

# THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY:

*A Review of North Carolina's 2014-2015 School Discipline Data Report*

**By Youth Justice Project**  
a project of the Southern  
Coalition for Social Justice  
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Each year, the NC State Board of Education reports selected school discipline data to the General Assembly. The Department of Public Instruction collects data from all school districts and charter schools for the report. Although not comprehensive, the annual school discipline data report allows tracking of discipline trends across the state.

To see full report, visit: [www.ncpublicschools.org/research/discipline/reports/](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/research/discipline/reports/)

## THE GOOD

**Unfortunately, there isn't much good news to share.** The best thing to be said about the 2014-2015 discipline data is that short-term suspensions (1-10 days) and long-term suspensions (more than 10 days) are down significantly compared to 2007-2008. However, in almost every category, the numbers have increased since the 2013-2014 school year, reversing the 7-year downward trend in the use of exclusionary school discipline.

## THE BAD

**The use of exclusionary and punitive discipline increased in almost every category.** The only exception was long-term suspensions (LTS), which decreased slightly to 1,085 (from 1,088 in 2013-2014). However, the average number of school days missed per LTS increased from 62.6 to 72.4 days. This means that **10,446 more** school days were lost to LTS in 2014-2015 than the previous year.

	Expulsions (indefinite removal)	Short-Term Suspensions (1-10 days)	Alternative Placements (for discipline*)	In-School Suspensions (full day)	Corporal Punishment
<b>2013-2014</b>	37	198,254	5804	192,032	122
<b>2014-2015</b>	42	208,650	7027	207,943	147
<b>% increase**</b>	+13.5	+5.2	+21.1	+8.3	+20.5

\*Includes all assignments to alternative programs where the stated reason for removal is explicitly tied to discipline (i.e. chronic misbehavior, instead of LTS, after EC hearing for discipline, felony charge).

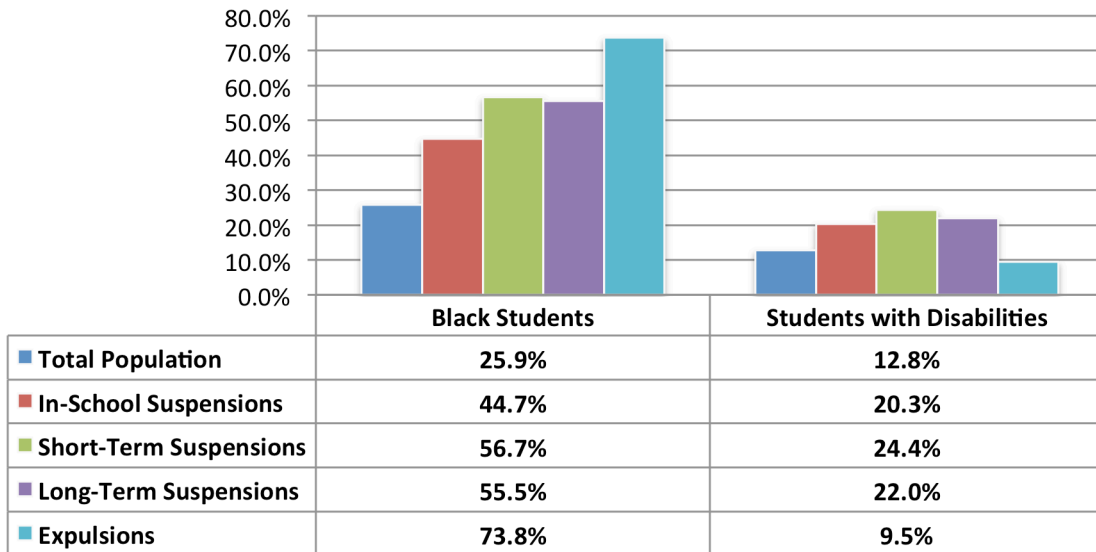
\*\* Compare to only a .85% increase in overall student population from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015.

**Many students were denied meaningful due process for their suspensions.** In 2014-2015, **14,409 students** received multiple short-term suspensions (STS) that added up to over 10 days in the school year (up 9.4% from previous year). Unlike students recommended for LTS or expulsion, these students had no right to a hearing to challenge their suspensions, even though they were out of school for more than 10 days during the school year. There were **3,373 students** who were out of school for **over 20 days** throughout the school year due to multiple short-term suspensions.

# THE UGLY

## School discipline continued to have a discriminatory and harmful impact on certain groups of students.

In 2014-2015, as in past years, Black students and students with disabilities were disproportionately represented among suspended students. These students were also more likely to be reassigned for disciplinary reasons to underperforming, overly punitive, and racially segregated alternative schools and programs. Male students, American Indian students, and ninth graders also received a disparate number of suspensions.



**The numbers are likely higher than reported.** Schools often enter inconsistent, inaccurate, or incomplete data and the state does not audit the districts' data to ensure accuracy. Further, some districts have misleading data-reporting practices. For example:

- In **Durham Public Schools**, a short-term suspension is reported as an in-school suspension when the student attends certain alternative programs during the suspension. However, the student is still removed from her regular school. Further, schools often do not send classwork to the student in a timely manner or provide consistent transportation to the alternative program causing additional disruptions to instruction.
- In recent years, **Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS)** and **Winston-Salem Forsyth County Schools (WCFCs)** have reported large decreases in LTS. Instead, when a disciplinary incident occurs, these districts reassign students to underperforming, overly punitive, and racially segregated alternative schools. In 2014-2015, WCFCs reported the highest number of disciplinary reassignments (723), with CMS ranking second (565). Disciplinary reassignments deny the student meaningful due process to appeal the decision and ultimately results in the same outcome since districts must offer alternative education to students serving long-term suspensions in most circumstances.

## CONCLUSION

The hard work of educators and advocates led to a significant 7-year decrease in suspensions. However, the increase in 2014-2015 and the persistently egregious disparities show that the work is not done. There must be continued pressure on school districts and policy makers to find creative and effective alternatives to suspension.

**Youth Justice Project** works to ensure equity, fairness, and justice for youth in high-quality education, juvenile, and criminal systems.

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