

Connecticut State Board of Education

Hartford

TO: State Board of Education
FROM: Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner of Education
DATE: February 14, 2024
SUBJECT: 2022-23 Report on Student Discipline in Connecticut Public Schools

Executive Summary

Please find attached the *2022-23 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 but can be accessed on the data portal [EdSight](#). Trend data in this report includes the 2015-16 to 2018-19 school years and the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. The data from 2022-23 are 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; however, disruptions to education caused by the pandemic has had some adverse effects.

- From 2018-19 to 2022-23 (pre-to post-pandemic) the total number of in-school suspensions decreased by 7.5 percent, but the total number of out-of-school suspensions increased by 14.4 percent and expulsions increased by 31.4 percent.
- While some incident categories showed lower rates in 2022-23 than in 2018-19 (e.g., School Policy Violations declined 4.8 percent, Sexually Related Behavior declined 25.4 percent, and Fighting and Battery declined 5 percent), other categories showed higher rates (e.g., Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco increased 31.4 percent, Physical and Verbal Confrontation increased 37.7 percent, and Weapons increased 78.8 percent). The total number of incidents reported for marijuana possession or use has increased nearly five times from 2021-22 (261 incidents) to 2022-23 (1,279 incidents); however, incidents coded as possession or use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (e.g., vapes, e-cigarettes) (3,302 incidents) far exceed those coded as marijuana (1,279 incidents) or tobacco (456 incidents).

- In 2022-23, over 37,500 students (7.0 percent) or approximately one out of approximately every 14 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 23 White students received at least one suspension, one out of seven Black/African American students and one out of 11 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. This pattern exists in many districts across the state. When analyzing suspension rates by grade, the data reveal that suspension rates in middle school grades in 2022-23 are substantially greater than pre-pandemic levels. Males receive a suspension/expulsion at greater rates (8.9 percent) than females (5.1 percent).
- The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is grouping districts into four tiers based on overall and disproportionate use of suspensions and expulsions in order to provide a system of supports and targeted action planning. The 2022-23 district tiers will be used to identify those districts needing support and the type of support needed.
- Among young children in pre-K through Grade 2, the number of suspensions (ISS and OSS combined) declined by 32.6 percent from 2018-19 to 2022-23. In 2022-23, fewer than 800 students in pre-K through Grade two (approximately 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 pre-K through Grade 2 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).

In 2023, the Collaborative was codified into law. Public Act 23-167 requires the Commissioner of Education to establish a working group to study current school discipline practices, including discipline practices that lead to students becoming justice-involved. A report to the legislature is expected by July 1, 2024. Additionally, the Collaborative will develop strategies to reduce out-of-school suspensions and expulsions of students in grades preschool to two.

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2022-23 Report on Student Discipline in Connecticut Public Schools

February 2024

Connecticut State Department of Education
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Introduction

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 behavioral 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, increased risk of substance use disorders, and involvement with juvenile justice systems¹.

[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

Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) 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)

¹ 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 verified 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 is included in Appendix B of this report. 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; 2022-23 data are compared to 2018-19 data to examine the differences from pre- to post-pandemic.

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 2022-23 than in 2018-19. While ISS was lower than in 2018-19, OSS and EXP increased in both the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years.

Table 1: Total Number of Sanctions

| Sanction Type | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | % Change from 2018-19 |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| In-School Suspension | 53,057 | 49,667 | 48,431 | 38,739 | 44,820 | -7.5 |
| Out-of-School Suspension | 32,982 | 31,834 | 32,681 | 34,580 | 37,376 | 14.4 |
| Expulsion | 750 | 797 | 745 | 858 | 979 | 31.4 |

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 in 2021-22 and has remained steady at 41 percent in 2022-23.

With respect to incident types, Sexually Related Behavior showed a substantial decline of 25.4 percent since pre-pandemic 2018-19; however other categories showed substantial increases (i.e., Weapons increased 78.8 percent, while Physical and Verbal Confrontation and the Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco categories increased by 37.7 and 31.4 percent respectively). In 2018-19, Vandalism accounted for 84 percent (N=1,216 incidents) of all incidents in the Property Damage category. In 2021-22, Vandalism declined to 82 percent of all incidents in the Property Damage category, and in 2022-23 it dropped to 76 percent (N=1,336). Vandalism is defined as the willful destruction or defacement of school property (destroying school computers, carving a desk, spray painting walls, damaging vehicles, etc.).

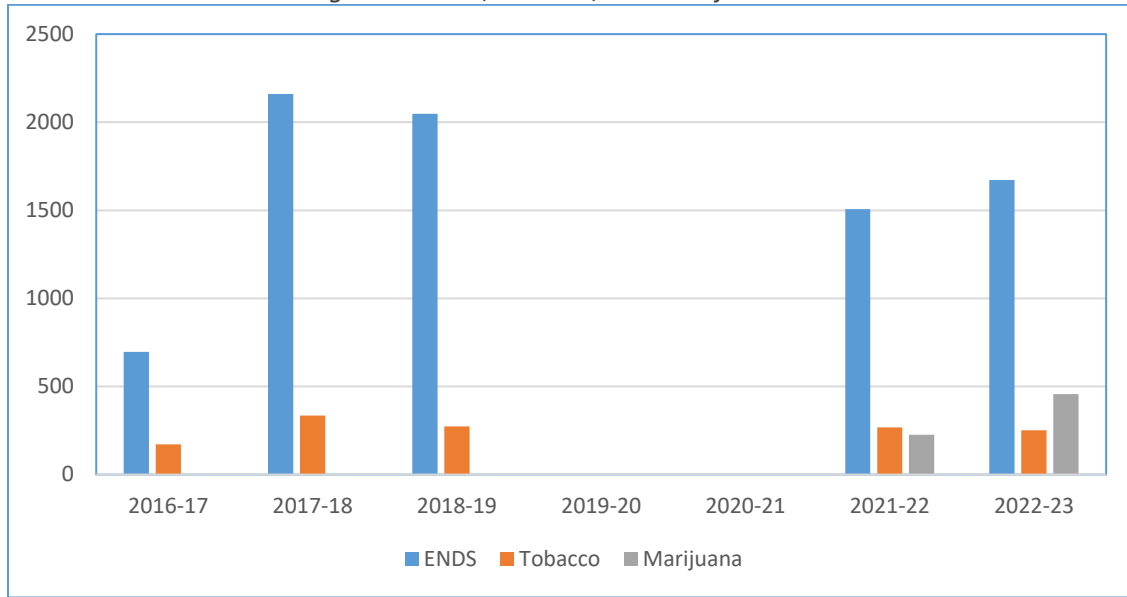
Table 2: Incidents by Category

| Incident Type | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | % Change from 2018-19 |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Violent Crimes Against Persons | 392 | 483 | 398 | 427 | 403 | 1.3 |
| Sexually Related Behavior | 1,286 | 1,329 | 1,254 | 1,018 | 936 | -25.4 |
| Personally Threatening Behavior | 6,870 | 7,208 | 6,787 | 7,559 | 8,755 | 29.0 |
| Theft Related Behaviors | 1,686 | 1,312 | 1,217 | 1,058 | 1,382 | 13.6 |
| Physical and Verbal Confrontation | 14,985 | 14,811 | 14,976 | 15,764 | 20,616 | 37.7 |
| Fighting and Battery | 16,744 | 16,952 | 18,036 | 17,165 | 17,141 | -5.0 |
| Property Damage | 1,529 | 1,431 | 1,455 | 2,161 | 1,756 | 20.7 |
| Weapons | 936 | 917 | 801 | 1,298 | 1,432 | 78.8 |
| Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco | 3,098 | 4,964 | 5,933 | 6,449 | 7,793 | 31.4 |
| School Policy Violations | 51,879 | 45,769 | 43,869 | 36,687 | 41,785 | -4.8 |

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 use increased in 2017-18. Tobacco use has remained stable, while ENDS has begun to increase again.

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 in 2018-19, possession has more than doubled. Tobacco possession and use in 2022-23 have nearly returned to pre-pandemic counts. In 2021-22, marijuana violations included 35 incidents of possession and 226 of use. In 2022-23, marijuana possession has increased over 23 times to 823 and marijuana use has doubled to 456.

