

Purpose: Analyze the role of the School-to-Prison Pipeline and determine effective ways to mitigate its effects.

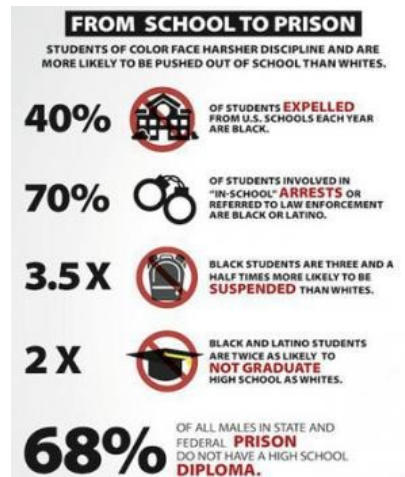
## What is the School-to-Prison Pipeline? (SPP)

According to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the School-to-Prison Pipeline occurs when children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems, thus contributing to the overpopulation of America's prisons. (2018)

## Why is the SPP an Issue?

### Disproportionate Effects of the SPP

The SPP disproportionately affects minorities, and particularly Blacks. "Black students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than white students." (US Department of Education, 2012) A study done by the Civil Rights Data Collection Agency, indicates that although Black students represent 16% of the student population, 32%-42% of the students are suspended or expelled. With these statistics, a school with a student population of 1,000 students, could have 160 Black students and about 68 of those students may be suspended or expelled. (2012)



### Zero-Tolerance Policies

Initially, Congress passed the zero-tolerance policy to combat school violence and enforced a minimum of one year expulsion for students who brought firearms to school. (Martinez, 2009) However, when the term "firearm" changed to "weapon" in 1995 (under the zero-tolerance policy) schools began to apply the zero-tolerance policy to drugs, liquor, and fights in efforts to "relinquish responsibility for students with behavioral problems." (McAndrews, 2001) Zero-tolerance policies can also disproportionately affect Black students. A study conducted by Christle found that schools with a large population of students that had low socioeconomic statuses (SES) and a greater percentage of minority students had higher suspension rates. (2004) These policies are conducive to the SPP.

In many schools around the nation there are campus police who may criminalize students by "moving problematic students to the juvenile justice system rather than disciplining them at school" thus supporting the SPP. (Theriot, 2009) When "disruptive" situations are handled by the police versus school administration and staff, the enormity of the disruptiveness can be heightened, leading to criminalization of behaviors that are not truly a "huge" threat to safety.

### The Ineffectiveness of Suspensions

School administrators believe that removing disruptive students can improve the academic performance of the rest of the students because their environment will be rid of disruptions. However, there will be implications for the "disruptive" student. The student will lose educational opportunities because of the time away from the classroom setting. Even if work is assigned or due upon returning to school, this may not be enforced in the student's home environment and they may have limited resources for assistance on assignments. When this student returns to school, it may be hard to keep up with new classroom topics, leaving them farther behind other students. Using Becker's Economic Model of Crime (1968) "depending on the degree of supervision at home, youth may have more opportunity to engage in crimes in the community." (Cuellar & Markewitz, 2015) Suspensions, lead to more free time, which can lead to riskier behaviors that result in encounters with the criminal/juvenile justice systems, thus proving the conduciveness of suspensions to SPP.

Suspensions are also ineffective because the real issues whether they be behavioral or psychological, are never truly addressed, which can lead to recidivism.



## From Suspensions to Drop-outs to Prison?

When students are suspended and lose access to structured education, it increases the rate of retention because it becomes harder to keep up with classroom topics. "Students who are held back a grade are more likely to drop out than those who have never been held back." (DeRidder, 1991) Even suspensions that do not lead to retention can cause dropouts. According to data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) if a student had a prior history of suspensions, the likelihood of the student dropping out of school increased by 78%. (1997) "A study of educational disruption in Florida showed that the typical disruptive student who is likely to drop out or be suspended or expelled was a Black male..." (DeRidder, 1991) Unlike suspensions, when students drop-out, many do not return to structured educational settings. This can lead to copious amounts of free time, that can allow these students to get into illegal and/or violent activities. In a study conducted on 18-25 year olds, "Dropouts were found to be two to three times more likely to have been arrested for larceny, assault, and drug possession or sales than their high school graduate counterparts..."(Maynard, Salas-Wright, & Vaughn, 2015) When suspensions lead to dropouts, they are conducive to the SPP.



