

Reclaiming Students: the educational and economic costs of exclusionary discipline

January 12, 2013

Presentation at LEV's 3rd Annual Activist Training

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A JOINT REPORT:
RECLAIMING STUDENTS
The educational and economic costs of exclusionary discipline



Washington Appleseed

Washington Appleseed works to address social and economic problems in our state by developing new public policy initiatives, challenging unjust laws, and helping people better understand and fully exercise their rights. We believe that by engaging both volunteer lawyers and community partners in these efforts, we better identify systemic problems, outline potential solutions and achieve effective and lasting social change.

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TeamChild

TeamChild is a non profit law firm dedicated to upholding the rights of youth involved, or at risk of involvement, in the juvenile justice system to help them secure the education, healthcare, housing and other support they need to achieve positive outcomes in their lives.

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Did you know?

Every seat in Safeco Field could be filled with a child who was excluded from a Washington State public school during the 2009-2010 school year.



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Meet Lashon

Lashon, a 15-year-old 10th grader, was emergency expelled after he was caught with a small amount of marijuana. Not long after he was caught, Lashon was arrested at school, charged with a felony drug offense in juvenile court and incarcerated in his county juvenile detention facility for several days. Lashon had never been in trouble before at school or in the community. While he successfully completed a deferred disposition through juvenile court, Lashon and his parents appealed the indefinite exclusion. They also submitted five petitions asking for readmission to his school district—all of them were rejected. After missing more than a year of high school, Lashon was not on track to graduate with his class and felt rejected from his school community.



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Meet Josh

Unlike Lashon, when Josh made the mistake of bringing drugs to his school, students and staff from the Restorative Justice Committee sat down with him and asked him what kind of support he needed. Together, they decided it would be a good idea for Josh to get connected to drug and alcohol counseling and for him to write a letter of apology to his school community. Josh was held accountable and learned from his mistake; but, instead of being expelled, he was supported by his peers and teachers and didn't miss out on any of his education.



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Background

- **Washington Appleseed, TeamChild, the ACLU of Washington and Garvey Schubert Barer** came together in 2010 out of a mutual concern about the negative impact of out of school exclusions on Washington students.



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Research Questions

- How many children are affected by exclusionary discipline in any given school year?
- Who is being removed from the school setting? Do these exclusions disproportionately impact students of a particular race or socioeconomic status?
- How does the use of exclusionary discipline vary across the state?
- What happens to these children once they are removed from the school setting? Do they receive educational services?



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Exclusionary Discipline

- A suspension, emergency expulsion, or expulsion that removes a student from the school setting. Exclusionary discipline is often accompanied by a lack of educational services during the duration of the exclusion.



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Methodology

- Public disclosure requests sent to all 295 school districts for the 2009-2010 school year.
- Not every district could answer every question posed.
- Despite fluctuations in the number of districts included in our analyses, all of the data does reflect diverse compositions of Washington State School Districts.
- Stakeholder interviews and youth stories included.
- Appendix highlights positive district approaches.



