

# ACTION KIT

## Mapping and Analyzing the Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track:

An Action Kit for Understanding How Harsh School Discipline Policies and Practices are Impacting Your Community



June 2009



ADVANCEMENT  
PROJECT

...Just Democracy!

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## INTRODUCTION

Across the United States, there is an ominous trend that is cutting short the opportunity to succeed for huge numbers of children and youth. Zero tolerance policies and practices are, in many instances, pushing young people off of the academic track and onto a track to prison. This approach, which was originally intended to address the growing concerns over school safety, has been expanded to include overly harsh punishments for behavior that has no bearing on safety. Students across the country are being pushed out of school through the over-use of out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests, mostly for minor misconduct. While this trend is harming children and youth of all ages and races, it weighs most heavily on children of color, who are being pushed out or thrown out of school at alarming rates.

School districts are not acting alone. In most places, school districts have teamed up with law enforcement to create this “schoolhouse to jailhouse track.” School districts are literally delegating their responsibility for school discipline to police, resulting in a large number of incidents that are now handled by school police and juvenile courts that could be – and were once – handled by a trip to the principal’s office or a call home to a parent. If the schoolhouse to jailhouse track is not stopped now, there will be serious negative consequences for generations to come.

This action kit is a tool to help communities eliminate the schoolhouse to jailhouse track by:

- Collecting information and data about school discipline policies and practices;
- Analyzing and organizing the data; and
- Developing messages that resonate with your audience.

### Ending the Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track Project

Advancement Project supports grassroots organizers working to end the schoolhouse to jailhouse track. The information contained here has been gathered from Advancement Project’s work over the past ten years with our community partners to end the schoolhouse to jailhouse track.

The Ending the Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track Project seeks to expose and reform the way in which schools have turned to out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement and courts to handle minor school disciplinary infractions. First, through participatory research, the partners in this project have gathered data to better understand the depths of the problem. Second, the research has permitted us to map the track—exactly how youth are sent packing into the juvenile justice system directly from school and what happens to them once their trip on the track begins. Third, the research has given us a richer understanding of the impact of the track, the reasons for its existence, and the institutions and persons involved. As a result, we and our grassroots partners are in a stronger position to push for change.



This action kit is intended to help mobilized communities (parents, youth, advocates, and educators) understand and begin to address the schoolhouse to jailhouse track so that they may ultimately create caring learning environments that push students toward colleges and careers rather than prison.

## What is Zero Tolerance?

“Zero tolerance” is a law enforcement term taken from the “War on Drugs” that began to make its way into school policy in the late 1980s. Since that time, school districts around the country have taken the Zero Tolerance principle, initially intended for weapon and drug offenses, and expanded it so that harsh disciplinary practices such as suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement are increasingly common for minor misconduct, such as acting up in class, name-calling, and fighting. These policies and practices are often rigid and unthinking (e.g., ten-day suspensions for a fight regardless of circumstances), and reflect a “get tough” approach to discipline in which the punishment rarely fits the misconduct (e.g., five-day suspensions for “disrespect of authority” or “disobedience”). They are also unforgiving, leaving students without any “lessons learned” and a discipline record that follows them from grade to grade.

Zero tolerance has not made schools safer or more effective in disciplining students. In fact, zero tolerance has been shown to be quite ineffective in changing student behavior in positive ways. Instead, because zero tolerance policies are harsh and keep students outside the classroom, they are associated with lower academic achievement, lower graduation rates, and worse school climate.

## DATA COLLECTION

### Getting Up To Speed

The first step in understanding the operation of zero tolerance and other harsh school disciplinary practices in a school district is to understand how they operate. What triggers zero tolerance? What is punishable? To gain a better understanding of school disciplinary policies and practices, the following materials may be helpful, and may be found on the Internet:

- State education laws. Federal law requires states to impose a one-year expulsion of students in possession of a firearm on school grounds (though this may be modified on a case-by-case basis). Many state laws go beyond this, requiring expulsions, suspensions, or referrals to law enforcement for other conduct including: drug offenses, possession of other types of weapons, and fighting. State laws may also indicate whether a suspended or expelled student is entitled to continued educational services (such as in alternative schools), and may detail disciplinary hearing procedures.
- Local school district code of conduct. Many public school districts have district-wide disciplinary codes that list all disciplinary offenses and recommend or require particular punishments for these offenses. These policies typically go beyond state and federal requirements.
- School disciplinary code. In some districts, individual schools may have their own code of conduct that details the policies specific to the school.

School discipline data is also important to understanding the schoolhouse to jailhouse track. Most school districts collect suspension and expulsion data. In some states, school districts are also required to keep data on student arrests or referrals to law enforcement. However, in many places, local (or state) law enforcement agencies, juvenile courts, and/or juvenile justice departments collect this data.

If you are unable to find data through these sources, state Departments of Education and local school districts commonly collect certain school discipline data in the following types of reports that may also be available on the Internet:

- School Accountability Report Cards;
- Safety and Discipline Reports;
- School Safety and Climate Reports;
- Student Disciplinary Action Reports; or
- School Violence Reports.

In addition, the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education collects and publishes school district discipline data in its bi-annual Civil Rights Report Card ([www.ed.gov/about/list/ocr/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/list/ocr/index.html)).



If data is not readily available on the Internet, a letter requesting this information, i.e. a public records request, may be necessary.

### Public Records Requests

Most school discipline data and related information is considered public record and thus must be made available to the public upon request. Often, a formal written request is necessary. However, public records requests can be time-consuming and even costly, so it is important to have a clear idea of what type of data/information is going to be most useful to an overall campaign before making a request.

Also, it is critical to have an understanding of the state's public records law. In particular, it is useful to know if the law requires that the district respond within a certain time, and how much can be charged for compiling and copying the documents. This can be especially helpful if difficulties are encountered in obtaining the information.

For more information about state public records laws, visit the National Freedom of Information Coalition at: [www.nfoic.org](http://www.nfoic.org).

The following agencies typically maintain school discipline and/or arrest data:

- State Departments of Education;
- School Districts;
- School Police Departments and/or local Police or Sheriff's Departments;
- State Departments of Juvenile Justice; and
- Court Administrators at local juvenile/municipal/state courts.

The types of data and information that often prove helpful in understanding the schoolhouse to jailhouse track are:

- Suspensions, expulsions, and arrests/referrals to law enforcement by conduct at issue, race, gender, age, grade, date, disability (if any), length of suspension/expulsion (if applicable), and school;
- School prevention and intervention programs, requirements for accessing those programs, participation rates by race, age, and gender of students, and length of time in program;
- School security budget;
- Hiring qualifications and training materials for school security and police officers;
- Information on the number of school security and police officer assigned to schools, and the race, gender, and years of experience of those officers;

- Agreements between school districts and local police departments for law enforcement services;
- Outcomes (or dispositions) of cases referred to law enforcement from schools (may be maintained by courts);
- Complaints or lawsuits filed against school security or school resource officers for misconduct; and
- Complaints or lawsuits filed against schools regarding discipline.

***See Appendix I for sample public records requests used in mapping the schoolhouse to jailhouse track.***

## **Tips for Public Records Requests**

### **Sending Requests**

- A) After identifying the appropriate agency/agencies and the appropriate recipient (usually the Public Information Official or the Public Records Official), send the initial request. A reminder system should be created for all requests in order to keep track of the date by which the agency should respond.
- B) Maintain a record of all letters; this should include all phone conversations, faxes, and mailings.
- C) All mailed letters should be photocopied before sending.
- D) For all faxed letters, keep a copy of the letter and fax cover page, along with the confirmation page.
- E) Keep all letters in a binder in reverse chronological order, so that the most recent letter will appear first, and so on.

### **Receiving Responses**

All letters received, except the actual data, should be kept with the original letter.

### **Data Not Received**

- A) Make follow-up calls and send faxes to the original contact person at the agency.
- B) Follow-up should be done promptly. In some states, if too much time passes between the initial request and the follow-up request, the request process will have to start over.
- C) If the agency states that it does not maintain the data requested, use this opportunity to find out the exact data it does keep that may be useful. However, if the agency does keep the data but refuses access to it, an appeal of the agency's decision may be an option under state law.

## Public Records Request Q&A

### **Q: Who can make public records requests?**

**A:** In most states the general public may request access to most public records. Some states, however, may limit requests to citizens of the state.

### **Q: What records are available?**

**A:** Each state has laws that identify the types of records that are open to public inspection. Generally, school discipline policies and statistics are public records. While student records are typically subject to privacy laws, data that does not identify individual students are not, and are thus public records. If arrest data is maintained with information that identifies individual students, a request may be made to remove any confidential information so that the records can be made available.

### **Q: Do I need to tell the state or local agency why I want the information or what I will do with it?**

**A:** This is necessary only if it is required under state law. States are usually only interested in knowing if the information will be used for “commercial” purposes (for a profit). In all cases, it is advisable to keep your request short and concise.

### **Q: In what form may I request the data?**

**A:** You may ask that data be provided in hard copy and/or electronically. If you have a computer, you may want to request the data be sent electronically (such as in a computer file) because it is often less expensive and is usually easier to analyze than data received in hard copy. However, some agencies may refuse to provide data in a format that permits analysis and may only provide it in PDF or hard copy.

### **Q: Do I have to pay for the records I request?**

**A:** It depends. Most states allow the state and local agencies to charge a fee for copying the information; some states also allow the agencies to charge an hourly rate for staff time used to search for and compile the information. However, many states provide for a reduction in fees or a waiver of fees if the information sought is in the “public’s interest,” which will likely apply to efforts to hold schools and law enforcement agencies accountable to the communities they serve. You should check your state public records law for more information.

### **Q: How long does the agency have to respond to my request?**

**A:** It varies. Some state laws give specific response times (e.g., seven working days), while other state laws are written more broadly and allow for a “reasonable amount of time” in which to respond.

### **Q: If my request is denied, can I appeal the decision?**

**A:** Most state laws provide for an appeal process. Because most laws require an explanation for the rejection, sometimes it is easiest to contact the agency to find out how the request should be changed to successfully obtain the data.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND ORGANIZATION

Data analysis and organization are crucial to educating allies and adversaries about the schoolhouse to jailhouse track. Data will paint a picture of the depth of the problem and its impact on groups of students by race, gender, age, grade, disability, and school. The analysis will help tell the story and provide insight into the types of reforms needed. However, errors in data analysis can seriously undermine the credibility of a campaign for reform. Thus, it is critical to spend a significant amount of time understanding and organizing the data.

### Tips for Analyzing School Discipline Data

- Understand the data before using it and make sure you are comparing “apples to apples.” For example, some data is kept by school year (i.e., September through June) and other data is kept by calendar year (i.e., January through December), and it is important not to confuse the two.
- Rather than looking solely at raw numbers of suspensions, expulsions, and arrests (i.e., how many students were suspended overall), look at the number of incidents per 100 students. For example, divide the number of out-of-school suspensions by the total number of students. Multiply that by 100 to get the number of out-of-school suspensions per 100 students. This can be helpful for comparing data from different schools and districts.
- Analyzing data by the type of underlying incident, if possible, can be extremely helpful for demonstrating the extent to which punitive measures are being used in response to minor misbehavior.
- Consider examining trends across time. For example, suspension and arrest figures often change from year to year as a result of changes in school staff, budgeting, resources, or philosophy.
- To examine disparities on the basis of race or disability, compare the disciplinary incidents to the student population overall. For example, if you would like to show that Black students are over-represented among students arrested in school, compare the percentage of arrests that were of Black students with the percentage of the total student body comprised of Black students.
  - Consider examining disparities across levels of schooling. For example, racial disparities in suspensions are often the most severe in elementary schools.
- Consider examining data – such as suspension rates, number of arrests, and racial disparities – at the individual school level. This can often be helpful because school discipline practices typically vary widely across schools.

