity, and resources. (See the multi-tiered series of supports section for these professional learning offerings).
- Continue to analyze district data and engage school districts regarding data of concern in Grades PreK-2 for OSS and EXP. Support included:

- Closer examination of individual student’s issues;
- Use data to ascertain risk factors for suspensions and expulsions;
- Recommending professional learning for district staff on how to routinely monitor progress; and
- Understanding patterns and trends.

## Focus on Alternative Education Programs

Public Act 17-220 required the SBE to adopt standards for the provision of an adequate alternative educational opportunity for students who have been expelled.

### Ongoing Actions:

- Developed [standards](#) in collaboration with the Connecticut Alternative Schools Committee.
- Disseminated the SBE adopted standards to school districts and multiple stakeholders.
- Developed, in collaboration with the Alternative Schools Committee, and disseminated a companion document to the standards, [Alternative Educational Opportunities for Students Who Have Been Expelled: Best Practice Guidelines for Program Implementation](#). The guidelines and standards are designed to ensure that students who are expelled continue to have access to high-quality education that will position them for future success.
- Developed and disseminated a comprehensive document, [Guidance Regarding Student Expulsions](#). This guidance outlines the process and procedures required for expulsions and provides an overview of key legal considerations relevant to expulsions in Connecticut.

### The Alternative Education Community of Practice

The *Alternative Education Community of Practice (CoP)* meets a minimum of quarterly throughout the school year, providing opportunities for educators such as school administrators, teachers, and support specialists to engage in discourse and activities to increase students’ attendance and reduce the rate of suspensions and expulsions. Trainings target key areas of interest by the CoP and are designed to enhance educator understanding, skillsets, and access to resources that promote social-emotional, academic and community connections in support of whole-child development.

The CoP meetings/trainings for the 2022-23 School Year are as follows:

- **October 27, 2022**  
Topic: Mental Health and Multi-tiered Systems of Support  
Description: An overview of Comprehensive School Mental Health (CSMH) and a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) as well as resources to support students’ behavioral health.

- **December 8, 2022**

Topic: Data to Support Intervention Planning

Description: CSDE Early Indication Tool (EIT) identifies students in Grades 1-12 who may need additional support to reach academic milestones and facilitates timelier, targeted interventions.

- **February 2, 2023**

Topic: Special Education and the IEP

Description: A focus on Individualized Education Plan (IEP) implementation and supports in Alternative settings.

- **March 23, 2023**

Topic: Family Engagement Strategies

Description: Family engagement strategies promoting equity and student success in alternative settings.

- **May 24, 2023**

Topic: Students with Unfulfilled Basic Needs

Description: Supporting students with unfulfilled basic needs and discussion on youth homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Act.

## Focus on Charter Schools

### Ongoing Actions:

- Continue to evaluate the progress of discipline metrics through the new charters and renewal processes, including Discipline Tiers, to identify disproportionality in exclusionary discipline.
- Continue to offer professional learning for charter schools with high rates of suspensions.
- Continue to implement CSDE protocol for addressing philosophy, policy systems, structures, practices, and data in school. This has expanded into the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) work.

## Focus on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Behavioral Health

The CSDE used COVID-19 Relief Funds to provide school districts with the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) System. The DESSA is a strength-based social-emotional observation tool that focuses on building students' self-efficacy and helping them persevere when facing challenges. Students learn best through school relationships that make them feel safe and nurtured. Prioritizing supports for students' social-emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs is vital to developing such relationships and for students to re-engage with

school after the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the DESSA helps educators better understand and support students to feel connected to school, confident, successful, and engaged in learning. The CSDE is rolling out Cohort 4; approximately 81 districts are using the DESSA and 80,000 students have been assessed in Cohorts 1 and 2, and over 160 trainings were held for educators. Two documents were disseminated statewide to provide an overview of the work.

