

## THE NEW YORK EQUITY COALITION



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### **New York schools disproportionately impose out-of-school suspensions on Black students**

*Statewide, districts suspended a student at least once every minute during the 2016-17 school year*

NEW YORK – New York State’s education system suspends Black students at more than four times the rate of White students outside of New York City and more than five times the rate of White students in New York City, according to [a report by The New York Equity Coalition](#).

The [report](#) comes as the New York State Board of Regents moves forward with important regulations that address how schools will be held accountable for reducing out-of-school suspensions for all groups of students as part of the state’s new accountability system under the Every Student Succeeds Act, and as New Yorkers prepare for a state budget and legislative session that can make 2019 a turning point in stopping punitive discipline and instead supporting restorative practices and strategies to combat implicit bias.

Using previously unpublished state data on the number of students on whom school districts imposed at least one out-of-school suspension in the 2016-17 school year, The New York Equity Coalition finds a statewide crisis in the use of suspensions to exclude Black students from classroom instruction.

Among the findings:

- Suspension rates were highest in high schools, but racial disparities were greatest in elementary/middle schools. Elementary/middle schools outside of NYC suspended Black students at a rate 4.9 times that of White students, and high schools outside of NYC suspended Black students at a rate 3.8 times that of White students.

- Schools imposed the most disproportionate discipline on Black female students. Outside of NYC, schools were 6.1 times more likely to suspend Black female students than their White peers, and in NYC the school district was 8.6 times more likely to suspend Black female students than their White female peers.
- Schools suspended Black male high school students at a greater rate than any other group of students. Outside of New York City, schools suspended 19 percent of Black male high school students — or nearly one in five Black male students in high schools.
- Big 4 and urban/suburban high-need school districts had the highest overall out-of-school suspension rates —and New York City, which imposes suspensions somewhat differently than the rest of the state, had the lowest.
- Low-need school districts and New York City had the biggest racial disparities in suspension rates.

At the most basic level, suspensions deprive a student of classroom instruction — even though students who are suspended may be most in need of academic engagement. And beneath the surface, suspensions can represent a step in the school-to-prison pipeline and reflect a school climate characterized by punishment and fear — rather than a caring and supportive environment created by skilled educators with high academic expectations.

Based on the findings, the coalition is calling on state leaders to address the following three policy priorities:

- Hold schools accountable for reducing suspensions and other exclusionary discipline, including through New York’s ESSA regulations.
- Strengthen laws and regulations to stop suspension abuse.
- Invest in supportive learning environments for all students.

“New York State has an opportunity in its implementation of ESSA and actions taken by the New York State legislature to address the inequities in the education system that have led to unacceptable outcomes for Black students,” **said Brenda McDuffie, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Buffalo Urban League.** “This report clearly demonstrates that Black children are being suspended at rates significantly higher than white students. What will be critical is that we use this information to create real alternative strategies to address student needs with critical stakeholders – parents, teachers, and administrators – to correct this by providing learning environments that maximize and support the opportunity for student achievement. This can only happen when students are actually in school.”

“Every child deserves and has a right to high-quality education that supports and cultivates their growth and learning,” **said Ramon A. Peguero, Chief Executive Officer of the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families.** “Children should be guided and counseled through their behavioral and cognitive development, especially in educational settings. With this report, The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families hopes that all educational stakeholders take this opportunity to reflect on the realities of punitive disciplinary practices across New York State. This is a moment not to point blame or become defensive, but to recognize the disparities and how current regulated practices are manifesting to impact the education and growth of our children. Pre-kindergarten to 12th grade, regardless of location, socio-economic status, learning needs, race, ethnicity or gender – these are all children who are growing

and learning, and every child deserves to be embraced and supported in their education, not pushed out from it.”

“The fact that Buffalo schools suspend Black students at the highest rate of any Big 5 district is totally unacceptable, and parents demand both state and local leaders to continue to take actions to effectively address this issue,” **said Samuel L. Radford III, Director of Better Schools Better Neighborhoods and President of the District-Parent Coordinating Council of Buffalo.** “And these findings are only the tip of the iceberg. We know that schools suspend some students repeatedly, and often for minor infractions. And we continue to do this with no evidence that suspensions actually work to address the underlying issues that may influence behavior.”

“Until New York State officials hold schools accountable for reducing suspensions and other out-of-school exclusionary discipline practices, they are directly contributing to and enabling the school-to-prison pipeline, which unfortunately disproportionately impacts students of color,” **said Nicole Brisbane, New York State Director for Education Reform Now.**

“Schools must take steps to support all students in the classroom, not push them out of it,” **said Ian Rosenblum, Executive Director of The Education Trust–New York.** “New York’s education system imposes suspensions on Black students at unacceptable rates and far more than their White peers. It is up to the state leaders to enact policies to stop these practices, and we hope this report adds to the urgency behind this important equity issue.”

“Educators know that relying on punitive discipline policies is tantamount to educational malpractice. These data are more evidence that these policies have failed to deliver effective, humane solutions for our children in New York,” **said Paula L. White, Executive Director of Educators for Excellence-New York.** “It’s time to listen to the professionals in the classroom. In New York City’s District 18 a restorative practices pilot program caused suspensions and removals to drop 19 percent last year. Our state and local leaders must prioritize investments in programs that keep our schools safe and our students of color in class, not cuffs.”

“For too long, Black and Brown students have been pushed out of classrooms,” **said Arva Rice, President and CEO of New York Urban League.** Days spent outside of a learning environment have hurt academic performance, self-esteem, opportunity, and hope. This report highlights the disparity in suspension rates and its disparate impact on children of color. The report also lays a path forward for recognizing and rectifying implicit bias and holding schools and school districts accountable for minimizing the number of suspensions. ”

“As Americans, we believe in second chances, we believe that a mistake does not define us,” **said Martha Kamber, Chief Executive Officer of YWCA Brooklyn.** “Today we have the opportunity to act in accordance with our beliefs, especially when it comes to children. Let’s ensure that we are giving each child an equal opportunity to succeed. Let’s live up to our moral duty to properly raise our adults of tomorrow by refusing to feed the school-to-prison pipeline. Let’s collectively raise our voice to say we’ve had enough and that the buck stops with us. There is no better time fix our broken disciplinary policy than now. ”

The New York Equity Coalition is a group of civil rights, education, parent, and business organizations committed to fighting for higher achievement and greater opportunities for all students in New York State.

The coalition includes Better Schools Better Neighborhoods, Brooklyn YWCA, the Buffalo Urban League, The Business Council of New York State, Business Council of Westchester, Capital Region Chamber, Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Democrats for Education Reform-NY, District-Parent Coordinating Council of Buffalo, The Education Trust–New York, Educators for Excellence, EPIC-Every Person Influences Children, High Achievement New York, Hispanic Federation, National Center for Learning Disabilities, New York Urban League, Otsego County Chamber of Commerce, Public Policy Institute of New York State, the Read Alliance, UnidosUS, Turnaround for Children, United Way of New York City, the Urban League of Rochester, and the Urban League of Westchester County.

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