



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

Suspensions Trends in the School District of Philadelphia, 2015-16 to 2017-18

Key Findings

- The percentage of students in grades 3-12 with zero suspensions has steadily increased over the last three years (2015-16 to 2017-18).
- Each year, students with disabilities were more likely to be suspended when compared to students without disabilities.
- Contrary to prior research, English Language Learner (ELL) students were *not* more likely to receive a suspension when compared to non-ELL students.
- Each year, Black/African American students, Latino/Hispanic students, and students identified as Multiracial/Other were more likely to be suspended when compared to White students.

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Why this Study

At the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year (SY), the School District of Philadelphia (SDP or the District) introduced changes to its discipline policy that marked a departure from the zero-tolerance approach previously in place. In response to these changes, in previous reports, the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE) examined SDP suspension data over a six-year span 2010-2011 through 2015-2016. In those reports, we referenced research evidence that found relationships between suspending students and negative student outcomes, including low academic achievement, grade retention, dropping out, decreased levels of civic engagement, legal troubles, and emotional and psychological disorders.¹

Research in districts and states across the country has also consistently found that Black/African American students and students with disabilities are more likely to be suspended for the same behaviors compared to their peers.² Extending our previous analyses, this report examines trends in student suspension between 2015-16 and 2017-18, specifically the percent of students receiving zero suspensions and an examination of disproportionality over time.

Box 1. Definitions of Key Terms

Suspension³: the denial to a student of the right to attend school and to take part in any school function for any period of up to 10 days.

Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)⁴: an exclusion from school and/or school activity for a period of three or fewer days (short-term suspension), or four to ten days (long-term suspension).

Disproportionality⁵: inequity in school disciplinary practices such that one group of students is being over-represented among students receiving discipline.

¹ Civil Rights Project, 2000; Fabelo, et al., 2011; Kupchik & Catlaw, 2015; Noltemeyer et al., 2015; Raffaele Mendez, et al. 2003; Skiba et al., 2014

² Arcia, 2007; Fabelo et al., 2011; Gibson et al., 2014; Gregory et al., 2010; Losen & Martinez, 2013; Rausch & Skiba, 2004; Skiba et al., 2014; Sullivan et al., 2013; Sullivan et al., 2014

³ According to Pennsylvania Law

⁴ From the School District of Philadelphia [Code of Conduct](#)

⁵ United States Government Accountability Office, Report to Congressional Requestors

What We Did

Research Questions

Two main questions guided our analyses:

1. What is the trend in the percentage of students receiving zero out of school suspensions over the last three years (2015-16 to 2017-18 school years)? How do the trends differ by gender, grade, disability status, and English Language Learner status?
2. At the District level, were certain groups of students – based on student characteristics including gender, grade, disability status, English Language Learner (ELL) status, and race/ethnicity – suspended disproportionately to their representation in the overall student body?

Box 2. Data Sources and Methods

The data sources for answering the research questions was the archived “Academics and Climate (2017-18 Networks)” QlikBAM Climate App data pulled in Fall 2018 (RQ1) and enrollment and suspension data from the District’s Business Data Warehouse (BDW) (RQ2).

Students were included in the analyses if they were enrolled for a minimum of 10 days (at the school, network, or district level) over the course of the school year. Students in kindergarten, first, and second grades were excluded from all grade-level tables, as it is the policy of the District not to suspend students in grades K-2 unless there is serious bodily injury.

Risk ratios were used to provide a measure of disproportionality. A risk ratio expresses the extent to which one group is at a higher or lower risk of being suspended than a comparison group of interest. A risk ratio of 1.00 means that the risk of receiving a suspension is the same in the two groups, values less than 1.00 reflect lower risk, and greater than 1.00 reflect higher risk. In some contexts, a risk ratio of 2.00 (double the risk) is used as a marker of meaningful levels of disproportionality.

Unlike percentage of students with zero suspensions, which uses student as a unit of analysis, the risk ratios method accounts for the fact that one student can receive multiple suspensions. A detailed description of how risk ratios were calculated is provided in the technical appendix.