- [7 Ways CSDE is Leading Social-Emotional Learning](#)
- [16 Ways CSDE is Supporting Social-Emotional Learning and Behavioral & Mental Health](#)

Additionally, pursuant to Public Act 21-95, *An Act Concerning Assorted Revisions and Additions to the Education Statutes*, the CSDE developed the Components of Social, Emotional and Intellectual Habits: Grades 4-12. The Components of Social, Emotional and Intellectual Habits (Habits): Grades 4-12 represents the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that form an essential blueprint for social-emotional habits and academic success. The purpose of the document is to provide a model for districts and schools to integrate social and emotional habits into academic content areas so that students will learn and model essential personal life habits. The Components of Social, Emotional and Intellectual Habits: Grades 4-12 are vital to K-12 education and contribute to the whole-child success across the lifespan. The SBE approved the Habits on March 1, 2023.

Also, the CSDE and Governor Ned Lamont launched the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP), which was created in 2021 following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to combat student absenteeism. The program is now featured as a national best practice. The [video highlights](#) the effectiveness of LEAP's home visiting actions in reducing student absences and increasing student engagement.

The CSDE and the Connecticut School Counselor Association developed the Connecticut Comprehensive School Counseling Framework (CCSCF) training series. This series offers free professional learning in the form of web-based learning modules designed for Connecticut school counselors, school counselor directors, counselor educators, pre-service school counselors, and administrators. The CCSCF is based on the American School Counselor Association National Model while providing more information to align with Connecticut's needs. The CCSCF is vital to the school community to help maximize student success in academic performance, develop and manage social-emotional skills, and plan for post-secondary options.

Ensuring students' social and emotional well-being is always critical to their ability to be healthy, happy, and ready to learn. The need for these supports is even more important during this unprecedented time when determining and effectively addressing the psychological and physical impact of the pandemic on students is significantly challenging. Additionally, the impact of traumatic experiences and the associated needs are especially prevalent in underserved communities.

## Ongoing and Completed:

- In the Summer of 2021, a Statewide Behavioral Health Landscape Scan was conducted to provide CSDE with information regarding emerging trends, concerns, and work taking place in schools regarding mental and behavioral health services. Afterwards, select districts representing various demographics joined a focus group discussion, where CSDE discussed and documented collective challenges regarding building or scaling up integrated support systems, long-term financial backing support; technical assistance and coaching on evidence-based practices for behavioral health; and coordinated referral systems.
- Currently, in 7 districts, the CSDE is conducting a Behavioral Health Pilot program that aims to create a scalable and sustainable system of coordinated care for all K-12 schools to provide comprehensive behavioral and mental health supports and services to students and staff. CSDE identified districts of various demographics to participate in the pilot program to implement targeted supports based on identified needs from the survey and focus group.
- Conducted a Statewide [Social-Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Landscape Scan](#) in September 2020, which provided insight into the work already taking place in districts, including emerging concerns and trends related to SEL for K-12 schools across Connecticut. This was the first step in providing a systematic collection of data to supplement existing efforts.
- Provided Social, Emotional and Intellectual Habits (SEIH) K-3 that represents the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that form an essential blueprint for college and career readiness and equip every student with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college, careers, and civic life. While attention to core academic subjects remains important, social-emotional, and intellectual habits set the stage for all future learning, promoting intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competence.
- Procured, in 2020, the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) System, a strength-based assessment of behaviors related to social-emotional well-being, to identify interventions and supports. Funded by the CSDE, the DESSA is available to all districts at no cost. The DESSA is commonly used to inform the delivery of SEL at Tier 1 or Tier 2. The assessment is used to measure students' prosocial factors and social-emotional skills as an early indicator tool to screen for potential behavioral concerns. By identifying and addressing these needs early, this leads to positive behavioral and mental health outcomes as well as improved academic performance. In addition, the supplemental assessment is a comprehensive follow-up with at-risk students (targeted) to identify specific areas of need as well as to measure the results of that delivery.
- Continue the School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI) to help keep students in school, improve student outcomes, and ensure that students receive fair and equitable in-school discipline regardless of mental

health, special education needs, or demographic characteristics such as race or ethnicity. SBDI is proven to reduce the rate of in-school arrests, expulsions, and out-of-school suspensions.

