

Corporal Punishment in Mississippi Schools: A Critical Examination of State- Sanctioned Violence in Schools

Nollie Jenkins Family Center, Inc.

Chanya Anderson, Data Analysis Consultant

About the Project

After years of working in Holmes County, Mississippi to end corporal punishment, Nollie Jenkins Family Center, Inc. (NJFC) partnered with organizations across Mississippi to form the Mississippi Coalition to End Corporal Punishment. The coalition's goal is to end corporal punishment and similar harsh discipline practices, implement effective alternatives, and create safer, healthier schools across the state and the nation.

In September 2021, NJFC partnered with Chanya Anderson, a graduate student at the University of Delaware in order to create a project that would examine the relationship between race, location, and corporal punishment in Mississippi during the 2017-2018 school year. Through the creation of a novel dataset that includes information about corporal punishment and various other district-level demographic information the *Corporal Punishment in Mississippi Schools: A Critical Examination of State-Sanctioned Violence in Schools* project is able to examine questions such as:

- Where are the highest number of corporal punishment incidences occurring in Mississippi?
- What does corporal punishment look like across school districts in the Mississippi Delta region?
- What is the relationship between race and corporal punishment in Mississippi?

Ultimately, the goal of this project is to have a better understanding of corporal punishment in Mississippi schools. In doing so, NJFC will be better equipped in their fight to end corporal punishment and help students across the state, and eventually the nation.

Nollie Jenkins Family Center, Inc. Mission Statement

NJFC's mission is to empower the citizens of the community by developing and supporting grassroots leaders, community organizers, parents, students, and community-based organizations, so that they have the necessary tools and skills of community organizing, advocacy, and activism to increase family and civic engagement, to build meaningful social change, to impact local and state policy, family and governance structures, and to build stronger and sustainable organizations and communities.

The Vision

NJFC envisions an energized and engaged community where all people, young and old are valued, nurtured and supported as we work together across generations and lifestyles to build and sustain equitable and purposeful communities that ensure that environmental, political, cultural, recreational, educational, economic, and spiritual needs of citizens are actualized and preserved.

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Notes on this Project

There are two particular notes of importance to discuss before delving into the findings on this project. First, during this project, we discovered two separate sources of information for number of corporal punishment incidents in school districts: (1) an Excel file for corporal punishment rates sent by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Office of Reporting and (2) corporal punishment rates as reported to the U.S Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights Civil Rights Data Collection. While, in theory, the numbers reported across these two sources should be identical they were actually, in fact, very different. It was then decided to continue the project by doing a comparative analysis across the two data sources. Thus, for the remainder of this document all findings will be reported twice: one for the findings from the data on the MDE reporting data and one for the findings on the OCR reporting data.

Second, it should be noted that the data and findings for this project are from the 2017-2018 school year. This decision was made for two notable reasons. First, the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible to examine the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years given that for the large majority of these school years, the students in Mississippi were not physically present in the school. Second, the OCR data has only reported the 2017-2018 school year as the most recent school year. So, while data was available for 2018-2019 school year from the MDE reporting data, in order to do a comparative analysis we decided to utilize the 2017-2018 school year for both sources.

Schools with the Top 10 Corporal Punishment Incidents

2017-2018 school year

MDE Reporting Data

1. Scott County School District (1746 incidents)
2. South Panola School District (1523 incidents)
3. DeSoto County School District (986 incidents)
4. Jones County School District (889 incidents)
5. West Jasper Consolidated School District (865 incidents)
 6. Lee County School District (829 incidents)
7. Louisville Municipal School District (699 incidents)
 8. Union County School District (686 incidents)
 9. Forest Municipal School District (666 incidents)
 10. Harrison County School District (619 incidents)

OCR Reporting Data

1. Louisville Municipal School District (1412 incidents)
 2. South Panola School District (1289 incidents)
 3. DeSoto County School District (916 incidents)
 4. Covington County Schools (904 incidents)
5. West Jasper Consolidated School District (860 incidents)
 6. Vicksburg-Warren School District (831 incidents)
 7. Scott County School District (805 incidents)
 8. Jones County School District (740 incidents)
 9. Forest Municipal School District (691 incidents)
 10. Lee County School District (668 incidents)

Let's take a closer look...