***See Appendix II for examples of data analyses of the schoolhouse to jailhouse track.***

## Lessons Learned

- Data comes in many forms, and so it is advisable to implement a standardized way to enter and analyze it, especially if different types of data will be compared.
- Student arrest data can often be complicated to identify. Because law enforcement records often include all arrests on or around school grounds, that may include arrests of adults and arrests that occur outside of school hours. It may be necessary to narrow your request to eliminate those arrests from your analysis. In particular, data requests for school-based arrests should include arrests by age so that non-student arrests can be excluded.
- Race data is not collected uniformly, so it is important to determine how students are classified in particular categories. For example, depending on the jurisdictions, students may be classified as Latino or Hispanic on the basis of their name, their skin color, or through self-identification. School districts, law enforcement agencies, and courts may all maintain race data in different ways so once again, make sure you are comparing “apples to apples.”
- School districts may list one incident of violence that includes more than one student, thus leading to more than one arrest. Therefore, in districts that only maintain incident data, using the data may undercount the number of arrests. Further, students may be arrested and charged with more than one offense (e.g., fight leads to an arrest for assault, disorderly conduct and resisting arrest). Thus, in analyzing the reasons youth were arrested, a uniform rule should be devised for categorizing arrests with multiple offenses. For example, an arrest for a fight that resulted in battery, assault, and disorderly conduct charges might be categorized by the most serious offense, i.e., battery.
- Many school districts, especially those that use the services of local police departments, do not collect student arrest data. Local police departments maintain arrest data, though they may not have collected data on school-based arrests in particular. It may be possible, though, to isolate the relevant data, such as by identifying arrests that occur on school campuses or where the arresting officer is a school resource officer.
- In larger school districts, it may be most efficient (and less expensive) to narrow requests to those schools that are the target of a campaign.
- When dealing with school discipline data, a healthy dose of caution is appropriate. Suspension, expulsion, and arrest figures are notorious for being inaccurate; specifically, they often fail to capture all, or even most, of the appropriate incidents. Also, race data tends not to match the experience “on the ground,” because agencies often undercount or wrongly categorize people.
- Keep a clean copy of the original set of data and detailed records indicating where, when, and from whom it was received. This is essential for citing the source of the data



accurately. It is also helpful to have this information in the event that a follow-up call about the data or a request for additional information or data is necessary. More importantly, this information can be very helpful if the data is questioned by an outside party. Also, if the data needs to be manually entered, have a system of checks and balances to eliminate human error.

## BEYOND THE NUMBERS

To thoroughly understand how disciplinary policies truly operate on a daily basis, interviews and surveys are crucial. Policies may look fine on paper, but in practice they may not be working well. Interviews and surveys not only give life to the numbers but also show the impact on students, families, and the community.

### Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews, narratives, and stories provide in-depth understanding and perspectives on the issue of zero tolerance and harsh school disciplinary practices. Interviewees not only provide anecdotes, but they also explain the data and ultimately help map the schoolhouse to jailhouse track. Common sources of anecdotal data include:

- Students;
- Parents;
- Teachers;
- School administrators (e.g. principals; vice principals; school safety department);
- School board members;
- School police officers;
- Local police officers;
- State department of education officials (school safety department);
- State law enforcement or juvenile justice agency officials;
- Juvenile court judges;
- Diversionary program administrators;
- Probation officers;
- State or district attorneys; and
- Public defenders.

*See Appendix III for sample interview protocols.*

### Interview and Story Documentation Tips

- Some parents and students are uncomfortable sharing their identity with the general public. This is particularly the case if the student is under age 18 and still enrolled in school, or is an undocumented immigrant. Thus, when collecting stories to be used publicly, the age and immigration status of the student and her family should be considered. The potential risks to the student and family who decide to publicly share their story (such as retaliation from the school or law enforcement) should be discussed.
- An arrest is a private matter. While many parents and students are outraged by the unjust criminalization of youth by their schools, it is often difficult to find students who have been arrested and are willing to talk about their experience publicly. Often the students and their families are embarrassed or concerned about continued harassment. Additionally, when a case is pending in court, statements made by the student or parent may be used against



them. Parents and lawyers representing these youth should be involved in any discussions about revealing the youth's identity.

- Attending juvenile court and/or expulsion proceedings to witness the schoolhouse to jailhouse track firsthand helps to paint a clearer picture of how the track works and the negative impact it has on students and their families. In some places these proceedings are open to the public.

## Community Surveys

Surveys can be a critical tool in gaining a deeper understanding of the impact of school discipline policies in a particular community. Surveys may assist in identifying: youth treated unfairly through disciplinary measures, potential allies, and safety concerns that should be considered when formulating reforms. Often these surveys are helpful in gauging perceptions, but may not be useful as quantitative data unless a significant number of people are surveyed.

For more information about community surveys, go to the Data Center's website: <http://www.datacenter.org/research/creatingsurveys>.

***See Appendix IV for a sample student survey.***

## Mapping the Track

While there are certainly similarities across communities in how the schoolhouse to jailhouse track works, there are also frequently important differences. Therefore, it can be helpful to map out the dynamics in your community once you collect and analyze your data. Hi-tech GIS mapping is now being used by some advocates, but simple diagrams can be extremely effective in helping others to visualize the problem and identify the key targets in a reform campaign.

***For examples of such maps, see Appendix V.***

## Messaging

Once you have diagnosed the school discipline problems in your community, the final step before crafting and implementing an advocacy campaign is to determine how to talk about the problem with potential allies. Developing your core messages is critical to building a base of support and identifying advocacy targets and goals. The failure of many promising campaigns can be traced to insufficient attention to "messaging."

Crafting messages around school discipline can be challenging. Because the safety of children is at issue, these discussions can be emotionally charged. Nevertheless, our experience has demonstrated that it is possible to reach and persuade a variety of stakeholders through strong, consistent messages that address the issue directly.



We recommend crafting messages that are aligned with the information you gather about the schoolhouse to jailhouse track in your community. Values and priorities can differ in some important ways across communities. Plus, it is important that your messages correspond to the particular problems in your community.

Nevertheless, we have found that there are some messages that are effective across many communities. We conducted focus groups of parents and students to better understand their values when it comes to school discipline and the messages that resonate with them. These were some of our findings:

- Parents like it when schools pay individual attention to students, and when schools are in close contact with parents about student behavior.
- Parents want schools to take into account the individual circumstances of students when issuing punishments, while acknowledging that teachers and schools are often overwhelmed.
- Most parents see schools as relatively safe, although several factors concern them, including gangs, the random nature of school violence incidents, and the fact that other children might “snap” at any time.
- Violent incidents that have occurred in schools scare and trouble parents, and make some teachers question their career choice. At the same time, parents and teachers both indicate that in modern society there is no such thing as a safe place.
- Parents would like schools to make an effort to ensure that parents and students understand discipline policies. Parents also perceive these policies as varying from school to school, and see inconsistencies in how principals and other school officials enforce the policies.
- Parents and teachers think minor offenses such as talking back in class can be handled by teachers. Fighting without weapons or making threats against students or teachers is seen as something that can be handled by principals, assistant principals, and deans, while police officers should only be involved when students make major threats (e.g. saying they have a bomb), bring a deadly weapon to school (e.g. a gun or a knife), or seriously hurt another student or teacher.
- Many parents and teachers see fighting in schools as normal behavior, and think harsh punishments for kids fighting is over-reacting to a long-standing problem. They also think kids who do not start fights should be able to defend themselves without being punished.
- Parents do not think they are contacted frequently enough or quickly enough when their children are getting into trouble at school.

- Parents and teachers do not like punishments that give children unsupervised free time (out-of-school suspensions are particularly disliked). Instead, parents and teachers favor issuing extra homework or making kids do community service.
- Parents and teachers are in favor of having additional counselors in the schools to work with troubled students.

***For examples of how this information was used to create messages, see the sample talking points in Appendix VI.***

## **ABOUT ADVANCEMENT PROJECT**

Advancement Project is an innovative civil rights law, policy, and communications “action tank” that advances universal opportunity and a just democracy for those left behind in America. We believe that sustainable progress can be made when multiple tools—law, policy analysis, strategic communications, technology, and research—are coordinated with grassroots movements.

For the past ten years, Advancement Project has focused on the use and devastating effects of harsh school discipline policies and practices and the increased role of law enforcement in public schools. We work at both the national level and on the ground with our community partners to examine, expose, and reform practices that lead to the criminalization of students.

To view a copy of our reports and learn more about our work, visit [www.advancementproject.org](http://www.advancementproject.org).

### Contact Information:

Advancement Project

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**SAMPLE PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST  
TO SCHOOL DISTRICT – LONG VERSION**

[DATE]

Via First Class Mail and Facsimile [FAX NUMBER]

[NAME AND ADDRESS OF PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER]

RE: Public Records Requests

To Whom it May Concern:

This letter is to request access to the following records and information in your custody and control. Pursuant to the [STATE PUBLIC RECORDS LAW], please make the following records available for review and photocopying:

1. All documents indicating the student population by school, grade, gender, type of disability (if any), and race/ethnicity from 2003-present.
2. All documents indicating the number of students arrested or referred to school resource officers, security guards, and/or other law enforcement officers for alleged misconduct in schools from 2003-present, disaggregated if possible by school, race/ethnicity of student, gender of student, age of student, grade of student, type of disability (if any), date, type of offense, and outcome of arrest.
3. All documents detailing the number of citations/summons and/or tickets issued to students by school resource officers, security guards, and/or other law enforcement officers from 2003-present, disaggregated if possible by school, race/ethnicity of student, race/ethnicity of officer, age of student, gender of student, type of disability (if any), date, type of offense, and outcome of citation/summons.
4. All documents indicating the number of students referred to juvenile or criminal court for alleged misconduct in schools from 2003-present, disaggregated if possible by school, race/ethnicity of student, gender of student, age of student, grade of student, type of disability (if any), date, reason for referral, and outcome of referral.
5. All documents detailing the number of suspensions given to students from 2003-present, disaggregated if possible by school, race/ethnicity of student, age of student, grade of student, gender of student, type of disability (if any), date, type of offense, and length of suspension.
6. All documents detailing the number of expulsions given to students from 2003-present,



disaggregated if possible by school, race/ethnicity of student, age of student, grade of student, gender of student, type of disability (if any), date, type of offense, and outcome of expulsion.

7. All documents indicating the number of school resource officers, security guards, and/or other law enforcement officers assigned to schools in your district by race/ethnicity, gender, years of experience, and school from 2003-present.
8. All documents indicating hiring and training procedures and policies of school resource officers, security guards, and/or other law enforcement officers assigned to schools in your district from 2003-present.
9. All documents indicating the amount of money budgeted each year from 2003-present for safety and security measures, including but not limited to: school resource officers, security guards, and/or other law enforcement officers assigned to schools in your district, security technology (such as metal detectors, security cameras, wands, and tasers), and training.
10. All documents indicating policies and procedures concerning school resource officers, security guards, other law enforcement officers assigned to schools, and law enforcement officers who are called to respond to a school-based incident in your district from 2003-present.
11. All documents indicating school discipline policies and procedures in your district from 2003-present.
12. All memoranda of understanding and other contracts between local law enforcement agencies and your district regarding the employment and responsibilities of school resource officers and other law enforcement officers assigned to schools from 2003-present.
13. All documents indicating policies and procedures about any programs used as an alternative to suspensions, expulsions, or school-based arrests.

Please provide the requested records in electronic format, if possible. If not, please let us know the cost of photocopying the requested records before they are duplicated. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at [PHONE NUMBER].