- Introduced the new Comprehensive School Counseling Framework that is systemic and delivers a range of evidence-based supports, programs, and practices to address student needs. The framework provides a proactive, preventative, and early intervention model for school counselors to support all students in reaching their full potential and acquire critical skills in the areas of academic, career, and SEL.
- Launched the 2021 Healthy and Balanced Living Curriculum Framework, which provides districts with standards to implement a planned, ongoing, and sequential Pre-K-12 health education and physical education curriculum that addresses the physical, mental, social, and emotional dimensions of health through acquiring and effectively applying the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.
- Introduced the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) that is providing targeted support to 15 districts through home visits in order to improve attendance and engagement and address chronic absenteeism. This program has provided students and families with resources, such as backpacks and technology, as well as referrals to health and social services.
- Developed the CSDE reopening guidance: Adapt, Advance, and Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together. Prioritizing supports for students' social-emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs was vital for the return to school amidst COVID-19. Some students will have experienced grief and loss, sickness, traumatic experiences in the home, inequities with access to learning and resources, food and housing insecurity, and the uncertainty of these times. Schools were encouraged to emphasize the need for positivity, empathy, reassurance, routines, flexibility, supports, and the implementation of a referral process to support students' return to school.
- Developed Addendum 10 of the: Adapt, Advance, and Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together: Reframing and Reopening: School Discipline Amidst COVID-19 Guidance. Addendum 10 outlines additional guidance that school districts may rely on regarding discipline during the pandemic. Some students experienced grief and loss, sickness, amplified challenging or traumatic experiences in the home, inequities with access to learning and resources, and the uncertainty of these times. The Addendum outlined best practices and strategies to promote a positive school climate, address misconduct, and foster student safety in lieu of ineffective and potentially retraumatizing exclusionary practices.

## Focus on Positive School Climate

A healthy learning community that is physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe is the foundation for a comprehensive high-quality education. When students feel welcome, accepted, valued and safe, they will challenge themselves academically and their readiness for learning is significantly enhanced. Reductions in exclusionary discipline also can be expected when schools achieve and maintain inclusive, affirming, supportive and positive school climates.

### Completed and Ongoing Actions:

- Provided targeted supports and resources for identified districts on school climate data collection and assessments; aligning and integrating school climate initiatives such as restorative practices and trauma-informed practices into action; and evaluating the impact of implementation.
- Provided district/school teams with technical assistance to support equitable, positive, and affirming student experiences and outcomes to support student success. Using systems change lens and an action-oriented approach, teams collaborate with one another to understand student and staff needs; assess how initiatives and practices achieve equitable outcomes aligned to their school improvement plan; and support their capacity to advance and sustain student success.
- Provided professional development to districts on building community and promoting relationships to help school leaders understand the importance of relationships especially during this challenging time, and to identify strategies to promote collaboration and relationships with and among staff, students, and families.
- Collaborated internally within CSDE and other key partners to align and integrate school climate and culture efforts to promote a comprehensive wellness approach to learning environments.
  - Internal Partnerships with Civil Rights/Title IX coordinator, Attendance and Engagement Workgroup, Turnaround Cross Divisional Teams, SEL Assessment Implementation Team, Project Aware Advisory Team, School Discipline Collaborative, the Bureau of Special Education, and Talent Office.
  - External Partnerships with Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) – State Student Advisory Council on Education (SSACE), the CAS Student Equity Board (SEB), and the Equity Committee, CT Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC), the Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI), Connecticut Children’s Medical Center (CCMC), Connecticut Center for Children’s Advocacy (CCAR), the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative (SCAC), and the Center for School Safety and Crisis Preparation



## Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative

### Current Report

The CSDE recognized the need for cross-sector collaboration to address significant challenges and achieve sustainable change in school discipline. In response, the CSDE launched the [Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative](#) in October 2018 to advise the Commissioner of Education and SBE on strategies for transforming school discipline to reduce the overall and disproportionate use of exclusionary practices. The membership reflects a diverse range of expertise in education, education law, public policy, youth development, and family and community leadership. The Collaborative engages experts from across Connecticut and nationally to network, exchange ideas and share best practices regarding the reduction of disproportionate practices in school discipline. Time is dedicated during and in between meetings to gain insight into Connecticut's current school discipline landscape.