We see that on each list there are two schools that do not appear on the other list. While Union County School District (SD) and Harrison County SD are on the MDE Reporting Data's top 10, they are not on the OCR's reporting data top 10. Rather, Covington County SD and Vicksburg-Warren SD are on OCR's reporting data top 10. Additionally, we see that three schools on the MDE reporting data's top 10 (Scott County SD, Jones County SD, and Lee County SD) have moved on the OCR's reporting data top 10. In fact, Scott County SD has moved from first in corporal punishment incidents to seventh from one list to the other. Only one school, Louisville Municipal SD, has moved up from the MDE list to the OCR list, moving from the seventh position to the first.

Schools with the Top 10 Corporal Punishment Incidents

2017-2018 school year

A Breakdown by Race....

School District only on MDE Top 10 List

Union County School District
7.52% Black students

Harrison County School District
26.77% Black students

School Districts on OCR Top 10 List

Covington County School District
49.68% Black students

Vicksburg-Warren School District
63.61% Black students

School Districts on Both Lists

Scott County School District
36.25% Black students

South Panola School District
55.37% Black students

DeSoto County School District
38.9% Black students

Jones County School District
19.58% Black students

West Jasper Consolidated School
District
59.69% Black students

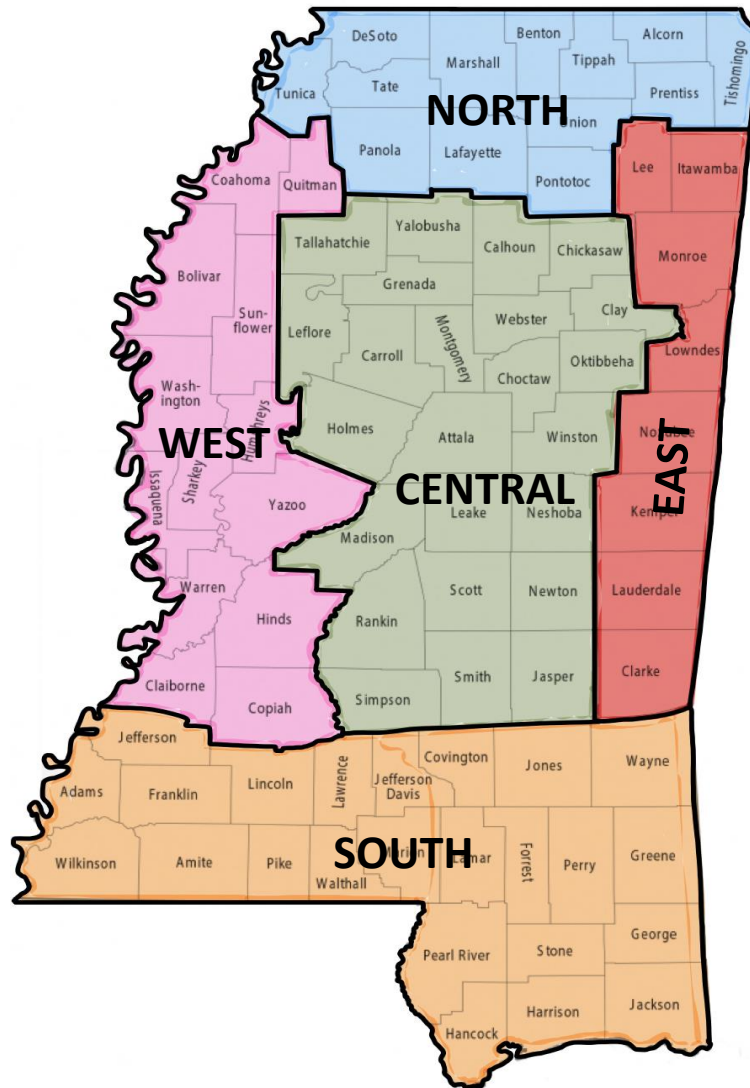
Lee County School District
28.35% Black students

Louisville Municipal School District
64.13% Black students

Forest Municipal School District
44.53% Black students

Corporal Punishment Incidences and Racial Makeup by Region

2017-2018 school year



	% of CP Incidences (MDE Reporting Data)	% of CP Incidences (OCR Reporting Data)	% of Black Students
North	25.25%	22.37%	12.57%
East	14.42%	11.49%	14.44%
West	6.59%	11.93%	21.08%
South	16.42%	16.52%	21.78%
Central	37.33%	37.69%	30.13%