What We Found

Findings for Research Question 1

From 2015-16 to 2017-18, there was a steady increase in the percentage of students receiving zero out-of-school suspensions

In 2015-16, 88.8% of students had zero out-of-school suspensions. In 2017-18, 92.1% of students received zero out-of-school suspensions (Table 1). The proportion of out-of-school suspensions aligned to the suspendable offenses⁶ in the student code of conduct also increased steadily between 2015-16 (82.0%) and 2017-18 (91.0%) (Table 2).

Table 1. Across the District, there has been an increase in the proportion of students receiving zero out-of-school Suspensions (OSS)

School Year	Total Students (End of Year)	% with Zero OSS (End of Year)	% with 1+ OSS (End of Year)	% with Multiple OSS (End of Year)
2015-16	143,115	88.8%	11.2%	4.6%
2016-17	141,852	90.4%	9.6%	3.8%
2017-18	140,480	92.1%	7.9%	2.7%

SOURCE: Qlik dev Suspension Reasons (2018-19 Networks) [v0.0.1,Dec2018,1-2-2019], data pulled on Jan 25, 2019

Table 2. The percent of OSS issued that aligned to the SDP Code of Conduct increased from SY 2015-16 to SY 2017-18

School Year	Total Students Suspended (OSS)	Total OSS	OSS Aligned to SDP Code of Conduct	Proportion of OSS Aligned to SDP Code of Conduct
2015-16	16,068	29,184	23,934	82%
2016-17	13,662	23,885	19,078	79%
2017-18	11,073	18,136	16,505	91%

SOURCE: Qlik dev Suspension Reasons (2018-19 Networks) [v0.0.1,Dec2018,1-2-2019], data pulled on Jan 25, 2019

From 2015-16 to 2017-18, female students had fewer suspensions compared to male students

Across all years and grades, a higher percentage of female students had zero suspensions compared to male students. In 2017-18, the largest gender disparities were seen in the younger grades. For example, in grade 3, 96.7% of female students received zero suspensions compared to 90.3% of male students (Table 3).

⁶ Suspendable offenses are those offenses for which suspension is an option according to the District's [Code of Student Conduct](#).

Table 3. Across grades 3-12,* female students had a consistently higher percentage of zero suspensions compared to male students from 2015-16 to 2017-18

Grade	Percent of Students with Zero Suspensions					
	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
3	95.7%	86.7%	96.3%	88.9%	96.7%	90.3%
4	93.8%	86.4%	95.1%	87.0%	95.6%	89.1%
5	92.2%	85.8%	93.0%	87.0%	93.7%	88.4%
6	88.2%	80.2%	90.1%	84.0%	92.3%	88.0%
7	83.7%	77.3%	85.3%	80.4%	88.7%	85.5%
8	84.2%	79.8%	86.4%	81.8%	89.5%	85.3%
9	83.6%	77.7%	85.2%	80.4%	88.0%	84.6%
10	87.0%	81.5%	89.7%	86.0%	90.0%	87.6%
11	91.0%	86.8%	91.6%	88.7%	93.1%	90.9%
12	95.1%	90.4%	95.1%	92.0%	96.2%	93.3%

SOURCE: Qlik dev Suspension Reasons (2018-19 Networks) [v0.0.1, Dec2018,1-2-2019], data pulled on Jan 25, 2019

*Grades K-2 are excluded from all grade-level tables, as it is the policy of the District not to suspend these students unless the student's action results in serious bodily injury.

From 2015-16 to 2017-18, across all grade levels, students with disabilities had a lower percentage of zero suspensions compared to students without disabilities

The percentage of students with zero suspensions increased from 2015-16 to 2017-18 for both students with and without disabilities (Table 4). However, students with disabilities had a lower percentage of zero suspensions compared to students without disabilities. For example, in 2017-18, in grade 11, the percentage of zero suspensions for students with disabilities was 86.9% compared to 93.0% for students without disabilities (Table 5).

