



School Suspensions in Bridgeport Public Schools: What's New?

This report updates BCAC's publication, *Lost Class Time: The State of School Suspensions in the Bridgeport Schools*, released in fall 2009. That report documented in-school and out-of-school suspensions from the 2005-06 school year through 2007-08.

In July 2010, state legislation went into effect limiting the use of out-of-school suspensions. Recognizing the need to address its high rate of out-of-school suspensions and in anticipation of the state law, the Bridgeport School District implemented several programs to reduce school suspensions.

In response to the Bridgeport school system's positive steps and the new state law, BCAC decided to update its data on school suspensions. Data for this current report came from the Bridgeport school system and the Connecticut State Department of Education.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Out-of-school suspensions in Bridgeport schools dropped by 20% in the last three years. In-school suspensions increased 13%.**
- **The number of students suspended out-of-school decreased 13%, while the number of students given in-school suspensions increased 14%.**
- **In three years, the total number of days sanctioned for school discipline decreased by 33%.**
- **The number of days lost due to school policy violations dropped 41% in the last three years, but still account for nearly 11,900 lost days.**
- **More than 35% of suspended students are in grades 7 and 8; 9% are in kindergarten-grade 3.**
- **There is still a wide variation in suspension rates among the K-8 schools.**
- **Out-of-school suspensions dropped, especially at the high school level, during the first three months of the 2010-11 school year, compared to the same time period last year.**

BCAC's 2009 report found that from 2005-06 to 2008-09, the total number of out-of-school suspensions in the Bridgeport schools dropped nearly 40%. This positive downward trend is continuing.

Total number of out-of-school suspensions dropped nearly 20% from 2007-08 to 2009-10

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	% Change 2007-08 to 2009-10
Total number of out-of-school suspensions	7,695	6,439	6,247	-19%
Total number of in-school suspensions	2,126	3,695	2,398	+13%
Total number of suspensions	9,821	10,134	8,645	-12%

In-School and Out-of-School Suspensions, Bridgeport Public Schools, 2007-08 through 2009-10

School Suspensions in Bridgeport Public Schools:

Bridgeport has made strides in reducing the number of students suspended out-of-school

The district has stepped up efforts to implement a number of programs to reduce out-of-school suspensions. These initiatives include a new in-school suspension program at all schools and the hiring of 16 paraprofessionals, as well as a pilot program addressing behavioral issues for students in grades K-2. Please see page 4 for an overview of the district's new programs.

Number of students suspended out-of-school has gone down, while those given in-school suspensions increased

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	% Change 2007-08 to 2009-10
Total number of students* given out-of-school suspensions	3,345	2,830	2,904	-13%
Total number of students* given in-school suspensions	1,019	834	1,163	+14%

Total Number of Students Suspended, Bridgeport Schools, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10

*Each student was counted only once, even if the student had been suspended more than once during the school year.
Source: Discipline Data Reports, Bridgeport Schools, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10

Fewer lost school days

In-school suspensions keep students in school, where they can focus on academics and get support services to help modify behavior. The reduction in out-of-school suspensions has led to a significant decrease in lost school days. While school policy violations still account for the vast majority of suspensions, the number of school policy violations has also gone down markedly.

Far fewer days lost for suspensions, especially those due to school policy violations

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	% Change 2006-07 to 2008-09
Total days sanctioned for school discipline	41,466 days	29,150 days	27,850 days	-33%
Total school policy violations*	10,243 violations	6,608 violations	6,786 violations	-34%
Total days lost for school policy violations	20,219 days	12,938 days	11,888 days	-41%

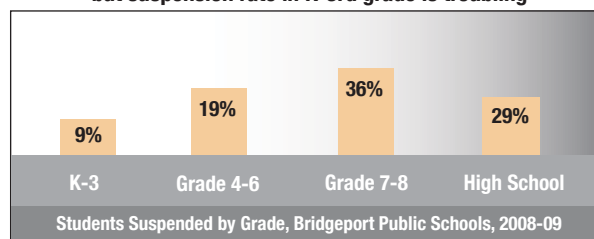
Days Lost Due to School Policy Violations, Bridgeport Public Schools, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09

*School policy violations include skipping class, insubordination, disorderly conduct, failure to attend detention, profanity, etc.
NOTE: 2009-10 data not available

Source: Number of Days Sanctioned for School Policy Violations by Category, 2008-09, 2007-08, 2006-07, State Department of Education

One in ten suspended students is in Kindergarten-Grade 3

Students are most likely to be suspended in grades 7 and 8, but suspension rate in K-3rd grade is troubling



* Suspension rate is calculated by counting each student only once; rate per 100 students; suspensions include in-school and out-of-school suspensions