The CSDE and the School Discipline Collaborative developed two resources for families and districts. The guides are designed to help families better understand the laws and policies on school suspensions and expulsions. The guides are not meant to provide legal advice, but to explain the general rights of students in Connecticut's Public Schools. Please click on the links below to review the released documents:

- [When a Child is Suspended from School: A Fact Sheet for Connecticut Families](#)
- [When a Child is Expelled from School: A Fact Sheet for Connecticut Families](#)

The CSDE partnered with the Connecticut Child Advocate and the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center to co-design a three-part series for educators and families on a System of Support to Reduce Exclusionary School Discipline. The series focuses on key practices and gaining an understanding of what can be done to reduce exclusionary school discipline. In addition, provide professional learning series for districts on creating inclusive classroom environments for all learners. These sessions will encourage self-reflection to understand better approaches to managing and addressing the day-to-day behavioral expectations and routines that will ensure consistent and compassionate responses school-wide.

### Completed and Ongoing Actions:

- Facilitated a panel discussion with superintendents and principals to share their expertise on school discipline, behavioral health, and building systems coherence during this extraordinary time. Panelists described how to amplify the attention to school discipline work for students and adults while fostering a positive school culture to support students in reaching their fullest potential to flourish and thrive.

- Completed family guides that are designed for families and schools to gain a shared understanding of school discipline statutes, requirements, rights and responsibilities of all parties, and best practices.
- Revisited a prior discussion and gallery walk of the Historical Timeline of Public Education Policy in the United States and the impact on the educational system. Underpinning this work is contextualizing policies so Connecticut can ensure fair, just, and equitable practices in our schools. Information regarding the Collaborative can be obtained at [SDE/Discipline-in-Schools](#).

## Tiered Systems of Supports

As mentioned earlier in this section, MTSS is a framework for implementing a continuum of academic, social-emotional, and behavioral supports to meet students' needs. The concept is to enhance opportunities for achievement while reducing exclusionary school discipline practices that disproportionately affect students with disabilities, students of color, and students from low-income families. The CSDE has developed training so educators can explore the core features of Tier I, which is necessary to establish an effective, efficient system for school-wide behavior support. The training is more targeted and is designed for a cohort of districts/schools to implement changes in school-wide and classroom supports. In addition, the CSDE conducted an analysis of suspension rates overall and disaggregated data by students with disabilities and race/ethnicity to identify schools in need of support.

Additionally, in the past, the Connecticut State Department of Education conducted a comprehensive statewide needs assessment (170 schools) called the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI). The TFI results showed that implementation fidelity is relatively sound at Tier 1, but more work is needed. Also, improvement was needed at Tier 2. Amidst COVID-19, districts are struggling for more Tier 3 and external supports. Gleaned from this, the CSDE also offered a two-day professional learning opportunity to understand at least three symptoms of traumatic stress in children and adolescents, evidence-based practices protocols, and related trauma-informed interventions that can be implemented in schools.

Additionally, the CSDE has introduced the assessing readiness for implementation of programming, called the Hexagon Tool. The CSDE has provided training for our leadership team, internal staff, and Alliance Districts. The assessment readiness tool can be used by districts, communities, and organizations to better understand how a new or existing program or practice fits into an implementing site's existing work and context. The Hexagon Tool can be used at any stage of implementation to assess fit and feasibility. It is most commonly used during the exploration stage when a site is identifying and selecting new programs and practices to implement. Six factors are to be considered when evaluating programs: evidence, support, usability, need, fit, and capacity to improve student outcomes.

### **Completed and Ongoing Actions:**

- Training for districts on 10 evidence-based strategies for building relationships in the classroom, embedding the language of expectations into praise and correction, escalation and de-escalation, and classroom implementation of behavior support plans. Additionally, high-leverage instructional practices to support academic progress, along with specific literacy strategies.
- Training on the Pyramid Model Practices is a conceptual framework of evidence-based practices to promote young children's social and emotional development.
- Updated the data-informed tiered professional learning framework grounded in equity, access, and evidence to identify and concentrate resources, expertise, and efforts where they are needed most. The framework provides prevention and early intervention strategies to promote a safe and positive school culture and identify vulnerable students.
- Redesigned tier one to support capacity-building to develop, enhance, and expand Connecticut's Statewide Systems of Support to LEAs and schools using the MTSS. MTSS provides guidance for the selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based behavioral practices for improving behavioral outcomes for all students.
- Continue a two-day professional learning opportunity: "Using Restorative Practices within a Multi-tiered System of Supports" (MTSS), including technical support. School teams were provided with an overview of restorative practices and implementation within an MTSS.

