

“

My behavior was always good, then my behavior went from good to bad, but nobody heard my silent cry... You don't just get up and talk about your homelessness, there's insecurities, there's pride. But why weren't they able to tell?

”

Graduate student, High School Class of 2010,
former participant in NYC Department of Education
Students in Temporary Housing (STH) Unit
supportive program

“

One first grade girl's family was placed in a shelter near our school (in Brooklyn) and we helped them a lot with basic resources. This year she disappeared and we found out she was transferred to a shelter in the Bronx. ... When she started with us she was totally dysregulated, very delayed, because there had already been a lot of disruptions in her education. It caused a lot of emotional outbursts.

”

Social Work Director, Partnership with Children,
working in Brooklyn public schools

Section 5

Behavioral Challenges and Discipline of Homeless Students

Social and behavioral challenges are widely recognized outcomes for children who have experienced trauma, especially those who are homeless. Higher risks of physical and sexual violence, substance abuse, and the everyday struggles of homelessness take a toll on homeless students' mental health. There is a growing consensus among educators that suspending children for minor infractions is not the answer to their individual behavioral challenges, yet homeless students are suspended at higher rates than their housed peers. Considering how to close these gaps and meet homeless students' social and behavioral challenges with support, not punishment, is key to ensuring that these students can stay in school and learn on pace with their peers.

What's New?

The citywide suspension rate saw a dramatic decline between SY 2010–11 and SY 2015–16. Progress has been made not only with housed students whose suspension rate declined from 4.3% to 2.4%, but also among homeless students whose suspension rate was roughly cut in half over the six-year period (5.8% to 3.2%).

School suspensions disproportionately affect homeless students, but also some schools overall. At the ten schools with the highest suspension rates for homeless students, an average of 29% of homeless students and 18% of housed students were suspended—nearly ten times the citywide average of 2.5%.

Policy Considerations

Students who experience housing instability face social and behavioral challenges as well as academic challenges. However, students are often unable to access the social and emotional supports they need. Recognizing the traumatic impacts of housing instability on students' lives and meeting those needs with trauma-informed services in schools is key to reducing suspension rates among homeless students.

High rates of suspension by school are particularly shocking when considering the City's successful efforts to lower suspension rates in recent years. Targeting school-wide behavioral supports could reduce the number of disciplinary actions in some of the city's highest-risk schools.

Suspension of Homeless Students

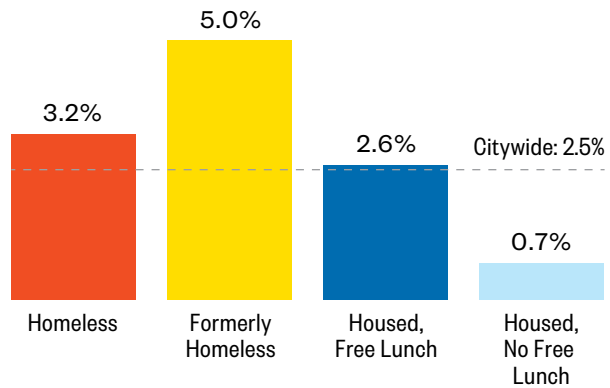
Overall, the suspension rate among homeless students is higher than their peers: 3.2% were suspended in SY 2015–16 compared to 2.5% of NYC students overall.

Formerly homeless students faced the greatest risk of suspension (5.0%) compared to both their currently homeless (3.2%) and low-income housed peers (2.6%). Housed students who were not low income had a far lower rate than any of these groups (0.7%).

Black, white, Native American, and multi-racial homeless students faced a much greater risk of suspension than their housed peers.

