

Update: July 31, 2018

2015-2016 School Year Data

If Missouri's public schools were graded on how fairly and equitably they use discipline, they would receive some bad marks.

The newest information from the federal Office of Civil Rights and analyzed by ACLU of Missouri demonstrates hows Missouri public schools are again failing students of color and students with disabilities.

Missouri has the 10th highest gap between Black and White K-12 students in the nation for out-of-school suspensions, according to federal data from the Office of Civil Rights collected during the 2015-2016 school year.

This is a significant increase from the last available survey data of the 2013-2014 school year. ACLU of Missouri referenced the this data for our October 2017 report, "From School to Prison: Missouri's Pipeline of Injustice" which you can read on the following pages.

The updated numbers are beyond alarming and indicate that Missouri public schools are not engaging in equitable discipline. Missouri's students deserve equal access to education and learning environments where every child can thrive.

As you will read, Missouri has an established record of punishing Black students and students with disabilities with harsher and more frequent discipline compared to their White peers. The disparities are even greater for Black students with disabilities.

The updated data also shows Black students are five times more likely than their White peers to receive an out-of-school suspension. This is a marked increase over the data we reported on in our initial report.

Missouri is falling far short of its obligation to provide its children with equal access to education by routinely disciplining Black students and students with disabilities harsher and more frequently than their White and non-disabled peers.

The trend begins way before students get to high school. Missouri has the eighth highest gap between Black and White students when it comes to suspensions in preschool. Black preschoolers are more than four times as likely to be suspended compared to White preschoolers; Missouri gives multiple out-of-school suspensions to Black preschoolers more than 44 other states.

In our report's data from the 2013-2014 school year, we found that while Black students made up 14 percent of Missouri's student population, they were given 41 percent of the suspensions as discipline. The new data shows those disparities are getting worse – Black students were 16 percent of the population but received 46 percent of suspensions statewide just two school years later.

Disabled students, who are more than twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension compared to their peers.

Missouri's Black students with disabilities are suspended three times more frequently than White students with disabilities. The same category of students was suspended a little over twice as many times as their peers in the 2013-2014 data.

Comparing out-of-school suspensions, the new data shows Black students with disabilities are eight times more likely to receive this discipline than their White peers.

Among the updated findings:

- Black students are five times more likely than their white peers to receive an out of school suspension, an increase from 4.5 percent from our last report.
- Black students with disabilities are suspended three times more frequently than White students with disabilities. This group was suspended twice as many times as their peers in the 2013-2014 data
- Black students with disabilities are eight times more likely to receive out-of-school suspensions than their White peers.
- Black preschoolers are suspended greater than four times more frequently than White preschoolers.
- Missouri currently gives Black preschoolers multiple out-of-school suspensions more than 44 other states.

When students experience harsh and disproportionate discipline in school, it can put them on a path to interact with the criminal justice system their entire lives, in what's known as the "school-to-prison pipeline." Suspensions can have long-term effects that include time out of class, falling behind on homework and damaged self-worth. It puts far

too many young people on a path that feeds directly into the school-to-prison pipeline.

The consequences of the school-to-prison pipeline have a long-term and far-reaching effect on our society by perpetuating cycles of poverty, low-education attainment, and systemic structural inequalities.

This toxic combination of missed class time and lowered self-esteem creates a damaging cycle the results in classroom disengagement and higher dropout rates. The consequences extend far beyond the classroom, perpetuating cycles of poverty, low-education attainment, and structural inequalities that span generations.

We must take action. That's why we've teamed up to work with school districts, parents, caregivers and students across the state to end the school-to-prison pipeline in Missouri.

Justice doesn't stop at the schoolhouse door. Missouri's schools can do better. Let's get to work.