Table 3: ENDS, Tobacco and Marijuana Possession and Use

| Incident Type | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| ENDS Possession | N/A | N/A | 675 | 1,323 | 1,630 |
| ENDS Use | 697 | 2,160 | 2,048 | 1,506 | 1,672 |
| Tobacco Possession | 116 | 172 | 201 | 160 | 205 |
| Tobacco Use | 172 | 335 | 274 | 268 | 251 |
| Marijuana Possession | N/A | N/A | N/A | 35 | 823 |
| Marijuana Use | N/A | N/A | N/A | 226 | 456 |

Incidents by Grade

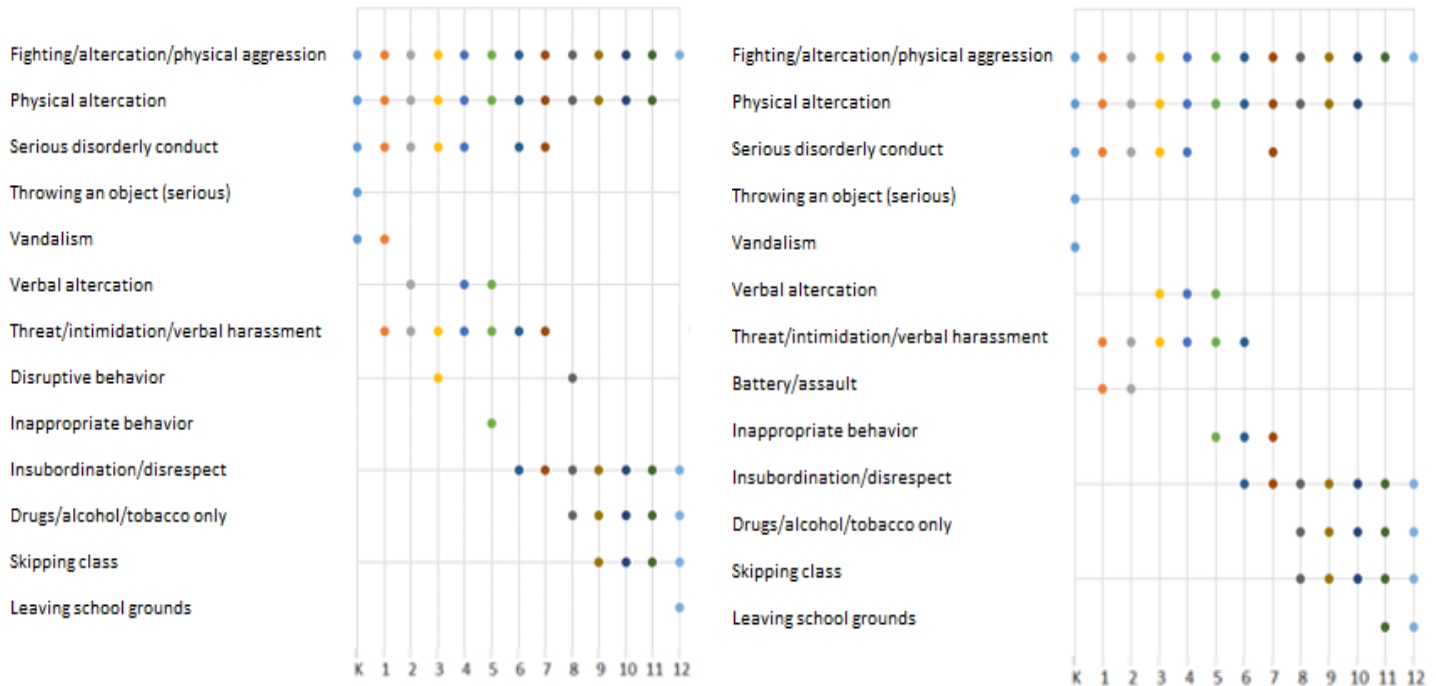
What are the most common behaviors/incidents that manifest themselves in a particular grade? How do they change across the grades? For this analysis, the CSDE identified the five most frequent incidents for each grade and then organized them by grade (see Figure 2). A brief definition for each incident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

Figure 2: Top Five Incidents by Grade, a Two-Year Comparison
2018-2019 **2022-2023**



Pre-and post-pandemic trends are similar. These data reveal that while some incidents like *Fighting/altercation/physical aggression* appear among the most frequent incidents in every grade, other incidents are more prevalent in certain grade ranges. For example, *throwing an object* occurs as a prevalent incident in Grade K only. As it did prior to the pandemic, *Insubordination/disrespect* appears among the most frequent incidents in the middle school years and remains prominent in every subsequent grade. *Skipping class* remains in all high school 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 2022-23, the rate increased slightly to 7.0 percent. Several student race/ethnic groups including Black/African Americans showed a decline from pre-pandemic rates; however Hispanic/Latino students, students of two or more races, and White students showed small increases. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders showed an increase of 2.9 percent; however, it should be noted that small student groups may show greater variability in rates (Table 4).

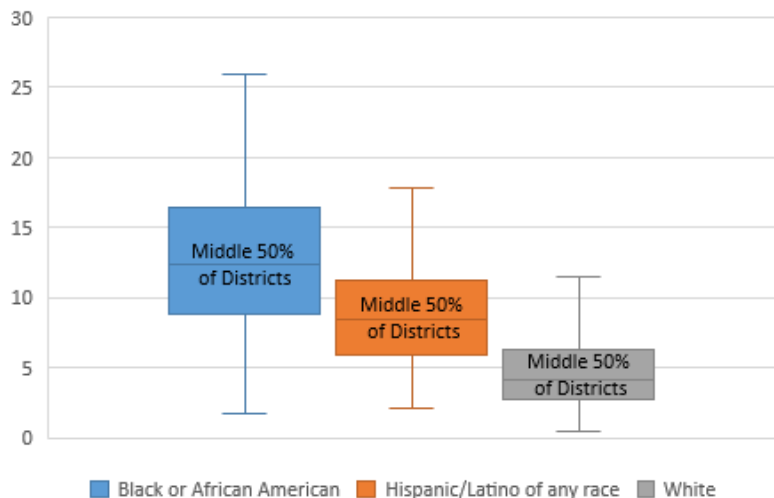
Both pre-and post-pandemic, the suspension rate of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students remains significantly greater than that of White students. Black/African American students are more than three times as likely as their White student peers, and Hispanic/Latino students are more than 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 7 Black/African American students and one out of 11 Hispanic/Latino students received the same sanction. Post-pandemic, one out of 23 White students, one out of 8 Black/African American students, and one out of 12 Hispanic/Latino students received at least one suspension/expulsion in 2022-23.

Table 4: Suspension Rates by Race/Ethnicity

| Race/Ethnicity | 2016-17 | | 2017-18 | | 2018-19 | | 2021-22 | | 2022-23 | |
|---|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 121 | 8.4 | 117 | 8.4 | 119 | 8.3 | 119 | 8.5 | 112 | 8.0 |
| Asian | 442 | 1.6 | 501 | 1.8 | 530 | 1.9 | 446 | 1.6 | 510 | 1.8 |
| Black or African American | 10,745 | 15.2 | 9,884 | 14.3 | 9,897 | 14.0 | 8,518 | 12.5 | 8,925 | 13.2 |
| Hispanic/Latino of any race | 12,710 | 9.7 | 12,819 | 9.4 | 13,214 | 9.2 | 13,574 | 8.6 | 15,462 | 9.5 |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | 36 | 6.8 | 32 | 5.8 | 34 | 5.7 | 46 | 8.5 | 47 | 8.6 |
| Two or More Races | 1,080 | 6.7 | 1,248 | 7.0 | 1,368 | 7.0 | 1,636 | 7.0 | 1,875 | 7.7 |
| White | 11,448 | 3.9 | 12,167 | 4.2 | 11,696 | 4.1 | 10,310 | 4.0 | 10,664 | 4.3 |
| Total | 36,582 | 6.7 | 36,768 | 6.8 | 36,858 | 6.7 | 34,649 | 6.5 | 37,595 | 7.0 |

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 in many districts across the state.

Figure 3: Distribution of 2022-2023 District-Level Suspension Rates by Race/Ethnicity



Males continue to be suspended at substantially higher rates than females (Table 5). The suspension rate for males matches the pre-pandemic rate, while that of females increased in 2022-23 to nearly match their pre-pandemic rate.