Suspension Rate

SY 2015–16



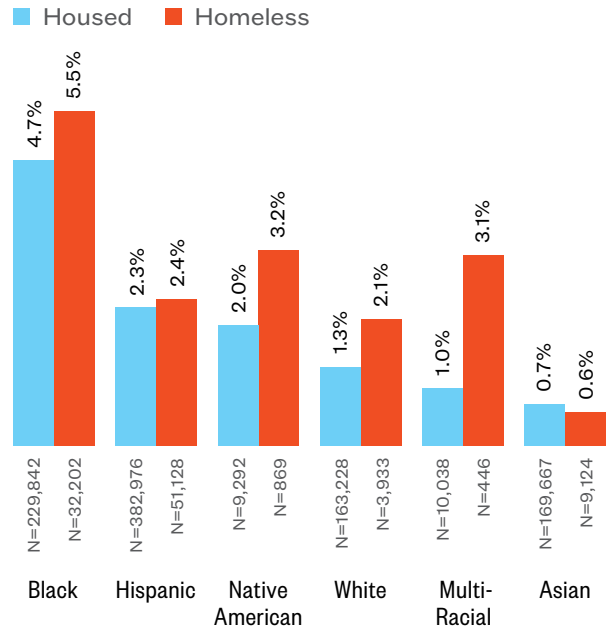
Note: Suspension rate shows the percentage of students who were suspended at some point during the 2015–16 school year. “Formerly Homeless” includes students who were housed during SY 2015–16 but were homeless at any point during SY 2010–11, SY 2011–12, SY 2012–13, SY 2013–14, and/or SY 2014–15.

Regardless of housing status, students who are black had the highest suspension rate of all students. Still, homeless students who are black were at an even higher risk for receiving disciplinary actions in school than their housed peers (5.5% to 4.7%).

Trauma-informed approaches and other school interventions that meet homeless students' behavioral challenges with support, not punishment, are key to supporting homeless students so they can remain in the classroom with their peers.

Suspension Rate by Race and Ethnicity

Percent of Students Who Were Suspended, by Housing Status and Race/Ethnicity SY 2015-16



Amidst a multi-year effort to reduce suspensions for all students citywide, the New York City Department of Education has succeeded in lowering the suspension rate from 4.4% of students overall in SY 2010-11 to 2.5% in SY 2015-16.

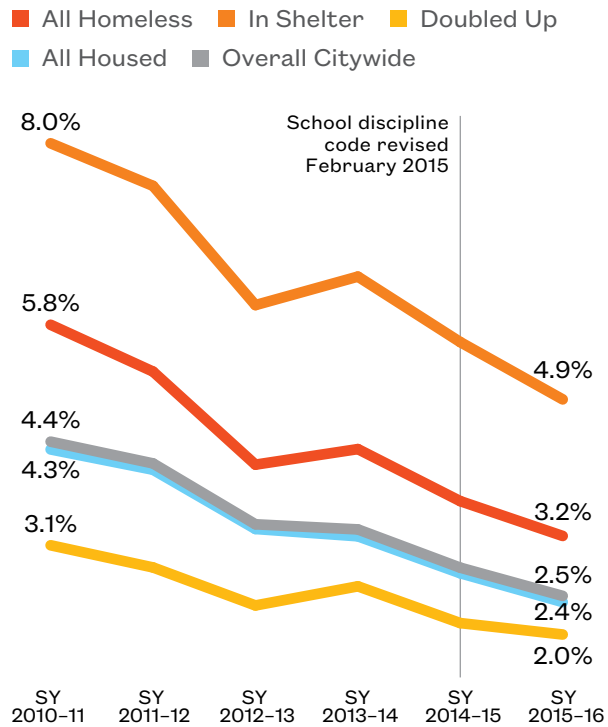
Progress has been made not only with housed students, but also with homeless students, whose suspension rate was nearly cut in half over the six-year period (5.8% to 3.2%).

Students living in shelter saw the greatest percentage-point decline over the six years (three points compared to a one-point decline for doubled-up students and a two-point decline among housed students).

While the suspension rate of students in shelter declined, the gap persisted. Students living in shelter had twice the suspension rate of any other housing status (4.9% to 2.0% for doubled-up students and 2.4% for housed students).

Changes in Suspension Rates

SY 2010-11 to SY 2015-16



Note: The school discipline code was revised in February 2015. Revisions included requiring that principals have approval for out-of-school suspensions and restriction of reasons for out-of-school suspensions.

