



62,596 YEARS OF INSTRUCTION ARE LOST ANNUALLY, AND IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH COVID



The worldwide coronavirus pandemic has understandably raised concerns that students of color are missing out on learning opportunities because their communities are disparately impacted both by the disease and by resulting decisions to close campuses and move to remote instruction.

But the ongoing rollout of vaccines means that the pandemic, however devastating, will eventually end.

There is no end in sight, however, for another longer lasting, more deeply rooted cause of disparities in lost learning time: exclusionary disciplinary policies such as suspension and expulsion that disproportionately impact students of color.

Overall, U.S. students lost 62,596 years of instruction to out-of-school suspension in 2015-16. These losses are disproportionately inflicted upon students of color and students with disabilities.

The losses are quantified in often horrifying detail by *Lost Opportunities*, a report recently released by [The Center for Civil Rights Remedies at the Civil Rights Project at UCLA](#) and the [Learning Policy Institute](#). NEPC Fellow [Dan Losen](#) of the UCLA Civil Rights Project wrote the report with Paul Martinez, also of the Civil Rights Project.

The following five charts highlight some of the disparities.

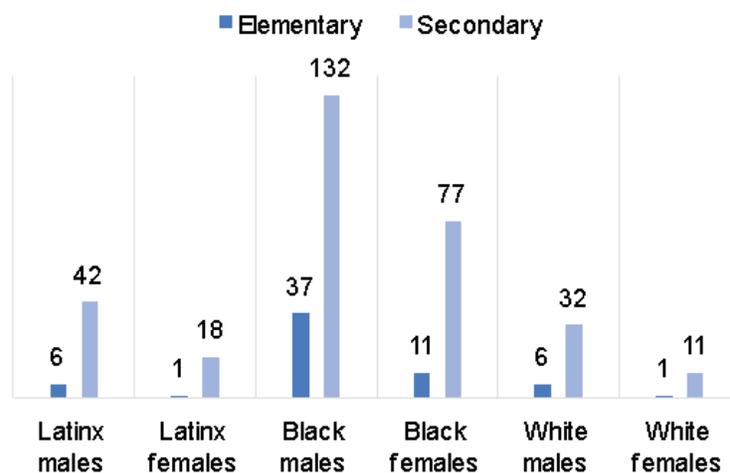
A note: Throughout their report, Losen and Martinez use a metric called the rate of lost

instruction due to suspensions. The rate indicates how many days 100 students in a given category (e.g., students with disabilities) miss out on instruction because they have been suspended from school. It's calculated per 100 students so that results from bigger and smaller groups (e.g., students in Wyoming versus students in California) can be compared. The metric is also meant to capture the full impact of suspensions on each group's educational opportunity. The results are based on the authors' analysis of the federal Civil Rights Data Collection dataset, with the most recent results coming from the 2015-16 survey.

1. Black Males Lose More Learning Time to Suspensions Than Any Other Racial/Gender Group

Overall, in grades K-12, the rate of days lost to suspension is roughly twice as high for boys as for girls (31 versus 14).

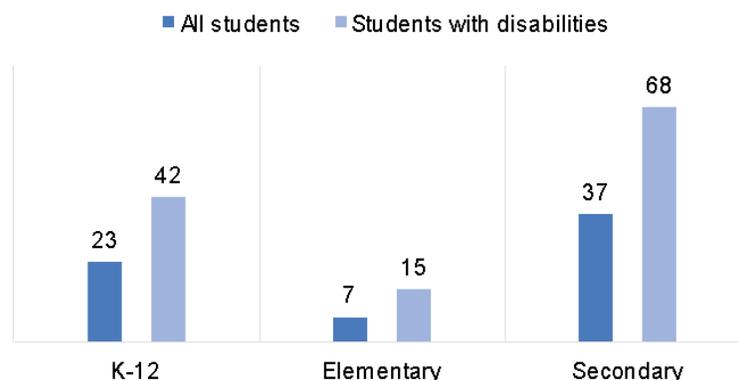
Days of Lost Instruction per 100 Students, By Gender and Race



2. Rates of Days Lost to Suspension Are Much Higher for Students With Disabilities

In grades K-12, the rate of days lost to suspension for students with disabilities is 19 days higher than for students overall. Rates vary considerably by district and by state.

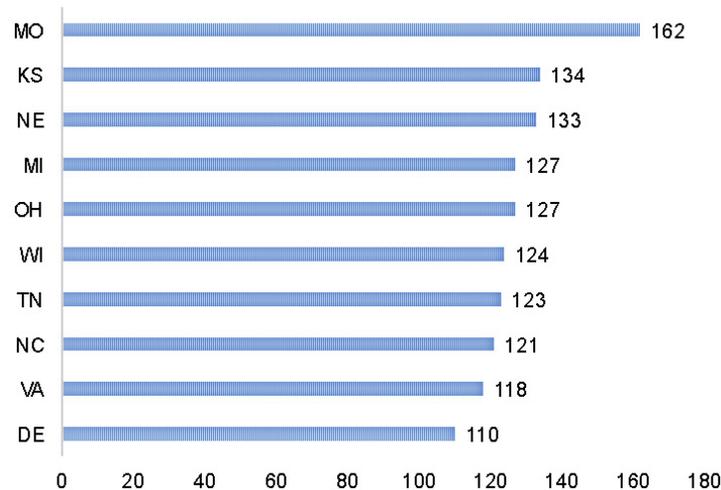
Days of Instruction Lost to Suspension per 100 Students



3. The Black-White Discipline Disparity Is Biggest in Missouri

It's smallest in three states that have relatively few Black residents: Idaho (six days), North Dakota (19 days), and Vermont (20 days). Overall, in the United States, the number of suspensions per 100 secondary school students is 103 days for Black students and 21 for Whites. The following figure shows the 10 states with the largest disparities.

