

# Suspensions

## DEFINITION

*Suspensions* is the rate of infractions and disciplinary actions per 100 students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade in Rhode Island public schools. It does not reflect the total number of students disciplined because each student can receive more than one disciplinary action during the school year. Disciplinary actions include in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and alternate program placements.

## SIGNIFICANCE

Effective school disciplinary practices promote a safe and respectful school climate for students and teachers, support learning, and address the causes of student misbehavior. Studies have shown that punitive disciplinary practices are largely ineffective and even counterproductive.<sup>1</sup> Out-of-school suspension is the most widely used disciplinary technique, both nationally and in Rhode Island. Suspension may be used for relatively minor offenses, such as attendance infractions and disrespect, as well as for more serious offenses, such as fighting, drug-related offenses, and weapon possession.<sup>2,3</sup>

Research has called into question the effectiveness and long-term impact of excluding students from school. Studies show that suspension usually does not deter students from misbehaving and

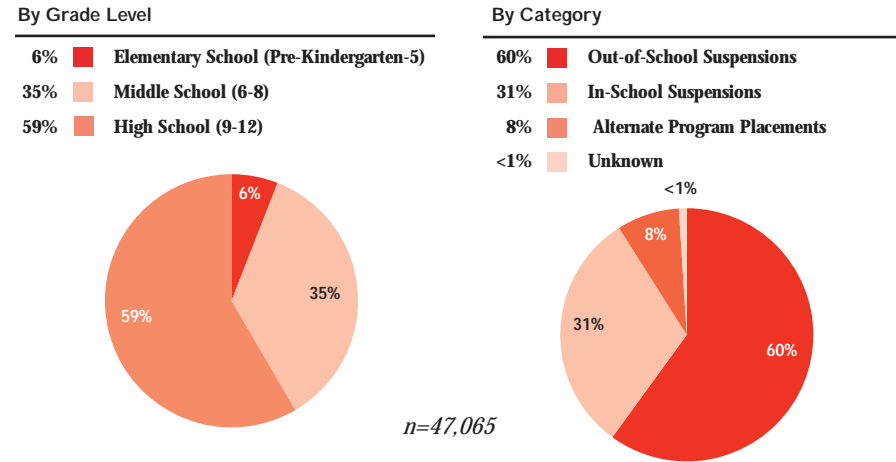
may actually reinforce negative behavior patterns.<sup>4</sup> Suspended students are also more likely to have poor academic performance and to drop out of school than their peers.<sup>5,6</sup> The psychological and behavioral consequences of exclusion from school include the student's further disengagement and isolation from peers and teachers.<sup>7,8</sup>

During the 2006-2007 school year in Rhode Island, 47,065 disciplinary actions were attributed to 17,466 students.<sup>9</sup> The total number of disciplinary actions is more than twice the number of students disciplined because some students were disciplined multiple times.

Low-income and minority students are overrepresented in school suspensions and receive disproportionately severe disciplinary action in response to relatively minor offenses.<sup>10</sup> In Rhode Island in the 2006-2007 school year, 34% of Rhode Island students were enrolled in core city districts, but they received 52% (24,679) of the 47,065 disciplinary actions.<sup>11</sup>

Students with disabilities are also more likely than other students in Rhode Island to be suspended. While 19% of Rhode Island students were receiving special education services, they accounted for 36% (16,750) of the disciplinary actions and 31% (5,425) of the total students disciplined during the 2006-2007 school year.<sup>12</sup>

## Disciplinary Actions, Rhode Island Schools, 2006-2007



## Disciplinary Actions, Rhode Island Public Schools, 2006-2007

By Type of Infraction	#	%	By Type of Infraction	#	%
Attendance Offenses	16,808	36%	Harassment/Intimidation/Threat	1,982	4%
Insubordination/Disrespect	7,747	16%	Alcohol/Drug/Tobacco Offenses	938	2%
Disorderly Conduct	7,048	15%	Arson/Larceny/Vandalism	817	2%
Fighting	3,229	7%	Weapon Possession	292	1%
Obscene/Abusive Language	2,478	5%	Other Offenses*	3,646	8%
Assault	2,080	4%	<b>Total</b>	<b>47,065</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Examples of other offenses include forgery, trespassing and communication/electronic devices, etc.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2006-2007 school year. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

◆ **Students who are suspended are more likely to have a history of poor behavior, academic achievement below their grade level, grade repetition, mobility between schools, and attendance at schools with high rates of suspension.**<sup>13</sup>

◆ **In Rhode Island in 2006-2007, 12% of the student population was suspended at least once. More than one-third (36%) of disciplinary actions were for attendance-related offenses.**<sup>14</sup>

Table 44.