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely yours,

[NAME]

**SAMPLE PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST  
TO SCHOOL DISTRICT – SHORT VERSION**

[DATE]

Via First Class Mail and Facsimile [FAX NUMBER]

[NAME AND ADDRESS OF PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER]

RE: Public Records Requests

To Whom it May Concern:

This letter is to request access to the following records and information in your custody and control. Pursuant to the [STATE PUBLIC RECORDS LAW], please make the following records available for review and photocopying:

1. All documents indicating the number of students arrested or referred to school resource officers, security guards, and/or other law enforcement officers for alleged misconduct in schools from 2003-present, disaggregated, if possible, by school, race/ethnicity of student, gender of student, age of student, grade of student, type of disability (if any), date, type of offense, and outcome of arrest or referral.
2. All documents detailing the number of out-of-school suspensions given to students from 2003-present, disaggregated, if possible, by school, race/ethnicity of student, gender of student, age of student, grade of student, type of disability (if any), date, type of offense, and length of suspension.

Please provide the requested records in electronic format, if possible. If not, please let us know the cost of photocopying the requested records before they are duplicated. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at [PHONE NUMBER].

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely yours,

[NAME]

**SAMPLE PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST  
TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY**

[DATE]

Via First Class Mail and Facsimile [FAX NUMBER]

[NAME AND ADDRESS OF PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER]

RE: Public Records Requests

To Whom it May Concern:

This letter is to request access to the following records and information in your custody and control. Pursuant to the [STATE PUBLIC RECORDS LAW], please make the following records available for review and photocopying:

1. All documents indicating the number of students arrested or referred to school resource officers, security guards, and/or other law enforcement officers for alleged misconduct in schools from 2003-present, disaggregated if possible by school, race/ethnicity of student, gender of student, age of student, type of disability (if any), grade of student, date, type of offense, and outcome of arrest.
2. All documents indicating the number of citations/summons and/or tickets issued to students by school resource officers and/or other law enforcement officers from 2003-present, disaggregated if possible by school, race/ethnicity of student, race/ethnicity of officer, age of student, type of disability (if any), gender of student, date, type of offense, and outcome of citation/summons.
3. All documents indicating the number of students referred to juvenile or criminal court for alleged misconduct in schools from 2003-present, disaggregated if possible by school, race/ethnicity of student, gender of student, age of student, type of disability (if any), grade of student, date, reason for referral, and outcome of referral.
4. All documents indicating the number of school resource officers, security guards, and/or other law enforcement officers assigned to schools in your jurisdiction by race/ethnicity, gender, years of experience, and school from 2003-present.
5. All documents indicating hiring and training procedures and policies of school resource officers and/or other law enforcement officers assigned to schools in your jurisdiction from 2003-present.
6. All documents indicating the amount of money budgeted each year from 2003-present for safety and security measures at schools in your jurisdiction, including but not limited to: school resource officers, security guards and/or other law enforcement officers assigned



to schools in your district, security technology (such as metal detectors, security cameras, wands, and tasers), and training.

7. All documents indicating policies and procedures concerning school resource officers, other law enforcement officers assigned to schools, and law enforcement officers who are called to respond to a school-based incident in your jurisdiction from 2003-present.
8. All memoranda of understanding and other contracts between your department and your local school district regarding the employment and responsibilities of school resource officers and other law enforcement officers from 2003-present.
9. All documents indicating policies and procedures about any programs used as an alternative to school-based arrests.

Please provide the requested records in electronic format, if possible. If not, please let us know the cost of photocopying the requested records before they are duplicated. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at [PHONE NUMBER].

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely yours,

[NAME]

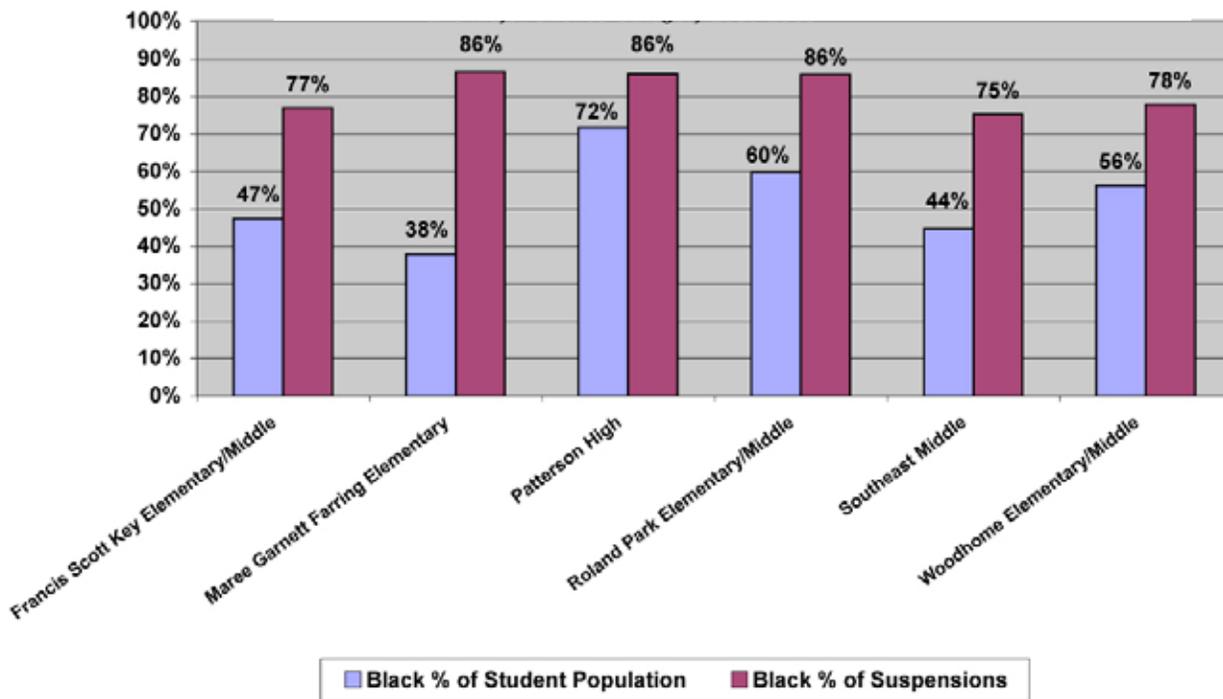




**Example A:**

**Specific Examples of Racial Disparities in Suspensions and Expulsions in Baltimore City Public Schools - 2005-2006**

Source: Maryland State Department of Education, "Maryland Public School Suspensions by School and Major Offense Category 2005-2006"

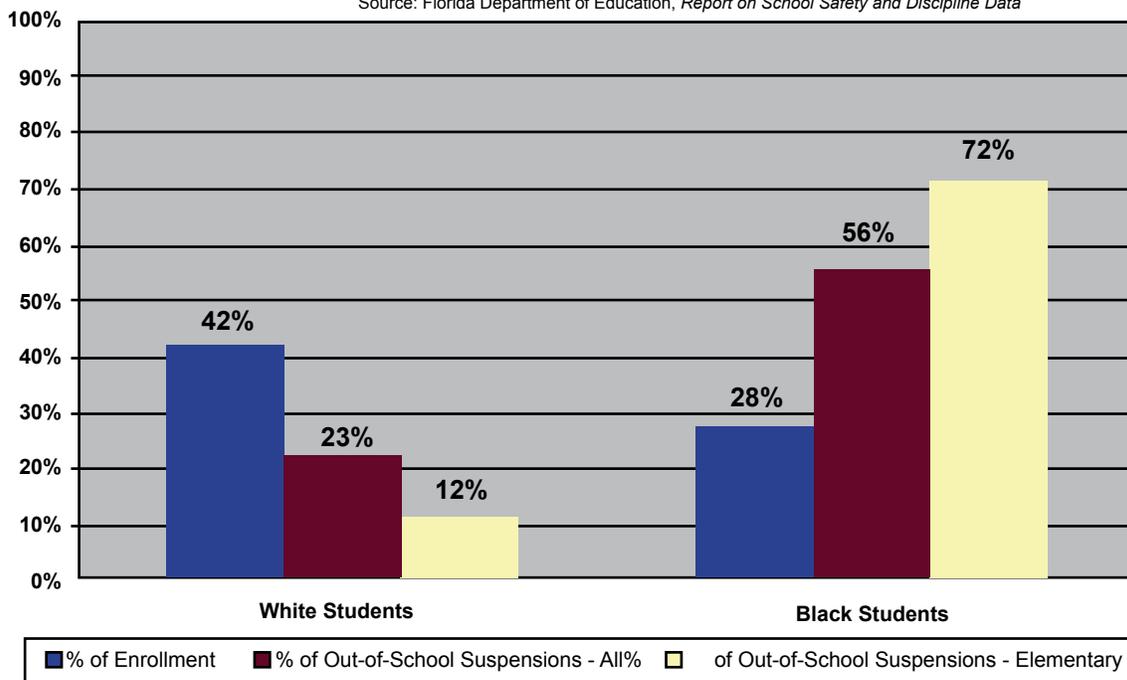




**Example B:**

**Racial Disparities in Palm Beach County Public Schools  
Suspensions: 2005-2006**

Source: Florida Department of Education, *Report on School Safety and Discipline Data*