Homeless students in middle school had the widest disparity in suspension rate between themselves and their housed classmates. While 6.9% of homeless middle schoolers were suspended, just 4.0% of housed students received suspensions in SY 2015–16.

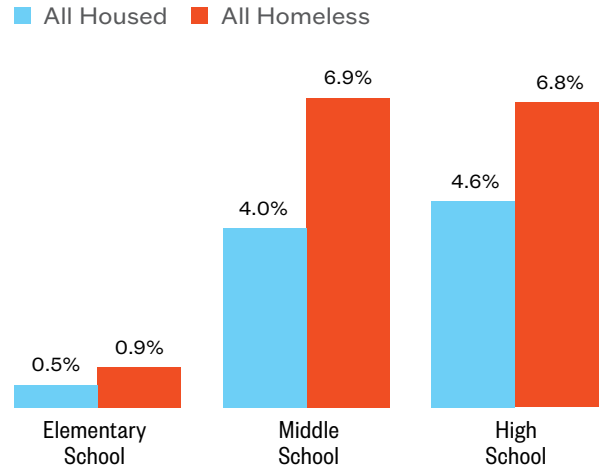
Students living in shelter had the highest suspension rates across middle and high school, with one in ten middle and high school students in shelter (10.2% and 10.0%) receiving a suspension in SY 2015–16.

Other homeless students who were not living doubled up or in shelter also had high suspension rates, similar to sheltered students overall, with 10.1% of middle schoolers and 8.5% of high school students receiving a suspension in SY 2015–16.

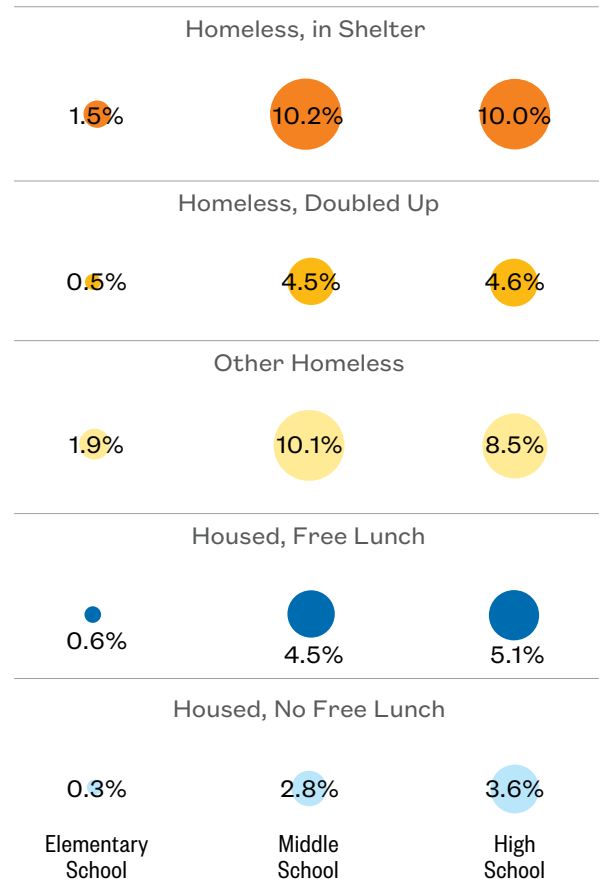
Suspension Rates, by Where Homeless Students Sleep

Percent of Students Who Were Suspended, SY 2015–16

By Housing Status and Grade Level



By Where Students Sleep and Grade Level



Note: "Other Homeless" includes students who were awaiting foster care, paying for a hotel/motel outside of the shelter system, or living in another temporary and/or unsuitable housing situation.