## Appendix A – District Tiers on 2018-19 Suspension/Expulsion Data

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Effective in the 2020-21 school year, the CSDE is grouping districts into four tiers based on racial/ethnic disparities in suspension/expulsion data to provide targeted interventions and supports. The primary metric used for placing districts into tiers is the “Suspension/Expulsion Rate.” This is the percentage of students receiving at least one in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion during the school year. Using this metric allows for the broadest inclusion of students who may experience any exclusionary discipline during the school year.

The Suspension/Expulsion rate is reported publicly for all students and student groups on [EdSight](#) and included in the [Profile and Performance Report](#) for every district/school. Districts are placed into tiers according to the following criteria:

- **Tier 4** - Consistently High Suspension Rates (may also have high disproportionality): Overall, Black, or Hispanic suspension rate  $\geq 15\%$  in 2 recent years.
- **Tier 3** - Consistently High Disproportionality: Not in Tier 4 AND either Black or Hispanic Relative Risk Index (RRI)  $\geq 3$  in 2 recent years.
- **Tier 2** - Consistently Medium Disproportionality: Not in Tiers 4 or 3 AND either Black or Hispanic RRI  $\geq 2$  in 2 recent years.
- **Tier 1** - Low Suspension Rate/Disproportionality: All other districts

### Relative Risk Index (RRI)

In addition to looking at the absolute suspension rate of all students and the primary race/ethnic groups (i.e., Black, Hispanic, and White students), a relative risk index (RRI) is also calculated for Black and Hispanic students relative to White students in each district. The RRI is a measure of disproportionality that indicates how many times more likely Black or Hispanic students are to be suspended/expelled relative to White students. For example, an RRI of 3.0 for Black students in a district means that Black students are 3 times as likely to be suspended/expelled as White students in that district.

### System of Support Model for Disproportionate School Discipline

In light of the impact on in-person learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in the 2019-20 school year, the 2018-19 district tiers are being used to identify districts needing additional support. Complete data regarding the tiers is available on [EdSight](#). The CSDE has developed a System of Support Model for

Disproportionate School Discipline to assist districts in reducing and eliminating disparities in school discipline. This model: (1) is designed to review and assess the systemic and root causes of school discipline disparities; and (2) provides supports and tools to systematically address district-based factors that contribute to disparities in school discipline. The CSDE provides professional learning on aligning/integrating social-emotional learning and Restorative Practices into a multi-tiered framework. The focus is on disproportionality to prompt districts to consider the potential impacts of a program or practice on specific students and whether the implementation of the program or practice could advance equitable outcomes for all individuals and families.

#### Tier 4

Consistently High Suspension Rates (may also have high disproportionality): Overall, Black, or Hispanic suspension rate  $\geq 15\%$  in 2 recent years.

District Code	District Name
0020011	Ansonia School District
0070011	Berlin School District
0150011	Bridgeport School District
0370011	Derby School District
0400011	East Granby School District
0430011	East Hartford School District
0470011	East Windsor School District
0490011	Enfield School District
0620011	Hamden School District
0640011	Hartford School District
1130011	Portland School District
1290011	Somers School District
1510011	Waterbury School District
1630011	Windham School District
2440014	Area Cooperative Educational Services
2650013	Interdistrict School for Arts and Comm District
2790013	Amistad Academy District
2850013	Achievement First Bridgeport Academy District
2890013	Elm City College Preparatory School District
2940013	Great Oaks Charter School District
9000016	Connecticut Technical Education and Career System
9010022	Norwich Free Academy District
9020022	The Gilbert School District

### Tier 3

Consistently High Disproportionality: Not in Tier 4 AND either Black or Hispanic RRI  $\geq 3$  in 2 recent years.