Table 4. From 2015-16 to 2017-18, the percentage of students with zero suspensions increased for students both with and without disabilities

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Students without Disabilities			
Total Students (grades 3-12)	87,735	87,201	87,159
# with Zero OS Suspensions	76,961	77,852	79,531
% with Zero OS Suspensions	87.7%	89.3%	91.2%
# with 1+ OS Suspensions	10,774	9,349	7,628
% with 1+ OS Suspensions	12.3%	10.7%	8.8%
# with Multiple OS Suspensions	4,136	3,411	2,409
% with Multiple OS Suspensions	4.7%	3.9%	2.8%
Students with Disabilities			
Total Students	16,938	17,564	17,506
# with Zero OS Suspensions	13,441	14,535	14,981
% with Zero OS Suspensions	79.4%	82.8%	85.6%
# with 1+ OS Suspensions	3,497	3,029	2,525
% with 1+ OS Suspensions	20.6%	17.2%	14.4%
# with Multiple OS Suspensions	1,674	1,420	1,056
% with Multiple OS Suspensions	9.9%	8.1%	6.0%

SOURCE: Qlik dev Suspension Reasons (2018-19 Networks) [v0.0.1, Dec 2018, 1-2-2019], data pulled on Feb 1, 2019

Table 5. Across grades 3-12,* the percentage of students receiving zero suspensions increased for students both with and without disabilities

Grade	Percent of Students with Zero Suspensions					
	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18	
	No Disability	Disability	No Disability	Disability	No Disability	Disability
3	91.8%	86.9%	93.0%	89.0%	93.8%	90.9%
4	91.0%	85.1%	91.7%	87.3%	93.1%	87.7%
5	89.9%	84.1%	90.8%	85.4%	91.9%	86.8%
6	85.1%	79.2%	88.1%	81.4%	91.2%	85.0%
7	81.9%	73.0%	84.1%	77.0%	87.7%	84.0%
8	83.8%	74.1%	85.5%	77.2%	88.6%	81.9%
9	82.7%	70.8%	84.2%	75.8%	87.4%	80.4%
10	85.8%	76.3%	89.4%	80.4%	89.9%	83.0%
11	90.0%	83.1%	90.9%	86.2%	93.0%	86.9%
12	92.9%	89.6%	93.8%	92.4%	95.1%	92.2%

SOURCE: Qlik dev Suspension Reasons (2018-19 Networks) [v0.0.1, Dec 2018, 1-2-2019], data pulled on Feb 1, 2019

*Grade K-2 are excluded from all grade-level tables, as it is the policy of the District not to suspend these students unless the student's action results in serious bodily injury.

From 2015-16 to 2017-18, across all grade levels and race/ethnicities, as a group, Black/African American students had the lowest percentages of students with zero suspensions

Across all grades and race/ethnicities, the percent of students with zero suspensions increased from 2015-16 to 2017-18, with lower percentages of zero suspensions for Black/African American students (Table 6). When we examined suspension trends for both disability status and race/ethnicity, we found that Black/African American students had the lowest percentages for both students with disabilities (Table 7) and without disabilities (Table 8) when compared to their peers. By grade, in 2017-18, the lowest percentages of students with zero suspensions for Black/African American students with a disability were seen in middle school, 9th grade, and 10th grade (Table 9). As a group, Asian and White students had the highest percentage of students with zero suspensions both for students with and without a disability.

Table 6. Across grades 3-12,* the percentage of students receiving zero suspension increased for all racial/ethnic groups from 2015-16 to 2017-18

	Percent of Students with Zero Suspensions														
	Asian			Black/African American			Hispanic/Latino			Other^			White		
Grade	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
3	99.4%	99.6%	99.4%	86.5%	88.5%	89.3%	93.6%	94.4%	96.8%	94.4%	94.8%	95.0%	97.3%	98.0%	98.1%
4	99.3%	99.4%	99.6%	84.8%	86.1%	87.9%	93.4%	94.5%	94.7%	93.1%	94.0%	94.7%	97.1%	96.5%	97.6%
5	98.9%	98.6%	99.0%	83.4%	84.4%	85.9%	92.0%	93.5%	94.2%	92.5%	93.1%	94.0%	96.0%	96.6%	97.3%
6	97.8%	98.3%	99.0%	77.1%	81.4%	85.4%	86.2%	88.2%	92.3%	89.8%	90.9%	92.6%	94.7%	95.0%	95.7%
7	97.6%	98.9%	98.3%	72.7%	75.6%	80.7%	81.8%	84.4%	90.6%	88.6%	87.9%	92.3%	92.3%	93.7%	94.3%
8	97.8%	98.9%	99.1%	75.5%	77.1%	81.9%	84.4%	86.8%	89.2%	86.6%	87.7%	90.5%	92.3%	94.1%	95.0%
9	97.3%	97.8%	97.9%	75.0%	77.2%	82.2%	81.9%	85.1%	87.9%	89.1%	87.9%	87.7%	89.0%	90.3%	92.9%
10	98.0%	98.5%	97.3%	79.7%	83.8%	85.0%	86.5%	89.3%	91.3%	87.2%	93.6%	91.4%	90.5%	93.1%	94.1%
11	97.9%	97.6%	97.2%	85.3%	87.3%	89.6%	90.8%	91.4%	93.0%	93.3%	95.5%	96.6%	94.6%	94.4%	95.5%
12	98.8%	98.5%	98.8%	90.6%	91.6%	93.1%	94.1%	94.9%	96.7%	93.5%	96.0%	97.0%	96.6%	96.6%	96.2%

