

BLACK GIRLS SUMMIT: FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS ON WATERBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS DISCIPLINE DISPARITIES

RADICAL ADVOCATES for CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATION-R.A.C.C.E.

Waterbury’s female students of color are at greater risk of being suspended in school than their white counterparts, thereby, accelerating the school to prison pipeline for girls of color. In light of this we urge the Superintendent, and BOE to form a special task force. This task force would examine and identify which discipline policies are administered properly, those that work to increase or decrease instructional time, and those policies that need to be supported or rescinded. Specifically, this task force should include principals, teachers, social workers, school psychologists, police and parents. R.A.C.C.E. would be a willing volunteer, as a participant and/or facilitator.

R.A.C.C.E. believes it is important to highlight the statistical illusion that reducing overall suspensions would lead to a reduction in the disparate disciplinary rates of female students of color.

We know this isn’t true. It is our belief that the reduction in the number of overall suspensions is not a reliable metric for determining whether or not our district’s policies and practices are in fact culturally competent and student centric.

R.A.C.C.E. believes the paradigm that places discipline over academic achievement is a primary reason for achievement gaps, graduation rate disparities, low-levels of school connectedness and the over-disciplining of students of color, especially girls of color in Waterbury’s public schools.

In an attempt to explain the unique circumstances that girls of color face we highlighted a report *Black Girls Matter*, produced by the *African American Policy Forum*. From this report we gained an understanding that poverty, interpersonal violence, sexual assault, pregnancy and the burdensome trend of parenting responsibilities for both Hispanic and Black female students is at higher levels than their white counterparts. Combining this with a paradigm of discipline over academic achievement, girls of color feel heightened levels of vulnerability through the phenomena of being pushed-out and over-policed. This creates a continuum of suspensions and more vulnerability for female students of color in Waterbury.

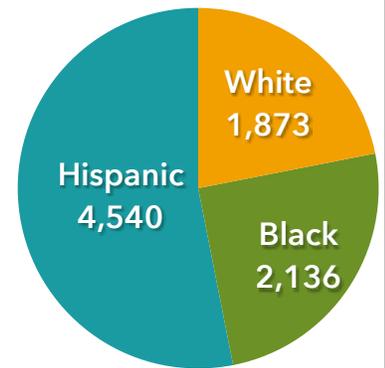
Waterbury’s school district will be required by law to provide cultural competency training for its school professionals in 2015. We urge the B.O.E., the Superintendent and her staff to pursue training that doesn’t just meet federal or state standards. Rather, we suggest designing and implementing long-term, progressive, and tailored professional development to meet the very specific needs of the diverse student body. Waterbury can be an innovator and leader in this area.

If school professionals don’t understand how their socio-cultural identity fits into societal power dynamics, then they can never truly be educators who are cross-cultural. It is only when school professionals understand how implicit and explicit bias works to control all of their core duties as educators that they will be able make judgments about discipline and academic achievement through a lens of equity, fairness, and justice.

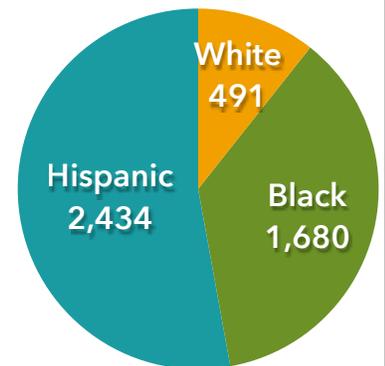
Finally our Black Girls Summit panelists and attendees recommended the following:

- ◆ Increase the amount of student controlled and designed after school programs.
- ◆ Training of all staff on culturally competency and implicit bias.
- ◆ More timely distribution of (dis)aggregated data.
- ◆ More accountability for school professionals as it relates to these discipline disparities.

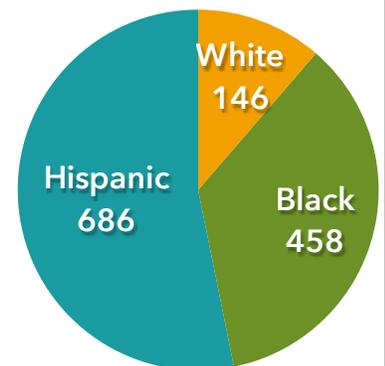
Female Student Population
3 -year Average



Female Student Suspensions
3-year Average



Individual Females Suspended
3-year Average



*All data was collected from Waterbury School District’s ED 166 files sent to C.S.D.E.

Black Female Students 2012-2015

- ◆ Over the last 3 years Black female students were suspended at a rate of 3.5 to 1 (5041 vs. 1472), while having a 1.1 to 1 population ratio.
- ◆ Over the last 3 years Black female individuals were responsible for suspensions that equaled 1375 vs. 437 for white females. A 3.2 to 1 ratio.
- ◆ Over the last 3 years 21% of all Black females were suspended while only 8% of White female students were suspended. This equates to a 2.6 times greater Risk Index for Black female students.
- ◆ Over the last 3 years, even though population numbers have **decreased** along with suspension totals, Black female students have seen an intensification of their suspensions. Risk Ratios increased from 2.6 to 1 to 3 to 1.
- ◆ Over the last 3 years 35% of all female suspensions were given to Black females while Black females only accounted for 24% of the female population. This equates to a 1.5 disparate impact rate.

Hispanic Female Students 2012-2015

- ◆ Over the last 3 years Hispanic female students were suspended at a rate of 5.0 to 1 (7303 vs. 1472), while only having a 2.4 to 1 population ratio.
- ◆ Over the last 3 years Hispanic female individuals were responsible for suspensions that equaled 2058 vs. 437 for white females. A 4.7 to 1 ratio.
- ◆ Over the last 3 years 15% of all Hispanic females were suspended while only 8% of White female students were suspended. This equates to a 1.95 times greater Risk Index for Hispanic female students.
- ◆ Over the last 3 years, as population numbers have steadily increased by 10 % for Hispanic females, so have their suspension totals. Hispanic female students have also experienced an increase of their risk to being suspended. Their Risk Ratio has grown from 1.9 to 2.2 a 17%.
- ◆ Over the last 3 years 51% of all female suspensions were given to Hispanic females while Hispanic females accounted for 53% of the female population.

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