

Synopsis: Minneapolis Public School District

The toll that zero tolerance policies and out-of-school suspensions have on students, both suspended and otherwise, have made many school districts looking to adopt a new policy.

The Minneapolis Public School District (MPS) began adopting a new behavior policy in 2013 in order to increase quality-learning time. The goal was to increase engagement while decrease suspension and out-of-class time, specifically for those students who were more affected by the current discipline that resulted in time out of class. Focus was put on positive climates, such as cultural competency, and a change in practice for staff, students, and parents to create consistency and ensure fairness in disciplinary actions. A discipline grid in which infractions are categorized by a 5-level system and are dealt with categorical responses ensured this fairness. For example, out-of-school suspensions are only an option for levels 3-5 infractions and expulsion is only an option for level 5 infractions.

As a result of implementing the new policy, 2013 – 2014 suspension rates dropped by 50% from 6.6% of the previous school year. Although the decline reflects some effectiveness of the policy, racial disparity remained at an average of 4.6%. MPS, and more specifically the superintendent, Bernadeia Johnson, revised the policy in early 2014 to remove nonviolent suspensions for preK-1 starting for the 2014 – 2015 school year, and later announced the intent to eliminate the non-violent suspension gap between white students and students of color by 2018. The announcement made effective, almost immediately, that Office of the Superintendent must review all suspension cases involving students of color before approval.

Perhaps the school district should have included all suspension cases for review, regardless of color, but the effort will likely decrease both suspension and disparity rates for this school year. The district understands that suspensions are not an effective measure of discipline, and often cause a child to fall behind in class, but it is most important to implement behavioral changes for students and staff that will, in turn, decrease suspension and disparity rates.

Study on impact of suspensions.

<http://edsources.org/2015/study-suspensions-harm-well-behaved-kids/72501#.VVjwfWbZrmE> ; ; <http://asr.sagepub.com/content/79/6/1067>

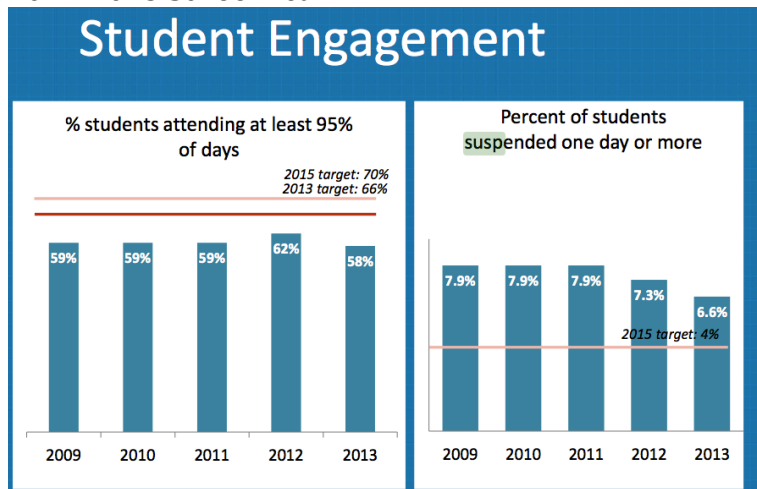
Superintendent's Response to Critics

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/11/26/critics-say-my-new-discipline-policy-is-unfair-to-white-students-heres-why-theyre-wrong/>

Discipline Grid

http://policy.mpls.k12.mn.us/uploads/levels_of_behavior_chart.pdf

2012-2013 School Year



http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/uploads/report_on_academic_progress.pdf

2013-2014 School Year

Acceleration 2020 in Action

- ✓ Access to rigorous academics (*using the Focused Instruction framework*) and supplemental supports that accelerate learning
- ✓ Improved use of data and data tools
- ✓ Increased inclusion for students who receive Special Education services
- ✓ Expanded support for students who are English Language Learners
- ✓ Expanded opportunities for high quality Pre-K
- ✓ Reduced suspensions by 50% already this year
- ✓ Redesigned support and accountability for school leaders
- ✓ Customized and integrated support for Focus & High Priority Schools

<https://v3.boardbook.org/Public/PublicItemDownload.aspx?ik=36293820>

Suspensions declining, but disparities persist



- *The number and rate of suspensions have declined over past several years*
- *The overall disparity rate shows that students of color were 4.6 times more likely to be suspended than white students; and are highest for African American, Native American, and Special Education students*
- *Strategies employed this year include*
 - *Revised discipline policy*
 - *Positive School Wide & Classroom behavior plans*

