

Creating Positive School Climate & Reducing Suspensions

What works: 1) *Restorative Justice* – program that gets to the root of a student’s misbehavior and works out a plan for retribution
2) *Social and Emotional* supports – guidance counselors and social workers

What’s happening in New York:

- **No progress:** as a state, suspensions continue to climb, especially for Black, Latino and special needs students

Benefits of a positive school climate:

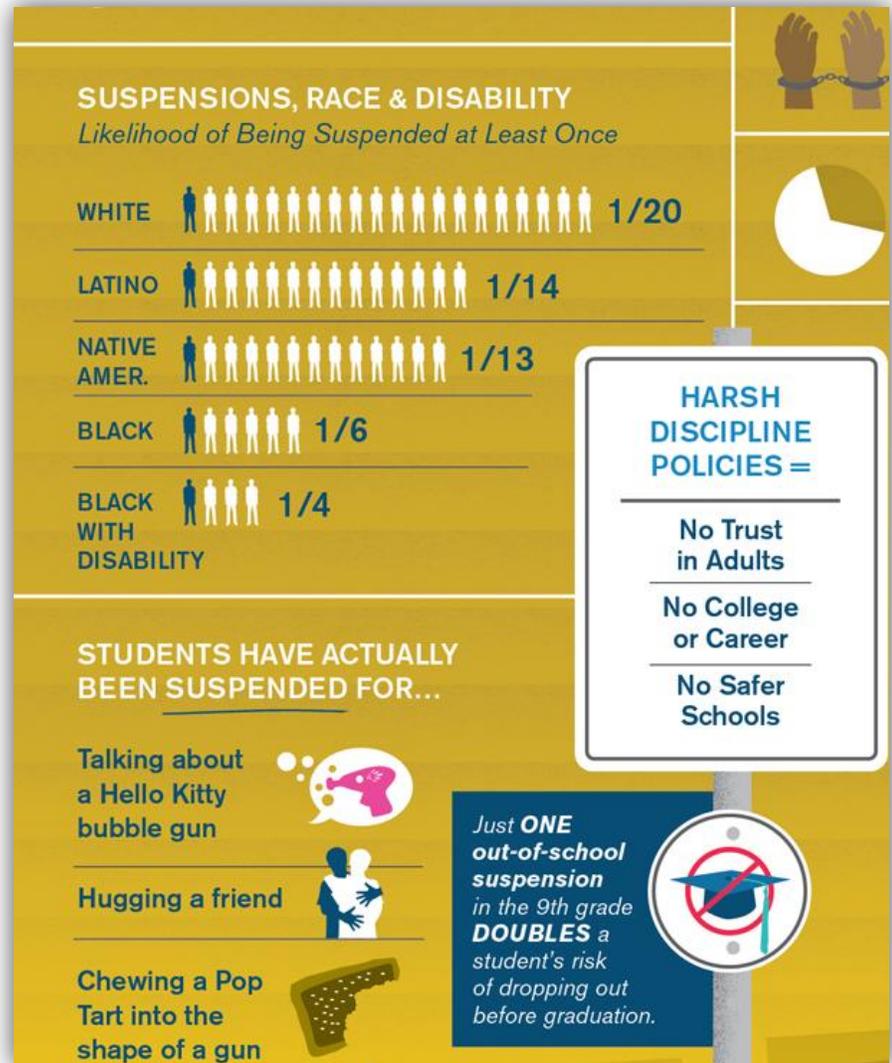
- Discipline actions, including out-of-school suspensions, are reduced¹
- Drop-out rates decrease,²
- Graduation rates increase

Concerns about school climate & suspensions in New York:

- **High rates of suspension:** in NYS, 5% of students are suspended each year. But in some districts suspension rates are 20% or higher.
- **Promoting punitive approaches:** State policies support ineffective punitive approaches to student behavior, which is reflected in school districts’ Codes of Conduct, despite strong evidence that student supports and restorative justice policies significantly reduce suspensions, improve school safety and student behavior and, increase student achievement.

AQE’s position on school climate:

- New York State should change those laws and regulations which mandate or encourage excessive use of suspensions particularly for non-violent offenses.
- The state should provide a model Code of Conduct to focus on progressive discipline and restorative justice designed to keep students in schools and solve behavioral issues, in place of punitive approaches.
- NYS should identify resources to implement restorative justice programs and to provide adequate student supports including guidance counselors and social workers.



¹ Schiff, M. & Bazemore, G. (2012). “Whose kids are these?” Juvenile Justice and Education Partnerships using Restorative Justice to end the “School-to-Prison Pipeline.” Published in *Keeping Kids in School and Out of Court*.

² International Institute of Restorative Justice Practices (2009). Findings from Schools Implementing Restorative Practices.