CP=corporal punishment

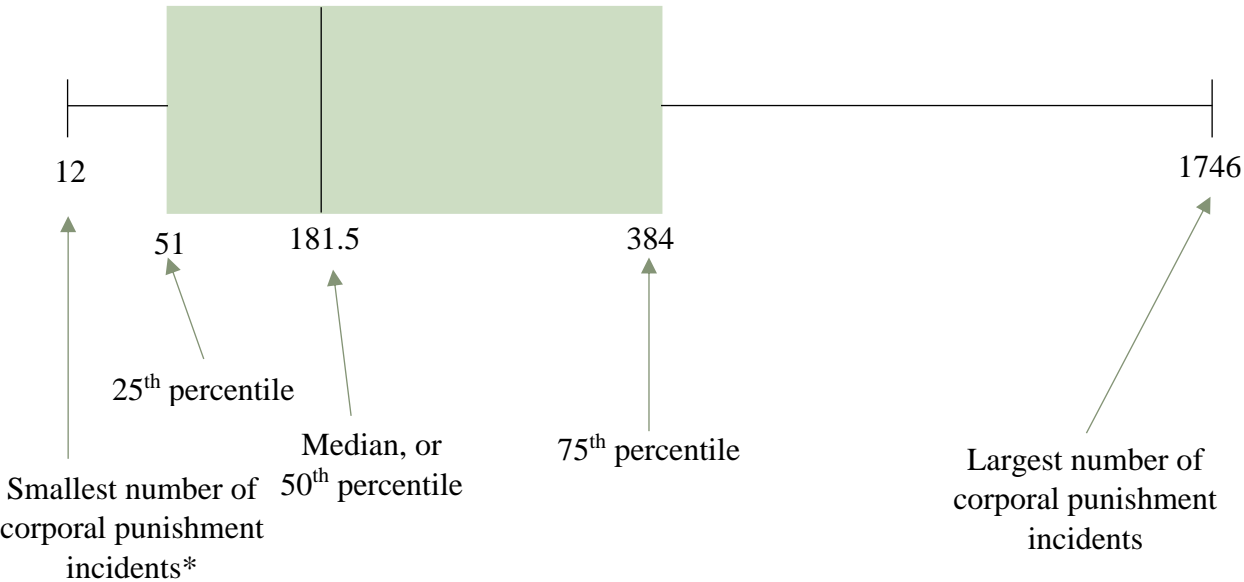
A Closer Look at the Data via Quartiles

2017-2018 school year

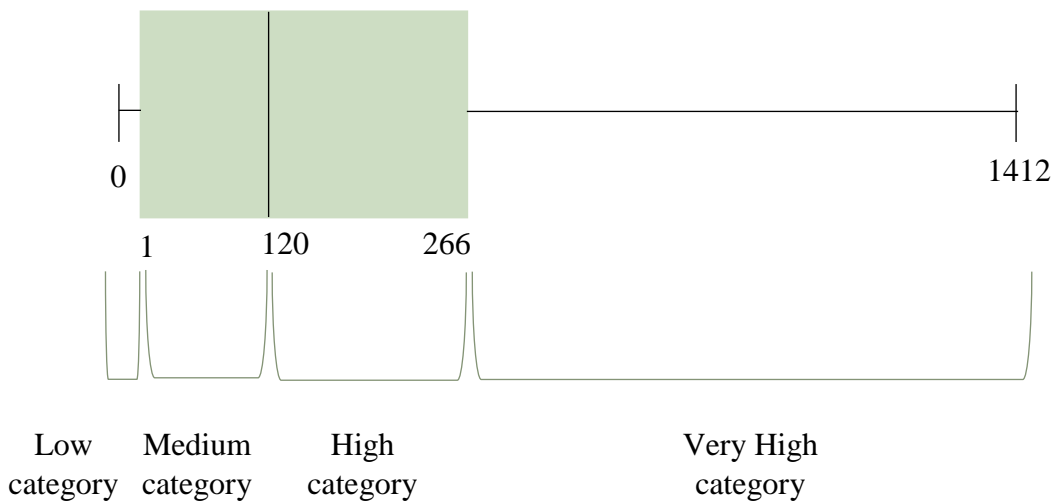
Why Quartiles are Important

The data set for this project includes corporal punishment incident numbers for 140 school districts across Mississippi. While this is important information, the reality is that it is just a really big list of numbers. Aside from the extremes—the highest and lowest number of corporal punishment incidents—this list by itself tells us very little about the data. That’s where quartiles come in. Quartiles give us a few numbers to summarize the data *and* it allows us to split up the data into four equal groups. This is particularly helpful when we have data that is not symmetrically distributed—as is the case with the data for this project.