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Finding 1

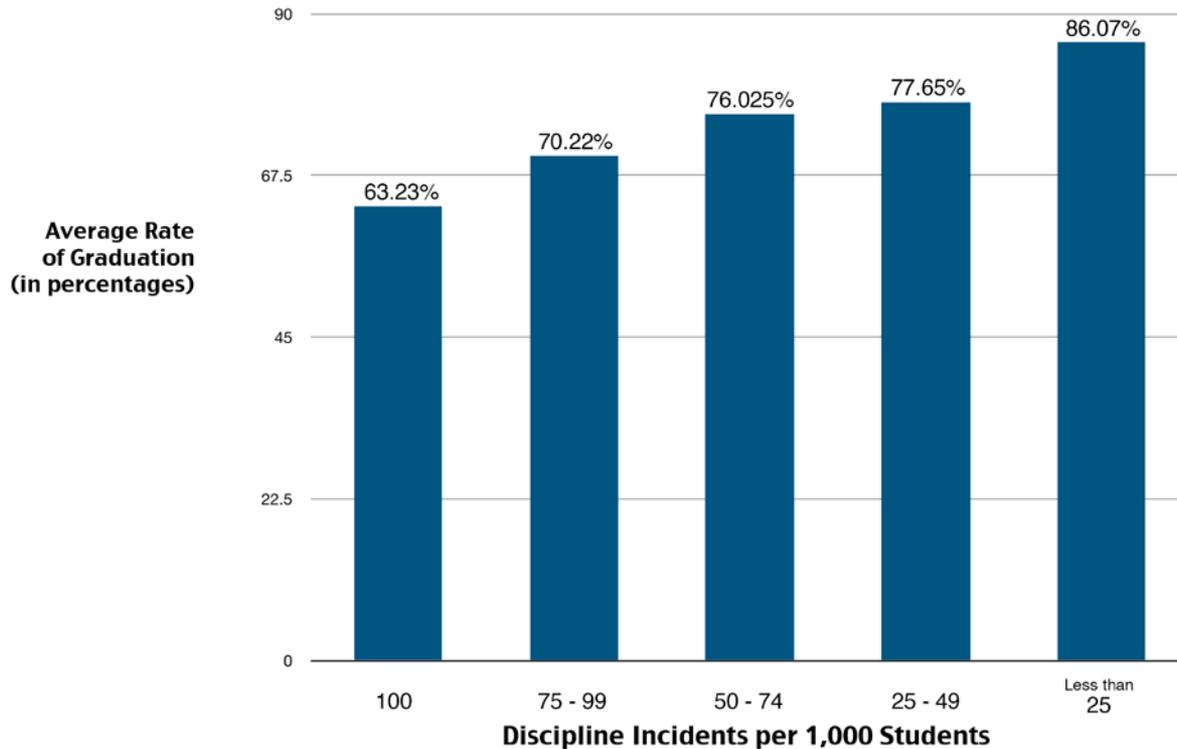
Exclusionary discipline negatively impacted academic success and a student's relationship with the educational system.



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Exclusionary Discipline Rates vs. Graduation Rates in Washington Schools



Data for this analysis is based on OSPI Behavior and Weapons Reports for the 2009 - 2010 school year as well as 2011 graduation rates from OSPI's School District Profiles, published at <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/default.aspx#download>. Only school districts with 1,000 or more students were included in this analysis as districts with fewer students tended to have larger fluctuations in graduation rates year over year due to each student comprising a much higher individual percentage of the total student population.



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- Students in 183 of the state's 295 school districts missed at least **70,000** days of school due to long-term suspensions alone during the 2009-2010 school year, greatly reducing the probability of academic success for these students and increasing their risk of drop out.



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“I think the longer a child is out of school, for whatever reason, the worse it is, the harder it’s going to be for them to come back in, because they come back in and they’re way behind.”

