

THE FIVE CRITICAL FACTS SERIES



WOOD, HARRIS III & QAS

THE CAPITAL OF SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS II

EXAMINING THE RACIAL EXCLUSION OF BLACK STUDENTS IN SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



The FIVE CRITICAL FACTS Series

The FIVE CRITICAL FACTS Series is designed to inform practitioners and researchers about emerging findings relevant to the success of underserved students in education. Data presented in this brief are derived from the California Department of Education (CDE) DataQuest and are publicly accessible via this system. This series is sponsored by the Black Minds Project of the Community College Equity Assessment Lab (CCEAL) at San Diego State University (SDSU) and is inspired by the NASPA “Five Things” Brief Series.

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THIS BRIEF ADDRESSES THE DISPROPORTIONATE RATE OF
SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS BLACK STUDENTS EXPERIENCE
IN SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (SCUSD).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This brief addresses the disproportionate rate of suspensions and expulsions Black students experience in Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD). Data in this brief are disaggregated by gender to further unveil the high suspensions of Black boys and young men in the district. Some of the key findings include:

- Black males are 5 times more likely to be suspended in SCUSD than the statewide average.
- Black males in early childhood are 10.4 times more likely to be suspended than the statewide average for their same-grade peers.
- Over one third of all Black male foster youth were suspended in SCUSD in 2018-2019.
- Cesar Chavez Intermediate has the highest suspension rate for Black males at 45.8%. John D. Sloat Elementary has the highest suspension rate for Black females at 26.8%.
- The highest suspension rates are in traditional public schools; however, disproportionate suspension rates in charter schools remain high.



INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on the exposure of Black students to exclusionary discipline, which are disciplinary practices that remove students from learning environments (Howard, 2008, 2013; Wood, 2017; Wood et al., 2017). Common examples of exclusionary discipline include referrals, in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions. Notwithstanding, exclusionary discipline can also include restrictions from participation in recess, field trips, and after-school activities. In terms of public attention, the most noticeable focus has been on suspension rates. In California, much attention has been placed on egregious suspension rates that are endemic to schools serving Black students throughout the state (Wood et al., 2018).

In 2018, “The Capitol of Suspensions” report was released by the Black Minds Project of the Community College Equity Assessment Lab (CCEAL). This report documented high rates of exclusionary discipline experienced by Black male students attending schools in Sacramento County. Findings demonstrated that Black males were 5.4 times more likely to be suspended than the statewide average. While the report identified that Sacramento County had 4 of the top 20 suspension districts for Black males in the State of California, SCUSD was named the most egregious suspension district in the state for having the highest total suspensions of Black males in California. This report serves as a follow up to this report to more broadly illuminate outcomes for Black students in the district. In 2018-2019, SCUSD had the third highest total suspensions of Black students in the State of California, following only Elk Grove Unified and

Fresno Unified. During that year, there were a total of 1,104 individual Black students who were suspended for a total of 2,012 suspensions.

Data provided in this brief are based on publicly available sources from the California Department of Education (CDE). This includes suspension calculations from DataQuest, a publicly available resource that enables cross-group analyses at the state, county, district, and school levels. There are two types of suspensions reported by the state, including in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions. These rates are representative of both traditional public schools and charter schools. All public local education agencies (LEAs) provide data to the CDE that are represented in the system. Thus, the data sources offered here are based on those provided by the LEAs to the state of California.



