

An Overview of Racial Disparity in Discipline in Champaign County Public Schools: 2011-2015

In October of 2000, African American students filed *and won* a lawsuit under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 against Champaign County District 4 Schools citing racial segregation and discrimination. While the case officially closed in 2012, Champaign District 4 and Urbana district 116 public schools still experience racial disparities at alarming rates. Black students are disciplined, suspended, expelled, and arrested at much higher rates than their white peers. Even in raw numbers, expulsions of black students far exceed those of whites despite the fact that blacks make up approximately 35% - 37% of total students enrolled in the county while whites represent 39% - 41% of the total.

How does racial disparity in schools affect the racial disparity in jails and prisons? It is necessary to investigate racial disparity in education because public schools are a direct funnel for many students experiencing discipline. Often referred to as “the school-to-prison pipeline”, students (most often black) are funneled through school into the criminal justice system. This process is a consequence of “zero tolerance” discipline and a high reliance on the use of suspensions and other extreme disciplinary measures by schools. A student who is suspended (perhaps even multiple times which is the case for many students in Champaign County) is more likely to be held back, drop out, commit a crime, and end up in jail. While black students do not commit more severe offences than their white peers, statistically they experience harsher punishments. The average number of suspensions in Urbana District 116 schools from 2011-2015 was **2,290 suspensions a year**. Champaign District 4 schools’ average suspensions from 2012-2015 was **1,426 per year** but **the use of suspensions has increased every year**.

In **Champaign District 4** schools...

Between the academic years 2012 to 2015:

75% of all students suspended were black, 13% were white.

77.7% of all students expelled were black, 13.7% were white.

In 2011, **85% of all students who experienced disciplinary action involving the police were black.**

In **Urbana District 116** schools...

Between the academic years 2011 to 2015:

65.8% of all students suspended were black, 18.6% were white.

85.7 % of all students expelled were black, 14.3 % were white. (100% of students expelled in the 2014-2015 school year were black.)

In the 2011-2012 school year, **84% of all students who experienced disciplinary action involving the police were black.**

In the 2013-2014 school year, **50% of all students who experienced disciplinary action involving the police were black, 32% were white.**

Sources: Champaign Unit 4 Schools; Urbana District 116 Schools; Civil Rights Data Collection national database; U.S. Census Bureau