

WHAT IS THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE?

The school-to-prison pipeline is the system of policies and practices that push students out of school and into the juvenile and adult criminal systems. Students of color are more likely to be pushed out of school through this pipeline.

HOW DO STUDENTS ENTER THE PIPELINE?

2018-2019 Data

The school-to-prison pipeline has many entry points. Once a student is caught in the pipeline, it can be very difficult for them to reengage and be successful at school. In almost every NC school district, students of color are overrepresented at each entry point to the pipeline.



Academic Failure

Students who are behind or failing academically are more likely to be truant, act out, and ultimately drop out of school. Statewide, only 28% of Black students in grades 3-8 are “College and Career Ready” based on their final exams, compared to almost 60% of White students. This is often called the “achievement gap.”

School Discipline

Any time spent out of the classroom for disciplinary reasons is time that a student is not learning. Research shows that suspension is not effective at addressing misbehavior. Instead, it harms students with no measurable positive impact on overall school safety. Black students receive 55% of all short-term suspensions given in NC, even though they make up only 25% of the student population.

Court Involvement

Over 45% of all juvenile court referrals come from schools. Criminalization of student misbehavior has life-long consequences and can impact a student’s future educational and employment opportunities. Statewide, almost half of all school-based juvenile complaints are filed against Black students.

HOW CAN COMMUNITIES DISMANTLE THE PIPELINE?

Prevention: Small classes and schools; engaging curriculum; School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS); staff training; parent engagement initiatives; social and emotional learning programs

Interventions: Mentoring; counseling; social work services; support groups; appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with disabilities; Student Support Teams (SSTs)

Alternatives: Community service; restitution; restorative justice; substance abuse treatment; Saturday school; high-quality alternative schools

Policy: Prohibit suspensions and court referrals for minor misbehavior; provide adequate due process for suspended students; clarify the appropriate roles of school police; require racial equity training for all staff

Accountability: Involve all stakeholders in creating and revising policies; evaluate programs and practices regularly; have in place well-publicized grievance procedures; collect and publish comprehensive data annually