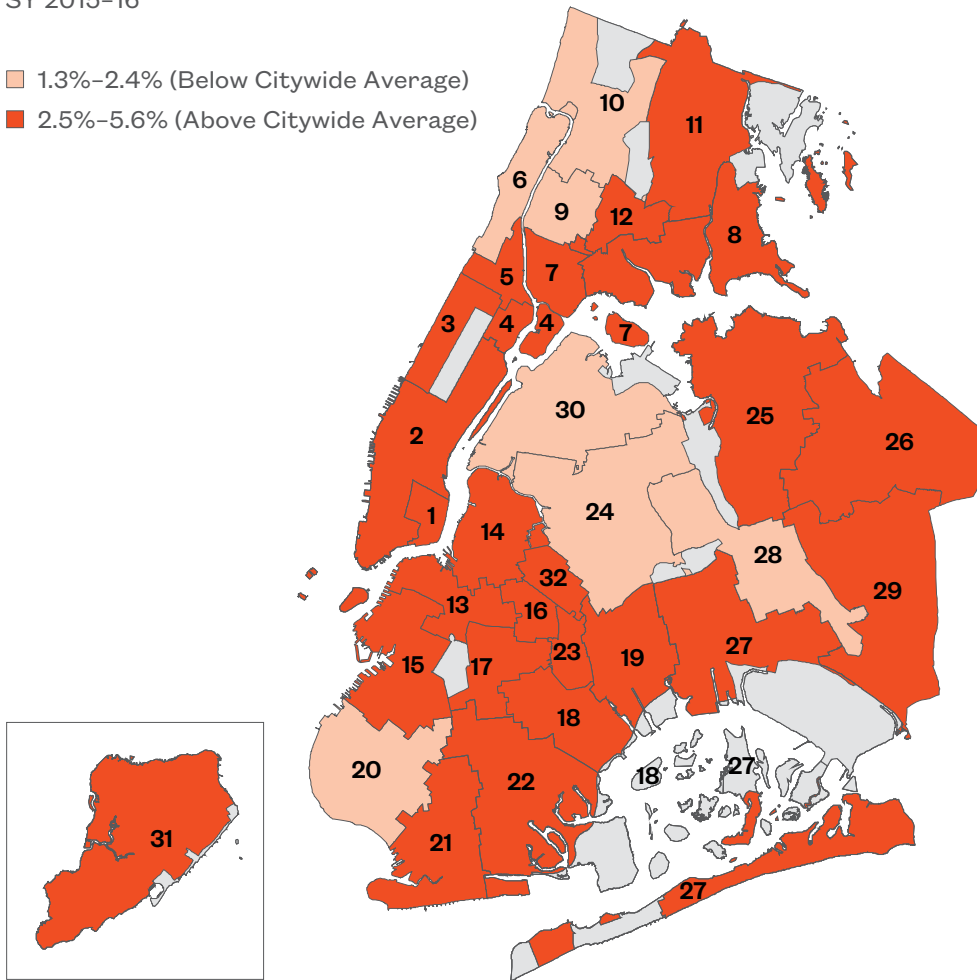
Geographic Patterns of Suspensions

The Intersection of Homelessness and Suspensions

Suspension Rate for Homeless Students

SY 2015-16

- 1.3%–2.4% (Below Citywide Average)
- 2.5%–5.6% (Above Citywide Average)



Note: Data are by school district for SY 2015-16 and do not include schools in non-geographic districts. Students were counted at their final school of enrollment for SY 2015-16.

Citywide, 3.2% of students experiencing homelessness received suspensions in SY 2015-16. By district, homeless students' risk of suspension varied from a low of 1.3% in **Bay Ridge** to a high of 5.6% in **Williamsburg**. (Districts 20 and 14)

In **Staten Island**, 5.1% of homeless students were suspended, nearly twice the suspension rate of homeless students living in **Queens** (2.6%).

In almost every City school district, students in shelter were suspended at a higher rate than both their housed and doubled-up peers. The suspension rate for students in shelter was highest at 10.8% in **Flushing, Queens**. (District 25)

In all but seven City school districts located in **Upper Manhattan**, the **west Bronx**, **southern Brooklyn**, and **west Queens**, the suspension rate of homeless students exceeded the citywide average of 2.5%. (Districts 6, 9, 10, 20, 24, 28, and 30)