MDE Reporting Data



OCR Reporting Data



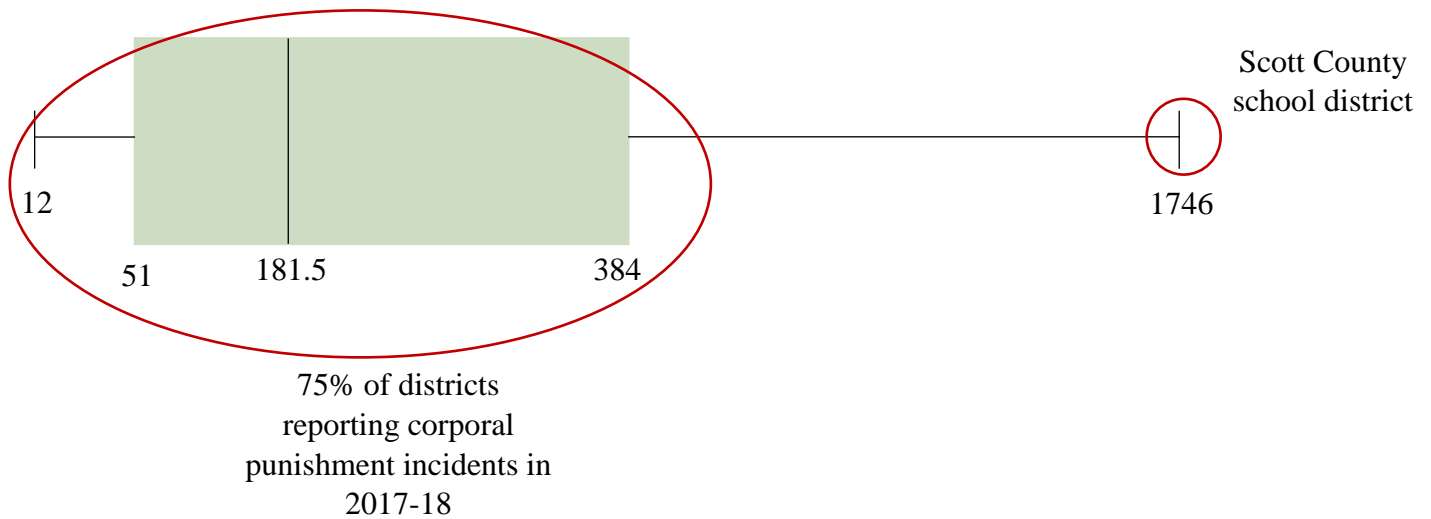
*For the MDE data, any school with a total corporal punishment incidence number between 1 and 10 was suppressed. So we can only examine schools with corporal punishment incidents larger than 10