Table 5: Suspension Rates by Gender

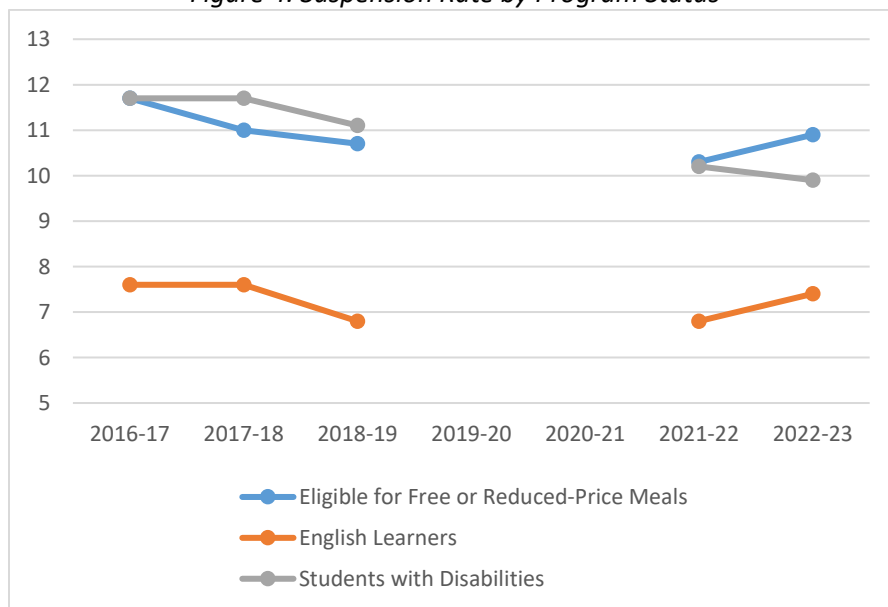
| Gender | 2016-17 | | 2017-18 | | 2018-19 | | 2021-22 | | 2022-23 | |
|--------|---------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|---------|-----|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Female | 11,373 | 4.3 | 11,356 | 4.4 | 11,638 | 4.4 | 12,156 | 4.7 | 13,119 | 5.1 |
| Male | 25,209 | 9.0 | 25,410 | 9.1 | 25,215 | 8.9 | 22,459 | 8.2 | 24,427 | 8.9 |

Suspension rates for students eligible for free or reduced-price meals (10.9 percent), students with disabilities (9.9 percent), and English learners (7.4 percent) are higher than the state average (7.0 percent). Suspension rates for Students with Disabilities continues to decline. Suspension rates for English learners and students eligible for free- or reduced-price meals were declining pre-pandemic; however, the rates are now above the 2018-19 rates (Table 6 and Figure 4).

Table 6: Suspension Rate by Program Status

| | 2016-17 | | 2017-18 | | 2018-19 | | 2021-22 | | 2022-23 | |
|--|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Meals | 25,863 | 11.7 | 25,585 | 11.0 | 26,223 | 10.7 | 24,049 | 10.3 | 26,013 | 10.9 |
| English Learners | 2,990 | 7.6 | 3,154 | 7.6 | 3,070 | 6.8 | 3,446 | 6.8 | 4,121 | 7.4 |
| Students with Disabilities | 10,127 | 11.7 | 10,442 | 11.7 | 10,551 | 11.1 | 10,145 | 10.2 | 10,125 | 9.9 |

Figure 4: Suspension Rate by Program Status



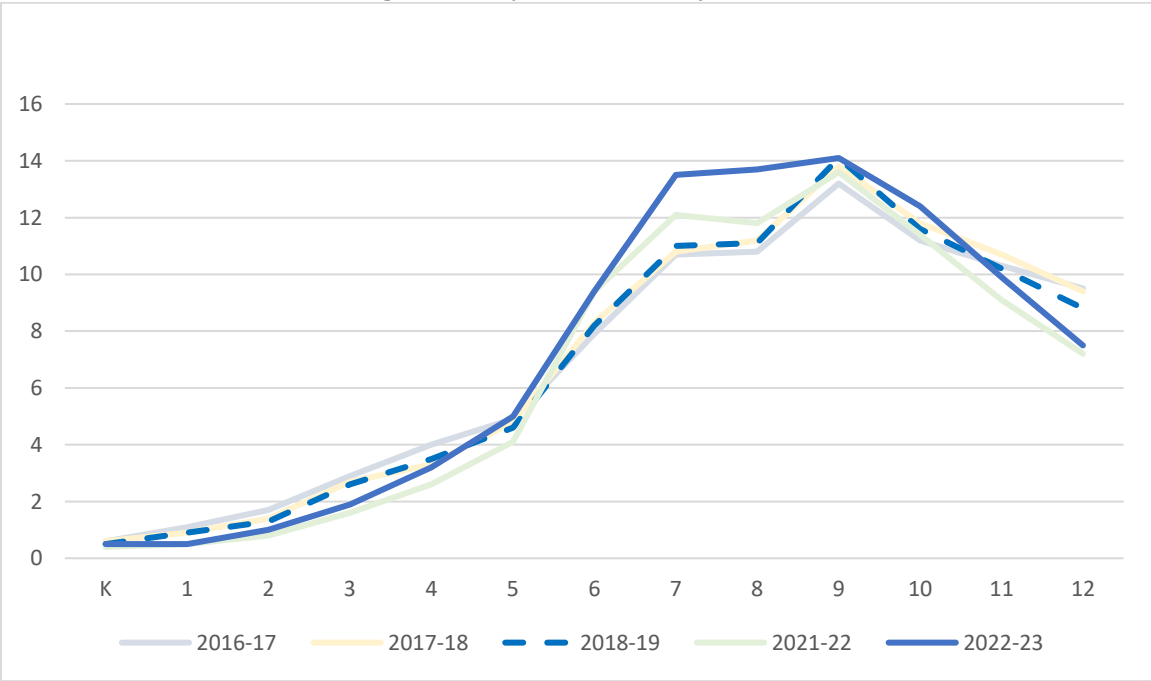
Analyses by grade (Table 7 and Figure 5) reveal that suspension rates increase gradually in the elementary grades and begin to spike in Grade 6. The highest suspension rates occur in Grade 9. The five-year trend indicates the suspension rate of 12th graders has an overall decrease despite a small uptick in 2022-23.

Table 7: Suspension Rates by Grade

| Grade | 2016-17 | | 2017-18 | | 2018-19 | | 2021-22 | | 2022-23 | |
|-------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|
| | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % | Count | % |
| K | 220 | 0.6 | 203 | 0.6 | 198 | 0.5 | 142 | 0.4 | 197 | 0.5 |
| 1 | 413 | 1.1 | 351 | 0.9 | 337 | 0.9 | 162 | 0.5 | 202 | 0.5 |
| 2 | 649 | 1.7 | 501 | 1.4 | 504 | 1.3 | 290 | 0.8 | 354 | 1.0 |
| 3 | 1,144 | 2.9 | 1,022 | 2.7 | 986 | 2.6 | 603 | 1.6 | 696 | 1.9 |
| 4 | 1,593 | 4.0 | 1,305 | 3.3 | 1,374 | 3.5 | 971 | 2.6 | 1,186 | 3.2 |
| 5 | 1,929 | 4.9 | 1,948 | 4.8 | 1,861 | 4.6 | 1,552 | 4.1 | 1,918 | 5.0 |
| 6 | 3,195 | 7.9 | 3,327 | 8.3 | 3,387 | 8.2 | 3,599 | 9.4 | 3,600 | 9.4 |
| 7 | 4,354 | 10.7 | 4,371 | 10.8 | 4,494 | 11.0 | 4,815 | 12.1 | 5,225 | 13.5 |
| 8 | 4,484 | 10.8 | 4,589 | 11.2 | 4,598 | 11.1 | 4,824 | 11.8 | 5,533 | 13.7 |
| 9 | 5,735 | 13.2 | 6,023 | 13.8 | 6,245 | 14.1 | 6,226 | 13.6 | 6,220 | 14.1 |
| 10 | 4,679 | 11.2 | 4,856 | 11.8 | 4,950 | 11.6 | 4,772 | 11.4 | 5,384 | 12.4 |
| 11 | 4,195 | 10.3 | 4,330 | 10.7 | 4,170 | 10.2 | 3,608 | 9.1 | 3,935 | 9.9 |
| 12 | 3,987 | 9.5 | 3,916 | 9.4 | 3,746 | 8.8 | 3,065 | 7.2 | 3,139 | 7.5 |

Figure 5 is a graphical representation of Table 7. Note the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic data are represented in bold for easier identification. Suspension rates in middle school grades in 2022-23 are substantially greater than their pre-pandemic levels.