Suspension Rate, SY 2015–16

City/Borough/ Select Neighborhoods (School District #)	All Students	All Homeless	Homeless, In Shelter	Homeless, Doubled Up	Housed, Free Lunch	Housed, No Free Lunch
New York City	2.5%	3.2%	4.9%	2.0%	2.7%	1.7%
Manhattan		3.5%	4.9%	2.4%	3.4%	1.5%
Lower East Side (1)		3.1%	4.9%	1.2%	2.6%	0.8%
Financial District/Midtown/Upper East Side (2)		4.8%	7.6%	3.3%	4.1%	1.6%
Upper West Side/Morningside Heights (3)		5.1%	5.6%	3.9%	4.4%	1.0%
East Harlem (4)		3.7%	4.5%	2.4%	3.2%	2.6%
Central Harlem/Manhattanville (5)		2.9%	3.1%	2.1%	3.5%	2.7%
Hamilton/Washington Heights/Inwood (6)		1.9%	3.4%	1.7%	2.1%	1.6%
Bronx		2.9%	4.1%	1.8%	3.0%	2.3%
Mott Haven/Melrose (7)		3.3%	4.0%	2.1%	4.0%	5.2%
Hunts Point/Longwood (8)		3.8%	5.6%	2.1%	3.6%	2.8%
Highbridge/Concourse (9)		2.1%	3.0%	1.4%	2.2%	1.7%
Riverdale/Bedford/Fordham/Belmont (10)		2.3%	4.1%	1.5%	2.5%	1.8%
Williamsbridge/Baychester/Morris Park/Co-op City (11)		3.4%	4.4%	2.5%	2.8%	2.1%
East Tremont (12)		3.4%	4.6%	2.0%	4.3%	3.8%
Brooklyn		3.7%	5.7%	2.2%	2.8%	1.7%
Brooklyn Heights/Fort Greene (13)		5.5%	8.3%	3.3%	3.1%	1.5%
Williamsburg/Greenpoint (14)		5.6%	7.8%	3.8%	4.5%	2.2%
Carroll Gardens/Park Slope/Sunset Park (15)		3.1%	5.9%	1.7%	2.4%	0.7%
Bedford-Stuyvesant (16)		4.1%	4.4%	3.1%	4.1%	3.7%
Crown Heights/Prospect Lefferts Gardens (17)		4.1%	5.1%	2.8%	3.7%	3.1%
East Flatbush/Canarsie (18)		5.1%	7.2%	3.3%	4.8%	3.9%
East New York/Starrett City (19)		4.0%	5.2%	2.3%	3.6%	2.5%
Bay Ridge/Dyker Heights/Borough Park (20)		1.3%	9.0%	0.8%	1.6%	1.2%
Coney Island/Gravesend/Ocean Parkway (21)		4.2%	10.2%	2.6%	2.7%	1.9%
Flatbush/Flatlands/Sheepshead Bay (22)		2.5%	4.9%	1.8%	1.6%	1.2%
Brownsville (23)		3.3%	3.8%	1.7%	2.7%	3.0%
Bushwick (32)		3.5%	5.8%	1.8%	2.4%	2.4%
Queens		2.6%	4.9%	1.6%	2.1%	1.6%
Sunnyside/Ridgewood/Maspeth/Elmhurst/Corona (24)		2.1%	6.1%	1.4%	1.7%	1.6%
Flushing/Whitestone (25)		2.7%	10.8%	1.2%	1.8%	1.7%
Bayside/Little Neck/Fresh Meadows/Floral Park (26)		2.8%	7.9%	2.3%	2.2%	1.8%
Woodhaven/Ozone Park/Howard Beach (27)		3.8%	5.3%	2.5%	2.3%	1.9%
Rego Park/Forest Hills/Briarwood (28)		2.3%	3.6%	1.4%	1.7%	1.5%
Hollis/Queens Village (29)		2.9%	4.3%	1.7%	3.1%	2.2%
Astoria/Long Island City (30)		2.1%	5.9%	1.3%	2.2%	1.3%
Staten Island		5.1%	6.8%	3.4%	3.2%	1.7%
Staten Island (31)		5.0%	6.9%	3.2%	3.3%	1.7%
Citywide Special Education (75)		3.0%	2.7%	2.8%	1.8%	0.9%
Citywide Alternative Schools & Programs (79)		3.2%	5.6%	2.7%	4.4%	1.1%

Note: Data by school district do not include schools in non-geographic districts, so borough and district total percentages may differ. Ns of fewer than 30 students were redacted.

