

# Suspensions

## DEFINITION

*Suspensions* is the rate of infractions and disciplinary actions per 100 students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade in Rhode Island public schools. Students 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, including “zero tolerance” policies, 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, though out-of-school suspensions have fallen as a proportion of total disciplinary actions in Rhode Island since the 2005-2006 school year. Suspensions may be used for minor offenses, such as attendance infractions and disrespect, and for more serious offenses, such as drug-related offenses and weapon possession.<sup>2,3,4</sup>

Suspensions usually do not deter students from misbehaving and may actually reinforce negative behavior patterns.<sup>5</sup> Suspended students are also

more likely to have poor academic performance and to drop out of school than their peers.<sup>6,7</sup> Additional consequences of exclusion from school include students’ further disempowerment and isolation from peers and teachers.<sup>8,9</sup>

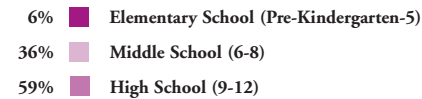
During the 2007-2008 school year in Rhode Island, 43,118 disciplinary actions were attributed to 15,957 students.<sup>10</sup> The total number of disciplinary actions is almost three times the number of students disciplined because some students were disciplined multiple times.

Low-income and minority students are overrepresented in school suspensions and receive disproportionately severe disciplinary actions compared with their higher-income and White peers. In Rhode Island during the 2007-2008 school year, 47% (20,157) of the disciplinary actions were to minority students, who comprise 31% of the student population. One-third (33%) of Rhode Island students were enrolled in core city districts, but they received 50% of the disciplinary actions.<sup>11,12</sup>

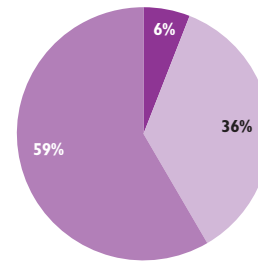
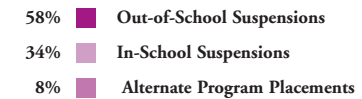
Students with disabilities also are more likely than other students to be suspended. While 18% of Rhode Island students were in special education, they accounted for 35% (14,880) of the disciplinary actions in the 2007-2008 school year and 31% (4,943) of the total students disciplined.<sup>13</sup>

## Disciplinary Actions, Rhode Island Public Schools, 2007-2008

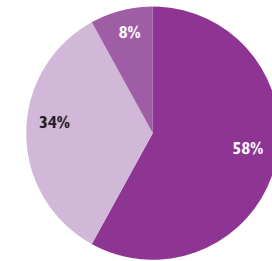
### By Grade Level



### By Category



n=43,118



## Disciplinary Actions, Rhode Island Public Schools, 2007-2008

By Type of Infraction	#	%	By Type of Infraction	#	%
Attendance Offenses	15,371	36%	Assault of Student or Teacher	1,531	4%
Disorderly Conduct	7,075	16%	Alcohol/Drug/Tobacco Offenses	833	2%
Insubordination/Disrespect	6,811	16%	Arson/Larceny/Vandalism	810	2%
Fighting	2,865	7%	Weapon Possession	292	1%
Obscene/Abusive Language	2,538	6%	Other Offenses*	3,063	7%
Harassment/Intimidation/Threat	1,929	4%	<b>Total</b>	<b>43,118</b>	

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

Source: Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007-2008 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 grade level, grade repetition, mobility between schools, and attendance at schools with high rates of suspension.<sup>14</sup>

◆ In Rhode Island during the 2007-2008 school year, 11% of the student population was suspended at least once. More than one-third (36%) of suspensions were for attendance-related offenses.<sup>15</sup>

Table 44.

Disciplinary Actions, Rhode Island School Districts, 2007-2008

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	3,382	87	20	0	107	3
Bristol Warren	3,433	488	1,476	5	1,969	57
Burrillville	2,554	155	499	14	668	26
Central Falls	3,338	905	635	0	1,540	46
Chariho	3,690	444	0	0	444	12
Coventry	5,215	1,288	0	463	1,751	34
Cranston	10,323	2,004	0	49	2,053	20
Cumberland	4,766	332	534	0	866	18
East Greenwich	2,347	82	38	0	120	5
East Providence	5,660	855	4	0	859	15
Exeter-West Greenwich	1,906	122	0	0	122	6
Foster	258	1	0	0	1	<1
Foster-Glocester	1,523	394	278	0	672	44
Glocester	554	0	3	0	3	1
Jamestown	481	2	3	0	5	1
Johnston	3,136	488	39	0	527	17
Lincoln	3,318	458	3	0	461	14
Little Compton	303	0	0	0	0	<1
Middletown	2,390	298	20	0	318	13
Narragansett	1,456	48	201	0	249	17
New Shoreham	142	6	0	0	6	4
Newport	2,175	622	352	0	974	45
North Kingstown	4,401	223	105	0	328	7
North Providence	3,128	71	1,014	200	1,285	41
North Smithfield	1,853	172	0	0	172	9
Pawtucket	8,530	1,484	1,865	0	3,349	39
Portsmouth	2,847	47	19	1	67	2
Providence	24,180	7,683	3,236	0	10,919	45
Scituate	1,721	84	0	405	489	28
Smithfield	2,496	124	118	0	242	10
South Kingstown	3,614	327	583	0	910	25
Tiverton	1,979	442	387	742	1,571	79
Warwick	10,742	1,947	361	0	2,308	21
West Warwick	3,575	914	1,365	16	2,295	64
Westerly	3,327	190	0	0	190	6
Woonsocket	6,166	1,591	1,443	1,725	4,759	77
<i>Charter Schools</i>	<i>1,901</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>156</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>State-Operated Schools</i>	<i>1,589</i>	<i>320</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>320</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>UCAP</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Core Cities</i>	<i>47,962</i>	<i>13,199</i>	<i>8,896</i>	<i>1,741</i>	<i>23,836</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Remainder of State</i>	<i>92,946</i>	<i>11,179</i>	<i>5,705</i>	<i>1,879</i>	<i>18,763</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Rhode Island</i>	<i>144,534</i>	<i>24,837</i>	<i>14,660</i>	<i>3,621</i>	<i>43,118</i>	<i>30</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 Factbooks prior to 2008.

The type of infraction resulting in disciplinary action varies according to school district policy. The type of disciplinary action used for each type of infraction also varies according to school district policy.

### Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007-2008 school year.

Total disciplinary actions is the number of incidents resulting in suspension—either in-school or out-of-school—or placement of the student in an alternate program.

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.”

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

Charter schools are BEACON Charter School, Blackstone Academy Charter School, Highlander Charter School, International Charter School, Kingston Hill Academy, and Paul Cuffee Charter School. State-operated schools include the Metropolitan Career & Technical Center, Rhode Island School for the Deaf, and Wm. 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.

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