District Code	District Name
0040011	Avon School District
0230011	Canton School District
0510011	Fairfield School District
0520011	Farmington School District
0560011	Granby School District
0570011	Greenwich School District
0950011	New London School District
1030011	Norwalk School District
1280011	Simsbury School District
1310011	Southington School District
1320011	South Windsor School District
1350011	Stamford School District
1550011	West Hartford School District
1580011	Westport School District
2150012	Regional School District 15
2410014	Capitol Region Education Council
2860013	Highville Charter School District

## Tier 2

Consistently Medium Disproportionality: Not in Tiers 4 or 3 AND either Black or Hispanic RRI  $\geq 2$  in 2 recent years.

District Code	District Name
0110011	Bloomfield School District
0140011	Branford School District
0170011	Bristol School District
0330011	Cromwell School District
0480011	Ellington School District
0540011	Glastonbury School District
0590011	Groton School District
0770011	Manchester School District
0800011	Meriden School District
0830011	Middletown School District
0930011	New Haven School District
0990011	North Branford School District
1010011	North Haven School District
1190011	Rocky Hill School District
1370011	Stonington School District
1380011	Stratford School District
1430011	Torrington School District
1530011	Watertown School District
1560011	West Haven School District
1590011	Wethersfield School District
1640011	Windsor School District
1650011	Windsor Locks School District
2050012	Regional School District 05
2080012	Regional School District 08
2450014	Learn
2610013	Jumoke Academy District
2680013	Common Ground High School District
2690013	The Bridge Academy District
2780013	Trailblazers Academy District
2830013	Park City Prep Charter School District
2880013	Achievement First Hartford Academy District
2970013	Capital Preparatory Harbor School District

## Tier 1

Low Suspension Rate/Disproportionality: All other districts

District Code	District Name
0010011	Andover School District
0030011	Ashford School District
0050011	Barkhamsted School District
0080011	Bethany School District
0090011	Bethel School District
0120011	Bolton School District
0130011	Bozrah School District
0180011	Brookfield School District
0190011	Brooklyn School District
0210011	Canaan School District
0220011	Canterbury School District
0240011	Chaplin School District
0250011	Cheshire School District
0260011	Chester School District
0270011	Clinton School District
0280011	Colchester School District
0290011	Colebrook School District
0300011	Columbia School District
0310011	Cornwall School District
0320011	Coventry School District
0340011	Danbury School District
0350011	Darien School District
0360011	Deep River School District
0390011	Eastford School District
0410011	East Haddam School District
0420011	East Hampton School District
0440011	East Haven School District
0450011	East Lyme School District
0460011	Easton School District
0500011	Essex School District
0530011	Franklin School District
0580011	Griswold School District
0600011	Guilford School District
0630011	Hampton School District
0650011	Hartland School District



District Code	District Name
0670011	Hebron School District
0680011	Kent School District
0690011	Killingly School District
0710011	Lebanon School District
0720011	Ledyard School District
0730011	Lisbon School District
0740011	Litchfield School District
0760011	Madison School District
0780011	Mansfield School District
0790011	Marlborough School District
0840011	Milford School District
0850011	Monroe School District
0860011	Montville School District
0880011	Naugatuck School District
0890011	New Britain School District
0900011	New Canaan School District
0910011	New Fairfield School District
0920011	New Hartford School District
0940011	Newington School District
0960011	New Milford School District
0970011	Newtown School District
0980011	Norfolk School District
1000011	North Canaan School District
1020011	North Stonington School District
1040011	Norwich School District
1060011	Old Saybrook School District
1070011	Orange School District
1080011	Oxford School District
1090011	Plainfield School District
1100011	Plainville School District
1110011	Plymouth School District
1120011	Pomfret School District
1140011	Preston School District
1160011	Putnam School District
1170011	Redding School District
1180011	Ridgefield School District
1210011	Salem School District
1220011	Salisbury School District

