

Kicked Out:

A Crisis of Discriminatory Suspension and Expulsion that Harms Black Children in South Carolina and Charleston County



THE BEE COLLECTIVE
BEE ANCESTOR ROOTED

Baker, M., Cameron, C. E., LiPuma, K. & Wade, G. (2024)

South Carolina leads the Nation in preschool suspensions.

Black children represent the greatest proportion of suspended students in the state. Studies indicate that Black children are frequently impacted by educators' implicit racial biases. Black children are perceived as older, less innocent, more prone to aggression, and more deserving of harsher punishment compared to their non-Black peers.

Suspended and expelled preschoolers are

10 times

more likely to drop out of high school, experience academic failure, and face jail time.



Black Children in South Carolina make up 61% of the state's preschool suspensions but only 39% of enrolled children.

10

For every 10 preschoolers suspended in the US, 1 is a Black child from South Carolina



Home to the most Black children in Charleston County Schools,

North Charleston Schools

that offer preschool programming are overrepresented in suspension and expulsion rates despite representing only 28% of student enrollments.

> 46% Out-of-school Suspensions

> 37% Arrest Referrals

< 28% Enrolled

1. Equal Justice Society (2018). Breaking the chains 2: The preschool-to-prison pipeline epidemic.

2. U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (2021). Discipline practices in public schools (2017-18).

3. South Carolina School Report Cards, Charleston County School District 2022-23, <https://screportcards.com/files/2023//data-files/>

Opportunities for Change



This is not a child problem.
This is a systemic issue
rooted in adult behavior and
decision-making.



What can early education and policy leaders do?

Recruit and train more teachers of color. This will take dedicated funding.

Provide, require, and pay for racial equity and implicit bias training that is strengths-based, inclusive, and historically aware.

Provide preventative care and mental health consultants and experts in culturally sustaining and anti-racist practice to assist preschool teachers in recognizing and addressing underlying social-emotional challenges or effects of trauma that may appear as behavioral issues.

Pass laws banning exclusionary discipline, allowing it only for immediate and serious safety threats, and mandating restorative practices to prevent suspensions and expulsions.

Require publicly funded early education providers to report data on exclusionary practices and supports used to prevent suspensions and expulsions, disaggregated by race and gender.



Preschool suspensions and expulsions are discriminatory and deprive Black children of crucial early learning experiences and have lifelong consequences.

What can families do?

Support your child

- Embrace teaching children about race
- Talk about big feelings
- Stay calm when disciplining
- Seek mental health support

Connect with your child's teacher

- Ask about the good and hard parts of your child's day
- Share family stresses with the teacher

Engage your community

- Find a community member who knows the resources available to support your child
- Request classroom observation or an evaluation by a psychologist, occupational therapist, or speech-language pathologist

What can teachers do?

Be aware

- Even requiring children to sit alone silently ("soft" exclusionary discipline) can be harmful to healthy development
- Children under 5 display a range of cultural and developmental differences that can be misinterpreted as behavioral disturbances
- Reflect on your implicit biases and how these influence your teaching

Act and advocate

- Request racial equity, implicit bias, and restorative practices training
- Provide proactive, strengths-based, and developmentally appropriate redirection

Engage all children

- Teach social-emotional learning
- Seek support for student behaviors
- Keep children in your classroom