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 ISS, OSS or EXP during the school year. This metric represents 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 is 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 ≥ 15 percent in 2 recent years.
- Tier 3 - Consistently High Disproportionality: Not in Tier 4 AND either Black or Hispanic Relative Risk Index (RRI) ≥ 3 in 2 recent years.
- Tier 2 - Consistently Medium Disproportionality: Not in Tiers 4 or 3 AND either Black or Hispanic RRI ≥ 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. The CSDE will be using the 2022-23 tiers 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 pre-K through Grade 2 has evidenced a steep decline (Tables 8 and 9), especially with the passage of [Public Act No. 15-96](#), *An Act Concerning 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 pre-K through Grade 2 unless the incident is of a violent or sexual nature that endangers persons.²

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 under 1,300 in 2022-23 post-pandemic, though there was increase from 2021-22 (Table 8).

² 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.

Table 8: Total Number of Sanctions (Pre-K through Grade 2) – *not a student count*

| Year | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|------|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| ISS | 1,911 | 1,477 | 1,152 | 1,032 | 395 | 560 |
| OSS | 1,327 | 983 | 791 | 894 | 599 | 738 |
| EXP | * ³ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | * |

Correspondingly, the total number of students (unduplicated count) in Grades PK-2 who received at least one suspension or expulsion has also declined significantly from 1,046 in 2018-19 to less than 800 in 2022-23 (Table 9) which is about half of one percent of all students in Grades PK-2, though there was an increase from 2021-22. 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 (Pre-K through Grade 2) by Grade

| | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Pre-K | 9 | * | 7 | 7 | * | * |
| K | 314 | 220 | 203 | 198 | 142 | 197 |
| Grade 1 | 543 | 413 | 351 | 337 | 162 | 202 |
| Grade 2 | 789 | 649 | 501 | 504 | 290 | 354 |

When disaggregated by race/ethnicity, the number of students in pre-K through Grade 2 receiving at least one suspension or expulsion has declined within all student race/ethnicity groups from pre-pandemic levels, though there was an increase from 2021-22 (Table 10).

Table 10: Number of Students Suspended/Expelled (Pre-K through Grade 2) by Race/Ethnicity

| | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| American Indian or Alaska Native | * | * | * | 0 | * |
| Asian | 10 | 12 | 10 | * | 8 |
| Black or African American | 481 | 354 | 345 | 151 | 182 |
| Hispanic/Latino of any race | 446 | 349 | 330 | 235 | 304 |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | * | * | * | * | * |
| Two or More Races | 64 | 48 | 57 | 37 | 47 |
| White | 292 | 291 | 302 | 169 | 212 |

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

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 22,000 students or 58.5 percent) committed only one incident during the 2022-23 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 | | 2022-23 | |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| | Percentage of Students | Percentage of Students | Percentage of Students | Percentage of Students | Percentage of Students | Percentage of Students | Percentage of Students | |
| Only one incident | 58.0 | 58.2 | 59.1 | 58.5 | | | | |
| Two to four incidents | 31.8 | 31.9 | 31.9 | 31.9 | | | | |
| Five to nine incidents | 8.0 | 7.9 | 7.4 | 7.5 | | | | |
| Ten or more incidents | 2.1 | 2.0 | 1.5 | 2.0 | | | | |

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 2022-23, 48.4 percent of Black/African American and 49.0 percent of Hispanic/Latino students who received a suspension/expulsion were involved in two or more incidents as compared to 36.7 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

| | Student Count → | American Indian or Alaska Native | Asian | Black or African American | Hispanic/Latino of any race | Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | Two or More Races | White | Total |
|--|-----------------|----------------------------------|-------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---|-------------------|-------|-------|
| | | 2017-18 | 1 | 53.8 | 75.1 | 51.8 | 54.9 | 63.2 | 60.8 |
| | 2 thru 4 | * | 21.6 | 35.3 | 33.3 | * | 30.9 | 27.9 | 31.8 |
| | 5 thru 9 | * | * | 10.1 | 9.2 | * | 6.2 | 5.6 | 8.0 |

| | | American Indian or Alaska Native | Asian | Black or African American | Hispanic/Latino of any race | Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | Two or More Races | White | Total | |
|---------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---|-------------------|--------|--------|------|
| | 10 plus | * | * | 2.8 | 2.5 | 0 | 2.1 | 1.2 | 2.1 | |
| 2018-19 | Student Count → | 118 | 532 | 9,875 | 13,217 | 35 | 1,396 | 11,685 | 36,858 | |
| | % with Incident Count | 1 | 61.0 | 69.9 | 53.8 | 55 | 62.9 | 56.9 | 65.2 | 58.2 |
| | | 2 thru 4 | 30.5 | 26.5 | 34.7 | 33.9 | 28.6 | 31.4 | 27.8 | 31.9 |
| | | 5 thru 9 | 7.6 | 2.4 | 9.1 | 8.7 | 8.6 | 10.0 | 5.8 | 7.9 |
| | | 10 plus | 0.8 | 1.1 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 0 | 1.6 | 1.1 | 2.0 |
| 2021-22 | Student Count → | 119 | 446 | 8,518 | 13,574 | 46 | 1,636 | 10,310 | 34,649 | |
| | % with Incident Count | 1 | 55.6 | 71.9 | 54.5 | 57.4 | 60.9 | 55.2 | 65.5 | 59.1 |
| | | 2 thru 4 | 35.9 | 24.4 | 35.3 | 32.9 | 28.3 | 34.6 | 27.8 | 31.9 |
| | | 5 thru 9 | * | * | 8.4 | 8 | * | 7.9 | 5.7 | 7.4 |
| | | 10 plus | * | * | 1.8 | 1.7 | * | 2.3 | 1 | 1.5 |
| 2022-23 | Student Count → | 111 | 513 | 8,933 | 15,439 | 48 | 1,900 | 10,693 | 37,637 | |
| | % with Incident Count | 1 | 64.9 | 74.1 | 56.1 | 64.7 | 58.7 | 64.7 | 66.8 | 63.5 |
| | | 2 thru 4 | 25.2 | 22.0 | 37.2 | 37.0 | * | 38.0 | 29.5 | 34.7 |
| | | 5 thru 9 | * | * | 8.8 | 9.5 | * | 10.5 | 5.8 | 8.2 |
| | | 10 plus | * | * | 2.4 | 2.6 | 0.0 | 2.9 | 1.4 | 2.2 |

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 in Length
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 ends prior to the other participant retaliating.

Among students who were reported with a single fighting/altercation/physical aggression incident during 2022-23 and where this was their only incident, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students received an OSS or EXP at rates of 70.5 and 70.8 percent respectively, while the rate for White students is significantly lower at 47.0 percent (Table 13).

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

| | 2017-18 | | | 2018-19 | | | 2021-22 | | | 2022-23 | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|------|-----------------|----------------------------------|------|-----------------|----------------------------------|------|-----------------|----------------------------------|------|
| | Total Incidents | Incidents Resulting in OSS/EXP # | % | 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 | 404 | 285 | 70.5 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 1,417 | 1,061 | 74.9 | 1,591 | 796 | 50.0 | 560 | 384 | 68.6 | 493 | 349 | 70.8 |
| White | 729 | 511 | 70.1 | 1,022 | 247 | 24.1 | 336 | 152 | 45.2 | 332 | 156 | 47.0 |
| Total | 3,361 | 2,474 | 73.6 | 3,946 | 1,751 | 44.4 | 1,388 | 889 | 64.0 | 1,229 | 790 | 64.3 |

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, 95.0 percent of Black/African American students and 94.9 percent of Hispanic/Latino students received an OSS, or an EXP, as compared to 90.0 percent of White students.

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

| | 2017-18 | | | 2018-19 | | | 2021-22 | | | 2022-23 | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----|-----|-----------------|----|------|-----------------|-----|------|-----------------|-----|------|
| | Total Incidents | # | % | Total Incidents | # | % | Total Incidents | # | % | Total Incidents | # | % |
| Black/African American | 36 | 36 | 100 | 23 | 21 | 91.3 | 40 | 37 | 92.5 | 40 | 38 | 95.0 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 71 | 71 | 100 | 38 | 34 | 89.5 | 97 | 92 | 94.8 | 78 | 74 | 94.9 |
| White | 68 | 68 | 100 | 42 | 32 | 76.2 | 62 | 55 | 88.7 | 50 | 45 | 90.0 |
| Total | 175 | 175 | 100 | 103 | 87 | 84.5 | 199 | 184 | 92.5 | 168 | 157 | 93.4 |

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, in 2022-23 the disparity still exists but is decreasing with the rates of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students receiving these sanctions (12.9 and 5.3 percent less respectively), and the rate of White students decreasing by 5.5 percent.