*Judge Susan Hahn
Yakima County Juvenile Court.*



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Finding 2

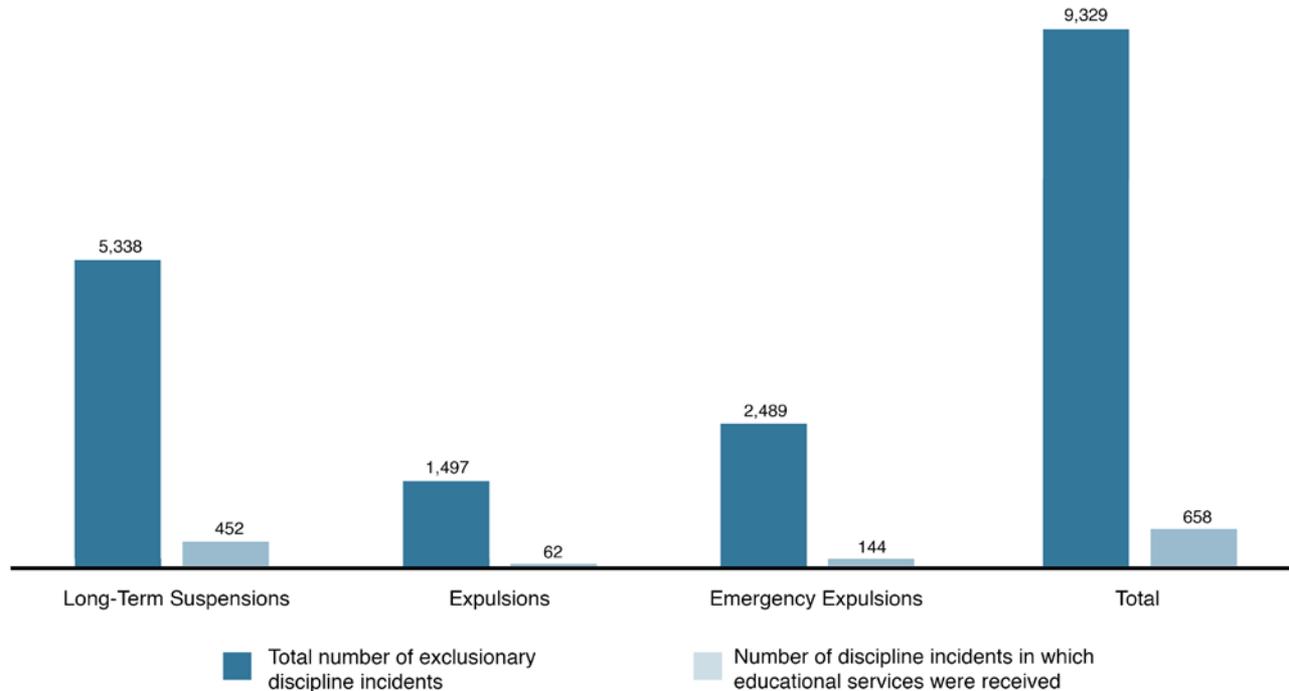
The vast majority of disciplined students did not receive educational services for the duration of their exclusion.



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Frequency of Educational Services Received During Exclusionary Discipline



Data for this analysis is based on responses to the Appleseed report team's public record request from 183 school districts. Though information was requested from all 295 school districts in the state, not all districts could provide the information requested. We recognize the 9,329 discipline incidents included here as a sample size of the state total. Please note the "Total" category includes 5 discipline incidents that were not specifically labeled as a long-term suspension, expulsion, or emergency expulsion.



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“I was shocked to hear that there is no duty to educate a child once they are expelled. And I just learned that maybe eight or nine months ago. To me, that was shocking. That we’re washing our hands of kids.”

*Honorable Helen Halpert,
King County Juvenile Court Judge.*



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Finding 3

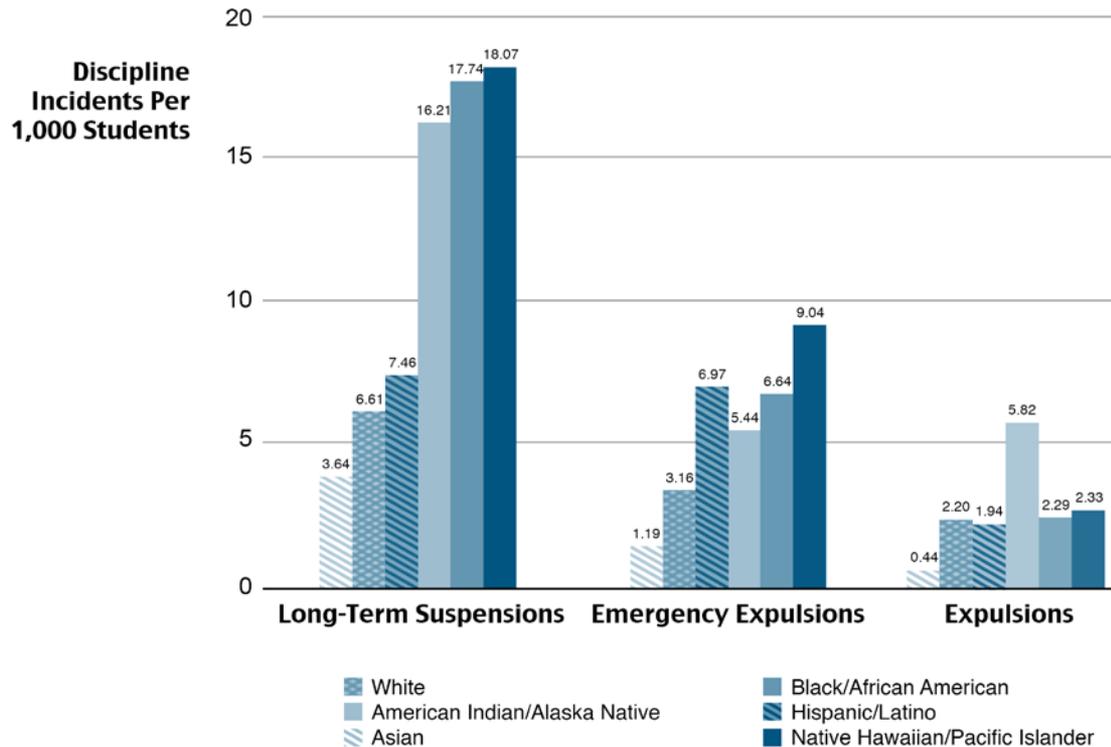
**Exclusionary discipline
disproportionately impacted
students of color and youth
living in poverty.**