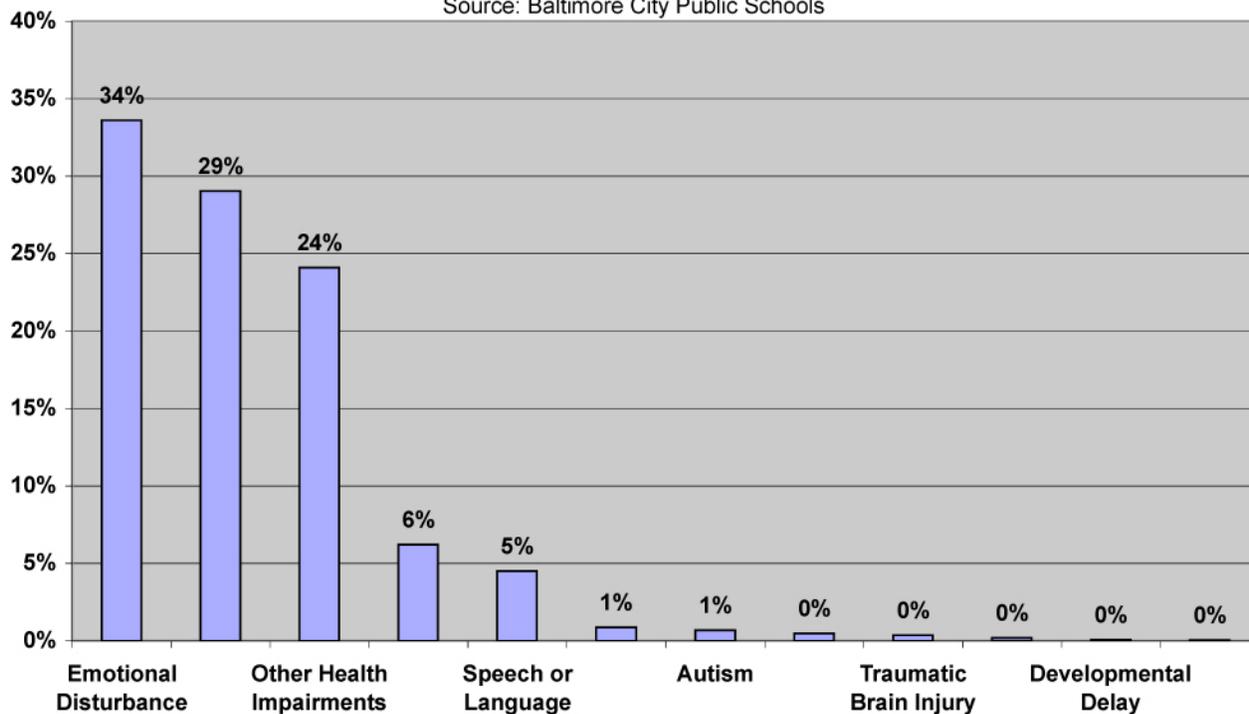




**Example C:**

**Baltimore City Public Schools Suspensions and Expulsions of Students with Disabilities - 2006-2007**

Source: Baltimore City Public Schools

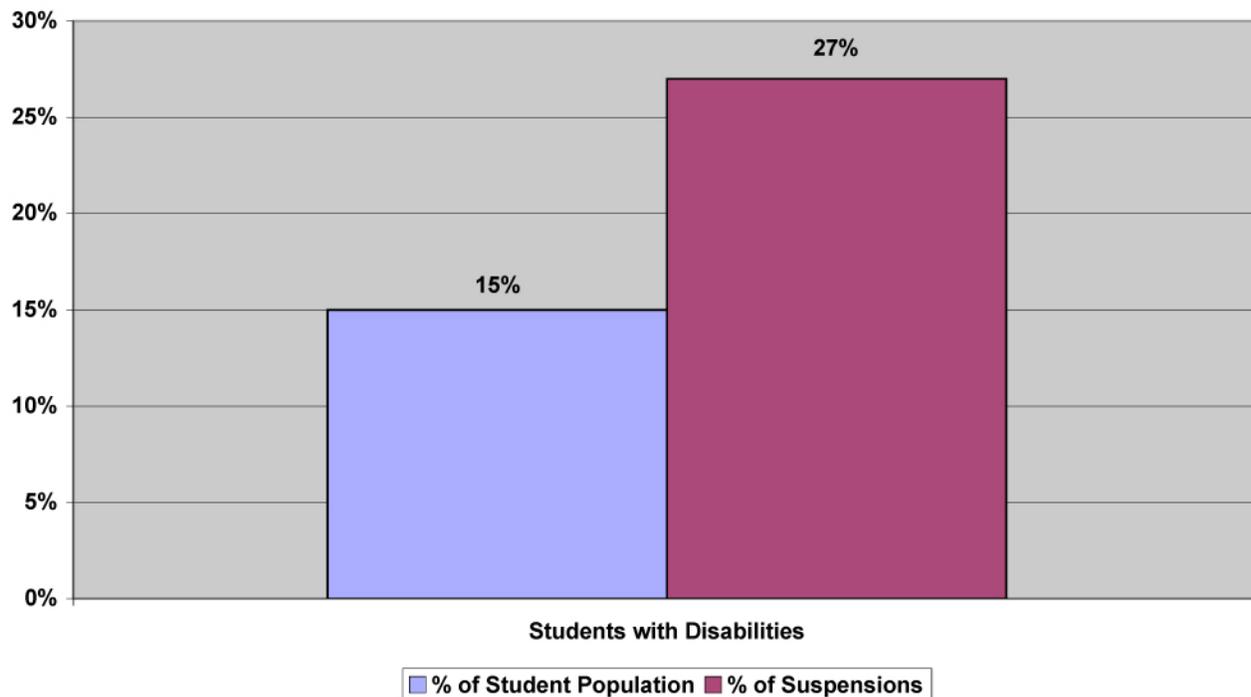




**Example D:**

**Baltimore City Public Schools Suspensions and Expulsions for Students with Disabilities - 2006-2007**

Source: Baltimore City Public Schools

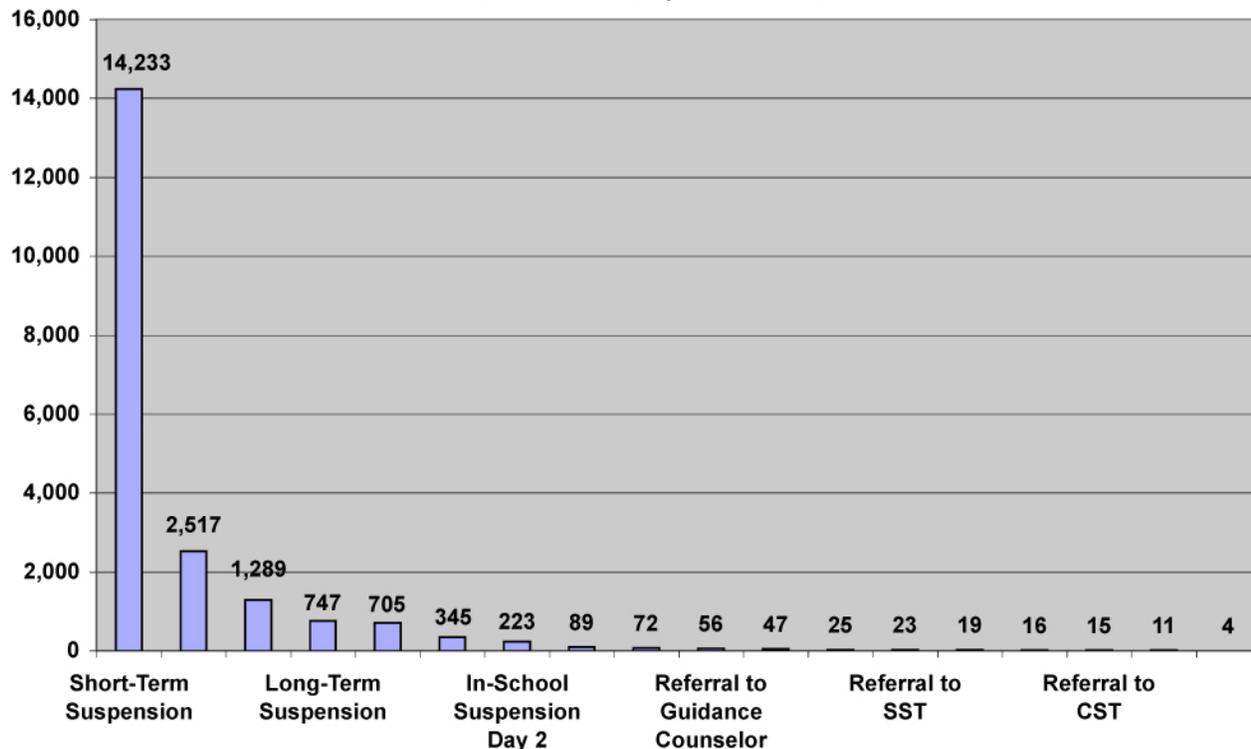




**Example E:**

**Baltimore City Public Schools Disciplinary Actions Taken - 2006-2007**

Source: Baltimore City Public Schools





### Example F:

#### Suspension Rates of Maryland Counties - 2005-2006

Source: Maryland State Department of Education, "Maryland Public School Suspensions by School and Major Offense Category 2005-2006"

District	Student Population	Number of Suspensions	Suspensions Per 100 Students
SOMERSET COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2,915	1,209	41.5
WICOMICO COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	14,491	5,372	37.1
CECIL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	16,521	4,650	28.1
KENT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	2,440	683	28.0
DORCHESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4,654	1,293	27.8
CHARLES COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	26,406	5,849	22.2
CAROLINE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	5,570	1,123	20.2
BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	107,043	20,528	19.2
ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	73,565	13,278	18.0
BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	87,643	15,031	17.2
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	133,525	22,564	16.9
ST. MARY'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS ST.	16,649	2,580	15.5
FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	39,672	5,677	14.3
HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	40,212	5,751	14.3
TALBOT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4,482	580	12.9
CALVERT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	17,468	1,911	10.9
QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	7,780	788	10.1
ALLEGANY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	9,715	930	9.6
CARROLL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	28,490	2,480	8.7
WORCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	6,727	478	7.1
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	139,398	9,192	6.6
HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	48,596	3,006	6.2
GARRETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	4,668	284	6.1
WASHINGTON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	21,141	1,082	5.1

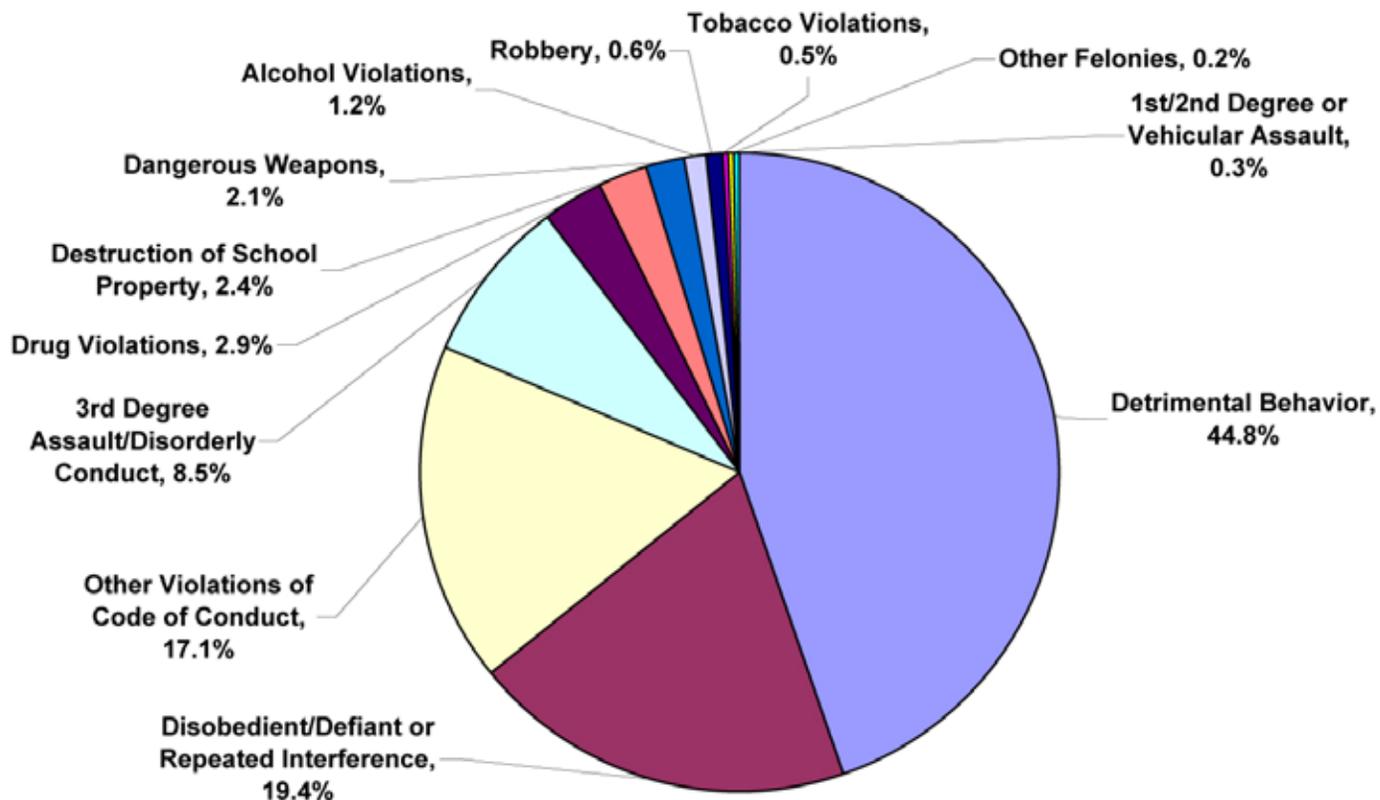


**Example G:**

**2006-2007 Denver Public Schools Out-of-School Suspensions**

(August 2006 through 1/12/07)