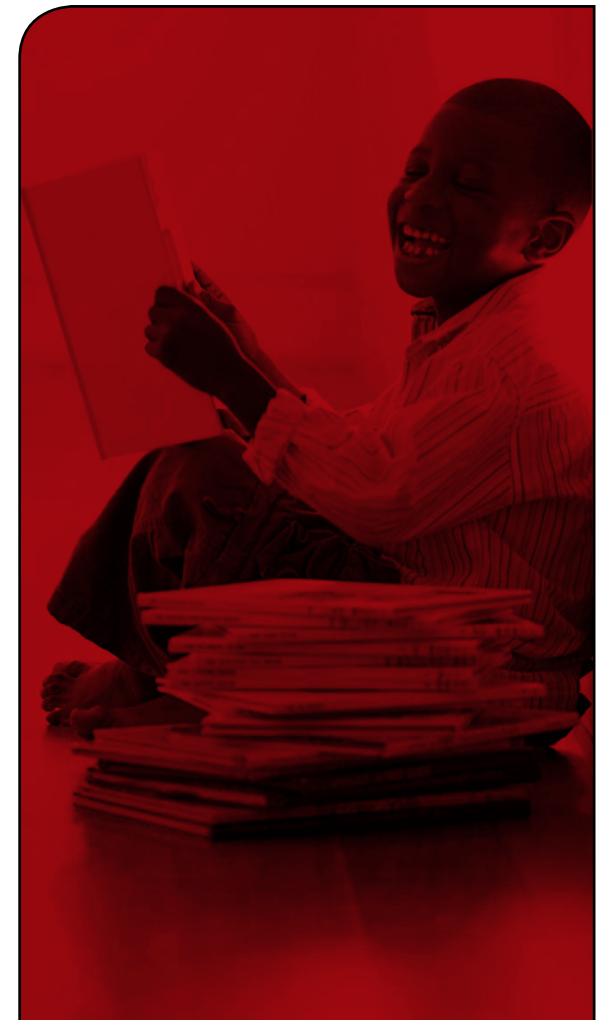
INTRODUCTION

The overall statewide suspension rate in 2018-2019 was 3.5%. This unduplicated suspension rate means at least 3.5% of students, across the state, were suspended at least once during the academic year. For African American students, the statewide suspension rate is 9.1%, representing the highest suspension rate for any racial group. However, as documented in previous reports (see Springer et al., 2019), the suspension rate for Native American students is also considerably higher than the statewide average, at 7.5%. When disaggregated by gender, the highest percentage of suspensions are for African American and Native American males, who are suspended at 11.8% and 10.1%, respectively. In all, this suggests Black males are suspended at a rate that is 3.37 times higher than the statewide average, while the rate for Native American males is 2.88 times higher than the state average.

Notwithstanding, the suspension rates for all students in Sacramento county is slightly higher than the statewide average, at 5.7%. A higher suspension rate is evident for all racial groups in the county; however, compared to the statewide average, the suspension rate for African Americans is most noticeable at 13.8%. In line with the statewide patterns, the highest suspension rates across all racial and gender groups in the county are among African American males, at 18.2%. This rate is 5.2 times higher than the statewide average.

Extant research documents that students who are regularly exposed to exclusionary discipline are tracked into the criminal (in)justice system, a process often referred to as the school-to-

prison pipeline. Moreover, extensive research documents that students who are overexposed to suspension are more likely to experience limited socioeconomic mobility and to be more reliant upon social services (Darensbourg et al., 2010; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Skiba et al., 2014). Bearing this in mind, this brief sought to highlight key facts about suspensions for Black students in SCUSD to reveal significant educational challenges in the Capital city.





THE CAPITOL OF
SUSPENSIONS II

FINDINGS

FACT 1

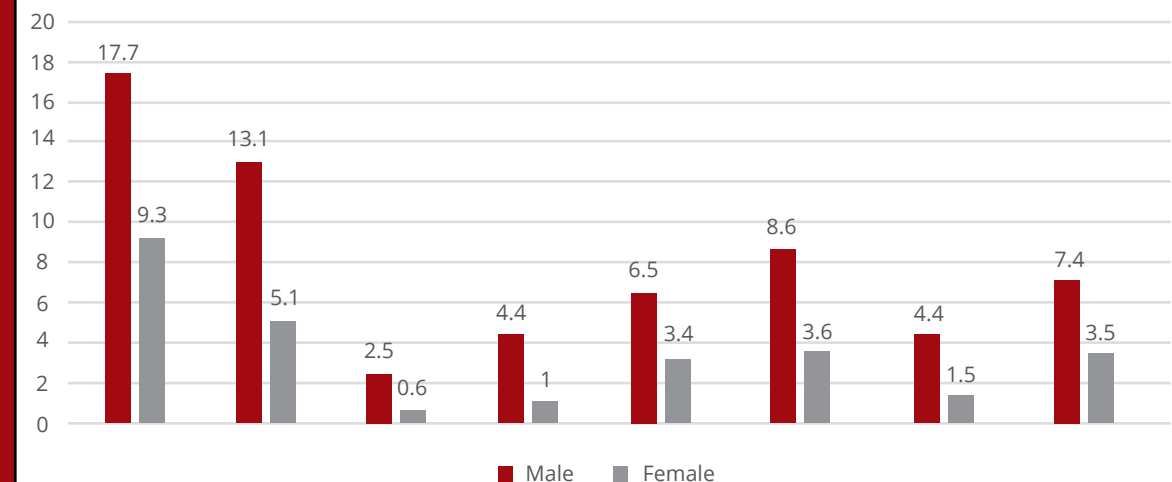
BLACK MALES IN SCUSD ARE 5 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE SUSPENDED THAN THEIR PEERS