SOURCE: Qlik dev Suspension Reasons (2018-19 Networks) [v0.0.1, Dec 2018, 1-2-2019], data pulled on Feb 1, 2019

*Grades K-2 are excluded from all grade-level tables, as it is the policy of the District not to suspend these students unless the student's action results in serious bodily injury.

^Due to small sample sizes, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial/Other, and unknown race/ethnicity categories have all been combined under the category "Other."

Table 7. Across the District, the percent of students with zero suspensions increased for students with disabilities for all racial/ethnic groups from 2015-16 to 2017-18

	Students with Disabilities														
	Asian			Black/African American			Hispanic/Latino			Other^			White		
Grades 3-12*	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Total Students	395	426	425	9,372	9,724	9,534	3,395	3,533	3,631	1,558	1,689	1,753	2,197	2,167	2,132
# with Zero OS Suspensions	375	411	413	6,848	7,545	7,716	2,818	3,049	3,232	1,414	1,535	1,614	1,967	1,971	1,979
% with Zero OS Suspensions	94.9%	96.5%	97.2%	73.1%	77.6%	80.9%	83.0%	86.3%	89.0%	90.8%	90.9%	92.1%	89.5%	91.0%	92.8%
# with 1+ OS Suspensions	20	15	12	2,524	2,179	1,818	577	484	399	144	154	139	230	196	153
% with 1+ OS Suspensions	5.1%	3.5%	2.8%	26.9%	22.4%	19.1%	17.0%	13.7%	11.0%	9.2%	9.1%	7.9%	10.5%	9.0%	7.2%
# with Multiple OS Suspensions	10	6	2	1,264	1,051	787	238	212	151	55	69	54	107	81	60
% with Multiple OS Suspensions	2.5%	1.4%	0.5%	13.5%	10.8%	8.3%	7.0%	6.0%	4.2%	3.5%	4.1%	3.1%	4.9%	3.7%	2.8%

SOURCE: Qlik dev Suspension Reasons (2018-19 Networks) [v0.0.1, Dec 2018, 1-2-2019], data pulled on Feb 1, 2019

*Grades K-2 are excluded from all grade-level tables, as it is the policy of the District not to suspend these students unless the student's action results in serious bodily injury.

^Due to small sample sizes, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial/Other, and unknown race/ethnicity categories have all been combined under the category "Other."

Table 8. Across the District, the percent of students with zero suspensions increased for students without disabilities for all racial/ethnic groups from 2015-16 to 2017-18

	Students without Disabilities														
	Asian			Black/African American			Hispanic/Latino			Other			White		
Grades 3-12*	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Total Students	8,239	8,466	8,557	46,275	44,680	43,801	17,183	17,638	18,395	4,005	4,439	4,535	11,858	11,762	11,632
# with Zero OS Suspensions	8,111	8,356	8,436	38,324	37,832	38,225	15,432	16,093	17,193	3,675	4,119	4,247	11,261	11,250	11,202
% with Zero OS Suspensions	98.4%	98.7%	98.6%	82.8%	84.7%	87.3%	89.8%	91.2%	93.5%	91.8%	92.8%	93.6%	95.0%	95.6%	96.3%
# with 1+ OS Suspensions	128	110	121	7,951	6,848	5,576	1,751	1,545	1,202	330	320	288	597	512	430
% with 1+ OS Suspensions	1.6%	1.3%	1.4%	17.2%	15.3%	12.7%	10.2%	8.8%	6.5%	8.2%	7.2%	6.4%	5.0%	4.4%	3.7%
# with Multiple OS Suspensions	27	20	27	3,189	2,651	1,878	619	487	329	122	122	83	174	126	88
% with Multiple OS Suspensions	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	6.9%	5.9%	4.3%	3.6%	2.8%	1.8%	3.0%	2.7%	1.8%	1.5%	1.1%	0.8%