Source: Denver Public Schools

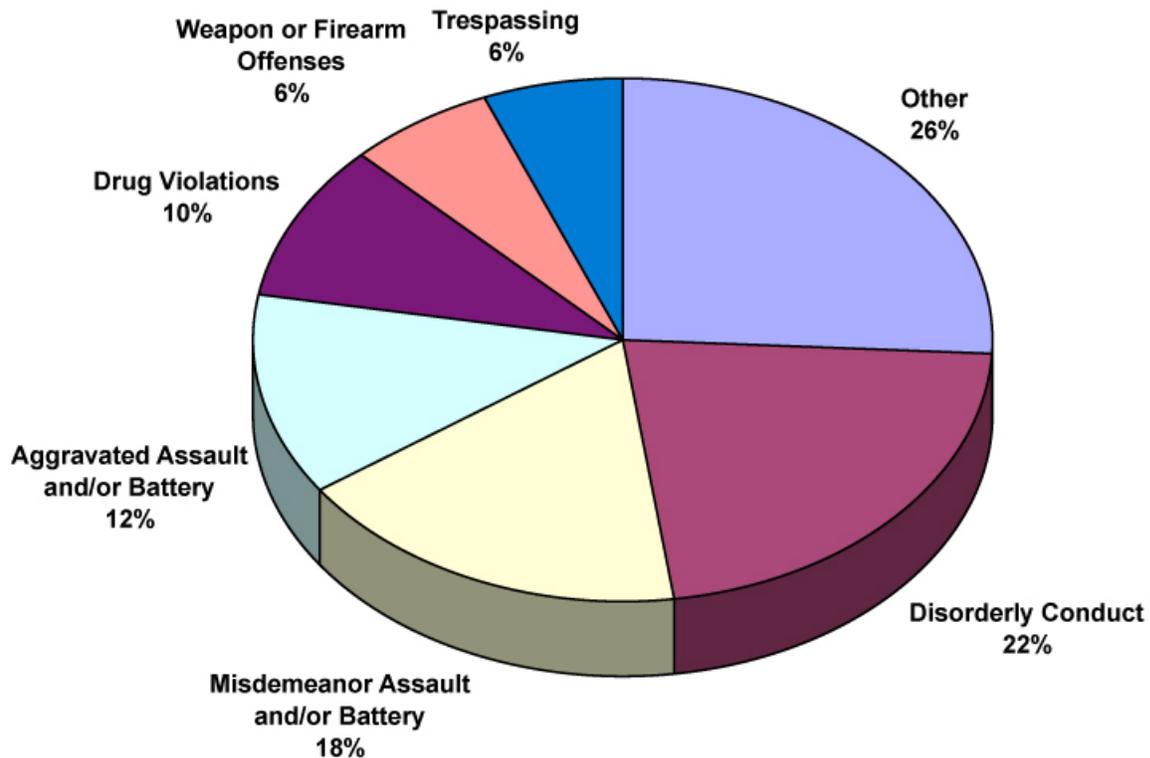




**Example H:**

**Florida School-Related Referrals to Department of Juvenile Justice: 2006-07**

Source: Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Office of Program Accountability, Delinquency in Florida's Schools FY 2006-07

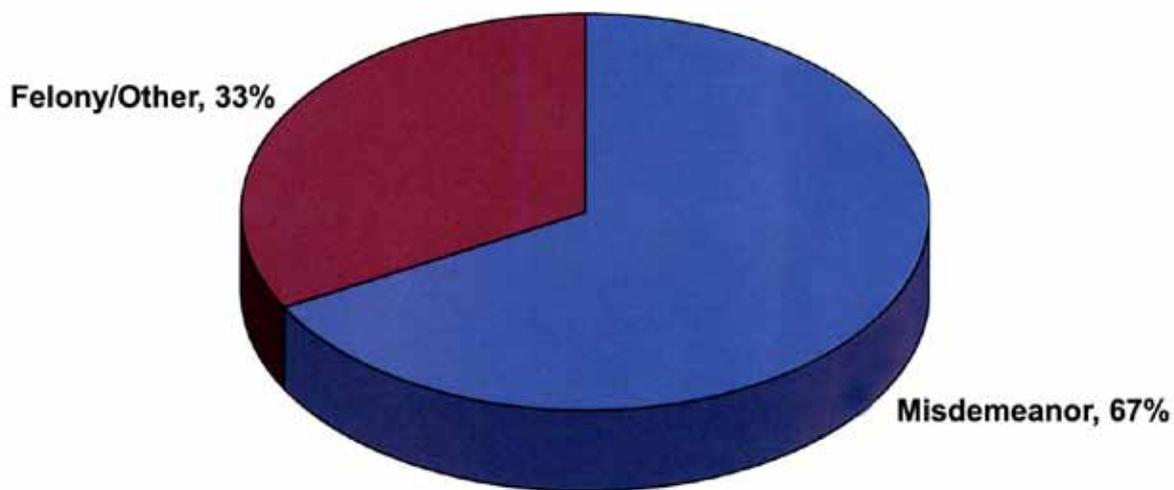




### Example I:

#### **Florida School-Related Referrals to Department of Juvenile Justice: 2006-07**

Source: Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Office of Program Accountability, Delinquency in Florida's Schools FY 2006-07





**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR JUDGES**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Introductory Statement to be made by interviewer:** Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_

and I am a member of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(name of organization)

schools arrest students for minor behavior and sometimes refer these students to Juvenile Court.

We would like to gather information from judges who hear cases involving incidents that occurred in school. We will be asking you questions about your experiences as a Juvenile Court Judge. Before we begin, do you have any questions?

Name of Judge \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Court \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Court \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. of Judge \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity of Judge \_\_\_\_\_

Language(s) Spoken by Judge \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long have you been a Judge?
2. How long have you been a Juvenile Court Judge?
3. What formal training do you receive for your position as a Juvenile Court Judge?
  - a) Do you receive training on adolescent development?
  - b) Do you receive training on children with disabilities?
4. How often do you receive this training?
5. Do you believe police officers should be assigned to schools? If so, why? If not, why not?
6. What percentage of the cases you hear involve a student's conduct in school?
  - a. Percentage of delinquency cases?
  - b. Percentage of truancy cases?

7. What percentage of the cases you hear involve students with disabilities who have allegedly misbehaved in school?
8. What are typical cases? E.g., fights, classroom disruption, etc?
9. Please give an example of a case involving a school incident that you thought did not warrant police or Court involvement.
10. Typically, how are these school cases resolved?
  - a. Dismissal?
  - b. Probation? If so, how long? What are the typical terms of probation?
  - c. Payment fines? If so, how much?
  - d. Referred to diversionary program? Under what circumstances?
  - e. Referred to alternative school?
  - f. Other?
11. How often do students who are placed on probation violate probation?
  - a. What is the typical reason for the violation?
  - b. What happened?
12. Is the outcome of cases involving students with disabilities any different from the outcome of similar cases involving students without disabilities? If so, please describe the different outcomes.
13. Are educational or emotional disabilities taken into consideration in deciding whether a student's case should go forward?
14. Are educational or emotional disabilities taken into consideration in deciding the punishment/disposition of a student's case?
15. What is the race/ethnicity of students involved in most of school incident cases?  
Gender?
16. From which schools are most of these school incident cases coming?
17. Do teachers or other school administrators attend Juvenile Court hearings to defend these cases?
  - a. If not, what information from the school does the district attorney use to prosecute these cases?

- 
18. What information do you consider when you defend or decide school incident cases? For example, do you consider whether a student has a disability? Grades? Etc.
  19. What types of programs or services are available to students who find themselves in Juvenile Court due to alleged school misconduct? Please describe.
    - a. Diversionary programs?
    - b. Alternative Schools?
    - c. Counseling?
  20. What are the criteria for entering these programs?
  21. Do you believe that these programs or services are effective? If so, why? If not, why not?
  22. What type of student behavior should result in an arrest or referral to Juvenile Court?
    - a. Drug violations?
    - b. Alcohol violations?
    - c. Fights (without weapons)?
    - d. Dangerous Weapons?
    - e. Robbery?
    - f. Disobedience or Defiance?
    - g. Destruction of School Property?
    - h. Other?
  23. What do you think needs to be changed in order to reduce the number of students being referred to Juvenile Court from schools?
  24. Do you know of any other lawyers, judges, or parents who would be willing to speak with us about their experiences with students who have been arrested in school for minor infractions and/or referred to Juvenile Court?
    - a. If so, may I have his/her contact information?

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LAWYERS

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Introductory Statement to be made by interviewer:** Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_  
and I am a member of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(name of organization) We are investigating the

way schools arrest students for minor behavior and sometimes refer these students to court.

We would like to gather information from lawyers who represent students who have been referred to juvenile court for incidents that occurred in school. We will be asking you questions about your experiences representing these students in court. Before we begin, do you have any questions?

Name of Lawyer \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Law Office \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Lawyer \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. of Lawyer \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity of Lawyer \_\_\_\_\_

Language(s) Spoken by Lawyer \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long have you been a lawyer?
2. How long have you represented young people in juvenile court?
3. Do you believe police officers should be assigned to schools? If so, why? If not, why not?
4. Do you believe school police officers are doing a good job? Why or why not?
5. What percentage of the cases you handle involve a student's conduct in school?
  - a. Percentage of delinquency cases?
  - b. Percentage of truancy cases?
6. What percentage of the cases you handle involve students with disabilities who have allegedly misbehaved in school?
7. What are typical cases? E.g., fights, classroom disruption, etc?

8. Please give an example of a case involving a school incident that you thought did not warrant police or court involvement.
9. Typically, how are these school cases resolved?
  - a. Dismissal?
  - b. Probation? If so, how long? What are the typical terms of probation?
  - c. Payment fines? If so, how much?
  - d. Referred to diversionary program? Under what circumstances?
  - e. Referred to alternative school?
  - f. Other?
10. How often do students who are placed on probation violate probation?
  - a. What is the typical reason for the violation?
  - b. What happened?
11. Is the outcome of cases involving students with disabilities any different from the outcome of similar cases involving students without disabilities? If so, please describe the different outcomes.
12. Are educational or emotional disabilities taken into consideration in deciding whether a student's case should go forward?
13. Are educational or emotional disabilities taken into consideration in deciding the punishment/disposition of a student's case?
14. What is the race/ethnicity of students involved in most of school incident cases?  
Gender?
15. From which schools are most of these school incident cases coming?
16. Do teachers or other school administrators attend Juvenile Court hearings to defend these cases?
  - a. If not, what information from the school does the district attorney use to prosecute these cases?
17. What information do you consider when you defend school incident cases? For example, do you consider whether a student has a disability? Grades? Etc.
18. What types of programs or services are available to students who find themselves in juvenile court due to alleged school misconduct? Please describe.
  - a. Diversionary programs?

- 
- b. Alternative Schools?
    - c. Counseling?
  19. What are the criteria for entering these programs?
  20. Do you believe that these programs or services are effective? If so, why? If not, why not?
  21. What type of student behavior should result in an arrest or referral to juvenile court?
    - a. Drug violations?
    - b. Alcohol violations?
    - c. Fights (without weapons)?
    - d. Dangerous Weapons?
    - e. Robbery?
    - f. Disobedience or Defiance?
    - g. Destruction of School Property?
    - h. Other?
  22. What do you think needs to be changed in order to reduce the number of students being referred to juvenile court from schools?
  23. If a student is undocumented and gets arrested or referred to court, will the student get deported? If so, what types of crimes lead to deportation?
  24. Do you know of any other lawyers, judges, or parents who would be willing to speak with us about their experiences with students who have been arrested in school for minor infractions and/or referred to juvenile court?
    - a. If so, may I have his/her contact information?