The overall suspension rate for Black students in SCUSD in 2018-2019 was 13.5%. This accounted for 1,104 Black students who were suspended for a total of 2,012 suspensions. This is the third highest suspension rate for Black students across the nearly 1,000 districts in the state. Most noticeable are the differential suspension rates by gender. For instance, Black males in SCUSD were suspended at a rate of 17.7%. This rate is 5.06 times higher than that of the statewide average. Black female students also experience higher rates of exposure to school suspensions, with a suspension rate of 9.3%. This rate is 2.66 times higher than the statewide average. While suspension rates for most students are far lower than these rates, concerning high rates are evident for Native American students as well, particularly Native American males. These males are suspended at a rate of 13.1%, which is markedly higher than the statewide average of 3.5%.

Table 1
Suspension Rates for Black Students in SCUSD, 2018-2019

Gender	Cumulative Enrollment	Total suspensions	Unduplicated count of students suspended	Suspension rate	Percentage of single suspensions	Percentage of multiple suspensions
Boys	4,114	1,412	729	17.70%	59.80%	40.20%
Girls	4,042	600	375	9.30%	66.40%	33.60%
Overall	8,156	2,012	1,104	13.5%	62.0%	38.0%

Figure 1
Suspension Rates for Students in SCUSD by Race/Ethnicity, 2018-2019

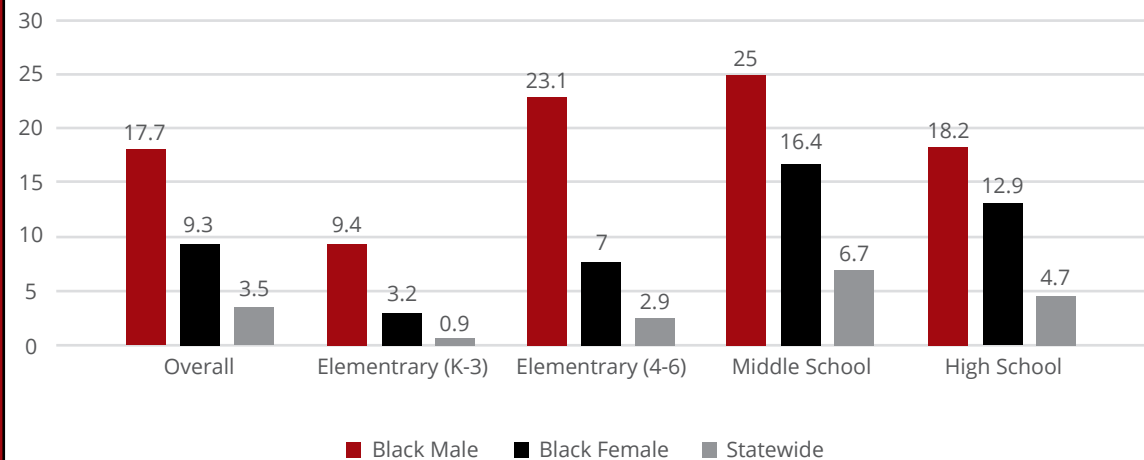


FACT 2

BLACK MALES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD ARE 10.4 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE SUSPENDED THAN THEIR PEERS

Across grade levels, the highest suspension rates for Black males were in middle school, at 25%. This suggests 1 in every 4 Black male middle schoolers was suspended in SCUSD, a startling high suspension rate. For Black females, the highest suspension rate was also in middle school at 16.4%. That said, the grade levels with the highest disparity between Black children and their peers statewide was in early childhood education. Specifically, students in kindergarten through third grade were far more likely to be suspended compared to the statewide average for this grade level. For instance, only 0.9% of children in Grades K-3 were suspended in 2018-2019; however, for Black males and females, these rates were 9.4% and 3.2%, respectively. This means Black males are 10.4 times more likely to be suspended than other children in early childhood education. This rate is egregious. Similarly, for Black girls, the highest suspension disparity was also in early childhood education where they are 3.56 times more likely to be suspended than the statewide average for this grade band.