SOURCE: Qlik dev Suspension Reasons (2018-19 Networks) [v0.0.1, Dec 2018, 1-2-2019], data pulled on Feb 1, 2019

*Grades K-2 are excluded from all grade-level tables, as it is the policy of the District not to suspend these students unless the student's action results in serious bodily injury.

^Due to small sample sizes, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial/Other, and unknown race/ethnicity categories have all been combined under the category "Other."

Table 9. Percentage of students receiving zero OSS, by race/ethnicity and grade level, with disabilities from 2015-16 to 2017-18

	Students with Disabilities														
	Asian			Black/African American			Hispanic/Latino			Other^			White		
Grades 3-12*	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
3	95.6%	98.0%	98.1%	81.2%	84.6%	87.4%	89.0%	91.6%	94.2%	92.9%	92.2%	92.1%	93.6%	96.5%	96.4%
4	97.4%	93.8%	98.0%	77.9%	81.9%	84.1%	88.3%	93.2%	87.9%	92.2%	92.0%	92.5%	95.5%	89.8%	94.6%
5	100%	97.5%	93.8%	77.3%	78.9%	82.3%	85.5%	89.6%	90.7%	93.8%	91.6%	91.8%	92.1%	94.3%	90.4%
6	91.9%	100%	97.4%	71.0%	74.0%	78.2%	86.3%	82.6%	90.2%	88.4%	92.5%	91.8%	92.1%	90.2%	94.3%
7	97.8%	87.2%	100%	65.4%	70.5%	76.4%	75.6%	80.2%	87.9%	88.8%	88.3%	94.4%	88.3%	86.0%	90.6%
8	97.1%	97.8%	91.2%	68.3%	70.5%	76.1%	78.5%	82.6%	85.6%	83.0%	88.5%	91.4%	87.1%	90.2%	91.1%
9	84.2%	94.7%	97.7%	65.9%	71.1%	75.8%	76.5%	81.4%	85.6%	76.6%	78.9%	90.6%	81.9%	85.9%	87.4%
10	97.9%	100%	100%	71.9%	75.8%	79.3%	80.9%	83.3%	85.9%	75.0%	92.1%	85.2%	85.2%	90.9%	93.7%
11	94.6%	97.5%	95.7%	79.6%	84.2%	84.1%	86.6%	88.0%	89.7%	91.3%	85.2%	89.7%	90.2%	91.5%	93.4%
12	100%	96.6%	100%	87.9%	91.2%	89.6%	89.3%	93.3%	95.0%	100%	100%	100%	97.2%	96.4%	96.8%

SOURCE: Qlik dev Suspension Reasons (2018-19 Networks) [v0.0.1, Dec 2018, 1-2-2019], data pulled on Feb 1, 2019

*Grades K-2 are excluded from all grade-level tables, as it is the policy of the District not to suspend these students unless the student's action results in serious bodily injury.

^Due to small sample sizes, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial/Other, and unknown race/ethnicity categories have all been combined under the category "Other."

From 2015-16 to 2017-18, ELL students had a higher percentage of zero suspensions compared to non-ELL students

While the percentage of zero suspensions increased between 2015-16 and 2017-18 for both ELL and non-ELL students, ELL students had a higher percentage of zero suspensions than their non-ELL peers all three school years (Table 10). In 2017-18, the percentage of zero suspensions for ELL students was 95.3% compared to 89.6 % for non-ELL students.