Table 15: Sexual Harassment Incidents Resulting in OSS/EXP

| | 2017-18 | | | 2018-19 | | | 2021-22 | | | 2022-23 | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|-----|------|-----------------|-----|------|-----------------|-----|------|-----------------|----|------|
| | Total Incidents | # | % | Total Incidents | # | % | Total Incidents | # | % | Total Incidents | # | % |
| Black/African American | 80 | 54 | 67.5 | 70 | 40 | 57.1 | 57 | 34 | 59.6 | 43 | 19 | 44.2 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 106 | 71 | 67.0 | 75 | 30 | 40.0 | 88 | 43 | 48.7 | 95 | 33 | 34.7 |
| White | 103 | 67 | 65.0 | 134 | 52 | 38.8 | 105 | 35 | 33.3 | 110 | 29 | 26.4 |
| Total | 289 | 192 | 66.4 | 265 | 111 | 41.9 | 250 | 112 | 44.8 | 248 | 81 | 33.7 |

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).

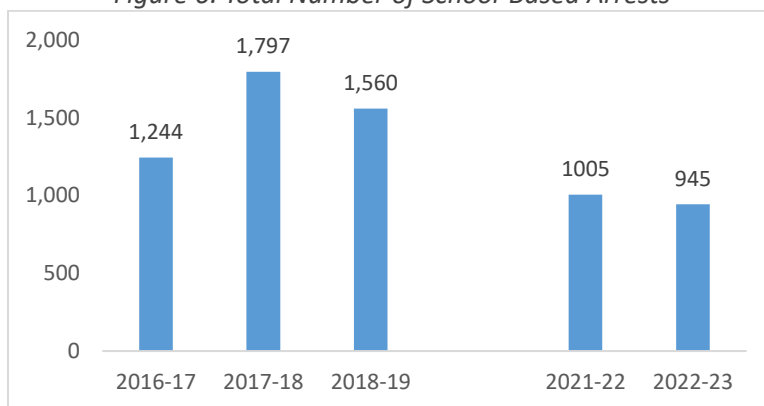
Table 16: School Policy Violation Incidents Resulting in OSS/EXP

| | 2017-18 | | | 2018-19 | | | 2021-22 | | | 2022-23 | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|------|-----------------|---------------------------------|------|-----------------|---------------------------------|------|-----------------|---------------------------------|------|
| | Total Incidents | Incidents Resulting in OSS/ EXP | | 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 | 210 | 101 | 48.1 |
| Hispanic/Latino | 1,329 | 362 | 27.2 | 1,240 | 343 | 27.7 | 301 | 129 | 42.9 | 396 | 167 | 42.2 |
| White | 1,446 | 290 | 20.1 | 1,349 | 263 | 19.5 | 390 | 109 | 27.9 | 431 | 104 | 24.1 |
| Total | 3,761 | 922 | 24.5 | 3,518 | 931 | 26.5 | 881 | 336 | 38.1 | 1037 | 372 | 35.9 |

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 declining (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Total Number of School-Based Arrests



Over the past four years incidents involving Fighting and Battery continue to be the most common reason for a school-based arrest (Table 17).

Table 17: Incident Categories for School-Based Arrests

| Incident Categories for School-Based Arrests | 2017-18 Count | 2018-19 Count | 2021-22 Count | 2022-23 Count |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Fighting and Battery | 598 | 515 | 408 | 363 |
| Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco | 319 | 403 | 88 | 115 |
| Physical and Verbal Confrontation | 240 | 215 | 167 | 164 |
| Personally Threatening Behavior | 204 | 134 | 80 | 77 |
| School Policy Violations | 151 | 84 | 49 | 55 |
| Weapons | 99 | 71 | 135 | 114 |
| Violent Crimes Against Persons | 65 | 48 | 25 | 22 |
| Theft Related Behaviors | 60 | 49 | 19 | 15 |
| Property Damage | 32 | 14 | 26 | 14 |
| Sexually Related Behavior | 29 | 27 | 8 | 6 |
| Total | 1,797 | 1,560 | 1,005 | 945 |

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 (student counts)

| Race/Ethnicity | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| Black or African American | 419 | 390 | 270 | 242 |
| Hispanic/Latino of any race | 577 | 601 | 421 | 394 |
| White | 554 | 468 | 217 | 188 |
| Male | 1,133 | 1,067 | 649 | 539 |
| Female | 522 | 493 | 313 | 326 |
| TOTAL | 1,655 | 1,560 | 962 | 865 |

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

A Statewide Systems Approach to Turning the Curve

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 underserved 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. However, 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 and the contributing factors that result in 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 data, evidence-based practices, and wraparound supports.

The CSDE developed the [Leveraging Multi-Tiered Systems Of Support \(MTSS\) To Enhance Educational Leadership](#) document to support leadership teams with systems work. The document provides context for the value and relevance of the framework. Additionally, specific actionable examples and resources are provided so that the document may serve as a resource for both pre-service and in-service school leaders in leveraging the MTSS framework to organize and enhance effectiveness in supporting student learning. MTSS emphasizes the central values of equity, inclusion, collaboration, and family and community partnership throughout all aspects of implementation. These values serve as a primary filter for decision-making and action planning at all levels of implementation.

The CSDE Turnaround Office provided professional training for districts on the Hexagon Tool developed by the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN). The tool is designed to support decision-making related to the selection and adoption of new practices, interventions, or programs. The tool supports administrators and leadership teams as they consider the capacity, fit, need, evidence, usability, and available supports for implementation.

Additionally, the CSDE partnered with the [Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center](#) (CPAC), a resource for families of children with disabilities, and the [Center for Children's Advocacy](#) (Spring, 2023) to develop and present a three-part webinar series. This series focuses on ways to reduce suspension and expulsion in schools for students with disabilities and students of color. The presenters use current state and federal law and recent state discipline data. The intent is to help everyone involved gain an understanding of what can be done to reduce exclusionary school discipline experienced by Connecticut's students with disabilities and students of color.

Lastly, the CSDE worked closely with the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee's (JJPOC) subcommittee for Suspensions and Expulsions. Section 8 of Public Act No. 21-174 established this committee to study the effects of and possible alternatives to suspensions and expulsions of students in any grade and tasked the committee with completing a report concerning the impact of and alternatives to suspension and expulsion of students in preschool through second grade. The committee meets bi-monthly. The CSDE has presented the following:

- Updated data on exclusionary discipline for students in pre-K through second grade to identify school districts with high rates of exclusionary discipline.
- An overview of the CSDE training and the work of the Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative.
- A review of the current professional development for school personnel.

State Board of Education Position Statement on Reducing Disproportionality in Suspensions and Expulsions

The position statement on reducing disproportionality in suspensions and expulsions reflects the Connecticut State Board of Education's (SBE) beliefs and values concerning school discipline. Based on guiding principles, the SBE has translated those beliefs and values into specific recommendations for school leaders, educators, students, families, and policymakers at various levels. 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 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. The CSDE continues to share the document with districts and stakeholders to inform their decision-making to build a comprehensive learning system that explicitly supports the reduction of disproportionality in suspensions and expulsions.

Focus on Preschool and Kindergarten to Grade Two

An out-of-school suspension for students in Kindergarten to Grade 2 is only appropriate based on evidence that the student's conduct on school grounds is of a violent or sexual nature that endangers persons (C.G.S. Section 10-233c). In addition, the CSDE has clarified the requirements under C.G.S. Section 10-233I, that preschool program providers, which include school districts that provide such programs, may not impose an out-of-school suspension on preschool students. The CSDE is developing sessions, coaching, and technical assistance for a continuum of supports to address behavioral concerns, including intensive interventions for pre-K to Grade 2. The impact is to have preventative measures for over-identifying students with disabilities and students of color. The sessions are designed to help districts with data trends indicating a more than typical use of suspensions for children in grades pre-K to Grade 2 to change that trajectory. In addition, these sessions will help districts examine data related to suspensions in a manner that assists with formulating useful reflection regarding practices. Topics will include data analysis, Connecticut law, systems of supports, developmental-prosocial approaches, and strategic planning.