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Race/Ethnicity Information by Type of Discipline



Data for this analysis is based on responses to the Appleseed report team's public record request from 177 school districts. Though information was requested from all 295 school districts in the state, not all districts could provide the information requested. Numbers are based on the 2009-2010 enrollment for each demographic group versus the number of discipline incidents for that same group.

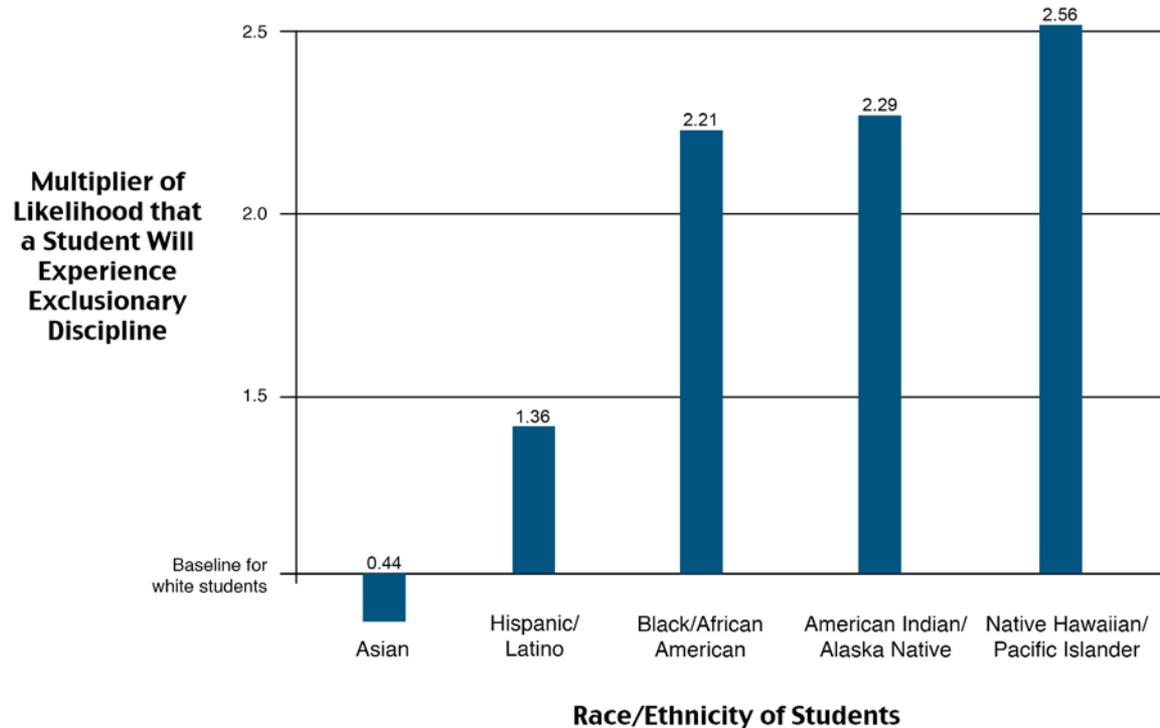


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Likelihood of Experiencing Exclusionary Discipline