Table 10. District wide Out-of-School Suspensions Trend by ELL status, 2015-16 to 2017-18

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Not ELL			
Total Students (Grades 3-12)	94,254	93,583	92,337
# with Zero OS Suspensions	80,821	81,908	82,758
% with Zero OS Suspensions	85.7%	87.5%	89.6%
# with 1+ OS Suspensions	13,433	11,675	9,579
% with 1+ OS Suspensions	14.3%	12.5%	10.4%
# with Multiple OS Suspensions	5,532	4,639	3,333
% with Multiple OS Suspensions	5.9%	5.0%	3.6%
ELL			
Total Students (Grades 3-12)	10,419	11,182	12,328
# with Zero OS Suspensions	9,581	10,479	11,754
% with Zero OS Suspensions	92.0%	93.7%	95.3%
# with 1+ OS Suspensions	838	703	574
% with 1+ OS Suspensions	8.0%	6.3%	4.7%
# with Multiple OS Suspensions	278	192	132
% with Multiple OS Suspensions	2.7%	1.7%	1.1%

SOURCE: Qlik dev Suspension Reasons (2018-19 Networks) [v0.0.1, Dec 2018, 1-2-2019], data pulled on Feb 4, 2019

From 2015-16 to 2017-18, there was a slight increase in the number of days that students were assigned out-of-school suspensions

Although the total number and total days suspended has decreased steadily, the average number of days spent in out-of-school suspension increased slightly between SY 2015-16 to 2017-18 (Table 11). In other words, the number of suspensions decreased, but the length of the suspensions being given increased.

Table 11. District-wide, the rate of out of school suspensions (OSS) decreased from 2015-16 to 2017-18 but the length of OSS slightly increased (Grades 3-12)

School Year	Total # of Students Suspended (OSS)	Total # of OSS Suspensions	Total OSS Days Suspended	Average Length of OSS in Days
2015-16	14,266	25,931	62,324	2.40
2016-17	12,364	21,515	52,109	2.42
2017-18	10,130	16,392	44,228	2.70

SOURCE: Qlik dev Suspension Reasons (2018-19 Networks) [v0.0.1, Dec 2018, 1-2-2019], data pulled on Feb 4, 2019

Findings for Research Question 2

The second research question asked whether certain groups of students were suspended disproportionately to their representation in the overall student body. To answer this question, we calculated risk ratios for a variety of student subgroups, including gender, race/ethnicity, English Language Learner (ELL) status, disability status (defined as students with Individual Education Programs, or IEPs), and grade level.

The risk ratio expresses the extent to which one group is at a higher or lower risk of being suspended than students that do not belong to that group. A risk ratio of 1.00 means that the likelihoods are the same for each group, values less than 1.00 reflect a lower risk of suspension for the particular group of students, and values greater than 1.00 reflect a higher risk for suspension for the particular group of students.⁷

Male students were more likely to be suspended than female students, particularly in the younger grades.

Our analysis found disproportionality in the number of suspensions given to male students (Table 12). This trend was particularly prevalent in the younger grades. From 2015-16 to 2017-18, for grades 3-5, male students were at least twice as likely (risk ratio > 2.0) to be suspended compared to female students. In 2017-18, third-grade male students were 3.38 times more likely to be suspended compared to third-grade female students.

Table 12. Gender-based disproportionality for male students was most severe in lower grades

Risk Ratios for Male Students Compared to Female Students in the Same Grade			
Grade	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
3	3.77	3.20	3.38
4	2.67	3.17	2.50
5	2.19	2.15	2.09
6	1.92	1.83	1.61
7	1.54	1.38	1.32
8	1.58	1.57	1.55
9	1.65	1.46	1.40
10	1.59	1.55	1.33
11	1.73	1.40	1.50
12	2.09	1.85	1.88

How to Read this Table: This table provides information about the likelihood of receiving a suspension based on gender. A ratio of 1 indicates an equal rate of OSS for both male and female students, while a ratio larger than 1 indicates greater risk for males. Risk ratios greater than 2 have been bolded. For example, in 2017-18, fifth-grade male students were 2.09 times more likely to receive out-of-school suspension when compared to fifth-grade female students.

