

Youth, Rights & Justice

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Don't kick our youngest students out of school for simply misbehaving

During 2011, Oregon schools suspended or expelled students at a rate six times higher per capita than the New York City school system. When this trend starts with students in grades K-5, it can have especially lasting consequences. Students who are suspended are more likely to get in trouble and drop out.

SB 553 will allow schools to suspend or expel students under 12 years-old for truly dangerous or harmful behavior. And it will prevent schools from excluding children for minor infractions and for **behavior that is developmentally normal**, such as being noisy or otherwise disrupting the class.

Among the reasons why out-of-school suspension and expulsion are particularly inappropriate for younger students:

- Children **lose vital early instruction time**, including **basic reading and math** skills which form the foundation for learning.
- Numerous studies show that suspension/exclusion doesn't improve school safety or academic achievement. There is evidence that it may make schools less safe and reduce test scores and academic progress for all students.
- Excluding young children from school places them in harm's way. School is the safe place for them to be during the day.
- Parents whose children are excluded will likely have to miss work and risk losing wages and their jobs.

Oregon's struggle with the "School-to-Prison Pipeline" and with racial disparities starts in the earliest grades and with suspensions for minor, non-violent offenses. The rates of school exclusion for African American students are nothing short of a crisis in Oregon:

2012-13 School Year – Oregon statewide data	Kindergarten	5 th Grade
Proportion of African-American students who were suspended out of school or expelled	1 in 28	1 in 12
Proportion of Caucasian students suspended or expelled	1 in 100	1 in 36
Rate at which African-American students are suspended or expelled, compared to Caucasian students in Oregon	3.51 times	2.99 times

Students with disabilities and low-income students are also more likely to be excluded. Grades K-5 are the place to start reversing these trends by eliminating suspension and expulsion for all but the most serious behaviors. Support learning and success for all of our children. **Support SB 553!**

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