



Fact Sheet

Safe and Fair Schools

Wake County Ranks High in Suspending Students, Needs Strategies to Keep Students Safe

During the 2008-09 school year,

- ✓ Wake County public schools gave out 20,651 short-term suspensions (exclusion from school lasting between one and ten days) and 1,015 long-term suspensions (exclusion from school for the remainder of the school year). *Source: NC DPI Consolidated Data Report, 2008-09, <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/research/discipline/reports/consolidated/2008-09/consolidated-report.pdf>*
- ✓ Wake County long-term suspended more than four times as many students as the district with the second most long-term suspensions (Hoke County, 246 long-term suspensions) and over twenty times as many students as Charlotte-Mecklenburg (47 long-term suspensions). *Source: Ibid.*
- ✓ Wake County accounted for 28.3 percent of all long-term suspensions in North Carolina (an increase of 7.2 percentage points from the previous year), even though Wake County has only 9.4 percent of the state's students. In other words, more than a quarter of all long-term suspensions in the entire state came from just one of the 115 school districts: Wake County. *Source: Ibid.*
- ✓ Wake County defines long-term suspension as the rest of the school year. This differs from state law and most other districts, which define it as being between 11 days and the rest of the year. Thus, every single long-term suspension in the Wake County Public Schools is for the rest of the year. *Source: WCPSS Board Policy 6530(C)(1) <http://www.wcpss.net/policy-files/series/policies/print-friendly/6530-bp.html>*
- ✓ At the end of the 2008-09 school year, WCPSS closed Richard Milburn High School, an alternative program serving long-term suspended students, and the only program of its kind in the County. A private vendor operated the school, and the cost of running the school was cited as the reason for closing. In April 2010, the Department of Public Instruction concluded that WCPSS was in violation of state and federal law for not providing free and appropriate public education for hundreds of long-term suspended students with disabilities, and WCPSS was ordered to develop a new program. Currently, some courses are offered online through the SCORE program (Second Chance Online Resource for Education).

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- ✓ African-American students made up 26.1 percent of students in the WCPSS, yet they received 62.3 percent of short-term suspensions and 67.5 percent of long-term suspensions. Over the past five school years, 34 of the 36 expelled students in Wake County were African-American. *Source: NC DPI Consolidated Data Report.*
- ✓ In WCPSS, African American students are short-term suspended at a rate 5.1 times higher than White students, and are long-term suspended at a rate 7.7 times higher. *Source: Ibid.*
- ✓ Last state fiscal year, 32.9 % of all delinquency complaints filed in juvenile court came directly from the school system. The fourth most common school-based delinquency complaint was “disorderly conduct” and 84.3% of all school-based referrals were low-level misdemeanors. Students age 16 and older are sent straight to adult criminal court for school-based misbehavior. *Source: Email from North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (October 19, 2009).*
- ✓ Almost a quarter of all short-term suspensions were given for the primary violation of “disrespect of staff.” More than 2,500 short-term suspensions were handed down for “inappropriate language.” *Source: N.C. Department of Public Instruction data request, September 25, 2009.*
- ✓ Wake County schools gave out, on average, one short-term suspension for every 6.6 students in the district. The rate rises when examining high schools, which gave out 27.3 suspensions per every 100 students. (Data based on final average daily membership of 137,092 students; some students received more than one short-term suspension during the 2008-09 school year. *Source: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/fbs/accounting/data/adm/2008-09admmlld.xls>.*
- ✓ Over the last three school years, students in Wake County have been long-term suspended at a rate 2.6 to 3.8 times higher than students in the rest of North Carolina’s school districts. *(Calculated using suspension and average daily membership data provided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.)*

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