⁷ Bonesheski & Runge, 2014

Students with disabilities had a higher risk of receiving a suspension than students without disabilities

Even though the percent of students with zero suspensions increased across all subgroups from 2015-16 to 2017-18, students with disabilities still had a disproportionately higher likelihood of being suspended than students without disabilities (Table 13). In 2017-18, in grades four, six, and eleven, students with disabilities were at least twice as likely to be suspended compared to students without disabilities (risk ratio > 2.0).

Table 13. Across grades 3-12, students with disabilities were more likely to receive a suspension than students without disabilities

Risk Ratios for Students with Disabilities Compared to Students Without Disabilities			
Grade	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
3	1.85	2.43	1.63
4	1.78	2.31	2.04
5	1.60	2.06	1.75
6	1.29	2.02	2.00
7	1.45	1.83	1.57
8	1.75	2.04	1.86
9	1.68	1.82	1.98
10	1.55	1.98	1.94
11	1.47	1.23	2.00
12	1.20	0.24 [^]	1.80

How to Read this Table: This table provides information about the likelihood of receiving a suspension based on disability status. A Risk Ratio of 1 indicates an equal rate of OSS for both students with disabilities and students without disabilities, while a ratio larger than 1 indicates greater risk for students with disabilities. Risk ratios greater than 2 have been bolded. For example, in 2017-18, eleventh-grade students were 2 times more likely to receive out-of-school suspension than eleventh-grade students without disabilities.

[^]In 2016-17, there were fewer students with disabilities who were promoted to 12th grade, which may have contributed to the small risk ratio.

ELL students in Philadelphia were *not* at a higher risk of receiving a suspension when compared to non-ELL students

Contrary to other research on the topic of suspension disproportionality,⁸ our findings suggest that ELL students are far less likely to receive a suspension compared to non-ELL students (Table 14). This may be partly explained by the possible confounding of race/ethnicity with ELL status in our sample.

⁸ Losen, D. J., & Martinez, T. E. (2013)

Table 14. Across grades 3-12, ELL students were less likely to receive a suspension than non-ELL students

Risk Ratios for English Language Learners (ELL) as compared to non-ELL students			
Grade	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
3	0.29	0.28	0.13
4	0.28	0.28	0.26
5	0.43	0.35	0.24
6	0.64	0.43	0.28
7	0.54	0.59	0.34
8	0.58	0.41	0.51
9	0.63	0.42	0.48
10	0.48	0.54	0.55
11	0.60	0.64	0.84
12	0.78	0.60	0.74

How to Read this Table: This table provides information about the likelihood of receiving a suspension based on a student's status as an English Language Learner (ELL). A Risk Ratio of 1 indicates an equal rate of OSS for both ELL and non-ELL students while a ratio larger than 1 indicates greater risk for ELL students. For example, in 2017-18, eighth-grade ELL students were 0.5 times (half as likely) to receive out-of-school suspension than eighth-grade non-ELL students.

The demographic composition of students with ELL status differed from the demographic composition of all students in the District. For example, in 2017-18, the composition of the ELL student population was 10% White, 10% Black/African American, 53% Hispanic/Latino, 21% Asian, and 6% Multi Racial/other. The same year (2017-18), the composition of the non-ELL population was 14% White, 55% Black/African American, 16% Hispanic/Latino, 8% Asian, and 7% Multi Racial/other (Table 15). Across all years, Black/African American students were a low percentage of the ELL population. Across all years, Black/African American students were also more likely to be suspended compared to their peers. Therefore, it is likely that race/ethnicity and ELL status were confounded when interpreting the risk ratios of ELL students.

Table 15. Demographic composition of ELL and non-ELL students

	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18	
	Non ELL	ELL	Non ELL	ELL	Non ELL	ELL
Race/ethnicity						
%White	15%	8%	14%	9%	14%	10%
%Black/African American	57%	11%	55%	10%	55%	10%
% Hispanic/Latino	16%	54%	16%	54%	16%	53%
% Asian	7%	22%	7%	22%	8%	21%
% Multiracial/Other [^]	6%	6%	7%	6%	7%	6%
Disability status						
Yes	16%	16%	16%	15%	17%	14%
No	84%	84%	84%	85%	83%	86%
Total enrollment (Grades 3-12)	85,852	9,022	84,694	9,588	83,933	10,209

SOURCE: Archive-Academics and Climate (2017-18 Networks), QlikBAM Enrollment-Oct 1 Snapshot application, data pulled on Feb 20, 2019.