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Introductory Statement to be made by interviewer:** Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_

and I am a member of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(name of organization)

We are investigating the way schools arrest students for minor behavior and sometimes refer these students to court. We are gathering stories from parents whose children have been arrested in school. After we have gathered all the stories, we will publish a report that exposes the problem and offers solutions. We will keep the information you share with us confidential and will not make it public unless you give us permission to do so. Do you have any questions?

Name of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

First Name of Student \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Language(s) Spoken by Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Language(s) Spoken by Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Student Now Attends: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Grade of Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Age of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Where Disciplinary Incident(s) Occurred: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Month/Year of Disciplinary Incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_

1. Which of the following word or words best describes your child's school security officers and police officers? Please explain your answer.
  - a. Friendly

- 
- b. Fair
    - c. Mean
    - d. Unfair
  2. Has your child ever been arrested or given a ticket at school? If so, how many times?
  3. Describe the incident(s) leading up to the arrest(s) or receipt of tickets?
    - a. When did the incident occur?
    - b. Where did it occur?
    - c. Was a weapon involved? If so, what type of weapon and who used it?
    - d. Did a teacher/assistant principal get involved? What is his/her name? What did he/she do?
    - e. Did a security officer/police officer get involved? What is his/her name? What did he/she do?
    - f. If your child was arrested, how long did your child stay in jail?
  4. Did your child have an opportunity to explain his/her side of the story before he/she was arrested/given a ticket?
  5. Did the police officer advise your child of his/her rights before your child was arrested or given a ticket?
  6. When were you notified about your child's arrest or ticket?
    - a. What was your child charged with?
    - b. Did you know that your child could be arrested for this type of charge?
  7. Did your child have to appear in court?
  8. Was your child represented by an attorney in court? If so, what was the attorney's name?
  9. When did you speak with the attorney? Before you went to court? In court?
  10. Did you understand the juvenile court hearings? Did you need a translator? If so, did you get one?
  11. What happened in court?
    - a. Was your child placed on probation?
      - i. If so, for how long?
-

- 
- ii. What was your child ordered to do while he/she was on probation?
      - iii. Did your child violate probation? If so, what happened?
    - b. Did you have to pay a fine? If so, how much?
    - c. Was your child given counseling? If so, what kind?
    - d. Was your child sent to a program for juveniles? If so, where and for how long?
  12. Before the arrest or ticket, had your child ever been suspended? If so why?
  13. Before the arrest or ticket, had your child received special education and related services, like counseling? If so, what types of services?
  14. After the arrest or ticket, did your child return to school? If not, where did he/she go?
  15. Do you believe your child was treated fairly during the arrest/ticket? At Court? If not, why not?
  16. What emotional impact did the arrest/ticket/Court experience have on your child?
  17. If you could change the way the school disciplines students, what would you change?
  18. Do you know of any other students who have been arrested/received a ticket?

If so, would you please give us the name of the students' parents/guardians or would you feel more comfortable asking them to contact us?

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Introductory Statement to be made by interviewer:** Hello, and thank you for meeting with us. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a member of \_\_\_\_\_. We are researching school discipline policies that lead to the arrest of students and sometimes the referrals of these students to court. We will be asking you a few questions about school policies and practices. Before I begin, do you have any questions for us?

Name of School Principal/Asst. Principal \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_

Address of School \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. of Principal \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity of Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Language(s) Spoken by Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long have you been a principal at this school?
2. Have you served as principal at any other schools? If so, where?
3. What, if any, training did you receive for your position as principal? e.g., were you trained on how to manage student behavior?
4. How often do you receive this training?
5. Do you have school security officer and/or police officers assigned to your school? If so, how many?
6. What are the duties and responsibilities of these security officers?
7. What are the duties and responsibilities of school police officers?
8. To whom do security officers report?
9. To whom do school police officers report?
10. Do you believe that security officers and police officers are needed? If so, why? If not, why not?

- 
11. Do you believe that school security officers are capable of keeping the schools safe and secure without the help of police officers? If so, why? If not, why not?
  12. What is the school policy and practice for arresting a student (referring a student to law enforcement)?
    - a. Under what circumstances are students arrested?
    - b. Who makes the decision to have a student arrested?
  13. What is the school policy and practice for giving a student a ticket?
    - a. Under what circumstances will a student receive a ticket?
    - b. Who makes the decision to give a ticket to a student?
  14. What is the school policy and practice for referring a student to court?
    - a. Under what circumstances will a student be referred to court?
    - b. Who makes the decision to refer a student to court?
  15. How are students/parents notified about these policies and practices? When are they notified?
  16. What percentage of the student body is arrested for incidents that occur in school?
  17. What are the typical reasons for these arrests?
  18. What percentage of the student body is referred to court for incidents that occur in school?
  19. What are the typical reasons for these referrals to court?
  20. What percentage of students with disabilities is arrested? Referred to court?
  21. Do you handle the arrest/referral of students with disabilities differently when compared to students without disabilities? If so, what do you do differently?
  22. Do your teachers receive formal training on adolescent development? Classroom management? If so, how often are they trained?
  23. What types of programs exist at your school that serves as an alternative to the arrest, suspension, or expulsion a child from school?
  24. How are these programs funded?
  25. What percentage of the students who are arrested or referred to court return to this school?
-

- 
26. What type of student behavior should result in an arrest or referral to juvenile court?
    - a. Drug violations?
    - b. Alcohol violations?
    - c. Fights (without weapons)?
    - d. Dangerous Weapons?
    - e. Robbery?
    - f. Disobedience or Defiance?
    - g. Destruction of School Property?
    - h. Other?
  27. What, if any, concerns do you have about a student who is arrested or referred to youth court for an incident that occurred in school?
  28. If faculty or staff treats a student unfairly, what recourse does the student have?
  29. If you could change the way the school disciplines students, what would you change?

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SCHOOL TEACHERS**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Introductory Statement to be made by interviewer:** Hello, and thank you for meeting with us.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a member of \_\_\_\_\_. We are  
(name of organization)

researching school discipline policies that lead to the arrest of students and sometimes the referrals of these students to Court. We will be asking you a few questions about school policies and practices. Before I begin, do you have any questions for us?

Name of Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_

Address of School \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. of Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity of Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Language(s) Spoken by Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How long have you been a teacher at this school?
3. What grade(s) do you teach? What subjects?
4. Have you taught at any other schools? If so, where?
5. During your time as a teacher, have you received formal training on adolescent development? If so, how often?
  - a. Have you received formal training on classroom management? If so, how often?
6. Do you have school security officers and/or police officers assigned to your school? If so, how many?
7. What are the duties and responsibilities of school security officers?
8. What are the duties and responsibilities of school police officers?
9. To whom do school security officers report?
10. To whom do school police officers report?

11. Do you believe that school security officers are needed? If so, why? If not, why not?
12. Do you believe that school police officers are needed? If so, why? If not, why not?
13. Do you believe that school security officers are capable of keeping the school safe and secure without the help of police officers? If so why? If not, why not?
14. What is the school policy and practice for arresting a student (referring a student to law enforcement)?
  - a. Under what circumstances are students arrested?
  - b. Who makes the decision to have a student arrested?
15. What is the school policy and practice for giving a student a ticket?
  - a. Under what circumstances will a student receive a ticket?
  - b. Who makes the decision to give a ticket to a student?
16. Do you handle the arrest/referral of students with disabilities differently when compared to students without disabilities? If so, what do you do differently?
17. Have you ever pressed charges against a student? If so, please describe the incident.
18. Have you ever witnessed a student being treated unfairly by school security or police officers? If so, please describe the incident.
19. What types of programs exist at your school that serve as an alternative to the arrest, suspension, or expulsion a child from school?
20. What type of student behavior should result in an arrest or referral to juvenile court?
  - a. Drug violations?
  - b. Alcohol violations?
  - c. Fights (without weapons)?
  - d. Dangerous Weapons?
  - e. Robbery?
  - f. Disobedience or Defiance?
  - g. Destruction of School Property?
  - h. Other?

- 
21. What, if any, concerns do you have about a student who is arrested or referred to juvenile court for an incident that occurred in school?
  22. Do you feel safe in the school? If not, why not?
  23. Do you believe that your school should have more police or fewer police? Please explain your answer.
  24. If you could change the way the school disciplines students, what would you change?

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SECURITY OR POLICE OFFICER**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Introductory Statement to be made by interviewer:** Hello, and thank you for meeting with us.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a member of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(name of organization)

We are researching school discipline policies that lead to the arrest of students and sometimes the referrals of these students to court. We will be asking you a few questions about school policies and practices. Before I begin, do you have any questions for us?

Name of Security Officer/Police Officer \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_

Address of School \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. of Security/Police \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity of Security/Police \_\_\_\_\_

Language(s) Spoken by Security/Police: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long have you been a security officer/police officer?
2. How long have you been a security officer/police officer at this school?
3. Have you been assigned as a security officer/police officer at any other school (s)? If so, where?
4. What did you do prior to working as a school security officer/police officer?
5. During your time as a security officer or police officer, have you received formal training on adolescent development? If so, how often?
6. During your time as a security officer or police officer, have you received formal training on classroom management? If so, how often?
7. How many security officers/police officers are assigned to your school?
8. What are the duties and responsibilities of security officers?
9. To whom do security officers report?
10. To whom do school police officers report?

11. What is the relationship between you and the school administration? For example, are you supervised by school administrators, etc.
12. Do you believe that security officers are needed? If so, why? If not, why not?
13. Do you believe that school police officers are needed? If so, why? If not, why not?
14. Do you believe that school police officers are needed? If so, why? If not, why not?
15. Do you believe that school security officers are capable of keeping the school safe and secure without the help of school police officers? If so why? If not, why not?
16. What is the school policy and practice for arresting a student (referring a student to the police)?
  - a. Under what circumstances are students arrested?
  - b. Who makes the decision to have a student arrested?
17. What is the school policy and practice for giving a student a ticket?
  - a. Under what circumstances will a student receive a ticket?
  - b. Who makes the decision to give a ticket to a student?
18. What is the school policy and practice for referring a student to juvenile court?
  - a. Under what circumstances will a student be referred to court?
  - b. who makes the decision to refer a student to court?
19. When are students read their Miranda rights? By whom?
20. How are students/parents notified about the arrest? When are they notified?
21. What percentage of the student body is arrested for incidents that occur in school?
22. What are the typical reasons for these arrests?
23. What percentage of the student body is referred to court for incidents that occur in school?
24. What are the typical reasons for these referrals to court?
25. What percentage of students with disabilities is arrested? Referred to youth court?
26. Do you handle the arrest/referral of students with disabilities differently when compared to students without disabilities? If so, what do you do differently?

- 
27. Have you ever used a weapon against a student? If so, please explain.
  28. If it is necessary to restrain a student, how do you do it?
  29. How do you interact with students or parents who do not speak English?
  30. What types of programs exist at your school that serve as an alternative to the arrest, suspension, or expulsion a child from school?
  31. What percentage of the students who are arrested or referred to youth court return to this school?
  32. What type of student behavior should result in an arrest or referral to youth court?
    - a. Drug violations?
    - b. Alcohol violations?
    - c. Fights (without weapons)?
    - d. Dangerous Weapons?
    - e. Robbery?
    - f. Disobedience or Defiance?
    - g. Destruction of School Property?
    - h. Other?
  33. What, if any, concerns do you have about a student who is arrested or referred to youth court for an incident that occurred in school?
  34. If you could change the way the school disciplines students, what would you change?

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Introductory Statement to be made by interviewer:** Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_  
and I am a member of \_\_\_\_\_. We are investigating the way  
(name of organization)

schools arrest students for minor behavior and sometimes refer these students to juvenile court. We are gathering stories from students who have been arrested in school. We will keep the information you share with us confidential and will not make it public unless you give us permission to do so. Do you have any questions?