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](#)

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 pre-K to Grade 2 for OSS and EXP. Supports include:
 - Closer examination of individual student’s issues;
 - Use of 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 were 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 provide training opportunities on the 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

Connecticut State Department of Education DESSA Impact

Devereux Student Strength Assessment (DESSA)- The K-12 DESSA system is a strength-based social-emotional tool that builds students' self-efficacy and helps students persevere when facing challenges. The DESSA System helps educators identify and prioritize knowledge and skills that lay the foundation for social development, emotional agility, and cognitive flexibility, including academic growth and goal setting necessary for college and career readiness and the portrait of a graduate.

Public Act 21-2: An Act Concerning Provisions Related To Revenue And Other Items To Implement The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2023, Sec. 386. Section 4 of Public Act 21-95 is repealed, and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (Effective July 1, 2021): (a) For the school year commencing July 1, 2021, and each school year thereafter, the Department of Education may provide to and assist local and regional boards of education in administering a social-emotional learning assessment to students pursuant to subsection (b) of this section. (b) For the school year commencing July 1, 2021, and each school year thereafter, a local or regional board of education may administer a social-emotional learning assessment to students. A board may use (1) the social-emotional learning assessment provided by the Department of Education pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, or (2) another social-emotional learning assessment or mental health and resiliency screening.

The DESSA System provides data to strengthen social-emotional skills and informs instruction for students who need additional support. The CSDE is collecting student-level data from the DESSA System. The CSDE uses the information to identify and provide specific supports and resources to the participating districts. The CSDE, districts, and schools can collect, analyze, and use the data to inform intervention and fidelity of implementation, including progress monitoring. This frequently and consistently evaluates student data to ensure progress toward a predetermined goal. These frequent observations inform instructional decisions and signal if a student needs additional support. Continuing to prioritize supports for students' social-emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs is vital for students to re-engage with school after the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The DESSA helps educators better understand and support students to feel connected to school, confident, successful, and engaged in learning.

The DESSA System consists of four supporting tools:

1. The **DESSA-mini** is an 8-item universal screener that provides a snapshot of each student’s overall social and emotional competence.
2. The **DESSA-Supplement** is a follow-up assessment typically completed for students who need additional SEL instruction on the DESSA-mini. It provides a more detailed understanding of each student’s unique social-emotional strengths and opportunities for growth in areas such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.
3. **DESSA High School-Student Self-Report (HS-SSR)** engages students in reflecting on their own social and emotional strengths and empowers them to steer their learning in a way that aligns with their needs and preferences. The HS-SSR is a student self-rating that delivers real-time results and immediate strategies to incorporate student voice and choice in SEL, which significantly impacts learner engagement, motivation, and achievement.
4. A tool to support educators- **Social and Emotional Reflection and Training (EdSERT)** is a comprehensive set of research-based resources that provides educators with professional development tools, self-reflective assessment, personal development plans, self-directed strategies, and teaching practices.

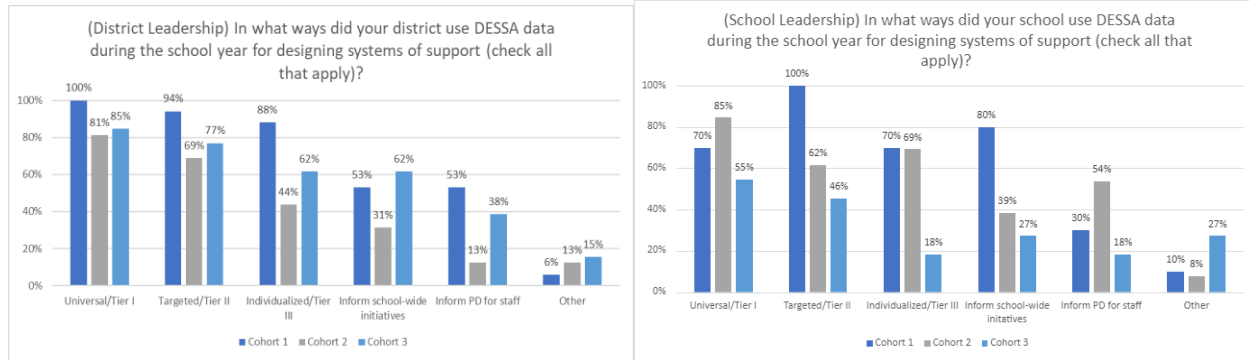
The CSDE has 89 districts participating in the initiative, including approved Special Education Private Schools, Charter Schools, Magnets, Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs) and Alliances Districts, and Regional School Districts. Also, two documents were disseminated statewide to provide an overview of the work.

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

DESSA Impact Information

- Majority of district leaders agreed or strongly agreed that the initiative has a positive impact on the students in their district.
 - Cohort 1: 88%
 - Cohort 2: 80%
 - Cohort 3: 84%
- Leaders highlighted
 - Improvements in district and school culture
 - Helpful in identifying a focus and informing instruction for individual students, groups of students, and at school level
 - Useful in informing training for staff
- Students completing the DESSA System
 - A total of 125,455 students had one or more DESSA ratings in SY2022-23
 - The CSDE was able to identify the grade level that needed the most instruction was middle schoolers.
 - Students had a 2 percent significant positive growth rate
 - Students had a 23 percent considerable positive growth rate
 - Percentage of students in ‘Strength’ increased from fall to spring for all grades.

Findings from Spring 2023 District and School Implementation



The CSDE developed a [Social-Emotional Learning Hub](#), that is a place where Connecticut educators and families can find on-demand resources made available to inform, educate, and highlight the best resources to develop compassionate learning spaces, anytime, anywhere that provide for social and emotional well-being. SEL integration is a vital component in K-12 education and contributes to the whole-child success across the life span. Connecticut public schools have scaled up their attention to SEL work for students and adults while fostering a positive school ethos to support our students in developing these essential skills to reach their fullest potential, and flourish and thrive.

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 K-12](#) (Habits K-12). The Habits represent the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that form an essential blueprint for social-emotional habits and academic success. The purpose of this publication 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 SBE approved the Habits K-12 on March 1, 2023.

This year, the CSDE developed three briefs for families, leaders, and educators on the purpose, importance and benefits of the Habits, and what role each stakeholder plays. In January 2024, the CSDE provided two professional development webinars on the Habits and the above resources for districts.

Behavioral Health Pilot

Recognizing the urgent need for more behavioral and mental health supports in all K-12 systems across Connecticut, the CSDE launched a pilot involving seven (7) high-need districts, each representing a wide range of demographics, school settings, and counties. Funding is used to conduct a district-level School Mental Health Quality Assessment (SMHQA) to better understand the comprehensiveness of schools' mental health systems, examine the efficacy of existing programs, and identify specific priority areas for improvement. The SMHQA is part of the School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation (SHAPE) System. It includes a full continuum

of supports for the well-being of students, families, and the school community. It is designed to document the mental health system components within each district, assess the comprehensiveness of those systems, prioritize quality improvement efforts, and track improvements over time.

The SMHQA examines the efficacy of districts' behavioral and mental health systems by analyzing current and existing programming and human and fiscal capital. It will also help to determine the appropriate, scalable interventions, which may include increased staffing and service provision; opportunities for training, professional development, technical assistance, and coaching; partnerships with mental health providers; and streamlined and shortened referral processes. These combined efforts will ensure students' emotional well-being, which can lead to consistent school attendance, engagement, and academic success. All relevant district staff will receive adequate training and demonstrate increased knowledge of content and referral processes and systems. This will help reduce the number of student visits to the emergency department and the rates of exclusionary discipline and absenteeism.

Each district is assigned a liaison from the Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI) to consult with school officials and staff, identify team members, and help complete an SMHQA district-level assessment. CHDI is working with the Connecticut COVID-19 Education Research Collaborative (CCREC) to evaluate key findings and identify priority areas for improvement. These findings are shared with district leaders and used to recommend appropriate interventions. Each district develops a customized implementation plan that includes progress monitoring and outcomes using a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) model. This may include: consultation to integrate a continuum of supports for positive school climate and social-emotional and behavioral supports; training for school staff in trauma-informed school mental health and staff wellness; training and technical assistance on selection and implementation of screening/early identification tools for social-emotional learning, suicide prevention, mental health, and trauma; increased integration and utilization of existing community-based services into the MTSS (e.g., community mental health affiliates, Mobile Crisis Intervention Services, Youth Service Bureaus, care coordination, wraparound services, family engagement, peer support); and consultation on policy review and modifications for policies related to behavioral health.