[^]Due to small sample sizes, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial/Other, and unknown race/ethnicity categories have all been combined under the category "Other."

Across all grades, Black/African American students were more likely to be suspended compared to White students

Across all years and racial/ethnic groups, Black/African American students were more likely to be suspended compared to White students in 2015-16 to 2017-18 (Table 16). While the risk ratios were highest for the younger grades, Black/African American students in high school were still twice as likely to be suspended when compared to White students in 2015-16 to 2017-18.

In addition, Hispanic/Latino students and Multiracial/Other students were also at a disproportionate risk of being suspended compared to White students. In 2017-18, similar to Black/African American students, the highest risk for Hispanic/Latino students was in fifth grade, with a risk of 3.38 times that of the White students.

Table 16. Risk ratios for receiving out of school suspensions relative to White students, by ethnicity and grade level (students with disabilities were excluded from this analysis)

Grade	Asian			Black/African American			Hispanic/Latino			Other^		
	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
3	0.12	0.19	0.27	7.35	7.37	7.90	3.17	2.75	2.07	3.72	2.79	2.84
4	0.15	0.10	0.15	8.15	5.67	7.84	2.99	2.07	2.79	3.52	2.02	2.60
5	0.32	0.44	0.37	5.60	6.04	8.79	2.29	2.41	3.38	2.83	3.10	3.49
6	0.22	0.27	0.25	5.51	4.40	3.66	3.21	2.50	2.00	2.46	2.29	2.11
7	0.39	0.14	0.35	4.55	5.73	4.24	2.67	3.20	2.17	2.11	2.78	2.44
8	0.32	0.21	0.09	4.35	5.43	4.82	2.51	2.90	3.04	1.96	2.67	2.75
9	0.16	0.19	0.30	1.99	2.98	3.03	1.33	1.65	1.97	0.56	1.62	1.76
10	0.25	0.19	0.40	2.75	2.65	2.74	1.57	1.80	1.35	1.46	1.30	1.40
11	0.31	0.34	0.65	3.09	2.95	2.61	1.54	1.85	1.54	1.31	1.13	0.64
12	0.32	0.35	0.41	3.86	2.83	2.25	2.61	1.56	0.98	1.91	1.07	0.89

How to Read this Table: This table provides information about the likelihood of receiving a suspension based on a student's race/ethnicity relative to White students in the same grade. A Risk Ratio of 1 indicates an equal rate of OSS for while a ratio larger than 1 indicates greater risk for ELL students. For example, in 2017-18, eighth-grade Black/African American students were 4.82 times more likely to receive out-of-school suspension than eighth-grade White students.

^Due to small sample sizes, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial/Other, and unknown race/ethnicity categories have all been combined under the category "Other."

Conclusion

From 2015-16 to 2017-18, the percentage of students in grades 3-12 that received zero suspensions increased. An examination of disproportionality revealed that across grade levels, male students were more likely to be suspended than female students, and students with disabilities were more likely to be suspended compared to students without disabilities. Contrary to the findings of other research, English Language Learner (ELL) students were not more likely to receive a suspension compared to non-ELL students. Black/African American students, Latino/Hispanic students, and students identified as Multiracial/Other were more likely to be suspended compared to White students.

Technical Appendix

Risk Ratios are defined as the risk of receiving suspension for one group divided by the risk of receiving suspension for a comparison group.

$$\text{Risk ratio} = \frac{\text{Risk of receiving suspension for one group}}{\text{Risk of receiving suspension for comparison group}}$$

In order to estimate the *risk of receiving suspension*, we calculated a **suspension rate** for each demographic group. Suspension rates were estimated from student-level enrollment data and suspension records for the entire school district during each academic year.

Suspension rate is defined as the following:

$$\text{Suspension rate} = \frac{\text{Total number of suspensions given to one group}}{\text{Total number of enrolled days in the school district for one group}}$$

Other research has used the total number of enrolled students as opposed to the total number of enrolled days in the denominator for the suspension rate. For this analysis, suspension rates were calculated using both methods and the two methods yielded similar results. Findings in this report use total number of enrolled days in the denominator to account for student mobility.