A comparison by race/ethnicity



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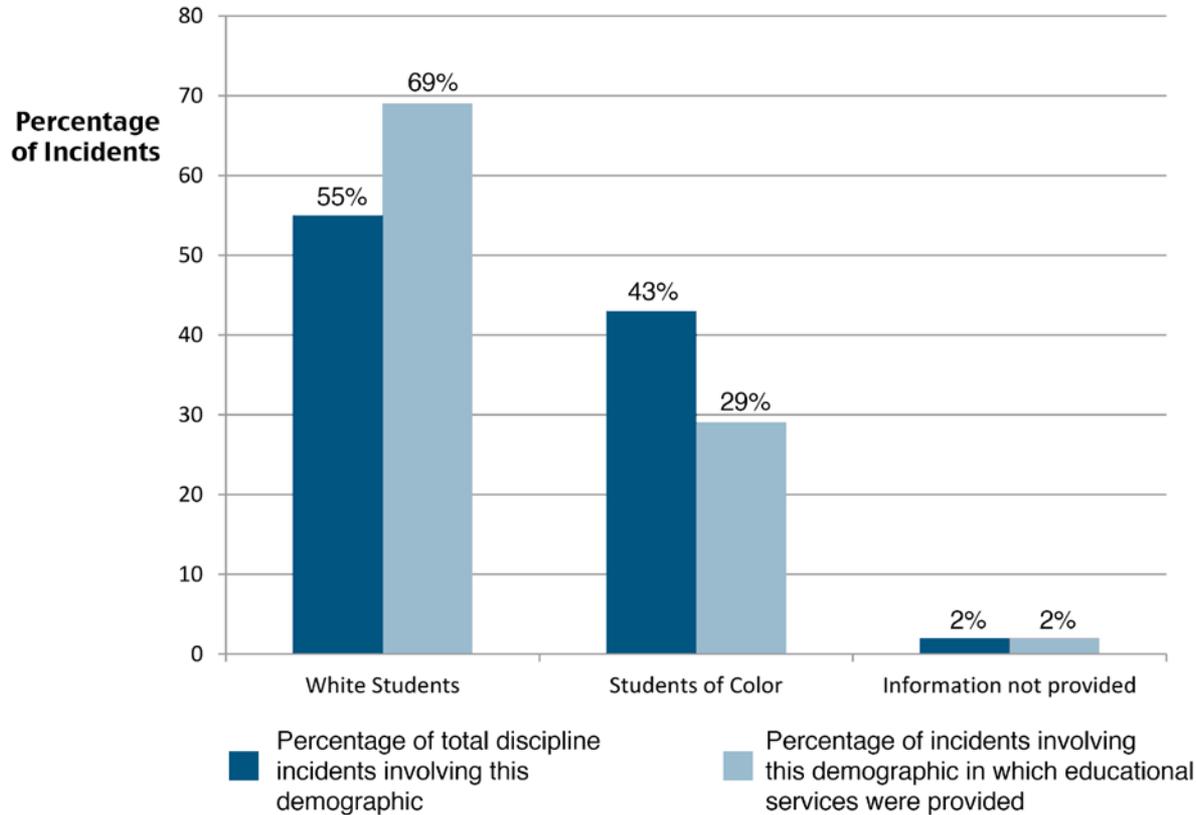


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Access to Education Services

(A Comparison of white students to students of color)



