The Civil Rights Project

Proyecto Derechos Civiles

***** NEWS RELEASE *****

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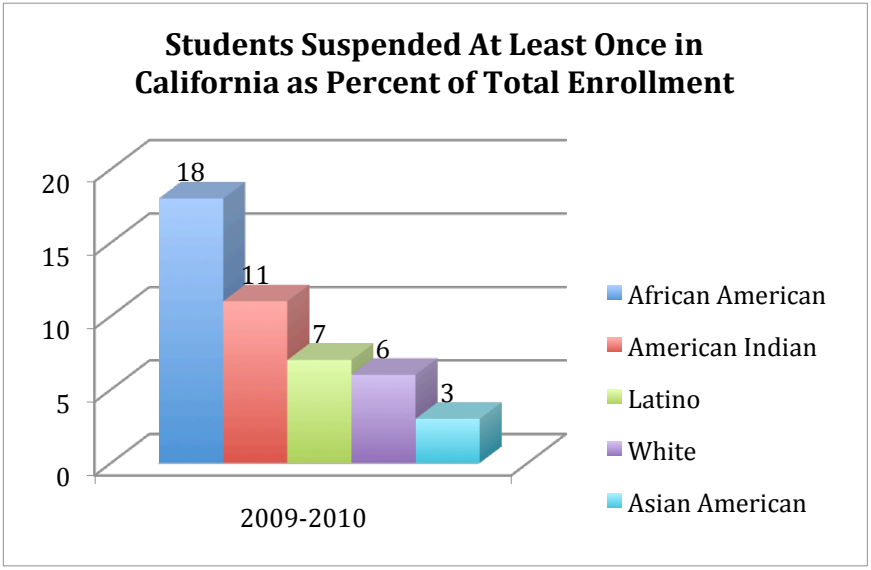
Out-of-School Suspensions in California's School Districts Reveal Hidden Crisis

Los Angeles--A new report from the Center for Civil Rights Remedies at the Civil Rights Project, ***Suspended Education in California's Public Schools,*** estimates that more than 400,000 students were suspended and removed from classrooms *at least one time* during the 2009-10 school year in California – enough to fill every seat in all the professional baseball and football stadiums in the state.

The California Department of Education reports over 750,000 *total* suspensions for the same year. These two estimates are consistent because many students were suspended two, three or even more times that year.

Suspended Education in California's Public Schools analyzes recently released data from the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR). The report focuses solely on the number of students suspended at least once, and provides statewide estimates of student discipline data for nearly 500 districts across California. The analysis also illustrates the risk for out-of-school suspension faced by students from each racial group and by those with disabilities.

The report shows large racial disparities in grades K-12 as depicted in the graph below.



The report further demonstrates that the closer you examine the data the worse the story becomes. At the district level, and when data are broken down by gender and disability status, these statewide numbers are even more disturbing.

For example, in the 10 districts where students were at greatest risk for suspension, nearly 1 of every 4 students was suspended.

The racial breakdown showed that in these 10 districts, average student suspension rates were: 41% for African Americans; 25% for American Indians; 21% for Whites; 21% for Latinos and 14% for Asian Americans.

The report provides discipline rates for students with and without disabilities for each racial group in every district included in the OCR survey. Statewide, nearly 28% of African American students *with disabilities* were suspended at least once. The report further analyzes the discipline data for the largest districts by race *with* gender, and by race with gender *and* disability status. In the largest 5 districts, African American males with disabilities were the group with the greatest risk to be suspended out of school without supervision.

"Most suspensions are for minor or vague infractions, such as disrespect, defiance and dress code violations, and this is clearly an unsound educational policy," says coauthor Daniel Losen. "The numbers in our report indicate an absolute crisis in many California districts since suspending students out of school--with no guarantee of adult supervision - greatly increases the risk for dropping out and involvement in the juvenile justice system."

The report discusses more effective responses to misbehavior than out-of-school suspensions. Studies of Texas and Indiana comparing demographically similar districts showed that those with lower suspension rates tended to have achievement and graduation numbers that were equal to or better than those with higher suspension rates.

As Losen points out, "This robust research busts the myth that you have to kick out the 'bad kids' so the 'good kids' can learn."

Suspended Education in California's Public Schools is co-authored by Daniel Losen, Tia Martinez and Jon Gillespie. The report, along with a spreadsheet of data from every California district covered in the report, can be found at www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu

About the Civil Rights Project at UCLA

Founded in 1996 by former Harvard professors Gary Orfield and Christopher Edley Jr., the Civil Rights Project/*Proyecto Derechos Civiles* is now co-directed by Orfield and Patricia Gándara, professors at UCLA. Its mission is to create a new generation of research in social science and law on the critical issues of civil rights and equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups in the United States. It has commissioned more than 400 studies, published 13 books and issued numerous reports from authors at universities and research centers across the country. This research, conducted by the CRP's Center for Civil Rights Remedies, was made possible with the support of Atlantic Philanthropies and the California Endowment.

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