District Code	District Name
1230011	Scotland School District
1240011	Seymour School District
1250011	Sharon School District
1260011	Shelton School District
1270011	Sherman School District
1330011	Sprague School District
1340011	Stafford School District
1360011	Sterling School District
1390011	Suffield School District
1400011	Thomaston School District
1410011	Thompson School District
1420011	Tolland School District
1440011	Trumbull School District
1450011	Union School District
1460011	Vernon School District
1470011	Voluntown School District
1480011	Wallingford School District
1520011	Waterford School District
1540011	Westbrook School District
1570011	Weston School District
1600011	Willington School District
1610011	Wilton School District
1620011	Winchester School District
1660011	Wolcott School District
1670011	Woodbridge School District
1690011	Woodstock School District
2010012	Regional School District 01
2040012	Regional School District 04
2060012	Regional School District 06
2070012	Regional School District 07
2090012	Regional School District 09
2100012	Regional School District 10
2110012	Regional School District 11
2120012	Regional School District 12
2130012	Regional School District 13
2140012	Regional School District 14
2160012	Regional School District 16
2170012	Regional School District 17

District Code	District Name
2180012	Regional School District 18
2190012	Regional School District 19
2420014	EdAdvance
2430014	Cooperative Educational Services
2530014	Eastern Connecticut Regional Educational Service Center (EASTCONN)
2630013	Odyssey Community School District
2640013	Integrated Day Charter School District
2700013	Side By Side Charter School District
2720013	Explorations District
2800013	New Beginnings Inc Family Academy District
2820013	Stamford Academy District
2900013	Brass City Charter School District
2910013	Elm City Montessori School District
2950013	Booker T. Washington Academy District
2960013	Stamford Charter School for Excellence District
3360015	Unified School District #1
3370015	Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
3470015	Unified School District #2
9030022	The Woodstock Academy District

## APPENDIX B – The Data Collection and Reporting Processes

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### ED166 Data Collection

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) submit data to the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) on an annual basis via an online data collection application known as the ED166 Student Disciplinary Offense Collection. After initial data submission, the CSDE conducts numerous validations to identify potential irregularities in the data. LEAs are expected to review and resolve all anomalies; then, a district administrator certifies electronically that the data are complete and accurate.

### Public School Information System (PSIS)

Student demographic data are collected in an application known as the Public School Information System or PSIS. PSIS contains student enrollment and demographic information (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender). Enrollment data, which are used for calculations such as suspension rates, are based on PSIS enrollment.

### Race/Ethnicity Information

In PSIS all students must be assigned to a racial/ethnic subgroup for analysis purposes. If a parent or student will not select a category from the five race codes provided, appropriate school personnel are advised to select the category for the child. In accordance with the final guidance and regulations issued by the United States Department of Education (USED), race and ethnicity are collected using the following two-part question:

1. Is the respondent Hispanic/Latino? – Yes/No  
Hispanic or Latino is defined as a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
2. Is the respondent from one or more races using the following (choose all that apply):
  - American Indian or Alaskan Native - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
  - Asian - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
  - Black or African American - A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- White - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

CSDE then reports this racial/ethnic data to the USED and the public using the following categories:

- Hispanic/Latino of any race;
- American Indian or Alaska Native;
- Black or African American;
- Asian;
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander;
- White; and
- Two or more races

Race/Ethnicity information can be updated at any time during the school year and be changed as many times as a student or his or her parents or guardian wish.

## EdSight

Data collected through the ED166 are released publicly on CSDE’s data portal, EdSight, sometime in October. EdSight is available at <http://edsight.ct.gov>. EdSight provides detailed information about schools/districts and offers information on key performance measures that make up Connecticut’s Next Generation Accountability System. A variety of reports are available on EdSight. They include:

- The Profile and Performance Reports and Connecticut Report Cards
- Numerous interactive reports on topics like enrollment, chronic absenteeism, discipline, educator demographics, graduation rates, and test results;
- The special education Annual Performance Reports; and
- Data and research bulletins on critical topics of interest.

## EdSight Data Suppression Guidelines

Data on both EdSight and within this report are suppressed following CSDE’s Data Suppression Guidelines. In general, counts less than 5 are suppressed; however, there are some instances where other numbers may be suppressed as well. The complete data suppression policy is available online at <http://edsight.ct.gov/relatedreports/BDCRE%20Data%20Suppression%20Rules.pdf>.