A Closer Look at the Data via Quartiles

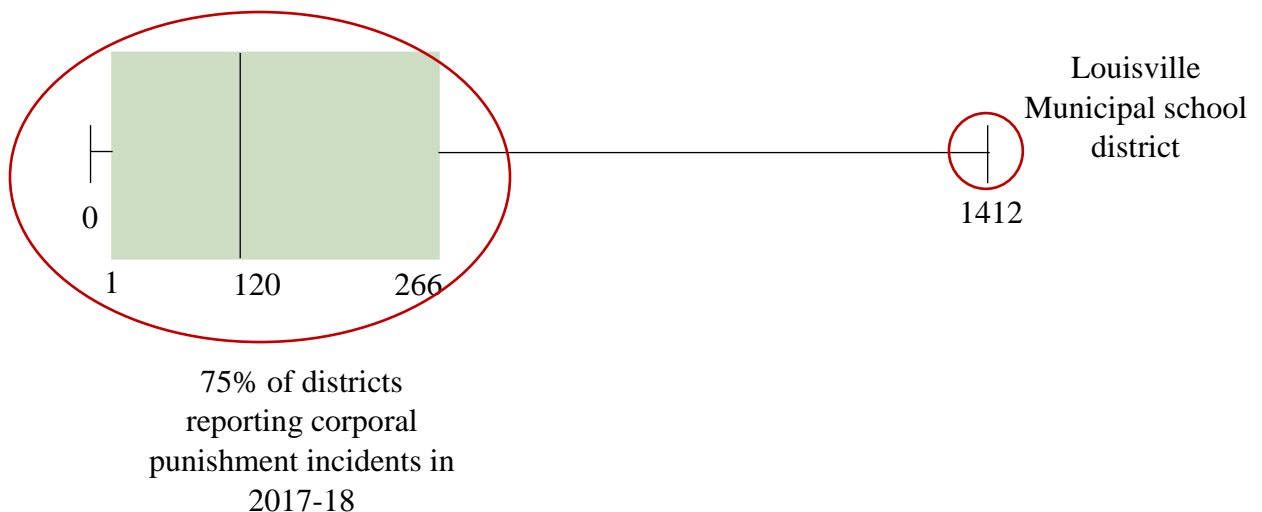
2017-2018 school year

To put it into perspective...

According to the MDE Reporting Data Scott County school district reported over 4 times as many corporal punishment incidents than 75% of school districts in Mississippi that reported corporal punishment incidents for the 2017-2018 school year.



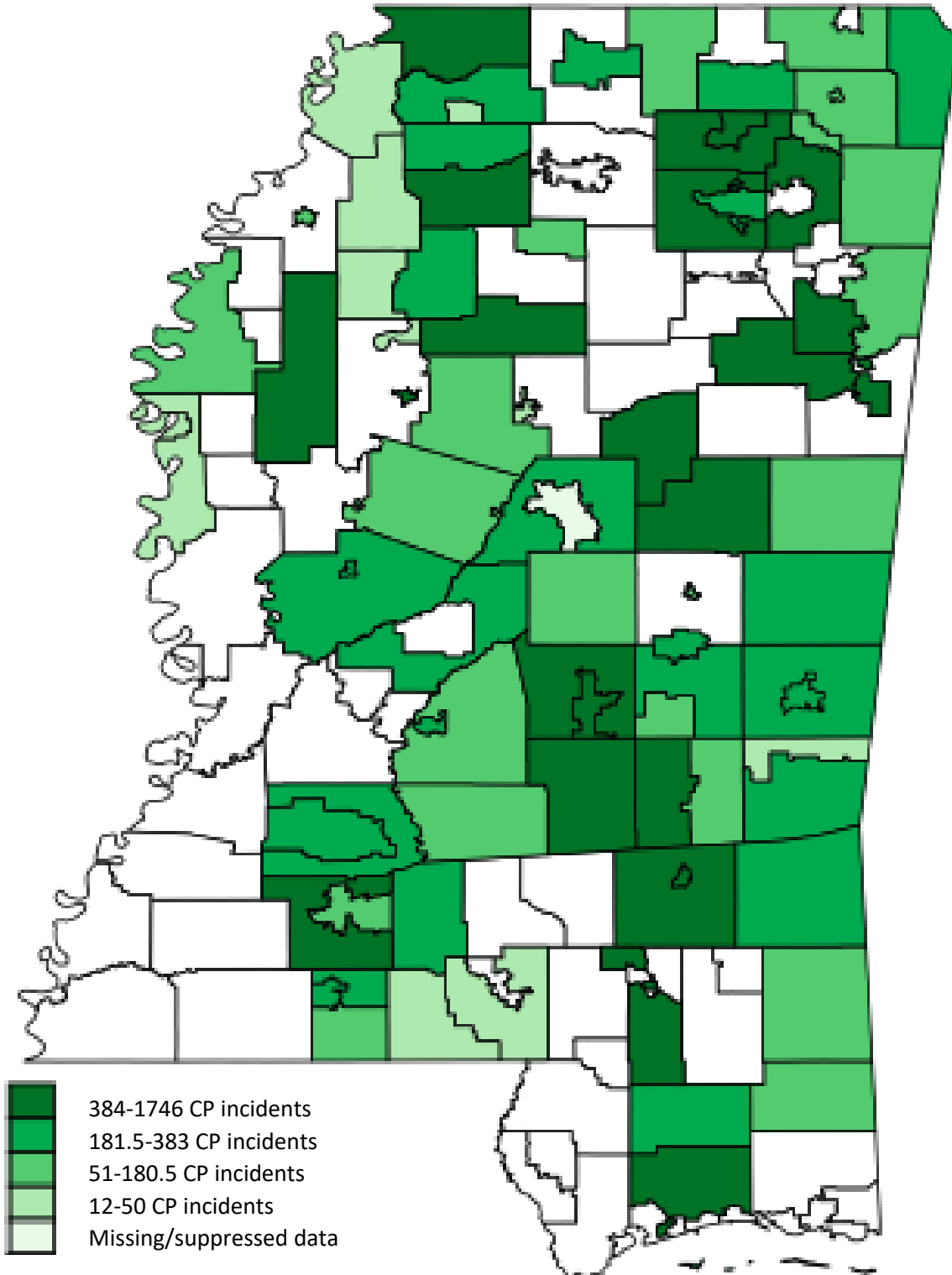
According to the OCR Reporting Data Louisville Municipal school district reported over 5 times as many corporal punishment incidents than 75% of school districts in Mississippi that reported corporal punishment incidents for the 2017-2018 school year.