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. LEAP is a relational home visit model and a targeted (Tier II) student intervention that serves as part of a comprehensive system of support for families whose students are struggling with consistent attendance. Its mission is to build trusting relationships with families to ultimately positively impact students' engagement and attendance. Students at-risk of or already chronically absent and

disengaged from school are identified for home visits by the school and community partners. This [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.

Ongoing and Completed- Summary:

- In the Summer of 2021, a Statewide Behavioral Health Landscape Scan was conducted to provide the 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 the 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. The 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.
- A Statewide [Social-Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Landscape Scan](#) was conducted 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.
- Continued 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 through Grade 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.
- Implemented the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) that is providing targeted support to 14 districts through home visits which has demonstrated improved attendance and engagement. Because LEAP is built on trusting relationships between families and home visitors who serve as the connector to service and help resolve barriers to attendance and other life stressors, there is a significant positive impact on LEAP families' and students' social and emotional wellness. The qualitative portion of the CCERC evaluation of LEAP found that families (and home visitors) both noted

the following main benefits of LEAP: Improved family-school relationships; Increased feelings of belonging; Increased access to resources (for families); Increased expectations of accountability; and, Greater gratitude and appreciation.

Focus on Positive School Climate

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) believes that schools must create healthy learning communities that are physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe. Positive school climates that are affirming, equitable, and inclusive require attention to the physical environment, belonging and connection rituals, and safety and wellness programming. We know that 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.

The CSDE is taking a multidisciplinary, and comprehensive approach to enhancing positive school climate support to districts. Our approach is based on a philosophy of supporting districts in selecting strategies that fit the context of their needs. We are thinking critically about how to do this work in an aligned and comprehensive manner, and we have been working internally to identify those projects, supports, and initiatives that align. Over the last school year, climate and culture efforts have included:

- LEA District Training and Support:
 - Attendance and Engagement [Talk Tuesday Presentation](#): A co-facilitated session with East Windsor on developing systems to support and create positive school environments.
 - Performance Matters Conference session - [Understanding Needs, Fit, and Capacity to Impact School Climate](#): This session provided various district and school perspectives on connecting school climate efforts with positive student outcomes.
 - CPAC's Transition Tuesday Webinar – A session specifically for transition-aged families around best practices for belonging, and accessing additional support was offered through a partnership with CPAC.
 - New England School Nurse Conference breakout – Opportunity to share with participants school climate efforts, and the role of the school nurse in legislative mandates around climate and bullying.
 - CT School Counselor Association Conference presentation – A session on foundational elements of school climate and the role of the school counselor.
 - DPH's - Connecticut Medical Home Initiative (CMHI) presentation – To build capacity of DPH's medical home providers in assisting the families they support a presentation was provided to review school climate best practices and legislation with their partners and workforce.

- Internal CPAC staff development – To build capacity of CPAC staff in assisting the families they support a presentation was provided to review school climate best practices and legislation with their staff.
- CSDE Collaborative Projects:
 - CSDE School Climate Consultant has begun joining Civil Rights compliance on-site reviews as a team member conducting interviews with leadership, educators, and students (i.e., regular, special education and English learners). This collaboration provides an invaluable opportunity to get students’ perspectives about their school experiences to inform the guidance and supports that the CSDE Division of School Health, Nutrition and Family Services provides to school district leadership, and the feedback that is given to CSDE colleagues.
 - Inclusion of the CSDE School Climate Consultant in the Talent Office Increasing Educator Diversity (IED) efforts. Understanding how a school climate impacts attracting and maintaining a diverse workforce is integral to this project.

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.
- CSDE leadership serves as a Tri-Chair and content area experts provided guidance and content expertise to the legislative efforts of the Connecticut Social-Emotional Learning and School Climate Collaborative.
- Collaborated internally within CSDE and with 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 the 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 (CCA), the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative (SCAC), and the Center for School Safety and Crisis Preparation

Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative

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 Family Guides are designed to help families better understand the laws and policies on school suspensions and expulsions. The Family 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](#)

In 2023, the Collaborative was codified into law. Public Act 23-167 requires the Commissioner of Education to establish a working group to study current school discipline practices, including discipline practices that lead to students becoming justice-involved. The members of such working group represent students, educators, community members, experts in child welfare and development, mental health care providers, and experts in restorative practices. By July 1, 2024, the Collaborative will submit a report to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly regarding the results of the study and any recommendations for school discipline reform. Additionally, the Collaborative will develop strategies to reduce out-of-school suspensions and expulsions of students in grades preschool to two. Also, the Collaborative will be providing evidence-based and

developmentally appropriate definitions and examples of conduct that are of a violent or sexual nature, in an effort to reduce the identification of such conduct in assessing the appropriateness of an out-of-school suspension of a student in grades preschool to two.

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, professional learning series are provided 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 schoolwide.

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.
- Distributed family guides to the juvenile justice community and stakeholders to ensure 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. Below are areas upon which the CSDE is concentrating on.

Connecticut State Department of Education Evidence-Based Practice Guides

Continued professional learning from Tiers 1 and 2 and added individualized support and targeted professional learning coaching sessions and technical assistance (TA). A continuum of evidence-based practices has been developed to ensure students and staff are proactively and effectively provided with appropriate levels of intervention and support. The continuum of evidence-based practices involves providing high-quality, differentiated instruction to all students to address academic, social-emotional, and behavioral (SEB) skills (Tier 1). Valid and reliable screening measures are used to monitor the academic and SEB progress of all students, as well as to identify students in need of more support. If needed, evidence-based small group instruction is provided for at-risk students (Tier 2) based on screening results and other diagnostic measures. Valid and reliable progress monitoring measures are utilized more frequently to evaluate progress. More individualized supports are provided for high-risk students who do not demonstrate adequate progress with Tier 2 supports (Tier 3). Throughout the MTSS process, decision-making rules are utilized to guide data-based evaluation of the success of the framework at both student and systems levels, as well as to guide adaptations to supports as appropriate. The CSDE Evidence-Based Practice Guides are intended to inform school and district decision-making regarding instructional and student support programming and optimize local, state, and federal school improvement funds.

Connecticut's System of Supports Model for Disproportionate Suspension Rate

Schools across the United States and in Connecticut often report higher suspensions, expulsions, and other punitive consequences for certain groups of students. These sessions will explore these data and lead participants through analyzing their own data and creating strategies to respond.

The CSDE and SERC provide a Community of Practice to address the disproportionate suspension rate. The CSDE identifies districts to monitor progress, share practices and challenges based on assessment information, and request that they review their policies, procedures, and practices related to disproportionality. The goal is to plan, coordinate, train, develop topical sessions, and facilitate data analysis and action planning protocol. Schools across the United States and in Connecticut often report higher suspensions, expulsions, and other punitive consequences for certain groups of students.

Additionally, the CSDE has developed [seven sessions called an Equity Series](#). Decisions regarding the appropriate use of discipline are multifaceted and must take into account both the context in which the challenging behavior occurs and the many individual, cultural, social, developmental, and environmental factors that may play a part when determining a course of action. School administrators should be mindful of decision rules on school discipline and the loss of instructional time. Black and Hispanic students are especially vulnerable to being excluded from school as a result of implicit bias. Implicit bias refers to attitudes, assumptions, or stereotypes that affect one's understanding, actions, and decisions without conscious knowledge. A wealth of research

demonstrates that the broad disciplinary category of school policy violations, including defiance, disrespect, and disruption, are more sensitive to cultural misinterpretation and unconscious bias.

Equity Series Program Titles- specifically addressing disproportionate suspension rate

- Disproportionality in school discipline.
- The impact of childhood trauma on students of color.
- Wired from birth-executive functioning: what does race and culture have to do with it?
- Building a culture- relationship building and recognizing behaviors.
- Using the cultural compass to teach about race in middle and high school.
- Implicit Bias: using a developmental approach to talk about race.
- Engaging families across race, culture, and language: evidence-based practice to increase student achievement.