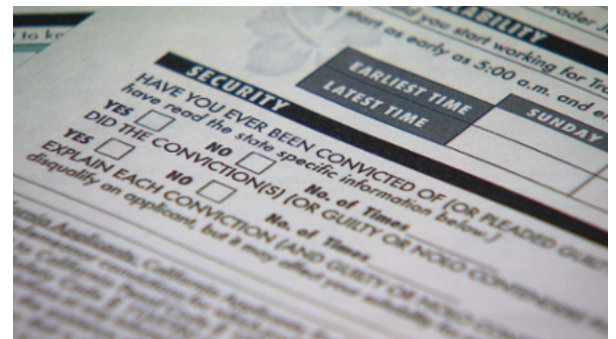
## Who is at Stake?

The SPP has many stakeholders. Students who may fall victim to SPP have much at stake. Once students begin to build up offenses within the criminal justice system, the offenses may remain on their records, making it hard to obtain legal, self-sufficient jobs. This is a life-long cost that makes it increasingly hard to pay bills, provide adequate food for themselves, and support families as they grow older and can lead to recidivism. Minority students such as Blacks and Latinos are often arrested at higher rates in schools than their White counterparts. The government is also affected because it is now susceptible to a "free rider" problem, where they cannot always afford services that they need but can still benefit from those services at the cost of others. "Moreover, high school dropouts are costly to society, with an estimated lifetime cost close to \$240,000 per dropout resulting from lower tax contributions, higher reliance on public assistance, and higher incidence of criminal activity" (Maynard et al. 2015) This can worsen economic conditions as the number of dropouts increase. In the 2016-2017 school year, North Carolina had 11,280 students drop out from grades 7-13. Just one school year in one state resulted in a societal cost of \$2,707,200,000 for the estimated lifetime costs of all of the dropouts. This has to be divided up amongst taxpayers, because the dropouts are unable to pay for these costs themselves. America's economy is also at stake because more dropouts can result in less people entering the workforce. If these rates become too high, the economy could begin to decline or become stagnant while less people enter the workforce while simultaneously benefiting off of the economy's current state.



## What is the Role for Government?

Due to the effects that the SPP has on the market, the government is justified in intervening to solve the problem of market inefficiencies. The social welfare for individuals directly affected by the SPP is a concern, and cause for government intervention. Many companies would prefer not to hire people who have been involved with the criminal justice system, however, this is not equitable. The government must intervene and put regulations in place that allow these people to also have access to some jobs. If a business or company goes against these regulations, then it is considered discriminatory and the government has the authority to intervene again. The government may also intervene to promote economic fairness. It is unfair for a victim of the criminal justice system who may be in poor economic health to pay the same amount of taxes as the upper-class. The government would make changes to the taxation system to ensure equity as well as provide welfare programs such as Food Stamps to help provide everyday needs.



# Solutions

## In School-Suspensions (ISS)

Out of school-suspensions are not a good punishment for students because they can fall behind in class material, and while they are unsupervised at home, they may choose to engage in risky behaviors. Instead developing proper In School Suspension programs, can ensure that students are learning and are being supervised. A good ISS program will have counselors who can rehabilitate students by finding the reason behind the cause of the actions that led to suspension, and determining solutions to prevent other offenses. There will also be specific ISS teachers and tutors who can assist with different school subjects and ensure that students are keeping up with their work.

## Three Strikes System

In addition to implementing a proper ISS program in schools, a three-strike system will ensure that students are given the opportunity to correct their behaviors before being given OSS. Under the three strikes program, students will only be sent to ISS three times and the next offense will result in OSS. However, if the ISS program is effective, the likelihood that the three-strikes will actually be used should be minimal due to its rehabilitative and supportive structure. This three-strikes solution will ensure that students understand the importance of staying in school to keep up with their education at the same pace as their peers, and prevent them from engaging in risky behaviors during their free time. It also shows students that their school administrators are invested in their success and not their downfall, by providing opportunities for students to remain in school.

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