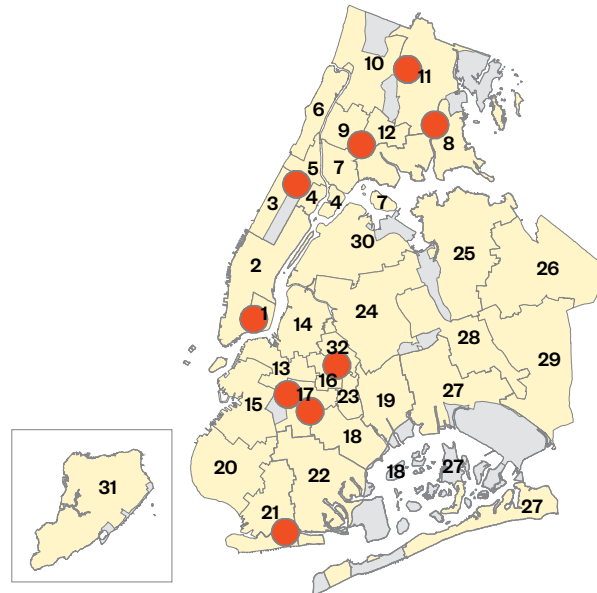
At the ten schools with the highest suspension rates for homeless students, an average of 29% of homeless students were suspended and 18% of housed students—compared to a citywide average of 2.5%.

At the **Brooklyn School for Music and Theatre**, the **Frederick Douglass Academy II Secondary School in Manhattan**, and the **Brooklyn High School for Law and Technology**, more than one-third of homeless students received a suspension in SY 2015–16. (Districts 17, 3, and 16 respectively)

Amidst the City’s successful efforts to reduce suspensions in recent years, disproportionately high suspension rates in some schools remain. Targeting school-wide behavioral supports could reduce the number of disciplinary actions in some of the City’s highest-risk schools.

Top 10 Schools for Highest Homeless Student Suspension Rate

SY 2015–16



Note: Data are by school district for SY 2015–16 and do not include schools in non-geographic districts. Students were counted at their final school of enrollment for SY 2015–16.

See more schools at bit.ly/mapNYCHomelessStudents

Top 10 Schools for Highest Homeless Student Suspension Rate, SY 2015–16

Rank	School Name	Select Neighborhoods (School District #)	Borough	Suspension Rate, Homeless Students	Suspension Rate, Housed Students	Number of Homeless Students	Total Number of Students
1	Brooklyn School for Music & Theatre	Crown Heights/Prospect Lefferts Gardens (17)	Brooklyn	38.5%	24.1%	39	350
2	Frederick Douglass Academy II Secondary School	Upper West Side/Morningside Heights (3)	Manhattan	36.2%	22.3%	58	386
3	Brooklyn High School for Law and Technology	Bedford-Stuyvesant (16)	Brooklyn	34.0%	14.2%	47	637
4	Urban Assembly Academy of Government and Law	Financial District/Midtown/Upper East Side (2)	Manhattan	32.4%	18.7%	37	315
5	Bronx River High School	Hunts Point/Longwood (8)	Bronx	27.5%	11.5%	40	302
6	Bronx High School for Writing and Communication Arts	Williamsbridge/Morris Park/Co-op City (11)	Bronx	26.3%	14.0%	38	381
7	Bronx Lab School	Williamsbridge/Morris Park/Co-op City (11)	Bronx	25.5%	19.5%	47	437
8	Bronx Latin	East Tremont (12)	Bronx	25.0%	15.1%	44	574
9	School for Democracy and Leadership	Crown Heights/Prospect Lefferts Gardens (17)	Brooklyn	24.5%	25.0%	53	305
10	William E. Grady Career and Technical Education	Coney Island/Gravesend/Ocean Parkway (21)	Brooklyn	24.4%	17.1%	45	524