NOTE: 2009-10 data unavailable

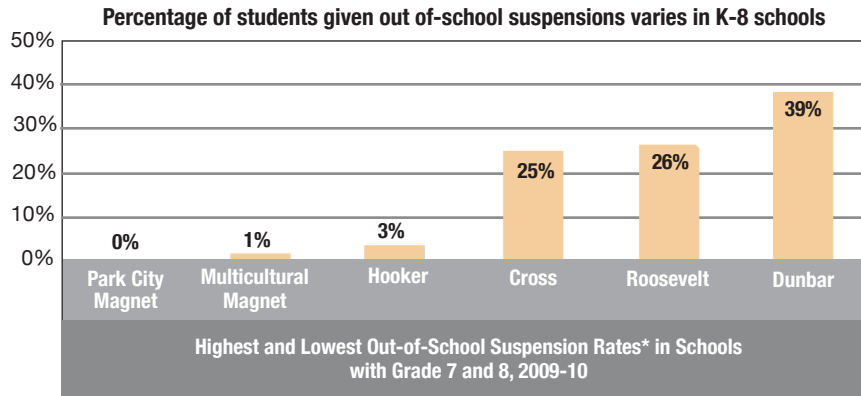
Source: Unduplicated Count of Students by Grade and Student Designation, 2008-09, State Department of Education

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Percentage of students suspended varies widely by school

The graph below shows the six schools with 7th and 8th graders that had the highest and lowest rates of school suspensions in 2009-10. The school system is challenged to successfully achieve uniformity across schools in implementation of district policies and practices. The variation in suspension rates may well reflect this issue.



* Suspension rate is calculated by counting each student only once; rate per 100 students.
 Source: Discipline Data Reports, Bridgeport Schools, 2009-10

Out-of-school suspensions continue to drop in 2010-11

Efforts to reduce suspensions are showing positive results. During the first three months of the 2010-11 school year, out-of-school suspensions have markedly decreased in those schools that had the highest number of out-of-school in suspensions during the same time period last year.

	Out-of-School Suspensions September - November	
	2009	2010
Columbus	71	4
Curiale	84	57
Dunbar	77	33
Roosevelt	75	18

K-8 Schools with the Highest Number of School Suspensions September - November 2009 compared to September - November 2010

Source: Discipline Data Reports, Bridgeport Schools, September - November 2009-10 and 2010-11

Out-of-school suspensions also continued to drop at the high school level, particularly at Bassick and Harding. On the other hand, in-school suspensions have increased significantly at those schools.

	Out-of-School Suspensions September - November	
	2009	2010
Bassick	242	173
Central	307	274
Harding	273	199

High School Out-of-School Suspensions, September - November 2009 and September - November 2010

Source: Discipline Data Reports, Bridgeport Schools, September - November 2009-10 and 2010-11

	In-School Suspensions September - November	
	2009	2010
Bassick	7	325
Central	414	415
Harding	0	207

High School In-School Suspensions, September - November 2009 and September - November 2010

Source: Discipline Data Reports, Bridgeport Schools, September - November 2009-10 and 2010-11



Programs implemented by the Bridgeport School District to reduce out-of-school suspensions

As of mid-October 2010, the Bridgeport School District implemented in-school suspension programs in all of its elementary and high schools. The district hired 16 paraprofessionals to staff these programs and provided three days of training for them on strategies to reduce school suspensions, including behavior management and crisis prevention training. Guidance counselors and social workers provide additional support services.

Staffing and hours of in-school suspension programs vary by school. High schools have programs five days a week. At the elementary school level, the hours of in-school suspension programs vary. Larger schools with Kindergarten-Grade 8 operate in-school suspension programs five days a week; smaller K-8 schools operate 3-4 days a week; and K-6 schools operate 1-3 days a week.

Preventing suspensions and improving school climate

The district has a number of initiatives in place to prevent school suspensions. These programs focus on school environment and student behavior:

- Positive Behavior Support (PBS), a national program for preventing and responding to discipline problems, has been implemented in all Bridgeport schools as of the 2009-10 school year.
- Three Bridgeport schools, Barnum, Bassick High School, and Harding High School, have been identified by the State Department of Education as low performing schools in need of remediation. In fall 2010, the district received funding through the School Improvement Grant (SIG) to implement models of change to restructure these schools. It is anticipated that the restructuring will result not only in improved academic achievement, but also reduced suspensions, fewer trancies, and better school environment.
- A pilot program in three schools, Beardsley, Bryant, and Curiale, focuses on students in grades K-2. Students are clustered by developmental ability, rather than placed in a grade, with guidance, social work, and speech and language supports. While not an in-school suspension program per se, it is expected that the new approach, including early intervention support, will help reduce behavioral problems in younger students.
- The Camp Program at the Bridgeport Learning Center targets kindergarten students with serious behavioral problems. Using a team approach, the program includes academics, as well as social work and guidance supports. A team from the child's home school works closely with the team at the Learning Center to ensure continuity of learning.