A Closer Look at the Data via Heat Maps

2017-2018 school year

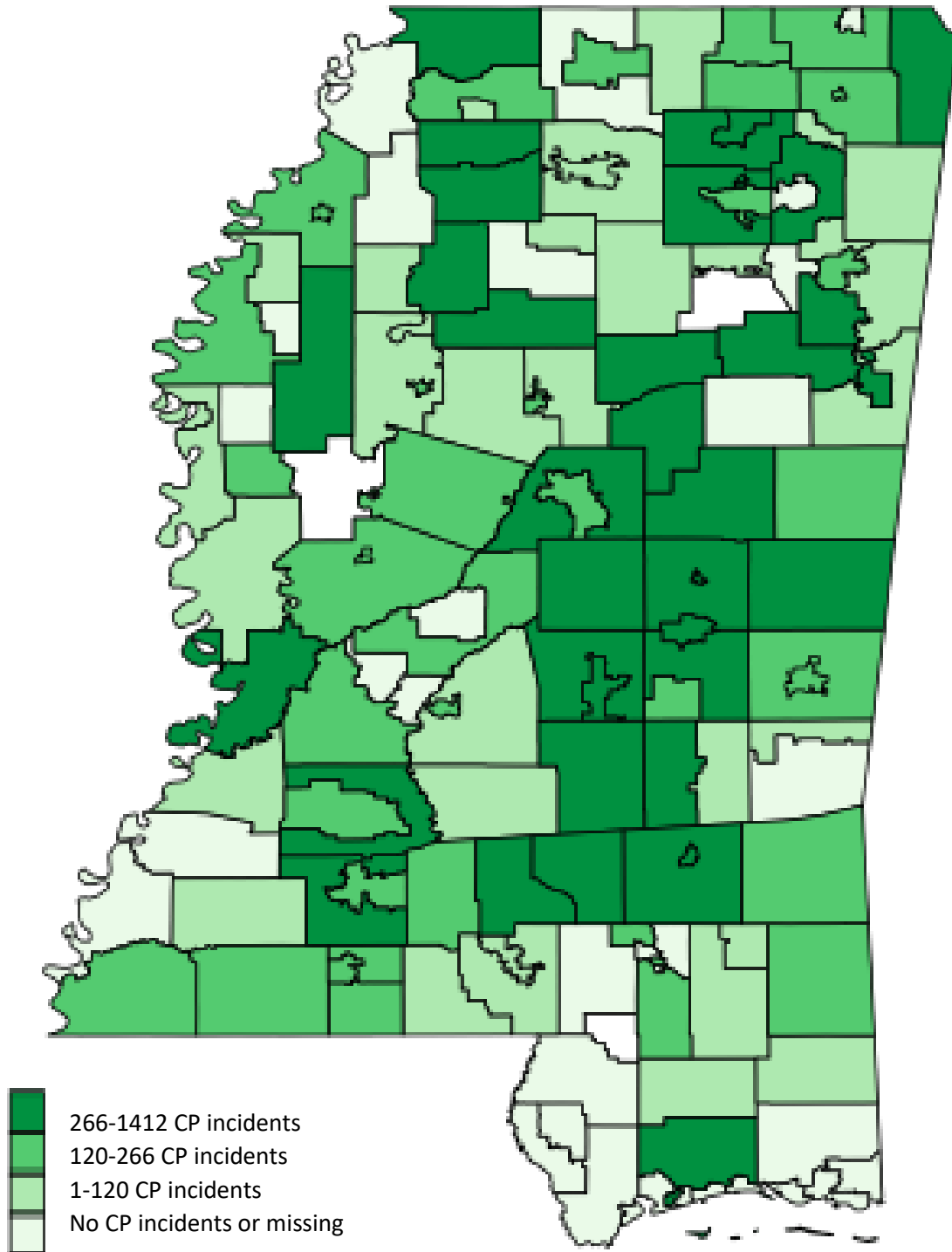
Corporal Punishment In Mississippi School Districts (MDE)