Disciplinary Actions, Rhode Island School Districts, 2006-2007

SCHOOL DISTRICT	TOTAL # OF STUDENTS ENROLLED	TYPE OF DISCIPLINARY ACTION			TOTAL DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS	ACTIONS PER 100 STUDENTS
		SUSPENDED OUT-OF-SCHOOL	SUSPENDED IN-SCHOOL	ALTERNATE PROGRAM PLACEMENTS*		
Barrington	3,410	99	41	0	140	4
Bristol Warren	3,459	451	1,273	0	1,724	50
Burrillville	2,554	290	529	0	819	32
Central Falls	3,481	660	82	24	766	22
Charlho	3,650	501	0	3	504	14
Coventry	5,442	965	15	237	1,217	22
Cranston	10,539	2,051	0	0	2,051	19
Cumberland	4,983	792	1,145	0	1,937	39
East Greenwich	2,338	80	53	0	133	6
East Providence	5,654	810	17	0	827	15
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,992	167	0	0	167	8
Foster	279	0	0	0	0	0
Foster-Glocester	1,566	532	192	0	724	46
Glocester	646	1	0	0	1	<1
Jamestown	480	3	1	0	4	1
Johnston	3,116	473	772	0	1,245	40
Lincoln	3,258	795	11	2	808	25
Little Compton	300	0	0	0	0	0
Middletown	2,420	463	40	0	503	21
Narragansett	1,508	40	127	0	167	11
New Shoreham	140	2	1	0	3	2
Newport	2,258	1,022	979	0	2,001	89
North Kingstown	4,429	337	66	0	403	9
North Providence	3,206	393	31	1,327	1,751	55
North Smithfield	1,855	204	0	0	204	11
Pawtucket	8,667	1,685	1,247	0	2,932	34
Portsmouth	2,978	16	37	0	53	2
Providence	25,012	8,594	3,296	0	11,890	48
Scituate	1,753	47	5	209	261	15
Smithfield	2,509	180	1	0	181	7
South Kingstown	3,775	274	375	0	649	17
Tiverton	2,020	481	416	782	1,679	83
Warwick	10,836	2,009	1,379	0	3,388	31
West Warwick	3,617	1,192	1,240	5	2,437	67
Westerly	3,430	250	0	0	250	7
Woonsocket	6,286	2,148	1,096	1,409	4,653	74
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>1,397</i>	<i>111</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>172</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools**</i>	<i>1,815</i>	<i>244</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>364</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>139</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Core Cities</i>	<i>49,321</i>	<i>15,301</i>	<i>7,940</i>	<i>1,438</i>	<i>24,679</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>94,524</i>	<i>12,706</i>	<i>6,527</i>	<i>2,560</i>	<i>21,793</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>147,196</i>	<i>28,419</i>	<i>14,637</i>	<i>3,999</i>	<i>47,065</i>	<i>32</i>

### Notes to Table

\*Alternate program placements (APPs) used for disciplinary reasons can consist of short-term or long-term academic placements in the student's home school or in an alternate setting. APPs provide students with explicit academic supports, unlike traditional in-school suspensions. The definition and use of APPs differs by district. Due to changes in how some districts categorize APPs, some of the data included in the in-school suspension and alternate program placement columns of this table may not be comparable to previous years.

\*\*There were ten disciplinary actions of unknown type in the state-operated schools category.

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2006-2007 school year.

The disciplinary actions rate per 100 students is the total disciplinary actions for the school district at all grade levels (pre-kindergarten through 12th grade), multiplied by 100, and divided by the "average daily membership" by district of instruction for the 2006-2007 school year. The rate signifies the number of disciplinary actions assigned per 100 students in the district.

Core cities are Central Falls, Newport, Pawtucket, Providence, West Warwick and Woonsocket.

Charter schools are BEACON Charter School, Blackstone Academy Charter School, CVS Highlander Charter School, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, and Paul Cuffee Charter School. State-operated schools are the Metropolitan Career & Technical Center, DCYF schools, Rhode Island School for the Deaf, and William M. Davies Jr. Career-Technical High School.

### References

<sup>1</sup> *Fair and effective discipline for all students: Best practice strategies for educators (Fact sheet)*. (2002). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

<sup>2,4,6,8,10</sup> Skiba, R. J. (2000). *Zero tolerance, zero evidence: An analysis of school disciplinary practice*. (Policy Research Report #SRS2). Bloomington, IN: Indiana Education Policy Center.

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