Completed and Ongoing Actions:

- Aligning/Integrating Practices Using MTSS Framework and a Review of the Hexagon Tool.
- Clustering Data to Determine Behavioral Strategies Priorities for Student Success.
- Using Protocols to Determine Effective Behavior Supports for Student Success.
- Training for districts on ten 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. This 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 2022-23 Suspension/Expulsion Data

The CSDE groups 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. This metric represents 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 ≥ 15 percent in 2 recent years.
- **Tier 3** - Consistently High Disproportionality: Not in Tier 4 AND either Black or Hispanic Relative Risk Index (RRI) ≥ 3 in 2 recent years.
- **Tier 2** - Consistently Medium Disproportionality: Not in Tiers 4 or 3 AND either Black or Hispanic RRI ≥ 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 ≥ 15 percent in 2 recent years.

| District Code | District Name |
|---------------|---|
| 2440014 | Area Cooperative Educational Services |
| 2970013 | Capital Preparatory Harbor School District |
| 9000016 | Connecticut Technical Education and Career System |
| 0370011 | Derby School District |
| 0470011 | East Windsor School District |
| 0490011 | Enfield School District |
| 0590011 | Groton School District |
| 2650013 | Interdistrict School for Arts and Comm District |
| 0690011 | Killingly School District |
| 0830011 | Middletown School District |
| 9010022 | Norwich Free Academy District |
| 1040011 | Norwich School District |
| 1100011 | Plainville School District |
| 1130011 | Portland School District |
| 2080012 | Regional School District 08 |
| 9020022 | The Gilbert School District |
| 1430011 | Torrington School District |
| 1510011 | Waterbury School District |
| 1630011 | Windham School District |

Tier 3

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

| District Code | District Name |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| 0040011 | Avon School District |
| 0070011 | Berlin School District |
| 2410014 | Capitol Region Education Council |
| 0510011 | Fairfield School District |
| 0560011 | Granby School District |
| 0570011 | Greenwich School District |
| 0620011 | Hamden School District |
| 1030011 | Norwalk School District |
| 1280011 | Simsbury School District |
| 1290011 | Somers School District |
| 1320011 | South Windsor School District |
| 1350011 | Stamford School District |
| 1380011 | Stratford School District |
| 1390011 | Suffield School District |
| 1520011 | Waterford School District |
| 1550011 | West Hartford School District |
| 1580011 | Westport School District |

Tier 2

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

| District Code | District Name |
|---------------|--|
| 2850013 | Achievement First Bridgeport Academy District |
| 2880013 | Achievement First Hartford Academy District |
| 0020011 | Ansonia School District |
| 0110011 | Bloomfield School District |
| 2950013 | Booker T. Washington Academy District |
| 0140011 | Branford School District |
| 0170011 | Bristol School District |
| 0180011 | Brookfield School District |
| 0330011 | Cromwell School District |
| 0340011 | Danbury School District |
| 0430011 | East Hartford School District |
| 0440011 | East Haven School District |
| 0520011 | Farmington School District |
| 0540011 | Glastonbury School District |
| 2310018 | Goodwin University Educational Services (GUES) |
| 2940013 | Great Oaks Charter School District |
| 0640011 | Hartford School District |
| 0770011 | Manchester School District |
| 0800011 | Meriden School District |
| 0840011 | Milford School District |
| 0930011 | New Haven School District |
| 0950011 | New London School District |
| 0940011 | Newington School District |
| 1010011 | North Haven School District |
| 2050012 | Regional School District 05 |
| 2130012 | Regional School District 13 |
| 1190011 | Rocky Hill School District |
| 1240011 | Seymour School District |
| 1310011 | Southington School District |
| 1370011 | Stonington School District |
| 1460011 | Vernon School District |
| 1480011 | Wallingford School District |
| 1560011 | West Haven School District |
| 1590011 | Wethersfield School District |
| 1640011 | Windsor School District |

Tier 1

Low Suspension Rate/Disproportionality: All other districts

| District Code | District Name |
|---------------|--|
| 2790013 | Amistad Academy District |
| 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 |
| 2900013 | Brass City Charter School District |
| 0150011 | Bridgeport School District |
| 0190011 | Brooklyn School District |
| 0210011 | Canaan School District |
| 0220011 | Canterbury School District |
| 0230011 | Canton 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 |
| 2680013 | Common Ground High School District |
| 2430014 | Cooperative Educational Services |
| 0310011 | Cornwall School District |
| 0320011 | Coventry School District |
| 0350011 | Darien School District |
| 0360011 | Deep River School District |
| 3370015 | Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services |
| 0400011 | East Granby School District |
| 0410011 | East Haddam School District |
| 0420011 | East Hampton School District |
| 0450011 | East Lyme School District |
| 2530014 | Eastern Connecticut Regional Educational Service Center (EASTCONN) |
| 0390011 | Eastford School District |
| 0460011 | Easton School District |
| 2420014 | EdAdvance |

| District Code | District Name |
|---------------|--|
| 0480011 | Ellington School District |
| 2890013 | Elm City College Preparatory School District |
| 2910013 | Elm City Montessori School District |
| 0500011 | Essex School District |
| 2720013 | Explorations District |
| 0530011 | Franklin School District |
| 0580011 | Griswold School District |
| 0600011 | Guilford School District |
| 0630011 | Hampton School District |
| 0650011 | Hartland School District |
| 0670011 | Hebron School District |
| 2860013 | Highville Charter School District |
| 2640013 | Integrated Day Charter School District |
| 2610013 | Jumoke Academy District |
| 0680011 | Kent School District |
| 2450014 | LEARN |
| 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 |
| 0850011 | Monroe School District |
| 0860011 | Montville School District |
| 0880011 | Naugatuck School District |
| 2800013 | New Beginnings Inc Family Academy District |
| 0890011 | New Britain School District |
| 0900011 | New Canaan School District |
| 0910011 | New Fairfield School District |
| 0920011 | New Hartford School District |
| 0960011 | New Milford School District |
| 0970011 | Newtown School District |
| 0980011 | Norfolk School District |
| 0990011 | North Branford School District |
| 1000011 | North Canaan School District |
| 1020011 | North Stonington School District |
| 2630013 | Odyssey Community School District |

| District Code | District Name |
|---------------|---|
| 1060011 | Old Saybrook School District |
| 1070011 | Orange School District |
| 1080011 | Oxford School District |
| 2830013 | Park City Prep Charter School District |
| 1090011 | Plainfield School District |
| 1110011 | Plymouth School District |
| 1120011 | Pomfret School District |
| 1140011 | Preston School District |
| 1160011 | Putnam School District |
| 1170011 | Redding 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 |
| 2140012 | Regional School District 14 |
| 2150012 | Regional School District 15 |
| 2160012 | Regional School District 16 |
| 2170012 | Regional School District 17 |
| 2180012 | Regional School District 18 |
| 2190012 | Regional School District 19 |
| 1180011 | Ridgefield School District |
| 1210011 | Salem School District |
| 1220011 | Salisbury School District |
| 1230011 | Scotland School District |
| 1250011 | Sharon School District |
| 1260011 | Shelton School District |
| 1270011 | Sherman School District |
| 2700013 | Side By Side Charter School District |
| 1330011 | Sprague School District |
| 1340011 | Stafford School District |
| 2960013 | Stamford Charter School for Excellence District |
| 1360011 | Sterling School District |
| 2690013 | The Bridge Academy District |
| 9030022 | The Woodstock Academy District |

| District Code | District Name |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 1400011 | Thomaston School District |
| 1410011 | Thompson School District |
| 1420011 | Tolland School District |
| 1440011 | Trumbull School District |
| 3360015 | Unified School District #1 |
| 3470015 | Unified School District #2 |
| 1450011 | Union School District |
| 1470011 | Voluntown School District |
| 1530011 | Watertown School District |
| 1540011 | Westbrook School District |
| 1570011 | Weston School District |
| 1600011 | Wilmington School District |
| 1610011 | Wilton School District |
| 1620011 | Winchester School District |
| 1650011 | Windsor Locks School District |
| 1660011 | Wolcott School District |
| 1670011 | Woodbridge School District |
| 1690011 | Woodstock School District |

APPENDIX B – The Data Collection and Reporting Processes

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
2. 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.
 - a. Is the respondent from one or more races using the following (choose all that apply):
 - b. 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.
 - c. 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.
 - d. Black or African American - A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.
 - e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

- f. 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>.