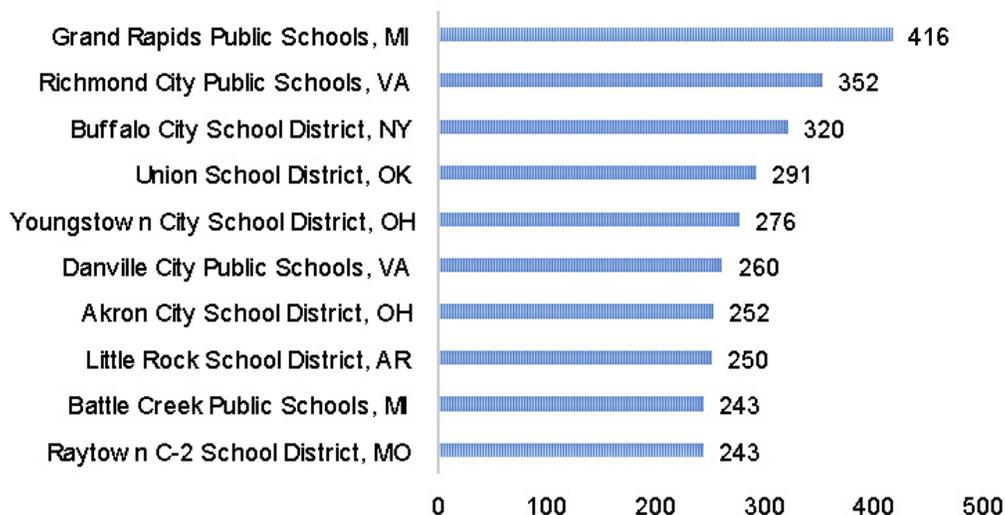
How Many More Days of Secondary School Instruction Did Black Students Lose Compared to Whites?



4. VA District Has One of Nation's Highest Rates of Days Lost to Suspension

Among districts with at least 1,000 students (and at least 200 Black, White, and Latinx students), Richmond City Public Schools in Virginia has the nation's highest rate of days of secondary school instruction lost to suspension. Losen and Martinez say such extremes are not anomalies.

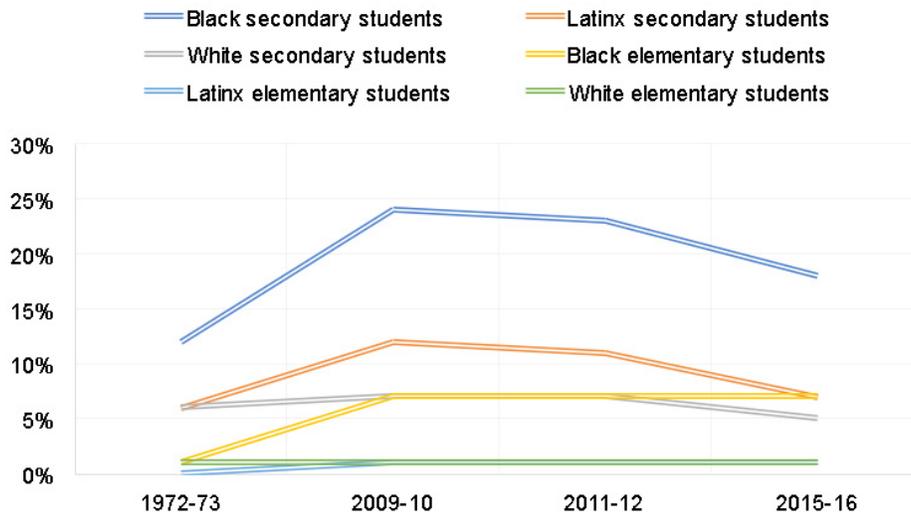
Days Lost to Instruction per 100 Secondary Students (For Districts with Enrollments of 1000 or More)



5. Out-of-School Suspension Rates Appear to Be Declining

In addition to using the rate of days lost to suspension metric, Losen and Martinez also use simple suspension rates to show how student discipline has changed over time. The Black-White and Latinx-White gaps appear to be shrinking at the secondary level. Losen and Martinez also found that, although they remain high (26 percent for Black students) suspension rates are declining for secondary students with disabilities.

Out-of-School Suspension Rates OVER TIME



The *Lost Opportunities* report concludes with multiple recommendations for further reducing exclusionary discipline rates and disparities. The suggestions include eliminating out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for lower-level offenses, replacing punitive disciplinary measures with strategies that help students learn from and improve their behavior, and training educators to understand the impact of disciplinary disparities. Another suggestion calls for training educators to develop stronger relationships with their students, since better teacher-student bonds have been shown to reduce the need for punishment.

For more recommendations, or to view the full report, go [here](#).

NEPC Resources on Discipline Policy

This newsletter is made possible in part by support provided by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice: <http://www.greatlakescenter.org>

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