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Language(s) Spoken by Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Language(s) Spoken by Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Student Now Attends: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Grade of Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Age of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Where Disciplinary Incident(s) Occurred: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Month/Year of Disciplinary Incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_

1. Does your school have security officers? If so, how many?
2. Does your school have police officers? If so, how many?

- 
3. Which of the following word or words best describes your school security officers and police officers? Please explain your answer?
    - a. Friendly
    - b. Fair
    - c. Mean
    - d. Unfair
  4. How would you describe your school. Does it:
    - a. Have a friendly atmosphere
    - b. Feel unsafe
    - c. Feel like a prison
  5. Have you ever been arrested/given a ticket at school? If so, how many times?
  6. Describe the incident(s) leading up to the arrest(s)/receipt of tickets.
    - a. When did the incident occur?
    - b. Where did it occur?
    - c. Was a weapon involved? If so, what type of weapon and who used it?
    - d. Did a teacher/assistant principal get involved? What is his/her name? What did he/she do?
    - e. Did a security officer/police officer get involved? What is his/her name? What did he/she do?
  7. Did you have an opportunity to explain your side of the story before you were arrested/given a ticket?
  8. Did the police officer read your rights before you were arrested/given a ticket?
  9. When were your parents notified about your arrest/ticket?
    - a. If you were arrested, how long were you held at the jail?
  10. Did you have to appear in court?
    - a. If so, when were you told about the court date?
-

- 
11. Were you represented by an attorney in court? If so, what was your attorney's name?
  12. When did you speak with attorney? Before you went to court? In court?
  13. Did you understand the court hearings? If so, what happened?
    - a. Were you placed on probation?
      - i. If so, for how long?
      - ii. What was your child ordered to do while he/she was on probation?
      - iii. Did you violate probation? If so, what happened?
    - b. Did you have to pay a fine? If so, how much?
    - c. Did you receive counseling? If so, what kind?
    - d. Were you sent to a program for youth? If so, where and for how long?
  14. Before the arrest/ticket, had you ever been suspended? If so, why?
  15. Before the arrest/ticket, had you received special education and related services, like counseling? If so, what types of services?
  16. After the arrest/ticket, did you return to school? If not, where did you go?
  17. Do you believe you were treated fairly during the arrest/ticket process? At court? If not, why not?
  18. If you could change the way the school disciplines students, what would you change?
  19. Do you know of any other students who have been arrested/received a ticket?  
If so, would you please give us the name of the students' parents/guardians or would you feel more comfortable asking them to contact us?





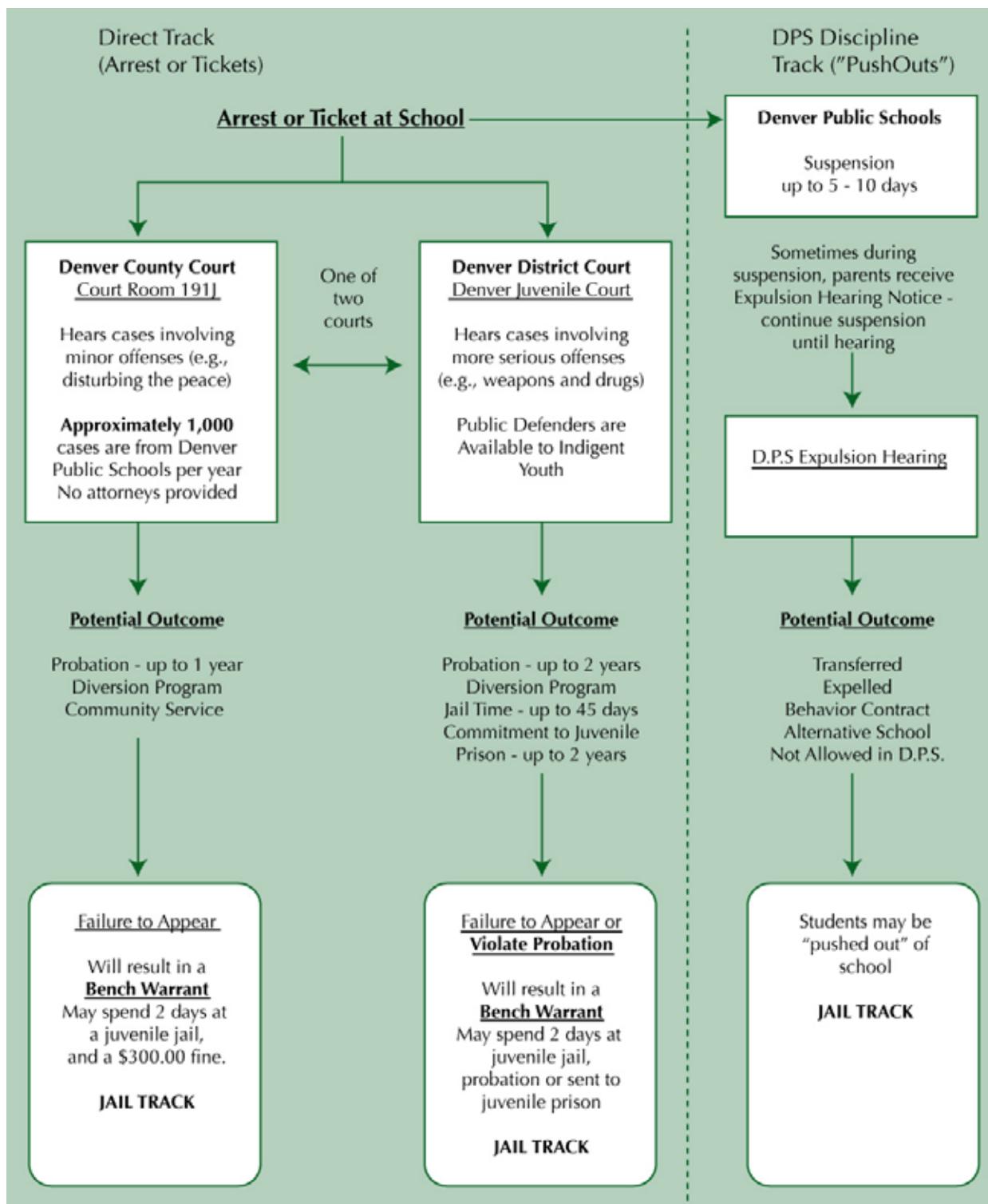
*Sample Student Survey*

**Name of Group** is conducting an investigation of the way students at **Name of School District** are being arrested, ticketed, and/or sent to juvenile court for minor behavior that occurs in school. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. Thank you for your participation.

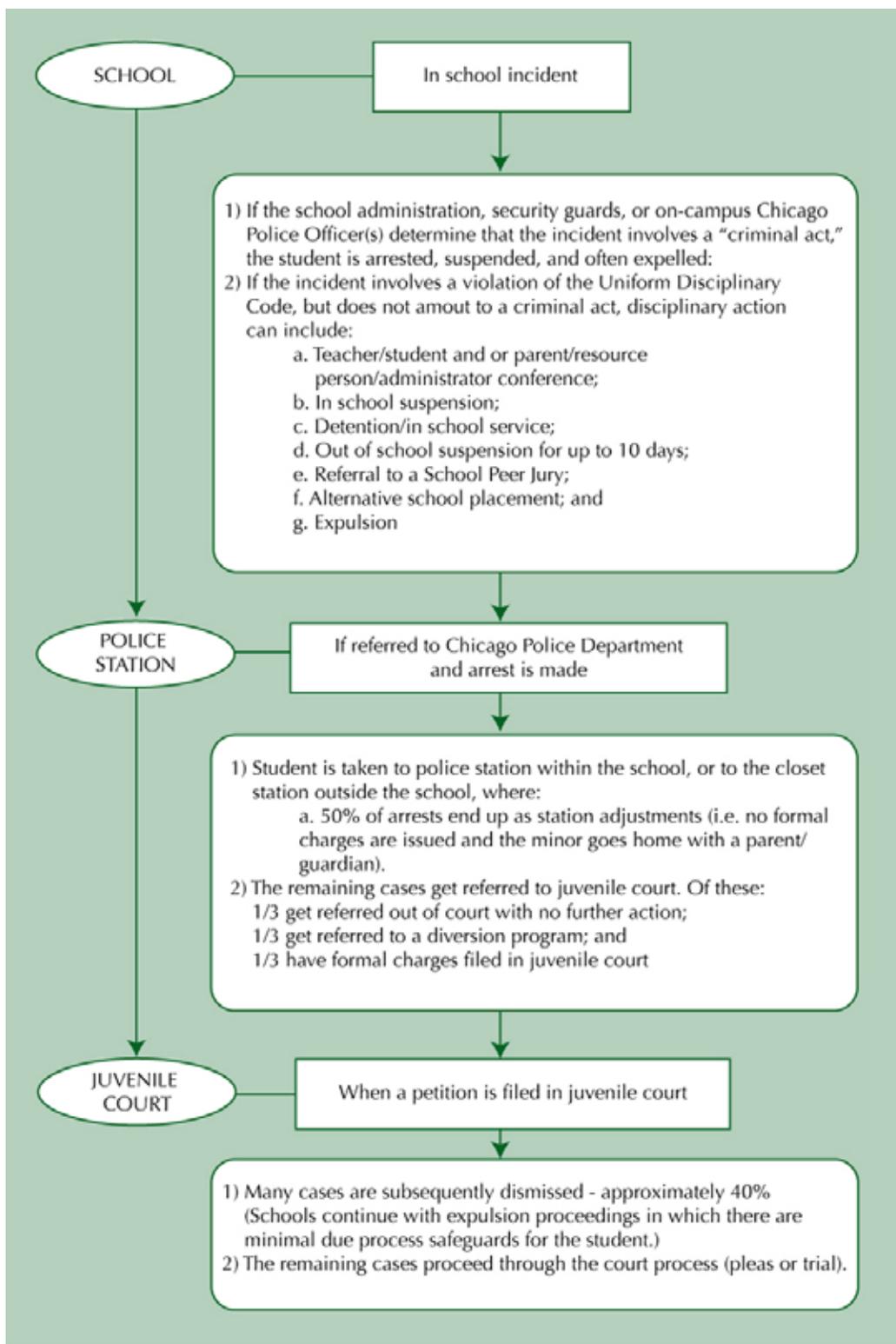
<p>1. What type of school do you attend?  <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School  <input type="checkbox"/> High School</p>	<p>7. If so, what was the reason for ticket or summons?  <input type="checkbox"/> Fight  <input type="checkbox"/> Weapons  <input type="checkbox"/> Disobedience  <input type="checkbox"/> Weapons  <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p>
<p>2. Does your school have security guards?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – How many? ____  <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p>8. Have you ever appeared in juvenile court for behavior that occurred in school?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – How many times? ____  <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>3. Does your school have resource/police officers?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – How many? ____  <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p>9. Were you represented by a lawyer?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>4. Have you ever been arrested at school in the past 3 years?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p>10. What happened with the court case?  <input type="checkbox"/> Case was dismissed  <input type="checkbox"/> I was placed on probation  <input type="checkbox"/> I had to pay a fine  <input type="checkbox"/> I was sent to a juvenile facility  <input type="checkbox"/> I was sent to an alternative school  <input type="checkbox"/> I did not show up to court  <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p>
<p>5. If so, what was the reason for the arrest?  <input type="checkbox"/> Fight  <input type="checkbox"/> Weapons  <input type="checkbox"/> Disobedience  <input type="checkbox"/> Weapons  <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</p>	<p>11. May we contact you for additional information?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No                   If yes, please give us your name and telephone number                  Name _____                  Telephone # _____</p>
<p>6. Have you ever been issued a ticket or summons at school in the past 3 years?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – How many? ____  <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	



