

Maintaining a safe and healthy instructional climate is a critical responsibility of schools in the 21st century. Student behavior and academic achievement are inseparable, and safer schools are higher achieving schools. Unfortunately, many schools use only one set of tools—suspension, expulsion, and arrest—to maintain discipline and safety. Rather than contribute to a better learning environment, the overuse of these exclusionary practices has been shown to predict dropout and contribute to an unhealthy school atmosphere affecting students and teachers alike.

The Dignity in Schools Campaign urges communities and policy makers to devote serious attention to school discipline’s impact on the health and academic success of our nation’s students and schools. This fact sheet includes information on graduation and discipline rates for Pennsylvania and Philadelphia Public Schools.

School Discipline

(www.safeschools.state.pa.us)

Suspensions:

- The number of suspensions rose by **84 percent** between 2000 and 2009 in Pennsylvania.

Expulsions:

- The number of expulsions increased by **17 percent** during the same time period.

Referrals to Disciplinary Schools & Programs:

- Pennsylvania referrals to alternative educational placements jumped **184 percent** between 2000 and 2009, from 2,956 to 8,356.

School based arrests:

- The number of school-based arrests increased by **260 percent** from 2000 to 2009, from 4,563 to 11,703.

Racial disparities:

- Black students in Pennsylvania are **four times** more likely to receive a disciplinary sanction than White students.

Graduation Rates

(www.edweek.org)

Based on 2007 data (the most recent available for this purpose), *Education Week* ranks Pennsylvania’s graduation rate 9th in the US.

Philadelphia Public Schools performs 29 percentage points below the state average, and 20.4 percentage points below the national average.

Year	2006	2007
Nation	69.2%	68.8%
State	77.6% (9 th)	77.6% (9 th)
Philly	39.1%	48.4%

Spotlight on Philadelphia Public Schools

- *Education Week* identifies Philadelphia as one of 25 “drop out epicenters” in the U.S. It projects that 9,324 Philadelphia students who entered ninth grade in 2007 will not graduate from high school after four years.ⁱ
- In Philadelphia schools, a Black student is 3.5 times more likely to be taken into police custody than a White student. Similarly, a Latino student is 1.6 times more likely to be taken into police custody than a White student.ⁱⁱ

Additional Sources:

ⁱ EDITORIAL PROJECTS IN EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTER, DIPLOMAS COUNT (2010).

ⁱⁱ Documents Obtained from School District of Philadelphia Pursuant to Public Records Request. (on file with authors); SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA, ABOUT US (2009). Retrieved April 1, 2009 from <http://www.phila.k12.pa.us/about/>.