Table 2
Suspensions in SCUSD by Grade Level, 2018-2019



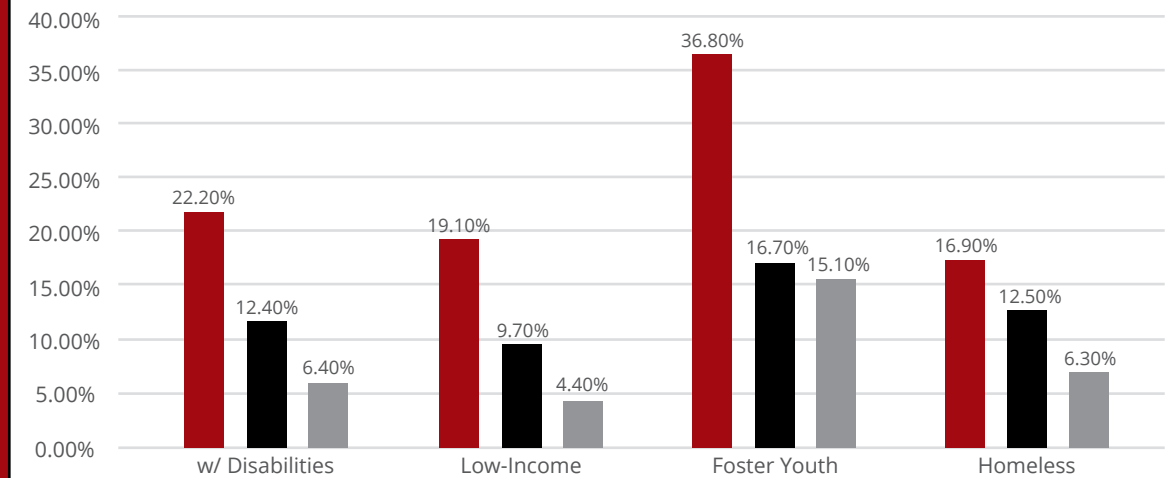
FINDINGS

FACT 3

OVER ONE THIRD OF ALL BLACK MALE FOSTER YOUTH ARE SUSPENDED IN SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

While overall suspension numbers provide insight into how Black students are exposed to exclusionary discipline, these numbers vary greatly across populations. For example, while the statewide suspension rate is 3.5%, the statewide suspension rate for students with disabilities is higher at 6.4%. However, for Black male and female students attending schools in SCUSD, the suspension rates for students with disabilities is considerably higher. For example, 22.2% of Black male students with disabilities were suspended in 2018-2019, while 12.4% of Black girls with disabilities were also suspended. Higher suspension rates are evident for Black subpopulations across all other subpopulations, including students who are low income and students experiencing homelessness. However, most notable is the suspension rate for foster youth, particularly Black male foster youth who are suspended at a rate of 36.8%.

Table 3
Black Male Suspensions in SCUSD by Subgroup, 2018-2019



FACT 4

FINDINGS

CESAR CHAVEZ INTERMEDIATE HAS THE HIGHEST SUSPENSION RATE FOR BLACK MALES AT 45.8%.
JOHN D. SLOAT ELEMENTARY HAS THE HIGHEST RATE FOR BLACK FEMALES AT 26.8%

There are a number of schools in SCUSD that have a suspension rate at 20% or higher. These rates are exorbitantly higher than the statewide average. Table 4 depicts Black male suspension rates for traditional schools. Among these, Cesar Chavez Intermediate had the highest suspension rate in SCUSD at 45.8%. This rate is more than 1,200% higher than the statewide suspension average. Of the schools featured on the list, several also had concerningly high multiple suspension rates. Multiple suspension rates refer to the percentage of students who are suspended more than one time in a given year. In SCUSD, the highest multiple suspension rates occurred at Ethel I. Baker Elementary (68.8%) and Kit Carson International Academy (68.4%). Higher rates of multiple suspension may serve to indicate schools where Black children feel particularly targeted for exclusionary discipline. Table 5 depicts suspension rates for Black female students in the district. Based on 2018-2019 data, there were nine SCUSD schools that suspended 15% or more of their Black female students. The three highest suspension schools for Black females were John D. Sloat Elementary, Will C. Wood Middle, and Hiram W. Johnson High. These schools had suspension rates for Black girls that were 7.5 times greater (or more) than the statewide suspension average. These rates are egregiously high and are emblematic of systemic failures within SCUSD.