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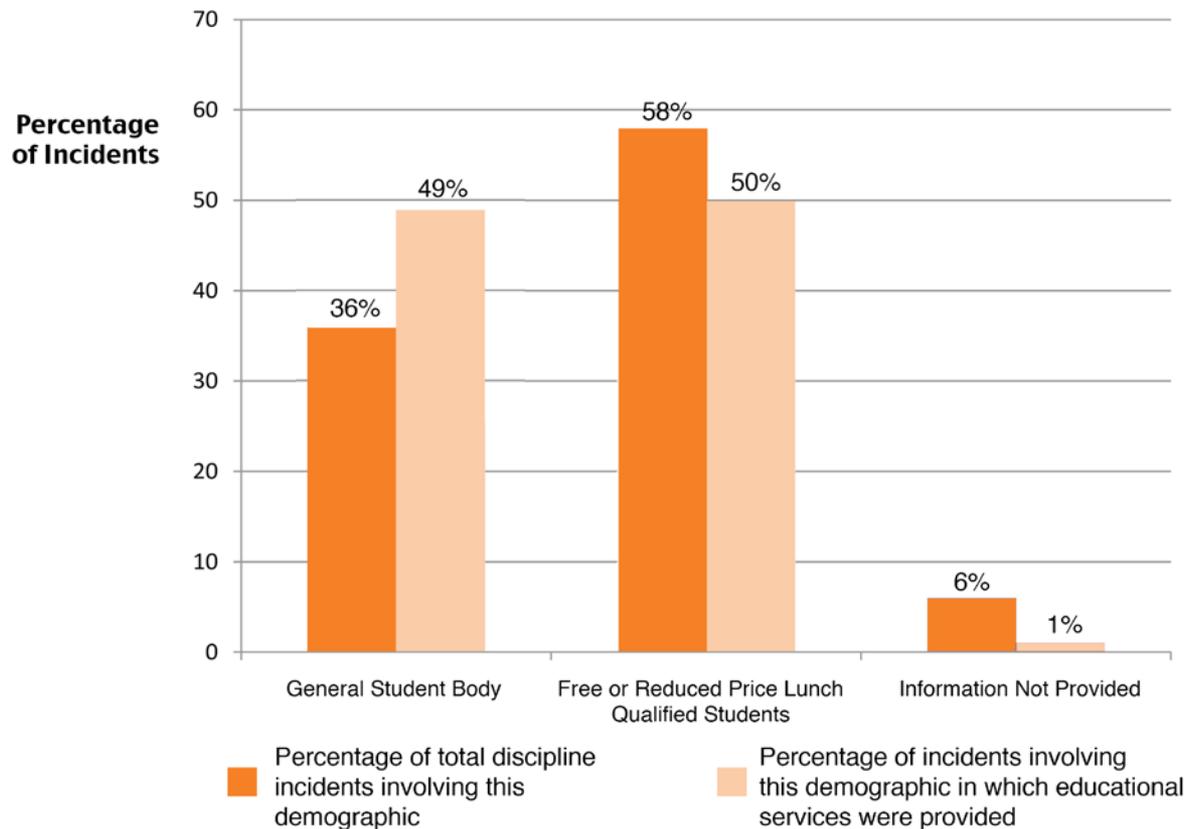


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Access to Education Services

(A Comparison of free/reduced price lunch qualified students to general population)



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“There is clear evidence that these policies seem to be imposed on minority students at a greater rate. The other thing that is interesting to me is that some of the things kids face emergency expulsion for is questionable. One of the big ones in our public schools is defiance of authority or insubordination.”

