



# Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

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## News Release

### For Immediate Release

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## **Advocates for Children of New York Commends the City's Efforts to Reduce the Number and Length of Suspensions and Urges the City to Tackle Longstanding Disparities by Race and Disability**

**November 4, 2019 (NEW YORK CITY)** — On November 1, 2019, the City released 2018-2019 school year data showing that, since the 2013-2014 school year, suspensions are at an all-time low, having declined by 38.5%. The City reported that major crime in schools declined by 31.9% during the same period. The school discipline data, which the Department of Education is required to report pursuant to the Student Safety Act, show that since last year, suspensions declined by 10.5%, and the average length of suspensions declined citywide from 7.5 to 5.8 days.

However, even as the overall number of suspensions and the average length of suspensions has fallen, the longstanding, stark racial disparities in suspensions have proven remarkably persistent. Black students—who comprise around a quarter of the New York City public school population—received *more than half* (52%) of all superintendent's suspensions in 2018-19, along with 42.1% of principal's suspensions. In 2017-18, those numbers were 51.6% and 43.5%, respectively.

There are similarly dramatic trends for students with disabilities: while approximately 20% of New York City students receive special education services, 39.7% of all suspensions issued last year went to students with disabilities—an almost identical percentage as in the past two years (students with disabilities received 40.1% of suspensions in 2017-18 and 38.9% in 2016-17).

“We are pleased by the results of the NYC Department of Education's hard work over the 2018-2019 school year to reduce both the number and length of suspensions,” said Kim Sweet, Advocates for Children's Executive Director. “However, there remains enormous work to be done to address the disproportionate impact of punitive, exclusionary discipline on Black students and students with disabilities. These dramatic disparities are deeply concerning.”

Results of the recent Center for Court Innovation report [School Discipline, Safety, and Climate: A Comprehensive Study in New York City](#) show that suspensions lead to poor academic and social outcomes, including failing a grade, arrests, and further suspensions in future school years. The study

also indicates that Black and Hispanic students, students with disabilities, and low-income students are more likely to be suspended than other students, taking into account past behavior and similar types of incidents. The study concludes that positive practices, especially restorative approaches, can lead to better student outcomes and a better school climate.

This year, the Administration is expanding restorative practices to 300 middle and high schools and plans to expand citywide over the course of three years.

“Going forward, it is critical that the City build on these promising results by creating a solid infrastructure to institutionalize them and make the necessary additional investments in mental health services and supports, social workers, and restorative practices to further expand on them,” said Dawn Yuster, Director of Advocates for Children’s School Justice Project. “We are eager to dig in and do the work with the City and other stakeholders on the NYC School Safety Community Partnership Committee to develop a comprehensive plan to keep students in school learning — safe and supported using evidence-based approaches to improve academic outcomes and eliminate discipline disparities by race and disability.”

**About Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)**

*Since 1971, Advocates for Children of New York has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds who are at greatest risk for failure or discrimination in school because of their poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, immigrant or English Language Learner status, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness, or involvement in the foster care or juvenile/criminal justice systems. AFC uses four integrated strategies: free advice and legal representation for families of students; free trainings and workshops for parents, communities, and educators and other professionals to equip them to advocate on behalf of students; policy advocacy to effect change in the education system and improve education outcomes; and impact litigation to protect the right to quality education and compel needed reform.*