FACT 4 - CONTINUED

FINDINGS

Table 4
SCUSD Suspensions – More than 20% of Their Black Male Students

School Name	Cumulative Enrollment	Total Suspensions	Unduplicated Suspensions	Suspension Rate	Percentage of Single Suspensions	Percentage of Multiple Suspensions
Cesar Chavez Intermediate	59	64	27	45.80%	51.90%	48.10%
Rosa Parks Elementary	116	94	45	38.80%	55.60%	44.40%
Oak Park Preparatory Academy	21	10	8	38.10%	87.50%	12.50%
Kit Carson International Academy	51	56	19	37.30%	31.60%	68.40%
Elder Creek Elementary	35	41	13	37.10%	38.50%	61.50%
Will C. Wood Middle	35	20	13	37.10%	69.20%	30.80%
Pacific Elementary	53	42	19	35.80%	52.60%	47.40%
Ethel Philips Elementary	23	22	8	34.80%	37.50%	62.50%
John H. Still	129	80	44	34.10%	54.50%	45.50%
Ethel I. Baker Elementary	49	38	16	32.70%	31.30%	68.80%
John Morse Therapeutic Center	22	16	7	31.80%	42.90%	57.10%
Rosemont High	133	62	42	31.60%	69.00%	31.00%
Hiram w. Johnson High	124	94	33	26.60%	45.50%	54.50%
Bret Harte Elementary	39	15	10	25.60%	60.00%	40.00%
John d. Sloat Elementary	46	18	11	23.90%	63.60%	36.40%
Isador Cohen Elementary	44	14	10	22.70%	80.00%	20.00%
Luther Burbank High	229	73	52	22.70%	75.00%	25.00%
Albert Einstein Middle	121	44	26	21.50%	73.10%	26.90%
John F. Kennedy High	219	68	45	20.50%	73.30%	26.70%

Note. This list does not include alternative and community schools. Success Academy had the highest suspension rate in SCUSD at 57.7%. American Legion High was also among the top suspension schools, with a rate of 20.3%.

Table 5
SCUSD Suspensions – More Than 15% of Their Black Female Students

School Name	Cumulative Enrollment	Total Suspensions	Unduplicated Suspensions	Suspension Rate	Percentage of Single Suspensions	Percentage of Multiple Suspensions
John D. Sloat Elementary	41	29	11	26.80%	63.60%	36.40%
Will C. Wood Middle	49	23	13	26.50%	46.20%	53.80%
Hiram W. Johnson High	129	68	34	26.40%	44.10%	55.90%
Albert Einstein Middle	67	24	15	22.40%	73.30%	26.70%
Rosa Parks Elementary	102	39	22	21.60%	59.10%	40.90%
John H. Still	103	23	18	17.50%	77.80%	22.20%
Kit Carson International Academy	42	13	7	16.70%	57.10%	42.90%
Fern Bacon Middle	73	19	11	15.10%	81.80%	18.20%
St. Hope Public School – 7	199	51	30	15.10%	60.00%	40.00%

Note. This list does not include alternative and community schools. American Legion High has a suspension rate of 18.2%.