A Closer Look at the Data via Heat Maps

2017-2018 school year

Corporal Punishment In Mississippi School Districts (OCR)



Corporal Punishment in the Mississippi Delta Region

2017-2018 school year

Mississippi Delta Counties

North

Tunica County

Central

Attala County

Carroll County

Holmes County

Leake County

Leflore County

Madison County

Montgomery County

West

Bolivar County

Claiborne County

Coahoma County

Copiah County

Humphreys County*

Issaquena County*

Quitman County

Sharkey County

Sunflower County

Tallahatchie County

Warren County

Washington County

Yazoo County

The Mississippi Delta

The Mississippi Delta is a distinctive region in the U.S. that lies primarily within the state of Mississippi as well as portions of Arkansas and Louisiana. The Delta region specifically lies between the Mississippi and Yazoo Rivers. This region of the U.S. has a long racial, cultural, and economic history that largely begins with the forced labor of enslaved African-Americans developing the land into a successful cotton growing region. Today, many of the districts within the Mississippi Delta region continue to be primarily Black.

Corporal Punishment in the Mississippi Delta Region

2017-2018 school year

School District	MDE Reporting Data	OCR Reporting Data	Percent of Black Students
North			
Tunica County School District	39	1	95.44%
Central			
Attala County School District	356	404	56.78%
Kosciusko School District	12	266	58.37%
Carroll County School District	136	96	53.89%
Holmes County School District	125	161	Missing*
Leake County School District	99	291	62.4%
Leflore County School District	Missing*	11	Missing*
Greenwood Public School District	408	231	Missing*
Madison County School District	384	229	39.71%
Canton Public School District	Missing*	0	85.31%
Montgomery County School District	Missing*	22	Missing*
Winona Separate School District	19	261	Missing*
West			
West Bolivar County School District	120	145	95.57%
North Bolivar Consolidated School District	Missing*	63	Missing*
Cleveland School District	Missing*	0	71.36%
Claiborne County School District	Missing*	10	Missing*

*Missing indicates that the data was suppressed or not listed on the data source

Corporal Punishment in the Mississippi Delta Region

2017-2018 school year

Coahoma County School District	Missing*	221	93.22%
Clarksdale Municipal School District	144	160	96.42%
Copiah County School District	352	319	56.53%
Hazlehurst City School District	203	375	84.65%
Quitman County School District	51	0	96.98%
South Delta School District	Missing*	93	Missing*
Sunflower County Consolidated School District	403	341	Missing*
West Tallahatchie School District	29	41	Missing*
East Tallahatchie Consolidated School District	278	294	84.99%
Vicksburg-Warren School District	Missing*	831	63.61%
Hollandale School District	Missing*	121	Missing*
Western Line School District	26	30	60.72%
Greenville Public School District	26	31	98.45%
Leland School District	Missing*	0	89.65%

*Missing indicates that the data was suppressed or not listed on the data source

Conclusion

Corporal punishment is a complex issue in the state of Mississippi that deserves the attention of policymakers, parents, students, and those working at all levels of the school system. The *Corporal Punishment in Mississippi Schools: A Critical Examination of State-Sanctioned Violence in Schools* project has shown that corporal punishment is a far-reaching issue touching school district in every region of the state. However, corporal punishment is not being used at the same rate in all school districts. The differences in the lowest to the highest corporal punishment incidences across school districts is striking with some schools reporting no corporal incidents and others reporting more than one thousand in one school year. Special attention needs to be given to schools that are reporting extreme levels of corporal incidents, particularly if we want to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of students that have the unfortunate reality of attending those schools. That being said, however, it is important to acknowledge that even one corporal punishment incident within a school district is one too many.

We end this project by calling attention to the lack of transparency and accountability of Mississippi school districts in terms of reporting corporal punishment incidents. Given the seriousness of the issue, information on corporal punishment should be both equally accessible to the public **and** identical across sources for school years and school districts. We could not, in good faith, conclude this project without asking the Mississippi Department of Education why the reporting of corporal punishment incidents is not the same across data sources. It is likely the case that the MDE needs to take a deep look at how they are collecting data on corporal punishment, how they are storing that information, and how they are reporting it to the public and other agencies.

Sources

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