*Judge Frank Cuthbertson,
Pierce County Superior Court Judge*



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Finding 4

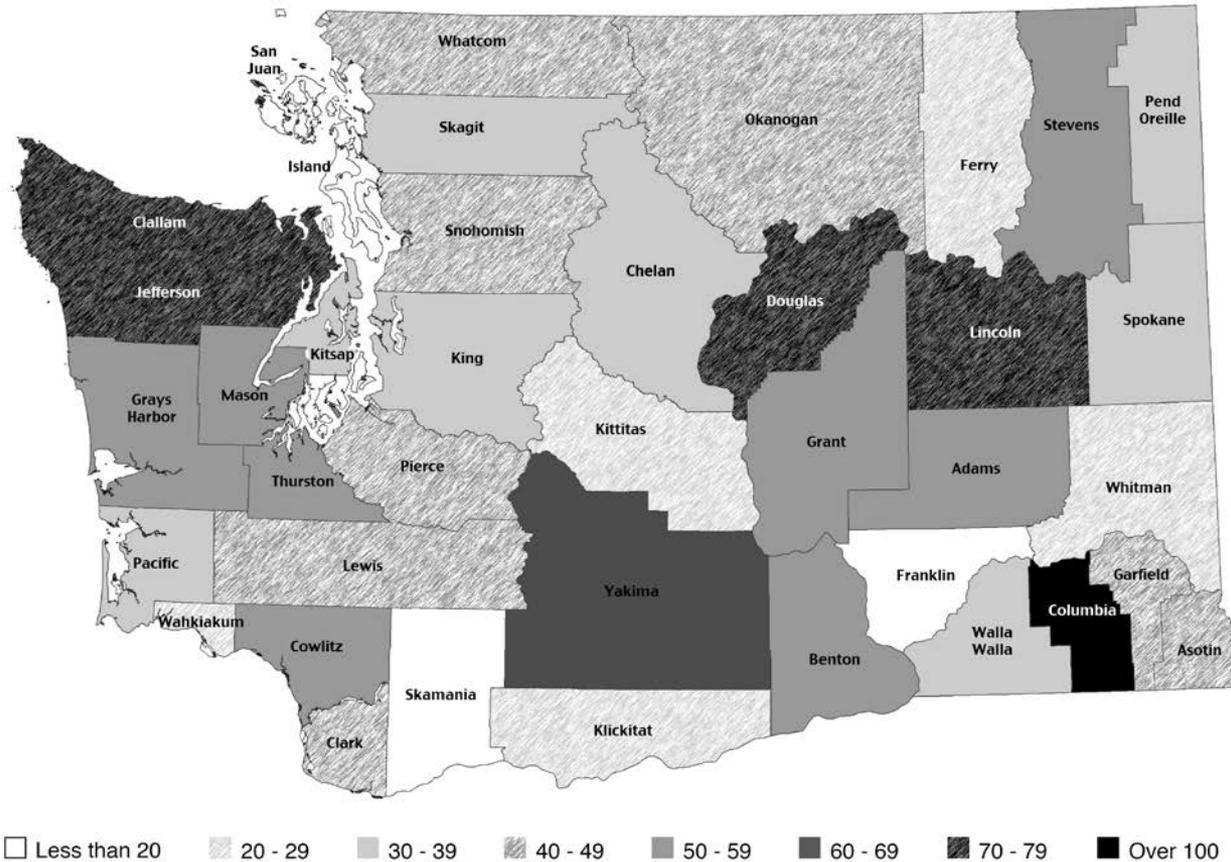
Reliance on exclusionary discipline varied significantly from district to district, even among districts with similar demographic characteristics.



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Discipline Rates (per 1,000 students) by Geography



Data for this analysis is based on data from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction 2009-10 Behavior Report – Suspensions and Expulsions, retrieved from <http://www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/Behavior/pubdocs/rptBehavior0910.pdf>, and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction 2009-10 Weapons Report – Suspensions and Expulsions, retrieved from <http://www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/Weapons/pubdocs/rptWeapons0910.pdf>.



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Finding 5

Discipline data yielded only a partial picture of the number of students impacted by exclusionary practices each year in Washington public schools.



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Recommendations

- Reduce the use of out of school exclusions.
- Require school districts to provide access to educational services during periods of exclusionary discipline.
- Ensure that no student is subject to indefinite exclusion.
- Adopt and follow recommendations of the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee in order to support a reduction in the disproportionate impact of exclusionary discipline on students of color.



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- Require school districts to retrieve excluded students and re-engage them in education.
- Update the statewide Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) so that school districts collect—and the state can review—data showing whether students subject to discipline receive educational services while out of school and whether they return to in-school education.



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- Transforming Washington's current exclusionary discipline practices should be a collective effort. School districts need the support and collaboration of students, parents, the medical community (including pediatricians and mental health providers), juvenile justice professionals, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), community agencies, advocates, and others to support and maximize the work school districts will need to do.



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What Can I Do?

- Download the full *Reclaiming Students* report and learn more about school discipline in Washington State.
- Be an advocate for a disciplined student.
- Support school discipline related legislation during the 2013 legislative session.
- Educate others in your community about the impact of school discipline practices on students.



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Questions?



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