

# OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION MARYLAND AND BALTIMORE CITY, 2009-2010

**OSI-BALTIMORE IS HEARTENED** by the continuing decline in suspensions state-wide, and, especially in Baltimore City. However, levels of out-of-school suspension continue to be excessive. In 2009-10, 57,207 or 7% of students in Maryland schools were at higher risk for academic failure, drop-out, and incarceration due to school suspensions. We urge all Maryland districts to examine their discipline policies to end the overused, biased, and inconsistent application of suspensions. In their place, we encourage the state to adopt effective practices that keep children in school and, provide supportive and structured environments that teach appropriate behavior and increase school safety.

## OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION RATES AT LOWEST LEVEL IN 12 YEARS

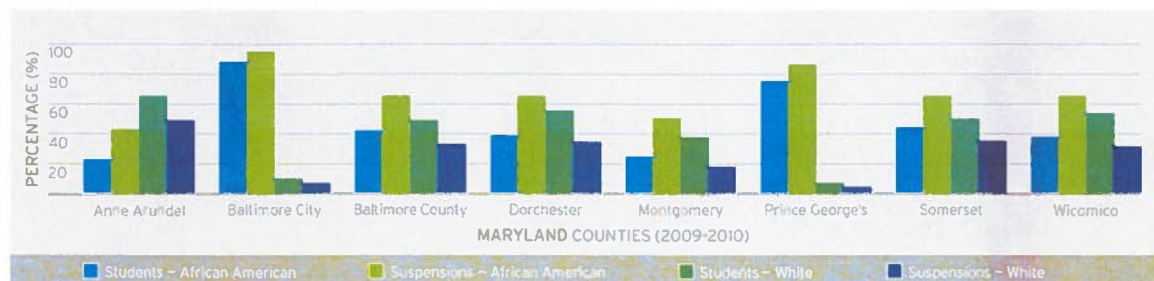
- During the 1995-1996 school year, Maryland public schools suspended 7.1% of the student population; by 2003-2004, that rate peaked at 9.3%. In 2009-2010, the rate declined to 7.0% (57,207 students out of a total enrollment of 819,786).<sup>i</sup>
- In Baltimore City, the number of suspension incidents and students suspended continued a downward trend begun in 2003-2004. In 2009-2010, City Schools suspended 6,547 students in 9,702 incidents. This represents 8.4% of the total enrollment, the lowest figure since 1995-1996. This dramatic decline directly resulted from the adoption of a new district-wide discipline policy.
- The fall in Baltimore City suspensions means that nine counties exceeded Baltimore City's rate: Anne Arundel (8.8%), Baltimore County (10.1%), Cecil (11.7%), Charles (11.5%), Dorchester (14.5%), Kent (10.8%), Prince George's (8.6%), Somerset (13.6%), and Wicomico (12.2%).

## OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION RATES VARY WIDELY AMONG AND WITHIN MARYLAND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- Suspension rates vary by district and school. In 2009-2010, out-of-school suspension rates for Maryland school districts ranged from 2.5% for Montgomery County Public Schools to 14.5% for Dorchester County Public Schools.
- Within district variability is also pervasive. For example, three Baltimore City high schools administered out-of-school suspensions at divergent rates – New Hope Academy (75.1%) had a significantly higher rate than Northwestern (26.3%), which had over twice the rate of Carver Vocational-Technical High (12.5%).<sup>ii</sup>

## AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS SUSPENDED AT HIGHER RATES IN EVERY COUNTY IN MARYLAND

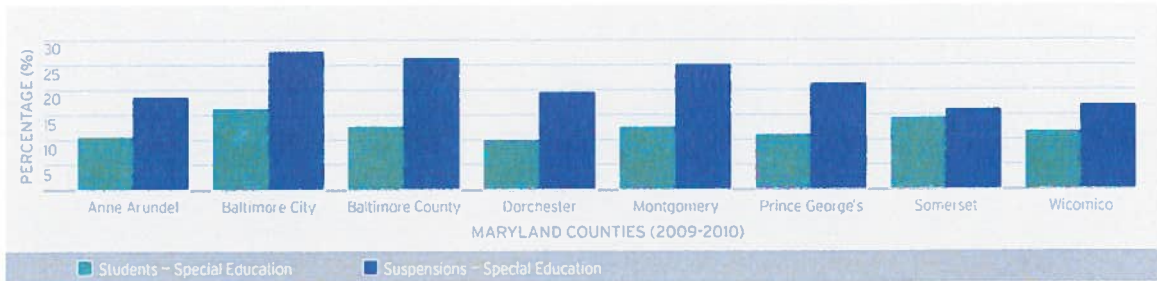
- In the 2009-2010 school year, African-American students comprised 37.9% of the student population in Maryland, but accounted for 61.2% of the students suspended, while white students made up 45.5% of the population, but accounted for 30.8% of suspensions statewide.
- In Baltimore City in 2009-2010, African Americans comprised 87.8% of the student population, but accounted for 95.3% of suspensions. White students comprised 7.8% of the population, but made up 3.5% of suspensions.
- In the eight counties below, African American students were suspended at over twice the rate of white students. If the suspension rates of African American students were to match those of white students, approximately 15,599 fewer African American students would be suspended in these eight counties.



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## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES SUSPENDED AT HIGHER RATES – DESPITE LEGAL PROTECTIONS OF FEDERAL LAWS<sup>iii</sup>

- In 2009-2010, 12.0% of Maryland students had disabilities, while 22.1% of suspended students had disabilities.
- In that same year, students with disabilities comprised 16.8% of the City Schools student population, while accounting for 27.2% of suspended students.



## SUSPENSIONS BEGIN IN PRE-K

- In 2009-2010, 8,184 elementary school students in Maryland were given out-of-school suspensions (accounting for 14.3% of suspended students), including 631 kindergarteners, 860 first-graders, and 1,175 second-graders. In addition, 75 pre-kindergarteners were given out-of-school suspensions.
- During that period, Baltimore City Schools suspended 1,580 elementary school students (accounting for 24.1% of suspended students) and 7 pre-kindergarteners.

## OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS MOST OFTEN GIVEN FOR NON-VIOLENT OFFENSES

- In the 2009-2010 school year, Disrespect, Insubordination, and Disruption was the #1 suspension category in Maryland, accounting for 41.8% of out-of-school suspensions. Only 7.4% of suspensions were issued for Dangerous Substances, Weapons, Arson/Fire/Explosives, and Sex Offenses combined.
- In Baltimore City, during that period, 2,230 suspensions were given for Disrespect, Insubordination, and Disruption, accounting for 23% of out-of-school suspensions.

## CHANGE IN BALTIMORE CITY DISCIPLINE POLICY AFFECTS OUTCOMES

- After the implementation of a code of conduct that mandated alternatives to suspensions/expulsions for SY 2008-2009, suspensions for virtually all infractions declined, except in the Attacks, Threats, and Fighting category.

<sup>i</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all data from: Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Accountability and Assessment, Suspensions, Expulsions, and Health Related Exclusions, Maryland Public Schools, 2009-2010 and Maryland Public School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and Gender and Number of Schools. Accessed at <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/planningresultstest/2009+-+2010+Student+Publications.htm?WBCMODE=PresentatIonUnpublished%252%253e%25%3e%25%3e%25%3e%25%3e%25%25%3e%25%3e>

<sup>ii</sup> Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Accountability and Assessment, Maryland Public School Suspensions by School and Major Offense Category Out of School Suspensions 2009-2010. Accessed at [http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/805A7BDE-C5E7-4106-81D9-D1F400BCCFC8/22408/usp09\\_sch\\_out1.pdf](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/805A7BDE-C5E7-4106-81D9-D1F400BCCFC8/22408/usp09_sch_out1.pdf); calculation = total number of incidents divided by total enrollment numbers provided by City Schools

<sup>iii</sup> Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Accountability and Assessment, Maryland Special Education/Early Intervention Services Census Data & Related Tables 2009-2010. Accessed at <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/A1A9320D-F78D-49CB-9565-9B8A68E924CD/23519/sped09.pdf>

Note: In 2006-2007, MSDE began collecting and publishing data on in-school suspensions; however, the data cited in this document refer to out-of-school suspensions only. For data on in-school suspension rates, see MDSE, supra note i.