



# RECLAIMING STUDENTS



## *The economic and educational costs of exclusionary discipline in Washington State*

Every year, tens of thousands of children are removed from Washington State schools through exclusionary discipline. While some students are excluded from school for just a few days, there is a hidden subset of students who are pushed out on a long-term or indefinite basis. Washington Appleseed, TeamChild, the ACLU of Washington and Garvey Schubert Barer came together to investigate the impacts of these exclusions on Washington students.

Based on data collection from all 295 school districts in Washington State, stakeholder interviews, and a review of state laws, regulations, and school district policies and practices, *Reclaiming Students* presents five key findings from our team's research and a series of recommendations for addressing the challenges identified in each finding.

## KEY FINDINGS

**FINDING ONE:** Exclusionary discipline negatively impacted academic success and a student's relationship with the educational system.

**FINDING TWO:** The vast majority of disciplined students did not receive educational services for the duration of their exclusion.

**FINDING THREE:** Exclusionary discipline disproportionately impacted students of color and youth living in poverty.

**FINDING FOUR:** Reliance on exclusionary discipline varied significantly from district to district, even among districts with similar demographic characteristics.

**FINDING FIVE:** Discipline data yielded only a partial picture of the number of students impacted by exclusionary practices each year in Washington public schools.

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[www.waappleseed.org](http://www.waappleseed.org) or [www.teamchild.org](http://www.teamchild.org)

All children in Washington State should receive an education as guaranteed by our state constitution. The Reclaiming Students report recommends that, collectively as a state, we take the following steps to ensure that all students have equitable access to public schools and that student behavior does not result in a loss of educational services.

## Moving Forward: Key Recommendations

1. Reduce the use of out of school exclusions.
2. Require school districts to provide access to educational services during periods of exclusionary discipline.
3. Ensure that no student is subject to indefinite exclusion.
4. Adopt and follow recommendations of the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee in order to support a reduction in the disproportionate impact of exclusionary discipline on students of color.
5. Require school districts to retrieve excluded students and re-engage them in education.
6. Update the statewide Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) so that school districts collect—and the state can review—data showing whether students subject to discipline receive educational services while out of school and whether they return to in-school education; how many students are removed from school and for what behaviors; and what the demographics are for students removed from school. This data should be publicly available and easily accessible on the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) website for each district and school.
7. Transforming Washington's current exclusionary discipline practices should be a collective effort. School districts need the support and collaboration of students, parents, the medical community (including pediatricians and mental health providers), juvenile justice professionals, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), community agencies, advocates, and others to support and maximize the work school districts will need to do.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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**About Washington Appleseed:** Washington Appleseed works to address social and economic problems in our state by developing new public policy initiatives, challenging unjust laws, and helping people better understand and fully exercise their rights.

**About TeamChild:** TeamChild is a non profit law firm dedicated to upholding the rights of youth involved, or at risk of involvement, in the juvenile justice system to help them secure the education, healthcare, housing and other support they need to achieve positive outcomes in their lives.