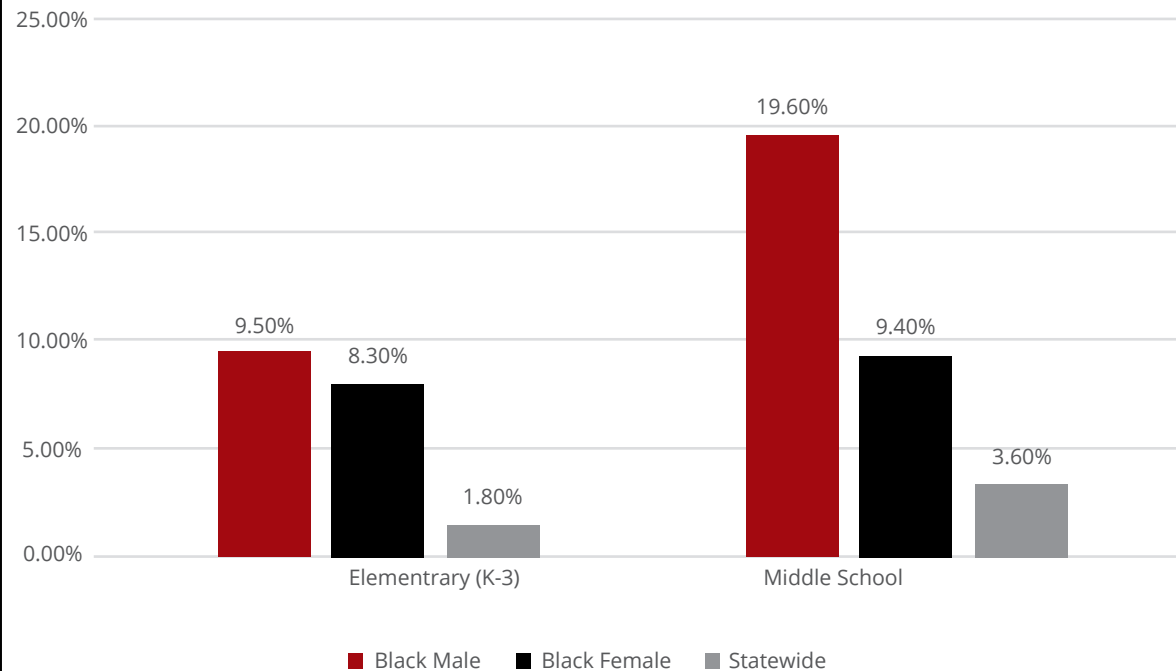
FACT 5

FINDINGS

THE HIGHEST SUSPENSION RATES ARE IN TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS; HOWEVER, DISPROPORTIONALITY IN CHARTER SCHOOLS REMAINS HIGH

When the differences in suspension rates are examined between charter schools and traditional public schools, it is evident the highest suspension rates are in traditional public schools. For example, in 2018-2019, 19.6% of Black male student attending traditional public schools were suspended compared to 3.6% of students (statewide) who attended this school type. This rate is 5.4 times higher than the statewide average. In terms of charter schools, there is a lower suspension rate for both Black male and female students compared to traditional public schools. However, the disproportionately between the suspension rates between Black students and the statewide average remains similar. For instance, in SCUSD charter schools, Black males were suspended at a rate of 9.5%. In contrast, the statewide average for charter schools in only 1.8%; thus, the rate for Black males is 5.3 times higher than that of the statewide average.

Figure 2
Suspension Rates for Black Students in SCUSD by School Type



CONCLUSION



Findings from the brief demonstrate concerning experiences for Black students in SCUSD. In total, the high suspension rates for students in early childhood education and foster children demonstrate that the district inadequately serves students who are in need of the greatest support. As noted in previous reports, SCUSD is far too reliant upon suspension as an appropriate strategy for classroom management.

In the GET OUT! report, Wood et al. (2018) offered recommendations for improving the experiences of Black students in education and reducing their exposure to exclusionary discipline. Here, we extend those recommendations to educators and policymakers in SCUSD. These recommendations include:

CONCLUSION

- Implement intensive, ongoing professional development for all educators on unconscious bias, racial microaggressions, culturally mediated behaviors, and teaching practices for boys and young men of color.
- Conduct analyses of school and school district data that can be used to guide discourse between school leaders, parents, policymakers, and other stakeholders on reducing the prevalence of exclusionary discipline in the region.
- Initiate district-level plans to reduce suspensions that identify areas in need of attention, specify planned interventions, and track the effectiveness of these interventions over time.
- Establish a citywide exclusionary discipline taskforce that can investigate districts and schools in the county with egregiously high levels of suspensions for Black males.
- Require that advocates be involved as independent representatives for any foster youth who is subject to suspension.
- Provide avenues for students to report educators who they feel are unduly “targeting” them for discipline and follow up with students afterwards.
- Employ restorative justice as an alternative to school suspension in an effort to build communities and “restore” relationships between all affected parties after an incident has occurred.
- Enhance school resources to identify and support students who have experienced personal trauma.
- Recognize the role cultural misunderstanding and differences have in producing disparities in suspension.

Taken together, these recommendations can help to improve the educational conditions of Black males who attend school in SCUSD. We urge all stakeholders in the City of Sacramento to receive the findings presented here with a sense of urgency.

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¹ *Note.* We have modified their recommendation for a statewide taskforce to focus more on county-specific issues.



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CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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