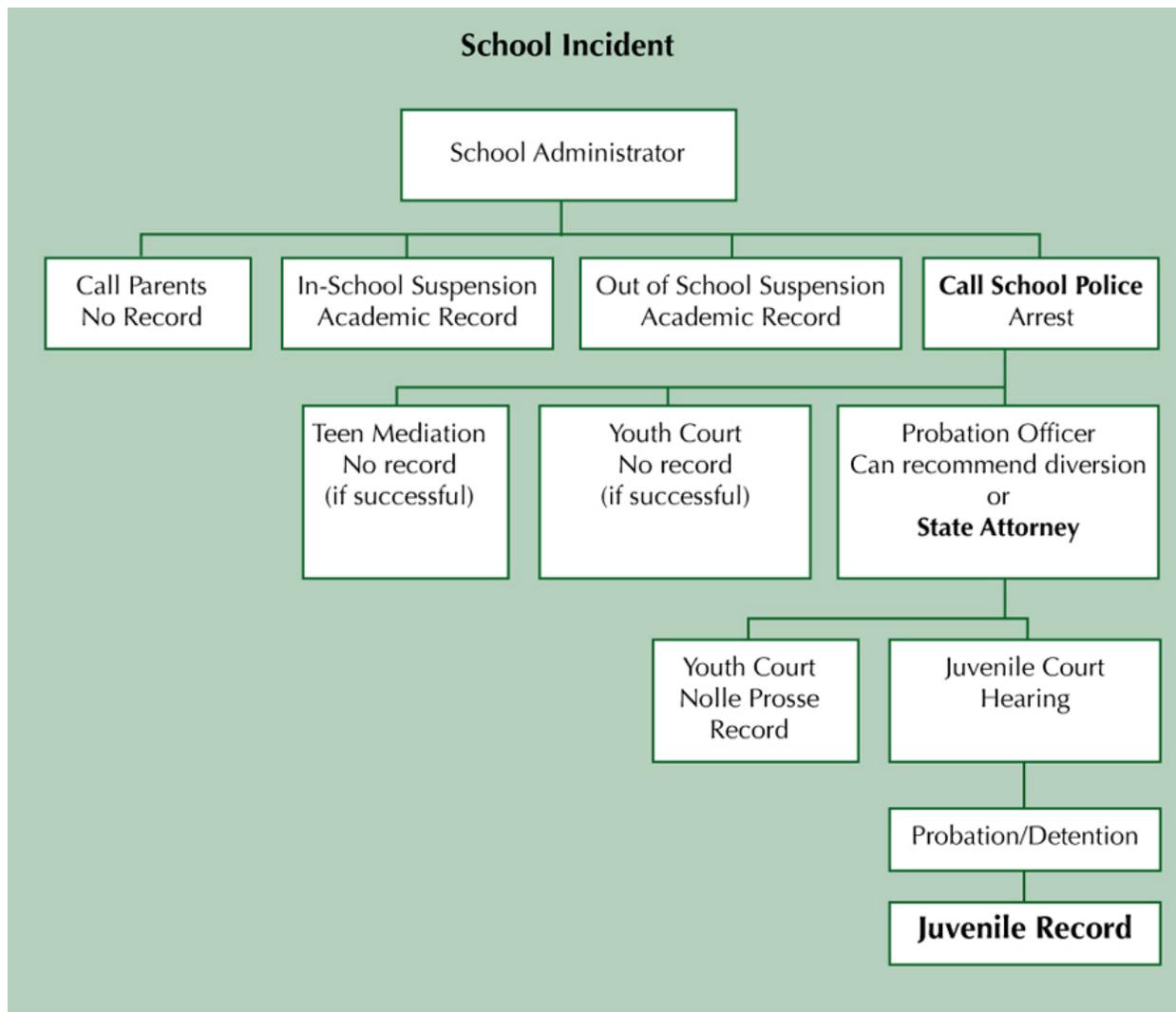
**Denver Schoolhouse-to-Jailhouse Track (as of 2005)**



**Chicago Schoolhouse-to-Jailhouse Track (as of 2005)**



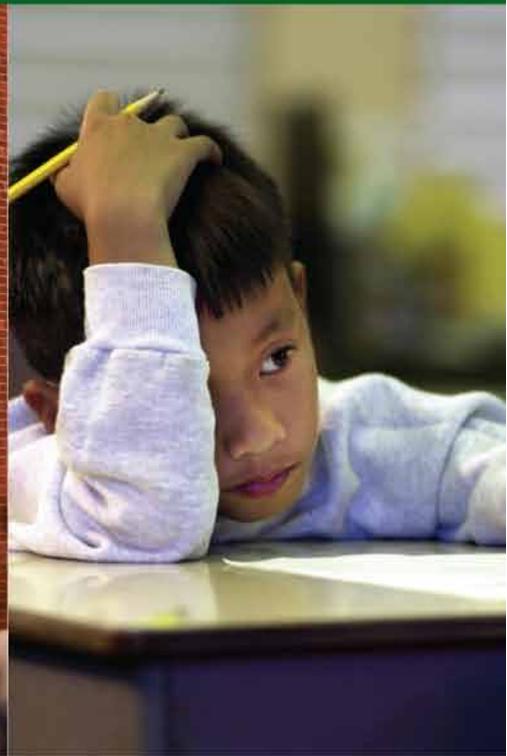
**Palm Beach County Schoolhouse-to-Jailhouse Track (as of 2005)**





# Appendix - VI

## Sample Talking Points



## SAMPLE TALKING POINTS ON THE “Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track”

The following sample talking points are grouped into four categories:

THE VISION  
THE IMPACT

THE PROBLEM  
THE SOLUTION

### The Vision

- Our schools should be places where children are nurtured rather than punished. Every school should be a place where students are cared for, supported, challenged, inspired, treated fairly, and given every opportunity to succeed. Young people make mistakes, but unless the safety of the school is threatened, they should not be pushed out of school and deprived of an education for those mistakes. Rather, those instances should be opportunities for teaching and learning, and providing students with the support they need to become healthy, productive adults.

### The Problem

- Students across the country are being systematically pushed out of school by overly harsh “zero tolerance” school discipline policies and practices. This “schoolhouse to jailhouse track” results in students being denied class time because of extended and unnecessary suspensions and expulsions, and also being directly fed into the juvenile justice system by school-based arrests for even trivial misconduct.
- Zero tolerance discipline practices were initially intended for weapon and drug offenses, but they have been expanded so that harsh consequences such as suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement are increasingly common for minor misconduct, such as acting up in class, name-calling, and fighting.
- At the same time that school policies have become more punitive, school districts have also expanded the role of law enforcement and school security in enforcing school discipline. School districts are literally delegating their responsibility for school discipline to police, resulting in a large number of incidents that are now handled by school police and juvenile courts that could be – and were once – handled by a trip to the principal’s office or a call home to a parent.
- If we know anything about young people, it is that they will occasionally act out and defy authority. By ratcheting up the consequences for those normal childish and adolescent behaviors, we set young people up for failure.

## The Impact

- As school districts across the nation rely more on the police and the juvenile justice system to handle even these most trivial acts of misconduct, they turn away from traditional education-based disciplinary methods. Instead, today, in too many schools, young people are criminalized for acting their age: children as young as 5-years-old are being handcuffed, arrested, booked, hauled before a judge, and sometimes locked up for being disruptive in school.
- The “schoolhouse to jailhouse track” has dire consequences for children and their families and puts aside any notion of forgiving and teaching children. It also removes students from the learning environment and places them in the often unstructured environment outside of school, where they are more likely to get in additional trouble. Additionally, children who are repeatedly and unjustly suspended or arrested often miss many days of school, fall behind in their classes, become discouraged, and drop out of school altogether.
- School police are usually not trained to distinguish between youthful misbehavior and truly criminal behavior that threatens the safety of the school. It also often costs schools districts millions of dollars for school police officers who spend most of their time disciplining students for conduct that should be addressed by classroom interventions, school programs, and counseling. Moreover, the costs to the community of pushing these students out of school far exceed the costs of keeping them in school.

## **Racial Disparities**

- Students of color are more likely than their White peers to be suspended, expelled, or arrested in school for the same conduct. Yet there is no evidence that Black and Latino students misbehave more than their White peers.
- Students of color also receive longer suspension and expulsions than their White peers for the same behavior.
- Students of color are also more likely to attend schools that have harsh disciplinary policies and extensive security forces, making them more susceptible to draconian punishments.

## **Students with Special Needs**

- Students with special needs are also affected more than their peers by harsh disciplinary practices and police presence in school. Frequently, these students are dramatically over-represented among those being suspended, expelled, and arrested in school.
- School security guards and police officers are often un-trained in working with students with special needs, placing these students at even greater risk.

## Academic Impact

- Schools are not any safer or more effective in disciplining children than before zero tolerance policies were implemented in the 1980s. There is also no credible evidence that zero tolerance policies are an effective means for changing student behavior.
- Research has shown that zero tolerance policies are associated with lower academic achievement, lower graduation rates, and worse school climate. Also, students who are arrested and appear in court are more likely to drop out of school.

## Lingering Effects

- The impact of the criminalization of children by their schools stretches beyond the teenage years. The emotional trauma, embarrassment, and stigma of being handcuffed can have long-lasting effects. And in some places, even just being arrested in school can become part of a child's criminal record. In some instances the arrests carry over and become a part of a student's adult records. Even if a student manages to get his or her record cleared, often he or she must still report an arrest to future employers.
- Research has shown that children who are arrested for the first time at a young age are more likely to be arrested again in the future. According to some studies, a student arrested in school is more than twice as likely as another student to be arrested later in life.

## The Solution

- Prevention and intervention strategies have been proven highly effective in addressing school-based misconduct, promoting a positive school climate, and making schools safe. These measures are also more cost effective than hurling students into the juvenile justice system.
- These alternatives to out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests range from the most simple classroom teaching techniques to comprehensive school-wide and community-based programs. In fact, the vast majority of student misconduct is best addressed through non-punitive classroom and in-school strategies. Most require little to no time or school resources, and are far more effective than exclusionary measures in creating a sustainable positive climate within schools.
- Many school districts are now realizing how ineffective their zero tolerance policies are and have begun the process of reform. Districts in cities such as Denver, Los Angeles, and Baltimore have moved away from a punitive approach toward a more supportive, educational, and child-focused approach to discipline.
- Districts such as these are: placing renewed emphasis on resolving low-level misconduct in the classroom; focusing on using developmentally appropriate disciplinary techniques



that limit the amount of time spent outside of class; treating misbehavior as a teachable moment, rather than as a chance to punish; stressing the importance of fairness and uniformity, and the elimination of racial disparities; and calling upon law enforcement only for serious or immediate threats to the safety of the school.

- Solutions to the “schoolhouse to jailhouse track” include:
  - Limiting zero tolerance school discipline policies to only conduct that poses a serious and/or immediate threat to school safety.
  - Placing renewed emphasis on resolving low-level misconduct in the classroom.
  - Creating or expanding prevention and intervention programs, in particular programs that keep students in school, learning, and in a structured environment, rather than pushing them out of school (e.g., in-school suspension rather than out-of-school suspension).
  - Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of school police. Any agreements between school districts and police departments for school resource officers should be very clear about when police should intervene, and should require police to receive training on how to effectively interact with youth and children with special needs.
  - Increasing or diverting funding for more guidance counselors and social workers who are available to address students’ academic and behavioral problems.
  - Requiring school districts to collect discipline and arrest reporting data in schools disaggregated by offense, age, gender, grade, race, ethnicity, disability, and school.
  - Investing in professional development for teachers and administrators on classroom management, conflict resolution, and implementing a non-punitive approach to discipline.
  - Developing incentives for schools to: keep students in school rather than push them out, demonstrate reductions in school disciplinary actions, and utilize alternative discipline programs that keep students in school and learning.



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